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The Career of William Conolly, 1689-1729

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D

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January 2008

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constant presence of William Conolly. Similarly my family, my brothers Cormac and Fergal and sister Fionnuala and my parents Jim and Jeanne have had to share me with the speaker. Particular thanks are due to my mother who carefully proof read the entire manuscript. This thesis is dedicated to my parents in acknowledgement of the interest they have shown and the encouragement, advice and support they have given me.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTES

Add Ms	Additional Manuscript
B.L.	British Library
C.J.I.	*The Journals of the House of Commons of the kingdom of Ireland,* (3rd edition)
C.S.P.D.	*Calendar of state papers, domestic series*
C.T.B.	*Calendar of treasury books*
C.T.P.	*Calendar of treasury papers*
D.N.B.	*Dictionary of National Biography*
E.C.I.	*Eighteenth Century Ireland: The Journal of the Eighteenth Century Ireland Society*
H.I.P.	E.M. Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish parliament, 1692-1800: Commons, constituencies and statutes* (6 vols, Belfast, 2002).
H.M.C.	Historical Manuscripts Commission
I.A.A.	Irish Architectural Archive
I.M.C.	Irish Manuscript Commission
Liber Munerum	Rowley Lascelles, *Liber munerum publicorum Hiberniae, or the Establishments of Ireland, 1152-1827* 2 vols (London, 1852).
N.A.I.	National Archives of Ireland
N.H.I.	T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin, F.J Byrne, and W.E. Vaughan (eds.) *A new history of Ireland* (9 vols, Oxford, 1976-2005).
N.L.I.	National Library of Ireland
O.D.N.B	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford 2004-).
P.R.O.N.I.	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
R.I.A. Proc.	*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1836-)
Reg. Deeds	Registry of Deeds

S.H.C.	Surrey History Centre
SP	State Papers
T.C.D.	Trinity College Dublin
T.N.A.	The National Archives (Kew)

Dates throughout are given according to the Old Style (Julian Calendar). The beginning of each year is taken, however, as 1 January rather than 25 March.

In quotations from contemporary sources spelling has been modernised, and punctuation and capitalisation standardised, except in cases where the meaning of the original is ambiguous or unclear.

All acreage figures have been converted to statute measure. 1 statute acre = 1.69 Irish acres or 1.29 Scotch/Cunningham acres.

SUMMARY

This thesis focuses on the career of William Conolly (1662-1729). Conolly's origins are slightly obscure. He was born in Ballyshannon Co. Donegal but his family's background is unknown although he and his father were sufficiently important to be attainted by King James' parliament in 1689. He received a legal training and following the Jacobite war he acted as agent to Londonderry Corporation. He also acted as collector of the king's alnage in the 1690s, a position which introduced him into official circles. From 1692 onwards he sat in the Irish parliament, first for Donegal borough and from 1703 until his death for County Londonderry. Following the Williamite confiscation he emerged as the largest purchaser of forfeited estates, buying substantial estates in Counties Donegal, Kildare, Londonderry and Meath as well as smaller scattered estates across the country. This rapid accumulation of property meant that Conolly generated a substantial fortune; by his death in 1729 he was regarded as the wealthiest commoner in the country. Politically he was aligned with the Whigs, and in particular the Brodrick faction, and following the Hanoverian succession in 1715 he was appointed to high office. He held the offices of Speaker of the House of Commons and Commissioner of the Revenue (an office he previously held from 1708-10) as well as serving as a lord justice ten times in the absence of the Lord Lieutenant. He was also the leading parliamentary manager or undertaker throughout the period after 1715.

From the above survey it is clear that Conolly had a long and varied career. This thesis is not a biography of Conolly: instead it seeks to examine particular facets of his life through a thematic approach. His political career has previously been outlined in the political histories of the period and so does not form a major part of this project. Instead it focuses on other more neglected aspects of his career, including the generation of his fortune and the relationship between his land dealings and indeed his legal work to his later political career. In particular his early career and his dealings in forfeited estates following the Williamite confiscation are studied closely. His electoral and parliamentary activities in the years before 1715 are also examined to demonstrate how Conolly emerged as one

of the leading players on the Irish political stage after 1715. Conolly's role at the Revenue Board is also analysed, exploring the links between his political success and his dominant role at the Custom House. This aspect of his career is of particular importance as later speakers of the House of Commons followed his example and held office at the Revenue Board as well. Finally the thesis concludes with a study of Conolly's position in Irish society in the period after 1715, which attempts to contextualise the construction of his lasting monument, Castletown, within his wider career.

Introduction

There was a fellow in Ireland called Conolly, who from a shoe-boy grew to be several times one of the chief Governors, wholly illiterate & with hardly common sense. A Lord Lieutenant told the first K. George, that Conolly was the greatest subject he had in both kingdoms, and truly this Character was gotten & preserved by Conolly's never appearing in England, which was the only wise thing he ever did except purchasing sixteen thousand pounds a year (Jonathan Swift 1731).[1]

Swift's posthumous caricature, although scurrilous, provides a good entry point into the career of Speaker William Conolly (1662-1729). Included are versions of the key facts of Conolly's life, as seen by both contemporaries and later historians. William Conolly had been born in Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal, in 1662, the son of a man variously described as an innkeeper or a miller. Despite these humble origins he had risen, through a combination of astute political skills, an advantageous marriage and shrewd land speculation to become the wealthiest and most powerful commoner in Ireland in the reign of George I. He served simultaneously as speaker of the Irish House of Commons, and as a Commissioner of the Revenue from 1715 until his death in 1729. He was also appointed a lord justice ten times in succession during this period. In parallel with this accumulation of political power and influence, Conolly had amassed a fortune estimated to be worth approximately £16,000 per annum in the mid-1720s. The physical embodiment of his power and wealth was his Palladian country house at Castletown, Co. Kildare.

[1] Jonathan Swift to John Gay and the Duchess of Queensberry, 28 August 1731, in David Woolley, (ed.) *The correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D* Vol. III (Frankfurt, 2003), p. 427.

Despite or perhaps because of his great success, Conolly has always been viewed with suspicion, both by contemporary commentators like Swift, and by later writers. His accumulation of such a vast fortune in such a short period attracted questions about the manner in which he rose from such humble origins, and such suspicions have continued to inform most works on Conolly up until the present day.[2] Adjectives like 'mushroom' and 'arriviste' continue to be coupled with his name.[3] This negative perception of his career and methods combined with the durability of the Lecky- and Froude-inspired bias towards the later eighteenth century in Irish scholarship, has ensured that Conolly has not received the historiographical treatment his career merits.[4] In this regard, he has not been alone, the equally interesting lives of Alan Brodrick, first Lord Midleton, or Henry Boyle, the first Earl of Shannon, have been similarly neglected by historians of early-eighteenth century Ireland, while other important figures like Archbishop King, and Nathaniel Clements have only recently been subjected to full biographical treatments.[5]

The only existing biographical study of Conolly, beyond biographical dictionaries and other works of collective biography, is a pioneering article on the Conolly

---

[2] Hugh Allingham, *Ballyshannon, its history and antiquities* (Ballyshannon, 1879), Brian Fitzgerald, *Lady Louisa Conolly 1743-1821: An Anglo-Irish biography* (London, 1950), J.G. Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland 1690-1703* (London, 1956), p. 126; S.J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power: The making of Protestant Ireland 1660-1760* (Oxford, 1992), p.64; David Dickson, *New Foundations. Ireland 1660-1800* 2nd ed (Dublin, 2000), p.54; T.C. Barnard, *A new anatomy of Ireland, the Irish Protestants 1640-1770* (New Haven, London, 2003), p. 119.

[3] D.W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685-1742: Politics, politicians and parties* (Woodbridge, 2004), p.72; A.P.W. Malcomson, 'A house divided: The Loftus family, earls and marquesses of Ely c.1600-c.1900', in David Dickson & Cormac O'Gráda (eds), *Refiguring Ireland: Essays in honour of L.M. Cullen* (Dublin, 2003), p. 186.

[4] W.E.H. Lecky, *A history of Ireland in the eighteenth century* (5 vols, London, 1892); J.A. Froude, *The English in Ireland* (3 vols, London, 1872-4).

[5] T.C. Barnard, 'Farewell to old Ireland' in *The Historical Journal,* xxxvi (1993), pp 909-928; Jacqueline Hill, 'Convergence and conflict in eighteenth century Ireland', in *The Historical Journal,* xliv (2001), p. 1,054. For King and Clements see Philip O'Regan, *Archbishop William King of Dublin (1650-1729) and the constitution of church and state* (Dublin, 2000) & A.P.W. Malcomson, *Nathaniel Clements: Government and the governing elite in Ireland, 1725-75* (Dublin, 2005).

family by Lena Boylan published in the *Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society.*[6] Based on extensive and thorough research into the surviving Conolly manuscripts, her article established the facts of Conolly's life but offered little by way of interpretation. McNally, in his entry for the *Oxford DNB,* has made an attempt not only to summarise Conolly's career but also to assess his significance, which he suggests was primarily his institution of the 'undertaker' system, by which Ireland was governed until at least the 1760s.[7] This is, however, a rather narrow view of Conolly's achievements. His remarkable ascent from obscurity to a position of great wealth and influence was unparalleled in eighteenth-century Ireland, while his contribution to Irish architecture as the builder of Castletown and patron of Edward Lovett Pearce has long been recognised as highly significant.[8]

Conolly's political career and especially his formative role in the development of the 'undertaker' system of government was first subjected to detailed historical scrutiny in the 1940s by J.L. McCracken, while J.G. Simms, writing in the 1950s, offered the first and to date most thorough analysis of Conolly's dealings in confiscated estates following the Williamite wars.[9] Their work established beyond doubt Conolly's importance in the political world of eighteenth-century Ireland. It was only with David Hayton's doctoral thesis and early articles in the 1970s that

---

[6] Lena Boylan, 'The Conollys of Castletown', in *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society,* XI, no 4 (1968),. See also J.M. McWilliam, 'The Dickson and Conolly families of Ballyshannon', in *Donegal Annual,* iv (1959), pp 111-117.

[7] Patrick McNally, 'William Conolly' in *O.D.N.B.* The original *D.N.B* article by B.H. Blacker was very limited in scope and merely recited the facts of Conolly's life. See also McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers: parliamentary politics in early eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 1997), which used a portrait of Conolly, by Charles Jervas on its front cover.

[8] Edward McParland, *Public architecture in Ireland 1680-1760* (Dublin, 2001), pp 5, 84, 177, 182-89; Finola O'Kane, *Landscape design in eighteenth century Ireland: mixing foreign trees with the natives* (Cork, 2004), pp 48-50; T.C. Barnard, *Making the grand figure: Lives and possessions in Ireland 1641-1770* (New Haven, London, 2004), pp 71-72.

[9] J.L. McCracken, 'The undertakers in Ireland and their relations with the Lord Lieutenant 1724-71' (M.A., Queens University Belfast, 1941); Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland 1690-1703* especially pp 126-127.

their original conclusions began to be reassessed and Conolly again emerged as a key figure in his work. In particular his article on 'The beginnings of the undertaker system' provided a detailed analysis of Conolly's political management both in terms of the distribution of patronage and his electoral interest.[10] Later works by Robert Burns and Eoin Magennis, on parliamentary politics, and Patrick McNally, on patronage, have derived much of their inspiration from Hayton's work and have further highlighted the importance of Conolly's political career.[11] Perhaps the most significant recent contribution to the study of eighteenth-century Ireland has been the long awaited publication of the six volume *History of Irish Parliament*, and especially the four volumes of biographical entries, which has provided the raw materials for more in-depth probings of Irish parliamentary politics and politicians.[12] It has been particularly useful in situating Conolly within his parliamentary milieu through comparative studies with his contemporaries.

The focus on political and parliamentary history in most of these works has, however, allowed only one dimension of Conolly's career to emerge. Toby Barnard has bemoaned how:

> That commanding early eighteenth century political presence, Speaker Conolly, floats free – in as far as his build will permit it – from any social or ideological context, because his wife, houses, conspicuous display and

---

[10] D.W. Hayton, 'Ireland and the English ministers 1707-16' (D.Phil., Oxford, 1975); D.W. Hayton, 'The beginnings of the undertaker system' in D.W. Hayton and Thomas Bartlett (eds.) *Penal era and golden age: essays in Irish history, 1690-1800* (Belfast, 1979), pp 32-54. Hayton's articles have been revised and collected in Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*

[11] R.E. Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics in the eighteenth century* (2 vols, Washington, 1989-90), I; McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers: parliamentary politics in early eighteenth century Ireland* ; Eoin Magennis, *The Irish political system 1740-70* (Dublin, 2000). See also Connolly, *Religion, law and power* .

[12] E.M. Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish parliament, 1692-1800: Commons, constituencies and statutes* (6 vols, Belfast, 2002). For an interesting example of the potential research uses of the individual entries see C.I. McGrath, 'Parliament, people and other possibilities', in *E.C.I.,* xvii (2002), pp 157-166.

> extended connections are at best perfunctorily sketched rather than integrated into the political and public lives.[13]

Barnard himself, in his reconstruction of the world of Katherine Conolly and her sisters, has started to address this issue.[14] He has shown the importance of Conolly's marriage to his later career, and has even argued that his later success would perhaps have been impossible without it. This judgement is based not only on the £2,300 dowry she brought with her, but also on her family connections, both in Donegal and in the Dublin administration, as well the intangible contribution of her personality to his later success. Barnard has further illuminated Conolly's career in his studies of Protestant Ireland both in terms of social mobility and material culture and, has provided a more sophisticated framework in which Conolly can be situated.[15]

This thesis, although influenced by the biographical method espoused by Anthony Malcomson, is not a political biography.[16] Instead it concentrates on the other aspects of Conolly's life in an attempt to elucidate the reasons for Conolly's dominance of the Irish political arena after 1715. In particular Conolly's early career and accumulation of his landed patrimony are closely scrutinised (Chapters 1-3). His parliamentary and electoral career before 1715 is also explored in order to shed light on his political development (chapters 4 &5). The important role Conolly played at the Revenue Board is analysed in chapters six and seven, and the

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[13]T.C. Barnard, 'Farewell to old Ireland', p. 926.

[14] T.C. Barnard, 'A tale of three sisters: Katherine Conolly of Castletown' in T.C. Barnard (ed.), *Irish protestant ascents and descents, 1641-1770* (Dublin, 2004), pp 266-289. See also A.P.W. Malcomson, *The pursuit of the heiress: aristocratic marriage in Ireland 1740-1840* (Belfast, 2006), p. 116.

[15] Barnard, *A new anatomy of Ireland*; Barnard, *Making the grand figure.*

[16] A.P.W. Malcomson, *John Foster: The politics of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy* (Oxford, 1978);Idem, *Archbishop Charles Agar, churchmanship and politics in Ireland, 1760-1810* (Dublin, 2002); Idem, *Nathaniel Clements: Government and the governing elite in Ireland, 1725-75.* See also S.J. Connolly, 'Malcomson's century' in *E.C.I.,* xvii (2002), pp 167-171.

findings there help situate Conolly's career in terms of the broader financial revolution taking place in the British Isles during this period.[17] The final chapter examines Conolly's career in the period after 1715 in broad terms and looks at his relationship with successive lords lieutenants and English ministers, in part to explain his emergence as an indispensable member of the Irish government. This chapter also considers the building of Castletown and the motivations that might have underpinned Conolly's decision to build the great house in 1722, and sets its construction more firmly within the context of Conolly's career than has hitherto been attempted.

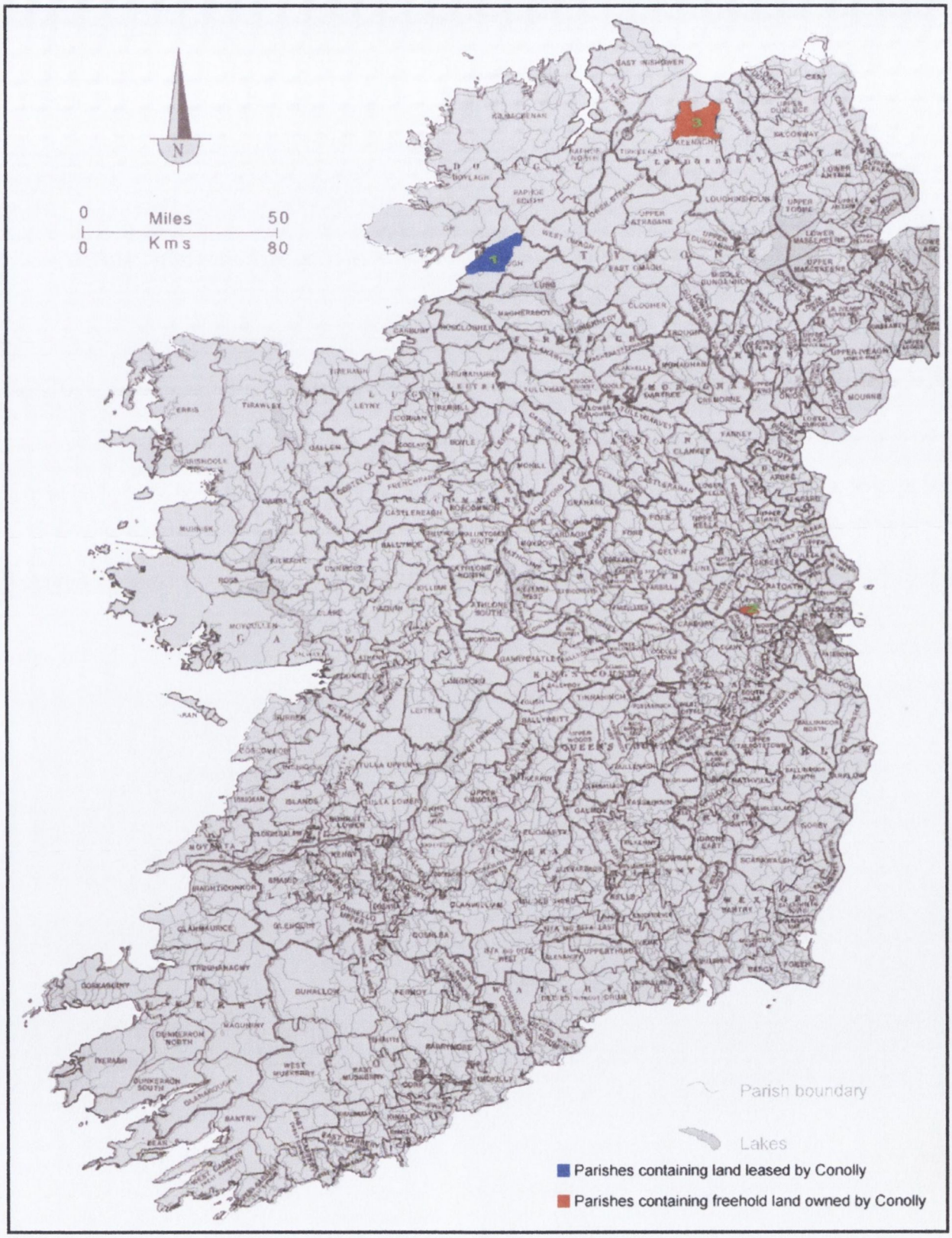
This thesis does not pretend to encompass all aspects of Conolly's life. This is partly because of the limitations of the available sources. Conolly did not leave a voluminous archive of private correspondence like, for example, Archbishop King or Alan Brodrick. The Conolly papers are quite extensive but they do not contain as many personal letters as might be expected. Most of Conolly's surviving correspondence dates from the period after 1715 and is primarily concerned with high politics, apart from some occasional letters relating to estate management and family affairs (mostly dealing with the dissipated lifestyle of his wife's nephew Williams Conyngham). The papers do however contain large amounts of estate material. Much of these records have not been examined heretofore. This is partly because of problems with access. When the Conolly-Carew family sold Castletown in 1965, they divided the extant family papers into three sections, one relating to estate material in Northern Ireland which was deposited in the Public Record

[17]P.G.M. Dickson, *The financial revolution* (London, 1967); John Brewer, *The sinews of power: war, money and the English state, 1688-1783* (London, 1989); Henry Roseveare, *The financial revolution 1660-1760* (London, 1991); M.J. Braddick, *The nerves of state: taxation and the financing of the English state, 1588-1714* (Manchester, 1996); C.I McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution* (Dublin, 2000).

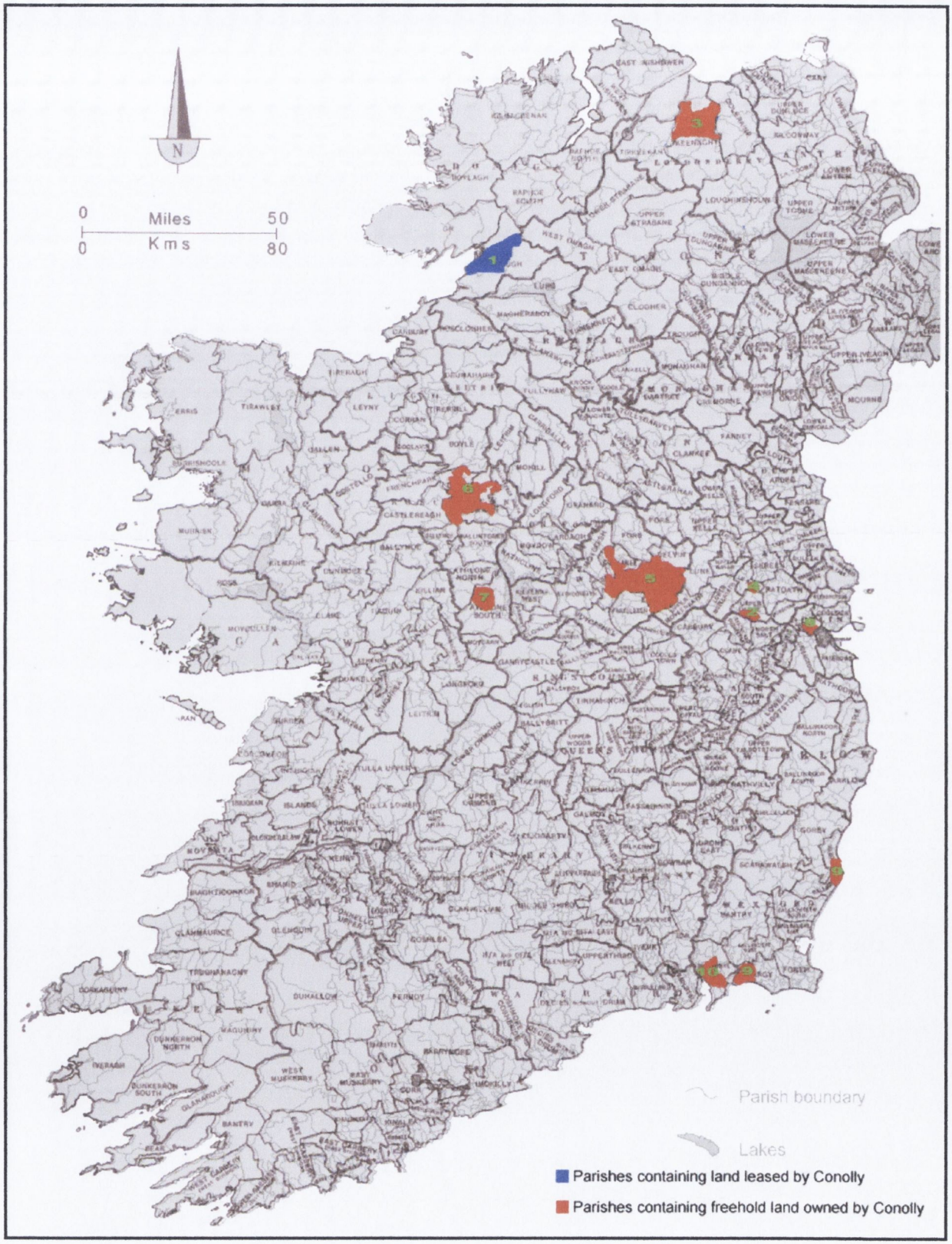
Office in Belfast, one containing estate material relating to the properties in the Republic of Ireland which was deposited in the National Archives in Dublin; and a collection of household accounts and correspondence which were deposited in Trinity College. These deposits were however not the only papers, and a large collection of mostly early eighteenth-century material was discovered two years later. These latter remained in private custody until 1997 when the Castletown Foundation lent them to the Irish Architectural Archive, where they have only recently been catalogued.[18] This last collection contains the bulk of the material relating to the speaker, and has proved the major source for much of this thesis.

The Conolly papers have been supplemented by other collections containing Conolly correspondence, especially the speaker's correspondence with Charles Delafaye, sometime chief secretary and under-secretary of state, contained in the Irish State Papers and the extensive collection of letters from various Conolly and Conyngham relations found in the Smyth of Barbavilla collection. Official papers, particularly the Irish Revenue Commissioners' minutes have also proved immensely valuable for reconstructing Conolly's time at the Revenue Board, while the papers of contemporaries, particularly Alan Brodrick and Archbishop King, have been especially useful in providing the context for and reactions to events in Conolly's career.

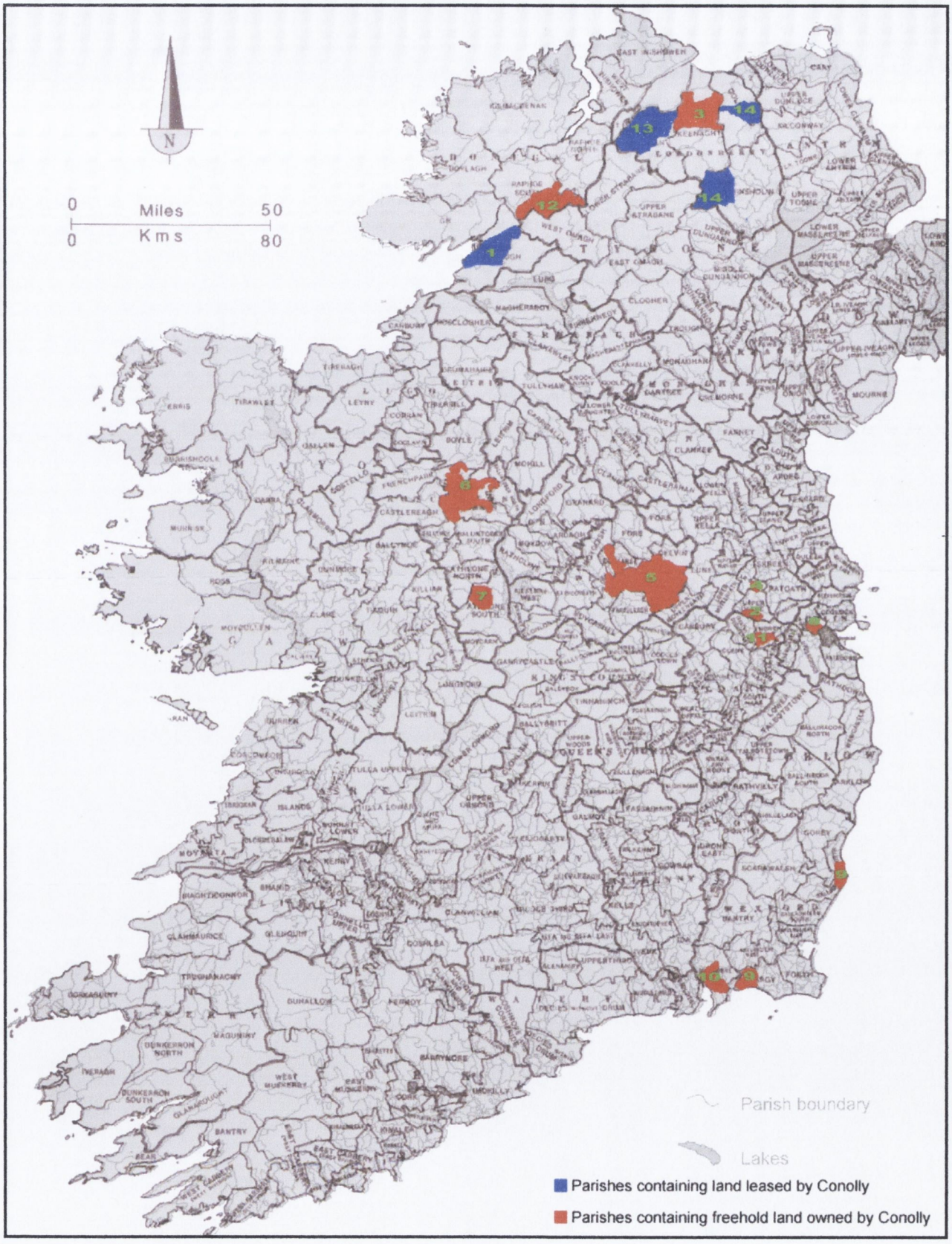
[18] I.A.A., Ref 97/84. I have been employed by the Castletown Foundation alongside Dr Anthony Malcomson since 2005 to produce a 'union catalogue' of all the Conolly papers, to be published by the Irish Manuscripts Commission. Some but not all of these papers have been available on microfilm format in the N.L.I. and in transcript form in P.R.O.N.I., since the late 1960s.



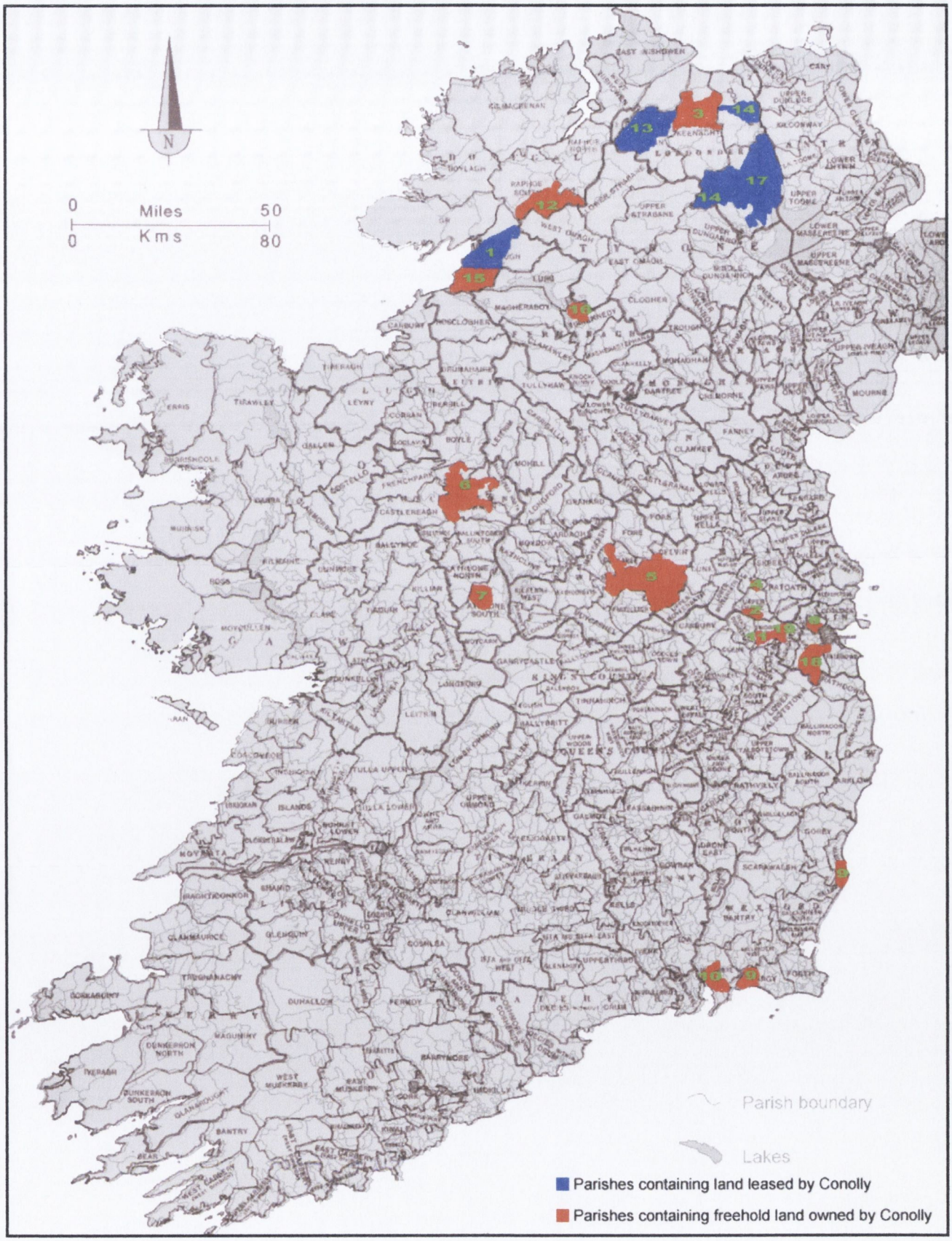
Map 1.1: *Conolly estates by parish in 1699*
(Adapted from map nos. 10.3 &10.7 in W.J. Smyth, *Map making, landscapes and memory: A geography of colonial and early modern Ireland c.1530-1750* (Cork, 2006)).



Map 1.2: *Conolly estates by parish in 1704*
(Adapted from map nos. 10.3 &10.7 in W.J. Smyth, *Map making, landscapes and memory: A geography of colonial and early modern Ireland c.1530-1750* (Cork, 2006)).



Map 1.3: *Conolly estates by parish in 1715*(Adapted from map nos. 10.3 &10.7 in W.J. Smyth, *Map making, landscapes and memory: A geography of colonial and early modern Ireland c.1530-1750* (Cork, 2006)).



Map 1.4: Conolly estates by parish in 1729
(Adapted from map nos. 10.3 &10.7 in W.J. Smyth, *Map making, landscapes and memory: A geography of colonial and early modern Ireland c.1530-1750* (Cork, 2006)).

Key to Maps

The shaded parishes include all parishes that Conolly owned or leased land in. He did not necessarily own all the land in each parish. For further details on these estates see Appendix 1.

1. Lands at Rossnowlagh leased from Trinity College leased in 1690. (13,000 acres)
2. Rodanstown estate purchased in 1691. (2,700 acres).
3. Limavady estate purchased in 1697. (12,448 acres).
4. Manor Dirpatrick purchased in 1703 (799 acres).
5. Former Nugent estates in Co. Westmeath estates purchased in 1703. (Includes former Nugent lands in Co. Meath. (9,717 acres).
6. Former Nugent estates in Co. Roscommon purchased in 1703-1704. (5,964 acres)
7. Former Dillon estate in Co. Roscommon purchased in 1704 (341 acres)..
8. Lands at Abbotstown, Dunsink and Scribblestown Co. Dublin, purchased between 1700 and 1704. (1,021 acres)
9. Former Itchingham estates in Co. Wexford purchased in 1703-1704. (1,553 acres).
10. Former Gilligan estates in Co. Wexford purchased in 1703-1704. (845 acres).
11. Castletown estate, Co. Kildare purchased in 1709. It also includes the manor of Killadoon purchased in 1725 (2,329 acres).
12. Castlefin Estate, Co. Donegal purchased in 1711. (3,476 acres)
13. The Grocers Proportion, Co. Londonderry leased from 1709. (15,900 acres).
14. Lands rented from the See of Derry from 1713?
15. Ballyshannon estate incorporating Trinity College estate at Cowlowdown, and lands leased from the See of Raphoe at Ballyhanna, purchased in 1718 (33,086 acres)
16. Newporton estate, Co. Fermanagh purchased in 1718 (7,118 acres).
17. The Vintners estate, Co. Londonderry leased from 1718? (27,490 acres).
18. The Rathfarnham estate purchased in 1723. (10,350 acres).
19. The Leixlip estate purchased in 1728. (809 acres).

Chapter One

The making of a 'very great fortune:' the accumulation and management of the Conolly patrimony.

Speaker William Conolly was by his death in 1729 regarded not only as the most powerful Irish-based politician of his time, but also as the wealthiest. His wealth was recognised as a key component of his political success. His great fortune was given tangible expression with the construction of Castletown in the 1720s: Ireland's first and largest Palladian style house, its domineering appearance gave some indication of the fortune invested in it. Hitherto the size and genesis of the Conolly fortune has remained obscure. Following the Speaker's death in 1729, Archbishop Boulter wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, 'After his death being expected for several days, Mr Conolly died this morning about one o'clock. He has left behind him a very great fortune, some talk of 17,000 per ann'.[1] Historians have long accepted this contemporary estimate made by Boulter as a good approximation of Conolly's income, but it has never been closely scrutinised. This is despite the exceptional nature of Conolly's fortune. His rise through the ranks of Irish society, from humble origins in Co. Donegal to his death as squire of Castletown is of abiding interest. This remarkable social mobility was of great interest to his contemporaries who both marvelled and sneered at his meteoric rise. In 1700 one hostile commentator wrote, 'He is one whom fortune in a frolicsome mood raised from the lowest of the people to make him equal to the Peers of the

[1] Archbishop Hugh Boulter to the Duke of Newcastle, 30 Oct. 1729, in Hugh Boulter, *Letters to several ministers of state in England* (2 vols, Dublin, 1770) I., pp 266-67.

Realm'.[2] This ascent to the apex of Irish Protestant society was achieved through careful manipulation of the opportunities offered by the Williamite revolution in Ireland, and in particular through his shrewd dealings in confiscated Jacobite estates. Land provided the greatest proportion of Conolly's wealth, but earnings from the law and office were also important. The latter however, even at the time of his greatest political power, formed a mere fraction of his wealth. This chapter, after a brief discussion of the historiography of the Conolly fortune, will examine in greater detail the accumulation of the Conolly estates and the income that they provided.

Writing in 1956, J.G. Simms commented that, 'Conolly's rise from obscurity has always been a puzzle'.[3] Over fifty years later it remains so. Earlier accounts of Conolly's life suggested he was the son of a Catholic innkeeper in Co. Donegal who had profited both from the advantageous speculative environment following the Williamite wars and from a successful career as an attorney, with one writer suggesting that the foundations of his fortune lay not in shrewd dealings in confiscated estates but in a substantial inheritance from a legal client.[4] This hypothesis has found little favour with subsequent historians. Following on from Simms, Connolly and McNally have stressed that Conolly and his father were sufficiently prominent in the Donegal Protestant community to be attainted by the Jacobite parliament in 1689.[5] While no detailed study has been made of those

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[2] John Trenchard, *A letter from a soldier to the commons of England occasioned by an address now carrying on by the Protestants in Ireland, in order to take away the fund appropriated for the payment of the arrears of the army* (London, 1702), p.25.

[3] J.G. Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland*, p. 126.

[4] Brian Fitzgerald, *Lady Louisa Conolly 1743-1821: An Anglo-Irish biography* (London, 1950), p.18.

[5] S.J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power*, p. 64; Patrick McNally, 'Conolly, William (1662-1729), speaker of the Irish House of Commons', in *O.D.N.B.*

attainted in 1689, it is clear that there were great variations in their social class and income, making it harder to judge the significance of the Conolly's status.[6] Of more importance is Conolly's role in the Irish Protestant emigré community in London in 1689. He was part of a committee that included Alan Brodrick and Robert Rochfort who represented Irish gentlemen in London.[7] This suggests that his status at this juncture was less humble than some have previously imagined and it also corroborates the impression suggested by the Act of Attainder.

All of this, coupled with Conolly's legal work for Londonderry Corporation in the 1690s, complements Simms' assertion that Conolly's rise 'cannot be ascribed only to his trafficking in the forfeited estates'.[8] These conclusions have not however been fully taken on board in the recent literature. Sean Connolly has suggested 'shrewd dealings in land' were the foundations of the Conolly fortune, while Barnard has suggested that Conolly's 1694 marriage to Katherine Conyngham together with the connections this brought including 'a brother-in-law, James Bonnell, strategically placed as accountant general and secretary to the commissioners overseeing the latest confiscations of rebels' estates,' was a crucial event in his life.[9] It was her portion of £2,300 he argues, which provided the initial capital to invest 'shrewdly' in forfeited estates. His interesting suggestion that without her, Conolly's success 'would have been unlikely, perhaps impossible' neglects the advances he had already made in the political, legal and administrative

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[6] For a list of those attainted in 1689, see Peter Manning, *The state of the Protestants of Ireland under the late King James' government: index of persons* (Kent, 1989). This is just a transcript of the list of names found in William King's *State of the Protestants,* and it offers no analysis.
[7] D.W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 41.
[8] Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p. 126.
[9] Connolly, *Religion, law and power,* p. 64; T.C. Barnard, *A new anatomy of Ireland,* p. 119.

arenas. Certainly Conolly's marriage was advantageous but not as crucial as Barnard suggests.[10]

What all writers agree on is that Conolly did very well in his dealings in forfeited estates, laying the basis for his future acquisitions. These other acquisitions of land which made up most of the Conolly patrimony have not been thoroughly analysed despite the important light they shed on Conolly's career, especially his financial dealings. The cursory outline of his career in the *History of the Irish parliament* suggests the rewards of such research.[11] Instead historians have been content to quote contemporary estimates of Conolly's income without further analysis, or to make generalised statements about 'mushroom fortunes'.[12] As a result Conolly's rise to his eventual position as the wealthiest commoner in the land has remained obscure.

Conolly's income can be divided into three component parts; these can be summed up as law, land, and office. Conolly had begun his career as an attorney attached to the Court of Common Pleas in the 1680s. His practice seems to have been concentrated on the North-West Circuit, reflecting his Donegal origins.[13] Following the Williamite war he became legal agent to Londonderry Corporation in 1691. He would later serve as the Irish legal agent to the London-based Irish Society (1697-1700), a position which brought an annual salary of £20.[14] He was also heavily involved in their long-running legal dispute with the Bishop of Derry

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[10] Barnard, 'A tale of three sisters: Katherine Conolly of Castletown', p. 270.
[11] Entry on William Conolly in *H.I.P.*, III, pp 477-78.
[12] See McNally, op. cit., and *H.I.P.*, for references to Swift's and Archbishop Boulter's attempts to estimate Conolly's income. For mushroom fortunes see Hayton, *Ruling Ireland,* p. 72.
[13] See lists of cases for 1687 and 1694 for detailed references to Conolly's activities on the North Western Circuit in the 1690s (I.A.A., Castletown Papers 97/84 B/1-4).
[14] Raymond Smith, *The Irish Society 1613-1966* (London, 1966), p. 110.

in the late 1690s.[15] His legal business while an important source of revenue in this early period of his career gradually declined in importance as his political star rose in the early 1700s. It is difficult to calculate his earnings from the law, but it is clear that while it was a substantial component of his income in the early part of his career it became of minor significance as his property interests and political involvement grew. Conolly's legal career will be examined in the next chapter.

Income from official sources was to play a far greater role in Conolly's rise to wealth. His official career started in 1692, when he became agent to Captain James Hamilton, after a five-year attempt to secure a position in his service.[16] Hamilton (later Earl of Abercorn) was a prominent Donegal and Tyrone landowner, but he was also collector of the Kings Alnage. Alnage was a duty imposed on wholesale and retail cloth transactions and Hamilton employed Conolly as his deputy in the collection of this duty. It was to be Conolly's introduction to the workings of public revenue and it gave him a countrywide network of contacts.[17] At this juncture Conolly seems to have been operating from Dublin, as he was also collecting Hamilton's rents in the city.[18] Conolly's next official appointment came in 1697 when he was appointed Customer, Collector and Receiver of Customs for the ports of Londonderry and Coleraine, a position which was essentially a sinecure: it would provide twenty pounds a year until his death.[19] As Conolly's political career progressed he was rewarded for his service to

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[15] See, T.W. Moody & J.G. Simms (eds), *The Bishopric of Derry and the Irish Society of London 1602-1703,* II (Irish Manuscripts Commission, Dublin 1983), *passim.* See also Conolly's papers relating to the dispute (I.A.A., 97/84 B/8-9).

[16] See John Cowan (St Johnstown) to William Conolly (Dublin), 27 Sept. 1687 for Conolly's first attempt to secure employment with Hamilton. (I.A.A., 97/84 B/1/2).

[17] Conolly's Alnage accounts with Hamilton 1692-1700 (I.A.A., 97/84 B/5/1-26).

[18] Rentrolls of Hamilton property in Dublin, Conolly acting as collector (I.A.A., 97/84 B/6/1-22).

[19] *Liber Munerum* I, part II p. 152. (Patent dated 22 May 1697).

the Whig cause and by 1708 he was sufficiently prominent to be appointed a Commissioner of the Revenue by the Earl of Wharton, which apart from bringing extensive control of patronage brought him £1,000 a year.[20] He was dismissed in 1710 with the return of the Tory administration of the Duke of Ormond but he regained his position on the Revenue board in 1714, following the Hanoverian succession, and remained there until 1729. His income from office was further increased when he became Speaker of the House of Commons in 1715; he was paid £500 per parliamentary session. He was also compensated for acting as a lord justice ten times from 1715 onwards. Public office was thus an important source of income for Conolly bringing over £1500 per annum in years when parliament was sitting. The possibilities of further exploitation of office for material gain were considerable but are by their nature difficult to ascertain.

While Conolly's official income was greater than many MPs' total income, it was but a small proportion of his own revenue. In 1715 for instance his earnings from office amounted to £1,520 per annum, while in 1713 the average income of an Irish MP sitting for a county seat was estimated at £1,585 per annum.[21] Even at this juncture Conolly's wealth greatly overshadowed his contemporaries. The same 1713 source estimated Conolly's own income at £5,500 per annum. In 1713 land was Conolly's major source of income. It would seem that, unlike in contemporary Britain, office alone could not provide the capital necessary for substantial social advancement. In England, 'the power and resources of government were basic to the rise of most of the spectacularly successful

[20] Upon his dismissal in 1710, it was reported that he had bribed Wharton £3,000 to secure this position, see Jonathan Swift, quoted in Lena Boylan, 'The Conollys of Castletown', p. 6. This accusation, together with Conolly's career at the revenue, is discussed in chapter 6.

[21] List of MPs, 1713 (B.L., Blenheim Papers, Add Ms 61637A). Quoted in Barnard, *A new anatomy of Ireland*, p. 61

newcomers,' such as James Brydges, first Duke of Chandos, Daniel Finch, Earl of Nottingham and Sir Stephen Fox.[22] There would be no Irish Chandos, at least in the early years of the century as the possibilities for large-scale profit were limited; instead investment in land remained the surest way to create a large fortune and enter the 'quality' in Ireland.[23]

By his death in 1729, Conolly held extensive estates across Ireland. He had land in ten Irish counties as well as an estate in Wales. These estates stretched from Wexford in the south-east to Donegal in the north-west and covered almost 150,000 acres. Conolly's estate rentals formed the greatest part of his annual income; in 1729 his rental income alone was approximately £14,900. It had risen from almost £11,000 ten years earlier; back in 1713, his income had been estimated at £5,500. The rising levels of income give some indication of the gradual augmentation of the Conolly patrimony throughout the Speaker's career. This extensive landed portfolio had been accumulated in rather a piecemeal fashion as is shown in maps 1.1-1.4. His earliest purchases were dictated by the economic conditions created by the Williamite confiscation, and as a result these estates were widely scattered (See Map 1.2). As his career developed, Conolly concentrated his landed interest in two distinct regions, the hinterland of Dublin, particularly south County Dublin and north Kildare, and the north-western counties of Donegal and Londonderry. The factors that persuaded him to concentrate on these areas will be examined over the course of the following discussion.

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[22] G.E. Mingay, *English landed society in the eighteenth century* (London, 1963), p. 73. On Fox see Christopher Clay, *Public finance and private wealth, the career of Sir Stephen Fox, 1627-1716* (Oxford, 1978).

[23] The career of Nathaniel Clements (1705-77), especially in the 1740s and 1750s, provides an example of an Irishman who generated a huge fortune from the proceeds of office. See A.P.W. Malcomson, *Nathaniel Clements: Government and the governing elite in Ireland, 1725-75* (Dublin, 2005).

Table 1.1 *Conolly estate rentals in 1729.*

Estate[i]	Year purchased/leased	1729 rental
Meath estates[ii]	1691-1703	*1100*
Manor of Limavady, Co. Londonderry	1697	1236
Wales, impropriated tithes	1700	270
Manor of Castletown, Co. Kildare[iii]	1709	899
Manors of Leixlip & Stacumney, Co. Kildare	1728	*900*
Westmeath estates	1703	*1000*
Roscommon estates	1703	*830*
Wexford estates	1703	?
Abbotstown Co. Dublin	1703	50
Tirhugh, T.C.D. lands, Co. Donegal	Leased from 1690	471
Castlefin, Co. Donegal	1711	145
Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal	1718	2250
Newporton, Co. Fermanagh	1718	528
Erne Fisheries, Ballyshannon	1718	500
Dunsink, Scibblestown, Co. Dublin	1700	310
Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin	1723	2700
2 townhouses in Waterford city	?	6
See of Derry Church lands	?	267
Manor of Vintners, Co. Londonderry	1729[iv]	706
Manor of Grocers, Co. Londonderry	Leased from 1713	758
Total		14926

i. This table is based on estate material in the Castletown papers, in the Irish Architectural Archive and memorials in the Registry of Deeds. Full details are found in Appendix 1, Table 1.3

ii. The figures in italics are estimates based on later income levels and on surviving contemporary leases. The figures for Counties Meath, Westmeath and Roscommon encompass all estates in these counties. Conolly treated them as single units and I have followed this convention.

iii. Includes the adjacent Manor of Killadoon purchased in 1725.

iv. Purchased in 1729, but already leased by Conolly previous to that.

