

# 10 Years Before The Blaze

## Newspaper Article by Herbert Wood (1912) on 'Unexplored Irish Treasures'

*Edited by Ciarán Wallace<sup>1</sup>*

*'Whatever else the administration did it kept its accounts well ... it is far and away superior to the way these things were done in England.'*

— *Herbert Wood*

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### Editorial Note

In 1912, Herbert Wood, then assistant keeper at the Public Record office of Ireland, wrote a two-part newspaper article describing the records held in the Record Treasury located within the Four Courts complex. Wood hoped to encourage historians and students to use the wonderful resource which he, his colleagues and their predecessors had been gathering since 1867. In 1919 Wood compiled the only comprehensive guide to the collections. As described in the third instalment of *Archive Fever* (['Order from Chaos'](#)), Wood's *Guide to the Records Deposited at the Public Record Office of Ireland* is the spine of the Beyond 2022 project, allowing us to digitally reassemble many of the lost records from transcriptions and surrogates in archives around the world.

Wood's two-part newspaper article published ten years before the blaze in the *Dublin Evening Telegraph* gives a fuller and more engaging description of the PROI's holdings and conveys the success of the PROI as a modern archive. As Wood says: 'In former times the Public Records of this country were in a chaotic state!'

It is a pleasure to be able to reprint Wood's article over a century after it first appeared, and to reintroduce Mr Herbert Wood B.A. (Oxon.) to the reading public.

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<sup>1</sup> **Image:** Twiss – Berry scrap book, Royal Irish Academy Library [MS, 23 M 75] p 20.

# UNEXPLORED IRISH TREASURES

Awaiting Student and  
Historian

In the Irish Record Office.

BY HERBERT WOOD, M.R.I.A.

Mr. Herbert Wood, B.A., of the Public Record Office of Ireland, is a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He has devoted a great deal of attention to the unexplored treasures of Irish history which lie unexplored in the archives of the Irish Record Office. His article on the subject, of which we publish a first instalment, will be found a most interesting supplement to that of the Rev. Professor MacSweeney, of Maynooth, dealing with the researches of Eugene O'Curry in unpublished Irish manuscripts. We reproduce, by permission of Mr. James Mills, M.R.I.A., Deputy-Keeper of the Records and State Papers, facsimiles of famous personages' signatures to documents in the Record Office.

Whilst Continental nations have called their literary remains "archives," our use of the word "records" has tended to a certain confusion of thought. Some have been inclined to confine the term to legal records, such as have been produced in a Court of Record, and others have admitted a wider connotation. Perhaps the best definition for our purpose is that given in the Acts of Parliament establishing the English and Irish Record Offices, where "records" are defined as meaning "all rolls, records, writs, books, proceedings, decrees, bills, warrants, accounts, papers, and documents whatsoever of a public nature belonging to her Majesty." And these are the Records—the Public Records—which I intend to deal with. Private records, such as those of municipal corporations, and the MSS. of our University Libraries and Academies are be-



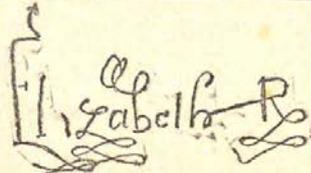
NO NEED TO SAY IN IRELAND WHO CROMWELL WAS. IT IS AN IRON SIGNATURE.

yond the scope of my paper. Now as history is a narrative of events of the past, the country which possesses the best records should have the best history. I say "should have" because it all depends on the way the records are treated. If they are left neglected, if they are not treated scientifically, your history will be more likely the creation of the imagination rather than a statement of facts. It is interesting to find that the critical study of history in these countries synchronises with the publication, thus the Rolls Series and the State Papers of our ancient records.

In former times the Public Records of this country were in a chaotic state. From time to time, especially after a fire, when many of them were consumed, there would be resolutions in Parliament on the subject, and Committees would be appointed to consider the state of insecurity of the national documents and the best means of preserving them, but nothing of much importance was effected, and things would go on in the same careless

amongst them became less and less frequent, and consequently neglected them, and, in some cases, were unable to read them.

