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Ireland and the Stuart Papers

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Bonnie Prince Charlie Entering the Ballroom at Holyroodhouse before 30 Apr 1892. Royal Collection Trust/ ©Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2018



Irish Jacobitism, or Irish support for the exiled Stuart monarchs after 1688, at once helped to sustain Irish national identity between the Treaty of Limerick (1691)^[1] and the French Revolution (1789) and explains the imposition and maintenance of the penal laws against Irish Catholics for much of the eighteenth century. It also condemned many Irishmen and women to a life of exile on the continent. The newly accessible, digitized and heretofore shamefully under-utilized Stuart Papers collection at Windsor Castle provides the single most comprehensive source for this early modern Irish émigré community, Irish Jacobitism and eighteenth-century Irish history more generally.

Irish loyalty to the Stuarts first manifested itself in the immediate aftermath of James VI and I's succession to the English throne and Irish crown in 1603. As the first *de facto* monarch of the whole kingdom, the king's martyred Catholic mother (Mary, Queen of Scots), his impeccably fabricated Gaelic genealogy and the strategic cultural, diplomatic and theological trimming of Franciscan and Jesuit theologians and Irish poets and writers ensured that he had no rivals for Irish royalist affections. Irish loyalty to his luckless house then largely survived the trauma of the Great Civil War (1638-52), the Interregnum (1649-1660) and the political frustrations and disappointments of Charles II's reign (1660-1685). On the succession of James II and VII in 1685, many Irishmen accordingly looked to the new Catholic monarch to repeal anti-Catholic legislation and restore lands they had lost fighting for his family against the English Parliament. Defeat and disillusionment at the Boyne (1690), Aughrim and Limerick (1691)^[2] initially dimmed but did not extinguish Irish enthusiasm for his fallen house.

After 1691, often in the context of successive Jacobite plots and invasion scares (1692, 1695, 1708, 1715, 1719, 1745, 1759), Irish Jacobites looked to the Stuarts, the exiled Irish aristocracy and the Irish regiments in the French and Spanish armies to restore their confiscated lands, dissolve the penal laws and reverse the political, social and cultural domination of the Irish Protestant Ascendancy. In addition, they also paid careful attention to Europe's numerous dynastic wars and ongoing political and military rivalries and their possible ramifications for the Stuarts' cause. Thus, the voluminous Irish correspondence in the Stuart Papers invariably equates the king's restoration with the exiles' return to Ireland, the restitution of their lands and titles and the rehabilitation of the Catholic Church. In the meantime, they looked to James for alms, access, certificates of noblesse and titles to enable them to operate in the restrictive world of elite ancien régime Europe^[3].

This unique archive correspondingly charts the lives and activities of an extensive and far-flung Irish Jacobite presence on the continent and sheds new light on early modern Irish military history and historiography. In particular, it enables us to explore the varied careers, lives, identities and ideologies of this vibrant expatriate Irish Jacobite community through the large cache of letters, literary relics, memorials and memoirs they sent to their exiled sovereigns over the course of nearly 70 years. Providing an appropriate political and military context for Irish involvement in ongoing Jacobite plots and in eighteenth-century European military and political intrigue more generally, they facilitate the re-creation of expatriate Irish social networks and Irish émigré links with their former homeland. They shed a great

deal of new light on their political, military, socio-economic and cultural milieu, their active role in Jacobite politics and their attitude towards Ireland and their exiled king. In addition, they show us how this expatriate Irish Jacobite community functioned as a military, political, diplomatic, and cultural grouping in Europe; how they organised recruitment networks at home and abroad and utilised Catholicism and Jacobitism for their military, political and practical advantage. Irish poets, propagandists, soldiers and smugglers all played a crucial role in recruiting for Irish regiments in all early modern theatres, as well as transferring intelligence between all sections of the Irish Jacobite community. Irish Catholic priests also served as chaplains in these Irish regiments, providing spiritual succour for their charges as well as acting as recorders and witnesses for wills and testaments and serving as guardians for widows and orphans. In the same vein, Irish-born bankers, merchants, educators, lawyers and notaries provided a secular support structure for the Irish community on the continent and their careers, and especially their pan-European political, socio-economic and cultural networks tell us a great deal about their place in their host societies. For the Irish Jacobite military diaspora formed only one part of a multi-faceted expatriate Irish community that established itself in host kingdoms and empires from the Iberian Peninsula to the Russian steppe.