While the above table gives some indication of the value and extent of the Conolly portfolio, it does not capture the complex acquisition history of the Conolly estates.

The beginnings of the Conolly patrimony, 1686-1709

Conolly's first landed interests were in Co. Donegal in the hinterland of Ballyshannon. The Conolly connection with the town of Ballyshannon has long been established; it is known that William was the son of a Patrick Conolly of Ballyshannon. Both were attainted by the Jacobite parliament in 1689 as Protestant landowners. Despite this evidence, Conolly's background has remained obscure. The contemporary suggestion that his father was an innkeeper has often being accepted as historical fact.[24] In one fantastical account two Dublin gentlemen whisked the young William away from his father's inn to educate him as an attorney.[25] Instead the evidence suggests that the Conollys, father and son, were by 1689 tenants of Lord Folliott, the local landlord in Ballyshannon. The earliest surviving rent roll of the Manor of Ballyshannon dates back to 1680 and included amongst the tenants is Patrick Conolly. He was renting the 'Ballyboe of Sminver and mill at a half yearly rent of £9', as well as a '½ quarter of the ballyboe of Creevy in the Moyh at a half yearly rent of £6.10.0 and 2 parks in the meadows at a half yearly rent of £2.'[26] Patrick Connelly or Conolly was in all paying a yearly rent of £35 as tenant on Folliott's estate in Ballyshannon. This was therefore a substantial holding. Furthermore and perhaps of greater importance he was the tenant of the estate mill. The manorial mill was then an important part of any estate; most tenants were required by their leases to grind their corn at the landlord's mill. The proprietor of the mill was therefore, one can assume, recognised as a reliable tenant who was suitable for such a duty. The mill was located close to the town and it was not uncommon for millers to combine their

[24] For a contemporary reference to Conolly's father as an innkeeper, see St Leger to Parker 21 Feb. 1717 quoted in Boylan, 'The Conollys of Castletown', p. 7. See also Hugh Allingham, *Ballyshannon, its history and antiquities* (Ballyshannon, 1879), p. 57.

[25] Allingham, *Ballyshannon* , p. 57.

[26] Rent Roll of Manor of Ballyshannon May to All Saints 1680 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/22).

milling business with an inn, suggesting that at least one part of the legend carries some truth. Patrick Conolly continued in this role until at least 1687.[27] The association of William Conolly with the Folliott estate in Ballyshannon, which he later purchased in 1718, began in the late 1680s. The 1687 rent roll for Ballyshannon includes a William Conolly as tenant of the 10 balyboes of Ballymunterhiggins at a yearly rent of £33.[28] This is the first mention of William as a tenant and suggests that he was sufficiently solvent to pay such a high rent at this time.

As well as being tenant on the Folliott estate in Ballyshannon, he also became a tenant of the other major landed interest in the region, Trinity College Dublin. The College had been granted their lands in Donegal as part of the Ulster plantation.[29] Included amongst this grant was most of the Barony of Tirhugh. The Conolly association with the College estates appears to have begun in 1690. In February of that year Conolly 'took a lease of the lands that formerly belonged to Mr Bedel in the county of Donegal'. These lands, known as the Rossnowlagh estate, containing 13,000 acres, had an annual rental income of £417 1*s* 2*d* in 1686, with a head rent of £130 per annum payable to the College.[30] The effects of the Williamite wars in south Donegal however lowered the value of the estate drastically.[31] When Conolly took over the lease in 1690, he paid an entry fine of £100 with the annual rent set at £90 for the first seven years starting in 1690, rising to the previous rent of £130

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[27] For the importance of an estate mill and the role of the miller, see E.A. Currie, 'Landscape development in north-west and south-east Derry 1700-1840' in Gerard O'Brien (ed.), *Derry and Londonderry, history and society* (Dublin, 1999), p. 338.

[28] Rent Roll of Manor of Ballyshannon May to All Saints 1687(I.A.A., 97/84 C/22).

[29] See, P.S. Robinson, *The plantation of Ulster* (Dublin, 1984), p. 84.

[30] A rent roll of Mr Conolly's lands in the College Manor of Tirhugh as it was set by Mr Conor O'Clery in the year 1686(I.A.A., 97/84 C/22).

[31] See generally J.G. Simms, 'County Donegal in the Jacobite war, 1689-91' in D.W. Hayton and Gerard O'Brien (eds.) *War and politics in Ireland 1649-1730* (London, 1986), pp 135-47.

after that. He was also obliged to collect what arrears he could.[32] In May 1692 the College renewed Conolly's lease for 21 years with the head rent set at £84 for the first 5½ years, £144 for the next 1½ years and £158 for the remainder.[33] The extant Conolly accounts for this period suggest that it was a worthwhile investment despite the unpromising economic outlook. In 1693 the estate generated a gross income of £203 8*s* 8*d* giving Conolly a 'profit rent' of almost £120 after the College's head rent was paid.[34] In 1694 the Provost of Trinity, St George Ashe, gave the following description of Conolly's holding: 'Mr Conolly's land is the best and most stocked and planted, this lease is reckoned to be worth six or seven hundred pounds,' suggesting Conolly had got his hands on an excellent lease.[35] Conolly's tenancy from the College was renewed in November 1705 for a further 21 years. The head rent remained at the earlier revised rate of £158 per annum.

A 1706 survey of the Donegal College lands by the Rev. William Grattan claimed that this was too low: writing to Provost Peter Browne, he was less than flattering in his description of Conolly and suggested with great accuracy that Conolly was making a great profit out of his College estate. According to Grattan, Conolly 'at this time gets as much as he pays'.[36] This handsome profit was also likely to rise because Conolly also sublet some of the College lands to a Mr Spence whose lease was about to expire, leaving Conolly with £200 clear profit. Grattan in fact underestimated Conolly's yield from the College estates. In 1706 the annual gross rental was £447 4*d* leaving Conolly with almost three hundred pound profit.

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[32]TCD Board Minutes 1660-1740, 2 Feb. 1690 (T.C.D., Mun V/5/2, p. 284).
[33] TCD Board Minutes 1660-1740, 6 May 1692 (T.C.D., Mun V/5/2, f. 291).
[34] Rent roll of college land May and Nov. 1693 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/22).
[35] An Account of the college lands in Ulster viewed in May 1694, Board Minutes 1660-1740, 3 Oct. 1694 (T.C.D., Mun V/5/2 f. 316).
[36] W Grattan (Enniskillen) to Provost Peter Browne 10 May 1706 (T.C.D., Mun P/24/341). See also draft lease of Rossnowlagh to William Conolly, 1705 (T.C.D., Mun P/24/340).

Despite Grattan's criticism the head rent remained at £158 until Conolly's death. The gross rent actually fell to a consistent level of £417 in the 1720s but the profit margin was still substantial. Conolly's initial acquisition of the lease at a time of great uncertainty certainly paid off.

Although Conolly was already building up a landed interest in Co Donegal before the Williamite wars, it was not until 1691 that he began to purchase freehold land. The forfeiture of Jacobite estates provided opportunities for those with ready cash and a shrewd business acumen to speculate and Conolly was to be perhaps the most successful beneficiary of the confiscations that followed the Williamite victory. His first purchase was in Co. Meath where he purchased over 2,500 acres in the parish of Rodanstown and in the manor of Mulhussey. To acquire these lands, he bought out 'varied interests, with different flawed interests in the same property'.[37] The purchase price of this estate is unknown, but in 1694 upon his marriage to Katherine Conyngham Conolly settled these lands on his bride in exchange for her marriage portion of £2,300.[38] Conolly also made Rodanstown his first country seat, suggesting his desire to have a country residence close to Dublin.

Conolly invested the £2,300 wisely: he became the Irish agent of Lord Albemarle, one of the greatest Williamite grantees, and purchased substantial estates in Counties Meath, Roscommon, Westmeath and Wexford from him, totalling approximately 15,200 acres for £3,000 in 1698-99. The purchase of these estates was complicated however by the Act of Resumption in 1701 when these estates

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[37] Gerard Rice, *Norman Kilcloon 1171-1700* (Navan, 2000), p. 221. See List of Deeds sent to Castletown c.1729 (I.A.A., 97/84 G/10) which includes deeds to various parts of the Rodanstown estate.

[38] Marriage settlement of William Conolly and Katherine Conyngham, 15 Dec. 1694 (I.A.A., 97/84 G/2/1).

reverted back to the crown despite vigorous opposition led by Conolly on behalf of the so-called Protestant purchasers, of whom he was the greatest.[39] This episode we will examine in a later chapter; it is sufficient to say now that Conolly was able to repurchase these lands from the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates in 1703, but he was forced to pay approximately £1,100 extra to regain his original purchases. At this juncture he purchased further estates from the Commissioners for Forfeited Estates in Counties Meath and Roscommon. He also purchased further estates in Counties Dublin, Westmeath and Wexford, for £2,400. These estates had initially being purchased by William Cairnes from Albemarle.[40] In total Conolly's purchases of forfeited estates amounted to over 19,500 acres, which he purchased for approximately £7,000. The scale of these investments confirmed Conolly's rising star, as well as engendering great suspicion from his contemporaries.[41]

Conolly's purchases of lands forfeited following the Jacobite defeat were a highly important part of the developing Conolly patrimony, but they were not the only lands he was acquiring at this time. In 1697 he made perhaps his greatest bargain when he purchased the manor of Limavady in Co. Londonderry. It was amongst the few estates in the county which had not been granted to a London company. Instead the Limavady property had been granted to Sir Thomas Phillips, following the Ulster plantation. It remained in the Philips family until the 1690s but, like some other Ulster landowners in the aftermath of the Williamite wars, they fell on hard times and sold their estate. George Phillips, the son and heir of Sir Thomas, had died in debt in 1697, and his son William was forced to sell the estate. The

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[39] See, Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland*, pp 125-127.
[40] Indenture between Conolly and William Cairnes dated 3 Mar. 1703 (I.A.A. 97/84 F/3).
[41] See chapter 3 for a detailed study of Conolly's purchases of forfeited estates.

estate comprised approximately 12,500 acres, including the town (and parliamentary borough) of Newtown Limavady, was sold to Conolly in June 1697 for £1,800.[42] Considering the size of the estate as well as its location, not to mention the two borough seats that went with it, this price seems very low. The estate was however encumbered, and the general economic difficulties in the 1690s coupled with the surfeit of land on the market following the Williamite confiscation meant that land prices were depressed at this time. However by the mid 1720s, the rental of this estate was £1,286 per annum suggesting it was a very worthwhile investment. This addition was also significant as it showed Conolly's determination to gain a foothold in the county which he would represent in parliament from 1703, and where much of his political and legal support was located.

While the purchase of the Limavady estate can be seen as being in part motivated by political concerns, Conolly also purchased for investment purposes. In 1700 he purchased from his brother in-law Henry Conyngham, an estate in Wales consisting of impropriated tithes in the Counties of Cardigan and Carmathen for £5,000.[43] This had been part of the inheritance of Conyngham's wife Mary Lady Shelbourne. Conolly leased these tithes to members of local Welsh gentry at an annual rent of £270 from 1703 onwards. This required little management but guaranteed a regular if unspectacular return on his investment.[44] The purchase of lay impropriated tithes was a common if controversial practice in early eighteenth century Wales; one recent commentator has suggested that 'it enervated the

[42]Currie, 'Landscape development in north-west and south-east Derry 1700-1840', p. 334

[43] Colonel Conyngham & Lady Shelbourne's Conveyance to Mr Conolly of the estate in Wales, 16 July 1700 (N.L.I., Conyngham Papers Ms 35,423 (3)).

[44] William Conolly to Nathaniel Griffiths: counterpart lease of tythes in Carmathen and Cardigan, 25 June 1703 (N.L.I., Ms 35,423 (4)).

mission of the church throughout that century'.[45] While these tithes did not strictly constitute an estate, Conolly himself used the term 'estate' to describe the property hence their inclusion at this juncture.

This was not Conolly's last purchase in 1700; he also acquired lands at Dunsink and Scribblestown, Co. Dublin from Dacre Barrett.[46] These lands contained 798 acres, which by 1729 were providing him with an annual rental of £310.[47] These lands had come to Barrett from the Earls of Sussex, and the former who was in the midst of a complicated battle over his inheritance was forced to sell. It was another case of Conolly being the right man at the opportune moment

Conolly's purchases in the years 1691-1703 can be seen as marking the first phase of his creation of a Conolly patrimony. In 1691 (as far as can be ascertained) he owned no property outright. Yet by 1703 he had purchased lands in Counties Dublin, Meath, Londonderry, Roscommon, Westmeath and Wexford as well as in Wales. He had spent in excess of £15,000 purchasing approximately 48,000 acres, as is shown in map 1.2. Most of these lands had been purchased on favourable terms arising out of the opportunities provided by the Williamite land settlement. Conolly had been the largest purchaser of forfeited estates but after 1703 as Barnard has suggested, 'the future was unlikely to bring fresh windfalls'.[48] The nature of these estates meant that they were geographically spread across the

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[45]David Howell, *Patriarchs and parasites: The gentry of south Wales in the eighteenth century* (Cardiff, 1986), p. 204.

[46] There is no extant documentation relating to the purchase of this estate, but all papers relating to the title of the estate were sent to Conolly on 9 July 1700, suggesting that the purchase took place around this time. See I.A.A., 97/84 D/26 for a list of documents sent to Conolly.

[47]Leases of Dunsink and Scribblestown, esp. William Conolly to Messrs Gibson and Taylor 9 Aug. 1729 (IAA 97/84 D/26). On Barrett family see P.R.O.N.I. introduction to Barrett-Lennard Papers by Anthony Malcomson.

[48]Barnard, *A new anatomy of Ireland*, p. 119.

country having been purchased not because of their location but because of the bargain that they offered. The purchase of the Limavady estate in 1697 was an exception to this pattern, as indeed was Conolly's initial purchase in Co. Meath. The former carried political advantages while the latter gave him a country base in the hinterland of Dublin (see Map 1.1). Conolly's investment in forfeited estates enabled him to set himself up as a landed proprietor, with these properties acting as a stimulus for further investment

The income from these purchases was over time invested in estates that were more congenial to Conolly's personal and political interests. From 1703 Conolly concentrated on increasing his landed interest in two important regions, the north-western counties of Donegal and Londonderry and in the hinterland of Dublin. These areas were chosen for political/electoral reasons in the case of the northwest and for personal convenience and political prestige with regard to the estates in Kildare and Dublin. It is proposed to examine the acquisition of the remaining Conolly estates thematically rather than strictly chronologically.

The Conolly estates in Counties Donegal and Londonderry, 1706-1729

The origins of the Conolly patrimony were as we have seen in Co. Donegal, and it is to that county we must now return. Both the Conolly and Conyngham families were connected with the county. The Conynghams had extensive property interests around Mountcharles and Killybegs. Apart from the their own estate at Mountcharles, they also held a long lease on the Murray of Broughton estate near Killybegs. The Murray estate contained about 65,000 acres, but much of it was infertile and the potential of the better land was limited by its remoteness. A dispute over the title between the absentee Murrays, and the Conynghams (they were distantly related) also hampered the potential of the estate. This dispute was only resolved in 1694. In 1696 Henry Conyngham was granted a 21-year lease on a large part of the property at £300 per annum with an additional 99-year lease on another portion totalling 21,000 acres for £80 per annum. The adverse economic conditions at the turn of the century led to a deterioration of the relationship between Murray and Conyngham as the latter struggled to raise the rents.[49] When Henry Conyngham died on campaign in Spain in 1706 his executors were left with a debt-ridden estate.

Amongst his executors was Conolly, and he took a leading role in managing the Conyngham estates in Meath and Donegal.[50] Following the death of Conyngham's

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[49] For further information on the above, see Graeme Kirkham, 'No more to be got from the cat but the skin; Management, landholding and economic change in the Murray of Broughton estate 1670-1755' in William Nolan, Liam Ronayne, and Mairead Dunlevy (eds.) *Donegal, history and society* (Dublin, 1995), pp 357-60. See also, Helen Meehan, 'The Conynghams of Slane and Mountcharles', in *Donegal Annual,* li (1999), pp 22-35.

[50] For Conolly's role in managing the Conyngham estate see I.A.A., 97/84 C/48/1-150 & F/4. See also Thomas Knox, Abstract of payments out of the Barony of Boylagh and Banagh, 24 Jan. 1711,

widow Lady Shelbourne in 1710 and the subsequent minority of his heirs Conolly's role increased. But from 1706 onwards the Murrays and their agents corresponded with Conolly regarding estate matters.[51] Kirkham has suggested that Conolly 'used his own resources to make full and regular payments to Murray, though it was probably some years before the Conyngham tenure began to be profitable.[52]' He suggests that this conduct was motivated by political considerations, particularly the control of the parliamentary borough of Killybegs. Certainly by 1711 Conolly controlled the two borough seats, giving credence to this suggestion. In 1718 when the Conyngham lease expired Conolly made enquiries about purchasing the Murray of Broughton estate outright, but he did not pursue this interest, despite deeds being drawn up.[53] This suggests that the estate was now profitable although the political considerations noted above may have played a part. It is unclear why this sale did not go ahead, but it could have been related to Conolly's troubles in completing the purchase of the manor of Ballyshannon at this time. Conolly's role in managing the Conyngham estates enhanced his standing in Donegal, but to cement his interest in the county he needed to acquire his own substantial estate.

In 1707, in partnership with Oliver McCausland, a Strabane merchant, he purchased the manor of Castlefin in east Donegal. This estate had belonged to the Kingsmill family since the Ulster plantation, but as with the Phillips family at Limavady they had fallen on hard times. There was no direct heir so the estate

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(I.A.A. 97/84 C/48/3). See also Conolly's correspondence with Lady Shelbourne re debts relating to Sir Albert Conyngham (N.L.I., Ms 15,549).

51 See Alexander Murray to William Conolly, 27 May 1707, William Pinkstan (Murray agent) to Conolly 4 June 1707; Thomas Knox (Conyngham agent) to Conolly; 19 June 1707, 22 Oct. 1707; and Lady Shelbourne to Conolly 30 Oct. 1707 (N.L.I., MS 15,550).

52 Kirkham, 'No more to be got from the cat but the skin', p. 361.

53 Conolly to Alexander Murray, 27 Aug. 1718, quoted in Kirkham, ibid, p. 361.

came up for sale. After a long and complicated process, which included the passing of a private act of parliament, it was purchased by Conolly for £2,000 in 1711.[54] It contained 3,476 acres according to a survey made in 1720, and its rental in 1724/5 was £145 per annum.[55] The Castlefin estate, while a small component of the Conolly patrimony, was his first purchase in his native county. It would not be his last.

As explored elsewhere the Conolly connection with Ballyshannon was a longstanding one. In 1739, the Rev. William Henry remarked that 'the greatest honour of this town is its having given birth to the late Right Hon. William Conolly'.[56] Both Conolly and his father Patrick had been tenants on the Folliott estate and William also as alluded to earlier held a lease on the nearby College lands at Tirhugh from the late 1680s. Conolly also appears to have acted in a legal capacity for the Folliott family in a long-running legal dispute over fishing rights with their neighbours the Caldwell family of Castlecaldwell. This dispute continued into the 1720s, having begun in the late seventeenth century.[57] This was not surprising, as they were worth £500 per annum by the time Conolly purchased the Ballyshannon estate, and were a very valuable source of income. The Ballyshannon estate was attractive to Conolly not only because of his close association with the town but also because it was a parliamentary borough, with

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[54] For details of the drawn out purchase of this estate, see I.A.A., 97/84 C/39-43.

[55] Eileen McCracken, 'Two eighteenth century surveys of Castlefin', in *Donegal Annual,* vii (1968), p. 313; Survey of the manor of Castlefin belonging to the Right Hon William Conolly (I.A.A., 97/84 C/44/2). Robert McCausland's account with Lord Justice Conolly All Saints 1724; Robert McCausland's account with Lord Justice Conolly May 1725 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/11).

[56] Revd William Henry: 'Hints towards a topographical history of the Counties Sligo, Donegal, Fermanagh and Lough Erne' (1739), quoted in Allingham, *Ballyshannon,* p. 58. See also N.A.I., Ms 2533.

[57] See I.A.A., C/21 for material relating to the fisheries dispute; see also, Boylan, 'The Conollys of Castletown', pp 1-2.

two seats in the House of Commons. Its acquisition would give him further electoral leverage in Co. Donegal where his allies the Gores and Conynghams already controlled a borough each.[58]

Conolly's eventual purchase of the manor of Ballyshannon was a particularly tortuous affair. Henry, second Lord Folliott, had died in 1716, leaving no direct heir. This meant that the estate was to be inherited by the twelve grandchildren of his father Thomas Lord Folliott who had died in 1695, four of whom were minors. They were all to be provided for. As a result the executors of his will had little option but to sell the estate. The inclusion of four minors amongst the beneficiaries of the sale further complicated the situation and the sale was only confirmed following a private act of parliament in 1719.[59] Conolly finally purchased the manors of Ballyshannon, Newporton (Co. Fermanagh), as well as the beneficial interest of the Folliott College and Church leases, for a total of £52,000.

As suggested above it was a huge but attractive investment: it was surveyed in 1718 and valued at £3,239 5*s* 4*d,* although this valuation was seen as too high.[60] In total the estate contained 40,204 acres. The estate was treated in two parts when the rents were being calculated. The Newporton estate in Co. Fermanagh comprising 7,118 acres was treated completely separately. In 1718 it was estimated to be valued at £582 4*s* 11*d,* but by 1727, when the first extant rent roll

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[58] See chapter 5.

[59] Copy of notice pinned on Lifford Courthouse door, 19 Feb. 1719 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/22).

[60] See J.B. Cunningham, 'William Conolly's Ballyshannon estate 1718-26', in *Donegal Annual,* xxxiii (1981), pp 27-44.

appears, the rent was only £528, at which level it remained in the following year.[61] On this portion at least the 1718 survey was optimistic. This pattern is continued when the manor of Ballyshannon itself is examined; it was valued at £2,364 1*s* 6*d* in 1718 with the College lands valued at £292 18*s* 10*d*. The valuation of Ballyshannon excluded the tenements in Ballyshannon town and the fisheries. It is instructive to compare this valuation with the actual rental. In 1725 the total rental of Ballyshannon and the College lands was £2,105 18s, rising to £2,256 16*s* in 1728, suggesting that the survey was, as J.B. Cunningham has suggested, an overvaluation.[62] It is reasonable to assume that this survey was linked to Conolly's purchase of the estate and that it reflected a belief that land values were increasing, rather than stagnating, as was the actual reality. Many of the leases on the estate were due to fall and it was presumably hoped that the rental could be increased. Many leases did fall and were renewed in the early 1720s, particularly in 1724. The true effect of this can only be guessed at because of the uncertainty of the true rental in 1718 although it has been suggested the total rental of the Folliott estate was £2,000 at the time of the sale with a further £450 for the Erne fisheries, (which has been left out of the other calculations) suggesting that the estate income rose during the 1720s if never quite reaching the projected level of the survey, which in the economic climate of the 1720s is not surprising. It would have been impossible to predict the depressed state of the Irish economy in the 1720s in 1718.

Despite its failure to realise the hoped for rental in the 1720s, the Ballyshannon estate was a very important component of the Conolly patrimony. It still yielded a substantial rental, and it also gave Conolly control of a second Donegal

[61] James Crawford to Conolly, account dated 3 June 1727 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/20).
[62] Ballyshannon Rentals, 1725, 1728 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/26).

parliamentary borough and greatly strengthened his interest in the county. With his interest in the Trinity College lands and Ballyshannon, as well as lands belonging to the See of Raphoe at Ballyhanna (which had been part of the Folliott portfolio), he became the dominant landowner in the Barony of Tirhugh and one of the leading landed interests in the county. The purchase of the Ballyshannon estate coupled with Conolly's involvement in the management of the Conyngham estates in the county suggest a determination to develop a strong landed interest in the county. By his death in 1729 Conolly was drawing a total income of approximately £2,850 from his various estates in the county.[63] This, while only a fraction of his total income, was greater than the annual income of many members of the Irish gentry.

However while his personal and familial roots were in Co. Donegal, Conolly's political base was in Co. Londonderry. He had first come to local prominence as legal agent first to Londonderry Corporation and then to the Irish Society in the 1690s and from 1703 he represented the county in the House of Commons. This rested on Conolly's extensive property interests in the county. These can be divided into two distinct elements, property he owned in freehold and institutional property he leased on long terms. Following the Ulster plantation most of the county had been granted to twelve London companies, who operated their estates under an umbrella group known as the Irish Society. Property ownership in the county was thus predominantly in the hands of institutional owners, who usually leased their lands in relatively large units to local landlords. Amongst the few estates not granted to a London company was the manor of Limavady which, as

[63] See Appendix 1, Table 1.3

described earlier was purchased by Conolly in 1697 from the Phillips family on very advantageous terms. The Limavady estate with its parliamentary borough played a significant part in the growth of the Conolly patrimony. Apart from the electoral advantages it conferred on its owner, it was also an extremely profitable estate, with a rental of almost £1,300 by the end of Conolly's life. Apart from the London Companies the other great institutional property owner in the county was the See of Derry. This diocese was one of the best endowed in the country, having gained significant grants of property in the Ulster plantation. These lands, like the Trinity College estates in Donegal, were leased to local landlords for a head rent. Conolly, like other landlords in the county, acquired a lease from the see. In 1718 the gross rental of his Church lands in Co. Londonderry was £267 7*s*, a rate it would remain at until his death. Most of the leases on the Church lands dated from 1712.[64] The head rent payable to the Bishop of Derry for these lands was £102 10*s* per annum,[65] giving Conolly over £160 profit on these lands. It is unclear how long Conolly held the lease on the church lands, but it is likely they were held on recurring twenty-one year leases: in 1729 he bequeathed his interest in them to Robert McCausland his agent on all his Londonderry estates, detaching them permanently from the rest of the Conolly patrimony.[66]

The greatest institutional landowners in Co. Londonderry were not the Church of Ireland but the London Companies, twelve of whom had been granted portions of the county as part of the plantation settlement.[67] By his death in 1729, Conolly

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[64]Rent rolls of the Church lands Co. Londonderry 1718, 1724, 1725 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/11).
[65] Robert McCausland's accounts with Lord Justice Conolly, 1724-27 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/11).
[66] Will of William Conolly 18 Oct. 1729 (N.A.I., T92).
[67] On the Londonderry plantation, see J.S. Curle, *The Honourable the Irish society and the plantation of Ulster 1608-2000* (Chichester, 2000); T.W. Moody, *The Londonderry plantation, 1609-41* (Belfast, 1939); and Smith, *The Irish Society 1613-1966*

held leases on two of these portions, the Grocers' portion centred on Muff in the north-west of the county and the Vintners' portion centred on Bellaghy in the south-east of the county. (See Map 1.4) Like his other institutional properties these estates were subject to a head rent, and like the Church and College lands they were seen as sound investments. In 1709 Conolly acquired the lease of the Grocers' proportion for £7,250.[68] The head rent on the Grocers' manor was £200 per annum, and it was held on a long lease which was not renewed until 1760.[69] The 'profit rent' on this estate through the 1720s was a steady £558 7*s* 8*d*, giving Conolly a substantial profit. The Vintners' portion seems to have been first leased by Conolly sometime after 1718. At first, it was held on a terminable lease, but in 1729 it was granted to Conolly on a perpetuity lease. Conolly paid £15,000 as an entry fine on this estate in 1729, while the annual head rent was £212. The profit rent on this estate in 1727 was £594 2*s* 7*d*,[70] a rental which was to rise substantially in the years following the Conolly purchase. The two estates leased from the Irish Society by Conolly not only provided over £1500 per annum in gross income, but they also greatly increased his landholdings in the county. These estates seem to have been set out on long leases thus attracting substantial under-tenants. Conolly's electoral interest was also significantly bolstered with these additions to the family patrimony. In total the Londonderry estates contributed almost £3,000 per annum to Conolly's income by the end of his life. The county was not only his political heartland but also his greatest specific source of income.

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[68] See the copy of Conolly's minute to Nathaniel Hornby, 30 July 1709 (P.R.O.N.I., D/2094/18A).
[69] For the above information see entry on Thomas Conolly (1734-1803) in *H.I.P.*, III, p. 472.
[70] Robert McCausland's accounts with Lord Justice Conolly, 1724-27, (I.A.A., 97/84 C/11). See also Currie, 'Landscape development in north-west and south-east Derry 1700-1840' p. 329. Currie claims the estate was purchased in 1734 but, see Conolly to Robert McCausland 22 July 1729 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/27).

The Conolly estates in Counties Kildare and Dublin, 1709-1729

As Conolly's career developed, it became essential to develop a landed base in the vicinity of Dublin. This led to the purchase of two strategic estates in the Dublin area, the Castletown estate in Co. Kildare and the manor of Rathfarnham in Co. Dublin. Castletown is probably the most celebrated of all the Conolly estates because of the great Palladian mansion built there in the 1720s. While the house is the clearest statement of Conolly's ambitions and success, the purchase of the estate itself in 1709 was an important statement. Its purchase gave Conolly a country base near Dublin and confirmed his arrival as a prominent figure in Dublin. The timing is significant; it was purchased while Conolly was serving as a Revenue Commissioner and a Privy Councillor for the first time, during the viceroyalty of the Earl of Wharton. These appointments seemed to confirm Conolly's status as a leading member of the Whig grouping in the Irish parliament. He needed an estate commensurate with his standing; Castletown fitted this criteria.

The estate had had an interesting recent history. It had been in the possession of the Dongan family since 1588. The Dongans were an Old English Catholic family, who were rewarded for their adherence to the Stuart cause with the Earldom of Limerick in 1685.[71] Following the Jacobite defeats at the Boyne and the Siege of Limerick, (where the Dongan heir was killed) their estates were forfeited and granted to General Ginkel, the Earl of Athlone, by King William. This grant was however contested by Col. Thomas Dongan who had served as Governor General

[71] On the Dongans see, T.P. Dungan, *John Dongan of Dublin, an Elizabethan gentleman and his family* (Baltimore, 1996); F. Van Wyck, *Ancestry of Governor Dongan* (Boston, 1935), Lena Boylan, Castletown and its owners, (Castletown, 1970), pp 1-16.

of New York, and who had succeeded to the Limerick title. Following protracted legal and political debates he was restored to his estates in 1703.[72] The dispute however was extremely costly and Dongan was forced to sell his estate in 1709. Conolly purchased the estate containing 1,890 acres in September 1709 for £15,000. Of this £6,000 was used to pay off mortgages and encumbrances including compensation owed to those purchasers who had acquired part of the estate from Ginkel before it was restored to Thomas Dongan.[73] But the return on Conolly's investment was once again well worth the initial outlay. The annual rental in 1714 was £640 which had risen to £796 by 1725 and £899 by 1729.[74] Amongst the tenants attracted to the estate were political allies of Conolly such as Arthur Price (Bishop of Clonfert and later Archbishop of Cashel) as well as Thomas Marlay, the Attorney General, whose holding had previously been leased to Esther Van Homrigh, better known as Swift's Vanessa.

Following his initial purchase in 1709, Conolly consolidated his property. In 1725 he purchased the manor of Killadoon containing 439 acres, from Matthew Plunkett for £3,542.[75] It brought in an annual rental of £159 accounting for the increased Castletown rental after 1725. It was leased as one portion of the Castletown estate to George Finey, Conolly's local agent. Conolly further increased his Kildare holdings in 1728 with his last purchase that of the manor of Leixlip. This included the town of Leixlip (although not the castle, but this was purchased by Conolly's

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[72] For Dongan's dealings with the Forfeited Estates Commission and General Ginkel, see Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland*, pp 140-141; Wouter Troost, 'Letters from Bartholomew Von Homrigh to General Ginkel, Earl of Athlone, 1692-1700', in *Analecta Hibernia,* xxxiii (1986), many of which deal with Dongans claim to the Castletown estate.

[73] Deed of purchase of Castletown, 21 Sept. 1709 (I.A.A., 97/84 E/2).

[74] Castletown Rentals 1714-29 (I.A.A. 97/84 H/1).

[75] Deed of conveyance of Killadoon, Matthew Plunkett to William Conolly, 2 June 1725, (Reg. Deeds 49.499.29113). See also Papers relating to purchase of Killadoon (I.A.A., 97/84 E/11/1-33).

nephew and heir William Conolly (1706-1754) in 1731). The Leixlip estate bordered the Castletown estate and was purchased along with the manors of Stacumney and Newtown for £11,883 in June 1728.[76] The opportunity to purchase the Leixlip estate was created by the indebtedness of the former owner John Whyte, another former Jacobite whose estate had escaped confiscation in the 1690s through the intervention of the Austrian Emperor.[77] Together the Leixlip and Castletown estates formed a highly important part of the Conolly patrimony, something that was reinforced from 1722 with the construction of Conolly's chief residence at Castletown. The Kildare estates offered no electoral advantage but they did however greatly boost Conolly's social status by providing a country seat. The Conollys were able to set themselves up as first-rank landed gentry and still remain in close proximity to Dublin. The Castletown estate was also a good investment, contributing almost £900 a year to his annual income by 1729.

Castletown, the most celebrated Conolly acquisition in the greater Dublin region, was not the only important purchase in this area. In 1723 Conolly acquired the Manor of Rathfarnham in south Co. Dublin from the Duke of Wharton. Rathfarnham had formerly belonged to the Loftus family who built Rathfarnham Castle in 1583-85. Philip, Duke of Wharton, inherited it in 1715 following the death of his father, the former Lord Lieutenant, who had married a Loftus.[78] The Duke of Wharton however led an extravagant lifestyle which, coupled with losses of over £120,000 in the South Sea Bubble, brought him into debt forcing him to

[76] Conveyance of Leixlip estate by John Whyte to William Conolly 22 June 1728, (Reg. Deeds 53.538.38094).

[77] For Whyte's debts see Castletown Papers, (I.A.A., 97/84 E/14/21-41; E/16/1-7). For the intercession of the Emperor see Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland 1690-1703,* p. 75.

[78] A.P.W. Malcomson, 'A house divided: The Loftus family, earls and marquesses of Ely c.1600-c.1900', p.186.

sell the heavily encumbered Rathfarnham estate. London-based trustees who took over responsibility for Wharton's debts, managed the sale. It was sold for £60,000: Conolly made an initial payment of £30,000 with the remainder paid in instalments, although £10,000 remained outstanding at his death in 1729.[79] The estate consisted of 6,223 acres arable and 4,127 acres of mountain. Its rental was £2191 6*s* 6*d* in 1723 rising to £2700 in 1727,[80] although a valuation made in 1724 suggested it was undervalued.[81] Conolly never used the estate as a residence and rented out the Castle to an Edward Worth, who had been Wharton's tenant. It was purchased as an investment and over time the initial investment would be recouped. Furthermore Conolly's purchase price was considerably lower than the £85,000, for which Wharton had tried to sell the estate in 1720. It still equated to over 27 years purchase, suggesting the initial price was a serious overvaluation. The manor of Rathfarnham provided Conolly with a secure estate in the Dublin region. Its income in 1727 was greater than the net income (minus charges) of his Londonderry estates which had a much greater acreage. The Rathfarnham estate yielded the greatest return per acre of all the Conolly estates suggesting that land values in the Dublin region were not greatly affected by the poor economic conditions of the 1720s.

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[79] For details of these payments, see the Castletown Papers (I.A.A., 97/84 D/14-18). See also Memorial of a quinpartite deed of assignment dated 31 July 1723 (Reg. Deeds 40.165.24811). For the outstanding portion of the purchase money, see the marriage settlement of William Conolly junior and Lady Anne Wentworth, 27 Apr. 1733 (I.A.A., 97/84 G/9/1).

[80] Rathfarnham rent rolls 1723-27, (I.A.A., 97/84 D/12).

[81] Particulars of the several valuations of the Right Hon. William Conolly's estate at Rathfarnham in the County of Dublin by Mr Campbell, Mr James Hamilton and Mr Geering,with the number of acres and accounts of the terms in being from, Ladyday, Mayday and Michaelmas 1724. The valuations ranged from £3,316 7s 6d (Hamilton) to £3,574 10d (Geering) with the median being £3399 15s 3d (Campbell), (I.A.A., 97/84 D/13).

The above survey details all the Conolly estates still in Conolly's possession upon his death in 1729. Apart from the estates detailed above, Conolly also owned two houses in Waterford City, let for 41 years in 1720 for an annual rental of £6.[82] It is unclear when these first came into his possession. In Dublin Conolly also owned his own town-house on Capel Street which he had purchased in 1707 and which became the centre of his Dublin political life.[83] Unfortunately very little is known about this house, other than that it was one of the largest and finest houses on the street, which was then one of the most fashionable in Dublin. [84]

Also omitted from the above survey are those estates which had been disposed of before Conolly's death. In 1702 for instance he had purchased two small estates in King's County and Cavan from Daniel and Isabella French for £600.[85] Apart from details of their purchase, no other records survive relating to these lands. They are not mentioned in Conolly's will so they must have been sold sometime in the intervening period. The size of the holdings, three townlands in Kings County and one in Cavan indicate however that they were not important components of the Conolly patrimony and the reasons for their purchase remain unclear. In 1719 he sold an estate in Co. Tyrone to a Robert Lowry. The lands of Altedesert (Pomeroy) in the Barony of Dungannon were conveyed to Lowry for £2,850.[86]

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[82] William Conolly to William Jones et al 30 Mar. 1720 (Reg. Deeds, 31.226.18847).

[83] On the Capel Street house see, Boylan, 'The Conollys of Castletown', pp 12-14, and Olwyn James, *Capel Street: A study of the past, a vision of the future* (Dublin, 2001).

[84] A. de la Montraye *Voyages en Anglois et en Francois D'A de la Montraye, en diverses provinces* (The Hague, 1732), pp 477-78; For a description of one room in the interior, see Katherine Conolly to Lady Shelburne, 7 Oct. 1707 (N.L.I., 15,549 (2)).

[85] Deed of 23 May 1702 between Daniel and Isabella French of Ballinboff in county of Cavan, and William Conolly of Dublin (I.A.A., 97/84 G/1).

[86] Indenture dated 18 Feb. 1719 between William Conolly and Robert Lowry of Aghenis Co. Tyrone (I.A.A., 97/84 C/27).

Puzzlingly this is the only mention of this estate in the Conolly papers, leaving no indication of the size of these lands or when Conolly had acquired them.

These were not the only estates sold by Conolly. 1n 1709, he sold his interest in lands in Co. Tipperary to a John Maghlin. Conolly had acquired these lands in 1705 for £370, the annual rent was £60. He sold them however for £324 suggesting they had proved a unsatisfactory investment.[87] It appears that Conolly also purchased an estate in Hampshire in England. In September 1725 Francis Annesley wrote to Conolly: 'A friend of mine hears from your tenants near Petersfield Hampshire that you intend to sell your estate though I told him I knew nothing of it, he desires to be the purchaser if you parted with it'.[88] This is the first mention of this estate in the surviving Conolly papers. Replying, Conolly wrote, 'As to the small estate I have at Petersfield if I part with it you may be assured it will be at as good a price as I can. I have no reason to sell but that I have been ill used by a person in England I employed there; when I have determined with myself what to do you shall hear from me'.[89] It seems from this that the estate was being mismanaged, and Conolly appears to have subsequently sold it, as it is not mentioned in his will. It seems to have been his only English property, but further details regarding its initial purchase and later sale remain elusive. The case of his Hampshire estate and indeed the lands in Tipperary suggest Conolly was always prepared to sell his estates if he was not getting a satisfactory return, either politically or financially.

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[87] Indenture of deed of assignment between William Conolly and Captain John Maghlin, 13 July 1709 (Reg. Deeds 2.439.553).
[88] Francis Annesley to William Conolly 16 Sept. 1725 (I.A.A., 97/84 D/18/1).
[89] Conolly to Annesley, 22 Sept. 1725 (I.A.A., 97/84 D/18/2).

The Conolly estates were therefore purchased for a variety of reasons, the earliest purchases being motivated by the opportunities offered by the Williamite confiscations, while later purchases particularly in Ulster were at least partly inspired by political calculation. It could also be argued that the manors of Rathfarnham and Castletown were purchased, partially at least, to portray what Barnard has called 'the grand figure'. Castletown particularly following the construction of Conolly's great prodigy house in the 1720s became the symbol of Conolly power. The return on the purchase of Castletown could therefore not just be measured in economic terms but also in terms of the added social prestige it brought to the Conollys. None of this would have been possible however if it was not for the economic returns from the other more substantial Conolly estates. The primary function of the Conolly estates was however to provide a return for the initial investments, so to assess Conolly's track record in securing this return the management of the different estates must be examined in some detail.

Despite his myriad political roles Conolly still kept a close interest in the running of his estates. His surviving correspondence includes a large number of references to estate matters. The management of his interests was carried out by a number of local agents. For instance, the agent on his Ballyshannon estate was his brother in-law Thomas Dickson, while his extensive interests in Co. Londonderry were overseen by the highly capable Robert McCausland, who was Conolly's main correspondent for all matters relating to the northern estates from problems with the militia, local concerns about emigration, to electoral issues.[90] Many of the other Conolly estates were supervised by leading tenants such as James Crawford in

[90] For McCausland's voluminous correspondence with Conolly covering the period 1715-29 see I.A.A., 97/84 C/27/1-c.100.

Fermanagh[91] and Hugh Bowen in Westmeath.[92] The role of these agents was to collect the rents and to oversee the day-to-day management of the estates. They also remitted the rent from the estates to Conolly through his banker in Dublin, Hugh Henry.[93] The one area where Conolly kept a close eye was the business of leasing. This was the most important part of estate management, as the choice of tenant and terms of the lease determined the level of income that could be expected from any estate in a given year.[94] Following the purchase of each estate, it was customary for him to have the estate surveyed so that the existing leases could be examined and the future value of the estate as leases expired could be ascertained. The manors of Ballyshannon, Castlefin and Rathfarnham were all extensively surveyed following their purchase.[95] Each of these surveys incidentally over estimated the future value of the estate but in the unpromising economic climate of the times, this was unsurprising: the prolonged recession of the 1720s could not have been forecast in 1718 or even in 1723.

Most of the Conolly estates were set out on long leases. For example when Conolly acquired the forfeited estates of the Nugent family in Counties Westmeath and Roscommon, he let out most of the estate in large denominations, usually encompassing at least one townland. Of the extant leases relating to the former Nugent estate in Co. Westmeath, five tenants held fee farm leases of their portions,

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[91] For Conolly's correspondence with Crawford, 1718-29, see I.A.A., C/20/1-25.

[92] See Hugh Bowen to Conolly, 10 Oct. 1723 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/4). Bowen was also Collector of Mullingar, and as such was actually forbidden from acting as an estate agent.

[93] See ibid, but also Robert McCausland's accounts with Lord Justice Conolly, 1724-27 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/11/1-20) for references to Hugh Henry, Conolly also left him £100 in his will (N.A.I. T92). Henry (1680-1743) was also returned for the Conolly borough of Limavady in 1713 suggesting a close relationship with the banker.

[94] David Dickson, *Old world colony: Cork and south Munster, 1630-1830* (Cork, 2005), pp 181-190

[95] For Ballyshannon see, Cunningham, 'William Conolly's Ballyshannon estate 1718-26'. For Castlefin see McCracken, 'Two eighteenth century surveys of Castlefin', the three surveys of Rathfarnham made in 1723 are found in the Castletown Papers (I.A.A., 97/84 D/13).

while two tenancies were held on 91-year and 99-year leases respectively with two further portions leased for terms of three lives renewable. The remainder of the Westmeath lands were leased on terms of 31 years, the longest term Catholics could lease land for. The greater part of the land was set on longer leases. These very long leases attracted wealthier tenants who were able to pay an entry fine and a substantial annual rent. For instance, Thomas Daly obtained a fee farm lease of 1,829 acres in the Barony of Corkery for an annual rental of £137 in 1710.[96] Amongst the other Conolly tenants in Westmeath was Sir Richard Levinge, sometime Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, who held a 91-year lease on 4479 acres in the townland of Parsonstown.[97] Levinge was not the only county notable who held lands from Conolly the Sheriff of Westmeath in 1723; Walter Nugent MP, was also a tenant.[98]

Unfortunately no contemporary rent-roll has survived for the Westmeath lands but because most of the leases were for such long terms, it is reasonable to assume that later records offer some indication of the value of these lands. The annual rental for all the Westmeath properties was £1,066 in 1760, which was probably higher but not substantially higher than the level in 1729.[99] The former Nugent estate in Co. Roscommon was set out in a similar manner to the lands in Westmeath; amongst the tenants there were two Irish MPs, Nicholas Mahon and Edward Crofton, who held a fee farm and a 22-year lease respectively.[100] The total income

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[96] Conolly to Thomas Daly, 30 Dec. 1710 (Reg. Deeds 50.368.33394).

[97] Counterparts of leases of lands in Co. Westmeath (1729), (I.A.A., 97/84 G/10/1).

[98] For Nugent as sheriff, see, D.W. Hayton, 'Two ballads on the Co. Westmeath by election of 1723', in *E.C.I.,* iv (1989), p. 24.

[99] Abstract of Charles Davis's Account for half year ended Nov. 1760 (I.A.A., 97/84 H/2).

[100] Conolly to Nicholas Mahon, 24 Feb. 1708 (Reg. Deeds 2.545.623); Conolly to Crofton, 4 Sept. 1709 (Reg. Deeds 3.66.669); Counterparts of leases made of lands in the county of Roscommon, (1729) (I.A.A., 97/84 G/10/1).

of the Roscommon estate in 1760 was £832 per annum.[101] This leasing pattern was followed elsewhere on the Conolly estates: in Limavady much of the estate was set on perpetuity leases in 1700, soon after Conolly purchased the estate. This practice was continued in 1713 when the remaining old leases fell in.

Apart from attracting tenants anxious for security of tenure, this practice also carried with it electoral benefits which should not be ignored. Tenants who held perpetual leases including leases of three lives renewable were entitled to vote.[102] Most of the Conolly estates in Donegal were held on similar leases. The majority of the Ballyshannon leases were for three lives renewable with some portions however leased for much shorter periods of 21 or 31 years.[103] However the lands leased from the College and the Church were set at much shorter leases. The 25 tenants on the Tirhugh College estate held their portions for terms of eleven years commencing in May 1726.[104] These leases gave Conolly greater control over the tenants, as his own lease of the lands from the College was for 21 years. The lands rented from the Bishop of Raphoe at Ballyhanna were meanwhile set out on terms of 7 years.[105] These institutional properties were the exception and reflected institutional practices; all the other Conolly estates were held on long leases.

These leases as we have seen greatly assisted the management of these estates, as it was easier to project the annual income that they would generate. The other benefit of these leases was that they offered a quick return on the initial investment

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[101] Abstract of Charles Davis's Account for half year ended Nov. 1760(I.A.A., 97/84 H/2).
[102] For an excellent discussion of the property qualifications required for the franchise, see A.P.W. Malcomson, *John Foster: The politics of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy* (Oxford, 1978), pp 282-84.
[103] Ballyshannon leasebook 1728 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/26) this very useful document lists each denomination with the tenants name and annual rent as well as the term of the lease.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.

through the payment of entry fines by the tenants: the entry fines on the Church lands in Co. Londonderry in 1726 amounted to £416 6*s* 9*d* which was nearly twice the annual rental giving some indication of the potential earnings available, although this was an exceptional case.[106] Apart from entry fines, fines were also paid when a new life was inserted into a lease. The size of these fines varied considerably depending on the value of the property. The fine for adding a new life on the Dirpatrick portion of the Meath estate was £100 which was a half years rent on the 799-acre holding.[107] The renewal fines on the Limavady estate ranged from 5*s* to £3 17*s* suggesting much smaller and less valuable holdings.[108]

The leasing practices outlined above give some indication of the management practices on the Conolly estates. Conolly as would be expected desired a good return from his estates. The rental figures for 1729 when compared with the purchase prices of the various estates suggest he was successful in this regard. His income as we have seen continued to rise through the 1720s as he augmented his holdings and increased his control over the leasing practices on the individual estates. Because of the geographically dispersed nature of the Conolly patrimony, he was an internal absentee landlord of much of his estates. He never resided on most of them; only at Limavady, Rodanstown and Castletown did he have a residence, with the former two only used in the earlier years of his career. As a result he was forced to manage his estates from a distance, the granting of long leases and the employment of reliable agents such as McCausland at Limavady making this easier.