In dealing with our Public Records, it seems to me that the most satisfactory way would be to divide them into five classes, viz., those belonging to the administration, the legislature, the judicature, local registries, and miscellaneous. I commence with the Administrative Records, as being the largest and most comprehensive class. No administration can be conducted without keeping a record of its acts, not so much in the interest of the subject as in its own. Grants of land, details of revenue, appointments of

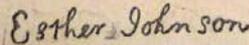


ELIZABETH'S NAME IS BARELY TRACEABLE IN THE DOCUMENT IN THE IRISH RECORDS OFFICE.

officers, must all be recorded as proofs or precedents, and consequently we possess a vast mass of this class of record. And of this class the Exchequer records of the revenue of the country form a most important section.

There is a large series of Pipe Rolls, about 200 in number, dating from the 13th Henry III., which contain much matter of historical interest. They comprise accounts of payments by the sheriffs or bailiffs of the different counties of expenses incurred in maintaining Royal castles, in assisting military expeditions passing through their county, in managing lands and property in the hands of the King through forfeiture, or minority of heirs, and of receipts derived from fines, rents, and other sources of revenue, set out with a wonderful degree of minuteness, so that even the purchase of a bucket for the well of Dublin Castle is accounted for. I give here an entry from the Pipe Roll of 15 Ed. II. The Sheriff of Dublin in his amount paid included money paid to John de Ludgate for expenses when going to Waterford district to provide provisions for the expedition to Scotland, carriage of salt from Dublin to the new town of Trym, to supply the castle of Acton; 41 lbs 3d paid to Henry de Badowe, constable of the Castle of Dublin for the support of 24 Scots in the said Castle for 13 days, and 21 lbs 6d expended in bringing 24 Scots from Dublin Castle to the castles of Kilkenny, Carlow, and Kildare. The reason of their being called Pipe Rolls is said to be that when rolled up they had the appearance of a pipe or tube; but I must confess that the explanation is not satisfactory.

Then there are the accounts of the Collectors of the different districts. This was a very ancient office, but their records which have been preserved only commence about the beginning of the seventeenth century. In these you have the accounts of all the port dues collected, the receipts from the Customs and Excise, Quit and Crown rents, and hearth money, set out by each collector yearly. But what we value especially are a magnificent set of Treasury ledgers showing the payments and receipts of the Government, dating from 1643 (the series really goes back to 1577, but many ledgers between those periods are mis-



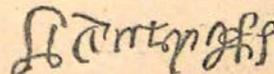
STELLA, SWIFT'S SWEETHEART, LET COMMENTORS DISCUSS WHETHER SHE WAS OR NOT. (Signature from her will.)

ing), and coming down to 1822. And for all

sions for erecting counties, appointments of Justices, and Commissioners, and numerous other subjects of which it was desirable to perpetuate the testimony by enrolling them in Chancery. Of these Rolls there were originally two classes, one called Patent Rolls, containing all open grants from the Crown, open to the inspection of all, and another class called Close Rolls, containing entries of writs from the Crown, sealed and directed to the officers by whom they were received; but this distinction gradually disappeared, and all documents of either class have since been enrolled on the Patent Rolls. Many a grant of letters patent contained a clause rendering it obligatory on the grantee to have the document enrolled in Chancery.

Another very valuable class are the Inquisitions, which extend from Henry VIII. to William III. They were taken under Commissions directed to the Escheator of each province, and are of three classes: the "Inquisition post mortem," taken on the death of a tenant of the Crown, the Inquisitions on attainder, and the Inquisitions taken by order of the Earl of Strafford to find the King's title to the province of Connaught. The Inquisitions post mortem disclosed the lands the tenant died seized of, by what rents and services they were held, and who was the next heir and his age; and as they also record wills and legal instruments of which there is no other record, they are very valuable to the genealogist. The Exchequer Inquisitions are particularly interesting, as they contain the findings of the jury on the possessions of the monasteries at the time of their dissolution, and disclose much information for the historian of any of the religious Orders.

To come now to the Council Books, which contain the Acts of the Privy Council. Unfortunately by a fire which took place in 1711 in the building in which the Council Office and Surveyor-General's Department were located, and which was situated in Essex street, all the old Council Books were burned, with the exception of those of the Commonwealth period, which afforded Mr. Prendergast so much assistance in writing his "Cromwellian Settlement," and two other volumes of the time of Elizabeth, one of which is in the Record Office, and the other in the Hallsday Collection of the Royal Irish Academy. Amongst these Council Books is one of much interest, setting out the names of the transplanted landlords, with their wives, children,



