

The O'Callaghan / Westropp Collection

The O'Callaghan / Westropp papers were acquired in the early 1990's by the then fledgling East Clare Heritage group. Ranging in date from the 1750's to the 1960, the papers represent three centuries of a landed gentry's family affairs and constitute the largest collection of documents relating to the historic Bodyke Evictions of 1887. As well as providing a socio-economic analysis into Irish tenant life under Landlord rule the papers offer a unique insight into the administration of a significant Clare landlord estate.

The collection includes indentures, affidavits, records of intermarriages, accounts, land deeds, wills, and family accounts. Combined, the collection reflects the control the gentry held over the native population and in the context of their respective socio-economic positions, reveal the level of detachment between them and their tenantry. A 19th century visitor to county Clare articulated the societal disparity as; *"A place with a number of big house's and all around them beautiful gardens, but all around is wasteland"*.

The O'Callaghan's were a Cork family resettled in Clare following the Cromwellian plantations. In 1885 the Westropp name was assumed, by Royal Licence, in compliance with the will of Captain Ralph Westropp, as a condition of the inheritance of Coolreagh estate in Bodyke. For obsequiously supporting Cromwell's campaign, the O'Callaghans had acquired a considerable amount of land in county Clare. In 1878, they owned four thousand, eight hundred and forty-two acres in North East Clare.

At this period, the remote, rural Parish of Bodyke acted as a microcosm of the inequality that characterised the landlord system of 19th century Ireland. The social, economic and political monopoly wielded by the ascendancy was exercised with ruthless severity by Colonel John O' Callaghan of Maryfort. Following disturbances in 1881, events culminated in 1887 when an unprecedented combination of tenant resistance resulted in an event that would forever be remembered as 'The Bodyke evictions'. Several documents among the O'Callaghan Westropp papers provide a unique window into this formative event in modern Irish history.

Also amongst the collection are papers and items that once belonged to the famous antiquarian and archaeologist Thomas Johnson Westropp who bequeathed a rich resource of folkloric and archaeological information as well as writing the first biography of High King Brian Boru in 1914. Appropriately these items are now housed at the East Clare Heritage Centre in Tuamgraney, which holds a nationally unique association with the great High King.

The O'Callaghan / Westropp collection can be seen by appointment at the East Clare Heritage Centre in Tuamgraney

Source: **Clare Heritage Circle Newsletter Volume 4 Summer 2007**

<http://homepage.eircom.net/~eastclareheritage/>

Clare Heritage Circle

The Clare Heritage Circle combines all the best of Clare's varied culture. The members of this circle will help you discover the diverse landscape, built heritage, natural and marine treasures and archaeology of County Clare.

http://www.clarecoco.ie/Heritage/Heritage_ClareHeritageCircle.pdf

O'Callaghan Westropp Photo Collection

<http://foto.clarelibrary.ie/fotoweb/Grid.fwx?archiveId=5017>

Papers of George O'Callaghan-Westropp (1864-1944)

<http://www.ucd.ie/archives/html/collections/ocallaghan-westropp.htm>