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[106] Robert McCausland's acccount with Conolly 20 June 1726 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/11).
[107] Conolly to William Palmer, 2 Jan. 1717 (Reg. Deeds 37.211.22443).
[108] Limavady account 1725 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/11).

Having looked at the accumulation and management of the Conolly patrimony it is now necessary to look at the levels of income generated by these estates over a long period of time. Throughout his career, contemporaries measured William Conolly's success by his increasing wealth. When Conolly was leading the agitation against the Act of Resumption in 1700, John Trenchard, political pamphleteer and a Trustee of the Forfeited Estates, queried his sudden rise to a position of wealth following the Battle of the Boyne. Trenchard wrote that since the Boyne, 'his yearly expenses have from that time exceeded his visible acquisitions; his manner of living was so profuse, that he got followers, and was styled prince Conelly'.[109] Already, Conolly's income at this early juncture in his career was large enough for his opponents to take notice. Conolly's income continued to rise as we have seen through his career. In 1713, as discussed earlier, it was estimated, reasonably accurately, at £5,500 a year. By 1717 when Conolly was appointed a Lord Justice for the first time, the hostile Sir John St Leger Baron of the Exchequer, suggested that Conolly was worth £8,000 a year:

> many people here especially our quality and old gentry are much offended at Mr Conolly's being one of them; this gentleman was lately an attorney, his father keeping an ale house in the north of Ireland, this being too notorious to be stifled, but by making long bills and good bargains, he is now reported to be worth eight thousand a year...[110]

When this estimate is compared with the surviving records it appears to accurately reflect Conolly's fortune at this juncture. But of more interest is the suggestion by St Leger that Conolly's appointment as a Lord Justice was related to his fortune, his accumulation of £8,000 a year was seen as his greatest achievement. St Leger

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[109] Trenchard, *A letter from a soldier to the commons of England*, p. 25

[110] Sir John St Leger to Lord Chief Justice Parker, 21 Feb. 1717 (BL Stowe Mss 750-244), quoted in Boylan, 'The Conollys of Castletown', p. 6.

showing a grudging appreciation of Conolly's talents, suggested this had been achieved through the making of 'long bills and good bargains,' something he makes clear was not the accepted way to generate a fortune. Conolly's successful speculation in land made him extremely wealthy but had not necessarily made him acceptable to the 'old gentry'.

The snide remark about Conolly's origins betrays the hostility that St Leger and others felt towards Conolly. This type of hostility towards those who possessed new fortunes was not uncommon: in Queen's County in 1727 the diarist Pole Cosby denounced his neighbour the Dublin banker Ephraim Dawson as, 'a mean, very mean upstart, for his father kept an ale house at the sign of the cock in Belfast.' In reality as Daniel Beaumont has pointed out, Dawson's father was a revenue collector in Carrickfergus.[111] Like St Leger with Conolly, Cosby wished to stress his target's low birth, being the son of an innkeeper seems to have been a generic slur. Cosby also referred to King's County arriviste Judge John Parnell as, 'but a mushroom, a man of no family at all at all'.[112] The opportunities provided by the Williamite revolution and to a lesser degree the Hanoverian succession in 1714 enabled 'mushrooms' like Parnell and Conolly to flourish in early-eighteenth century Ireland: they, unlike many of the older resident gentry, had one crucial factor of production, capital. Conolly's mushroom fortune continued to grow through the 1720s as his influence increased: in 1720 he had an annual income of £11,986, which had risen to £16,446 in 1729.[113] In 1724 Jonathan Swift in his first

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[111] Walter Fitzgerald, 'Autobiography of Pole Cosby of Stradbally, Queens County 1703-1737', in *Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society,* v (1906-08), p. 174; D.M. Beaumont, 'The gentry of the King's and Queen's Counties: Protestant landed society 1690-1760' (PhD, University of Dublin, 1999), p. 141.

[112] Fitzgerald, 'Autobiography of Pole Cosby of Stradbally, Queens County 1703-1737', p. 254.

[113] See Appendix 1, tables 1.2 &1.3, Conolly income levels 1720-29.

Drapier's Letter suggested that if Wood's Halfpence was introduced Conolly would need 250 horses to carry his rent to Castletown.[114] Swift at this time suggested that Conolly had an annual income of sixteen thousand pounds, a figure that appears to be an over estimate of the Conolly fortune at this point. His use of Conolly as an example does however reflect the contemporary belief that Conolly's fortune was exceptional. Few if any other landlords would have needed 250 horses to transport their rent. The assumed connection between Conolly's wealth and his pre-eminence in the Irish administration continued with Archbishop Boulter's report on his death in 1729, with its assessment of the Conolly fortune. To contemporaries Conolly's greatest success was indeed his acquisition of a fortune.

The parallel seen by contemporaries between the growth of Conolly's political influence and his wealth was a real one. In the 1680s when he was making his mark as an attorney, he acquired his first properties in Co. Donegal, while his rise to political and legal prominence in the 1690s was reflected in his acquisition of large estates for the first time. In the early 1700s when his political career was hindered by the domination of the Tory faction the expansion of his landed portfolio was also restrained. Only in 1709 when he was briefly to the fore during Wharton's viceroyalty did he venture into the property market with his purchase of the Castletown estate. It would be nine years before his next purchase, the manor of Ballyshannon, which along with the purchase of the Rathfarnham estate in 1723, copper-fastened his position as the wealthiest commoner in the land, at a time when his political influence was at its greatest.

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[114] Jonathan. Swift, *The Drapier's letters and other works 1724-25* (Oxford, 1966), p. 7.

This parallel development is not surprising, but it does show quite strikingly that Conolly's greatest investments came when his political fortunes were rising. The case of the 1720s is particularly striking: over a twelve-year period from 1718 to 1729, he spent, £142,125 (see appendix, table 1.4) on land, while from 1722 onwards he was also building Castletown, which presumably caused a significant drain on his resources.[115] This level of expenditure was unparalleled in early eighteenth century Ireland, and even in Britain would have been exceptional. According to Mingay, capital investment of £100,000 was needed to become a great landlord, and very few families succeeded in doing so in one generation. [116] Conolly was therefore truly exceptional.

Such high levels of expenditure were possible because over the same period his aggregate income was close to £150,000. If we take Mingay's average income level figure for a great landlord of £6,000 then the average aggregate over the same period would be £72,000, just under half Conolly's total.[117] In Ireland the average income level of a great landlord was much lower, probably closer to the figure of £3,500 suggested by David Howell for eighteenth century Wales, giving an aggregate of £42,000 or slightly greater than a quarter of Conolly's total. [118] These comparisons serve to illustrate the scale of Conolly's fortune in relation to contemporaries in Britain. This chapter has demonstrated how this fortune was constructed, how it was managed, and how it compared with Conolly's

[115] No building accounts have survived for Castletown, This was not unusual: in England, the building records of Walpole at Houghton and the Duke of Newcastle at Claremont have not survived despite the survival of extensive archives, see R.A. Kelch, *Newcastle: a duke without money: Thomas Pelham-Holles 1693-1768* (London, 1974), pp 51-52.

[116] Mingay, *English landed society in the eighteenth century*, p. 26.

[117] Ibid., p 6.

[118] Howell, *Patriarchs and parasites*, p. 9.

contemporaries at home and abroad. In 1689, with the Jacobite act of attainder, it looked like his career was over before it had begun; instead, forty years later he died not only the wealthiest and most successful politician of his time but also having established a great Irish landed dynasty.

Chapter Two

From lawyer to politician, Conolly's early legal and official career, 1684-1703

By the beginning of Queen Anne's reign in 1703 William Conolly was an established figure in the Dublin political world. He was MP for County Londonderry and was recognised as a leading member of the nascent Irish Whig party. Furthermore he had extensive landed interests with estates in seven counties, all of which he had acquired since 1691. By any contemporary standard his was a remarkable success story but, as J.G. Simms pointed out as long ago as 1956, Conolly's rise 'cannot be ascribed only to his trafficking in the forfeited estates'.[1] Undoubtedly his successful manipulation of the opportunities created by the Williamite confiscation, as will be shown in a separate chapter, was important but other factors were also significant. It is with these other factors that this chapter is primarily concerned. In particular Conolly's career as an attorney, both in Dublin and on the North-West circuit, will be examined as well as his legal and other activity on behalf of Derry Corporation and the Irish Society of London. The beginnings of Conolly's official career, in the Alnage office, will also be explored. By studying these aspects of Conolly's career it should be possible to offer some suggestions as to how he was able to emerge as a public figure from such unpromising origins.

[1] J.G. Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland*, p. 126.

Conolly's beginnings as an attorney, 1685-89

Very little is known of Conolly's early life, other than that he was born in Ballyshannon, County Donegal in 1662. He had qualified as an attorney sometime before 1685. Unfortunately nothing is known of his education or his activities in the intervening period. It can be presumed that he had served a period of apprenticeship before qualifying as an attorney. In 1671 it was decreed that:

> 'none should be admitted an attorney of this court unless he hath served or shall serve by the space of five years at least as a clerk to some judge, sergeant at law, practising counsellor, attorney, clerk or officer of one of his majesties courts at Westminster in England or at Dublin'.[2]

This was the rule as laid out by the courts but unfortunately there is little hard data to test the operation of this rule. However according to Osborough, 'it is legitimate to infer that a system of apprenticeship operated and that some test however cursory preceded admission to the pertinent common law court'.[3]

Conolly it would seem had qualified sometime before 1685 as he was addressed in a letter of February of that year as 'attorney at law'.[4] The exact date of his qualification remains elusive. Attorneys were required to register as members of the Kings Inns before they could practice in any of the Dublin courts. This rule had been restated in 1683, suggesting adherence to it had lapsed. Attorneys were also required to present proof of payment of the Inns admission fine of 13*s* 4*d*

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[2] R.S. Moore & T.K. Lowry, *A collection of the general rules and orders of the courts of Queens Bench, Common Pleas and Exchequer Pleas in Ireland* (Dublin 1842), Appendix 1, p. 6.
[3] W.N. Osborough, 'The regulation of the admission of attorneys and solicitors in Ireland, 1660-1866' in Daire Hogan and W.N. Osborough (eds), *Brehons, serjeants and attorneys: studies in the history of the Irish legal profession* (Dublin, 1990), p. 107.
[4] Conor O'Clery to William Conolly and James Hamill, attorneys, 1 Feb. 1685 (I.A.A., 97/84 B/1/1-40).

before they were admitted into any of the common law courts.[5] The absence of detailed court records for this period coupled with the lack of Kings Inns admissions papers for the years 1678-89, the period when Conolly would presumably have qualified, further hinders any attempt to discern the beginnings of his legal career. Certainly by 1687 he was attached to the Court of Common Pleas in Dublin, suggesting he was a member of the Kings Inns, as otherwise he would not have been allowed practice under the rules made in 1683.

Conolly's practice in the early part of his career seems to have been divided between Dublin and travelling the North-West circuit. This combination of practice on the provincial circuit and in the metropolitan centre seems to have been commonplace. For instance, Alan Brodrick practiced both in Dublin and on the Munster circuit.[6] Travelling the circuit enabled aspiring lawyers and politicians to make contacts with the local gentry who acted as sheriff, grand jurors and magistrates. Each circuit was travelled twice a year, in lent and summer, by two judges and their entourage. The North-West circuit covered Counties Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh, Londonderry, Longford, Tyrone and Westmeath.[7] Conolly seems to have been particularly involved in cases in his native county, Donegal, as well as in the neighboring counties of Fermanagh and Londonderry.

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[5] Osborough, 'The regulation of the admission of attorneys and solicitors in Ireland, 1660-1866', p. 107; T.P. Power, 'The 'Black book' of King's Inns: An introduction with an abstract of contents', in *Irish Jurist,* xx (1985), p. 165.

[6] Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 11 Nov. 1681 (Surrey History Centre, Midleton Papers 1246/1 ff 202-203) I am indebted to Professor David Hayton and Mr Michael Page of the Surrey History Centre for permission to use their transcripts of the Midleton Papers. All references to this collection are from these transcripts.

[7] On the circuit system, see Neal Garnham, *The courts, crime and the criminal law in Ireland 1689-1760* (Dublin, 1996), pp 70-9.

A detailed study of Conolly's private practice in the period 1684-89 is impossible, but some clues to his activity can be identified from the surviving fragmentary evidence. As suggested earlier, Conolly was attached to the Court of Common Pleas by at least 1687. He had come to Dublin sometime before 1685, as the first reference to his career in Dublin dates from that year.[8] It is probable that he served his apprenticeship in Dublin but no direct evidence survives. By 1687 he was an established attorney practising both in Dublin and on the North-West circuit. A rough list of cases survives in the Conolly papers from 1687: It seems he was involved in approximately 200 cases in that year.[9] The list is divided into cases in the four courts, Chancery, King's Bench, Common Pleas and Exchequer. This varied practice across the courts conforms to the general view as outlined by Barnard who has suggested that few practitioners specialised in a particular court.[10] Unfortunately Conolly's fee income for 1687 was not recorded with the list of cases, although he did record his legal income for later years. The volume of cases he was involved in does, however, suggest that he was making a small but significant income from his legal practice. This view is corroborated by the suggestion that his annual income in 1688, when he was amongst the Irish Protestant refugees in Britain, was £121, most of which presumably came from his legal practice. In the same document he was described as *William Conolly, Dublin gentleman*, suggesting that not only was he resident in Dublin, but also that he had acquired the status of a gentleman.[11] The appellation 'gentleman' does not necessarily mean Conolly had entered the elite. Indeed Ian Christie has recently

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[8] Conor O'Clery to William Conolly and James Hamill, attorneys, 1 Feb. 1685 (I.A.A., 97/84 B/1/1-40).

[9] Rough list of cases divided into chancery, Kings Bench etc., 1687 (I.A.A., 97/84 B/3/1-10)

[10] T.C. Barnard, 'Lawyers and law in later seventeenth century Ireland', in *Irish Historical Studies,* xxviii (1993), p. 267.

[11] 'A list of the Protestants of Ireland as are lately fled out of this kingdom for safety of their lives…' [1688] (T.C.D. Ms 847 f. 6).

maintained, commenting on Britain, that it meant the opposite, 'for by the early eighteenth century this word had been largely emptied of its original honorific meaning and it might be claimed and conceded in respect of individuals in such professional callings as attorney'.[12] In Ireland this was also likely to be the case but Conolly's brief but important period in London ensured that on his return he would be treated as a gentleman.

Conolly in London, 1688-89

The Williamite revolution was to have a profound effect on the development of Conolly's career. The defeat of King James in England in 1688 and his escape first to France and then to Ireland created a climate of fear and uncertainty amongst Irish Protestants. The widespread fear that the events of the 1641 rebellion were to be recreated prompted many Irish Protestants to flee to England and Wales. This sense of fear is well expressed in a letter received by Donegal landlord Sir Albert Conyngham in December 1688:

> We have been in great consternation here about a letter which I presume you must have heard of, wherein it was said that on the 7th instant the Protestants was [sic] to be cut off; which alarm hath caused I believe 2,000 people to go to England. But God be thanked, now people come into their right wits again.[13]

Conyngham remained in Donegal and became one of the heroes of the Williamite campaign in the north-west before his death at the siege of Sligo in 1691. His future son in-law William Conolly was however amongst the approximately 2,000 Protestants who went first to Chester and then on to London,[14] where he became active in the Irish Protestant émigré community. In October 1689 an ad hoc

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[12] I.R. Christie, *British 'non-elite' MPs, 1715-1820* (Oxford, 1995), p. 16.
[13] Samuel Jackson, Dublin to Sir Albert Conyngham, Mount Charles, 11 Dec. 1688 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/47/1-50). See also, J.G. Simms, *Jacobite Ireland 1685-91* (London, 1969), p. 49.
[14] See, 'A list of such Protestants of Ireland as are lately fled out of this kingdom for safety of their lives '[1688] (T.C.D., Ms 847 ff 1-8).

committee was chosen by 'the gentlemen of Ireland' to address the 'King in parliament, and make proposals for the settlement of Ireland'. This committee numbered amongst its members many who would become prominent in Irish affairs over the next decade including future speakers of the House of Commons, Alan Brodrick and Robert Rochfort as well as prominent lawyers Henry Echlin and John Osborne and Lords Lanesborough and Massereene. When the committee met in a London coffee house to draw up an act for the benefit of Ireland on 30 October 1689, Conolly was acting as clerk.[15] This is very revealing of the respect in which he was already held. It undoubtedly helped Conolly to forge useful connections for the future.

Amongst these opportunities was Conolly's appointment as solicitor to the Duke of Ormonde through the patronage of Robert Rochfort, one of the members of the London committee. Rochfort, a prominent lawyer, had served as Recorder of Derry since 1680 and was MP for County Westmeath in the 1692 parliament. In September 1691 he recommended Conolly to the second duke of Ormonde, who needed legal assistance in his attempts to grapple with his recently inherited patrimony. Conolly was recommended as 'a man of known integrity and abilities and a firm Protestant according to the rites of the Church of England as a person fitly qualified for that employment'.[16] Just over a year later when it was reported to Rochfort that Conolly was having some difficulty in taking up this employment, he wrote to Ormonde's secretary, John Ellis, in support of Conolly, 'It was by your friendship my friend got this employment and with what integrity and skill he has

[15] R. Caulfield (ed.) *Journal of the Very Rev. Rowland Davies* (London, 1857), pp 60-61, entry for 28th –30th Oct. 1689. See also D.W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685-1742,* p. 41.
[16] Robert Rochfort to James, Duke of Ormonde, 1 Sept. 1691 (B.L., Ellis Papers, Add Ms 28,877 f.91). See, also T.C. Barnard, 'The government and Irish dissent, 1704-80' in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The politics of Irish dissent* (Dublin, 1997), p. 23.

discharged it his Grace's commissioners here can witness and besides I am confident his Grace never had a servant more zealous for his grace's interest and honour'.[17] The following day Conolly himself wrote to Ellis expressing his gratitude for the 'favour you did me in procuring my being chosen and appointed solicitor for his Grace the duke of Ormonde in which I have endeavoured to discharge myself with all integrity and I hope to the satisfaction of his Grace's commissioners now'.[18]

His task as Ormonde's legal agent was not easy. The Ormonde estates stretching across a number of counties in the south-east had suffered from bad management during the long public career of the first duke. These problems were exacerbated by the Jacobite wars. In October 1691 the duke consigned the management of his estates to five trustees, the chief of whom was Francis Aungier, Lord Longford.[19] It seems to be after this that Conolly became involved. Amongst the problems faced by the trustees was the issue of forfeited estates. The trustees tried unsuccessfully to get any estates forfeited in the Ormonde palatinate resumed to the duke. Catholic proprietors in areas within Ormonde's sphere of influence were also pursued. It is in this context that Conolly as Ormonde's solicitor first appears. In April 1692, Longford wrote,

> We have appointed Mr Connolly (sic) my Lords Solicitor at law to go down into the county of Catherlogh on Monday to enquire into the value of that part of Mr Baggot's estate which he purchased from my Lord Arran (or rather cheated him of) that his Grace if it be worth his asking it of His Majesty may apply himself to obtain that forfeiture of his own estate.[20]

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[17] Rochfort to John Ellis, 31 Oct. 1692 (B.L. Add Ms 28,877 f.388).
[18] Conolly to Ellis, 1 Nov. 1692 (B.L. Add Ms 28,877 f.389).
[19] See H.M.C. *Ormonde MSS* New Series VIII (London, 1920), p. xxxii.
[20] Lord Longford to John Ellis 30 Apr. 1692 in Patrick Melvin, 'Letters to Lord Longford and others on Irish affairs 1689-1702', in *Analecta Hibernia,* xxxii (1985), p. 92.

The particular case he was involved in is also of some interest. Mark Baggot, a Catholic had served as the Jacobite Sheriff of Carlow in 1689. Persistent attempts were made by the Protestant gentry of Carlow to remove him from his estates culminating in an address to Ormonde in 1701 from the Protestant gentry of the county.[21] Baggot appears to have retained his estates, and he appeared on the list of 'Protestant purchasers' in 1701 who petitioned parliament against the Act of Resumption. Significantly or not, the organiser of this campaign was Conolly.[22]

Despite his apparent failure to secure the Baggot estate for Ormonde, Conolly remained active on his behalf. In Hilary Term 1695 he submitted a bill for nine shillings in consideration of a case involving the duke.[23] Undated accounts relating to an application on behalf of the duke also appear in Conolly's papers. These accounts appear to date from the 1690s and possibly refer to an application for a private act of parliament. They include payments to the speaker and clerks of the House of Commons.[24] Conolly's involvement with Ormonde, while a small element of his career, demonstrates the geographical spread of his connections even at this early stage. His success in obtaining a position with Ireland's premier nobleman offers testament to his burgeoning reputation, talent and connections.

Conolly and the Earl of Abercorn

Ormonde was not the only leading nobleman from whom Conolly succeeded in obtaining a position. In 1692, five years after his first attempt, he was appointed agent to Captain James Hamilton, later sixth earl of Abercorn. John Cowan of St

[21] Pierce Butler and others to Ormonde 16 Apr. 1701 in H.M.C. *Ormonde Mss* VIII, p. 39.
[22] Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p. 127.
[23] Legal case paper Hilary Term 1695 (I.A.A., 97/84, B/1/1-40).
[24] Bills relating to papering of duke of Ormonde's bill (I.A.A., 97/84 B/1/1-40).

Johnston, a Derry alderman and merchant, had applied to Hamilton on Conolly's behalf in 1687, but the position he sought had already been filled.[25] In 1692 Conolly succeeded in obtaining the position with Hamilton, again through the offices of Cowan.[26] Conolly's role as Hamilton's agent was to act as deputy in his capacity as King's alnager and keeper of the lighthouses, as well as to manage Hamilton's Dublin properties. Hamilton had become King's alnager and keeper of the lighthouses in 1684 upon the death of his father in-law Sir Robert Reading, who had been granted a 61-year patent in 1666. [27] He briefly lost these offices worth £500 per annum during the Jacobite ascendancy in 1689 but was reinstated in January 1692.[28] The alnager was responsible for assuring the quality of woollen goods. It was a lucrative revenue office dating back to medieval times. Hamilton, like his successors as alnager, passed on the duties of office to deputies while retaining the profits for himself. The alnage office was very lucrative: in 1692 the total alnage receipts were £764 10*s*, but Conolly himself does not seem to have benefited greatly from his employment. He was paid only £10 per annum as Hamilton's agent.[29] This seems a paltry sum considering his various activities on behalf of his master, but presumably does not include the fees Conolly received. He oversaw the alnage collection, monitored the maintenance of lighthouses and collected the rents on Hamilton's properties in York Street and elsewhere in Dublin.[30]

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[25] John Cowan to Conolly, 27 Sept. 1687(I.A.A., 97/84 B/1/1-40).
[26] For Cowan see, William Young, *Fighters of Derry* (London, 1932), p. 88.
[27] *Liber Munerum*, I, part ii, 141.
[28] For history of Alnage officeholders 1666-91 see *C.S.P.D 1691-92,* pp 108-110
[29] Conolly's account with Captain Hamilton, 4 Nov. 1692 (I.A.A., 97/84 B/5/1-26).
[30] Conolly's accounts with Hamilton regarding the Lighthouses and Alnage, 1692-1700 (I.A.A., 97/84 B/5/1-26). For details of Hamilton's Dublin Property see I.A.A., 97/84 B/6-7.

The advantages of this employment didn't come in monetary terms but in the opportunities it created. While it is true that the position may have held more appeal for the aspiring attorney of the 1680s, Conolly was still willing to take up the position in 1692. This decision was likely to have been made for a number of reasons. Hamilton was the leading landowner in County Donegal and had major political interests in both Donegal and Tyrone. Attaching himself to this interest would be of major assistance to Conolly's career. It was commonplace for aspiring politicians, particularly lawyers, to garner small agencies, which would increase their standing with more powerful interests.[31] The introduction to the revenue that the Alnage office offered was also important. It carried a modest amount of patronage and provided an invaluable induction into the revenue service and the countrywide network of minor officials who managed the King's revenue. Conolly remained in Hamilton's employment until 1700. This indeed was not the end of Conolly's connection with Hamilton: in 1703 he held a mortgage worth £4,500 on the Abercorn manor of Strabane, while in 1708 he acted as a trustee of an Abercorn family settlement.[32] He also spoke on his former patron's behalf, in the House of Commons, when Abercorn's grant of the lighthouses was reviewed in the 1703/04 session.[33]

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[31] For examples of lawyer MPs acting as agents and 'men of business' see, Eveline Cruickshanks, Stuart Handley & D.W. Hayton (ed.) *The house of commons, 1690-1715.* (5 vols, Cambridge, 2002), I, p. 297.

[32] Mortgage of the Manor of Strabane, 30 June 1703 (P.R.O.N.I., Abercorn Papers D/623/B/4/4); Settlement of the Abercorn estates in Counties Donegal and Tyrone, 14 Apr. 1708 (P.R.O.N.I., D/623/B/2/1A).

[33] *C.J.I.,* II, pp 386-7; D.W. Hayton, 'A debate in the Irish house of commons in 1703: A whiff of tory grapeshot', in *Parliamentary History,* x, (1991), p. 162.

Conolly's private legal practice post 1690

Despite his involvement in the legal affairs of the Duke of Ormonde and Captain Hamilton, Conolly continued to practise as an attorney on the North West circuit. In 1691-92 he was involved in about 150 pieces of legal business. The average fee he charged for these legal transactions was 4s 9d, which was the standard fee for legal work in the late seventeenth century.[34] According to Barnard, fees were graduated according to the reputation and experience of the practitioner and (perhaps) by the locality.[35] In Conolly's case the latter criterion seems to have been important, as much of his legal practice was based in the north-west. Unfortunately little is known about Conolly's clients but what we know suggests he represented some of the county gentry in counties Donegal and Fermanagh. In 1693 he acted for Col. Abraham Creighton, one of the county MPs for County Fermanagh, in a case against a Robert Corney.[36] He was also involved in a legal dispute involving the Hamilton family, another prominent Fermanagh family.[37] Outside these isolated cases little is known about Conolly's clientele. It appears that as Conolly became more actively involved in the affairs of Derry Corporation from 1693 onwards, his private practice dwindled. This was probably because his work for the Corporation and later the Irish Society was better paid and also offered better opportunities for advancement. His annual income in private practice cannot have exceeded £40 per annum, while he was able to make considerably more in his capacity as legal agent to the Corporation.

[34] Rough list of cases Conolly was involved in 1691-92 (I.A.A., 97/84 B/3/1-10).
[35] Barnard, 'Lawyers and law in later seventeenth century Ireland', p. 267.
[36] Case papers for Corney versus Creighton, 23 July 1692 (I.A.A., 97/84 B/1/1-40).
[37] See Hamilton versus Hamilton case papers (I.A.A., 97/84 B/2/1-15).

Conolly and Derry Corporation

Conolly was closely involved in the affairs of Derry Corporation over a long period. He acted as legal agent to the corporation for a period of 20 years from 1690 to 1710. This connection with the corporation seems to have begun in the period of confusion after 1690. Derry had been devastated both physically and financially by the siege of 1689 and it would take years for it to recover. Much of Conolly's activity on behalf of the corporation involved matters arising out of the effects of the war and the ensuing land confiscation. It is unclear when Conolly's career with the Corporation began and, more importantly, how it began. Certainly by January 1691 he was advising the Corporation to acquire the lease of Lord Antrim's forfeited estate in County Londonderry, and by May of that year he was dealing with the Revenue Commissioners on behalf of the corporation. As legal agent to the Corporation, Conolly worked closely with the City Recorder, Robert Rochfort. It was possibly through Rochfort that Conolly first acquired his position in Derry. Both had served on the committee of Irish Protestant exiles in London in 1689, and as we have seen Rochfort acquired a position for Conolly with the Duke of Ormonde. Conolly was also connected to another Derry alderman, John Cowan of St Johnston, who had procured an employment for Conolly from Captain James Hamilton in 1692. It is impossible, however, to determine precisely how Conolly's association with the corporation began. Conolly conducted his business from Dublin. His role seems to have been to represent the corporation in the courts, at the Privy Council and in any other legal dealings with government departments. He did not, unlike the recorder, hold a salaried formal position and instead seems to have been paid on a case by case basis.

Much of Conolly's early activity on behalf of the corporation involved matters arising out of the effects of the war and the ensuing land confiscation. In particular the corporation were attempting to secure some of Lord Antrim's forfeited estate in County Londonderry. As early as January 1691 while war still raged, attempts were being made to secure part of the Antrim estate for the corporation.[38] Many Ulster Protestants coveted the extensive Antrim estates, in Counties Antrim and Londonderry.[39] Lord Antrim was one of the few remaining Catholic peers in the province and was a prominent supporter of James II. It was against his regiment, that the city's apprentice boys had shut the gates of Derry in December 1688. The Antrim estates were therefore an apposite choice when the corporation sought a forfeited estate to lease. They were also amongst the few newly forfeited estates in Ulster. The only other lands to be forfeited in County Londonderry were parts of James II's private estate. It was not unreasonable to assume that Antrim, as a prominent Jacobite, would not be restored to his estates.[40] By February 1691 Conolly was making arrangements to lease a portion of the Antrim estate, at Coleraine, on behalf of the corporation from the Commissioners of the Revenue.[41] In May of that year the corporation petitioned the crown seeking a reduction in the proposed rent of the portion they were leasing considering the 'manifold disbursements, losses, and debts' suffered by the city during the late siege.[42] With the fall of Galway in July and the subsequent peace articles it was feared that the

[38] Minutes of Common Council held 27 Jan 1690/1 (P.R.O.N.I., LA/79/2AA Derry Corporation Minute Book, 1688-1704 p. 42). Hereafter Londonderry Minutebook.
[39] Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p. 22.
[40] For the Williamite confiscation in Ulster see W.A. McGuire, 'The estate of Cu Chonnacht McGuire of Tempo: A case study from the Williamite land settlement', in *Irish Historical Studies,* xxvii (1990), pp 130-44
[41] Londonderry Minutebook, 14 Feb. 1690/1.
[42] Proceedings upon the petition of the Mayor, Commonalty, and Citizens of Londonderry, 5 May 1691 (*C.S.P.D., 1690-91*, p. 361).

efforts of the corporation would come to nought. Conolly expressed these fears in a letter to the corporation:

> In short they have embraced the King's declaration which is life and estate both real and personal. It's feared the Lord of Antrim is there, if not he is in Limerick to which place the Gen. wrote to Tyrconnell offering the same terms, which is thought he and many others will accept of. [43]

Antrim was at Limerick where the siege continued till October. But despite the fears about a possible restoration of Antrim's fortunes, the Corporation were granted the Antrim lands which had been set to 'William Conolly, gent., agent to the Mayor, Commonalty, and Citizens of Londonderry,' for an annual rent of £1,500. The rent was reduced because of the 'eminent services performed by the inhabitants of the said city in their defence of the same when it was besieged in 1689'.[44] The corporation would not enjoy the lease of the lands at Coleraine for very long. In October 1691 Limerick fell, and controversially Antrim was included in those covered by the Articles of Limerick.[45] As such he was to be restored to his estates. This would not be confirmed until 1697 when the Treaty of Limerick came before the Irish parliament. However from 1692 the corporation sought to undermine this judgement and to keep the estate at Coleraine. Conolly appeared before the Privy Council to present the views of the corporation, even though he believed his efforts would be in vain: 'I design to give all the opposition I can, though I fear to little purpose'.[46] Later he advised the corporation on how to make the best of the situation:

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[43] Conolly to Derry Corporation, 25 July 1691, quoted in Mina Lenox-Conyngham, *An old Ulster house* (Dundalk, 1946), p. 18.
[44] Warrant to the Lord Justices of Ireland, 21 Aug. 1691 (*C.S.P.D., 1690-91*, p. 497).
[45] Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p. 50.
[46] Conolly to William Crookshanks, quoted in Lenox-Conyngham, *An old Ulster house*, p 18.

> I fear he will be restored, for we have no evidence against him. Therefore manage accordingly and get all you can into your hands and take bonds and securities for the rest, though if he be restored we must continue this year's tenants as it is set to us.[47]

Rents were collected even if the corporation was to shortly to lose their lease. In May 1692, despite his failure to protect the corporation's claim, Conolly was paid £6 14*s* for his services.[48]

Conolly and the corporation ran into further difficulties regarding the Coleraine lands in the summer of 1693 when a dispute over the rent arose. Antrim demanded that the tenants pay him, while the corporation sought to collect the rents. The Common Council of the corporation resolved on 12 September 1693 'that the committee now to be appointed do discourse Mr Conolly on the matter and that if he will not take the management of this affair upon himself, this Common Council do hold it best to let the suit fall'.[49] Following a meeting with several of the aldermen later that day, Conolly took it upon himself to resolve the dispute. In February 1694, the city chamberlain wrote to Conolly 'to advise him...to secure this corporation of all arrears of the bonds due to the crown by this corporation and that he is obliged to discharge all charges that may accrue by his suit with the Lord of Antrim'.[50] It would not be until the following January that the final portion of the 1692 rent was paid to the corporation.[51] When this final sum of £218 13*s* 6*d* was paid to the corporation, it was ordered to be passed on to Conolly. It appears that Conolly, having advised the corporation to retain their claim to the lands at Coleraine was forced to bear the costs of litigation with Antrim and to accept the risks of pursuing his suit. This commitment reflected his

[47] Same to same quoted in Ibid.
[48] Londonderry Minutebook, 11 May 1692.
[49] Londonderry Minutebook, 12 Sept. 1693.
[50] Londonderry Minutebook, 3 Feb. 1693/4.
[51] Londonderry Minutebook, 31 Jan 1694/5.

statement in February 1693 that he would 'stand by...the Corporation with both life and fortune'.[52] He may not have put his life on the line but by settling the corporation's debts he had employed his finances on their behalf.

Despite his questionable advice regarding Lord Antrim's forfeited estate, Conolly continued to represent the corporation in other legal matters. In 1691-93 he represented the corporation in a dispute with a Mr Jemmett over 'town dues' before the Privy Council. This case was supposed to appear in December 1692 but was delayed because of the Privy Council's preoccupation with the 'intended invasion and other public business'. It seems to have come before the council in April 1693 instead.[53] Conolly's other business on behalf of the corporation was the annual submission of their nomination of city mayor for ratification by the Privy Council. The mayor was elected at a Common Council meeting on 2 November each year. Conolly would then present a certificate to the Council to obtain its approbation of the election. According to Jean Agnew 'it was normal for the election of sovereigns and mayors of corporate towns to be approved by the Dublin government' but, as she acknowledges, Derry was the exception. [54] The perpetual struggle to get the mayoral elections approved was a by-product of the conflict between the Presbyterian and Anglican members of the corporation. It was more likely that the government would block Presbyterian nominees. The first case of this type involving Conolly followed the election of Alderman James Lenox, a Presbyterian, as mayor in 1693. Lenox had served as mayor the previous

[52] Conolly to Crookshanks, 27 Feb. 1693 (P.R.O.N.I., Lenox-Conyngham Papers D1449/12/12).
[53] Same to same, 20 Dec. 1692, 8 Apr. 1693 (Ibid., D1449/12/16-17). See also Londonderry Minutebook, 11 May 1692.
[54] Jean Agnew, *Belfast merchant families in the seventeenth century* (Dublin, 1996), p. 92.

year but in 1693 his re-election was disputed. Conolly informed Lenox of the reasons for the Privy Council's disapproval as follows:

> The matter going so it was resolved, or will be next council that no mayor shall serve two years together in this kingdom. If so then we are all satisfied when it is a general rule but to make a particular and by the means of some troublesome spirits who peek at us every year makes us very uneasy.[55]

Previously there had been no objection to mayors serving consecutive terms and Lenox was commended for his management of the corporation. This decision was purely political and the decision was based on what he characterised as 'frivolous information' given by someone 'only credited as an informer'.[56] Conolly's own sympathies were clearly with the Presbyterian party on the corporation, demonstrating an early attachment to a cause that he would espouse throughout his career. In this instance Lenox was replaced as mayor despite intensive lobbying by Conolly, the Recorder Robert Rochfort and Bartholomew Von Homrigh, one of the two MPs for Derry. It seems that they had intended raising the issue in the House of Commons but this plan was altered by the prorogation of parliament.[57] This episode shows, however, how Conolly's role as MP for Donegal borough could be used to the advantage of Derry Corporation. Membership of parliament increased Conolly's opportunities to build connections within the Dublin administration.

The next mayoral dispute came in 1698 when the government 'thought fit to disapprove of the election of Edward Brookes Alderman to the office of mayoralty for the ensuing year'.[58] This time, according to David Hayton, 'the actions of privy councillors were unquestionably determined by religio-political prejudice, since they were responding to the protests of a rejected Anglican candidate for the

[55] Conolly to James Lenox, 11 Nov. 1693 (P.R.O.N.I., Lenox-Conyngham papers, T3161/1/3).
[56] Ibid.
[57] Conolly to Lenox, Nov. 1698 [not dated but between 2nd and 11th November] (Ibid., T3161/1/2).
[58] Londonderry Minutebook, 26 Dec. 1698.

mayoralty, Alderman Thomas Moncrieffe'.[59] The corporation elected another Presbyterian, Gervais Squire, as mayor instead and the Privy Council was eventually prevailed to accept him, although this appears to have been part of a compromise settlement as Anglicans and Presbyterians alternated in the position until 1704. Conolly presented Squire's election for approval in January 1699, writing to Alderman John Harvey that 'I believe it will be approved. Though I shall not trouble you with whether I approve of it,'[60] suggesting that perhaps he did not agree with the choice. While he clearly supported Lenox in 1693, Conolly seems to have been on good terms with both groups on the corporation. As a member of the Church of Ireland he remained close to the Anglicans while he built up strong working relationships with the Presbyterians. For Conolly the maintenance of the common Protestant interest was more important: he wrote how 'our city is yet poor ... and every good man ought to stand up for its defence and import as well as it did for the Protestant interest'.[61] This gives some indication of Conolly's views on the internal struggles within the corporation.

Conolly could have been equally commentating on another case in which he represented the corporation. This was a dispute between the corporation and Col. John Mitchelburne, who had been one of the heroes of the siege of Derry. He fell foul of the corporation in 1699 following publication of a pamphlet in London detailing the case of soldiers' claims of arrears of pay from the siege, which 'the corporation alleged misrepresented the facts to their detriment'.[62] The corporation then attempted to disenfranchise him leading to Conolly's involvement. This

[59] Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 197.
[60] Conolly to John Harvey, 31 Dec. 1698 (P.R.O.N.I., D1449/12/20).
[61] Conolly to Harvey, quoted in Lenox-Conyngham, *An old Ulster house*, p. 18.
[62] Young, *Fighters of Derry*, p. 22.

would prove more difficult than anticipated for the corporation and led to some frustration on the slow progress of the case through the courts. This frustration came to a head when Conolly submitted his bill of costs in September 1699 for the Mitchelburne case and the mayoral dispute of 1698. Having perused his accounts the corporation 'being somewhat surprised as so large a charge and so little done for have not now time to order the payment of it as soon as possibly they can'.[63] Conolly replied regarding his bill that it was the only one 'I never had a farthing profit in'.[64] It would be the following March before Conolly was paid his bill of £54 10*s* 6*d*, and even then they did not pay it in full refusing to pay for expenditure worth £6 19*s* 4*d*.[65]

In May 1700 Mitchelburne had a writ of mandamus served in the Court of King's Bench demanding his reinstatement as an alderman. In September Conolly again produced a bill of costs, but again the corporation expressed alarm and desired him 'to bring the suit to as speedy a conclusion and with as much husbandry as he possibly can'.[66] In November Conolly wrote to the corporation, desiring to know the circumstances of Mitchelburne's admission to the corporation, presumably trying to find a loophole which would aid his expulsion. The corporation replied that they did not insist in removing him 'because of his not being sworn in but because of his behaviours in that office'.[67] The case continued to drag on and in May 1701 Conolly wrote that Mitchelburne 'designs this week some day to attack us in the King's Bench. I am upon my guard and our counsel are ready and

[63] Londonderry Minutebook, 12 Sept. 1699.
[64] Conolly to John Harvey, 18 Sept. 1699 (P.R.O.N.I., D1449/12/24).
[65] Londonderry Minutebook, 12 Mar. 1699/1700.
[66] Ibid., 9 Sept. 1700, 3 Oct. 1700.
[67] Ibid., 12 Nov. 1700.

prepared for a defence'.[68] Whether the dispute was resolved at this juncture is unclear, but Conolly was still demanding payment for his part in it in 1703. This may have referred to money that both parties agreed was owed, or to money he perceived he was owed. Certainly he had great trouble extracting money from the corporation. In 1701 a committee of aldermen was sent to meet him to attempt to reduce his bills by almost ten pounds.[69] His work for the corporation was not always well remunerated or regarded, but it certainly formed an important part of Conolly's political apprenticeship.

Conolly remained in the corporation's employ until 1709. After the passing of the Test Act in 1704, he was sworn in as one of the new aldermen who replaced the Presbyterians who had disqualified themselves.[70] This gave him an increased role in the affairs of the corporation, and when a further dispute arose over town dues he was amongst the corporation members in parliament who was to be consulted on this issue.[71] Conolly rarely attended meetings of the corporation, and only attended a meeting of the Common Council for the first time in October 1706.[72] Despite his lack of attendance, occasioned by his residence in Dublin, he was elected in absentia as mayor in 1707. However, he declined this honour, citing 'his important business at present preventing him'.[73] He did continue as legal agent and presented the certificates for each mayoral election, and was even asked to present the certificate of his own election to the Privy Council. His role as legal agent came to an end in January 1710 when Mr Richard Vincent was appointed to

[68] Conolly to Harvey, 27 May 1701, (P.R.O.N.I., D1449/12/33).
[69] Londonderry Minutebook 13 Aug. 1701.
[70] Ibid., 13 Sept. 1704. See also Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 197.
[71] Londonderry Minutebook, 3 Feb. 1704/5
[72] Ibid., 2 Oct. 1706.
[73] Ibid., 13 Nov. 1707.

'succeed Mr Conolly in what business this corporation may have to do particularly the lodging of certificates we order our chamberlain to send up'.[74] It is likely Conolly's replacement as legal agent was connected to his appointment as a privy councillor in the same year. He could no longer bring forward petitions and election certificates to a council of which he was a member.

The job description for Conolly's successor did not reflect the full range of activities that Conolly was engaged with on behalf of the corporation. He had served as legal agent during a particularly busy period. The effects of the Williamite war and confiscation had created situations and opportunities which were unlikely to recur. The Test Act of 1704 had also removed much of the party tensions within the corporation. Conolly's skilful representation of the corporation was recognised outside the city, and in 1698 he had been employed by the Presbyterian dominated Belfast Corporation to conduct the town's defence against the Anglican vicar of Belfast in a dispute over 'house money'.[75] This brief seems to have arisen out of Conolly's work in Derry. There were many close links between the two corporations and members of the same families such as the Lennoxes and Cairneses were involved in the business communities of both towns. Another Belfast merchant with close Derry connections, David Butle, first approached Conolly in March 1698.[76] Conolly's membership of the Irish House of Commons from 1692 also increased his ability to represent the interests of Derry Corporation in Dublin. His activities on behalf of the corporation increased his profile amongst the Dublin political elite. Active involvement in local politics and government was seen as an advantage for aspiring MPs. At least 155 MPs elected

[74] Ibid., 31 Jan 1709/10.
[75] See Agnew, *Belfast merchant families* , pp 72-73.
[76] On Butle see Ibid. , p. 215.

in 1692 had previous experience of local government either at county or corporation level, and many more would become involved following their return to parliament.[77]

Conolly and the Irish Society

The twelve London Companies represented collectively by the Irish Society for the Plantation of Ulster, more commonly known as the Irish Society, were the largest landowners in County Londonderry. Their interests often coincided with the interests of Derry Corporation and there were strong links between the two. The Irish agents of the society were invariably prominent in the affairs of the city; David Cairnes, for example, agent to the Society from 1692 to 1707, was a leading member of the corporation and even represented it in parliament.

From 1696 onwards the corporation became involved in a long-running legal dispute between the Irish Society and the see of Derry. This dispute over fishing rights and land has been described as a 'long drawn out and infinitely tedious business,' and while a somewhat apt description neglects the important constitutional dimension of the case, particularly the questions it raised about the jurisdiction of the English House of Lords in Ireland. [78] The dispute had a long history and came back into focus in the early 1690s, partly because of the expiry of old leases but also because of the arrival of William King as Bishop of Derry. King was an energetic and frequently confrontational prelate, in marked contrast to many of his predecessors and successors. In his first few years in Derry, he concentrated on the rebuilding of churches and on making other improvements to

[77] See Table 2.1.
[78] J.S. Curle, *The Honourable the Irish society and the plantation of Ulster 1608-2000*, p. 173.

his war-ravished diocese. However he also came into conflict with the Presbyterian community in Derry. The antipathy King felt for the Presbyterians was mirrored by their reaction to him. In particular Derry Corporation with its strong Presbyterian bias was not enamoured with the new bishop. This was to have important consequences when King decided to 'make a determined effort to claim rights over certain parcels of land in the neighbourhood of Derry known as the Quarterlands and to fishing rights in the Foyle and Bann rivers'.[79] The corporation under the influence of the town clerk John Mogridge, King's former legal agent with whom he had since fallen out, supported the Irish Society in resisting the bishop's claims.

The corporation held the lease from the bishop of the disputed lands, which had expired in 1696, and therefore had an active interest in the affair. The overlap of personnel between the corporation and the Society's local agents was also important. David Cairnes, as the Society's agent, was one of the leading actors in the litigation with the bishop. He was assisted not only by Mogridge, but also by Conolly. Conolly as well as serving as legal agent for the Corporation was appointed solicitor to the Irish Society in 1697, a position he held until 1700.[80] He acted on behalf of the Society in the Dublin Courts where the case was being conducted, while Mogridge seems to have been based in Derry.

Conolly performed a similar role for the Society in Dublin as he did for Derry Corporation. He carried out routine legal work, briefing barristers, gathering legal material for dispatch to London, as well as maintaining contact with Mogridge in

[79] Ibid.
[80] See Raymond Smith, *The Irish Society 1613-1966*, p. 110.

Derry and the Society in London.[81] In August 1697 the Irish House of Lords instructed the Society to reply to the bishop's suit in the House of Lords.[82] The Society having decided to seek advice as to whether the Irish Lords had any jurisdiction in this case at all, instructed Conolly to seek to have the Lords decision deferred.[83] He seems to have had a role in drafting the Society's eventual response to the bishop as five copies of the Society's response to the bishop's petition appear in Conolly's own papers.[84] Conolly also seems to have negotiated with the bishop on the Society's behalf. In particular he seems to have been responsible for paying the rent due to the bishop on behalf of the Society. In July 1697 he warned them that King was 'vigorously prosecuting' them for the rent of fishings in County Londonderry.[85]

The salmon fishing rights on the Bann and Foyle rivers were perhaps the most valuable part of the disputed property. In 1702 King suggested that in the years 1697-1699 fish to the value of £1800 had been taken from the Foyle and fish valued at £7,500 was taken from the Bann in the same three year period. The moiety or half tithe due to the diocese for the above fish was according to the bishop, £375.[86] The fishings were leased to Lord Massereene until 1699 and then to a consortium of Derry aldermen led by James Lenox from 1700. The bishop

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[81] See for example, Irish Society to Conolly, 26 May 1696; Irish Society to David Cairnes, 10 July 1697; and Irish Society Court Minute, 23 Oct. 1697, reproduced in T.W. Moody and J.G. Simms (eds), *The Bishopric of Derry and the Irish Society of London, 1610-1704*, II, pp 169, 183, 193.
[82] Copy of order of Irish House of Lords to Irish Society dated 16 Aug. 1697 (I.A.A., 97/84 B/8/1-34).
[83] Irish Society Court Minute, 22 Sept. 1697, reproduced in Moody and Simms (eds), *The Bishopric of Derry and the Irish Society*, II, p. 191. See also Philip O'Regan, *Archbishop William King of Dublin,* p. 101.
[84] Five Copies of Reasons humbly offered why the Lords and Commons assembled ought not receive the Bishop's petition (I.A.A., 97/84 B/8/1-34).
[85] Irish Society to David Cairnes, 10 July 1697, reproduced in Moody and Simms (eds), *The Bishopric of Derry and the Irish Society*, II, p. 183.
[86] Bishop of Derry's petition for tithes of fish, [*c.*1702] reproduced in Ibid. pp 428-30.

however attempted to take possession of the fishings in 1699 upon the expiration of Massereene's lease, but the tenants supported by the county sheriffs Samuel Harvey, a member of Derry Corporation, and John Denning, resisted this.[87] The sheriffs became embroiled in a dispute with King who questioned their loyalties, considering Conolly who also represented the Society represented them. When asked why they employed Conolly, the sheriffs replied that 'they usually did employ him'.[88] They also disclosed that acting upon Conolly's advice, 'they deferred anything that was to be done for [King] as long as they could and were sometimes fined, whereas whatever was to be done against [King] was done with the utmost rigour and haste'.[89] This conduct, Harvey and Denning acknowledged, was contrary to their oath but Conolly had 'bid them not to be concerned for he would save them harmless from their fines and, accordingly, had from time to time got off their fines'.[90] It appears that Conolly was not averse to bending the law to successfully defend his client's interests. Through his dual role as attorney for the sheriffs and as attorney for the Irish Society, he was able to manage the administration of justice in favour of his clients.