THIS IS THE SIGNATURE OF HENRY THE EIGHTH. HE HAD NO CONSIDERATION FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

and dependents, and recording not only their age, but their stature, and the colour of their hair. There are two similar ones in the Auditor-General's Collection. Other departmental documents before 1700 have also disappeared, but in this case the loss is not to be attributed to fire, but to the fact that the Lords Lieutenant for the time being, on the termination of their term of office, took away with them all the papers relating to their government, with the result that such papers will be found either in private collections in England or in the Public Record Office in London. The Government here found themselves so hampered by the absence of these administrative records that in 1702 a State Paper Office was established for the purpose of recording the various acts of the different governors, so that from this period a continuous record has been kept of the departmental acts of the administration in Civil and Military Entry Books, while the series of papers contain many interesting communications between British Castle and the various

Dublin Evening Telegraph, Saturday 3 February 1912

# UNEXPLORED IRISH TREASURES

## Awaiting Student and Historian in the Irish Record Office

### *Part 1*

By Herbert Wood, MRIA

*Mr Herbert Wood, BA of the Public Record Office of Ireland, is a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He has devoted a great deal of attention to the unexplored treasures of Irish history which lie unexplored in the archives of the Irish Record Office. His article on the subject, of which we publish a first instalment, will be found a most interesting supplement to that of the Rev. Professor McSweeney of Maynooth, dealing with the researches of Eugene O'Curry in unpublished Irish manuscripts. We reproduced, by permission of Mr James Mills, MRIE, Deputy Keeper of the Records and State Papers, facsimiles of famous personages' signatures to documents in the Record Office.*

'Whilst Continental nations have called their literary remains "archives" our use of the word "records" has tended to a certain confusion of thought. Some have been inclined to confine the term to legal records, such as have been produced in a Court of Record, and others have admitted a wider connotation. Perhaps the best definition for our purpose is that given in the Acts of Parliament establishing the English and Irish Record Offices, where "records" are defined as meaning "all rolls, records, writs, books, proceedings, decrees, bills, warrants, accounts, papers, and documents whatsoever of a public nature belonging to her Majesty." And these are the Records – the Public Records – which I intend to deal with. Private records such as those of municipal corporations, and the MSS. of our University Libraries and Academies are beyond the scope of my paper.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Here is reproduced the signature of Oliver Cromwell with the caption 'No need to say in Ireland who Cromwell was. It is an iron signature.'

Now as history is a narrative of events of the past, the country which possess the best records should have the best history. I say "should have" because it all depends on the way the records were treated. If they are left neglected, if they are not treated scientifically, your history will be more likely the creation of the imagination rather than a statement of facts. It is interesting to find that the critical study of history in these countries synchronises with the publication of our ancient records, thus the Rolls Series and the State Papers.

In former times the Public Records of this country were in a chaotic state. From time to time, especially after a fire, when many of them were consumed, there could be resolutions in Parliament on the subject, and Committees would be appointed to consider the state of insecurity of the national documents and the best means of preserving them, but nothing of much importance was effected, and things would go on in the same careless way till the public conscience was again [illegible] up to action. The Birmingham Tower in the Castle was the most secure repository for the same reason that the records of England and Scotland were deposited in the Tower of London and Edinburgh Castle, but the records were stored there without any arrangement which would make them easily accessible.

At last, in 1810, a Commission was appointed to consider and report on the state of all the Public Records in Ireland. Amongst the Commissioners was John Philpott Curran, the then Master of the Rolls. They continued in existence till 1830, and their various reports may be considered as monumental. They sent out queries to all the keepers of records<sup>3</sup> throughout the land asking for information as to the records in their custody, the methods of securing their safety, the clerical staff which assisted and helped them in their duties, and any suggestions which might occur to them as to improvements in the arrangements for securing their safe custody. On receipt of the information, which was most voluminous, the Commissioners set themselves, by the aid of the most skilful assistant they could find in the country, to systematise and arrange the various collections, to make what arrangements they could for ensuring the safety of repositories, and to transcribe many of the old rolls and documents, or at least to calendar them. The necessity for such a Commission will be found in a report of the Commissioners "that with the exception of Lodges' MSS, there did not exist in any repository a single calendar, repertory, index, or inventory that the Commission could avail itself of in the progress of its labours, or by any corrections render useful to the public." The result of these twenty years of labour has been not only to preserve much which would probably otherwise have disappeared, but to give to the public such important works as the

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<sup>3</sup> Here is inserted a copy of Daniel O'Connell's signature with the caption 'Signature of the Liberators to the codicil to his will (facsimile reproduction)'.