The socio-cultural and associational aspects of the Irish military community abroad centred on a strong, distinct Irish Catholic nationalist and royalist identity and the cult of the exiled Stuarts. Key events in the Jacobite calendar (births, birthdays and name-days) and associated Jacobite rituals and religious feast-days mirror later St Patrick's Day celebrations in George

Washington's Army at Valley Forge or George McClellan's Army of the Potomac during the American Civil war. Of course, Irish generals, colonels-proprietor, recruiters and clergymen then utilised this cultural Jacobitism to enlist kinsmen and compatriots into various European armies, often in conjunction with their political and diplomatic traffic on behalf of the exiled Stuarts.

Seventeenth-century confiscations and the decimation of the Irish Catholic landed interest after Limerick (1691) also ensured that Irish Jacobitism remained closely associated with a Catholic tenant-farming and mercantile class, the politically suspect Irish Catholic converts to Protestantism, the Irish colleges scattered across the continent from Lisbon to Prague and a prolific, multi-lingual Irish literati on both sides of the Channel. The burgeoning Irish community on the continent, officially deemed 'traitors', 'rebels', fugitives or - at best - military and religious refugees, was thus able to play a significant role in European political and cultural life for most of the Jacobite period and was thoroughly integrated into their host societies. Yet despite the long years of exile they remained loyal to the Stuart dynasty and did not cease to participate in Jacobite risings, invasion plots and cross-channel espionage for over six decades after the Treaty of Limerick. Indeed, Catholicism and Jacobitism, inexorably linked until the death of James 'III and VIII' in 1766, directly helped to hold this pan-European community together by enabling its adherents to move seamlessly from Madrid to Moscow. Although the Irish military diaspora's relationship with their homeland in the seventeenth century has been the subject of much recent research, their eighteenth-century successors, military and civilian alike, lack a modern, pan-

European, interpretative history. The newly accessible Stuart Papers Archive will be a crucial resource for any scholar who wants to address this yawning lacuna in Irish and Jacobite history.

As well as charting the activities of the Irish Jacobite Diaspora, the Stuart Papers also provide abundant evidence for the activities of ambitious Irish Catholic clerics, and especially of the vigorous canvassing and intrigues centred on appointments to vacant Irish bishoprics^[6]. The close ties between Jacobitism and Catholicism were firmly established at the outset of James II and VII's reign. Immediately after his accession to the throne in 1685, King James petitioned Pope Innocent XI for the right of nomination to Catholic bishoprics in his three kingdoms and the pope reluctantly conceded this. James then maintained this prerogative after his deposition in 1688 despite opposition from a few dissident Irish clerics who feared that he would attempt to anglicise the Irish church or that his right of nomination would provoke further persecution of the Irish Catholic community. James II and VII, Mary of Modena (acting as *de facto* regent for her son) and the young James 'III and VIII', indeed, regularly exercised this jealously guarded prerogative for the next seventy years^[5]. The Stuarts nominated all but five out of 129 Irish bishops and coadjutors between 1687 and 1765. It is therefore no surprise that the exiled Stuarts continued to be regarded as the fount of righteous authority by the higher Irish Catholic clergy. These *de jure* kings got little chance to show their affection for those Catholic Irish men and women who sacrificed so much in their cause. However, they could and did scrupulously exercise their right of episcopal nomination to choose men well-suited to sustaining the underground church and the spiritual identity of the

Catholic community in Ireland during the worst years of the Penal Era. As a result, Jacobitism remained crucially relevant for Catholic Ireland and the Irish clergy focused their hopes and ambitions on the Stuart court rather than the Holy See.