In May 1700 the Society praised Conolly's 'great courage and industry in our affair'.[91] It was a business arrangement, his role being to conduct the Society's routine legal business, not to defend the superiority of the English House of Lords as a court of appeal in a wider sense. Burns's claim that 'Conolly's... contribution

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[87] See, copy of the statement of John Denning Sheriff of Londonderry about the attempt to install Richard Anderson as the tenant of the fishing weir at Ballynase, County Londonderry which was resisted by the Bishop of Derry (I.A.A., 97/84 B/7/1-28).
[88] Bishop of Derry's note about Cutt fishery [*c.* 1700], reproduced in, Moody and Simms (eds), *The Bishopric of Derry and the Irish Society*, II, pp 277-78.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Irish Society to Conolly, 18 May 1700, reproduced in Moody and Simms (eds), *The Bishopric of Derry and the Irish Society*, II, p. 273.

towards winning this case for his clients identified him in English ministerial circles as a dependable spokesman in Dublin for the constitutional dependence of Ireland upon England and the supremacy of the British parliament over the Dublin legislature' is implausible and not supported by the evidence. [92] Conolly was not as we have seen a major actor in the case. The chief Irish representative of the Society was David Cairnes, not Conolly. The contacts that he forged with the Society were indeed much more beneficial to Conolly than to 'English ministerial circles'. As the largest landowner in County Londonderry, the Society held a significant electoral interest and this support, together with the support of Derry Corporation, could only have benefited Conolly in his successful election to one of the county seats in 1703. Conolly was also eventually to obtain long-term leases of the Grocers' and Vintners' proportions. He, not the Society, was the beneficiary of the connection. The case did not affect Conolly's subsequent relations with King and in 1704, when the issue was being finally resolved, King wrote to Conolly requesting his assistance in receiving some rent that was still outstanding to him.[93]

Entry into parliament

In 1692 Conolly entered the Irish House of Commons for the borough of Donegal, beginning an involvement with the Irish parliament that would continue until his death. Election for parliament confirmed Conolly's status as a member of the Irish ruling elite, even if he was an atypical member of the elite. In 1692 he was a minor landowner with a small recently acquired estate in County Meath. He also held a lease from Trinity College Dublin of part of their large estate in County

[92] R.E. Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics in the eighteenth century*, I, p. 32. For a more considered discussion of the effects of the case on King's later career see O'Regan, *Archbishop William King of Dublin*, pp 97-124.
[93] King to Conolly, 17 Feb. 1705 (T.C.D., Ms 750/3/1/93-94).

Donegal. He had no family or personal background in local government, either at county or corporation level, and his practice as an attorney barely qualified him as a member of the elite. Despite these disadvantages Conolly was able to break into the parliamentary world. This can be put down to the unique characteristics of the 1692 parliament and the opportunities created by the Williamite revolution.

Other than King James' parliament in 1689 with its overwhelmingly Catholic make-up no parliament had been summoned since that of 1661-66.[94] The Irish political landscape had undergone dramatic changes in the intervening years. Only 16 members elected in 1692 had previous parliamentary experience. The members therefore represented a new generation of the Irish political elite. This was even more extreme than the situation in England where over a quarter of the MPs elected to the 1690 parliament were sitting in their first parliament; itself a relatively high proportion and resulting from the 'disjointed politics of the previous decade'.[95] The Irish parliament, unlike its English counterpart,[96] has not been subjected to a statistical structural analysis of members despite the recent appearance of the *History of the Irish Parliament,* though the prosopographical approach of that project may stimulate new research.[97] Nothing similar to Hayton's magisterial survey in the 1690-1715 volume of the *History of Parliament* has been attempted regarding the Irish parliament.[98] Such an investigation would enable the historian to examine the reasons why men entered the Irish parliament as well as

[94] J.G. Simms, 'The Jacobite parliament of 1689' in D.W. Hayton and Gerard O'Brien (eds.) *War and politics in Ireland,* pp 65-81.
[95] Cruickshanks, Handley & Hayton (ed.) *The house of commons, 1690-1715*, I, p. 330.
[96] See for example, Christie, *British 'non-elite' MPs, 1715-1820*; E.A. Wasson, *Born to rule: British political elites* (Stroud, 2000), pp 65-92.
[97] E.M. Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish parliament, 1692-1800: Commons, constituencies and statutes* (6 vols, Belfast, 2002)
[98] Cruickshanks, Handley &\Hayton (ed.) *The house of commons, 1690-1715*, I. See especially pp 262-343.

which groups formed. In the absence of such detailed research it is still possible to assess Conolly's entry into parliament in structural terms and to determine how much he deviated from the norm of the 'inevitable parliament men'.[99]

Conolly's background and social position suggested he was an unlikely member of parliament in 1692. Of the MPs whose parentage is known, Conolly's were lowest on the social scale.[100] Only Sir Patrick Dun, the state physician, whose father was a Scottish dyer, had risen from similar origins. Educationally Conolly also suffered a disadvantage: he had neither attended university nor been trained at one of the Inns of Court. And unlike most of the other 166 MPs who had not received higher education, he was neither a soldier nor a country gentleman. He was one of four attorneys to enter parliament in 1692, as compared to 49 other legal practitioners, mostly barristers.[101] Of the three other attorneys, one Daniel Gahan MP for Portarlington was the son of a former MP, his father having sat in the 1661-6 parliament so his election could be partly attributed to his membership of a parliamentary family. Virtually nothing is known of Nicholas Jones MP for Naas; he was only returned for this parliament and seems to have been a minor officeholder. Hugh Hamill, like Conolly, was returned for a Donegal borough, in this case Lifford. He was a prominent member of the county gentry, having served as a sheriff in 1681 and as high sheriff in 1689, although he was of obscure background. His rise to a position in the county elite from similarly inauspicious beginnings suggests that Donegal upper-class society may have been particularly permeable in the late seventeenth century. Hamill's entry into parliament could

[99] The phrase is Namier's. See Lewis Namier, *The structure of politics at the accession of George III* Second ed (London, 1968), p. 1.
[100] See Figure 2.3.
[101] See Figure 2.2.

also be attributed to his religion: he was a Presbyterian from an area with a strong dissenting presence.[102] He had also distinguished himself at the siege of Derry, another sure way to earn strong local approbation.[103]

It is therefore difficult to generalise about parliamentary entrants from ostensibly similar backgrounds. Each of the four attorneys elected in 1692 had a distinct background and specific advantages which could be harnessed. In Conolly's case his legal training provided him with the skills necessary to obtain the patronage of influential figures like Robert Rochfort and Captain James Hamilton. His legal work on behalf of Derry Corporation and the Irish Society had introduced him into the world of official Dublin. All of these factors, combined with his activity as a prominent member of the Irish exile community in London in 1689, made entry into parliament for a borough seat a realistic ambition in 1692. The disadvantages of his non-elite background were overcome through his successful manipulation of the opportunities which came his way. Once in parliament, Conolly continued his rise to public prominence through involvement firstly in the Bishop of Derry's dispute with the Irish Society, and secondly through his advocacy of the rights of the 'Protestant Purchasers' following the Act of Resumption. By 1703 and the first election of Queen Anne's reign he had a sufficient interest in County Londonderry, both through his recent purchase of an estate at Limavady and his connections with the Irish Society and Derry Corporation, to be returned for one of the county seats, a seat he held until his death.

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[102] *H.I.P.*, iv, p. 502.

[103] See petition from Captain Hugh Hamill, Captain William Hamill, Captain Robert Baird and Captain John Auchmuty seeking arrears of pay since the siege of Derry, in *C.J.I.* II, p. 475.

Chapter Three

Untying the 'mystic knot': Conolly and the Williamite confiscation.

The Williamite confiscation was the last of the major land confiscations in seventeenth-century Ireland. Each land settlement had provided unprecedented opportunities for accelerated social mobility which was not possible under normal conditions. The disposal all at once of so much confiscated land created a buyers market, creating opportunities for the 'speculative and strong willed'.[1] The most speculative and strong-willed adventurer in the 1690s was William Conolly. Historians have long recognised the important contribution of his dealings in forfeited estates to the generation of his fortune and indeed the development of his political career. In 1688 Conolly was a busy but unremarkable Dublin attorney. The Williamite revolution, however, had a profound effect on his career. His brief exile in London, and the connections it provided, have been examined elsewhere, as has his legal activities on behalf of Derry Corporation in the immediate post-war period. The opportunities to gain riches and influence through investment in forfeited estates had a much greater impact on Conolly's career. In 1703 his income was reckoned to be approximately £4,000 per annum.[2] Virtually all of this income came from estates purchased in the 1690s, both forfeited Jacobite lands and other estates, such as the manor of Limavady, were acquired at bargain prices because of the depressed nature of the land market. He had also acquired a reputation for shrewd dealing or sharp practice depending upon the viewpoint of the observer; the Trustees of Forfeited Estates allegedly referred to him as a

[1] S.J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power*, p. 64. See also Harold O'Sullivan, *John Bellew, a seventeenth century man of many parts* (Dublin, 2000), especially chapters, 6,7 & 8.

[2] Henry Maxwell to James Stanhope, 23 Nov. 1703 (Centre for Kentish Studies Maidstone, Stanhope Papers, U1590/0141/11). [Reproduced as an appendix to a forthcoming article by David Hayton, to whom I am very grateful for allowing me to see a copy in advance of publication.]

'cunning intriguing spark', while Joseph Addison referred more favourably to his raising of a great estate 'without the advantages of birth or education'.[3] His acquisition of a large fortune in such a short period of time had provoked, almost inevitably, questions and innuendo about the means by which he had acquired this fortune, questions which have continued to dog his reputation.

Historians have rarely probed the clouds that have continued to hang over Conolly's activities in the 1690s. Simms in his authoritative history of the confiscation noted that 'Conolly's rise from obscurity has always been a puzzle and that it could not be solely ascribed solely to his trafficking in forfeited estates, although he certainly made a great deal of money out of them'.[4] Simms briefly outlined the known facts regarding Conolly's interest in the forfeitures, drawing on the evidence collected by the Trustees for Forfeited Estates, but an analysis of these facts lay outside the scope of his enquiry.[5] Later historians have been content to follow him in noting Conolly's rapid accumulation of land and wealth but failing to analyse the methods by which they were acquired. Hayton, for instance, refers to Conolly's 'mushroom fortune, which was thought to have its origins in trafficking in forfeited estates',[6] while McNally merely states that Conolly's fortune was founded upon successful land speculation.[7] The most in-depth analysis of Conolly's purchases of forfeited lands is still Lena Boylan's short biographical sketch, which while good on the details offers little analysis, although she does

[3] Petition of John Little, 1701 in 'Copies and draughts of petitions to the House of Commons in 1701-2 about Irish forfeitures' (Bodleian Library, Oxford, Rawlinson MS A253 f. 374.); Joseph Addison to Sidney Lord Godolphin, 7 May 1709 (Walter Graham (ed.) *Letters of Joseph Addison,* p. 136).
[4] J.G. Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p. 126.
[5] Ibid., p. 127
[6] D.W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685-1742,* p. 72.
[7] *O.D.N.B.,* entry on Conolly by Patrick McNally.

highlight one particular case, which was she uses, as did hostile contemporaries, to show the temptations that Conolly succumbed to in order to circumvent the law in the pursuit of profit.[8] This exploration of the shadier side of Conolly's activities has otherwise been only hinted at in the secondary literature.

This chapter will endeavour to untie the 'mystic knot' of Conolly's financial affairs in the 1690s. John Trenchard, pamphleteer and trustee of the forfeited estates claimed in 1702 that the trustees had untied this mystic knot and 'set him in a true light'.[9] This assessment was, however, based on political considerations surrounding the Irish Protestant agitation against the Act of Resumption, something in which Conolly had played a prominent role. Conolly's entanglement with the trustees plays an important part in this chapter for a number of reasons. Firstly much of the evidence for Conolly's career during this period comes from the records of the 1699 commission of inquiry and especially from the proceedings of the Trustees of Forfeited Estates. Secondly the Trustees determined investigation into Conolly's actions is interesting in itself, both for the information it yields, but also in terms of their motives. Thirdly the roles of individual trustees, especially Trenchard, but also Francis Annesley and Sir Henry Sheres, in the

[8] Lena Boylan, 'The Conollys of Castletown', pp 4-5. This useful article lacks scholarly rigour but does silently correct the earlier suggestion made by Brian Fitzgerald, who also had access to the Conolly papers, who suggested that the roots of Conolly's fortune lay not in land speculation but in a large inheritance from two mystery old ladies. Brian Fitzgerald, *Lady Louisa Conolly 1743-1821: An Anglo-Irish biography* (London, 1950), p. 18. See also, Mina Lenox-Conyngham, *An old Ulster house* (Dundalk, 1946) which includes the same story.

[9] John Trenchard, *A letter from a soldier to the commons of England occasioned by an address now carrying on by the Protestants in Ireland, in order to take away the fund appropriated for the payment of the arrears of the army* (London, 1702), pp 26.

debate over the Act of Resumption and their personal attacks on Conolly were important, not least for the increased publicity and profile it brought him.[10]

These attacks reflected his rising profile in the Irish Protestant community. Toby Barnard has suggested that Conolly was part of a coterie of inter-related north-west Ulstermen who were well placed to take advantage of the Williamite revolution in Ireland, but these connections remain to be drawn out fully.[11] This chapter will attempt to analyse the nature of this grouping and their interaction with other political factions especially that centred on the Brodrick brothers, concentrating particularly on Conolly's role. A thorough understanding of these connections will make it easier to understand the importance of this period to the later development of Conolly's career, and his emergence as a leading member of the Whig party in the first parliament of Queen Anne's reign.

It is, however, necessary to first examine the precise nature of Conolly's interest in the Williamite forfeitures. Conolly upon his return to Dublin, in early 1691, immediately got involved in the land market, taking a lease of a portion of the Trinity College estates in Co. Donegal, in February 1691.[12] He also purchased an estate at Rodanstown Co. Meath, where he established his first country seat.[13] Conolly's first foray into the forfeited estate market, came during the same year when he acted as agent for Derry Corporation in their attempts to secure a lease of the confiscated estate of the Earl of Antrim. This attempt as we have seen was

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[10] The best analysis of the Williamite confiscation remains J.G. Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation* which details the complete process from the initial forfeitures in 1690 through to the disposal of the forfeited estates by the trustees in 1703.
[11] T.C. Barnard, 'A tale of three sisters: Katherine Conolly of Castletown', p. 272.
[12] T.C.D. Board Minutes 1660-1740, 2 Feb. 1691 (T.C.D., Mun V/5/2 p. 284).
[13] For details of this estate see chapter 1.

doomed when Antrim was adjudged to come under the terms of the Articles of Galway, but Conolly's persistence on behalf of the corporation, which eventually led to personal financial loss, demonstrated his willingness to take risks in anticipation of a large windfall.[14]

Despite this setback Conolly continued to speculate in forfeited estates both on his own behalf and on behalf of others. In 1692 he was acting as an agent for the farming of Sir Patrick Trant's estate, in the midlands.[15] He claimed he was forced to bid unnecessarily high for this farm as a result of prejudice. Such farms acquired at the right price could prove quite lucrative as the head rent payable to the revenue commissioners was often below the actual valuation of the estate.[16] Conolly was physically based in Dublin during this period, where he continued his legal practice as well as acting as legal agent to Derry Corporation and as agent to Captain James Hamilton. These activities gave him access to the administrative and political worlds of post-revolution Dublin. His connections to these administrative and political elites were strengthened in December 1694 with his marriage to Katherine Conyngham. Toby Barnard has made a persuasive argument for the importance of Conolly's marriage to his future career. Marriage brought not only a marriage portion of £2,300, which his wife's elder brother,

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[14] For Conolly's attempts on behalf of the corporation to lease the Antrim estate and his subsequent efforts to collect rents on the estate on their behalf, in opposition to Antrim's agents see chapter 2. 'From lawyer to politician'

[15] Wyche Papers 'Petition Book' quoted in Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p. 127. Sir Patrick Trant's estates in the midlands had been granted to the Huguenot Earl of Galway for three years in 1692 in recompense for the losses he had suffered during the recent war. Simms, *Williamite Confiscation,* p. 88-9.

[16] *The report of the commissioners appointed by Parliament to enquire into the Irish forfeitures delivered to the honourable House of Commons the 15th of December 1699. With their resolutions and addresses to His Majesty relating to those forfeitures. As also His Majesty's gracious answers thereunto; and His most gracious speech to both Houses of Parliament the 5th of January 1690,* (London, 1700), item no. 52. This report is referred to hereafter as *The Commissioners Report.*

Henry Conyngham paid immediately, providing a ready source of capital, but also more importantly valuable connections.[17]

Conyngham, although Conolly's junior in age was his superior in terms of political and social rank. He enjoyed a more prominent standing in the two Williamite parliaments, where he was closely connected with the Brodrick faction.[18] It seems probable that he introduced Conolly into these political circles after the latter's marriage. Certainly Conolly quickly moved into political and financial relationships with both Brodrick brothers. Perhaps more tantalising is Conolly's relationship with another Conyngham relation, James Bonnell (1653-99), the Irish Accountant General, who had married Katherine Conolly's elder sister Jane in 1693. Bonnell was also from 1693 the secretary or registrar of the Irish forfeitures, and as Barnard has pointed out 'no imputation of insider dealing has ever been attached to him'. Despite this, the successful speculative activities of his relations, Conolly, Conyngham and Conyngham's cousin Edmond Stafford do raise questions about possible exploitation of his position.[19] Certainly Bonnell and Conolly both made enquiries about purchasing the indebted estate of George Phillips at Limavady, Co. Londonderry in 1695, which Conolly eventually purchased in 1697 for a bargain price of £1,800. Conolly would later be accused of engaging in insider dealings trying to secure his title to this estate. Although heavily encumbered when Conolly purchased it in 1697, it was probably the

[17] Barnard, 'A tale of three sisters', pp 271-2. Conolly marriage settlement with receipt for the marriage portion on reverse, 15 Dec. 1694 (I.A.A., 97/84 G/2/1). The portion was paid a week after the marriage on 21 December.

[18] See, Alan Brodrick (Dublin) to St John Brodrick (London) 17 Dec. 1695 (S.H.C., 1248/1 f. 278.). A survey of the Irish Commons Journals for the 1692 and 1695-9 sessions suggests that Conyngham was the more prominent member of the two. See also Hayton, *Ruling Ireland,* p. 89.

[19] Barnard, 'A tale of three sisters' p. 273; N.D. Emerson, 'James Bonnell, accountant general of Ireland, 1653-99', in *Evangelical Quarterly,* xii (1940), pp 172-83.

greatest bargain he made during this period, and justified the risk that he took in acquiring it.[20]

If the possible benefits of Conolly's relationship with James Bonnell resist probing, his partnership with Thomas Brodrick is slightly easier to delineate. Brodrick and his younger brother Alan had been among the leaders of the 'sole right' faction in the 1692 parliamentary session, where they were joined by amongst others Robert Rochfort and Henry Conyngham. Conyngham although Conolly's junior in age enjoyed a higher political profile in both the 1692 and 1695 sessions, and enjoyed a closer political relationship with Alan Brodrick at this junction, who recommended him to his brother, St John, as 'a very worthy man and intimately my friend'.[21] Alan Brodrick chose not to dabble in the forfeitures, choosing to concentrate on consolidating the family holdings at Midleton, Co. Cork instead.[22] Thomas Brodrick, however, actively entered into the forfeitures market. In 1695 he attempted unsuccessfully to obtain a grant of Lord Clancarty's estate on behalf of the protestant gentlemen of County Cork.[23] Undeterred by this failure, he entered into a partnership with Conolly in the same year. According to the 1699 parliamentary commission of inquiry, together they governed the cants, 'and acted in partnership in all they took in the year 1695 and ever since; and let it

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[20] Bishop King had advised Bonnell, not to go on with the purchase but Conolly had no such qualms although it took him two years to secure his title, Bishop King to James Bonnell, 28 June 1695, 23 July, 1695 (T.C.D., Mss 1995/2008 Nos. 445, 452.) For the suggestion that Conolly had acted improperly during the negotiations for this estate, see Minutes of Trustees of Forfeited Estates, 14 Feb. 1701, (N.L.I., Annesley Papers P.259, Vol. iv, p. 54). The originals of these volumes are in P.R.O.N.I (D/1854) but I have used the microfilm copies in the N.L.I, which were used by Simms, in his pioneering study, and are arranged slightly differently.

[21] Alan Brodrick (Dublin) to St John Brodrick (London) 17 Dec. 1695 (S.H.C., 1281/1 f. 278.).

[22] I am indebted to Ms Susan Ricketts for this point.

[23] Earl of Shrewsbury to Thomas Brodrick, 3 Dec. 1695; Brodrick to Shrewsbury, 10 Dec., 1695; Shrewsbury to Brodrick, 24 Dec. 1695 (*MSS of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury*, II, pt 1 (H.M.C., 1903) pp 271, 276, 281); David Dickson, *Old world colony,* p. 62.

afterwards to under tenants at greater rents'.[24] This conclusion was borne out by the evidence presented to the commissioners by witnesses across the country. One deponent Edmond Tyrell told the commissioners in 1699, that,

> Mr William Connolly [was the] most frequent bidder there and at most of the Cants for the forfeited lands of Munster since the year 1695. Sir Thomas Broderick did usually attend and he did appear to have so great an influence at the said Cants that seldom any person durst bid against him, and so he had almost what bargains he pleased. And this deponent did observe that Mr Connolly and Mr Broderick never bid against one another, and so between them they generally governed the Cants.[25]

The language in his deposition was echoed in the commissioners' report. Tyrell also provided a vivid picture of Conolly's methods. In August 1699, when lands in Co. Roscommon were being canted, Tyrell had bid for several lands much to Conolly's dissatisfaction. Conolly, according to Tyrell's testimony, approached him after the cant and,

> held up his hand and swore God damn him or words to that effect, that when he was out of that place he would cut his throat, or words to that effect, and by means of the swaggering of the said Mr Connolly (which was always usual to him on those occasions) very many people were frightened from bidding at the Cant for setting of lands, by which means the said Mr Connolly got great bargains of the forfeited lands.[26]

While such hostile evidence should be treated with some caution it does reveal an image of Conolly as a ruthless efficient operator, willing to use all means to achieve his aims. The commissioners chose to use a different example in their

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[24] *The Commissioners Report,* p. 20. This parliamentary commission was set up to establish why the forfeitures had failed to yield the promised revenue to the English Exchequer. The focus of the inquiry was the grants of land made by King William to his favourites and loyal followers, in recompense for their services and loyalty. The commisioners' inclusion of the Kings grant of King James' former private estate to Lady Orkney, dominated the debate, which followed their report. See Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland*, pp 96-110 for a detailed study of the commission of inquiry.

[25] Deposition of Edmond Tyrell of Dublin, 2 Aug. 1699 (N.L.I. P.264, xxxiii, f. 36.).See also Deposition of Denis Daly of Galway, 19 June 1699 (N.L.I., P.264, xxxiii, f. 2). I am indebted to Mr Eoin Kinsella for these references.

[26] Second Deposition of Edmond Tyrell, 2 Aug. 1699 (N.L.I. P.264, xxxiii, f. 36.).

report to highlight Conolly's methods as an exemplar of the insidious role of agents of great men (and women) in the mismanagement of the forfeitures. Such agents of 'great men' were singled out in the inquiry commisioners' report in 1699. Conolly admitted to acting on behalf of Lady Gravemore, the widow of a Dutch general, in her attempts to secure a grant of Irish lands, while he had also previously acted as an agent for farming the forfeited estate of Sir Patrick Trant. His most significant agency, however, was his employment, alongside Thomas Brodrick, as agent to the Dutch Earl of Albemarle. Joost Van Keppel, earl of Albemarle had been granted over 183,590 acres in 1697, including the confiscated estate of Lord Clare and some of the former estates of Richard Talbot, Earl of Tyrconnell.[27]

Part of Conolly's role as an agent to Albemarle was to identify estates, which could then become part of future grants to prospective grantees. The inquiry commissioners made specific reference to an auction of some lands in Co. Kilkenny. These auctions took place in Dublin, where Conolly was based throughout the 1690s, something else that the commissioners criticised as this made it easier for 'agents of great men' to dominate the cants.[28] In this particular instance, Conolly and the Attorney General allegedly 'canted Lands in the County of Kilkenny worth about *200l* per annum to more than *20,000l per annum*, so that persons who had no interest, found it in vain to contend; besides they were over awed by the Authority often of those that bid against them; which weighs much in this'. Conolly's aim as he revealed to the commissioners was that 'he hoped to get a grant of the said lands for Lieut General Gravemore's widow and that he

[27] Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* pp 88-9.
[28] *The Commissioners Report,* p. 20.

expected to get a release of this cant at forwards'.[29] He claimed not to know why the Attorney General Robert Rochfort bid against him in this instance, and denied they were acting in partnership, further claiming that he always worked alone, looking for lands which he would later let out at greater prices.[30] The commissioners were convinced that Conolly was not working alone and in the next paragraph of their report described his partnership with Thomas Brodrick. Significantly they were the only individuals singled out in the report for alleged misconduct, with Brodrick particularly censured because he was a member of the Privy Council at the time.[31] The commissioners were not alone in making such a judgement on Conolly and Brodrick. In April 1700, Bartholomew Van Homrigh, Dublin merchant and revenue commissioner, writing to his patron General Ginkel, commented that Brodrick and his partner Conolly 'are held in esteem by no-one'.[32]

The 1699 inquiry report, while harsh in its judgement on Conolly, did not utilise all the information the commissioners had gathered about him. In the course of their investigations, they had interviewed Conolly and gained an insight into his business practices and the methods he used to gain maximum benefit from his role

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[29] Deposition of William Conolly, 3 Aug. 1699 in 'Commissioners of enquiry into the Irish Forfeitures: Book of depositions from June 10 1688' (N.L.I., P.264, xxxiii, p. 56.).

[30] Ibid. The reference to Robert Rochfort, who was attorney general from 1695, is intriguing, because Conolly enjoyed a close working relationship with him in other spheres. Rochfort had served as Recorder of Derry since 1680, and Conolly may have secured his appointment as legal agent to the corporation through Rochfort's patronage. They certainly worked closely together soliciting the corporation's affairs in Dublin. Rochfort had also successfully recommended Conolly to the Duke of Ormonde, whom Conolly served as legal agent from 1690 until at least 1703. Rochfort, although a substantial purchaser of forfeited estates did not join the purchasers agitation spearheaded by Conolly and Brodricks, although this may have had more to do with a breach both personal and political with Alan Brodrick. See Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 29 Jan. 1701 (S.H.C., 1281/2. ff 1-2).

[31] His role as agent to Lady Orkney, also increased the commissioners negative opinion of him.

[32] Van Homrigh (Dublin) to Ginkel, 27 Aug. 1700 (Wouter Troost, 'Letters from Bartholomew Von Homrigh to General Ginkel, Earl of Athlone , 1692-1700', in *Analecta Hibernia,* xxxiii (1986), p. 128). Van Homrigh had served as MP for Derry from 1692 –99 and had solicited the corporation's business in Dublin alongside Conolly. See chapter 1. In 1699 he was concerned that Conolly and Brodrick were attempting to use Albemarle's influence at court to have him replaced as a Revenue Commissioner in Ireland.

as agent to Albemarle. He was employed in his own words: 'as solicitor in passing the Earl of Albemarle's grants and in managing and soliciting his law affairs'.[33]

Thomas Brodrick seems to have been the senior partner and oversaw the sale of the earl's estate, but Conolly dealt with prospective purchasers and oversaw the collection of rents on the estates. This division of roles reflected their respective physical locations as well as status. Brodrick was already a member of the Irish Privy Council. He was also resident in London, and enjoyed close relationships with figures prominent at the English court.[34] Conolly on the other hand was an attorney and a junior member of parliament. He did, however, have the advantage of being familiar with the Dublin legal and administrative worlds, through his work for the Irish Society and Derry Corporation, which was continuing at this time. Such a presence in Dublin was essential to the successful management of the earl's Irish grants. Conolly did not spend all his time in Dublin, as he was required to oversee the management of the granted estates and oversee the collection of rents.[35] These activities gave him detailed knowledge of the various estates, and it is probable that it was Conolly who succeeded in getting the size of the earl's original grant increased (its putative value did not equate to the valuation of £2,000 initially promised to Albemarle).[36] But of more interest are Conolly's dealings with prospective purchasers of these estates.

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[33] Deposition of William Conolly, 3 Oct. 1699 in 'Commissioners of enquiry into the Irish Forfeitures: Book of depositions from June 10 1688' (N.L.I., P.264, xxxiii, p. 135.).

[34] He had inherited his uncle Sir Alan Brodrick's estates at Wandsworth in Surrey in 1680. He also inherited his connections including links with the Villiers family, who included King William's mistress Lady Orkney. See entry for Sir Alan Brodrick in the *O.D.N.B.*

[35] For instance in Aug. 1696, he was in Wexford, Bishop King to James Bonnell, 4 Aug. 1696 (T.C.D., Mss 1995-2008/507). For the importance of a Dublin based agent, see O'Sullivan, *John Bellew, a seventeenth century man of many parts,* p. 97.

[36] Royal Warrant for a further grant of lands to Joost Earl of Albemarle, 15 Sept. 1697. (*C.T.B.,* XII p. 321.) This grant was made because the earl's agent had 'insisted' the value of the lands originally granted was less than the £2,000 per annum intended in the original grant.

The largest portion of Albemarle's grant was Lord Clare's estate in Co. Clare, which was purchased by Francis Burton of Buncraggy and two partners, Nicholas Westby and Captain James McDonnell, in 1698.[37] They offered Conolly the opportunity to join them in this venture. Instead he offered his services to solicit and manage the purchase on their behalf, in return for the sum of £500. Burton and his associates agreed to this offer and duly purchased the lands for £2,500, which was paid to Albemarle. Conolly also received his commission of £500, which was not included in the purchase price.[38] It seems to have been paid without the knowledge of Albemarle or Thomas Brodrick, who told the commissioners he knew nothing of it.[39] The willingness of Burton and his partners to pay such a large sum to Conolly suggests that the lands were grossly undervalued, as suspected by the inquiry commissioners. Certainly by 1720, when Burton's son married into the extended Conolly/Conyngham family, his annual income was estimated (by Conolly) to be about £3,000, much of which came from these estates.[40]

This was not an isolated case either. Conolly also acted as middleman between Robert Pakenham and Albemarle, when the former purchased the forfeited estate of Redmond and Hugh Mulledy in Co. Westmeath. Conolly had himself been interested in purchasing this estate from Albemarle. He later purchased other estates in the same county from the earl, but Pakenham persuaded him to desist in

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[37] *Records of the commissioners appointed by his majesty to execute the measures recommended in an address of the house of commons respecting the public records of Ireland; with supplements and appendixes*, (Dublin 1811-25), Vol. 3, p. 351. Hereafter referred to as *The 1825 Report*.

[38] Deposition of William Conolly, 3 Oct. 1699; Deposition of Nicholas Westby, 12 Sept. 1699, in 'Commissioners of enquiry into the Irish Forfeitures: Book of depositions from June 10 1688' (N.L.I., P.264, xxiiii, pp 99-100, 134-135).

[39] Deposition of Thomas Brodrick, 30 Sept. 1699 in Ibid. p. 132.

[40] Thomas Pearson to Jane Bonnell 12 Mar. 1720 (N.L.I., Smyth of Barbavilla Papers, Ms 41,580/24); Barnard, 'A tale of three sisters', p. 277.

his interest for these particular lands. Pakenham held a mortgage worth £3,000 on this estate and wished to purchase it for himself, so he sent his agent, Major Rider, to negotiate with Conolly.[41] Pakenham through Rider offered Conolly 500 guineas if he would assist Pakenham in securing the title of the said estate from Albemarle for £2,000. Conolly was successful and acquired the estate for Pakenham who paid Brodrick £2,000 for the earl's use. Conolly meanwhile pocketed his 500 guineas.[42] These duplicitous dealings greatly increased Conolly's income and suggest that his reputation for knavery is not undeserved.[43] The commissioners chose not to disclose these discoveries in their report to back up their more general criticisms of Conolly and Brodrick's activities.

Their report was laid before the House of Commons in London on 29 November 1699. Its contents did not, however, filter back to Ireland until a month later. On the 28 December, Alan Brodrick wrote to his brother Thomas that he just heard reports of the contents of the report from Conolly's brother-law Henry Conyngham at Rodanstown, Conolly's country retreat in Co. Meath. This suggests that Conolly had also heard the same news from the same source at this time.[44] It also shows the close relationship that existed between Conolly, Conyngham and Brodrick. Brodrick was particularly annoyed that his brother Thomas's name was being tarnished in the House of Commons and he rued his involvement in the

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[41] Pakenham later successfully entered a claim with the Trustees for Forfeited Estates for this mortgage, which he had held since 1685. See the *List of the claims as they are entered with the Trustees at Chichester house on College Green Dublin on or before 10 Aug. 1700.* No. 121.
[42] The five hundred guineas were equivalent to £630. Deposition of Walter Tuite, 23 .Sept. 1699; Deposition of William Conolly, 3 Oct. 1699, in 'Commissioners of enquiry into the Irish Forfeitures: Book of depositions from June 10 1688' (N.L.I., P.264, xxxiii, pp 126-27, 134-35).
[43] To put the sums that Conolly received in context, the four commissioners who signed the majority report in Nov. 1699 each received £1,000 for their services, a lesser sum than Conolly received for these two transactions together. Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p. 115. The minority commissioners only received £500 each.
[44] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 28 Dec. 1699 (S.H.C., 1248/1 ff 316-7).

whole forfeitures business: 'This with many other things convinces me that I told you right all along that acting an invidious part for great people was not the most prudent course to steer in my opinion: I am sure my Uncle and father have both suffered by it in their fortunes, and found cold returns of their services: I wish you may not be the third of the family able to tell the same story'. [45]

This was a reference to the involvement of his father Sir St John and his uncle also Alan in the Restoration land settlement.[46] Thomas Brodrick was particularly vulnerable because of his involvement in managing the late King James' private estate on behalf of Lady Orkney as this grant became the focus of the debate that followed the presentation of the commisioners' report. Conolly, however, also had much to fear since he had not only acted as an agent to Albemarle; he had also purchased estates in counties Meath, Westmeath and Wexford for a bargain sum of £3,000 from the earl, making him the single largest purchaser of forfeited estates.[47] Brodrick, unlike Conolly, did not purchase any forfeited lands, being content to act as agent for others. The future of these estates and the security of Conolly's title to them were rendered insecure by the commisioners' report.

The Act of Resumption

The major result of the report was the introduction of a bill of resumption, which would resume all the estates granted by the king and place them in a trust. The trust would then sell the resumed estates to raise money to pay the debts caused by

[45] Conolly and Brodrick and their respective wives travelled together to Bath in 1699, while during Brodrick's stay at Rodanstown in Christmas 1699 they hunted hares together. See Alan Brodrick's evidence before the Trustees on 14 Feb. 1701 (N.L.I., P 259 Minute Book of the Trustees of Forfeited Estates, iv, f. 56).
[46] For Sir St John Brodrick's successful acquisition of an estate after the restoration see his entry in the *H.I.P.*, III, p. 270.
[47] *The 1825 Report,* p. 386.

the Irish war. The failure of the forfeitures to raise sufficient funds to pay the arrears of the army had been the major impetus behind the commission of inquiry, even if it was based on unrealistic expectations of the potential yield of the forfeitures. This bill faced strong opposition from the court in London, but eventually the King was forced to accept it and it became law in April 1700.[48] The real losers under the act of Resumption, however, were not the King nor his favourites, Ginkel, Keppel, Bentinck and the rest, but the Irish Protestants who had purchased estates from the grantees, often for bargain prices. Under the terms of the act they were allocated £21,000 to be divided proportionately amongst them. This equated to a third of the total amount laid out by the purchasers. Conolly for instance was to receive £1,058 for his investment of £3,000.[49] This compensation ignored the sums laid out by the purchasers in improving these estates. Unsurprisingly the purchasers deemed these provisions unsatisfactory and expressed their strong opposition to the act.[50] At the heart of the opponents of the act were Conolly and the Brodrick brothers. Alan Brodrick may have disapproved of his brother's activities on behalf of the grantees but the notice given to him in the House of Commons ensured he would support all agitation against the act of resumption, if only to defend the family's honour.

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[48] 11 and 12 Will. III c.2. The resumption bill was tacked on to a supply bill, a common way of passing unpopular legislation through the House of Lords. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland* p. 75.

[49] The Protestant purchasers were listed by name with the portion of the £21,000 they were to receive in the Commons Journals. *Journal of the House of Commons* XIII, pp 393-95; Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p. 125.

[50] For some of the arguments used by Irish Protestants against the Act of Resumption see the pamphlets produced during the debates on the resumption bill. Anon., *The case of the forfeitures in Ireland fairly stated with the reasons that induced the Protestants to buy them* (1700), idem., *A memorial of the deplorable case of the Protestant purchasers in Ireland under the Right Honourable Godard Earl of Athlone* (London, 1699), idem., *Memorial on behalf of the purchasers of forfeited lands in Ireland* (London, 1699); Sir St John Brodrick, *Short remarks upon the late act of resumption of the Irish forfeitures and the manner of putting that act into execution* (London, 1701). For an English Whiggish defence of the King's grants see, John baron Somers, *Jus Regium or the Kings right to grant forfeitures, and other revenues of the crown fully set forth from the beginning...*(London 1701). Perhaps the most influential pamphlet supporting a bill of Resumption was Charles Davenant's *A discourse upon grants and resumptions...*(London, 1700).

Under the terms of the Act of Resumption, a trust was set up to dispose of the forfeited estates, and to hear claims on the forfeited estates from interested parties, including purchasers, former occupiers, mortagees and lessees. Thirteen Trustees were appointed, with former lord justice Sir Cyril Wyche as chairman, and they set up business in Chichester House, the regular home of the Irish parliament, in June 1700.[51] They first began to hear claims the following autumn. In total, 3,140 claims were submitted, of which 1,861 were allowed, although as Simms has pointed out this figure needs to be treated with caution, as the nature of claims varied greatly, from claims of dowers or marriage portions to claims for whole estates.[52] Most claims involved Protestants, who had a financial interest in a forfeited estate. Conolly was directly involved in three claims. All of these related to the estate of Cuchonnacht Maguire, a Catholic landowner in Fermanagh, who had successfully retained his heavily indebted estate in Co. Fermanagh against the odds. These included claims for a debt and a mortgage owed by Maguire to Conolly, as well as a debt owed to a Dorothy Hume, on whose behalf Conolly was acting. The trustees' allowed all of these claims.[53]

Conolly was also centrally involved in another claim. This was the claim made by a John Parker on part of the Earl of Tyrconnell's estate in Co. Kildare. Parker claimed the rights to a mortgage on the estate, the total value of which including

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[51] For a list of the trustees and the manner of their appointment see, Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* pp 118-20.
[52] Ibid. p.136.
[53] *List of the claims as they are entered with the Trustees at Chichester house on College Green Dublin on or before 10 Aug. 1700.* Nos. 413, 414 & 1969. On the remarkable survival of the Maguire estates see, W.A. Maguire, 'The estate of Cu Chonnacht Maguire of Tempo: A case study from the Williamite land settlement', in *Irish Historical Studies,* xxvii (1990); W.A Maguire, 'The Maguires of Tempo: Vicissitudes of a Co. Fermanagh family' in Eileen Murphy and William Roulston (eds.) *Fermanagh, history and society* (Dublin, 2004), pp 147-170.

interest was estimated to be approximately £13,500.[54] His claim was declared to be false when it came up for decision by the trustees in January 1701[55]. The basis for this decision was evidence presented by John Little, who claimed Parker had forged deeds to secure his title and that he had been assisted by Conolly, who according to Little was to obtain the greatest benefit from the fraudulent claim.[56] Little was rewarded for his services with a payment of £50. He was also promised one quarter of the £10,000 fine that was to be levied on Parker for making a false claim. This figure was twice the amount of the original value of the mortgage. Upon the Trustees' adjudication Parker proffered a petition against their judgement. The hearings on this petition began on 3 February 1701, and immediately the trustees began to focus not on Parker but on Conolly who they clearly saw, following Little's line, as the real villain. The first question asked by John Baggs on behalf of the trustees was, 'Mr Parker do you remember whether Mr Conolly was with you that morning your claims came on?'[57] Straightway it was clear that they intended using Parker as a means to incriminate Conolly.

Parker did not disappoint. He told the trustees that Conolly was privy to the claim and that he knew that the deeds were forged. Parker claimed that he was worried that evidence would be produced to discredit his claim, but that Conolly had

[54] *List of the claims as they are entered with the Trustees at Chichester house on College Green Dublin on or before 10 Aug. 1700,* No. 1022. The mortgaged lands were in the Barony of Salt, and were contiguous to the lands at Castletown purchased by Conolly in 1709.

[55] Most of the evidence that is drawn upon in the following paragraphs is taken from the Trustees' minutes on their hearings on Parker's claim held over 4 days between the 3rd and 14th of Feb. 1701. These are found in the Annesley Papers, (N.L.I., P259 Minute Book of the Trustees of Forfeited Estates, iv ff 20-59). Hereafter this minute book is referred to as Trustees Minutebook, with reference being made to the individual folio quoted.

[56] Little's allegations are found in petition later submitted to the English House of Commons. Petition of John Little, 1701 (Bodleian Library, Oxford, Rawlinson MS A253 Copies and draughts of petitions to the House of Commons in 1701-2 about Irish forfeitures, f.374.) There are published summaries in, Boylan, 'The Conollys of Castletown', pp 4-5, and Charles MacNeill, 'Report on the Rawlinson collection of manuscripts in the Bodleian Library Oxford', in *Analecta Hibernia,* 1 (1930), p. 85.

[57] Trustees' Minutebook f. 20.

reassured him that he had taken care of this. Parker, however, told the trustees that Conolly was not involved in the will and burial of Boiton Nutley, the third party in this claim, the alleged details of which had formed the most salacious part of Little's discovery. Nutley had originally held the mortgage, but had assigned it to Parker sometime in the late 1690s, although the details of this transaction were disputed. The key lines of questioning followed by the trustees in their investigation were, firstly, to discover the nature of Conolly's involvement in the claim; secondly to ascertain his whereabouts the night before the claim was heard in Chichester House; and thirdly to ascertain the veracity of the mortgage deeds. The evidence presented to the trustees was by the adversarial nature of their inquisition, contradictory and confused but the next section of this chapter will attempt to unravel this evidence.

Conolly claimed to have first heard of the mortgage and of Nutley in November 1699, when the latter wrote to Conolly informing him of its existence and offering him the opportunity to purchase his interest in it. Nutley approached Conolly at this juncture because the mortgaged lands had been granted to Albemarle, for whom Conolly was acting.[58] Articles of agreement between Conolly and Nutley were supposedly drawn up on 29 November 1699, ironically the same day the inquiry commisioners' report was laid before the House of Commons. According to their later accounts Conolly and John Parker, to whom Nutley had assigned his interest in the mortgage to at an earlier date, agreed to purchase the mortgage for £4,000, of which £500 was for Parker's own use. [59]

[58] Ibid., f. 28.
[59] Ibid.

Conolly, however, was cautious about expending such a large sum of money and sought advice from various sources, as to the veracity of the mortgage deeds, including Tyrconnell's solicitor, Fitzpatrick, and Alan Brodrick, the solicitor general. Brodrick suggested that Conolly procure a bill in chancery against Nutley to gain Nutley's title to the deeds.[60] Brodrick also wrote to his brother St John then in London recommending Conolly's affairs.[61] Parker was sent to London to seek out Nutley to confirm the latter's agreement to the proposed purchase, for which mission Conolly lent him £100.[62] Conolly also sought assistance from his wife's cousin, Edmond Stafford, an Irish MP, who was to act on Conolly's behalf in securing a bill in chancery.[63] Stafford, however, failed to locate Nutley or Parker in London. This was partly because Nutley had revoked his previous agreement with Parker, and was on his way to Ireland, where he duly arrived in April 1700 only to die almost immediately.[64] Conolly, having failed to get a satisfactory title, abandoned his plan to purchase the mortgage. He also cited the then impending Act of Resumption, and its lack of satisfactory provisions for purchasers from the grantees, as a contributing factor to this decision.[65]

He did not, however, completely abandon his interest in the matter, and he continued to correspond with Parker. Conolly advised Parker upon his choice of attorney to represent his claim before the Trustees, recommending first a Mr

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[60] Ibid., f. 29

[61] Alan Brodrick (Dublin) to St John Brodrick, 28 Jan. 1700 (S.H.C., 1281/1 ff 309-10). This letter was referred to in Brodrick's evidence in support of Conolly on 14 February and its existence confirms Conolly's early involvement with Nutley.

[62] Trustees' Minutebook, f. 29.

[63] Stafford told the trustees that he spent most of the 1690s in London. During this time he like his cousin Henry Conyngham acted as a conduit for correspondence between the Brodrick brothers. See, Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 28 Dec. 1699 (S.H.C., 1248/1 ff 316-7).

[64] Trustees Minute Book f. 32.

[65] Ibid, f. 29.

Lambe and then Major Walter Delamar when Parker refused Lambe's services.[66] Conolly continued to advise Parker on the submission of his claim after this and lent him further sums of money to assist him in this process.[67] Conolly claimed he continued to assist Parker because he believed it was a just cause, and because Parker owed him the £100, which Conolly had previously lent. The trustees, however, maintained that Conolly kept up a greater interest in the claim and hoped to profit from it. Their conviction was based on the extensive correspondence between Conolly and Parker, which included references to procuring witnesses for the receipt of payment on the reverse of the mortgage deeds, as well as advice on the timing of Parker's trip to Dublin for the hearings on the claim.[68]

The trustees challenged the veracity of the mortgage deeds upon which Parker's claim was based. Of particular concern was the absence of a receipt for payment on the reverse of these deeds. They questioned their provenance, interrogating Christopher Clark, Conolly's clerk, who claimed to have made copies of the deeds the previous summer and again three weeks before the hearing of the claim. His master claimed that these were perfected to assist the solicitation of Parker's claim. Clark also told the trustees that he was required to perfect the deeds in secret, 'my master gave me the deed and ordered me to take a copy of the memorandum he desired me to let nobody see it or come into the office while I was writing it'.[69] This evidence added to the trustee's suspicion but did not prove anything.

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[66] Trustees minute book f. 30. Major Walter Delamar and Lambe were both known associates of Conolly (Deposition of Edmond Tyrell, 2 Aug. 1699, N.L.I., P.264 xxiii f. 56).
[67] He lent him two sums of £20, one bill for this amount was sent to a Captain Harrison, while another was drawn on a Mr Lownds, a Limerick merchant. Trustees Minutebook f. 32.
[68] In total twelve letters from Conolly to Parker, all owned by Conolly to be in his own handwriting, written between April 1700 and January 1701 were quoted by the trustees. (Trustees Minutebook ff 32-36).
[69] Trustees Minutebook f.36.

The last line of questioning followed by the trustees was predicated towards ascertaining Conolly's movements the night before the hearing of Parker's claim on 29 January. He strenuously denied visiting Parker's house on that night or the next morning, but evidence from Parker's servants and from a periwig maker, George Turner, contradicted him. They all claimed Conolly visited Parker and reported conversations between the two. These included reports of Conolly telling Parker that the worst that would happen was that the trustees would fine him and that Conolly 'had interest enough with the trustees to get off any fine that would be imposed upon him'.[70] Richard Charles, later identified as Parker's son in-law, claimed that Conolly told him that the trustees' pursuit of Parker was 'a most unfortunate business for us', while Conolly maintained he never said these words, which would have implicated him in Parker's claim.[71] This contradictory evidence did not prove anything, but Conolly decided to petition the trustees to defend himself publicly from the imputation that he had been privy to Parker's false claim.

This hearing, which took place in public, in the downstairs chamber of Chichester House, was held on the 14 January.[72] Proceedings began at 10 o'clock in the morning and continued for twelve hours, in front of a packed public gallery, suggesting there was great public interest in the proceedings.[73] The trustees'

[70] Ibid. f .26

[71] Trustees Minutebook ff 26-27, 32 & 37-38. For Charles' relationship with Parker see, Anon., *The secret history of the trust; with some reflections upon the letter from a soldier. In a familiar discourse between J. Truncheon Esq; and Mr. Inquisitive* (London, 1702), p. 14.