Calendar of the Patent Rolls up to Hen. VII., and one for King James I., and the Calendar of the Rolls connected with the Act of Settlement. Several other Calendars or transcripts, such as those of the Statute Rolls, Plea Rolls, Acta Regia Hibernica etc., were in preparation by the Commissioners, but were not completed on account of the Commission being brought to an untimely end in 1830. Their printed reports, however, are mines of information, and we cannot be too thankful for their efforts, incomplete though they were.

But the system by which these records were left in their different repositories, in the charge of guardians whose interest in them was only transitory, was bad. In 1832 an attempt was made to concentrate all the records connected with the Land Revenue in the Custom House, and gradually a few of a different class found their way there, but it was not till 1868 that an Act was passed for building a Public Record Office in which all the old records of the country could be stored,<sup>4</sup> and which would be in the custody of a special staff with the duties not only of preserving them, but of arranging, indexing and generally making them accessible to the public. Thus all the records of a public nature are sent to the Record Office, in the case of legal records, as soon as they are ten years old, and from most of the other repositories as soon as they have attained the age of twenty years. One of the difficulties of the old system, or rather want of system, was that officers took less and less interest in their records according as the searches amongst them became less and less frequent, and consequently neglected them, and, in some cases, were unable to read them.

In dealing with our Public Records, it seems to me that the most satisfactory way would be to divide them into five classes, viz., those belonging to the administration, the legislature, the judicature, local registries, and miscellaneous. I commence with the Administrative Records, as being the largest and most comprehensive class. No administration can be conducted without keeping a record of its acts, not so much in the interest of the subject as of its own. Grants of land, details of revenue, appointments of<sup>5</sup> officers, must all be recorded as proofs or precedents, and consequently we possess a vast mass of this class of record. And of this class the Exchequer records of the revenue of the country form a most important section.

There is a large series of Pipe Rolls, about 200 in number, dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> Henry III., which contain much matter of historical interest. They comprise accounts of payments by the

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<sup>4</sup> Here is inserted an image of Henry Grattan's signature with the caption 'Esto Perpetua' ('let her be perpetual') – a quotation from Grattan's 1782 comment on a resurgent Ireland.

<sup>5</sup> Here a copy of Elizabeth I's signature is inserted with the caption 'Elizabeth's name is barely traceable in the document in the Irish Records Office'.

sheriffs or bailiffs of the different counties of expenses incurred in maintaining Royal castles, in assisting military expeditions passing through their county, in managing lands and property in the hands of the King through forfeiture, or minority of heirs, and of receipts derived from fines, rents and other sources of revenue, set out with a wonderful degree of minuteness, so that even the purchase for a bucket for the well of Dublin Castle is accounted for. I give here an entry from the Pipe Roll of 15 Ed. II. 'The Sheriff of Dublin in his amount paid to John de Ludgate for expenses when going to Waterford district to provide provisions for the expedition to Scotland, carriage of salt from Dublin to the new town of Trym, to supply the castle of Adlon: £1 18s 3d paid to Henry de Badowe, constable of the Castle of Dublin for the support of 24 Scots in the said Castle for 18 days, and £1 10s 0½d expended in bringing 24 Scots from Dublin Castle to the castles of Kilkenny, Carlow and Kildare'. The reason of their being called Pipe Rolls is said to be that they had the appearance of a pipe or tube, but I must confess that the explanation is not satisfactory.

Then there are the accounts of the Collectors of the different districts. This was a very ancient office, but their records which have been preserved only commence about the beginning of the seventeenth century. In these you have the accounts of all the port dues collected, the receipts from the Customs and Excise, Quit and Crown rents, and heath money, set out by each collector yearly. But what we value especially are the magnificent set of Treasury ledgers showing the payments and receipts of the Government, dating from 1643 (the series really goes back to 1577, but many ledgers between those periods are missing)<sup>6</sup> and coming down to 1822. And for all these payments vouchers have been carefully preserved in the form of debentures (for payments on the Civil List), warrants (for payments on the Military Establishment and appropriated duties), King's Letters for exceptional payments, and Concordatums of the Privy Council for extraordinary expenditure. Whatever else the administration did it kept its accounts well, and we have the authority of Professor Oldham for saying that it is far and away superior to the way these things were done in England.