Hence a great many of the letters and documents routinely submitted to the Stuart court in exile illuminate the workings of the Irish Catholic Church and its links with France, Spain, the Habsburgs and Rome. They reveal, furthermore, the major problems of the Irish mission, such as the difficulties created by the penal code and episodic bouts of persecution stemming from it, the struggle between the continental-based and indigenous Irish clergy for control of the Irish colleges^[6], the ongoing friction between the regular and secular clergy and the problems caused by absentee bishops and an over-supply of clergymen. They also shed light on the way the links between the Catholic clergy in Ireland and their religious and secular masters in Rome operated. The written and oral traffic between them had to be carried on by underground channels and couched in a cryptic vocabulary, and hence the correspondence is full of descriptions of intricate manoeuvres for moving information and couriers in secret and much of it is written in elaborate ciphers with pseudonyms and references to 'widows' [vacant dioceses], 'farms' [dioceses], farmers [bishops] and 'tenants' [bishops] that were all at the disposal of the 'landlord' [James 'III and VIII']. The Irish component of the Stuart Papers is consequently an excellent source for scholars who are uninterested in Jacobitism, but are engaged in studying the mechanics of the 'dangerous trade' of espionage and subversion in early modern Europe^[7].

Furthermore, prominent members of the clergy, including Dr Ambrose O'Callaghan, Provincial of the Irish Dominicans and later Bishop of Ferns^[8], Dr Sylvester Lloyd, Bishop of Killaloe^[9], Fr Bernard Dunne^[10], Fr. Michael MacDonough, Bishop of Kilmore^[11] and Fr James McKenna, Monaghan clergyman and Jacobite agent^[12], also acted as the eyes and ears of the Stuart king in Ireland and on the continent. They sent information directly to him and his secretary James Edgar, or via his agents Lieutenant-General Arthur Dillon and Daniel O'Brien, Jacobite Earl of Lismore, on the state, structure and strength of the Irish Jacobite political nation, as well as other news relating to Irish political affairs. King James also received presents of butter, oysters, tobacco, linen, books (including Gulliver's Travels and other works by Jonathan Swift) and alcohol designed to curry favour with him and his secretary.

A further insight into the mind of eighteenth-century Ireland can be found in the many postulations from the indigenous and exiled Irish nobility in support of the pretensions of episcopal hopefuls. These are invariably imbued both with Catholic self-righteousness and a strong sense of persecution. They are accordingly a necessary corrective to those interpretations of Irish history that have downplayed the psychological effects of the penal laws. Their letters and memorandums continually refer to their poor oppressed country, the persecuted Catholics of Ireland, their lawful king, their fatherland and the tyranny of the usurping Elector of Hanover (George I, II and III). They provide a ringing demonstration of the singular importance of the Jacobite ideology in eighteenth-century Ireland and it is particularly striking how resoundingly the optimism in the letters of clergymen such as O'Connor,

O'Callaghan, Lloyd, McKenna, MacDonagh and Dunne is replicated and magnified in those written by Irish Jacobite soldiers, civilians and Gaelic literati.

In addition to materials specifically focused on Ireland and Irish matters penned by Irishmen, the collection contains hundreds of letters to and from prominent Irish Jacobite exiles who represented King James' interest across the continent, including Count John O'Rourke (Vienna), Sir Charles Wogan, (Madrid)^[13], Lieutenant-General Dillon (Paris)^[14], Daniel O'Brien (Rome)^[15] and James Butler, Duke of Ormonde (Avignon)^[16]. Although Ireland seldom featured directly in post 1691 Jacobite plots and invasion plans (London remained the ultimate goal for the Stuarts) the kingdom invariably had a subsidiary, diversionary role in all of them. Thus, the surviving invasion plans drawn up by the likes of James Fitzjames, Duke of Berwick, John Erskine, Jacobite Duke of Mar, Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester and prominent Irish Jacobites such as Lieutenant-General Dillon, 'Robin' Leslie, Roger O'Connor and a host of others all stressed the need to reinforce any indigenous rising in the British Isles with expatriate Irish troops and arm the Jacobites in Ireland to pin down the government's troops there^[17].