[72] The regular hearing of claims usually took place in an upstairs chamber in Chichester House. A Number of witnesses during this second hearing made reference to their previous evidence given upstairs. (Trustees Minutebook, ff 42,45 &47).

[73] For descriptions of the hearing see, Jane Bonnell to Bishop William King, 18 Feb. 1701 (T.C.D., Ms 1995-2008/761); and Trenchard, *A letter from a soldier to the commons of England,* p. 26.

lawyers, Roscarrick Dunkin and Richard Nutley, opened the proceedings presenting the evidence against Conolly.[74] They concentrated on trying to demonstrate Conolly's long links with Parker and his involvement in the forgery of the mortgage deeds. The correspondence between Parker and Conolly was read, while the former also appeared as a witness. He alleged that Conolly had initially been reluctant to 'meddle' with the deeds, but when Conolly was 'better acquainted with him he told him twas pity such a sum of money should be lost for want of good deeds...and he burnt the first deeds and made new ones in September 1699'.[75] This was particularly damning testimony as it suggested that Conolly was privy to the forging of the deeds, and that this had taken place before agreement was reached with Nutley in November 1699. Conolly vigorously denied this, but the trustees continued to present evidence demonstrating Conolly's continued interest in the mortgage up to and beyond the Act of Resumption.[76] Parker's witnesses, Richard Charles, Edmond Loudon and George Turner, all reiterated their testimonies from the initial hearing that Conolly had been conspiring with Parker since the latter's arrival in Dublin for the hearings on his claim.[77] During their evidence the Irish judges appeared in Chichester House to declare that 'Mr Conolly was a man of very fair character and they never knew but that he was a very fair practicer'.[78] This intervention at the close of the trustees' prosecution shows the interest of the Irish political and legal establishment in the proceedings

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These proceedings also attracted interest from across the country, see Richard Harrison (Derry) to Bishop King, 21 Feb. 1701 (T.C.D., Ms 750/2 ff 95-96); Mark Bagott to King, 15 Mar. 1701 (T.C.D., Ms 1995/2008/775).

[74] For Dunkin and Nutley see Hayton, *Ruling Ireland,* p.77. A later pamphlet suggested that John Parker was related to Richard Nutley, Anon., *The secret history of the trust; with some reflections upon the letter from a soldier. In a familiar discourse between J. Truncheon Esq; and Mr. Inquisitive,* p. 13.

[75] Trustees Minutebook f. 43.

[76] Trustees Minutebook ff 45-48.

[77] Trustees Minutebook ff 51-52.

[78] Trustees Minutebook f. 52.

and their confidence in Conolly, and indeed their distaste for the trustees' proceedings.

Following the presentation of the trustees' evidence, Conolly was given an opportunity to defend himself against the charges levelled at him. He detailed his version of his involvement with Parker, claiming that he was only involved in the latter's claim because Parker owed him the money he had lent him to go to England in early 1700. He further declared that he was confident the trustees would acquit him, once they heard his witnesses. One of Conolly's lawyers Sir Toby Butler declared that:

> We will make it appear to you that Parker had a design to pull a trick upon Mr Conolly in this affair and to [ ] of a considerable sum of money and is very plain that Parker was of a mind to bring Mr Conolly in at a share in this affair.[79]

Amongst the witnesses produced was Richard Fleming, the clerk of the Hanaper Office, who informed the trustees that Parker had entered a 'petition of right' to the mortgage in July 1699, four months before articles were drawn up between Nutley and Conolly. The Solicitor General, Alan Brodrick, also gave evidence in support of Conolly. He told the trustees that he believed the mortgage deeds to be good, and that he had advised Conolly to perform a bill in chancery to secure his title. He also told how he had recommended Conolly's case to his brother St John who was resident in London. Edmond Stafford, who Conolly asked to seek out Nutley and Parker in London, also gave evidence to that effect, telling the trustees he had failed to locate them. He also told the hearing, that 'Mr Conolly had more than

[79] Trustees Minutebook f. 55. Conolly's two lawyers were Sir Toby Butler and Sir Stephen Rice, both leading members of the Catholic community, and former officeholders under James II. Their acting for Conolly in this instance is therefore intriguing, although they were also amongst the most highly respected lawyers in Ireland at this time. See Ch. MacDonagh to Sir Donat O'Brien, 19 June 1701 (John Ainsworth (ed.), *The Inchiquin MSS,* p. 60.). For Butler and Rice, see *O.D.N.B.*

once told him the reason he was off the bargain and though he had a liberty to be so because Mr Nutley's articles were not perfected'.[80] The purpose of this evidence according to Sir Stephen Rice was to show that all articles and deeds were cancelled. Conolly's servants and friends including Mrs Brodrick and Francis Burton also testified telling the trustees that Conolly had never left his house on the morning of 29 January, the day of Parker's claim, countering the evidence produced by the trustees counsel. The last word was left to Conolly:

> I desire your Honours to take notice that Parker's caveat was entered in July 99 and hope you will not believe that I would enter into a [ ] with Mr Parker upon so small an acquaintance as these times sight [sic].[81]

This summed up his argument, that he was a careful honest legal practitioner and that he would not have entered into an arrangement that was not secure. The true story of Conolly's dealings with Parker is impossible to discover. Instead what matters is the weight given to the competing truths by the different parties involved in the claim.

The trustees failed to make a substantive case demonstrating Conolly's guilt in the matter. Conolly's pious sister-in-law, Jane Bonnell, declared that the evidence produced was insufficient to hang a dog, and further that no one would dismiss a footman upon such evidence. She also reported to Archbishop King that the trustees would have to face a greater judge 'out of whose reach no parliament can put them'. Such hostile sentiments had been voiced since the arrival of the trustees the previous summer.[82] The trustees enjoyed quasi-judicial powers not usually

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[80] Trustees Minutebook, f. 57.
[81] Trustees Minutebook, f. 58.
[82] See, Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 4 Oct. 1701 (S.H.C., 1248/2, ff 29-30). Brodrick's criticism was inspired by several factors including his desire to defend his family's honour as well as his resentment that he was not allowed to appear before the trustees in a legal capacity, because of his position as solicitor general, something which greatly reduced his income. He was also

enjoyed by a parliamentary commission.[83] Furthermore they had been appointed by the English parliament without any reference to the Irish legislature, exacerbating existing tensions created by Bishop King's dispute with the Irish Society, the Woollen Act and Molyneux's *Case of Ireland Stated.*[84] The hearings on Parker's false claim were about more than just his claim or even Conolly's alleged involvement in it. They had become a trial of strength between the trustees and the Irish protestant purchasers and their representatives, including Conolly.

The possible reasons for the trustees' pursuit of Conolly need to be examined to see if they can shed light on the trustees' relationship with the Protestant purchasers. Investigation of Conolly's dealings in forfeited estates had begun two years earlier during the course of the inquiry commisioners' inquisitions. Their report, which was published in April 1700, had publicly questioned his methods and actions. Conolly was also an attractive target because of his status as the greatest of the purchasers. In October 1700 there were already stirrings amongst the purchasers, with those who had acquired estates from Albemarle at the forefront, including presumably Conolly.[85] Such stirrings if successful would have been extremely prejudicial to the trustees' work. Hayton has also highlighted the importance of party politics in the operations of the trustees.[86] The trust was seen as a Tory undertaking, while Conolly was closely connected with the Irish Whig grouping led by Alan Brodrick. Brodrick's association with Conolly's claim, and

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motivated by higher political ideals centred on the peculiar legal status of the Trust. See Hayton, *Ruling Ireland,* p. 81.

[83] See Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p. 119.

[84] Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 80. See also P.H. Kelly, 'The Irish wollen export prohibition act of 1699: Kearney revisited', in *Irish Economic and Social History,* vii (1980), J.G. Simms, *William Molyneux of Dublin 1656-1696* (Blackrock, 1982); David Dickson, *New Foundations,* p. 53. On Bishop Kings dispute with the Irish Society and Conolly's role in this dispute see chapter 1.

[85] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 11 Oct. 1700 (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 11-12).

[86] Hayton, *Ruling Ireland,* pp 78-79.

his declared confidence in its veracity only added further grist to the Tory mill. Both Roscarrick Dunkin and Richard Nutley were prominent exponents of the Tory cause. All of these were possible motives for the trustees' determination to expose Conolly as a perjurer and a forger.[87]

If this was the trustees' aim, they failed. Instead this case, together with the general tenor of the proceedings only served to increase Irish agitation against the Act of Resumption. It was only in late 1701, however, that constructive attempts were made to seek redress from parliament. In October 1701, Alan Brodrick reported that there were rumours circulating in Dublin of petitions against the Act being prepared in Dublin, which were to be presented to the lord lieutenant, the Earl of Rochester. Brodrick disagreed with this approach, believing it was necessary to lobby the King directly.[88] Accordingly he suggested the idea of a national address or remonstrance, which would be signed by the leading gentry in each county.[89] These addresses would then be forwarded on to the King. Such addresses were drawn up in December 1701, and circulated in late December and early January 1702.[90] The address represented the grievances of the Irish Protestant purchasers against the Act of Resumption. It stressed the dangers of weakening the Protestant interest in Ireland, arguing that the trustees' activities had encouraged the Papists. The blame for this situation was laid not upon the English parliament who framed the act but on the trustees for their execution of it. The act

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[87] For contemporary speculation that Conolly not Parker was the real focus of the investigation see Anon., *The secret history of the trust; with some reflections upon the letter from a soldier. In a familiar discourse between J. Truncheon Esq; and Mr. Inquisitive*, 'We let him [Parker] escape in order to bring a reflection on a more considerable person', p 7

[88] Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 4 Oct. 1701 (S.H.C., 1248/2, ff 29-30).

[89] Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 15 Dec. 1701 (S.H.C., 1248/2, ff 43-44); Same to same, 7 Jan. 1702 (S.H.C., 1248/2, ff 49-50.

[90] Copy of the circular letter sent by Conolly and Coghill (B.L., Egerton MS 917, f.179).

was regarded as misconceived rather than malicious.[91] It is unclear who wrote the draft address but it was signed by a number of the nobility and gentry including the earls of Abercorn, Meath and Inchiquin as well as commoners like Samuel Dopping, Gustavus Hamilton and Conolly, although not by any of the Brodricks.[92] Alan Brodrick was regarded as a main mover behind the address and was described as the 'heart and soul' of the group promoting it, by one hostile, but informed, commentator, Sir Henry Sheres.[93] In total there were 44 signatories.[94] These draft addresses were circulated to the grand jury of each county, who were to return them to Conolly and Marmaduke Coghill. This was Coghill's first entry on the Irish political stage and little is known of his motives in supporting the address.[95] Conolly's motives for promoting the address seem more straightforward. He was the greatest loser under the Act of Resumption, while the Parker claim had demonstrated the trustees' hostility to him and his interests. This was clear from Sheres' claim that he and Brodrick would not have

> had credit sufficient with the world of this day, to have appeared at the head of so pernicious a conspiracy; they being both on my conscience, dipped over head and ears in one of the most scandalous frauds and forgeries, not only which hath appeared before them, but which is hardly to be precedented even in this country, which seems to me to be the very element and style of perjury.[96]

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[91] Ibid., Hayton, *Ruling Ireland,* p. 82; Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p. 126.

[92] Thomas Brodrick did however see the address before it was circulated unlike his brother Alan, who later criticised its tone although he agreed with the sentiments expressed. Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 7 Jan. 1702 (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 49-50).

[93] This description is found in a manuscript copy of a probably unpublished pamphlet, certainly there is no trace of a published version: Henry Sheres, *Reflections and Annotations on the New Irish Address or Remonstrance against the Act of Resumption; with Some Few Animadversions bestowed on the Authors and Promoters thereof,* (B.L. Egerton Ms 917 f. 161). For Sheres a Trustee of the Forfeited Estates, see *O.D.N.B.*

[94] A copy of the address was produced and read in the English house of commons on 3 Feb. 1702. (*C.J.*, XIII, p. 718).

[95] On Coghill, see D.W. Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill, 1722-1738.* (Dublin, 2005). Hayton makes no mention of Coghill's activities on behalf of the Protestant purchasers. Coghill would later, after a flirtation with Toryism in Queen Anne's reign become a close political ally of Conolly in the 1720s. See also Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p.127.

[96] Sheres' *Reflections and Annotations on the New Irish Address or Remonstrance against the Act of Resumption,* (B.L., Egerton Ms 917, f.161).

This was a clear reference to the Parker case and the charges levelled against Conolly and Brodrick by John Little.

The address engendered a varied response across the country, with 17 addresses being returned to Dublin and then on to London.[97] The geographic spread of the addresses reflected the dominant political outlook in each county. Cork, where the Brodricks held influence, and Donegal and Tyrone where the Earl of Abercorn was dominant, returned addresses but counties like Westmeath and Louth where Tories in the guise of Richard Levinge, Robert Rochfort and Stephen Ludlow held influence failed to return addresses.[98] The bishops also failed to support the remonstrance, mostly because the church stood to gain from the Act of Resumption.[99] County Londonderry where Conolly already held some influence failed to return an address but this may have been due to the powerful church interest in the county led by Bishop King, who was opposed to the address. Despite the mixed response on the ground, the address drew a hostile reaction from the trustees and from one trustee in particular John Trenchard, who published two pamphlets against the remonstrance.[100]

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[97] Hayton, *Ruling Ireland* p.82.

[98] Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 20 Jan. 1702, (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 51-52). Hayton mentions Ludlow and Levinge, but not Rochfort, but Brodrick noted Rochfort's opposition. His opposition continued his drift away from his former allies in the 'sole right' party in the 1690s and his former protégé Conolly. Ibid. , p.83.

[99] For Bishop King's hostility to the address see, King to Bishop St George Ashe, 20 Jan. 1702 (T.C.D., MS750/2/3 ff 92-95); King to Francis Annesley, 12 Feb. 1702 (T.C.D., MS 750/2/2 ff 106-07).

[100] For Trenchard, see *O.D.N.B.*, and Caroline Robbins, *The eighteenth-century commonwealth man* (Cambridge, Mass, 1959), pp 111-121. He is best known for his co-authorship with Thomas Gordon of *Cato's letters* in the 1720s, and for his 1697 pamphlet against William III's proposed standing army. John Trenchard, *An argument showing that a standing army is inconsistent with a free government and absolutely destructive to the constitution of the English monarchy* (London, 1697).

The first of these pamphlets *The several addresses of some Irish folks to the king and house of commons* [101] featured the text of the address alongside a burlesque version which ridiculed it. Another anonymous burlesque version of the address, this time in verse, featured an attack on Conolly and Brodrick in the concluding lines:

> Since Conolly and Brodrick are defeated,
> Who gainst justice and truth at the trustees have gloated,
> With praise and good name may they wind up their bottom,
> And as for their enemies all may god sott em.[102]

This was not the only pamphlet produced during the debate on the address, which included such an attack on Conolly, signifying his perceived importance amongst the purchaser's opponents. Trenchard's second, and more influential pamphlet, *A letter from a soldier to the commons of England occasioned by an address now carrying on by the Protestants in Ireland in order to take away the fund appropriated for the payment of the army,*[103] which was published in February 1702 also featured a commentary on the address but more importantly concluded with a lengthy personal attack on Conolly. He attacked Conolly because of his role as one of the promoters of the address.[104] Trenchard questioned Conolly's origins noting that since the battle of the Boyne

> his yearly expenses have from that time exceeded his visible acquisitions; his manner of living was so profuse, that he got followers, and was styled prince Conolly. And he has not only been adored by the base and the vulgar but he has been honoured and caressed by men of station and figure. The discreet and upright gazed at this glittering meteor and admired from what undiscovered

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[101] John Trenchard, *The several addresses of some Irish folks to the king and the house of commons,* (London, 1702).

[102] Anonymous verse on the Purchaser's Remonstrance (N.L.I., Ms 3870 Collection of 29 printed and manuscript tracts relating to the Irish forfeitures 1700-1704, no. 12.).

[103] (London, 1702). It went through two London editions, suggesting it was quite popular. Although it was published anonymously it was known to be by Trenchard. See Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 23, Feb. 1702 (S.H.C. 1248/2 ff 56 c-d).

[104] He ignored Coghill commentating that 'One of these gentlemen I do not know, but I guess his name is made choice of to countenance the other' meaning Conolly. Trenchard, *A letter from a soldier to the commons of England,* p. 24.

> mine he had raised so much riches; but now the mystic knot is untied, the commissioners for enquiring into forfeitures opened the scene and the trustees have set him in a true light.[105]

Trenchard went on to use the evidence which the commissioners of inquiry in 1699 had uncovered but had not published in their report. He was one of the commissioners and had been present when they interviewed Conolly. In particular he referenced Conolly's dealings with Pakenham and Burton.

> When he had power given him to sell an estate he took £2500 but only had £2000 mentioned in the conveyance. These are things that are owned and called experience in business; but there is a much fouler fact than this proved upon him which I am persuaded he would own too if the fear of punishment affected him no more than the guilt does. [106]

This was an oblique reference to the Parker case, which he then went on to discuss at greater length suggesting that the claim was completely fictitious save for the fact that there once was a Lord Tyrconnell.[107] He had participated in the questioning during the hearings on Parker's claim and was therefore fully aware of the nature of the evidence presented. At the same time that this 'libel' was being published the trustees raised the Parker case again, much to the incredulity of Alan Brodrick who wrote that the address had 'nettled' them so much as to 'stir the matter of Parker again'.[108]

This use of the Parker business by the trustees to discredit Conolly confirms the level of importance that they had attached to the original investigation, while Trenchard's use of the inquiry commissioners' papers demonstrates the lengths they were willing to go to defend their actions. Brodrick's correspondence

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[105] Ibid. p. 25.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid., p.26.
[108] Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 7 Feb. 1702 (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 55-56).

mentions that the Parker business was to be raised before the House of Commons in London as a means of discrediting Conolly and by extension the purchasers address. He reported that representations were being made by his friends to defend Conolly's reputation. At least one pamphlet appeared in print defending Conolly and castigating Trenchard, who was referred to throughout as John Truncheon. It offered an alternative version of the Parker case, suggesting that Parker was the true villain, and that his witnesses were not credible, and that their evidence would have stood up in no other court. Perhaps less plausibly a defence was offered of Conolly's duplicitous dealings with Robert Pakenham and Albemarle.[109]

The basis of this belief that Conolly was to be attacked in the House of Commons was a petition laid before parliament by John Little. He was the discoverer of Parker's fraudulent claim and was awaiting the payment of Parker' fine of £10,000, as he was owed a quarter of the said fine as a reward for his services. Little's petition not only accused Conolly and Parker of forging the mortgage deeds but also of impersonation and body snatching. He alleged that Conolly had concocted the tale of Nutley's death and had attempted to get Little to impersonate Nutley, but Little had refused. Conolly and Parker had then arranged a funeral for Nutley. But upon investigation by Little, it was discovered that the coffin they buried was full of stones. Undeterred they had displayed a corpse in Nutley's house, which they claimed to be the dead man, but this corpse was recognised by his relations as that of another man 'and the whole sham was blown'.[110] These

[109] Anon., *The secret history of the trust; with some reflections upon the letter from a soldier. In a familiar discourse between J. Truncheon Esq; and Mr. Inquisitive*, esp., pp 13-14.
[110] . Petition of John Little, 1701 (Bodleian Library, Oxford, Rawlinson MS A253 Copies and draughts of petitions to the House of Commons in 1701-2 about Irish forfeitures, f.374.)

salacious details only appear in Little's petition and in the *Letter from a soldier,* and were never mentioned by the Trustees' during the course of their investigation, suggesting that they were not convinced of these details.[111]

It is unclear whether this petition was presented to parliament. The representations made on Conolly's behalf seem to have delayed its presentation. The petition did reappear again in 1703, when a further attempt was made to damage Conolly's reputation based on the Parker's claim. In November 1703 it was rumoured in Dublin that Little's petition was to be brought before the House of Commons in London. Henry Maxwell, Irish MP, and a close associate of Conolly, wrote to James Stanhope, the prominent English Whig MP, asking for his assistance in protecting Conolly. Maxwell outlined the circumstances of the case and explained why he thought it was being brought up at this juncture almost three years later suggesting it had much to do with old animosities between Conolly and Francis Annesley, the Irishman who had played such a prominent role as a Trustee. Annesley, according to Maxwell 'had an old pique against Conolly,' which had motivated this re-appearance of Parker's false claim on the horizon.[112] Again, it seems to have come to nothing, and was not raised again, on either side of the Irish Sea.

Neither Little's petition nor Trenchard's pamphlet materially affected the Protestant purchasers' campaign, as an act made in spring 1702 granted further relief to the Protestant purchasers allowing them to purchase the estates they had previously acquired for 13 years purchase in addition to the sums they had been

[111] Trenchard, *A letter from a soldier to the commons of England,* p. 26. Parker also claimed in his evidence before the trustees that Conolly was not involved in the burial of Nutley.
[112] Henry Maxwell to James Stanhope, 23 Nov. 1703 (Centre for Kentish Studies, U1590/0141/11).

allowed under the Act of Resumption.[113] This while only a qualified victory was welcomed by the purchasers.[114] They were given the option to purchase the estates they had previously acquired from the grantees before the remainder of the estates were disposed at public auction. Most of the purchasers duly took up this offer, despite adverse economic conditions and these included Conolly who re-purchased the estates he had previously acquired from Albemarle.[115]

Conolly had purchased 12,150 acres in counties Meath, Roscommon, Westmeath, and Wexford from Albemarle for £3,000 in March 1699.[116] These included the forfeited estates of the Nugent family in counties Meath, Westmeath and Roscommon as well as the former estates of John Itchingham and James Gilligan in Wexford.[117] Conolly presumably used his intimate knowledge of the lands granted to Albemarle to secure these estates in the first place. In March 1702 he repurchased them from the trustees paying £390 8s 5½ d.[118] In total he paid £3,390 for these lands including both his pre-resumption and post-resumption expenditure.[119] Apart from re-affirming his original purchases Conolly acquired further forfeited estates in counties Meath, Roscommon, Westmeath and Wexford

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[113] 1. Anne c.26.
[114] Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 19 May 1702 (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 63-64). Simms, *The Williamite Confiscation in Ireland,* p. 127.
[115] Dickson, *New Foundations.* p. 54.
[116] *The 1825 Report,* p. 386. He paid £2,000 for the lands in counties Meath, Roscommon and Westmeath on 29 Mar. 1699, while the lands in Wexford were conveyed to Conolly for £1,000 on 10 Mar. 1699.
[117] See Table 3.1 which details Conolly's purchases of forfeited estates.
[118] Conveyance of several lands from the Trustees of Forfeited Estates to William Conolly, 19 Mar. 1702 (N.A.I., Conolly Papers, M6,917/84). *The 1825 Report*, p.386.
[119] The trustees subtracted the £1,058 allowed under the act of resumption from the real value of the estate (*C.J.,* xiii, 393-5), There were also a number of incumberances on the estate following the success of a number of claimants for various charges including jointures on the Nugent estates in Roscommon and Westmeath. See the decrees in favour of Elinor Nugent, Major Garrett Nangle,Dame Alice Mulledy, Robert, earl of Roscommon, Terence McDermotroe, Dame Thomasin Nugent, William Handcock and Benjamin Chetwood (N.A.I., M6917/68-77).

at auction, spending £1,704 for 2,430 acres.[120] These purchases did not complete his acquisition of forfeited estates, although they were his final purchases from the trustees. In March 1704 he purchased a further 4,942 acres spread across counties Dublin, Meath, Roscommon, Wexford and Westmeath. These lands had originally formed part of Albemarle's grant.[121] His representatives, presumably Conolly and Brodrick, had sold them to Major Walter Delamar in April 1699 for £900. Delamar, a Catholic, later assigned them to William Cairnes the Dublin banker, who purchased them from the trustees in March 1702, paying £3,793.[122] Cairnes then sold them to Conolly in March 1704 for £2,400, making a substantial loss. The reasons for this transaction, which seems advantageous to Conolly, remain unclear. Conolly and Cairnes were close associates, with the latter being returned for one of Conolly's borough seats at Limavady in 1703.[123] Conolly had also acted as security for Cairnes when he served as a cashier to the Trustees.[124]It is possible that Cairnes, a prominent banker, was financially embarrassed, and needed the ready cash that the sale of the lands would bring in. It may also be significant that this transaction took place on the same day that the Act to Prevent the Further Growth of Popery, which affected the property rights of Catholics, became law, especially considering the involvement of Delamar.[125] There were also a number of incumberances on these lands, which would have reduced their value still further.

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[120] *The 1825 Report,* pp 350, 388, 390.

[121] Conveyance from Cairnes to Conolly, 3 Mar. 1704 (N.A.I., M6917/89). There is also copy in the Castletown Papers (I.A.A., 97/84 F/2).

[122] *The 1825 Report*, pp 379-80. Delamar was one of two catholic 'protestant purchasers' (the other was Mark Baggot, a Co. Carlow landowner). He had been originally been granted a 21 year lease of forfeited estates as recompense for debts owed to him (H.M.C., *House of Lords Mss* n.s vol. iv p.34). See also, Anon, *The case of Major Walter Delamar* (London 1701). He was also a close associate of Conolly and was recommended by him as a suitable attorney to manage John Parker's claim. (Trustee's minute book, f. 30).

[123] He was also chosen for Belfast, where he chose to sit representing it until his death in 1707.

[124] Hayton, *Ruling Ireland,* p. 77

[125] J.G. Simms, 'The making of a penal law (2 Anne, c.6), 1703-4' in D.W. Hayton and Gerard O'Brien (eds.) *War and politics in Ireland, 1649-1730* (London, 1986), p. 275

Conolly's purchase of these lands also helped him to build up a consolidated landed interest in the midlands, as well as in Wexford. His relations and close allies Henry Conyngham and Edmond Stafford, as well as his other Conyngham brother-in-law Richard Jones, also purchased forfeited estates in Co. Meath.[126] It is perhaps possible to see a family strategy of building up contiguous estates on the northern marches of the pale at work. This is evident in Conolly's case in Map 1.2. They were joined by other northern interests, including Gustavus Hamilton who acquired an estate at Stackallen in Co. Meath, as a reward for his services in the Irish war. All of them continued to concentrate their electoral energies in the more remote north-west, but they chose to reside in the more accessible eastern region.[127]

Conolly was extraordinarily successful in his negotiation of the Williamite forfeitures. By March 1704, he had acquired estates containing in total 19,521 forfeited acres spread across five counties, expending £6,436 altogether. In 1703 his annual rental, the bulk of which was drawn from these estates was said to between three and four thousand pounds.[128] This did not include the estates purchased from Cairnes and his actual rental was probably closer to £3,000 per annum before this last acquisition. In the early 1690s his visible rental income was probably closer to £500 per annum, which itself was a fivefold increase on his pre-

[126] Stafford purchased an estate at Brownstown Co. Meath; Conyngham famously acquired an estate at Slane Co. Meath, where his widow later erected Conyngham Hall, which became Slane Castle; Richard Jones, who married the third Conyngham sister Mary, purchased an estate at Dollanstown in the same county. *The 1825 Report,* pp 349, 351, 357 &385. See also Barnard, 'A tale of three sisters' pp 32-33.

[127] Conolly did not completely forego all electoral interest in these counties. For a spectacular intervention in Westmeath politics see, D.W. Hayton, 'Two ballads on the Co. Westmeath by election of 1723', in *E.C.I.,* iv (1989), pp 7-30.

[128] Henry Maxwell to James Stanhope, 23 Nov. 1703 (Centre for Kentish Studies, U1590/0141/11).

war income. This increase in property and income was not the only successful outcome from Conolly's activities in the 1690s. His activities, both as agent to Albemarle in the 1690s and as a leader of the Protestant purchaser's agitation against the Act of Resumption, increased his profile within the Irish Protestant community. His growing influence in the House of Commons, partly based on a growing electoral bloc, could be seen in the 1703/04 parliamentary session, where he emerged as an important member of the Whig opposition centred on Speaker Alan Brodrick. This emergence as a leading parliamentary figure is traced in the next chapter.

Table. 3. 1: *Conolly's purchases of Forfeited Estates*

County	**Date Purchased**	**Purchased from who**	**Acreage**	**Purchase Price**	**Former proprietor**
Roscommon	24 Mar. 1702	Trustees for Forfeited Estates	3346	390	Sir John and Richard Nugent
Westmeath	24 Mar. 1702	Trustees for Forfeited Estates	6165		These lands together with the forfeited estates
Meath	24 Mar. 1702	Trustees for Forfeited Estates	1575		Were purchased from Albemarle in 1699.
Wexford	24 Mar. 1702	Trustees for Forfeited Estates	845		J Gilligan[also initially purchased from Albemarle]
Wexford	24 Mar. 1702	Trustees for Forfeited Estates	218		John Itchingham [also initially purchased from Albemarle]
Westmeath	3 June 1703	Trustees for Forfeited Estates	992	65	Sir John and Richard Nugent
Westmeath	5 June 1703	Trustees for Forfeited Estates	985	744	Sir John and Richard Nugent
Meath	10 June 1703	Trustees for Forfeited Estates	112	424	King James II
Roscommon	21 June 1703	Trustees for Forfeited Estates	341	471	Garrett Dillon
Meath	3 Mar 1704	William Cairnes	799	2400	Thomas Plunkett from
Wexford	3 Mar 1704	William Cairnes	1335		whom it was purchased by Walter Delamar
Dublin	3 Mar 1704	William Cairnes	223	0	
Roscommon	3 Mar 1704	William Cairnes	2584		
Total			**19521**	**4494**	

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his table is based on information found in the Abstracts of the conveyances from the trustees of the forfeited estates and interests in Ireland in 1688, found in *Records of the commissioners appointed by his majesty to execute the measures recommended in an address of the house of commons respecting the public records of Ireland; with supplements and appendixes,* (Dublin 1811-25), Vol. III, pp 348-399.
All acreage figures have been converted from Irish acres to English Statute acres.

Chapter 4:

A lover of business: Conolly in parliament 1703-14

'Mr Conolly loves business and has a good turn for it'. This was how Joseph Addison described Conolly to Lord Godolphin in May 1709, upon his arrival in Dublin as chief secretary. Conolly's industrious nature in managing his northern electoral interest is examined elsewhere, but he was equally assiduous inside parliament, and it was this command of parliamentary business and routine that Addison was referring to. The Chief Secretary also noted that Conolly was very 'popular within his own party and particularly among the dissenters'.[1] These attributes recommended him to the new Whig lord lieutenant, Lord Wharton, but also emphasise that while Conolly was an active parliamentarian, he was also a party man. This chapter seeks to examine Conolly's activities within parliament, where he was just as effective as he was in the electoral realm during the period 1703-14. Conolly's career during the reign of Queen Anne has received little attention from historians. His appointment as Speaker of the House of Commons in 1715 and his re-appointment as a Commissioner of the Revenue are always highlighted but the reasons for his rise to such prominence have not been subject to thorough scrutiny. His return as a revenue commissioner - he had previously served in that role in 1709-10 - was seen as a reward for his adherence to the Whig cause in Queen Anne's reign. His appointment as speaker reflected his weight in the House of Commons and his abilities as a parliamentary manager. This chapter will explore Conolly's emergence as an important member of the Whig party in the House of Commons during what has become known as the 'age of party'.

[1] Joseph Addison to Lord Godolphin, 7 May 1709 (Walter Graham (ed.) *Letters of Joseph Addison* p. 136).

Conolly had not been a prominent member of either of the two Williamite parliaments. In the short-lived 1692 parliament he had been only nominated to one committee, and had not been involved in the 'sole right' controversy, which involved so many of his later colleagues and confederates.[2] In the 1695-99 parliament he served on nineteen committees, reporting from one. He seems to have followed the lead of his brother-in-law Henry Conyngham in this parliament; Conyngham emerged as a leader of the Whig grouping centred around the Brodrick brothers in the 1695 session. Conolly's commitment to the party cause was evident in his role at a disputed by-election for Trim in August 1697. He took the poll alongside a Mr Pratt for the opposition side. The Whig candidate, John Keating was however, defeated by the Tory Robert Johnson.[3] It is perhaps noteworthy that the only committee that Conolly reported from in this parliament was a committee appointed to investigate the claims of Lieutenant Henry Camsey for arrears due for services rendered during the siege of Derry.[4] This reflected Conolly's concern with the affairs of Londonderry Corporation during this time. Conolly's parliamentary activity was however, limited and he seems to have been concentrating on other activities especially his burgeoning legal career and his dealings in forfeited Jacobite estates during this period.[5]

The first parliamentary session of Queen Anne's reign opened on 21 September 1703, over four years after the last parliamentary session. During the intervening

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[2] James McGuire, 'The Irish parliament of 1692' in Thomas Bartlett and D.W. Hayton (eds), *Penal era and golden age* (Belfast, 1979), pp 1-31; C.I. McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution* (Dublin, 2000), pp 74-90.
[3] *The journals of the House of Commons of the kingdom of Ireland* (third edition, Dublin, 1796-1800) hereafter *C.J.I.,* II, p. 186.
[4] *C.J.I.,* II, pp 256, 258.
[5] See chapters 2 & 3.

period the Anglo-Irish political landscape had changed; the imposition of the Woollen Act, the resumption of the forfeitures, and the appearance of Molyneux's *Case of Ireland stated* all contributed to a politically charged situation.[6] All of these factors together with the generous supply granted in 1699 had contributed to the long delay in calling a parliament, and had even led to questions whether a new parliament should be called. The parliamentary hiatus had also coincided with an upturn in Conolly's profile; both through his involvement in the Irish Society's case with Bishop King, and more importantly and controversially, his dealings with the Trustees for Forfeited Estates. His role as the leader of the 'Protestant purchasers' agitation has been discussed elsewhere, but its political significance should not be understated. It had brought Conolly in from the periphery of Irish whiggery to its centre. His importance can be partly judged by the attempts made by the political enemies of the 'purchasers' campaign' to discredit Conolly through repetition of the allegations made during the hearing on John Parker's claim before the trustees.[7]

His return to parliament for a county seat in Londonderry in 1703 confirmed his rising local profile. Inside the House of Commons his status was also rising. Together with his wife's relations, Henry Conyngham and Edmond Stafford, Conolly attached himself to the parliamentary grouping surrounding the new speaker Alan Brodrick. In doing so he abandoned his former patron Robert Rochfort, who having been a leading ally of the Brodricks in the 1690s had now allied himself with the Tory interest of the lord lieutenant, the second Duke of Ormonde. Conolly, however, remained a private employee of the duke till at least

[6] J.G. Simms (ed.), *William Molyneux, 'The case of Ireland stated (1698)'* (Monkstown, 1977); D.W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685-1742*, pp 67-8.
[7] For a detailed account of Conolly's dealings with the Trustees see chapter 3.

November 1703 despite their political differences.[8] Party politics are not the only lens through which possible parliamentary activity should be viewed, although they were important. The chief function of parliament was legislation and Conolly became an active legislator. Some of this legislative activity was rooted in the party conflict of the era but not all of it. This chapter will attempt to reconstruct Conolly's legislative activity in the period 1703-13.

The day to day workings of the Irish parliament are somewhat shrouded in mystery because of the paucity of sources available to the historian. The major source for Irish parliamentary history in this period is *The journals of the House of Commons of the kingdom of Ireland.* They provide information on the passage of heads of bill through the House of Commons as well as information on nominations to committees.[9] The legislative process was largely carried out in committees - either committees of the whole house or more commonly in select committees appointed to prepare heads of bills, and manage them through the commons.[10] The *Journals* provide evidence on the members appointed to serve on committees as well as on the members who reported to the house on matters referred to committees. This evidence provides some indication of the level of activity of individual members. In the years 1703-13 Conolly served on 231 committees, making him the most active member of the House of Commons during this period, in terms of committee membership as the table below demonstrates.

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[8] Henry Maxwell to James Stanhope, 23 Nov. 1703 (Centre for Kentish Studies Maidstone, U1590/0141/11).

[9] On the sources for Irish parliamentary history see Dermot Engefield, *The printed records of the parliament of Ireland: A survey and bibliographical guide* (London, 1978). See also D.W. Hayton (ed.) *The long apprenticeship: the Irish parliament in the eighteenth century* (London, 2002), especially the introduction, pp 1-25.

[10] F.G. James, *Ireland in the empire 1688-1770* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), pp 44-5.

Table 4.1 *Committee Membership in the Irish House of Commons 1703-14*

Member	Years in parliament	No. of Committees served upon	Party Designation
William Conolly	*1703-14*	*231*	*Whig*
Stephen Ludlow	1703-14	184	Tory
John Forster	1703-14	150	Whig
Anderson Saunders	1703-14	150	Tory
Joseph Deane	1703-14	143	Whig
Edward Deane	1703-14	132	Whig
Oliver St George	1703-14	132	Whig
Edward Southwell	1703-14	126	Tory
Philip Savage	1703-14	125	Tory
Clotworthy Upton	1703-14	114	Whig
Robert Rochfort	1703-5	94	Tory
Henry Tenison	1703-9	90	Tory
Thomas Brodrick	1703-14	89	Whig
Francis Bernard	1703-14	87	Tory
Alan Brodrick	1703-10, 1713-14*	85	Whig

The information in the above table is taken from the individual biographical entries in Johnston-Liik, E.M. *History of the Irish parliament 1692-1800: Commons, constituencies and statutes* (6 vols, Belfast, 2002). The party designations are taken from the consolidated parliamentary lists found in D.W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, pp 96-105.

* Alan Brodrick resigned his parliamentary seat upon his appointment as Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench in 1710. *H.I.P.* iii, p. 266. He also served as speaker of the house from 1703-09 and 1713-14, as did John Forster from 1709-11, something that would have presumably reduced their committee activity. Brodrick's entries might also include cases of mistaken identity for his brothers, Thomas and St John.

This table shows the fifteen most active committee members in the House of Commons during Queen Anne's reign. They are divided almost evenly between Whigs and Tories and include most of the acknowledged party leaders. Several of these members were office-holders including two speakers of the House of Commons, Alan Brodrick and John Forster, while both Brodrick and Rochfort were elevated to judgeships during this period curtailing their parliamentary activity.[11] The preponderance of lawyers amongst these members is also noticeable, suggesting that legal skills were an advantage in the committee room. The absence of army officers is not surprising and reflects their frequent absences from parliament on military duty, although some like Henry Conyngham, Frederick Hamilton and Owen Wynne could and did play an important role in politics when they were in Dublin. Committee membership required regular attendance in the house, so it is reasonable to suggest that the members listed above were conscientious in their attendance in the legislature.

Conolly's position at the head of the above table is significant. It suggests that he was almost in daily attendance in Chichester House, and the evidence from the *Journals* bears this out. It confirms Addison's comment that Conolly loved business and that 'he spared neither pain nor money to serve the public good'.[12] It also suggests that Conolly's lowly origins and controversial career in the 1690s did not present an impediment to public advancement. His educational disadvantage, having neither attended university nor the Inns of Court do not seem to have

[11] Rochfort became Chief Baron of the Exchequer in 1707, while Brodrick became Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench in 1710. F.E. Ball, *The judges in Ireland, 1221-1921* (New York, 1927), II, pp 31-33.
[12] Addison to Godolphin, 7 May 1709 (*Addison Letters*, p. 136).

hindered his parliamentary career. They may have prevented him from rising to any of the law offices of the state, like his patrons Rochfort and Brodrick, or even to a recordership like Forster, but they did not prevent him drawing up legislation or from chairing committees. His private fortune also presumably assisted his committee membership; it gave him financial independence, ensuring that he did not have to toil at the bar like, for example, Alan Brodrick or Rochfort who both maintained extensive legal practices during parliamentary recesses. Instead, all of his energies were concentrated on parliamentary business. It is now worth considering the type of committees that Conolly served on and deciphering as much as possible his role on them.

Conolly served on a wide range of parliamentary committees, ranging from ones appointed to investigate petitions presented to parliaments from insolvent debtors in the Dublin Marshalsea prison, Derry merchants complaining about excessive import duties, to chairing the all-important Public Accounts Committee or the committee appointed to draw up a petition to remove the Tory lord chancellor, Constantine Phipps, in 1713.[13] He was especially active in preparing heads of bills for private acts, an important and often understudied part of parliamentary procedure, as well as in preparing and managing the progress of heads of bills on more substantive issues like the 1710 act for the improvement and regulation of the linen trade, which led to establishment of the Linen Board in the following year. Conolly's parliamentary activity is perhaps best studied through a thematic approach rather than through a chronological session-by-session analysis, taking

[13] *C.J.I.*, II, p769.

the central themes from Addison's description in 1709 as a starting point.[14] These were love of business; adherence to party; and support for dissenters. This examination of Conolly's parliamentary activity will be divided into three chronological sections. The first will examine Conolly's role in the first three parliamentary sessions up to the end of Lord Pembroke's viceroyalty in 1707. The second will examine Conolly's conduct in the three sessions held between 1709 and 1711, encompassing his entry into government under the Earl of Wharton and his subsequent dismissal from office following the return of Ormonde in 1711. The tumultuous session of 1713 will, finally, be examined separately.

The primary purpose of parliament was to legislate and Conolly quickly emerged as an active legislator in the 1703-04 parliamentary session despite his lack of activity in the 1692 and 1695-99 parliaments. On 6 October 1703, he was nominated to a committee appointed to investigate the regulation of markets and tolls.[15] Two days later, he was appointed to a committee to bring in an act to regulate the qualifications necessary for a justice of peace, and on the same day he was ordered alongside Clotworthy Upton, MP for Newtownards, to bring in heads of a bill on parliamentary privileges and procedure.[16] On the following day he reported from a committee appointed to investigate a petition for a private act from Redmond Morres. The commons passed these heads of bill and Conolly was ordered to bring them to the lord lieutenant for transmission to the English Privy

[14] My analysis of Conolly's parliamentary career has been influenced by David Hayton's analysis of Henry Maxwell's parliamentary career in a forthcoming article in *Eighteenth Century Ireland,* 'Henry Maxwell, M.P., author of *An Essay towards an Union of Ireland with England* (1703)'. I am very grateful to Professor Hayton for allowing me to read this article in its unpublished form.
[15] *C.J.I.,* II p. 328.
[16] Ibid., p. 330.

Council.[17] This brief snapshot of Conolly's activity in three days in October 1703 provides an indication of the variety of parliamentary activity he was involved in.

He was regularly appointed to committees set up to examine parliamentary procedure, suggesting he had a good knowledge of the often arcane subject matter. He managed the progress of the proposed bill for regulating markets and tolls through the house only for it to eventually fail.[18] He had more success with the Morres private act, one of the several brought before the house each session. Conolly was regularly appointed to manage the progress of such acts through the Commons from the initial investigation to the eventual presentation of the engrossed heads of bill to the lord lieutenant for transmission to the English Privy Council. Conolly's active role in managing the progress of private bills certainly suggests an aptitude for business, and also perhaps reflects his legal training and particular expertise in dealing with land transactions, honed during his time as solicitor to the Earl of Albemarle.

Conolly continued to be an indispensable member of the commons in the 1705 parliamentary session, despite the continuing dominance of the Tory-led administration. It was by now customary for proposed legislative initiatives to be announced as part of the lord lieutenant's speech at the beginning of each session following consultation between the lord lieutenant and his parliamentary managers. In the first sittings in each parliamentary session committees would be appointed to prepare the heads of bills for the proposed legislation. In February 1705 Conolly

[17] Ibid., p. 331.
[18] Ibid., pp 340, 349, 373 & 406. The failure of these heads of bills to become law was not unusual. 53.3 % of Irish legislative initiatives failed in the period 1701-10: Hayton (ed.) *The long apprenticeship: the Irish parliament in the eighteenth century* p. 12.

was appointed to a number of such committees. Together with Anderson Saunders, a leading Tory, he was charged with bringing in heads of a bill to amend the Act for Registering Popish Clergy, made in the previous session. This bill was piloted through the house by Saunders and eventually became law in 1705. On the same day, 14 February, Conolly was appointed to a committee to prepare heads of a bill 'to prevent the unlawful cutting, spoiling and stealing of timber in this kingdom'. He was named first on this committee, something that often signified that the member would act as chair of the committee.[19] Certainly Conolly reported on this committee's deliberations and managed the progress of these heads of bill through the commons before their eventual enactment as law. On the same day Conolly was nominated to a committee to examine the petition of John Morres for a private act of parliament. He also managed the progress of this matter from the drawing up of the heads of the bill to the eventual presentation of the heads to Ormonde for transmission to the English Privy Council.[20]

Conolly, as in the first session of this parliament, was particularly active in dealing with matters relating to parliamentary procedure and privilege. On 15 February 1705, he was nominated, alongside Henry Tenison, one of the government's leading parliamentary managers, to 'manage' a conference with the House of Lords on parliamentary privileges. This suggests that he was regarded as one of the leaders of the opposition in parliament, especially as Conolly presented a report to the commons following the conference.[21] Conolly's expertise in such matters was further emphasised when he was nominated alongside the Solicitor General,

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[19] C.J.I., II, pp 425, 428, 437,469 & 472. This became 4 Anne. c.9 *An Act for explaining and preserving in execution an Act for Planting and Preserving Timber Trees and woods.*
[20] *C.J.I.,* II, pp 425, 435, 444 & 472.
[21] *C.J.I.,* II, pp 427 428.

Sir Richard Levinge, to examine the journals to search for a precedent for members withdrawing their membership at their own request. This followed a request from St John Brodrick, the speaker's brother to withdraw because of ill health. Conolly again presented their report, and although they had discovered several precedents, they recommended against it because it was 'of dangerous consequence and tends to the subversion of the constitution of parliament'.[22]

Conolly was also nominated to investigate a number of petitions during this parliament, including one from Derry merchants complaining about the level of duties they were required to pay upon imports and exports, as well as a petition from Captain Hugh Hamill and three other officers seeking arrears due since the siege of Derry.[23] This reflected the common practice to nominate MPs to deal with matters originating from their constituency. He also continued to manage the progress of private acts through parliament, and was a near constant presence on committees formed to deal with such legislation.

His expertise in financial matters, combined with his rising prominence in the Whig party, saw Conolly appointed to chair the Public Accounts Committee in 1707. He had previously served as a member of this important committee in 1703, and he had been associated with the very thorough examination of the accounts of the deputy vice treasurer Sir William Robinson, which had led to the censure of the latter for presenting false accounts.[24] Conolly's appointment as chairman of the accounts committee in 1707 followed the replacement of Ormonde as lord

[22] *C.J.I.*, II, pp 437, 459.
[23] *C.J.I.*, II, pp 473, 475.
[24] For Conolly's role on the 1703 committee see the minute book of the Public Accounts Committee (N.A.I., Frazer Mss No. 10, entry for 2 Oct. 1703) and Henry Maxwell to James Stanhope, 23 Nov. 1703 (Centre for Kentish Studies Maidstone, U1590/0141/11).

lieutenant by Thomas Herbert, Earl of Pembroke in 1707; the latter was charged with forming a mixed ministry in Dublin incorporating both the Broderician Whigs and the court supporters of previous sessions.[25]

The major point of difference between the two parties in previous sessions had been the supply bill. The Tories had successfully passed two-year supply bills in 1703 and 1705, while the Whigs had pressed for one-year supply bills in line with their stated call for more regular parliaments and greater parliamentary accountability over government expenditure. The pre-session meetings with Pembroke in July 1707 were therefore dominated by attempts to reach a compromise on the duration of the supply bill in the new parliament. Conolly was part of a three-man Whig delegation who met Pembroke on 9 July to inform him that they were prepared to grant a supply for a year and three quarters.[26] On the following day, together with Alan and Thomas Brodrick, William Caulfield and Oliver St George, he took part in a conference with the lord lieutenant where it was decided to proceed with their proposal for a year and three quarters supply.[27] Conolly's membership of this delegation suggests his rising importance within the Whig leadership.