But the officials in the Exchequer were careful not only to keep their accounts well, but also to record all the numerous events which took place in or concerning the Exchequer. This they did in what they called the "Memoranda Rolls" (about 200 in number, and dating from 31 Ed. I.), which contain such diverse matter as admission of officers, recognisances, pleadings, and decisions of the Court, family pedigree, inquisitions, and in general anything which it was necessary for the officers of the Exchequer to keep a memorandum of. As an

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<sup>6</sup> Here is inserted a copy of the signature of Esther Johnson with the caption 'Stella, Swift's sweetheart. Let commentators discuss when she was or not. (Signature from her will).'

instance I may mention that on the Roll of 18 and 19 Richard II. there is a note that in the 9 Ed. II. a writ was issued to the Prior and Friars of Mount Carmel of Dublin to celebrate divine things in the Chauntry of the Exchequer, receiving 100 s. per annum, i.e., that at the beginning of each term prayers were recited and chants sung in the Exchequer. It is a great testimony to the power of conservatism that this religious service has continued from the 9 Ed. II. right up to 1869, when it ceased in the Disestablishment, for evidently at the Reformation the duty was transferred to Christ Church. We find in 1670 the following:-  
"Memorandum, that this day Dr. Bladen, one of the prebends of Ch. Ch., with the vicars and choristers of the same, came and performed their ancient homage due to his Majestie in<sup>7</sup> this Courte by singing and anthem and reading prayers for his Majestie and the Royal Family."

In this Court of Exchequer was preserved a very ancient book called the Red Book of the Exchequer. They had in old times a great partiality for describing a book by its cover, as you have the Liber Albus and the Liber Niger. As a national monument it takes precedence of all other records in Ireland. The entries in it were transcribed there at different periods from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. It contains canons of the Mass, gospel and prayers, statutes and ordinances, Latin verses, memorable events, and oaths of Kings, Counsellors, judges and officers. It was upon this book that the oaths were taken, and the constant handling and kissing have obliterated some portions. There is a sketch, crude but full of action, of the Court of Exchequer, temp. Hen. IV., with the judges, officers, and sheriffs around the chequered board, which gave the name to the Exchequer Court. In the "Missal" portion, the initial letters are illuminated, and there is a picture of Christ on the Cross, with the Virgin and St. Peter [the apostle St John, presumably] on either side.

I next come to the vast series of Patent Rolls (about 1,200 in number), and which, commencing with the reign of King John, has been continued up to the present time. The importance of this class can hardly be overestimated. Upon these rolls were entered all grants of land whether in perpetuity or on lease, creations of honours, grants of charters, offices, fishers, patents for inventions, ecclesiastical preferment, commissions, inquisitions, deeds, conveyances, summonses to Parliament, treaties with the captains of the Irish septs, Papal Bulls, proclamations, commissions for erecting counties, appointments of Justices, and

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<sup>7</sup> Here is inserted a copy of Edmund Spencer's signature with the caption "Spencer's signature, anyone who wishes to know anything regarding Spencer's poetry in so far as it refers to Ireland, should see Dr. Joyce's work on the subject. There you will see the vexed question settled of the real names of the rivers which flow into Lough Neagh and which flow into the sea.'

Commissioners, and numerous other subjects of which it was desirable to perpetuate the testimony by enrolling them in Chancery. Of these Rolls there were originally two classes, one called Patent Rolls, containing all open grants from the Crown, open to the inspection of all, and another class called Close Rolls, containing entries of writs from the Crown, sealed and directed to the officers by who they were received; but this distinction gradually disappeared, and all documents of either class have since been enrolled on the Patent Rolls. Many a grant of letters patent contained a clause rendering it obligatory on the grantee to have the document enrolled in Chancery.

Another very valuable class are the Inquisitions, which extend from Henry VIII. to William III. They were taken under Commissions directed to the Escheator [Escheater] of each province, and are of three classes: the "Inquisitions post mortem," taken on the death of a tenant of the Crown, the Inquisitions on attainder, and the Inquisitions taken by order of the Earl of Strafford to find the King's title to the province of Connaught. The Inquisitions post mortem disclosed the lands the tenant died seized of, by what rents and services they were held, and who was the next heir and his age; and as they also record wills and legal instruments of which there is no other record, they are very valuable to the genealogist. The Exchequer Inquisitions are particularly interesting, as they contain the findings of the jury on the possessions of the monasteries at the time of their dissolution, and disclose much information for the historian of any of the religious Orders.