Irish Jacobitism, and the Irish diaspora in particular, has left an indelible mark on the politics, political culture, literature and history of eighteenth-century Europe and this looms large in the papers of the exiled Stuarts. Yet despite their loyal service to temporal and spiritual masters on the continent and their steady integration into their host societies, these exiles retained a strong, sentimental allegiance to their native land. Links between Ireland and her clerical and military exiles profoundly influenced the elaboration, maintenance and survival of Jacobite ideology until the

end of the 1750s. In the course of the better part of a century of wars and invasion plots, the exiles vigorously lobbied for, with and on behalf of the exiled Stuarts; in periods of political inactivity, they commented on European politics, sought pensions, titles, preferment and continually dwelt on their sadness at living in exile and the persecution of their compatriots at home. The exiled Stuart kings reciprocated by repeatedly turning to Irish soldiers, priests and merchants to represent and support their political interests across the continent and by trying to obtain favours for their loyal Irish subjects. For their part, the Irish Jacobite exiles boasted loudly of their willingness to serve the cause and recoup their native lands and possessions by force of arms. Like Jacobitism itself, these are tokens of a profoundly dissident, implicitly revolutionary tendency in eighteenth-century Irish society. Long before 1798 and the beginnings of modern Irish nationalism there was, in other words, an Irish community at home and abroad yearning, and fighting, for a very different Ireland.

NOTES

^[1] Signed in October 1691 at Limerick, this treaty ended the Williamite War in Ireland and saw the end of Jacobite military opposition to William of Orange in that country.

^[2] Williamite forces defeated the Jacobite army first under James II at the Battle of the Boyne on 1 July 1690, then under Lieutenant-General St Ruth at Aughrim on 12 July 1691, after James II had fled to France. Limerick, a Jacobite stronghold, was under siege from Williamite forces first in August 1690, then once again in August 1691, ending in the Jacobite surrender and the signing of the Treaty of Limerick.

^[3] RA SP/Main/262/152

^[4] Petition on Behalf of Bernard Dunne, Bishop of Kildare, for His Translation to the Archbishopric of Dublin [1729]. RA SP/Box/1/85.

^[5] RA SP/M/17/23.

^[6] RA SP/Box/3/1/27. "Memorial Concerning the Pretensions of the R. Chapter of Piacenza in prejudice of the ancient Rights of the English College of Rome".

^[7] Arthur Dillon to James Francis Edward Stuart and John Erskine, 6 March 1719. RA SP/Main/42/75.

^[8] Fr Ambrose O'Callaghan to John Hay, 9 October 1724. RA SP/Main/77/69.

^[9] Fr Sylvester Lloyd to Col Daniel O'Brien, Paris, 4 February 1726. RA SP/Main/90/70.

^[10] Bernard Dunne, Bishop of Kildare, to James, 3 December 1727. RA SP/Main/112/89.

^[11] Michael Macdonogh, Bishop of Kilmore, to James Edgar, 10 April 1741. RA SP/Main/231/190.

^[12] Fr James MacKenna to James Edgar, 7 February 1747. RA SP/Main/281/65.

^[13] Sir Charles Wogan to James, 9 December 1722. RA SP/Main/64/21.

^[14] Arthur Dillon to James, 29 July 1720. RA SP/Main/48/71.

^[15] Colonel Daniel O'Brien to James Francis Edward Stuart. 22 Sept 1727. RA SP/Main/110/86.

^[16] James Butler to James Francis Edward Stuart, 19 March 1719. RA SP/Main/42/91.

^[17] RA SP/Box/3/1/34.

CITATION

ó Ciardha, Éamonn: "Ireland and the Stuart Papers." *State Papers Online: The Stuart and Cumberland Papers from the Royal Archives, Windsor Castle*, Cengage Learning (EMEA) Ltd, 2018

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