This status was confirmed when he was appointed chairman of the Public Accounts Committee on 14 July.[28] Their investigations into the public accounts were similar to those undertaken in 1703, and demonstrated the political potential

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[25] McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution*, p. 195.
[26] Ibid. pp 198-99.
[27] Anderson Saunders to Edward Southwell, 16 July 1707 (B.L. Southwell Papers Add Ms 9715 f. 174).Ibid. pp 198-99.
[28] For the committee's deliberations see the minute book of the Public Accounts Committee (N.A.I., Frazer Mss No. 10, entries for 14-24 July 1707).

of the committee, much as the Commission of Public Accounts had done so much to forward the aims of the country party in the English parliament in the 1690s.[29] The members spent more time in committee than had been the case during any other parliamentary session, and they divided into sub-committees to examine specific sections of the accounts. The whole committee also subjected the establishment to a thorough examination looking for ways to cut costs.[30] Conolly presented the committee's report on 26 July. Unsurprisingly it was extremely detailed and scathing in its criticism of the practices of the revenue officials for their alleged mismanagement of the state finances:

> Upon the whole the committee observe that the public accounts laid before the house and referred to this committee are in so confused a manner and method that they create a very great trouble and difficulty, and no account brought to balance: and though the public officers have been called upon, and demanded why the accounts of the nation are not brought to a balance, they say it is not their business....[31]

Among the report's recommendations was that a process be brought in to audit the public accounts properly.[32] Accordingly a committee was set up to draft heads of a bill to audit and state the public accounts. Conolly was joined on this committee by other prominent Whigs, including William Caulfield, Henry Maxwell and Thomas Carr.[33] Nothing came of these heads of bill, but it demonstrated the Whig desire to have greater control over the administration of the public finances. On 30 July the House of Commons voted thanks to the Public Accounts Committee, and to 'Mr Conolly their chairman for their great care and faithful and diligent

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[29] J.A. Downie, 'The commission of public accounts and the formation of the country party', in *English Historical Review,* 91 (1976), pp 33-51.
[30] Minute book of the Public Accounts Committee (N.A.I., Frazer Mss No. 10, entry for 18 July 1707).
[31] *C.J.I.,* II part II pp clv- clxii; See also McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution* pp 201-202, for a detailed discussion of this report.
[32] Minute book of the Public Accounts Committee (N.A.I., Frazer Mss No. 10, entry for 23 July 1707).
[33] *C.J.I.,* II, p. 511.

discharge of the trust reposed in them'.[34] Conolly also took the chair when a committee of the whole house took the Public Accounts Committee's report into consideration on 4 August.[35] He had clearly emerged as a leading financial spokesperson on the Whig side of the house, alongside Lawrence Clayton and Henry Maxwell.

During this session, Conolly had continued to be an active legislator on public and private matters. He had been nominated to committees to prepare heads of a bill to reduce sheriffs' fees at executions and also a bill to prevent the destruction of salmon fry, amongst other bills. The latter was possibly in recognition of his expertise in fisheries matters, arising out of his involvement in the Bishop of Derry's case in the 1690s and his own disputes with the Caldwell family over the salmon fisheries at Belleek. Conolly managed the progress of both of these heads of bills through parliament, although only the bill to lessen sheriffs' fees became law.[36] He also introduced the heads of bills for nine private acts during this session, adding to his reputation as a busy legislator.[37] Many of the private bills brought in this session, including one effecting a settlement made by Lord Bellew, were necessitated by the need to close loopholes in the *Act to Prevent the Further Growth of Popery*. Conolly, in a report presented to a committee of the whole house on Lord Bellew's petition, reported that the committee had 'examined what evasions have been used to elude the act to prevent the further growth of popery'.

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[34] *C.J.I.*, II, p. 514.

[35] *C.J.I.*, II, p. 522; Sir Richard Cox to Edward Southwell, 5 Aug. 1707 (B.L., Cox-Southwell Correspondence, Add Mss 38,155, f.89).

[36] 6 Anne c. 7 *An Act for lessening Sheriff's Fees on Executions.*

[37] Amongst these private acts was one to sell part of the estate of Thomas Hackett to pay off his creditors. (*C.J.I.*, Vol. II part I pp 496, 507 & 515). Conolly was amongst the MPs appointed Trustees to carry out the sale of Hackett's estates. Their actions can be traced in the Registry of Deeds, which was established in the same session. (Reg. Deeds. 1.481.375, 1.495.385, 1.498.387, 1.500.487, 2.151.344 & 2.157.350.)

The MPs who had been appointed to investigate Lord Bellew's petition under Conolly's chairmanship were therefore ordered to prepare heads of bill to amend the *Act to Further Prevent the Growth of Popery*. In due course these heads of bill were presented and eventually became law in 1709.[38]

The 1707 session from the English government's perspective was a failure. Pembroke had not managed to bring in a repeal of the Test Act, while the compromises made over the supply had damaged both the Whigs and the Tories. For Conolly personally, however, the session could be seen as a success. His involvement in the pre-session meetings with Pembroke had demonstrated that he was in effect one of the leaders of the Whig party. His chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee, during a period when it established itself as 'the central body in the increasingly formalised and structured process of supply', had only served to enhance his credentials.[39] His success was recognised outside parliament as well. In March 1708 Alexander Montgomery, a Donegal landowner and half-pay officer, wrote to Conolly asking him to use his 'extraordinary good interest with Lord Pembroke and the Secretary', to get Montgomery a regiment, because Montgomery 'finds he cannot live off his country affairs'.[40] This request suggested that Conolly was regarded as having access to the lord lieutenant, and to government patronage.

Conolly's 'extraordinary good interest' with Pembroke was gained not just through his legislative activity in parliament or his small but growing electoral

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[38] 8 Anne c. 3 *An Act for explaining and amending an Act intituled An Act to Prevent the Further Growth of Popery.*
[39] McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution* p. 210.
[40] Alexander Montgomery to Conolly, 29 Mar. 1708 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/41).

interest in the north-west, but also through shared political goals. Amongst these was a shared interest in some measure of relief for dissenters, particularly Ulster Presbyterians. Conolly's background in the politics of Londonderry Corporation, where he had enjoyed good relations with a number of Presbyterian merchants and alderman, coupled with his legal representation of the Presbyterian-dominated Belfast Corporation in their dispute with the Anglican vicar of Belfast in 1698, had demonstrated his early attachment to the dissenters' cause.[41] The election, first of William Cairnes, a prominent Presbyterian banker, and then of George Macartney, a prominent supporter of the dissenting community (though himself an Anglican), for one of Conolly's borough seats at Limavady in 1703 had only confirmed this impression, and it was further revealed in the 1703 session.[42]

The High Church appetite for tightening up the legal restrictions on Protestant dissent first became visible during a debate in a committee of supply on 19 October 1703, when the Tories proposed to strike the sum of £1,200 per annum, provided for the maintenance of Presbyterian ministers, off the establishment. This proposal, as David Hayton has pointed out, must be seen as a Tory attempt to embarrass the Whigs, who had started the process of scrutinising the pensions on the civil list. During the debate, Tory speakers spoke out in favour of stopping the *regium donum* citing the illegal activities of the Presbyterians in the north. They were joined by church Whigs such as Henry Maxwell and Samuel Dopping, who expressed similar sentiments, with Maxwell, saying he was always a churchman, and that the 'Dissenters ought to be content with not being persecuted.'[43] Conolly

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[41] Jean Agnew, *Belfast merchant families in the seventeenth century,* p. 72.
[42] See chapter five.
[43] D.W. Hayton, 'A debate in the Irish house of commons in 1703: A whiff of tory grapeshot', in *Parliamentary History,* 10, no 2 (1991), p. 161.

also entered the debate, and Alan Brodrick's notes record that he was against 'the 1200 on account of poverty'. This intervention seems unusual, considering Conolly's known support of the dissenting interest, but it also demonstrates the trap that the Tories had created. Conolly did not couch his arguments in terms of hostility towards the Presbyterian community, but instead used a financial argument, grounded in the stated Whig philosophy to reduce the charges on the Irish establishment.[44] The *regium donum* was voted as an unnecessary charge but the government ignored this censure. Conolly continued to be engaged by the Presbyterians as a spokesperson for their cause. In December 1703, he was recommended as a suitable person to present their case in parliament by the members of the newly founded Dublin conventicle off Capel Street in Dublin, suggesting that he enjoyed their trust.[45]

Conolly's activities following the imposition of the sacramental test clause to the notorious *Act to Prevent the Further Growth of Popery* by the English Privy Council in 1704, confirmed this.[46] When the modified bill was returned to the Irish House of Commons, Conolly was nominated to a committee alongside fellow Whig Henry Maxwell and two others 'to prepare and bring in heads of a bill to give such toleration to protestant dissenters in Ireland as is by law allowed protestant dissenters in England'.[47] This was, however, little more than a sop to the dissenters, and no further action was taken. Further action would indeed have been

[44] Ibid. pp 160-61. This evidence is taken from Alan Brodrick's note on the debate and is somewhat ambiguous. It is possible that Conolly was arguing for the £1,200 charge based on the poverty of the dissenting ministers.
[45] Enclosure in letter from Edward Southwell to the Earl of Nottingham, 9 Dec. 1703 (*C.S.P.D.*, 1703/4 pp 229-30).
[46] On the passage of this act see, J.G. Simms, 'The making of a penal law (2 Anne, c.6), 1703-4' in D.W. Hayton and Gerard O'Brien (eds.) *War and politics in Ireland,* pp 263-76.
[47] *C.J.I.,* II, p. 401.

impossible, considering the opposition to any form of relief in the House of Commons, as evidenced by the debates on the *regium donum* the previous year. Conolly's appointment to this committee, however, suggests some recognition of his interest in toleration, which was evidenced by his support of the local Presbyterian community on his Limavady estate, where he had provided the site for a meetinghouse in 1701.[48] Furthermore Walter Williamson, a Presbyterian merchant, was allowed to remain a member of the borough corporation until 1712 despite the imposition of the Test.[49]

Conolly's support for toleration and later for repeal of the test was aligned with his wider commitment to the Whig cause. This allegiance was never really in doubt considering his actions in the 1690s, although the case of Robert Rochfort, a leading 'sole right' advocate and speaker of the House of Commons from 1695-99, shows the danger of assuming unswerving continuity between the 'sole right' circle centred on the Brodricks and Rochfort in the 1690s and the Whig party that emerged in 1703. Conolly's leadership of the 'purchasers'' agitation had demonstrated his Whig credentials and he continued where he left off in parliament. His alleged partisan behaviour on the Public Accounts Committee, where he joined other Whigs in exposing the discrepancies in Sir William Robinson's accounts led to the rumours that he was to be censured in the English parliament for his alleged part in abetting John Parker's fraudulent claim two years earlier. Henry Maxwell also suggested that Conolly was to be attacked because of his opposition to a two-year supply bill along with the other Whigs.[50]

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[48] Julia Mullin, *The Presbytery of Limavady* (Limavady, 1989), p.71
[49] E.M.F.G. Boyle (ed.) *The records of the corporation of Newtown Limavady* (Londonderry, 1912).
[50] Henry Maxwell to James Stanhope, 23 Nov. 1703 (Centre for Kentish Studies Maidstone, U1590/0141/11).

Conolly also served on the committee which drew up the representations upon a union under the chairmanship of commonwealth Whig Robert Molesworth.[51] This memorial was less a petition for a political union than an opportunity for Irish Protestants to air their grievances. Amongst the grievances highlighted were the Irish Protestants' anger at the trustees' proceedings as well as traditional Whig complaints relating to the calling of regular parliaments and the absenteeism of government officials.[52] When the Queen's reply to the address was returned to Dublin in February 1704 Conolly joined other Whig members of the committee in speaking in favour of a motion by Henry Maxwell to print the address, a move which was eventually defeated.[53] He was clearly identifiable as an opposition member, but unlike other opposition MPs especially the soldier MPs, such as Conyngham, Hamilton and Stafford, he did not suffer for his opposition, despite the attempts to raise his alleged involvement in John Parker's fraudulent claim in the English House of Commons.[54] There is, however, some danger of overstating Conolly's importance at this juncture: and it is perhaps worth noting that he did not feature in a satirical library list drawn up in April 1704, shortly after the end of the session.[55] This list, found in the Midleton papers, lampooned 38 prominent Irish

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[51] On the 1703 address see, Allan Macinnes, 'Union failed, union accomplished: the Irish union of 1703 and the Scottish union of 1707' in Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Acts of Union: The causes, contexts, and consequences of the Act of Union* (Dublin, 2001), pp 67-94, which erroneously sees it as a petition for a union, but see also, C.I. McGrath's convincing rebuttal of Macinnes' argument, in an unpublished paper delivered at the Tercentenary symposium on the Anglo-Scottish Union, 1707: European Perspectives in May 2007, 'The 'Union' Representation of 1703 in the Irish House of Commons: A case of mistaken identity?' I am grateful to Dr McGrath for allowing me to read this paper prior to publication.

[52] The Irish parliament's anger at the Trustees had already been demonstrated by the expulsion of Francis Annesley and the censure of John Trenchard, the Earl of Drogheda and even the late James Hamilton of Tollymore for their part in the Inquiry report. *C.J.I.*, II, pp 321, 326.

[53] Alan Brodrick, Dublin, to Thomas Brodrick, Westminster, 10-11 Feb. 1704 (S.H.C., Midleton Papers, 1248/2/ ff 123-4).

[54] On the dismissal of the Whig officers see, William Cairnes to Alan Brodrick, 18 Apr. 1704 (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 133-134).

[55] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 15 Apr. 1704 (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 131-132).

politicians, including Maxwell, Sir Richard Levinge, and Clotworthy Upton, amongst others, with the latter cited as the author of the History of Geneva, a clear reference to his Presbyterian background. Conolly's absence is noteworthy, because virtually all the other prominent MPs, on both sides of the party divide, of the period are included.

Conolly continued to be a prominent speaker on the Whig side, and remained a vociferous supporter of the Whigs' now traditional attempt to secure a one-year rather than a two-year supply bill. The importance of this was that it would mean more regular sittings of parliament and would increase parliamentary control over state finances. Conolly, together with other leading Whigs Joseph Deane, Benjamin Parry, Lawrence Clayton and William Whitshed, who according to Alan Brodrick 'spoke to a miracle', all spoke in favour of a one-year supply in 1705.[56] Despite their efforts and Whitshed's oratory, they were defeated by 142 votes to 67. This was a marked increase in the margin between the two parties since the division on the supply in the previous session, which had only been carried by three votes, something that was attributed to better party management on the court's part.[57] Conolly also appears in the accounts of another Commons division based on party lines over an address from the lower house of convocation to the House of Commons.[58] Conolly's close personal connection with the Whig leadership was emphasised when he was asked to carry a letter from Alan Brodrick to his brother in London, when Conolly departed for London for the summer of

[56] Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 3 Mar. 1705 (S.H.C., 1248/2 f. 174).
[57] McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution*, pp 185-186
[58] Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 14 Mar. 1705 (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 180-182).

1705 at the close of the session.[59] This also confirmed the impression that Conolly was still very much the junior partner in his relationship with the Whig leader despite his rising profile.

Conolly's public attachment to the Whig cause was clear in the period of heightened party conflict before the opening of the 1707 session. In February he caused some controversy at a dinner hosted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Benjamin Burton, in honour of the queen's birthday, when he declared that there 'was no government in being,' a reference to the recent death of Lord Cutts, one of the lord justices.[60] Conolly had also declared a Mr Langston to be 'General Langston', in Cutt's place.[61] The party divisions were further evident when Conolly and other prominent Whigs including Richard Pyne, Oliver St George and John Forster, refused invitations to the public celebration of the Duke of Ormonde's birthday in April 1707 on the eve of the new session.[62] Conolly's position within the Whig leadership at this junction was, as shown above, confirmed by his inclusion in the party's negotiations with Pembroke before the beginning of that session.

Conolly and the Wharton viceroyalty

Thomas, Lord Wharton, one of the junto lords and a stalwart Whig, was appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland in succession to Pembroke in October 1708.[63] Wharton

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[59] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 24 June 1705 (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 215-216). Conolly and his wife departed for England aboard the man of war that carried Ormonde across the Irish Sea. They stayed in London until the following October though the purpose of their visit is unknown.
[60] William Crowe to the Duke of Ormonde, 11 Feb. 1707 (H.M.C., *Ormonde* n.s. VIII, p. 282).
[61] This was Francis Langston MP for Baltimore who wished to be Lieutenant General in place of Cutts. See *H.I.P.* V, p. 61.
[62] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 30 Apr. 1707 (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 264-65).
[63] For a general account of the Wharton viceroyalty see, L.A. Dralle, 'Kingdom in reversion, the Irish viceroyalty of the Earl of Wharton 1708-10', in *Huntington Library Quarterly,* xv (1951-52),

had long been identified with the Whig interest in Ireland and had taken a keen interest in Irish affairs since the 1690s. His appointment suggested that the Whigs would continue to represent the court in parliament, although there were few initial changes made to the Irish executive, which continued to be dominated by Tories.[64] Wharton's legislative proposals were laid out in his opening address to the Commons on 5 May 1709. They included a commitment to spending the money raised by the supply bill in Ireland, and to prevent the withdrawal of troops from Ireland without replacement. This addressed security concerns in Ireland, which were heightened by the Franco-Jacobite invasion threat of 1708. He also made specific reference to the Catholic threat while also appealing for a greater understanding amongst Irish Protestants.[65] This was an oblique reference to his intention to bring in a repeal of the sacramental test clause. The Commons welcomed his speech and a committee under the chairmanship of Conolly drew up their response, again without making direct reference to the proposed repeal of the Test clause.[66] Conolly's role as chairman of this committee suggests that he was regarded as one of the court's parliamentary managers in this session. Chief Secretary Joseph Addison's report on the address, which included the favourable account of Conolly quoted above, confirms this impression.[67]

On the 13 May, Conolly was again appointed to chair the Public Accounts Committee. Whereas in 1707 the accounts committee had produced a tough report aimed at embarrassing the government, the 1708 report was much more muted in

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pp 393-431. See also Christopher Robbins, "The most universal villain I ever knew' Jonathan Swift and the earl of Wharton', in *E.C.I.,* xviii (2003), pp 24-38.

[64] McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution,* p. 211.

[65] *C.J.I.,* II, p. 576.

[66] *C.J.I.,* II, p. 578; McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution,* p. 213.

[67] Joseph Addison to Sidney Lord Godolphin, 7 May 1709 (*Addison Letters,* p. 136).

its criticism.[68] This was not because there had been many major changes in the management of the state finances, but because of the changed political scenario. Conolly and the other leading Whigs on the committee used their skills to protect the government rather than to attack it. This reflected Wharton's desire to bring in a one-year supply bill, which would need Whig support.[69] The supply bill was eventually successfully ushered through parliament, though not without difficulties being raised by a group of renegade Whigs, led by Samuel Dopping in alliance with some Tories.[70] Conolly played a vigorous role in managing the progress of the supply bill through the house.[71]

Conolly was especially active as a legislator in this session, confirming Addison's impression of him as man who loved business. Amongst the eventual acts which he managed through the Commons were ones to enable posthumous children to take estates as if born in their father's lifetime,[72] and an act aimed at preventing the counterfeiting of coin in the kingdom.[73] He also took on the management of a private act to enable Charles Plunkett, only Protestant son of Lord Louth, to inherit his family estates.[74] (These included the Killadoon estate in Co. Kildare, which Conolly later purchased in 1725). Despite his support for Plunkett's bill and Lord Bellew's bill in the previous session, Conolly remained resolutely determined to uphold the seventeenth-century land settlements upon which his fortune was based.

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[68] *C.J.I.,* II, part II, pp cxcviii-cxcix.
[69] McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution,* p. 213.
[70] Ibid. pp 216-228.
[71] See *C.J.I.,* II, p. 594; Addison to Godolphin, 31 May 1709, Same to Same, 10 Aug. 1709, Same to Same, 12 Aug. 1709, Addison to John Lord Somers, 12, Aug. 1709 (*Addison Letters* pp 144,174, 176, 177-8).
[72] 8. Anne. c.4 *An Act to enable posthumous children to take estates as if born in their father's lifetime C.J.I.,* II, pp 580, 625.
[73] 8 Anne. c.6. *An act aimed at preventing the counterfeiting of coin in this kingdom, C.J.I.,* II, pp 577, 631.
[74] *C.J.I.,* II, pp 605-6, 626-627.

This was evidenced by his appointment to a committee to draw up an address to the Queen 'setting forth the fatal consequences of reversing the outlawries of persons attainted for treason for the rebellions in 1641 and 1688'.[75] This address, which Conolly presented to the Commons, was occasioned by a petition from Christopher Fleming, Baron Slane, seeking a reversal of his outlawry, which was supported by Wharton.[76] Amongst Fleming's former estates was the Slane estate of Conolly's late brother-in-law Henry Conyngham. Conolly's pro-government line in this session was further recognised when he, together with Lawrence Clayton, another close adherent of Speaker Alan Brodrick, was appointed to draw up the address of thanks to the lord lieutenant at the close of the session in August 1709.[77]

Conolly's position within the Whig leadership was strengthened by his actions during the 1709 parliamentary session. He had successfully acted as one of Wharton's parliamentary managers during an often-tumultuous session. Wharton failed to bring in a repeal of the Test clause, but this had as much do with English politics as it had with Irish.[78] The major result of this session had, however, been the clear identification of the Whigs as the court party. This led to a reorganisation of Irish officeholders in the aftermath of the parliamentary session, giving Wharton the opportunity to reward some of his most reliable supporters. Alan Brodrick was appointed Lord Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench, while John Forster and William Whitshed were appointed Attorney and Solicitor General

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[75] *C.J.I.,* II, pp 599, 609.
[76] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 28 Feb. 1709 (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 358-9); McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution,* p. 211.
[77] *C.J.I.,* II, p. 630.
[78] See, D.W. Hayton, 'Divisions in the Whig Junto in 1709: some Irish evidence', in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research,* lv (1982), pp 213-21.

respectively.[79] Conolly, owing to his lack of professional legal training, was ineligible for promotion to a law office, but he was also to be rewarded. He was appointed to the Revenue Commission replacing the deceased Henry Tenison who had been appointed in 1704 in recognition of his service in the previous parliamentary session.[80] Conolly's appointment to the Revenue Board could be seen as recognition of his interest in and aptitude for financial administration as exemplified by his astute chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee in 1707 and 1709.[81] Wharton also appointed Conolly to the Privy Council in 1710, further demonstrating Conolly's emergence as a member of the inner political circle. These appointments brought Conolly into the centre of Irish government, and it was perhaps not coincidental that Conolly purchased the Castletown estate from the Earl of Limerick in September 1709, just after the close of his most successful parliamentary session.

The second parliamentary session of Wharton's viceroyalty ran from May to August 1710 and was dominated by events in England. The Sacheverell affair created a reaction against the English government leading to the eventual removal of the Whig junto from power by the end of the year. The uncertainty over the future of the English Whig administration meant that Wharton's future as lord lieutenant of Ireland was in doubt, which weakened his administration. This uncertainty over his future also ensured that his proposal to repeal the Test clause

[79] McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution* p. 248; Ball, *The judges in Ireland, 1221-1921*, II, pp 51-2.
[80] Duke of Ormonde to Godolphin 10 Jan. 1704 (N.L.I., Ms. 991 p. 217). Quoted in Hayton, 'A debate in the Irish house of commons in 1703: A whiff of tory grapeshot', p. 161.
[81] See Chapter 6 for a further discussion of Conolly's appointment and career at the Revenue Board.

was abandoned.[82] Any repeal would only be possible with the full support not only of the Irish Whigs but also, crucially, the English administration.

Despite these disadvantages there were some positives for Wharton to reflect upon going into the new parliamentary session. The introduction of Forster, Whitshed and Conolly into the executive had increased the Whig presence within the Irish government. The elevation of Alan Brodrick to a judgeship also meant that further changes were necessary, including the election of a new speaker of the House of Commons. Forster, the new attorney general, was elected unopposed to the speakership upon the first sitting of parliament. Forster's election suggests that at that point he was regarded as the senior Whig leader in the Commons, rather than Conolly or Whitshed. But he may have been chosen because he was more amenable and better disposed to work with the moderate Tories. Rochfort had suggested him as a possible successor as solicitor general when the former was rumoured to be about to be promoted to become chief baron in 1705.[83] Brodrick's departure also left a vacancy in the Whig leadership in the Commons, which was partly filled by Conolly alongside the new speaker Forster.

Conolly continued to play a prominent role in parliament although, strangely, he was not as prominent as in the two previous sessions. Fellow Whig Henry Maxwell replaced him as chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.[84] Conolly's appointment as a Revenue Commissioner may have precluded him from chairing the latter, considering that the Revenue Commissioners' activities would

[82] McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution*, p. 234.
[83] Robert Rochfort to Ormonde, 27 Dec. 1705 (H.M.C. *Ormonde* n.s., VIII p. 204).
[84] Minute book of the Public Accounts Committee (N.A.I., Frazer Mss No. 10, entry for 25 May 1710).

be under scrutiny. Conolly was, however, appointed to a committee to draw up heads of a securing bill, a Whig innovation, which had first been introduced in the previous session to secure the supply for the remainder of the session.[85] He was joined on this committee by Edmond Stafford, who acted as chairman, Thomas Brodrick, Whitshed and Parry, all leading Whigs.[86] Conolly also continued to be an active legislator managing the progress of two heads of bills successfully through the house, including the 1710 Act for the Improvement of the Linen Manufacture, which led to the setting up of the Linen Board in 1711.[87] Conolly's involvement in this bill reflected his background as an Ulster landowner, the region where the linen trade was already concentrated.

Wharton resigned as lord lieutenant on 22 September 1710, just over three weeks after the end of the parliamentary session. His resignation prevented his dismissal by the Queen following the Tory takeover of the government on both sides of the Irish Sea. Ormonde returned as lord lieutenant for the second time, in late October. In the intervening period Conolly was dismissed from his position as a Revenue Commissioner, much to the glee of Jonathan Swift amongst others.[88] Conolly's time at the Custom House had been short-lived, reflecting a volatile political situation. He was also dismissed from the Privy Council along with the Brodrick brothers and other prominent Whigs including General Gustavus Hamilton.[89] There were also wholesale changes in the judiciary and law officers, with Alan

[85] 9 Anne c. 1 *An act for better securing to Her Majesty the payment of such duties granted to Her Majesty this session f parliament. C.J.I.,* II, p. 648.
[86] For this securing bill see McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution,* pp 236-37.
[87] 9 Anne c. 3, *Act for the Improvement of the Linen Manufacture*; *C.J.I.,* II, pp 678, 680.
[88] Swift to Stella, 28 Sept. 1710 (Jonathan Swift, *Journal to Stella* ed. Harold Williams, (Oxford 1948), I p. 31-2). For Swift's accusation that Conolly bribed Wharton to secure a commissionership see chapter 5.
[89] Edward Pearson to the Earl of Oxford, 24 June 1711 (H.M.C. *Portland Mss,* V, (London 1899), pp 20-21.)

Brodrick, James Macartney, Forster and Whitshed losing out, to be replaced by Sir Richard Cox, Richard Nutley, Richard Levinge and Francis Bernard respectively.[90] This purge of officeholders, even before Ormonde's arrival, confirmed the partisan approach that the new ministry was going to take. The speed of Conolly's dismissal from the revenue - he was the first of the Whig commissioners to be dismissed - confirmed his identification with the Whig leadership and with Wharton's administration.[91]

The Tory takeover of the Dublin administration and the resultant despondency amongst the Whigs gave the Tories confidence heading into the parliamentary session that began on 9 July 1711. Whig despondency was clear in their low attendance at the opening sittings of parliament. In a vote on retaining a phrase critical of the Wharton administration in the traditional loyal address to the Queen, only 39 Whigs voted against the court compared to the 84 votes in favour. Conolly acted as teller for the noes, suggesting that he was willing to continue to lead the parliamentary opposition to Ormonde's administration in the absence of Alan Brodrick, who remained outside parliament.[92] Brodrick in fact spent the parliamentary session in England. He had however spent time at Conolly's country house in May 1711, possibly making preparations for the upcoming session.[93] Conolly's major parliamentary activity in this session was to manage the progress of heads of a bill for the encouragement of tillage. He was nominated chairman of the committee appointed to prepare the heads of the bill and reported

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[90] McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution,* pp 248-9.
[91] Ibid.
[92] *C.J.I.,* II p. 697.
[93] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 19 May 1711 (S,H.C. 1248/3 ff 49-50).

on the bill's progress at each committee stage.[94] The bill was altered by the English Privy Council, provoking a furious reaction from the Whigs in the House of Commons upon its return.[95] Conolly presented the report of the committee on the altered bill on 24 October, recommending that the bill now be rejected. The bill was put to a vote, with the Whigs emerging victorious by 109 votes to 105. Richard Jones acted as teller for the yeas, confirming his allegiance to the Tory side, while Edmond Stafford acted as a teller for the noes. Jones' vote only serves to confirm the breach between him and Conolly.[96]

The high turnout for this division, together with the Whig reaction to the returned heads of bill, demonstrates that their despondency was short-lived and that they had returned to active rather than passive opposition. This heightened activity was motivated by concerns over the succession to the crown, and what some saw as the increased arbitrariness of government decisions, which were seen as reminiscent of Tyrconnell's actions in the latter years of the reign of James II.[97] Of particular concern were the attempts of the Privy Council to remodel borough corporations through the withholding of approval for Whig chief magistrates. The most notorious case was the Dublin mayoral dispute, where Whig candidate after Whig candidate was rejected despite a strong Whig majority on the corporation. Amongst the other corporations affected was Coleraine where Conolly enjoyed some interest. He had previously been involved in a contest with Richard Gorges over the election of a mayor in 1708 at the Privy Council. This contest was

[94] *C.J.I.,* II, p. 697, 699, 702, 722, 724
[95] McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution,* p. 260; D.W. Hayton, 'An Irish parliamentary diary from the reign of Queen Anne', in *Analecta Hibernia,* xxx (1982), p. 111. John Perceval did not, however, list Conolly amongst the Whigs who spoke 'violently' against the returned bill.
[96] *C.J.I.,* II, p. 724.
[97] Hayton, 'An Irish parliamentary diary from the reign of Queen Anne', p. 109.

referred to at the time as a 'party matter' and was described as a competition to see 'whether Conolly or Dick Gorges would be dictator of the borough'. Gorges won, 9 votes to 6 and the Whig mayor was unseated.[98] On 29 October Conolly joined other leading Whigs including Whitshed, Molesworth and Parry in speaking for a motion deploring the Privy Council's conduct.[99] The motion was narrowly defeated by one vote, 109-108, again demonstrating the finely balanced divisions.[100]

Conolly's steadfast defence of the Whig cause in the last four years of Queen Anne's reign would later be lauded by his friends and admirers who praised his zeal for the Protestant succession and his patriotism in these years.[101] This attachment to the party cause became particularly evident following the dissolution of Queen Anne's first Irish parliament, after almost ten years, in May 1713, and the subsequent replacement of Ormonde, as lord lieutenant, by the Duke of Shrewsbury in late summer 1713. The Tories under the guidance of Lord Chancellor Sir Constantine Phipps had spent much of 1712-13 preparing for the upcoming election, not only remodelling borough corporations but also in appointing Tory county sheriffs in a manner that echoed Tyrconnell's management of the elections to the 1689 parliament. Shrewsbury was sent to Dublin to institute a policy of moderation, and to call a new parliament. He brought leading Whigs into his household including Conolly and Isaac Manley. Conolly was appointed

[98] Sir Richard Cox to Edward Southwell, 27 Apr. 1708 (B.L., Add Mss 38,156, f.6).
[99] Hayton, 'An Irish parliamentary diary from the reign of Queen Anne', p. 116
[100] Ibid. p. 119; *C.J.I.*, II, p. 726.
[101] See James Arbuckle *The Tribune* (Dublin 1729), p. 53; William Hamilton, *The dangers of popery, and blessings arising from the late revolution consider'd in a sermon preached in the cathedral church of Armagh. November, 5th MDCCXXII* (Dublin, 1723), pp 3-4.

one of two honorary aide de camps.[102] These ceremonial appointments notwithstanding, Shrewsbury continued the existing Tory officeholders in government, including the highly divisive Phipps. Election preparations continued apace with the Tories confident of victory.[103]

Conolly's important role in the 1713 election is dealt with elsewhere. He was instrumental not only in securing a large Whig representation in counties Donegal and Londonderry but more importantly in managing the election of Alan Brodrick as speaker of the House of Commons, despite a perceived Tory majority in the house. Brodrick's election as speaker owed much to Shrewsbury's political ineptitude, specifically his failure to endorse Sir Richard Levinge as speaker until after Brodrick had started his campaign for the speakership. The vote for the new speaker took place on 25 November 1713, with Conolly nominating Brodrick 'as a person for his great learning and abilities fit for speaker'.[104] Conolly's speech in favour of Brodrick was reported as being short and to the point. According to Sir John Perceval, he told the house 'that for him to attempt giving him (Brodrick) a character would but lessen his merits'.[105] Conolly's role in nominating Brodrick provides an indication of his standing in the Whig party. He was clearly regarded as a leading figure both because of his previous activities in the house but also because of his electoral interest. He had played a key role in securing the return of the Whig soldiers, Owen Wynne and Frederick Hamilton, both of whom voted for Brodrick, rather than for the court candidate, much to the disgust of Bolingbroke

[102] Anon., *A long history of a certain session of a certain parliament in a certain kingdom* (London, 1714), p. 9.
[103] See for example William Stratford to the Earl of Oxford, 19 Nov. 1713 (H.M.C. *Portland Mss* VII, p. 172); James, *Ireland in the empire 1688-1770*, p. 76.
[104] *C.J.I.*, II, p. 743.
[105] Hayton, 'An Irish parliamentary diary from the reign of Queen Anne', p. 125.

who complained to the chief secretary John Stanley, 'I hope I am not ill natured but I confess myself extremely tired of that leniency which suffers a fleet and army to declare for a faction against the Crown'.[106] Conolly had also secured the return of prominent members of the Whig party including Benjamin Parry, Henry Maxwell, (who again chaired the Public Accounts Committee) and George Macartney who possessed no significant parliamentary interest of their own. The return of members to sit in parliament was one thing, but ensuring they turned up was another, and this was where the Tories fell down according to Sir Richard Cox, who suggested that the Tories were negligent in their attendance while the Whigs 'attended to a man'.[107]

Brodrick's election as speaker was followed by the election of John Forster as chairman of the all-important committee of elections, which would determine the results of contested elections. The ferocity of the electoral contest meant that there were many more contested elections than on any previous occasion. The choice of Forster as chairman coupled with the Whig domination of the ordinary committee members, who included Conolly, ensured that the committee's deliberations were more likely to favour adherents of that party.[108] These two Whig victories set the tone for the remainder of the session, which was dominated by the continuing fallout from the Dublin mayoral dispute. The election of two Whigs, including Forster, in a volatile and tightly contested election for the two city seats only served to escalate an already inflammatory situation. Whig ire continued to be directed at the Lord Chancellor, Phipps, for his part in the dispute, and a committee

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[106] Cited in J.G. Simms, 'The Irish parliament of 1713' in D.W. Hayton and Gerard O'Brien (eds.) *War and politics in Ireland*, p. 282.
[107] Cox to Southwell, 9 Dec. 1713 (B.L., Add Mss 38,157 f. 29).
[108] Hayton, 'An Irish parliamentary diary from the reign of Queen Anne', pp 127, 39.

was set up to address the queen, petitioning for the removal of Phipps. Conolly chaired this committee. He presented the address in the House of Commons on the 19 December, where it was passed with minor amendments.[109] On the same day Conolly engaged in a bit of parliamentary obstruction, starting a debate that should have taken two minutes and continuing it for two hours, so that St John Brodrick could prepare a report that was to be presented to the house on the proposed prosecution of Edward Lloyd for publishing the pro-Jacobite *Memoirs of the Chevalier St George*.[110] This filibustering approach demonstrated Conolly's experience and knowledge of parliamentary procedure.[111] It was clear that parliament could not continue without some decision on the future of the Lord Chancellor, and parliament was adjourned on 24 December.[112]

On 44 January Shrewsbury, on the advice of the Tory leaders Anglesey and Phipps, called a meeting of the 'chief managers of the commons' to discuss the parliamentary impasse.[113] The Whig 'men of fortune & understanding' called to the Castle were Alan Brodrick, Conolly, Whitshed, Maxwell, Forster, Joseph Deane and George Gore, a veritable who's who of the most prominent Whigs in the previous three or four sessions.[114] The meeting was not a success as the Whigs refused to provide a supply bill until their grievances had been dealt with. By the end of January it was clear that the parliament would not be recalled and that

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[109] *C.J.I.*, II, pp 770-76.
[110] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 19 Dec. 1713 (S.H.C., 1248/3 ff 121-23).
[111] David Dickson has suggested that the growth of the use of the committee in Queen Anne's first parliament greatly aided the Whigs in their successful resistance to Tory executive power in 1713. David Dickson, *New Foundations. Ireland*, p. 63
[112] C.J.I., II, p. 777; Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 174.
[113] McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution*, p. 279.
[114] The phrase is Brodrick's. Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 5 Jan. 1714 (S.H.C. 1248/3 ff 151-2).

Shrewsbury was going to attempt to govern without a parliament.[115] Conolly's prominence in the parliamentary attacks on Phipps, together with his presence at the conference with Shrewsbury, confirmed Conolly's standing as a leading and influential member of the Whig party.

In October 1714, with the death of Queen Anne and the peaceful accession of the Elector of Hanover to the British and Irish thrones, Conolly came out of the shadows and back into the front rank of Irish politics. He regained his place at the Revenue Board and was successfully nominated as the court's candidate for the speakership of the House of Commons. His nomination to the chair confirmed his status as the leading Whig in the Commons, and his role as the government's leading parliamentary manager. It also reflected the paucity of other candidates available. Of the leading Whigs in the previous parliamentary sessions, Alan Brodrick, Whitshed, Forster, William Caulfield and Joseph Deane had all left the House to take up judicial office, while neither Henry Maxwell nor Benjamin Parry had the political interest to be nominated to the speakership, while Alan Brodrick dismissed the possibility of Sir Richard Levinge being nominated as 'very unsafe'.[116] Indeed it is hard to see why he was even countenanced as a possibility. The only other Whig candidate to be considered was George Gore, who had only come into parliament in 1709, and though widely respected, was still too junior to be seriously considered. He was appointed attorney general instead.[117] The legal route either as a judge, or as attorney or solicitor general was not open to Conolly,

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[115] McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth-century Irish constitution,* p. 279.
[116] Alan Brodrick to the Earl of Sunderland, 19 Oct 1714 (B.L., Blenheim Papers Add Mss 61,636 ff 113-114).Ball, *The judges in Ireland, 1221-1921* II, p.78; Patrick McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers: parliamentary politics in early eighteenth century Ireland* (Dublin, 1997), pp 74-79.
[117] *N.H.I.,* IX, p.515; Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p.125.

because of his lack of formal legal training. Instead he became the first speaker of the House of Commons who had not been called to the bar.

His parliamentary skills, honed while he had become the most prolific committee member in Queen Anne's reign, led to Conolly's appointment to the chair. His knowledge of parliamentary procedure, as evidenced by his regular appointment to all procedural committees, coupled with his experience of chairing important committees such as the Public Accounts Committee in 1707 and 1709, and the committee which investigated Lord Chancellor Phipps in 1713, demonstrated his unrivalled political experience and practical qualifications for the speakership. Conolly was by 1707 recognised as a leader of the Whig interest in parliament. His leadership role was based partly on his already growing electoral interest, but also on his close connection with the group centred on Alan Brodrick, which dated back to the early 1690s. Conolly's active participation in legislative activity, however, accelerated his rise to a position of real political power that was not dependent on Brodrick or any other patron. His appetite for business as identified by Addison was particularly important; it brought Conolly to the attention of the English ministers as well as bringing him into contact with a wider group of Irish MPs on both sides of the house. All these factors, electoral interest, private wealth, personal connections, active parliamentary activity and political ideology contributed to Conolly's crucial central position in the new Hanoverian regime.

Chapter 5

The 'Great man of the North:' Conolly's electoral interest in north-west Ulster

By 1703 Conolly had acquired estates in seven Irish counties, stretching from Donegal in the north-west to Wexford in the south-east. In the same year he was elected MP for Co. Londonderry, having previously sat for Donegal borough in the two Williamite parliaments. It was clear that Conolly intended to concentrate his electoral interests in his native north-west despite accumulating extensive estates elsewhere. This strategy made sense for a number of reasons. He had first made his name as an attorney on the north-west circuit and had then increased his local reputation through his legal work for Londonderry Corporation and the Irish Society. Meanwhile his marriage to Katherine Conyngham in 1694 connected him to many of the leading families in Co. Donegal, including the Gores, Hamiltons, Knoxes and Montgomerys.[1] Members of these interconnected families were amongst the coterie of Ulstermen, identified by Toby Barnard, who came to the fore in the aftermath of the Williamite revolution, and who emerged as leading players in the Dublin administration in the early years of the eighteenth century (although he acknowledges that the extent of their influence remains to be established).[2] In Barnard's analysis Conolly emerges as the most ostentatious success story. Hayton has also pointed to his striking emergence as the leader of a nexus of Whig electoral interests in counties Donegal and Londonderry.[3] In 1703,

[1] Lena Boylan, 'The Conollys of Castletown', p. 4.
[2] T.C. Barnard, 'The government and Irish dissent, 1704-80' in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The politics of Irish dissent* (Dublin, 1997), p. 22.
[3] D.W. Hayton, 'Ireland and the English ministers 1707-16' (D.Phil., Oxford, 1975), idem, *Ruling Ireland, 1685-1742*, p. 206.

Conolly controlled three borough seats, in addition to his own county seat, while by 1713 he had an interest in at least six borough seats, a total that had risen to eight by 1727. In addition he also maintained an indefinable political influence in Derry city during most of this period. This chapter traces the evolution of these political interests in counties Donegal and Londonderry and the different factors and forces which led to the establishment of an enduring power base in the two counties.

Politically the two counties were quite different. Donegal was dominated by a small interconnected Whig-leaning elite, the majority of whom had come to prominence in the Williamite war. These families, the Conynghams, Creightons, Folliotts, Gores, Hamiltons and the Montgomerys, divided the representation of the county and the boroughs between them. By the 1690s the heirs of the plantation grantees, the Chichesters in Inishowen, the Folliotts of Ballyshannon and the Kingsmills of Castlefin, were in eclipse and newer interests were on the rise. Sir Albert Conyngham, Gustavus Hamilton and David Creighton all distinguished themselves in the Jacobite war, both locally and nationally, and were able to reap the rewards of their service. The Donegal gentry had been quick to declare for William III and the county had been an important theatre of war.[4] This forwardness of the leading Donegal gentry meant they were well placed to benefit from the opportunities provided by the revolution in the Dublin administration.[5]

Politics in Co. Londonderry was more complicated. The peculiar landholding structure of the county created an unusual electoral situation. A plantation county,

[4] J.G. Simms, 'County Donegal in the Jacobite war, 1689-91' in D.W. Hayton and Gerard O'Brien (eds.) *War and politics in Ireland,* pp 135-147.
[5] Barnard, 'The government and Irish dissent, 1704-80', p. 22.

it was divided into thirteen portions, twelve of which were owned by a group of London guilds who operated under the collective entity of the Irish Society. The thirteenth portion was the manor of Limavady and belonged to the Philips family, descendants of the architect of the plantation, Sir Thomas Philips, until 1697 when Conolly purchased it.[6] In addition there was extensive church land attached to the bishopric of Derry. County politics was dominated by the Irish Society's tenants-in-chief, who held large renewable leases on very advantageous terms. The Presbyterian-dominated merchant community in the city of Derry also played an important political role in the county. Furthermore the presence of a large dissenting interest added another dynamic to county politics, both before and after the imposition of the Test Act in 1704, while the presence of a strong clerical interest in the county, led by a succession of influential bishops from William King to William Nicolson, further complicated matters.

The different political structures and characters of the two counties meant that the were linked only by the presence of Conolly interests in both and thus had to be treated separately, although the chapter will conclude with a discussion of Conolly's broader political interest across the north-west region. A regional north-west grouping formed the backbone of Conolly's parliamentary support, just as the Duke of Ormonde was supported by a local following in south Leinster, and the Brodrick and later Boyle interests were supported by their 'Cork squadrons'. These regional followings were arguably more important and durable than the party divisions with which they often overlapped in early eighteenth-century Ireland, as the following study of Conolly's 'electoral empire' suggests.

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[6] On Sir Thomas Phillips see, T.W. Moody, *The Londonderry plantation, 1609-41* (Belfast, 1939), P.S. Robinson, *The plantation of Ulster* (Dublin, 1984).

Co. Donegal

The advent of regular parliaments in 1692 meant that membership of the House of Commons became requisite for advancement in public life, both in the civil and military spheres. Attention turned from the court to the restored parliament in Dublin as offering perhaps a more accessible route to public advancement, both for an individual member and for his patron.[7] In Donegal, as elsewhere, the election to the first Williamite parliament, in 1692, gave the leading local interests a chance to flex their muscles. Gustavus Hamilton, a local military hero, was returned alongside his brother-in-law, Charles Hamilton, who had formerly represented the county in the restoration parliament, for the two county seats.[8] The other leading interests were represented in the ten borough seats. At Ballyshannon, Lord Folliott returned two members of his family, suggesting the seats were entirely at his disposal. In Killybegs, Henry Conyngham, who owned a large estate around Mountcharles was returned alongside Thomas Smith, a connection of the Bishop of Raphoe, while at St Johnston the representation was divided between the Abercorn and Forward families, with the return of John Forward alongside Charles Melville, a connection of the Hamilton/Abercorn family.[9] At Lifford prominent local landowners, Hugh Hamill and John Montgomery were selected. Meanwhile in Donegal town John Hamilton was returned alongside William Conolly.

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[7] See D.W. Hayton, 'Dependence, clientage and affinity: the political following of the second Duke of Ormonde' in T.C. Barnard and Jane Fenlon (eds.) *The dukes of Ormonde, 1610-1745* (Woodbridge, 2000), p. 212.

[8] For all MPs mentioned hereafter, see E.M. Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish parliament* (6 vols, Belfast, 2002).

[9] James Hamilton later 6th earl of Abercorn was also returned for St Johnston but chose to sit for Co. Tyrone and was replaced by Melville.

Conolly's election for Donegal borough remains a slight mystery. He was not yet a major landowner in the area, his only property in the county, near Ballyshannon, was leased from Trinity College and carried no electoral weight.[10] Despite this, although not an inevitable parliament man, his profile was rising both through his legal work and through his involvement in the Irish Protestant exile community in London, in 1689. His local credentials were further enhanced by his uncle Terrence Conolly's role as Revenue Collector for Killybegs (which included all of Donegal Bay). Whatever the reasons for his return in 1692, Conolly held the seat in 1695 when he was returned alongside William Gore. The representation of the borough would be divided between Conolly and the Gore family for the next thirty-five years. In 1703 Conolly was returned for Co. Londonderry but his wife's brother in-law Richard Jones was returned in his place in Donegal alongside Sir Ralph Gore. Sir Ralph, the head of the Donegal branch of the Gore family, would become one of Conolly's most trusted parliamentary allies.

During Queen Anne's first parliament Conolly's electoral influence in the county increased. Conolly's marriage to Katherine Conyngham, in 1694, connected him to one of the major interests in the county. In 1695 her brother, General Henry Conyngham, was returned for County Donegal, having previously sat for the family borough of Killybegs, and quickly emerged as one of the leading members of the Court party in parliament, alongside the Brodrick brothers.[11] By 1703 the Duke of Ormonde's Tory advisors were referring to a 'northern party', which seems to have included amongst its leaders, Conyngham, Gustavus Hamilton and

[10] See chapter two.

[11] Alan Brodrick described Conyngham as 'a very worthy man and intimately my friend'. Alan Brodrick to St John Brodrick, 17 Dec. 1695 (S.H.C., Midleton papers 1248/1 ff 278-9). See also Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 28 Dec. 1699 (S.H.C., 1248/1 ff 316-317).

Conolly.[12] Conyngham's ascent to political prominence was short-lived; he died on active service in Portugal in 1706. Frederick Hamilton, eldest son of Gustavus Hamilton, was returned to represent the county in his place, cementing the Hamilton grip on the county seats. Under the terms of Conyngham's will, Conolly was nominated as an executor, and much of the management of the Conyngham inheritance in Donegal devolved on Conolly during the minority of Conyngham's two sons.[13]

Included in this inheritance was Conyngham's interest in the borough of Killybegs. Control of the borough was divided between the Conyngham family and the absentee Scottish landlord, Alexander Murray of Broughton. Henry Conyngham enjoyed a close relationship with Murray (they were cousins) and their interests usually coincided.[14] When Conyngham's widow, Lady Shelburne (she had kept her first husband's title), died in 1710 Conolly gained greater control of his late brother in-law's affairs including the management of Killybegs.[15] In the same year, one of the incumbent MPs, Charles Hamilton died, and Conolly was presented with an opportunity to demonstrate his influence. Thomas Knox, his local agent, wrote to Conolly to inform him of the situation:

> I was on Friday at Killybegs and cautioned the provost to expect to hear from you before there should be any exertion expecting My Lady and your recommendation of a worthy person in the room of Mr Hamilton. I had a letter from My Lady last night also in favour of your brother recommending him heartily to the corporation

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[12] Thomas Lord Consingby to Robert Harley, 9 Oct. (H.M.C. *Portland Mss*, Vol. 4 p. 71). See also, the Earl of MountAlexander to Ormonde, 27 Apr. 1704 (H.M.C. *Ormonde Mss*, Vol. 8 p. 67).
[13] See copy of will in *Irish Genealogist,* vol. 1 No. 12 (Apr. 1942).
[14] See Graeme Kirkham, 'No more to be got from the cat but the skin; Management, landholding and economic change in the Murray of Broughton estate 1670-1755' in William Nolan, Liam Ronayne, and Mairead Dunlevy (eds.) *Donegal, history and society* (Dublin, 1995).
[15] She had forfeited her rights as guardian to her children following her third marriage to Robert Dallway MP, but remained unofficially involved in the management of Conyngham's affairs. See, Lady Shelburne to Alexander Murray, 13 May 1710; Same to same, [undated but 1710] (P.R.O.N.I., Murray of Broughton Papers, D/2860/9/25-27).