To come now to the Council Books, which contain the Acts of the Privy Council. Unfortunately by a fire which took place in 1711 in the building in which the Council Office and the Surveyor-General's Department were located, and which was situated in Essex Street, all the old Council Books were burned, with the exception of those of the Commonwealth period, which afforded Mr. Prendergast so much assistance in writing his "Cromwellian Settlement," and two other volumes of the time of Elizabeth, one of which is in the Record Office, and the other is in the Hallyday [sic] Collection of the Royal Irish Academy. Amongst these Council Books is one of much interest, setting out the names of the transplanted landlords, with their wives, children<sup>8</sup> and dependents, and recording not only their age, but their stature, and the colour of their hair. There are two similar ones in the Auditor-General's Collection. Other departmental documents before 1700 have also disappeared, but in this case the loss is not to be attributed to fire, but to the fact that the Lords Lieutenant for the time being, on the termination of the term of office, took away with

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<sup>8</sup> Here is inserted a copy of the signature of Henry VIII with the caption: 'This is the signature of Henry the Eighth. He had no consideration for women's rights.'

them all the papers relating to their government, with the result that such papers will now be found either in private collections in England or in the Public Record Office in London. The Government here found themselves so hampered by the absence of these administrative records that in 1702 a State Paper Office was established for the purpose of recording the various acts of the different governors, so that from this period a continuous record has been kept of the departmental acts of the administration in Civil and Military Entry Books, while the series of papers contain many interesting communications between Dublin Castle and the various departmental offices here, county officers, the Treasury, Home Office, Secretary of State, etc.

In connection with this class, we have the various Proclamations from 1618, which should give valuable help to the historian. A list of these has been printed by Lord Crawford in the magnificent volumes of Proclamations of the Three Kingdoms, which he has issued at his own expense.

Then there is the large class of records belonging to the Auditor and Surveyor-General's Offices, dealing with the transfers of land under the forfeitures of the Earl of Desmond, the Ulster plantation and the forfeitures consequent on the rebellions of 1641 and 1688. To illustrate these, there are the maps of the<sup>9</sup> six escheated counties of Ulster, made in 1609, of which we have only the photozincographed copies, as the originals are in the London Record Office. But the maps which were made by Dr Petty to facilitate the transfer of land after the war of 1641 are much more valuable, as they are in much greater detail. Dr. Petty, afterwards Sir William Petty, was a distinguished surgeon and man of science, who came over with the Cromwellian forces. Seeing the difficulties the Government had in distributing the forfeited lands to the officers, adventurers, and soldiers through the want of maps for the districts, he offered for a stipulated sum to prepare maps of all the forfeited lands. His offer was accepted, and with the aid of a body of surveyors he in three years furnished the Government with maps of a large part of Ireland, each map consisting of a parish, and so correctly laid down that many of the boundaries of the various townlands coincide remarkably with these boundaries as laid down by the Ordnance Survey to-day. His remarkable energy was exemplified in the manner of working. Of an evening in his house on Crow street he employed two amanuenses. He used to send one to bed, and whilst he was

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<sup>9</sup> Here is inserted a copy of the signature of Joseph Addison with 'The greatest essayist, as he wrote. Note the precision of his handwriting, which is only to be equalled by the precision of the essays which he gave to the world. Many of his writings were produced in the Botanic Gardens, Dublin. He was Chief Secretary at Dublin. His dispatches to England would be even more interesting than his articles in the Spectator.'

sleeping dictated to the other, who took down Petty's words in shorthand. At the same time Petty was eating his modest supper of bread and a handful of raisins. Petty then woke up the other boy, and set him to work to copy out the notes in longhand whilst he himself slept, so that when he awoke in the morning everything was ready for him. These maps I have alluded to were called the Down Survey, because they were laid **Down** [sic] by admeasurement, as distinguished from an ordinary descriptive survey. At the same time he prepared sets of baronial maps, each map consisting of a barony, with most of the information contained in the parish maps, but on a smaller scale. In 1712 one of these sets of maps was being conveyed to England when the ship in which they were was seized by a French cruiser, and the<sup>10</sup> maps taken to Paris, where they were deposited in the Bibliotheque Royale. Here in 1787 came Col. Vallancy, the distinguished Irish antiquarian. To quote his own words, "My pursuit in the French King's Catalogue were for old copies of the Bible, and consequently I turned to the volume entitled Theology, curious to know in what manner the collection was made. I perused the Preface, and to my great astonishment at Page 50 I found the original Survey of Ireland by Sir W. Petty." He was allowed to make copies of them, which we possess, but recently in 1908, the French Government kindly allowed them to be photographed, and now you can get a copy of any barony from the Ordnance Survey Department for a shilling, and it should certainly be bought by anyone writing a history of his county.