> for that service. There was no danger of any one getting in there without your consent; there is provisional marking for the election and as soon as you please to send the writ your brother shall be elected.[16]

Conolly's brother-in-law, Thomas Pearson, was duly elected without any trouble.[17] It is clear from Knox's letter that Conolly controlled at least one seat at this juncture. The other seat was at this time held by Benjamin Parry, a leading Whig who had been returned on the Murray interest in 1703 at the request of Alan Brodrick.[18] Parry would be the last MP returned on the Murray interest. In 1711, Alexander Murray's agent, confusingly, a different Thomas Knox, informed him of the composition of the corporation, following an inquiry from his patron:

> There is not three of the number that lives in your town, so that your interest without Mr Conolly could not go far, because most of the other burgesses are his relations and friends.[19]

These friends and relations were rumoured to include 'three burgesses belonging to the revenue'.[20] Conolly's brief tenure as a revenue commissioner during the partisan Wharton viceroyalty had allegedly enabled him to arbitrarily dismiss members of the corporation and replace them, on the corporation, with friendly revenue officials who owed their loyalty and places to Conolly. This use of revenue places for political purposes was not new and had been a feature of the party conflict during Queen Anne's reign.[21] The extent of this control would be tested in the tightly contested election of 1713.

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[16] Thomas Knox to William Conolly, 6 Aug. 1710 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/48/1-150).
[17] He had married Conolly's sister Jane in 1707. See marriage settlement, 9 Aug. 1707 (I.A.A., 97/84 G/8/1-15).
[18] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 23 Nov. 1704 (S.H.C., 1248/2 ff 156-7). Brodrick referred to a mother and her son who had 'the whole interest'. I take this to mean the Murrays as Lady Anne Murray had until 1699 managed her late husband's affairs during her son's minority. See Kirkham, 'No more to be got from the cat but the skin', p. 360.
[19] Thomas Knox, Lougheaske, to Alexander Murray, 28 Apr. 1711 (P.R.O.N.I., D/2860/4/21).
[20] Edward Pearson to the Earl of Oxford, 24 June 1711 (H.M.C. *Portland Mss* V, (London 1899)). This is unfortunately the only source which hints at the use of revenue patronage in this manner.
[21] Thomas Crawford transferred ironically to Killybegs in 1705, which he had described as 'the worst port in the kingdom', wrote to Ormonde requesting assistance citing his loyalty in previous parliamentary sessions. Crawford to the duke of Ormonde, 16 July 1705 (H.M.C., *Ormonde* VIII p. 166).

The 1713 election has been seen as the high point of the 'age of party' in Ireland.[22] The conflict between the Whigs and the Tories even extended to Whig-dominated Donegal. During the divisive viceroyalty of the earl of Wharton, Richard Jones MP for Killybegs had deserted his patron, Conolly, voting against the money bill. It was clear as early as April 1711 that Jones would not be returned again for Donegal, and he had already been mentioned as a possible candidate for Killybegs in the next election.[23] This was not to be, despite his connection with the Conyngham family. Politics came before family for Conolly in this particular instance, despite the protestations of Jones and his wife. In January 1713 Mary Jones wrote to her cousin Edmond Stafford MP:

> It is upon a matter of great concern I trouble you with this. I was yesterday with my Br Conolly endeavouring to prevail on him not to oppose my spouses election at Killybegs and not withstanding all the arguments I could use or the concern I was in it was to no purpose ... Mr Jones thinks as everybody must that he being married to me has a right to be elected there for man till such time as master Conyngham comes of age therefore I earnestly beg you will interpose and use your friendly endeavours.[24]

It is clear she believed her husband was entitled to the seat until her nephew came of age. These sentiments were shared by her husband who wrote a supplicating letter to Conolly, in which Jones inferred that other patrons put support of family over politics, citing the example of Lord Abercorn.[25] Abercorn, although a Tory

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[22] See, J.G. Simms, 'The Irish parliament of 1713 in D.W. Hayton and Gerard O'Brien (eds.) *War and politics in Ireland*; Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, pp 170-2.
[23] Thomas Knox, Lougheaske, to Alexander Murray, 28 Apr. 1711 (P.R.O.N.I., D/2860/4/21).
[24] Mary Jones to Edmond Stafford, 30 Jan. 1713 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/7/1-10).
[25] Richard Jones to Conolly, 3 Oct. 1713 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/7/1-10). See also T.C. Barnard, 'A tale of three sisters: Katherine Conolly of Castletown', p. 274.

himself, had supported his Whig kinsmen Sir Ralph Gore and Frederick Hamilton in the county election in the same year.[26]

Conolly, however, refused to budge and nominated his close political associate Henry Maxwell alongside Pearson for Killybegs. The 1713 dispute showed that while Conolly was nominally managing it in the Conyngham interest he had, in reality, complete control over the borough. This control was recognised by the compilers of a government list in preparation for the 1713 election. They noted Conolly's control, but hoped forlornly that the Bishop of Raphoe, who had formerly had an interest in the borough, would be able to rekindle this interest.[27] Tory expectations were also centred around a faint hope that the Tory Alexander Murray of Broughton would regain his dormant interest both in the borough and in the county, 'whereupon the interest of the friends of the Ministry even in that country [sic] will be superior to Hamilton's and Connelly's'.[28]

In Donegal town hopes were briefly maintained that Maurice Annesley, a Tory relation of the Gores, would be returned, but these were frustrated. Arthur Gore was returned in place of his kinsman Sir Ralph, who chose to sit for the county, while George McCartney was chosen in Jones' place. McCartney, a Belfast merchant with impeccable Whig credentials, had previously sat for Limavady, and his election for Donegal confirmed Conolly's continuing interest in the borough. Writing to Conolly, his agent Thomas Knox reported:

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[26] F.G. James, *Lords of the ascendancy: The Irish house of lords and its members, 1600-1800* (Dublin, 1995), p. 65.

[27] 1713 parliamentary list (B.L., Southwell Papers, Add Ms 34,777, f. 58). The Conynghams may have inherited their interest in the borough from the See of Raphoe. Sir Albert Conyngham was the son of the Dean of Raphoe while his wife was the daughter of Bishop Henry Leslie of Raphoe. See, Helen Meehan, 'The Conynghams of Slane and Mountcharles', pp 22-35.

[28] Edward Pearson to the Earl of Oxford, 24 June 1711 (H.M.C. *Portland Mss* V, p. 21).

> 'On Thursday last we had our election at Donegal where Sir Arthur Gore and Mr McCartney were unanimously elected by all except Mr Robert Spence who named Mr Jones'.[29]

The Gore/Conolly partnership in the borough was further emphasised by the division of the election costs of £16 4*s* 6*d* between Conolly and Sir Ralph.[30]

Meanwhile at Ballyshannon the Whig Owen Wynne was returned alongside the Tory George Rochfort, despite government efforts to get the playwright William Phillips returned on the Folliott interest.[31] Conolly's agent Thomas Knox informed him that he 'was concerned that Ballyshannon election did not succeed in favour of Mr Geering' suggesting Conolly had supported sitting MP Richard Geering's re-election, presumably against Rochfort.[32] Geering's failure was offset by the return of Wynne, who was described as a 'violent' Whig. He was one of the several half pay officers in General Frederick Hamilton's regiment, who had attached themselves to the Whig interest. Their failure to support the government in the contest for the speakership in 1713 caused adverse comment from the English ministry with Bolingbroke expressing his disapproval.[33] Conolly had been both instrumental in General Hamilton's return for Coleraine and in the management of Alan Brodrick's campaign for the speakership, suggesting he may have had a hand in Wynne's election, although this is mere conjecture.

Conolly's electoral interest in Killybegs was confirmed in 1715 when he returned Charles Fane, an English officeholder, at the request of the government, alongside

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[29] Knox to Conolly, 16 Nov. 1713 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/48/1-150).
[30] Same to Same, 12 Mar. 1713/14 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/48/1-150).
[31] 1713 parliamentary list (B.L., Add Ms 34,777, f. 58). On Philips see below.
[32] Knox to Conolly, 16 Nov. 1713 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/48/1-150).
[33] J.G. Simms, 'The Irish parliament of 1713', p. 282.

Thomas Pearson.[34] Fane was elevated to the peerage in 1717, and Robert Colvill a nephew of Sir Ralph Gore was returned in his place. Meanwhile Henry Maxwell was returned at Donegal in place of McCartney who was elected for Belfast. Otherwise there were no major changes in the county representation until 1727. Behind the scenes, however, Conolly made one significant move with his purchase of the manor of Ballyshannon, in 1718 from the heirs of Lord Henry Folliott.[35] This purchase brought with it, control of the town's two borough seats, as well as a substantial political interest in the county. By 1722 Conolly had established control of the corporation; a list of burgesses from that year includes his brother-in-law and agent Thomas Dickson as provost, while other members included Conolly himself and General Owen Wynne.[36]

This new electoral interest would be demonstrated in 1727 with the return of his nephew, and eventual heir, William Conolly junior, alongside Thomas Pearson. Meanwhile at Killybegs his wife's nephews Williams and Henry had come of age and were selected for the family borough. Conolly's influence was still apparent: thus he wrote to Alexander Murray, thanking him 'for writing to his agent in support of them' but he added significantly that Murray 'need not be at the trouble of writing to the corporation'.[37] Conolly, while ostensibly acting as guardian of his nephews' interest, had successfully wrested control of the borough from Murray's hands. Williams Conyngham and his heirs would control not one seat, like their father, but both seats until the Act of Union. The Conolly interest at Donegal borough also continued with the return of Henry Maxwell.

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[34] Conolly to _____ 22 Aug. 1715 (T.N.A., SP 63/373 f. 182).
[35] See chapter one.
[36] List of Ballyshannon burgesses, 15 May 1722 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/28).
[37] Conolly to Alexander Murray, 10 Aug. 1727, cited in Kirkham, 'No more to be got from the cat but the skin', p. 376.

By 1727, therefore Conolly had an interest in five borough seats in Donegal. Of these five, the representation of three (the two at Ballyshannon and one at Donegal) were completely under Conolly's control, while the two seats at Killybegs had reverted back to the Conyngham family, although Conolly had secured their election for them. This impressive electoral interest had been built up despite Conolly's lack of a major landed property in the county until 1718. Admittedly his interest in Killybegs only came about through circumstances beyond his control, although he did manage to secure a greater interest in this borough than Henry Conyngham had enjoyed.

Moving away from the complexities of borough politics to examine the county elections, it is clear that the Hamilton, Conyngham and Gore interests acted in harmony.[38] This harmonious cooperation came about for a number of reasons. Firstly, there were only a small number of large landowners in the county capable of exercising political influence. Of these, some like the Chichesters, earls of Donegal, the leading landowners on the Inishowen peninsula, did not get involved in Donegal politics.[39] Others like the earls of Abercorn concentrated much of their electoral interests in a different county, in this case Tyrone. Secondly, some potential county interests like the Folliotts at Ballyshannon and the Forwards at St Johnston concentrated on borough politics. Conolly's activities in Donegal could fall into this category. Thirdly, many of the largest estates in the county carried no electoral advantages. These included the Trinity College lands in the barony of

[38] Edward Pearson to the Earl of Oxford, 24 June 1711 (H.M.C. *Portland Mss* V, p. 21).
[39] See, David Dickson, 'Derrys backyard: the barony of Inishowen 1650-1800' in William Nolan, Liam Ronayne, and Mairead Dunlevy (eds.) *Donegal: history and society.* (Dublin, 1995), pp 405-46.

Kilmacrenan, which formed a large portion of Gustavus Hamilton's estates, and the College's lands in the Barony of Tirhugh, which formed the largest part of Conolly's estate in the county until 1718. These estates were leased for a maximum of twenty-one years and so in themselves created no freeholders, and therefore no extra voters amongst the tenantry. Fourthly, the common political interests of the remaining landholders ensured mutual support at elections.

Conolly's potential influence in county elections was limited until 1718, when he purchased his estate at Ballyshannon. Hitherto his influence in the county had been based on his management of the Conyngham interest, and on the small interest he derived from his estate at Castlefin. Despite his limited landed interest, he had played an important part in the politics of the county. The dominance of a Whig oligarchy led by Gustavus Hamilton, Sir Ralph Gore and Conolly was recognised by outside commentators as early as 1711, and was demonstrated in the 1713 election. Acting in concert they divided the representation of the county between them, and in doing so ensured that no new interest could rise against them. This absence of contested elections meant that Conolly was free to concentrate his electoral efforts in the boroughs and in County Londonderry.

Co. Londonderry

Conolly's greatest and most durable political interest was in Co. Londonderry. He represented one of the county seats from 1703 until his death in 1729, while his grandnephew and ultimate heir Thomas Conolly (1734-1803) would later represent the county from 1760 until the Act of Union. Conolly's interest in the politics of the county began with his purchase of the Limavady estate, together with its

parliamentary borough, in 1697 and was first exercised in the election of 1703. His influence in the county increased with his acquisition of the leases of the Grocers' and Vintners' proportions from the Irish Society in 1713 and 1718 respectively. To fully understand Conolly's emergence as a dominant player in the county it is necessary to examine the politics of the county in the 1690s.

The Philips and Beresford families at that stage dominated the parliamentary representation of the county. Sir Tristram Beresford was MP for the county in 1692 and 1695-9, and his interest was centred on Coleraine; he died in 1701 when his eldest son was still a minor. George Philips, the other county MP and also a local hero of the Williamite wars died in 1697, leaving a heavily encumbered estate at Limavady, which his son William was forced to sell to Conolly for £1,800.[40] Philips' death in 1697 also led to a by-election. William Jackson of Coleraine and James Lenox, the Presbyterian mayor of Derry, contested it. Lenox was initially victorious but was unseated following a petition from Jackson. This election illustrated another important factor in the politics of the county, the dissenting interest. Jackson was supported by a strong Anglican interest in the county, including the influential William King, Bishop of Derry (1690-1703), an avowed opponent of the dissenting interest, while Lenox drew much his support from the Presbyterian-dominated mercantile elite in Derry.[41]

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[40] Conveyance of the Manor of Limavady from William Philips to William Conolly, 25 June 1697. (P.R.O.N.I., Conolly Papers D/2094/12A). On William Philips see also, John Kerrigan, 'The Derry school of drama, 1677-1722: Ireland, the Ulster Scots and archipelagic English' in Ray Ryan and Liam McIlvanney (eds.) *Ireland and Scotland: culture and society, 1700-2000* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), pp 65-90.

[41] See Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 65.

Conolly was therefore well placed to stand for a county seat in 1703. His purchase of the manor of Limavady gave him a substantial estate in the county. Importantly it also brought with it an influential electoral interest as it contained a large number of freeholders who were entitled to vote in county elections. Most of the estate was let out on long leases, most for three lives renewable.[42] This particular type of perpetuity lease, unique to Ireland, seems to have equated with a freehold.[43] Most of the proportions let out by the Irish Society forbade the creation of such leases; consequently those estates carried little electoral influence. Conolly's influence in the county was not solely based on his possession of the manor of Limavady. His legal activities on behalf of Londonderry Corporation in the 1690s had brought him into contact with many of the leading interests in the city, including prominent Presbyterians like James Lenox.[44] His involvement in the celebrated case of the Irish Society v. the Bishop of Derry also allowed him to develop close links with the Society. As has been argued elsewhere, this involvement was of more use to Conolly than the Society in the long term.[45] The Society carried a lot of weight in elections in the county, both for the county seats but also in the boroughs. Conolly's emerging local interest was formally recognised in 1697 with his appointment to the revenue sinecure of Customer and Receiver of Customs for the ports of Londonderry and Coleraine. This slow cultivation of a local interest in the

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[42] See for example, perpetuity lease dated 4 Apr. 1700, William Conolly to Robert Patton (P.R.O.N.I., D/2094/15). Earlier leases granted by Philips also included a clause informing tenants 'when there was a writ for an election for parliament in the county Smith was to go to the place where the election was held at his own expense and vote for the candidate nominated by Philips'. T.H. Mullin, *Limavady and the Roe Valley* (Londonderry, 1983), p. 77.

[43] D.W. Hayton, 'Voters, patrons and parties: parliamentary elections in Ireland, c.1692-1727' in Clyve Jones, Philip Salmon, and Richard Davis (eds.) *Partisan politics, principle and reform in parliament in the constituencies, 1689-1880* (Edinburgh, 2005), p. 46. See also David Dickson, *New Foundations*, p. 119.

[44] See correspondence with Lenox and other members of Londonderry Corporation in the Lenox Conyngham Papers. (P.R.O.N.I., D/1449/12/1-42). See also Mina Lenox-Conyngham, *An old Ulster house* (Dundalk, 1946), pp 17-18.

[45] See chapter 2.

1690s increased Conolly's chances of mounting a successful challenge to represent the county, a task made much easier by the death of first Phillips, then Beresford, the sitting members.

Conolly completely took over the Philips interest, whereas in the case of the Beresfords, the family interest only went into temporary decline following the untimely death of Sir Tristram in 1701. It is unclear whether in 1703 the county election was contested but the fact that Conolly took the precaution of returning himself for the borough of Limavady suggests it was, possibly by Jackson. In the end Conolly was returned for the county alongside Hercules Rowley of Summerhill, Co Meath. Rowley was connected through marriage to the Dawson family, who held a lease of the Drapers proportion near Moneymore. Rowley also leased lands from the Bishop of Derry.[46] He continued to sit for the county until 1742.

The Conolly/Rowley dominance at county level did not remain unchallenged. In 1713 Joshua Dawson, the under secretary at Dublin Castle, challenged the sitting MPs. He had inherited his brother Thomas's estate at Moneymore in 1708 and stood in the Tory interest. The compilers of a list of likely Tory gains believed that he would unseat Conolly at this highly contested election.[47] Dawson was to be disappointed, as Conolly and Rowley carried the day, although Conolly again took the precaution of returning himself for Limavady. In 1715 Conolly and Rowley were returned without a contest. This reflected the Whig dominance across the country. The Tory interest in Londonderry declined further with the death of the

[46] *H.I.P.* ,ii, p. 277.
[47] 1713 Parliamentary List (B.L., Add Ms, 34,877, f. 58).

Jacobite leaning Tory Bishop John Hartstonge in 1717 and his replacement by the Whig, St George Ashe in 1717, who was followed shortly afterwards by Bishop William Nicolson in 1718.[48] The support hitherto given to the Tory interest by the Church of Ireland was now extinguished. The security of Conolly's interest rose in the county as his national political profile increased in the years following the Hanoverian succession. This local dominance was evident in 1727 when Conolly and Rowley were again returned unopposed. However, despite this, they still had to expend some energy and money on the election. Ale, beer and music had to be provided for the electors, while charity money was also paid to the poor and prisoners of Derry. Election costs totalling £129 10s 3d were split equally between Rowley and Conolly.[49]

Conolly's success in representing the county for such a long period can be attributed to a combination of factors; his large landed interest, his national profile, his connections with Londonderry Corporation and the Irish Society and his distribution of local patronage. The importance of Conolly's landed interest to his electoral success, particularly his estate at Limavady, has been analysed above. A large landed interest, however, could not alone guarantee electoral success, but if managed well could be the decisive factor in achieving such success. Conolly's leasing practices, which were mostly inherited from Philips, combined with the close attention he paid to his estates, assisted in the mobilisation of his tenants. His

[48]On Hartstonge's Jacobite leanings see, Éamonn Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite cause, 1685-1766* (Dublin, 2004), pp 172, 231. See also S.J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power*, p. 241, more generally on the disaffection of the Derry Clergy. On Nicolson, see F.G. James, 'Derry in the time of George I: Selections from Bishop Nicolson's letters', in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology,* xvii (1954), pp 173-186; F.G. James, *North country bishop: a biography of William Nicolson* (New Haven, 1956).

[49] An account of the expenses of the county election of Londonderry, 28 Sept. 1727 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/7/10).

interests in Co. Londonderry were managed by the highly capable Colonel Robert McCausland, who as well as overseeing the collection of Conolly's rents also kept him informed about local issues ranging from militia appointments to defaulting tenants, to the emigration of Presbyterians to North America. McCausland's reports, coupled with Conolly's occasional visits to his estates, ensured that he was kept very well informed on local issues.[50]

Conolly's ability to dispose of local patronage was another important element in his dominance of county politics. This patronage came in two forms, that which he controlled as a local notable, and the patronage to which he had access to as a result of his national profile, predominantly revenue jobs. Under the first category came the influence he enjoyed as governor of the county and colonel of the militia, positions that were largely independent of his parliamentary position. These positions, like his earlier revenue sinecure, owed more to his status within the county and were the usual rewards for prominent members of the county gentry. Conolly's involvement with the local militia provides a good example of the opportunities available to gratify his existing supporters and to increase his influence in the county. Conolly was prominent, at least from 1715, in the Londonderry militia. In that year he supported the enlistment of Presbyterians both at local and national level, despite the restrictions imposed by the Test Act.[51] His own regiment in Co. Londonderry contained a number of Presbyterian members in

[50] Patrick Walsh, 'The differing motivations for preventing transatlantic emigration: A case study from west Ulster 1718-1729' in Shane Murphy, et al. (eds.) *Beyond the anchoring grounds: More crosscurrents in Irish and Scottish Studies* (Belfast, 2005), pp 324-30.

[51] Conolly to Sunderland, 9 Aug. 1715, (T.N.A., SP 63/373 ff 70-1); Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 1 Mar. 1716, (S.H.C., 1248/3 ff 316-17). See also J.C Beckett, *Protestant dissent in Ireland* (London, 1948), pp 71-4; Neal Garnham, 'Ireland's protestant militia, 1715-76: a military assessment', in *Irish Sword,* xx (1996), pp 131-136.

the 1720s.[52] This reflected both his commitment to the dissenting cause and the security situation in the county, which it was deemed required a large militia. In 1725 it was reported that:

> The Papists are so uppish and barefacedly insolent preaching up sedition and blasphemy, making collections, raising money at mass places, that the softest construction the most intelligent here can put upon it is that the papists design once more (if they can find an O'Neill to head them) to play over the same of 41.[53]

Such fears as expressed in the above report suggested that the Protestant interest was perceived as being far from secure in the county. This was submitted through the Irish Society to Conolly, 'who will use such means as will prevent the fatal effects of the Papists' wicked designs'.[54] As governor of the county he nominated new officers albeit often in consultation with the county gentry. In 1726 when he proposed a Mr Coningham for a vacant commission, Robert McCausland told him that this appointment 'will be very acceptable to the people in general and so will the other new officers'.[55] In the previous year a Thomas Ash had written to Conolly, requesting a colonelcy, informing him that he was the choice of the regiment. His petition was successful, suggesting that Conolly took the interests of the local gentry seriously.[56]

Conolly's local patronage extended beyond the parameters of the militia. By 1718, his local interest was so great he was able to intervene in the affairs of the Presbyterian Church, writing to the General Synod to suggest a new minister for Limavady. Furthermore his recommendation was taken on board, although in the

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[52] Return of the Right Honourable William Conolly's regiment of Militia Dragoons in Co. Londonderry, 1725 (N.L.I., Ms 17858/1).
[53] Thomas Sandys to the Board of the Irish Society, 26 Mar. 1725, cited in P.J. Larkin, 'Popish riot in south County Derry, 1725', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha: journal of the Armagh Diocesan Society,* viii (1976), p. 98.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Robert McCausland to Conolly, 14 July 1726 (N.L.I., Ms 17858).
[56] Thomas Ash to Conolly, 2 Oct. 1725 (N.L.I. Ms 17,858).

end his nominee, Mr Hillhouse, emigrated to America and another minister was appointed.[57] This intervention in the internal politics of the Presbyterian Church gives some indication of Conolly's status in the region, and indeed his relationship with the dissenting interest in the county. He also enjoyed a good relationship with the local Anglican community, particularly following the elevation of Bishop William Nicolson to the See of Derry in 1718. Nicolson even dedicated his *The Irish historical library in* 1724 to Conolly, noting that the freeholders of Londonderry were exalted to 'behold *their* representative presiding in the collective body of the Commons'.[58] Nicolson's successor Henry Downes also maintained a good relationship with Conolly and kept him informed of local efforts to alleviate the distress of the poor during the bad harvests that hit the county in 1728/29.[59]

The importance of Conolly's national profile to his electoral success is harder to quantify. Prominence at national level could not alone guarantee election for a county seat; Conolly's successor as speaker Sir Ralph Gore sat for the borough of Clogher, while his fellow revenue commissioner Thomas Medlycott had to be returned for the Conolly borough of Limavady in 1727.[60] Gore had formerly sat for Co. Donegal, but sat for Clogher from 1727. In terms of patronage, Conolly's terms as revenue commissioner in 1709-10 and particularly after 1715 provided him with a ready reservoir of jobs to be disposed. In theory revenue posts were

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[57] Julia Mullin, *The Presbytery of Limavady* (Limavady, 1989), p. 73.
[58] William Nicolson, *The Irish historical library. Pointers at most of the authors and records in print or manuscript, which may be serviceable to the compilers of a general history of Ireland* (Dublin, 1724), dedication, p. v.
[59] Bishop Henry Downes to Conolly, 26 Nov. 1728 (T.C.D., Conolly papers, Ms 3974/12).
[60] Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell sr, 15 Feb. 1728, in D.W. Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill, 1722-1738*. (Dublin, 2005), p. 50. Also Carteret to Newcastle, 30 Apr. 1728 (P.R.O.N.I., *T.S.P.I.* T659 p.49).

allocated by the commissioners through a rotational system, but in practice Conolly through his eminence at the Custom House was able to take a particular interest to any vacancies in the northwest, where he sought to support his tenants, friends and relations.[61] Such patronage could also be used for political reasons, as Conolly's alleged remodelling of Killybegs Corporation in 1710 suggested.

Conolly's ability to shape government policy through his role as a lord justice and speaker of the Commons was also potentially important electorally, particularly in relation to the politics of dissent. Conolly had emerged in Queen Anne's reign as a strong supporter of the dissenting interest in parliament. During the Wharton viceroyalty he supported the unsuccessful attempt to repeal the Test Act. This was a particularly important issue in Co. Londonderry because of the large local dissenting population, while the disputed election of 1697 showed its political potency in the county. Conolly himself acted as a 'virtual representative' of the dissenters in parliament and made not only promises to repeal the Test in 1716 and 1719, but even attempted to fulfil them.[62] He was particularly disheartened by the failure to repeal the Test in 1719.[63] The subsistence crisis that affected Ulster and subsequent increase in emigration to the American colonies in the late 1720s affected Conolly's estates in the county and was linked by contemporaries to the restrictions imposed by the Test Act. The crisis appeared so serious that McCausland pressed Conolly to introduce legislation in the House of Commons to

[61] See for example, John Martin (Newtown Limavady) to Conolly, 11 June 1724, (I.A.A., Ref: 97/84 A/4/1-65). Martin successfully secured a tidewaiters place at Derry for his son, Samuel, through Conolly's intervention. See also Chapter 7.
[62] Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 206.
[63] Jane Bulkeley to Jane Bonnell, 18 July 1719, 25 July 1719 (N.L.I., Smyth of Barbavilla Papers Ms 41,580/4).

restrict emigration.[64] While it is difficult to quantify the electoral impact of this advocacy of the dissenting interest, the perception of Conolly as a patron of the dissenters probably prevented the emergence of a rival candidate from the local Presbyterian community. [65]

Conolly's enduring interest with the Irish Society also paid electoral dividends. The society as suggested earlier had an important electoral influence both in county contests and in the boroughs. Conolly's links with the Society, established during the celebrated dispute with Bishop King, were maintained throughout his career. Early in Queen Anne's reign the Society referred proposals from Coleraine Corporation to redraw the county boundaries to Conolly, while his links with the Society were strengthened when he acquired the leases of the Grocers' and Vintners' proportions.[66] In 1720, he secured the Society's backing for his candidate in a by-election at Coleraine. Their support was not enough, however, to guarantee electoral success. In the late 1720s William Richardson, the Society's agent, twice failed in electoral contests, firstly in the borough of Coleraine where he was defeated by Thomas Jackson, and then in the by-election caused by Conolly's death in November 1729, when he was defeated by Arthur Dawson by 19 votes.[67] Richardson's failure to hold Conolly's seat against the Dawson interest, suggests that Conolly's interest in the county was attributable to the combination of factors illustrated above, and that a broad base of support was necessary to

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[64]Conolly to Robert McCausland 27 May 1729, (I.A.A., 97/84 C/27/1-92). R.J. Dickson, *Ulster emigration to colonial America 1718-1775* Revised ed (Belfast, 1988), p. 186. See also Walsh, 'The differing motivations for preventing transatlantic emigration: A case study from west Ulster 1718-1729'; James Kelly, 'Harvests and hardship: famine and scarcity in Ireland in the late 1720s', in *Studia Hibernica,* xxvi (1992), *passim.*

[65] Hayton has argued that the Presbyterian reliance on proxy parliamentary representatives like Conolly hindered their attempts to repeal the Test Act. See Hayton, *Ruling Ireland* pp 206-08.

[66] T.H. Mullin, *Coleraine in by-gone centuries* (Belfast, 1976), p. 2. See also chapter one for Conolly's acquisition of the Grocers' and Vintners' manors.

[67] *H.I.P.,* vi, p. 158.

secure election. It is noteworthy too that the Dawson interest only emerged again after Conolly's death, suggesting his position in the county in 1715 and 1727 was unassailable.

Conolly's borough interest in Co. Londonderry

Conolly's electoral influence in Londonderry was not confined to his county seat. He had interests in all three boroughs in the county: Limavady, Coleraine and Derry city. His interest was greatest in Limavady where he enjoyed absolute control from 1703 onwards, following his purchase of the manor and borough in 1697. It was a corporation borough with twelve burgesses and a provost, and had previously been absolutely controlled by the Philips family.[68] In 1703 Conolly returned himself alongside William Cairnes, another successful speculator in forfeited estates. Both, however, were also returned elsewhere, Cairnes for Belfast and Conolly for Co. Londonderry. In their places, George McCartney, a prominent Belfast merchant and Thomas Carr, a minor treasury official, were returned.[69] At the following election in 1713, Conolly returned himself and Benjamin Parry, a leading member of the Whig party who had previously sat for Killybegs. Conolly, having withstood the challenge of Joshua Dawson in the county, nominated William Usher, a Dublin merchant in his place. Usher was elected too late to even take his place in this short-lived parliament. In 1715, Joseph Henry, brother of Hugh, Conolly's banker, was returned alongside Isaac Manley the Postmaster General. In 1717, upon Henry's death, Thomas Marlay, later solicitor general, and a tenant of Conolly's at Castletown, was returned in his place, although it was

[68] E.M.F.G. Boyle (ed.) *The records of the corporation of Newtown Limavady*. (Londonderry, 1912).

[69] Carr was joint cursitor in chancery. Upon his death in 1720 Conolly secured this patent office for his nephew and heir William Conolly junior. See Conolly to Horatio Walpole, 24 Dec. 1720 (I.A.A., 97/84 A3/20).

rumoured Conolly would use this vacancy to bring in the chief secretary, Edward Webster, thereby further ingratiating himself with the government.[70]

In 1727, Manley retained his seat this time alongside Thomas Medlycott, the revenue commissioner. Medlycott's return had come at the request of the government, further suggesting government office did not alone guarantee parliamentary entry. Indeed it is noticeable that most of the MPs returned for Limavady enjoyed some sort of national profile. Carr, Parry, Manley, Marlay and Medlycott were all office-holders in the Irish administration. Conolly was using the borough seats as a means of returning those political allies who had little electoral interest of their own. Manley, Medlycott and Parry, were all Englishmen who had made their careers in Ireland but who had limited landed interests in Ireland. All were dependent on government influence for their return to parliament. Medlycott for example was a client of the duke of Ormonde until 1715, and had represented the Southwell borough of Downpatrick in George I's first parliament, while Parry had been returned for Killybegs in 1703 at the request of Alan Brodrick, and later sat for the Burlington boroughs of Tallow and Dungarvan. Conolly's interest in Limavady, although absolute in his lifetime, passed to his wife's nephews Williams and Henry Conyngham who inherited the estate and borough upon his death, although it later reverted to the Conollys in the 1760s.

Conolly's interest in Coleraine was much more shadowy. The major interests in the borough were the two leading local landed interests, the Beresford and Jackson

[70] Alan Lord Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 26 Apr, 1717 (S. H.C., 1248/4 ff 13-14).

families. The Beresford interest went into temporary abeyance with the death of Sir Tristram in 1701 and William Jackson attempted to take over the borough. Despite this attempted takeover, Sir Arthur Langford, a Presbyterian and uncle of Hercules Rowley, the county MP, was elected in 1703 alongside Richard Gorges, who soon after married Beresford's widow. Jackson gained greater control of the borough in the aftermath of the passing of the Test Act in 1704, when the Presbyterian burgesses and aldermen withdrew. Conolly was also reputed to have an interest in the borough in these years; his precise interest at this point is difficult to judge although the Irish Society had communicated with him regarding petitions from Coleraine in 1704 and 1708.[71] In 1708 Richard Cox reported that Gorges had wrested control of the borough from Conolly, and it was expected in 1713 that two members of the Jackson family would be returned for the Tory interest.[72]

They were to be disappointed as General Frederick Hamilton and George Lowther, son-in-law of Sir Tristram Beresford were returned. Hamilton had an estate at Walworth, County Londonderry, and had married a Beresford, but Conolly's influence has been detected behind the scenes in securing his election, suggesting Cox had been premature in dismissing his influence.[73] The defeated candidates Richard and William Jackson presented a petition to the House of Commons protesting against the return of Hamilton and Lowther. The hearing upon their petition took place on 23 December 1713 and revealed a number of irregularities in the conduct of the election. The Tory mayor Arthur Cary was found to be guilty of

[71] Mullin, *Coleraine in by-gone centuries* ,pp 7-9

[72] Cox was reporting upon hearings on a Coleraine mayoral dispute at the Privy Council, which he described as contest between Dick Gorges and Conolly to see who would be dictator of the corporation. Sir Richard Cox to Edward Southwell, 27 Apr. 1708 (B.L., Cox/Southwell Correspondence, Add Ms 38,155 f.6); 1713 Parliamentary list (B.L. Add Ms, 34,777, f.58). The same list attributed control of the borough to Gorges.

[73] Hayton, *Ruling Ireland,* p. 201.

'several unwarrantable and illegal practices' in attempting to secure the return of the Jacksons. These practices included the removal of three members of the corporation and their replacement with three members more amenable to his interest. Cary failed, however, and the Whig dominated Committee on Elections threw out the Jacksons' petition.[74]

Conolly re-emerged as a player in the borough in 1720 when Marcus Beresford, one of the incumbent MPs, was elevated to the peerage leaving a vacancy, which Conolly endeavoured to fill with support from the government and the Irish Society. Conolly nominated his wife's nephew Francis Burton for the seat and sought support from the Irish Society for his candidacy, through chief secretary Horatio Walpole.[75] The Society initially agreed to recommend Burton, but this decision was thrown into some doubt following the sudden death of Sir William Withers, Governor of the Society and his replacement by a supporter of what Walpole termed 'the other interest', presumably a member of the Jackson family.[76] Thanks to Walpole's exertions, however, Burton was returned at the by-election. Burton's success in 1720 suggests that the Irish Society had the decisive interest in the borough at this juncture.

This interest was short-lived, however, as William Richardson who was supported by the Society, Lord Tyrone (the former Marcus Beresford) and Conolly, was rejected by 'the major part of the corporation,'[77] which chose Thomas Jackson instead. Following this disputed election, which ended with Richardson

[74] *C.J.I.,* II, pp 754-755, 771, 775.
[75] Horatio Walpole (London) to Conolly 2 Feb. 1720/21; same to same 4 Feb. 1721; Conolly to Walpole (draft) 7 Feb. 1721 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3 /22-24).
[76] Walpole to Conolly, 11 Mar. 1721 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3 /26).
[77] Sarah Gage, Garvagh, Co. Londonderry to Isaac Manley, 8 Oct. 1728 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3/53).

unsuccessfully petitioning parliament, the Beresford and Jackson families divided the representation of the borough between them. This arrangement suggests that Conolly's interest in Coleraine was dependent on his good relations with the Irish Society, whose own interest was transient and depended upon good relations with the two major local interests. Far from being a pocket borough, Coleraine seems to have enjoyed a corporate life of its own whereby local interests were able to resist outside interference in the borough. Richardson's personal odiousness seems to have outweighed the patronage of Conolly and the Irish Society, a fact reflected in his subsequent failure to take Conolly's county seat upon the latter's death in 1729.[78]

Conolly's interest in Derry City was even more limited than in Coleraine. Derry had a wider franchise than either Coleraine or Limavady; all the freemen of the city were entitled to vote. This wider franchise made it impossible for one patron to gain complete control. Conolly, however, did have a long-standing interest in the city. He had acted as legal agent to the corporation from 1690 until 1710 and was an alderman from 1704. He had even been nominated as mayor in 1706 although he declined to serve, citing the pressure of business in Dublin. He continued to take an interest in city politics after his elevation to the speakership: in 1724 Bishop Nicolson praised him for 'continuing to bear a share in the magistracy of the city'.[79] Despite this long-term interest in the Corporation it is difficult to perceive Conolly's precise electoral interest if any. He was certainly close to a number of the MPs chosen for the borough. Both MPs elected in 1703

[78] Ibid. This letter gives an excellent account of Richardson's 'many cruelties' and nefarious methods.

[79] Nicolson, *The Irish historical library. Pointers at most of the authors and records in print or manuscript, which may be serviceable to the compilers of a general history of Ireland.*, dedication p. v. See also, Downes to Conolly, 26 Nov. 1728 (T.C.D., Ms 3974/12).

had strong Conolly connections. James Lenox, a former Mayor and unsuccessful candidate for the county seat in 1697 was a correspondent of Conolly, while Charles Norman, a burgess at Limavady, remitted Conolly's Co. Londonderry rents.[80] His brother, Robert, also a prominent Derry merchant, obtained a sinecure in the revenue through Conolly's intercession.[81] Norman remained in parliament until 1727, while the Tory governor of the city, John Newton, replaced Lenox, a Presbyterian, in 1713, a success that surprised even the Tories.[82] His parliamentary career was short and George Tomkins, the Irish Society's agent in 1715, replaced him. He retained his seat in 1727, when Thomas Upton came in, instead of Norman. Upton, a member of prominent Presbyterian family from Antrim had acted as recorder of Derry since 1707 and had been appointed commissioner of revenue appeals, a lucrative post, in 1717. Both this post and Robert Norman's revenue sinecure suggest Conolly's use of Custom House patronage to increase his interest in the borough. While it would be unwise to suggest that Conolly controlled even one of the two seats, it is clear that he had some influence in the borough derived both from his interest in the corporation and his access to revenue patronage.

Conclusions

The above analysis of Conolly's electoral interest in counties Donegal and Londonderry has been divided along county lines for the reasons outlined at the beginning of the chapter, but it is also worth considering this interest along

[80] See Robert McCausland's accounts with Conolly for the manor of Limavady, 1724-29 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/11); Boyle (ed.) *The records of the corporation of Newtown Limavady.*
[81] Conolly to Charles Delafaye, 14 Jan. 1718 (T.N.A., SP 63/376 f.1); Minute Book of Revenue Commissioners, 1 Feb. 1718 (T.N.A., CUST 1/13).
[82] 1713 Parliamentary list (B.L., Add Ms 34,777, f. 58). George Tomkins was expected to be returned in 1713.

chronological lines to assess its impact on national politics. The assessment that follows is therefore divided into two sections, one covering the period 1703 –13 and the second covering the period after 1715. The first examines Conolly's electoral contribution during the age of party and the second looks at the effects of government office on his electoral interest and strategies.

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Conolly's electoral management in the north-west in 1713 was an integral part of the Whig success in 1713. Despite a Tory majority amongst the members returned, the Whigs managed to secure the speakership for Alan Brodrick and the chair of the important committee for elections for John Forster.[83] Conolly played a crucial role in the former triumph, managing the speaker's campaign for the chair. His role in the returns of Whig candidates in the marginal seats of Ballyshannon and Coleraine, as well as his successful management of the Conyngham inheritance at Killybegs and in Co. Donegal were vital to his party's cause. He had controlled the return of five members, apart from himself, as well having an interest in the return of at least two more. Only the outgoing Lord Lieutenant Ormonde had a similar interest amongst resident magnates, and his interest was in decline.[84]

Conolly's electoral interest was different to Ormonde's and to other early eighteenth century borough-mongers for a number of reasons, especially in the period 1703-13. He did not have the inherited advantages of an Ormonde or a Boyle, or even a Brodrick or a Southwell. He was the first generation of his family to enter politics at either at local or national levels. His interest in Co.

[83] Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, pp 172-3.
[84] Hayton, 'Dependence, clientage and affinity: the political following of the second Duke of Ormonde', pp 239-40.

Londonderry was largely based on his landed interest in the county, specifically his estate at Limavady acquired in 1697. This gave him complete control over the two borough seats for the town, as well as an important interest in county elections. Conolly's uncertainty about his interest in the county could be seen in his decision to have himself returned for Limavady in both 1703 and 1713, as well as for the county. His interest in the Co. Donegal boroughs of Donegal and Killybegs had less to do with property ownership. His interest in Donegal was long-standing and seems to have involved an agreement with the Gore family to divide the representation. Certainly Conolly's widow claimed in 1730 that he had 'always' had an interest in one seat.[85] His interest in Killybegs, where he enjoyed complete control after 1710, was derived primarily from his management of his brother-in-law, Henry Conyngham's, affairs, as well as possibly through the distribution of revenue patronage in 1709-10. Patronage, however, played only a small part in Conolly's management at this time, mostly because he had limited access to patronage in this period.

His greatest source of patronage was actually the borough seats themselves. It is worth examining closely how he used them. In 1703 the two Limavady seats had been used as safety nets for both Conolly and William Cairnes. Their replacements were Thomas Carr and George Macartney. Conolly may have first come into contact with Macartney through his involvement in the legal affairs of Belfast Corporation. He had also served as an MP for Belfast in 1692 and he maintained a significant interest in the politics of that borough. His return for Limavady in 1703 may have been connected to the election of William Cairnes for

[85] Francis Burton to Jane Bonnell, 14 Feb. 1730 (N.L.I., Ms 41,579/10).

Belfast, as the latter would have needed Macartney's support, as the by-election occasioned by Cairnes' death four years later would demonstrate. Macartney was a staunch Whig in Queen Anne's first parliament, and like Conolly a supporter of the dissenting cause. He was returned again for Limavady in 1713, but chose to sit for another Conolly borough, Donegal town, where he replaced Richard Jones, who had failed to support the party line. Benjamin Parry, another prominent Whig, who despite leasing Chichester House to the government was dependent upon others for a seat in the parliament that sat there, replaced him at Limavady. He had previously represented Killybegs, though on Alan Brodrick's recommendation to Lady Murray rather than on the Conolly/Conyngham interest. Despite his difficulties in securing himself a seat, he was a leading parliamentarian, as well as an office holder; in 1710 he secured the registrarship of deeds. He had also entertained hopes of being appointed to the Revenue Commission in 1709, only to be thwarted by Conolly. The second MP elected for Limavady in 1713, this time to replace Conolly, was William Usher, a Dublin merchant of whom little is known, and who enjoyed one of the shortest parliamentary careers in eighteenth century Ireland.

The career of Richard Jones, elected for Conolly's seat at Donegal, demonstrates the conditions that MPs who were nominated for Conolly's boroughs were required to uphold, regardless of their personal connection to Conolly. Jones, as has been shown above, failed to support the government in the 1709 parliamentary session, when Conolly was acting as one of the government managers in the commons. This failure to toe the party line cost him his seat in 1713, despite the fact that he had pretensions to one of the Killybegs seats by reason of his kinship

with Conolly. Ironically one of the people to benefit from Jones' desertion was another kinsman of Conolly, Thomas Pearson, who had married his patron's younger sister, Jane, in 1707. Three years later he was returned for Killybegs replacing Charles Hamilton. He retained his seat in 1713 and again in 1715. He would also later obtain a collectorship in the revenue thereby demonstrating the virtues of loyalty, while Jones languished in rural exile in Co. Meath. The second MP returned for Killybegs in 1713 was Henry Maxwell, who had formerly represented Bangor, Co. Down. He was another staunch Whig, and had been a prominent figure in the 1703-11 parliament. He had also defended Conolly in 1703 when Conolly's name looked likely to be besmirched in the English House of Commons. He continued to sit for Conolly boroughs until his death in 1730.

The common threads that link the MPs returned for Conolly's boroughs are few, other than their shared electoral patron and their Whiggishness, although it would be wrong to push a shared ideology too far. The case of Jones proves this, and Maxwell did not share his patron's views on toleration for the dissenting community. These MPs were not necessarily subservient to Conolly either. Maxwell and Parry, as well as Conolly were amongst the leaders of the Whig party called to a conference with Shrewsbury to resolve the parliamentary impasse in 1713. Instead Conolly seems to have used his electoral interest, not just to bolster a personal fiefdom but also to bolster the Whig representation in parliament. The members of Conolly's following were more than just lobby fodder but independent voices in their own right, although dissonant voices were not always tolerated.

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Conolly's prominent role within the leadership of the Whig party ensured that he was going to be rewarded following the Hanoverian succession. He regained his Commissionership of the Revenue and was nominated as the government's choice as Speaker of the House of Commons in 1715. This appointment, as suggested elsewhere, reflected not only his prominence within parliament but also his electoral interest outside parliament.[86] In 1715 he was able to control the return of at least five borough MPs, as well as having an interest in the return of between three and five further members. This constituency interest contributed to Charles Delafaye's assessment of Conolly's parliamentary interest 'one to whose single interest the King is more obliged than to all Ireland'.[87] This analysis was based not just on the number of members that Conolly could return or influence the return of, but also on the calibre of MPs that were returned on his interest.

Conolly often used his seats to return prominent government supporters. The elections of Charles Fane for Killybegs in 1715 and Thomas Medlycott for Limavady in 1727 were both made at the request of the government. Other officeholders like Isaac Manley, postmaster general, and Thomas Marlay, successively solicitor and attorney general, were returned for Limavady. They both lacked a parliamentary interest of their own and needed the support of Conolly to be returned to parliament. Both were close adherents of the speaker in parliament; Manley was described in 1721 as one of Conolly's creatures 'and is said to be one of them that is a cat claw, to do things that he has no mind to appear in himself'.[88] The reward for such loyalty was a borough seat in both the 1715 and 1727 parliaments. Henry Maxwell, another man who was known for his loyalty to

[86] See chapter 4.
[87] Charles Delafaye to James Stanhope? 14 Dec. 1715 (T.N.A., SP 63/373/306).
[88] Jane Bulkeley to Mrs Bonnell, London, 19 Dec. 1721 (N.L.I., Ms 41,580/3).

Conolly, was returned for Killybegs in 1713, and for Donegal town in 1715. His return in 1715 was not guaranteed because he had initially canvassed in his own county before approaching Conolly through Archbishop King, seeking a nomination for one of his borough seats. Conolly chided Maxwell for not approaching him earlier, but returned him in 1715 and again in 1727 for Donegal.[89] Maxwell although he differed with Conolly over the repeal of the Test Act was a loyal follower in parliament, even earning the sobriquet 'the speaker's echo' from Alan Brodrick. This was a slightly unfair judgement as, like Manley, Marlay and Medlycott, Maxwell was a significant parliamentarian in his own right. Their relationship with Conolly was less that of a dependant or a client with his patron; rather it was based on a shared affinity and political outlook.[90] Conolly still held the balance of power within the relationship because he could control their parliamentary return, while he also enjoyed sufficient power with the ministry to influence their promotion or demotion from office. Conolly's ability to return officeholders and other prominent government supporters only served to ingratiate him further with successive lords lieutenant, as in the nomination of Fane in 1715. This could also work the other way round as was demonstrated by Horatio Walpole's assistance in securing Francis Burton's return for Coleraine in 1720.