Let me now turn to the records of the judicial proceedings. On the Equity side, you have the numerous pleadings, such as bills and answers in the Courts of Chancery and Equity Exchequer, which date back to 1575 in Chancery, and somewhat later in Equity Exchequer. On the criminal side, the Crown records of the Court of the King's Bench, contain much of interest, comprising as they do attainders and political trials. But the numerous Plea Rolls, in excellent preservation, and dating back to 1252, contain not only the old civil actions, but also criminal actions. They are over 600 in number, and are full of information for the historical student. In them you find the Justiciary and the Justices Itinerant going about the country and dispensing justice from Kerry to Ulster, as well as judges sitting in the King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer in Dublin. The Justiciar was the chief governor of Ireland, and was not only the administrative but also the judicial head of the country. He travelled round the country to administer justice, accompanied by a permanent justice

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<sup>10</sup> Here is inserted a copy of Jonathan Swift's signature with 'The "Authorities" in Dublin Castle, on the appearance of the famous "Drapier letters," were on the look out for Swift's handwriting with a view to his prosecution. They could not find any of his writing, and so had to fall back on Swift's printer. Harding, the printer, kept his secret and stood his punishment like a man and a printer.'

skilled in the law. The perusal of these rolls gives one a good idea of the comparatively settled state of the country up to the invasion of Bruce, as we find people producing their deeds and agreements in court, and attacks on the person and property of the individual meeting their fitting punishment in a way which was impossible after that invasion. These rolls are practically journals of all the proceedings in the courts, and throw much light not only on the social condition of the country, but also on the evolution of judicial procedure.

I should like to briefly summarise one case as an example of what you will find enrolled here. In 1305, Robert Russell, of Rossponte, in Wexford, complained that certain mariners from Winchelsea were lately in the harbour, and that on the eve of SS. Peter and Paul the men commonly staying up at night making fire in the streets, as is the custom, went to a boat belonging to Tho. Coytif and took some wood from it to keep on the fires. To this Coytif naturally objected, and a great cry being raised, Robert Seinde and his servant came to know the cause of the row. The mariners turned on Seinde and beat him so unmercifully that Rob. Russell, the sovereign of the town, came on the scene with a "posse comitatus" and drove the mariners back to their ships. A little while after these same mariners were at S. Math., in Brittany, and by chance found four ships there from Ros, laden with merchandise to the value of £400. In revenge for their treatment at Ros they extorted £20 and a tun of wine from the men of Ros under threat of being slain, and having their ships burned. As two of the boats belonged to Rob. Russell, and as the mariners from Winchelsea behaved so to revenge themselves on Seinde, Russell brought the action against Seinde to recoup himself for the damage sustained. Now, in this instance I have given you here, we learn that there was trade between Winchelsea and Ros, and between Ros and Brittany, in 1307; that the trade on this occasion between Ros and Brittany was of the enormous value of £400, and that it was usual to light fires on the eve of SS. Peter and Paul.

I should like to give another instance of the information which can be obtained from these Rolls. Some time ago I came across a reference to the presence of Italian merchants here in Ireland at the end of the thirteenth century. My curiosity was excited, and after a long search I amassed a good deal of knowledge about these merchants and their presence here. I was particularly interested because I found that many of them came from Florence, and were members of the guilds there, and it seemed to me no great a stretch of the imagination to picture these merchants on their return talking to Dante of their adventures in these islands. I was indebted to these Plea Rolls for much of my information, because these merchants were not only traders, but also bankers and moneylenders, and frequently lent sums of

money to knights, abbots, and other merchants, and as there was often some difficulty about getting the money repaid, the Italians had to bring their debtors into the Law Courts; consequently you will find the legal proceedings enrolled on these rolls. Sometimes indeed the merchants quarrelled amongst themselves, and brought one another before the judge. The Judiciary Rolls are being calendared by the Deputy Keeper, and when the series is finished will afford much new matter to writers on Irish history.

Besides the ordinary jurisdictions, there was an extraordinary jurisdiction in Tipperary, as part of it formed the palatinate of the Duke of Ormond, and all the legal proceedings in this court are deposited with us. I come now to the third division, viz., the Records of Parliament. It is impossible to study the history of a country without knowing what the legislature has deemed fitting to enact, for a country's course is often determined for good or bad by the wisdom or folly of the decree of Parliament. Sir John Gilbert testified that the most valuable illustrations of the history of the English government in Ireland are derivable from these old Irish Statutes. The Acts of the Irish Legislature were enrolled in the Rolls Office, and these Rolls, to the number of 500, which are now in the Record Office, commence in 1427. If the enactments of earlier Parliaments were enrolled, such Rolls are not now in existence. Here we find legislation on subjects of merchants, merchandise, crafts, coinage, measures, labourers and servants, and customs, with many private Acts affecting particular persons and bodies. Now, when you go into the National Library and ask for the printed Statutes of Ireland, many people probably think that they contain all the Statutes enacted in this country. As a matter of fact, they contain only the Acts in force when Grierson printed the volumes, viz., between 1765 and 1800. It will, I think, astound some to learn that, of about 1,300 chapters of the enactments of the Anglo-Irish Parliaments, contained in rolls and records down to and including the reign of Richard the Third, only about sixty-six are to be found in the hitherto published editions of the Statutes of Ireland. What a mine of information is still lying buried in these Rolls! Fortunately, under the direction of the Master of the Rolls, Dr Berry is now editing the Statute Rolls, and two volumes have already appeared, but it will be a long time before the series is completed. Besides this precious series of enactments, we have also the heads of Bills which for some reason or other did not become Acts of Parliament, but they are useful as showing at least the intention of the Government or Legislature, and disclose circumstances which it is useful to know of.

In these Parliamentary and other records it is possible to trace step by step the head of a Bill, as it was called, from the time when leave was asked to introduce it through the various

steps of first and second reading, Committee stage, and the third reading, presentation to the Privy Council for their assent, the proceedings of the Council on the Bill, their letter transmitting it to the King for his assent, and the transmiss, which was the form of the Bill as approved by the King in Council, and sealed with the Great Seal. We can still further trace its course in its being read and passed or rejected, as the case might be, in the Irish Parliament. These transmisses were so called because they were "sent across" from England to Ireland. They did not cease in 1782, but continued right up to the Union, with this difference, however, that whilst before 1782 the transmisses sent back by the King could not be altered by either House of Parliament, who only had the choice of taking it or leaving it, between 1782-1800, on the contrary, the Act as sent over by the Irish Parliament had to be accepted or refused by the King, who had no power of altering it, but if he accepted it, as I think he always did, he sent back the transmisses with the Great Seal attached.

Of our Parliamentary records, what we perhaps treasure most are the original fair copy journals of the House of Lords and Commons, recording the daily proceedings of both Houses. They are engrossed in a fine large handwriting. However, clear and legible as they are, they would not be of great interest here, as they have all been printed, and can be perused in the Dublin libraries. Their chief feature of excellence lies in the magnificent bindings in which our legislators thought fit to enshrine their acts. Of these elaborately bound volumes there are 149 now in existence, dating from 1613-1800. Excepting some of the earliest, in which calf or vellum is used, they are bound in the finest Turkey or Barbary leather procurable at the time, and the gold tooling and inlaying on their sides and backs express the bookbinder's art in the highest degree of perfection which Ireland was capable of. Sir Edward Sullivan, who is an acknowledged authority on this subject, says –

"Considering the large number of the volumes and the magnificence and bewildering variety of their artistic designs, it may be truly said of them that there is no such set of bound books to be found in any part of the world." The various volumes of this unique series are not of uniform excellence, as the period from 1707 to the middle of the eighteenth century exhibits the most superb expression of the bookbinder's art, after which time a gradual decline in artistic taste manifested itself, till about 1800 they are inferior to the class of bindings found in the earlier examples. The work was in the hands of the King's Stationer, but there is no mark or "etiquette" to give us the faintest clue to the names of the artists. The fact that the different stamps made by the tools are, with some minor exceptions, quite different from any that are to be found outside Ireland during that period, proves conclusively that these

artistic designs were the work of Irish hands. It is almost inconceivable that the charge to the Government for each of the elaborate volumes was only £6.

Amongst the records of the Irish Legislature, besides these which I have mentioned above, there are many of its documents, such as appeals, accounts, reports, returns etc., on many subject which are well worth perusing.

[End of Part One]