Burton was not the only Conolly family connection returned on the Conolly interest in this period. Conolly's control of the two seats at Killybegs owed much to his management of the Conyngham interest. As demonstrated earlier, with the case of Richard Jones, this did not mean the automatic return of family members

[89] See, D.W. Hayton, 'Henry Maxwell, M.P.: Author of *An Essay towards an Union of Ireland with England* (1703)', in *Eighteenth Century Ireland* (forthcoming).
[90] See Hayton, 'Dependence, clientage and affinity: the political following of the second Duke of Ormonde', p. 228.

for these seats. Thomas Pearson, who represented Killybegs until 1727, before sitting for Ballyshannon, was a family connection, but on the other side of the family, having married Conolly's sister. He was also an active supporter of the government interest in parliament as well as a revenue collector at Drogheda. His fellow MP for Ballyshannon in 1727, Conolly's nephew William, was elected to ensure the family succession, confirming his position as Conolly's heir. The return of the two Conyngham brothers for Killybegs demonstrated Conolly's guardianship of the borough, but he also made it clear that he controlled the representation of the town. The return of four family members in 1727 confirmed Conolly's status as a leading interest in Co. Donegal, rather than weakening it. It demonstrated his control of the boroughs and suggested that he had built up an electoral empire that was based not only on governmental obligation but also on kinship. The ability to return so many family members to parliament continued Conolly's upward social mobility through the ranks of Irish society. He was now not just a successful borough-monger; he was also the head of a new political dynasty.

Conolly's electoral nexus extended beyond the proprietorship of up to eight borough seats; it also included his wider influence within the region. His potential influence in the open borough of Derry City has been discussed above, as has his interest in the county seats in Donegal and Londonderry. The title 'great man of the north' given to Conolly by Bishop Henry Downes in 1721 recognised not just Conolly's borough interest but also his leadership of the a wider connexion including other such prominent figures as Sir Ralph Gore, Owen Wynne and

General Frederick Hamilton.[91] Wynne, MP for Ballyshannon from 1713 to 1727, was recognised as the head of another electoral interest based in Counties Sligo and Leitrim, but he was also considered to be part of the wider circle surrounding Conolly.[92] Sir Ralph Gore was similarly a prominent Donegal landowner, who represented the county in parliament until 1727. He was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, with Conolly's support, in 1717. Gore, by virtue of his position, wealth and parliamentary activity, could have expected some reward from the court. His appointment to the chancellorship, however, reflected his connection to Conolly, who secured it for Gore despite the opposition of Lord Chancellor Midleton. Through this alliance Gore was able to increase his own position, but he still owed his advancement to Conolly despite his own standing. Gore continued to act as a parliamentary and electoral lieutenant to Conolly; they shared the nomination of the members for Donegal town. He also eventually succeeded Conolly as speaker and as leader of the Ulster Whig network in 1729, although he had much less leverage than Conolly, owing to the concentration of his interest in Donegal.[93]

Conolly had enjoyed much greater power and influence because his electoral interest extended across the two counties of Donegal and Londonderry. His greater access to government patronage also allowed him to sustain his interest. His long period in national office had helped in this regard, especially his domination of the revenue board. Other factors had also played their part. His wife's family

[91] Bishop Henry Downes to William Nicolson, 1 Mar. 1721 in John Nichols (ed.) *Letters on various subjects literary, political, and ecclesiastical, to and from William Nicolson, D.D., successively Bishop of Carlisle, and of Derry; and Archbishop of Cashel* (2 Vols., London, 1809), II, pp 535-36.
[92] On Wynne's interest see, Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell, 30 Dec. 1727 in Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill, 1722-1738.*
[93] For the Gore interest in Donegal, see A.P.W. Malcomson, *Nathaniel Clements*, pp 289-335.

connections had provided a gateway into Donegal politics, especially following the death of Henry Conyngham. His acquisition of vast estates in both counties was also crucial, especially in Co. Londonderry, while the purchase of the Ballyshannon estate created the most enduring Conolly electoral interest, continuing arguably up until the 1870s. His connections with the Irish Society and Londonderry Corporation were also hugely important, something that is demonstrated by the strength of the Conolly interest in 1713, before he had achieved high office. All of these factors combined with the incalculable element of personality enabled Conolly to emerge as the leader of the largest and most powerful electoral interest in early eighteenth-century Ireland. The failure of his parliamentary lieutenants Marmaduke Coghill and Ralph Gore to maintain this interest only emphasises Conolly's crucial personal role in creating and sustaining this connexion.

Chapter 6

'The only man of application among our Commissioners'. Conolly at the Revenue Board, 1709-1729[1]

In October 1714, upon the accession of George I, William Conolly was re-appointed to the Revenue Board. He had briefly served as a commissioner in 1709-10 during the Earl of Wharton's term as lord lieutenant. He would remain a Revenue Commissioner until his death, combining his position at the Custom House with his role as speaker of the House of Commons and lord justice. The importance of his position as a Commissioner of the Revenue to his political ascendancy was noted by both contemporaries and has been remarked upon before by later historians.[2] It has been argued that during Conolly's time at the Revenue, the revenue administration became more politicised and became an integral part of a system of political management that emerged after 1715. Much of the credit for this politicisation of the revenue system has been given to Conolly, without any thorough examination of his role. This chapter will examine his role at the Custom House, in terms of the increasing political role of the commission. Conolly's initial appointment to the board in 1709 and his return in 1714 will be examined. His own role at the board and his relationship with the other commissioners will be studied, to determine whether he was actually the dominant figure and, if so, how this dominance was achieved. The chapter finishes with a discussion of Conolly's dual role as a lord justice and commissioner during the Wood's halfpence crisis.

[1] Eustace Budgell to Joseph Addison, 8 Jan. 1715 (B.L., Blenheim Papers Add MS 61,636 f. 160).
[2] See for example D.W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 125; Patrick McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers*, p. 106; and R.E. Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics*, I, p. 251.

This analysis will concentrate on these structural and political issues, leaving questions relating to revenue patronage for a further chapter.

Conolly's involvement with the revenue system extended back to the beginning of his career. He had family connections with the revenue in the restoration period. His uncle, Terence Conolly, was one of the 11 collectors appointed in 1689 as part of the fledgling Williamite revenue administration.[3] He served as collector of Killybegs from 1689-91, but it is probable that he had served in the revenue prior to this as most of the officials appointed in 1689, were Protestants who had previous experience.[4] Conolly's own personal association with the revenue system began in 1692, when he deputised for Captain James Hamilton in the alnage office.[5] It introduced Conolly to the countrywide network of minor officials who managed the king's revenue and to the composition of the revenue system itself. In 1697 he was appointed Customer and Receiver of Customs for the ports of Londonderry and Coleraine.[6] This position was essentially a sinecure, as under William III, the old patent officers ceased to have a role other than to countersign the accounts of the port collector, and to collect fees.[7] The value of the fee income deriving from this office is unknown, but was not likely to be particularly high. Nevertheless Conolly remained as Customer of Derry until his death. His

[3] For the relationship between the two Conollys see a Chancery bill dated 1694, (I.A.A., 97/84 C/33/1).
[4] *C.T.B., 1689-92* pp 252-3, 256; C.I McGrath, 'The Irish revenue system: government and administration 1689-1702' (PhD, University of London, 1997), pp 11, 195, 207, Appendix 3, table 4
[5] See Chapter 2.
[6] *Liber Munerum*, I, part II p. 152. (Patent dated 22 May 1697).
[7] McGrath, 'The Irish revenue system: government and administration 1689-1702' , p. 205; E.E. Hoon, *The organisation of the English customs system, 1696-1786* (Newton Abbot, 1968), pp 1-44.

appointment to this sinecure seems to have been a form of political reward. He was one of eight MPs in 1697 that held an ancient or patent customs office.[8]

It was, however, only in 1709 that Conolly was appointed to a major revenue position that carried executive power, when he was first appointed a Revenue Commissioner. His elevation to the post of commissioner at this juncture seems to have been primarily politically motivated. He had emerged as one of the leading members of the Whig interest in parliament in the previous two sessions, particularly in relation to financial issues, exemplified by his chairmanship of the Committee of Public Accounts in both sessions. This aptitude for the politics of finance earned Conolly the approbation of the Dublin Castle administration.[9] His abilities and his parliamentary prominence meant that he was a likely candidate for promotion. Conolly's reward came following the 1709 session: in December 1709 he was appointed to the Revenue Commission upon the death of Henry Tenison.[10] His appointment to the Revenue Board seems to have come at the instigation of the Earl of Wharton, but there seems little truth in Jonathan Swift's accusation that he paid the lord lieutenant £3,000 for the commissioner's place. This accusation made by Swift, whose antipathy to Wharton is well known, came upon Conolly's removal from office when he claimed, 'that employment cost Conolly three thousand pounds...so he made one ill bargain in his life'.[11] In reality Conolly's appointment as a commissioner seems to have been a reward for his endeavours in

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[8] McGrath, 'The Irish revenue system: government and administration 1689-1702', Appendix 5, pp. 389-91.

[9] Walter Graham (ed.), *The letters of Joseph Addison* (Oxford, 1941), p. 136.

[10] *Liber Munerum*, I, part ii, p. 134.

[11] Jonathan Swift, *Journal to Stella* ed. Harold Williams, (Oxford 1948), I, p. 31. Despite the unproven nature of this accusation, it is often cited as fact. See for example, Eoin Magennis, *The Irish political system 1740-70* (Dublin, 2000), p. 19. For Swift's relationship with Wharton, see Christopher Robbins, "The most universal villain I ever knew' Jonathan Swift and the earl of Wharton', in *E.C.I.*, xviii (2003), pp 24-38.

parliament. The political nature of his appointment did mean, however, that upon the change in administration in London in 1710 (and even before the arrival in Dublin, of the Tory Duke of Ormond as lord lieutenant) he was removed in favour of Englishman Francis Robartes, who had previously served as a commissioner, without distinction, from 1692 to 1704.[12] Conolly's removal was amongst the first significant moves in a general purge of Whig officeholders effected by the new administration.[13]

The Irish Revenue Board consisted of seven commissioners of the customs, five of whom were also commissioners of the excise. Appointments to the Board were in the gift of the British Treasury, and the commissioners were responsible to the Treasury in London rather than to the lord lieutenant in Dublin, although depending on their influence in London, individual lord lieutenants like Wharton could have some say over the recommendation of commissioners. The commissioners each earned an annual salary of £1,000, making these positions amongst the most lucrative and coveted places on the Irish establishment. This salary had risen from £800 p.a. to £1,000 p.a. during the reign of Queen Anne to make the positions 'fit for parliament men in England'.[14] Active membership of the board demanded a substantial commitment from would-be commissioners, as they were expected to be at the Custom House six days a week to deal with the volume of business. A quorum of three members was also required to make important decisions. Despite these disadvantages, places at the board were seen as highly desirable.

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[12] See McGrath, 'The Irish revenue system: government and administration 1689-1702', pp 132-3. Robartes failed to come to Dublin once during the period 1710-14, D.W. Hayton, 'Ireland and the English ministers 1707-16' (D.Phil., Oxford, 1975), p. 185.
[13] C.I. McGrath, *The making of the eighteenth century Irish constitution*, p. 247.
[14] Charles Delafaye quoted in Hayton, 'Ireland and the English ministers 1707-16', p. 261.

Unfortunately very little is known about Conolly's time at the Revenue Board during the Wharton viceroyalty. In contrast to the period after 1715, neither the board's minute books nor the out-letter book of the commissioner's secretary survives. In 1708 before Conolly's appointment, Irish Whig MP Benjamin Parry wrote to an English official describing the make-up of the commission,

> [The]Commissioners of the revenue are of the old lawmen for the most part ... and have at present the sole direction of such officers by the absence of Sir William St Quentin and Mr [Samuel]Ogle, the only two of the board to be valued.[15]

Parry was attempting to procure the place that Conolly subsequently succeeded to, but his commentary gives some indication of the commission that Conolly joined. Commissioners' John South and William Strickland only attended infrequently during this period, leaving Conolly along with Thomas Keightley and Thomas Southwell to conduct most of the board's business and to dispose of the available patronage.[16] Keightley, the longest serving member, was a Tory and therefore was not likely to hold great influence at this time, while Southwell despite his long service was not a very effective administrator. Conolly, considering his close links with Dublin Castle had probably a greater role at the commission than might have been expected for a new member.

The Custom House regained

In 1714, upon the Hanoverian succession, Conolly was determined to regain his place at the Custom House. When his name was first suggested as a possible candidate for the speakership of the House of Commons, Alan Brodrick wrote to the Earl of Sunderland suggesting that

[15] Benjamin Parry to Thomas Hopkins 6 May 1708, (B.L., Hopkins Papers, Add Ms 64928, ff 106-7).
[16] Hayton, 'Ireland and the English ministers 1707-16', p. 185.

> Mr Conolly would undergo the trouble of it, and do the business, but perhaps he thinks this may obstruct his pretensions to being restored to his Commissioners place. I know not how that matter stands, but humbly offer that it will be an ill reason to deny restoring him to what he was turned out of to say he is like to serve in the chair of the House of Commons.[17]

It would appear that regaining his seat at the board was of more importance to Conolly than gaining the speaker's chair. Brodrick and presumably Conolly himself believed that his deprivation of office by the Tories in 1710 was unjust. In the end after much cajoling and flattery, Conolly was persuaded to accept the Chair as well as keeping his place as a commissioner.[18]

Alongside Conolly on the new Revenue Board appointed at the beginning of George I's reign were two Irishmen, Thomas Medlycott and Thomas Southwell, as well as four Englishmen, Sir William Strickland, Henry Bunbury, Horatio Walpole and Phillips Gybbon. Medlycott, Southwell, Strickland, Bunbury and Walpole had all previously served on the board. Bunbury and Walpole were both Tories and would shortly lose their place, while Strickland and Southwell, like Conolly, were Whigs who had been removed in the last years of Queen Anne's reign. Medlycott on the other hand had only become a commissioner in February 1714 and despite being closely associated with the Duke of Ormonde, retained his position until 1733, albeit with a brief interruption in 1727. The board was, however, dominated by the three Irish commissioners, who alone maintained a regular presence in Dublin. Of the English commissioners, Strickland and Gybbon were most active, both having strong connections with the Treasury in London. Walpole and Bunbury seem to have treated their places almost as sinecures; the former was only continued at the board because of the patronage of his nephew Robert Walpole,

[17] Alan Brodrick to Sunderland, 19 Oct. 1714 (B.L., Add Ms 61636 ff 113-114).
[18] Sunderland to Conolly, 20 Sept. 1715 (B.L., Add MS 61652 ff 322-23).

who needed to keep his troublesome uncle happy, while Bunbury was removed in September 1715 for engaging in correspondence with the Jacobite court.[19] So in reality there were five active members of the Revenue Board, two of whom spent most of their time in London. Thus the bulk of the business and patronage devolved to the three Irish commissioners.

Chief Commissioner?

Conolly has been described as chief or 'first' Commissioner of the Revenue.[20] This description is misleading, as there was no official hierarchy within the commission. Unofficially, one commissioner usually did dominate the proceedings of the commission. Conolly's successful combination of the offices of Commissioner and Speaker of the House of Commons was imitated and followed by first Henry Boyle, and later by John Ponsonby. Indeed according to Thomas Bartlett, Ponsonby in 1767, on the eve of Lord Townsend's reforms of the revenue system, was 'by virtue of his length of service at the board, his parliamentary following and his general weight in the kingdom, the first commissioner, though this title had no official basis'.[21] The same could have been said of Conolly at any time following 1715, but this role was not officially designated. Despite this, individual commissioners and would-be commissioners did indeed see a hierarchy within the Board's members.

The order of the names within the patent appointing new commissioners was regarded as important. In October 1714, when a new patent was been drawn up,

[19] See entries in D.W. Hayton (ed.) *The house of commons, 1690-1715.* (5 vols, Cambridge, 2002)
[20] See for example, David Dickson, *New Foundations*, p. 73; Magennis, *The Irish political system 1740-70,* p. 19; McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers,* p. 106.
[21] Thomas Bartlett, 'Viscount Townshend and the Irish Revenue Board', in *Proc. RIA,* lxxix, sect C (1979), p. 157.

Horatio Walpole demanded precedence over Thomas Medlycott even though they were appointed together. This concession to his vanity was granted. In 1714 when the new patent was drawn up, it was Thomas Southwell, followed by William Strickland, who appeared first, designating him first commissioner.[22] This reflected Southwell's seniority; he was first appointed in 1697. As each new commissioner was appointed, the continuing commissioners moved up one place on the patent. Conolly although only named third in the 1714 patent quickly established himself as the dominant figure. It was with Conolly, rather than Southwell who was also resident in Dublin, that the lord lieutenant and the Treasury corresponded. His continued presence at the fulcrum of the Irish government, as speaker and as a lord justice, meant that he remained the dominant figure at the Revenue Board, although it was not until 1725, when Strickland was appointed a Lord of the Treasury in London, that Conolly became 'first' commissioner. He had never sought to be established as first or chief commissioner and when Henry Boyle sought such a role upon his appointment to the Board in 1735, Marmaduke Coghill, whom he was replacing, saw it as a dangerous precedent:

> I am persuaded Mr Boyles insisting on being first in Comn. may obstruct the change, if he makes that sine qua non: for I believe that will never be agreed to, the president [sic] may bring great uneasiness to those in power by complying with such demands for tho it be begun here, it may be quoted as a president [sic] of their own making, and if done in one Kingdom why not in another, especially in that, where people may more reasonably insist on such a favour, then here, and we know our friend Medlycott who when he was turned out was second in Comn. yet when he was restored, they would not restore him to his former station, but he was last in Comn. and in his case more was to be said for him to be restored to his old post, then for a new officer to be put over the heads of the rest, nor did Mr Conolly ever desire this, tho Ld. Justice and Speaker, and if it would have bin granted to any body probably it would have been to him if he had desired it.[23]

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[22] For the dates of appointment of commissioners see, *Liber Munerum*, 1, part II, p. 134.
[23] Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell jr, 14 Jan. 1735, in D.W. Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill, 1722-1738,* pp 151-52.

Coghill pointed out that there was no precedent to follow regarding the appointment of the first commissioner. He noted that Thomas Medlycott, who briefly lost his place in 1727, was not restored as second commissioner upon his reappointment despite his long service at the commission. Furthermore Conolly had never desired any special treatment, although Coghill noted he would have got it 'if he had desired it'.[24] Conolly's dominance at the board needed no official title or confirmation, but was the product of circumstance. If Boyle wanted to enjoy such dominance he would have to earn it. Conolly's career also suggested that no formal designation as chief commissioner was necessary for dominance at the Custom House.

Conolly's emergence as the dominant figure at the Revenue Board can be attributed to a number of factors. After 1715 three members, Conolly, Thomas Medlycott and Thomas (later Lord) Southwell, carried out the majority of the Board's business. The four English members, although in the majority played a minor role in the administration of the Irish Revenue. Each of the three Irish commissioners was a figure of some consequence: Medlycott, an Englishman who had made his career in Ireland, had petitioned for the post of Solicitor to the Revenue Commissioners in 1695, but his appointment had fallen foul of political manoeuvring.[25] Despite his close association with the Duke of Ormond he had survived the purge of Tory commissioners in 1715; he was also a MP in both the Dublin and Westminster parliaments for much of his career, although he only sat in the Dublin parliament during the reign of George I. Southwell, a hero of the

[24] Ibid.
[25] McGrath, 'The Irish revenue system: government and administration 1689-1702' pp 105-06

Williamite war, had first been appointed a commissioner in 1697 and remained on the board for the next fifteen years, briefly losing his place in 1712. His appointment in 1697 has been attributed to his strong connections at the Williamite court; the king personally recommended his appointment.[26] He was also an active member of the commons. He was, however, less prominent politically by 1715, although he was raised to a peerage in 1717, probably for past services. William Harrison, who eventually replaced Southwell in 1721 following the latter's death the previous year, was of less consequence. He only entered parliament in 1730, and his career before this is as obscure as the reasons for his appointment to the Revenue Board.[27]

Despite the obvious attributes of the other commissioners Conolly quickly emerged as the dominant figure at the Custom House. His role as unofficial chief commissioner was largely attributable to outside factors. Based purely on activity at the board, Medlycott would have been the obvious candidate to emerge as 'chief' commissioner. Of all the commissioners he spent the most time at the Custom House. His membership of the Westminster parliament prior to 1715, and again after 1727, gave him influence and presence on both sides of the Irish Sea, something that other commissioners lacked. He did not, however, have a strong political base in Ireland. He was not sure of a parliamentary seat, and in 1727 he was returned for the Conolly borough of Limavady at the request of the government. In the same year he also temporarily lost his seat at the Revenue Board despite his long and diligent service. This lack of a seat either in parliament

[26] Ibid., pp 135-6.
[27] *H.I.P.*, iv, p. 373.

or at the Custom House after 13 years service suggests that being a commissioner did not necessarily mean one had or could create a political interest.

Patrick McNally has suggested that whichever of the resident commissioners gained control of revenue patronage, 'would have the opportunity to become one of the dominant figures in Irish politics'.[28] This view, based on Conolly's success needs some modification, as it does not take into account the failure of Medlycott, Southwell and later Harrison to emerge as figures of political importance in Hanoverian Ireland. It can be contended that Conolly's dominance at the Revenue Board was achieved because of his high political profile, not the other way round. As early as December 1714, he was acting as the channel of communication between the commissioners and the English government.[29] His emergence as de facto chief commissioner owed much to his influence as Speaker of the House of Commons and as a Lord Justice. The relative stability of government compared to the tumultuous years of Queen Anne's reign also ensured that the board was less subject to the type of political machinations that had first brought Conolly to the board. His long tenure at the Custom House enabled him to consolidate his political position rather than to establish him *de novo* as a figure of political prominence.

[28] McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers: parliamentary politics in early eighteenth century Ireland* , p. 106.
[29] Sunderland to Conolly, 25 December 1714 (B.L., Add MS 61652 f. 234).

Attendance at the Board

Conolly's dominance at the Custom House has been ascribed to his willingness to spend more time there than any of the other commissioners. This view of his diligence is usually illustrated with the following quotation from a letter from his wife, Katherine, to Charles Delafaye the English Under Secretary of State on 17 June 1729:

> he is every day at least six hours at the customs house...I wish some of the commissioners were ordered to their business, for I think it is hard he should have the labouring.[30]

This excerpt certainly gives the impression that Conolly was especially conscientious and that much of the business of the Board devolved onto him. This is only partially true. It is certainly correct that much of the board's business was carried on by the three commissioners resident in Dublin, but it was all three, not just Conolly, who shared out the bulk of the commission's duties. If anything, the other two tended to be more assiduous in conducting the board's business because of Conolly's other duties, either as speaker or as lord justice. The excerpt quoted above also gives a false impression, as it does not quote the whole letter, which is reproduced below:

> I thank God Mr Conolly enjoys a pretty good state of health and would be much better had he a little time now and then to get to his country house which though but eight miles from this he has been but thrice since last October and now he is every day at least six hours at the Custom House – they having detected a villainy amongst the tide officers at Ringsend; which give him much trouble and uneasiness – for everything of that kind gives him more uneasiness than I am sure it doth any other and some has their servants that do no wrong. I wish some of the Commissioners were ordered to their business – for I think it is hard he should always have the labouring over on him. I hope any Commissioner will come but

[30] Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 126. Also see McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers*, p. 106. Both quote the same passage.

> the last that left this which I hope I shall never see again and had you one thats here also I dare say all business would go much better on, both for the King's and the Country's services, for I will not say all I could.[31]

It was only then that Conolly was spending six hours a day at the Custom House, and this only because 'they have detected a villainy amongst the tide officers at Ringsend.

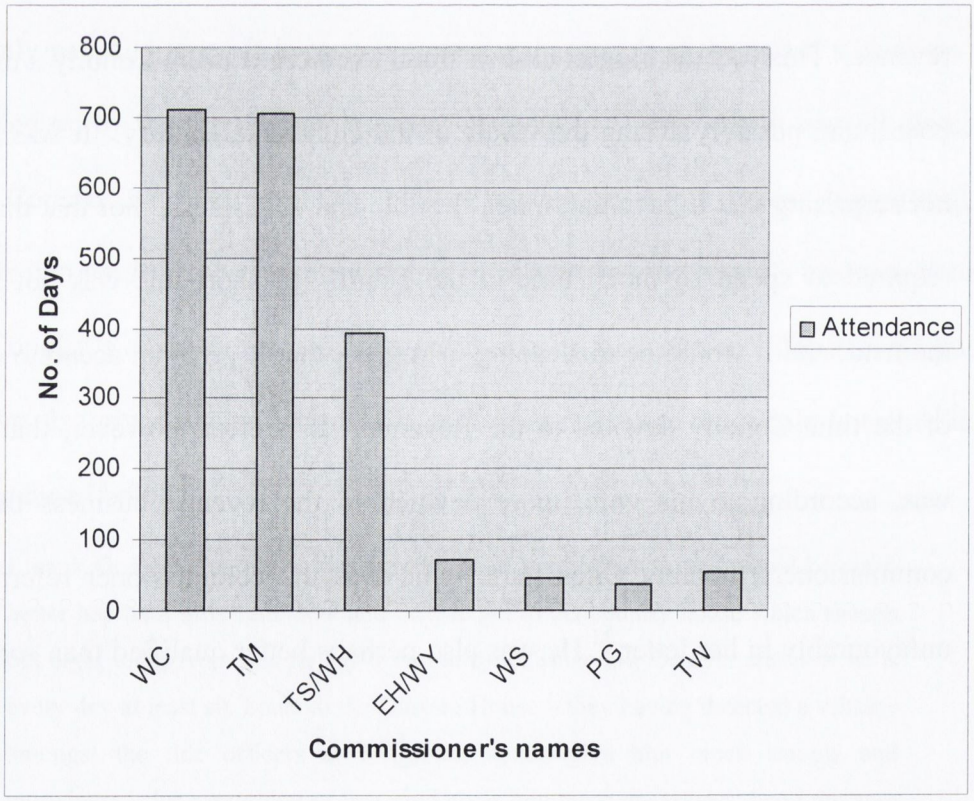
This villainy consisted of 'two or three merchants... of this city in confederacy with some tidewaiters in Dublin carrying on a fraudulent trade to the prejudice of His Majesty's Revenue'.[32] This instance of smuggling on a vast scale with the full cooperation of the port officials saw 42 revenue officers, in the port of Ringsend, dismissed from their posts on 7 June 1729. These were no ordinary times at the revenue. This was the biggest case of fraud to emerge during Conolly's time at the board, and possibly during the whole of the eighteenth century. It was therefore not surprising that it gave him much 'trouble and uneasiness,' nor that that he was required to spend so much time at the board. In short this was not a typical moment, and it would be misleading to suggest that it gives an accurate depiction of the time Conolly devoted to the Revenue. It is clear, however, that Conolly was, according to his wife, more devoted to the revenue business than some commissioners, notably Giles Earle, who was the commissioner referred to so unfavourably in her letter.[33] He was also perhaps better qualified than some of the

[31] Katherine Conolly to Charles Delafaye, 17 June 1729 (T.N.A., SP/63/391 f.71).
[32] Minute Book of the Revenue Commissioners, 7 June 1729 (T.N.A., CUST 1/21 pp 151-53).
[33] Earle left Ireland on 14 December 1728 (T.N.A., CUST 1/21 p. 22).

others such as Robert Sawyer-Herbert who, prior to his appointment as a commissioner, in 1727, had been a groom of the bedchamber to George I.[34]

Conolly certainly maintained a frequent presence at the board, in common with the other resident commissioners. Between January 1718 and December 1722 Conolly attended more than any other commissioner. In this period he also served as speaker of the House of Commons and as a Lord Justice in the absence of the Duke of Bolton. In total his attendance was recorded 712 times out of a possible 800 sittings during these five years. The attendance of the other commissioners is demonstrated in the following chart.

Figure 6.1. **Attendance at the Revenue Board 1717-22**



This table is based on the Commissions minute books for this period, (T.N.A., CUST. 1/14-17). WC =William Conolly, TM = Thomas Medlycott, TS = Thomas

[34] Theophilus Clements to Conolly, 29 July 1727 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3/49), See also, A.P.W. Malcomson, *Nathaniel Clements*, p. 29.

Southwell, WH = William Harrison, EH = Edward Hopkins, WY= William Yonge, WS =William Strickland, PG = Phillips Gybbons, TW = Thomas Wylde.

It should be noted however that during Conolly's terms as a lord justice, his presence was recorded separately from the other commissioners in the margins of the minute book.[35] Only the names of the other commissioners present were listed at the start of each daily entry. During parliamentary sessions he was listed as 'Mr Speaker' rather than under his own name and again in the margins. These notations suggest that he was only present for part of the Board's daily business during these times. It is also clear, however, that Conolly was keen to keep a close watch on activities at the Custom House despite his other duties, both in Dublin Castle and in parliament. This level of activity is also supported by his wife's correspondence: in March 1720 she wrote to her sister, 'between the Commissioners' Board and the Castle he has not a minute to himself'.[36] None of the other Irish commissioners had such a high profile in government to necessitate such juggling of offices.

The other resident commissioners were expected to maintain an almost constant presence in Dublin. Apart from public holidays, the board met every day except Sundays and took its business very seriously. In same period Thomas Medlycott was present at the Custom House for 704 sittings of the board out of a possible 800 sittings. Apart from brief periods in the autumn of 1718 and in August 1720 when

[35] This combination of roles was missed by McNally, see Patrick McNally, 'Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-27' (PhD, Queens University Belfast, 1993), p. 99.
[36] Katherine Conolly to Jane Bonnell, 15 March 1720, (N.L.I., Ms 41,578/3).

he was in England, he was continuously at the Custom House.[37] During this brief period away, Thomas Southwell died suddenly and Conolly was left as the sole commissioner. He was also a lord justice at the time but was required to attend the board every day. This example shows how much the Revenue Board was run by the resident commissioners, and the repercussions of a unexpected event such as Southwell's death. In the months prior to his death Southwell had travelled to London, and Conolly and Medlycott needing a quorum in Dublin wrote to him requesting him to return, but were told that his health precluded him from doing so. They were then forced to write to the other English-based commissioners in the following terms:

> We hoped to have had no occasion of giving you this trouble and have used all means and expedients that were practicable and consistent with a due regard to our trust, to avoid it; but the merchants observing as we suppose that we have not a quorum to condemn them legally, have been so daring and open in the running of goods and the masters and mariners so insolent in doing it almost barefaced that though in ordinary cases we would rather overlook them than press you at this juncture yet some of these being so flagrant together with the frequent and impatient demands for determination almost to an insult lay us at last under a necessity of acquainting you what great want there is of a third commissioner of Excise at this board.[38]

The tone of this letter suggests an implicit recognition of the fact that the business of the Board had been devolved to the resident commissioners. The severity of the situation caused by Southwell's illness had, however, forced their hand. Indeed in this twelve-month period from July 1720 to July 1721, only one English commissioner, Thomas Wylde, appeared in Dublin and then only for 26 sittings of the board. This was despite the fact that William Harrison was only appointed to

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[37] He was apparently trying to procure a seat in the Westminster parliament during these absences, Romney Sedgwick (ed.) *The history of parliament: the house of commons 1715-54* (2 vols, London, 1970), ii, pp 250-1.

[38] Conolly and Medlycott to the Commissioners resident in London, 9 March 1720, (N.L.I., Letterbook of James Forth, secretary to the Revenue Commissioners, Ms 16,007, p. 78).

succeed Southwell at the end of this period. In the interim the management of the revenue devolved almost exclusively to Conolly and Medlycott.

Absenteeism particularly relating to the English members was a long-standing problem. It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the English commissioners treated their positions solely as sinecures. Hayton has shown how all the English commissioners bar one, in the period 1707-16, took their seats at least briefly.[39] After the Hanoverian Accession the number of English commissioners increased from two or three out of every seven to four out of every seven, although this seems to have been the product of events rather than design. The Irish Revenue also increasingly became a step on the ladder to higher office in the Treasury. Commissioners Strickland, Gybbons, Wylde, Frankland, Yonge, and Earle all went to hold prominent offices in the Treasury. It has been suggested that these commissioners were also intended to perform a watching brief on behalf of the Treasury, 'one, whom they could rely on to advise them what was doing at the Board and to prevent jobs for private purposes'.[40] The infrequent attendance of the English commissioners casts some doubt on this assertion, at least for this period. That most of the English commissioners had close ties with the Treasury is not disputed, but their level of influence in Dublin should not be overestimated.

All English members of the Revenue Board did make brief sporadic visits to Dublin in the period after 1715. They were also occasionally consulted by the commissioners in Dublin on subjects of particular importance. In 1716, when the commissioners had reservations about the appointment of a Charles King as

[39] Hayton, 'Ireland and the English ministers 1707-16', p. 185.
[40] Bartlett, 'Viscount Townshend and the Irish Revenue Board', p. 156.

collector of Cork, on the recommendation of Robert Walpole, the three commissioners in Dublin wrote to Strickland and Gybbons in London to notify them of their decision not to adhere to Walpole's request.[41] Similarly in November 1720, when the commissioners had cause to dismiss the collector of Dublin, Sir John Eccles, for financial irregularities, Conolly and Medlycott wrote to their colleagues in London to inform them of their decision.[42] This letter written two days after the decision was made involved the commissioners in London in the affair, although the two commissioners in Dublin effected the dismissal.[43] This particular instance may have been necessary to confer legitimacy on an important decision which had been reached without a quorum. So even when the non-resident commissioners were consulted it was often a mere formality. Conolly and Medlycott were making the decisions and overseeing the day-to-day management.

The resident commissioners also on occasion did neglect their posts. The correspondence of the commissioner's secretary, James Forth, includes a number of such instances.[44] In October 1718 he wrote to Medlycott in the following terms,

> There are many cases of moment that need determination; many seizures wait for judgements; merchants are clamorous and impatient; and it is become the common discourse in coffeehouses and other public places that the revenue is under no management and that there is not a sufficient number of Commissioners in the Kingdom sufficient to constitute a quorum.[45]

This particular situation had arisen because of the departure of William Strickland for London. Strickland had only been in Dublin because Medlycott had vacated

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[41] Southwell, Medlycott and Conolly (Dublin) to Strickland and Gybbons (London), 26 Apr. 1716 (N.L.I., Ms 16.007, pp 15-16).
[42] Medlycott and Conolly to the Commissioners in London, 19 Nov. 1720 (N.L.I., Ms 16,007 p. 85).
[43] Minute Book of the Revenue Commissioners, 17 Nov. 1720 (T.N.A., CUST 1/15 p. 42). There were only two commissioners in Dublin as Southwell had died in October and had yet to be replaced by William Harrison.
[44] On Forth, see *H.I.P.,* iv, pp 218-19.
[45] James Forth to Medlycott, 10 Oct. 1718, (N.L.I., Ms 16,007 p. 64).

his station to travel to London. In August 1724, Medlycott was again absent in London and Forth wrote to him requesting his presence:

> They hope will allow your returning soon to assist in the determination of some matter in which your opinion and judgement is much desired. My Lord Justice Conolly has in particular ordered me to acquaint you that the three packets which arrived this morning brought him two letters from you which he would answer but that he hopes his letter would hardly overtake you at London.[46]

It is clear that Conolly was seen as having a superior role at the board. It was he who was requesting Medlycott's presence. The diligence and attention expected of at least the resident commissioners was not uncommon in early eighteenth-century administration: in England Sir John Lowther had resigned his place as a Treasury Lord because of the workload in 1691, telling a baffled House of Commons, 'I shall be much easier out of it, and I hope I shall leave it'. Lord Godolphin likewise had groaned under the rigours of responsibility – 'the life of a slave in the galleys is a paradise in comparison of mine'.[47] These Treasury positions like active membership of the Irish Revenue Board were no easy sinecures.

The failure of the English commissioners to spend more time in Dublin, and indeed the failure of the Treasury to enforce residency in Ireland, meant that the three Irish commissioners, Conolly, Medlycott and Southwell/Harrison, dominated the Revenue Board. Indeed when Medlycott was reinstated at the Board in 1728, he was also obliged to remain in Dublin, despite his English estates and membership of the Westminster parliament. This concentration of the work of the board in the hands of the three Dublin resident commissioners was recognised by the Treasury: in 1725 they were rewarded for their dedication with a once-off

[46] Same to Same, 3 Sept. 1724 (N.L.I., Ms 16,007, pp 133-134, 143).
[47] Henry Roseveare, *The treasury 1660-1870: the foundation of control* (London, 1973), p. 79.

payment of £500 each.[48] Of these three, Conolly held the strongest position as the only commissioner consistently resident in Dublin, as well as being the only one who had a significant political interest. His capacity for hard work exemplified by his continued attendance at the Board during both his terms as lord justice and as speaker of the House of Commons certainly played an important role in his emergence and his maintenance of a dominant position at the Custom House.

Conolly and the British Ministers

The three resident commissioners oversaw the daily management of the countrywide revenue system, distributed most of the patronage in the hands of the commissioners and corresponded with the British Treasury. Of the commissioners appointed in 1714, it was Conolly who chiefly corresponded with the British ministers. His role as the primary correspondent with both the lord lieutenant, Sunderland and the Treasury was the result of his wider political role. It was also clear that his appointment to the commission then, just as it had been in 1709, was politically motivated. Since Sunderland remained an absentee, the establishment of the new Hanoverian regime in Ireland was left to the local politicians and officials. Conolly was to be the link between Dublin Castle and the Revenue Board. He was simultaneously helping to prepare for a new parliamentary session as well as overseeing the transfer of the revenue system into Hanoverian hands. Officeholders suspected of holding Tory sympathies were purged from all branches of the government from the top down.[49] The appointment of the new Revenue Commission in 1714 was emblematic of this new policy. Amongst the new commissioners' first tasks was to remove suspect officials and to replace them

[48] Lords of the Treasury to Commissioners in Dublin, 13 Apr. 1725, (N.L.I, Ms 16,007, pp 155-56).
[49] See, McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers*, chapter 4 *passim*, pp 58-87.

with new more reliable ones. This artificially high turnover of jobs also created vast patronage opportunities. Conolly as the leading political figure on the new commission became intimately involved in this process. It was also important for the new administration in London and Dublin to establish an accurate picture of the current state of the Irish revenue.

It was to Conolly that Sunderland looked for these answers. As early as January 1715 the under-secretary in Dublin Castle, Eustace Budgell, wrote to chief secretary Joseph Addison: 'I was with Mr Conolly this morning who promises me an account of the 4 surveyors by the next packet, and is indeed the only man of application among our Commissioners'.[50] Already it was clear that Conolly's superior abilities as an administrator were being recognised. Sunderland himself also carried on correspondence with him, enquiring about the state of the revenue, seeking accounts, and making suggestions about possible appointments. In December 1714 he sought an accurate version of the revenue accounts because of discrepancies in the versions proffered by William Burgh the Accountant General, and the Deputy Vice-Treasurer, John Pratt. In seeking this information he wrote, 'I am so sensible of your zeal for the King's service and that of the public, that I forbear making excuses for the trouble I give you in this affair, your care of which will particularly oblige me'.[51] While this was in many ways typical of the flattery that Sunderland was wont to employ, it demonstrates the esteem in which he held Conolly and seems sincere if the task in hand is taken into account. Conolly lived

[50] Budgell to Addison 8 Jan. 1715 (B.L., Add MS 61,636, f. 160).
[51] Sunderland to Conolly 25 Dec. 1714 (B.L., Add MS 61,652, ff. 234).

up to expectations on this occasion and in a letter of 11 January he mentions meeting Captain William Burgh to ascertain the state of the revenue.[52]

In January 1715 Sunderland suggested to Conolly a number of individuals who he wished to see promoted in the Irish Revenue.[53] The commissioners met these requests with some resistance, primarily because they believed some of those nominated were unsuitable for promotion, especially where they had no previous experience. This viewpoint was expressed in a strongly worded letter signed by Conolly, Medlycott and Southwell, in which they asked the lord lieutenant to desist from forwarding further applications: 'you would please to oppose all further applications'.[54] Following this, Sunderland continued to press the issue, but he corresponded solely with Conolly; writing in late January 1715 he noted how he had sent the original list of prospective appointments only to Conolly 'so as not to put too much pressure on the board to appoint any unsuitable persons'.[55] This letter is significant because it shows that Sunderland preferred to channel his communications with the commissioners privately through Conolly, and that he was aware that those figures he wanted to nominate might not be acceptable. Amongst the names submitted to Conolly for consideration was, for instance, a brother in-law of the earl of Kildare, a recent lord justice.[56] These nominations seem to have been motivated by political expediency as much as by suitability for the service. Conolly as the most politically astute member of the commission was therefore entrusted with bringing these names to the board. Conolly's initial

[52] Conolly to Sunderland, 11 Jan. 1715 (B.L., Add MS 61,636, ff 201-202).
[53] Sunderland to Conolly, 4 Jan. 1715 (B.L., Add MS 61,652, ff 241-42).
[54] Conolly, Southwell and Medlycott to Sunderland, 18 Jan. 1715 (B.L., Add MS 61,636 ff 210-211).
[55] Sunderland to Conolly, 25 Jan. 1715 (B.L., Add MS 61,652 ff 254-56).
[56] Henry Sandford, who was appointed Collector of Excise in Dublin.

response in consulting the other commissioners shows that he was reluctant to oversee the appointment of too many unqualified officials, and wished to make this clear to Sunderland. The commissioners were also making it clear that the distribution of patronage was their preserve.

This episode did not adversely affect Conolly's relationship with Sunderland, and when, in March 1715, Sunderland sought ways to reduce the cost of the revenue system he turned to Conolly. The latter believed that such cost cutting was impossible. When he informed the lord lieutenant of this conclusion, Sunderland wrote that despite his view to the contrary, 'I must therefore recommend these matters to your care of which I can not have the least doubt, but shall always entirely depend upon your zeal to His Majesty and your Country's service and your friendship to me'.[57] Once again he was depending on Conolly's knowledge of the revenue system and taking his opinion as an accurate barometer of the state of the revenue. This relationship between Conolly and Sunderland was a key factor in Conolly's emerging dominance at the Customs House. Conolly acted as a conduit between the British administration and the Revenue Board, acting on behalf of the other commissioners, only drawing them in when a formal statement of policy needed to be made. Conolly's role as a commissioner was more overtly political than either of the other resident commissioners.

This role as a politicised commissioner was not new. During the viceroyalty of the earl of Rochester, Thomas Keightley had briefly performed a similar role. Keightley, served as a commissioner from 1692 until 1714, an Englishman who

[57] Sunderland to Conolly 15 Mar. 1714/15 (B.L., Add MS 61,652 ff 277-78).

had made his career in Ireland. His influence as a commissioner grew with the appointment of the earl of Rochester as lord lieutenant in 1700. Before his arrival in Dublin, Rochester had, in a manner similar to Sunderland with Conolly, corresponded with Keightley, 'canvassing his views on all aspects of the revenue, and government in general'.[58] On Rochester's departure in 1702, Keightley was appointed a lord justice, in which station he continued to correspond with Rochester, giving advice on issues such as the calling of parliament, coastal defence, raising regiments and government appointments, while still acting as a revenue commissioner. Again this is similar to Conolly's relationship with Sunderland, although it was not until 1716 that he was first appointed a lord justice. The difference between Keightley and Conolly, however, was that the latter was able to maintain his position of political influence throughout his career as Revenue Commissioner, while Keightley's political star diminished after 1703, and the departure of his brother-in-law, and patron, Rochester from Dublin, even though he remained a commissioner until the end of Queen Anne's reign.

Conolly remained the conduit through which the Revenue Commissioners communicated with the London ministers long after Sunderland's viceroyalty. In 1718, Medlycott and Southwell wrote to Conolly at Limavady, where he was visiting his northern estates, to inform him that a number of decisions the board had made had been reversed by the Court of Appeals. The letter they wrote is revealing of the role that they perceived Conolly to have at the commission,

> We thought it proper (as you are in the government) to give you as early advice hereof as the time would allow that nothing be omitted to check these unaccountable proceedings; otherwise you easily foresee the inconveniences that

[58] McGrath, 'The Irish revenue system: government and administration 1689-1702' , pp 117-118.

> will ensue and will think proper on your return to lay this before the Government or the Treasury.[59]

The interaction between Conolly's position as a commissioner and his wider political role is clear from this correspondence. He was deemed the appropriate person to deal with the government on behalf of the board. At this time he was serving as a lord justice and was therefore in regular contact with the London government and the Treasury. Fellow lord justice, Lord Chancellor Alan Brodrick, questioned the propriety of his holding this office in conjunction with his commissionership. In principle the combination of the two offices, he suggested, was in order but he wondered about the potential for the abuse of the system, commenting on Conolly's appointment as lord justice in 1717, 'but how consistent with the character I will not determine'.[60] While this comment was intended primarily as a political jibe at Conolly, it did acknowledge the amount of potential influence concentrated in his hands, something of which his fellow commissioners and indeed the British ministers were aware.

Even Walpole was forced to acknowledge Conolly's dominance at the Revenue Board. As Lord Treasurer, he interfered in the British revenue service, ending the independence the customs and excise commissioners had previously enjoyed, 'he quickly stopped that and no one was appointed except with his consent. By such means he created the Treasury party which became the most reliable ministerial group in the Commons'.[61] Having successfully penetrated the English and Scottish Treasuries, the 'administrative tentacles' were turned on Ireland, especially after

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[59] Southwell and Medlycott (Dublin) to Conolly (Newtown-Limavady), 12 July 1718 (N.L.I., Ms 16,007 p. 36).
[60] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 21 Mar. 1717 (S.H.C., 1248/3 ff 412-413).
[61] J.H. Plumb, *Sir Robert Walpole* (London, 1956-60), ii, p. 93; P.W. Riley, *The English ministers and Scotland, 1707-27* (London, 1964), p. 293.

the Wood's Halfpence affair. Walpole in his attempts to get some of his clients appointed to the Irish revenue service, turned to Conolly. As McNally has noted, 'he usually wrote to Conolly personally, presumably on the assumption that Conolly's agreement was all that was required'.[62] This is certainly true, but his belief that the two men enjoyed a close working relationship does not take into account the frequency with which Conolly and the other Irish commissioners rejected Walpole's suggestions.

In 1728, when Walpole wished to have Christopher Phillips appointed Collector of New Ross, he wrote to Conolly outlining his request. But the board refused to make the appointment because of his lack of experience in the revenue; a prior recommendation from Walpole and Carteret had also previously been rejected in 1726. In the end he was appointed to a lesser post in Waterford; as his letter of appointment made clear, the commissioners, thought 'this a great instance of their respect for your patron'.[63] Significantly, the commissioners while making the appointment were able to place Phillips in a post they believed more suited to his talents while still paying respect to Walpole. In the following year, Walpole again applied directly to Conolly in an attempt to get the salary of another client, Thomas Copleston, raised.[64] The commissioners had previously expressed their dissatisfaction with Copleston to Walpole, although in this instance they eventually felt obliged to acquiesce to his demands. Raising salaries was one thing, but recommendations for appointment were treated much more seriously.[65] Walpole's use of Conolly as a channel of communication with the board reflected the view in

[62] McNally, 'Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-27', p.87.
[63] Conolly, Harrison and Medlycott to Walpole, 13 Sept. 1728 (N.L.I., Ms 16,007 pp 177-78).
[64] Conolly, Harrison and Medlycott to Walpole, 2 Jan. 1729 (N.L.I., Ms 16,007 pp 181-83).
[65] See McNally, 'Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-27', p. 88

London that Conolly was the dominant personality in Dublin. The willingness of the commissioners to object to Walpole's suggestions also indicates the security of Conolly's dominance at the board. He was been treated more as an equal and less as a subordinate. The Revenue Board would remain the preserve of the Irish commissioners.

Wood's Halfpence: Custom House and politics intertwined.

The greatest confrontation between the Revenue Commissioners, and indeed between Conolly, and Walpole came not over a question of patronage or Treasury influence but over the issue of Wood's Halfpence. The controversy over Wood's Halfpence has been seen as an important turning point in Conolly's political career, because it cemented his position as the leading parliamentary 'undertaker'.[66] It also, however, demonstrated the close interaction between his roles as commissioner and lord justice. The initial objections to the granting of the patent, to William Wood in 1722 were economically, not politically motivated.[67] The Revenue Commissioners expressed their opposition as early as August 1722, writing to Chief Secretary Edward Hopkins,

> [We] are ...of opinion that such a patent will be highly prejudicial to the trade and welfare of this Kingdom, and more particularly to His Majesty's Revenue, which we have formerly found by experience to have suffered very much by too great a quantity of the like small base coin. We desire that you would farther represent to his Grace that as this affair has already made a great noise here, the mischiefs and inconveniencies which most necessarily attend it (more especially as to the

[66] Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, pp 16-127.

[67] Dickson, *New Foundations*, p. 73. On the controversy generally see, Albert Goodwin, 'Wood's halfpence' in Rosalind Mitchinson (ed.), *Essays in eighteenth century history* (London, 1936), pp 117-44; Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics,* I pp 134-75; Patrick McNally, 'Wood's halfpence, Carteret and the government of Ireland 1723-25', in *Irish Historical Studies,* xxx, no 119 (1997), pp 354-76.

> deficiency of the revenue) may be very prejudicial to His Majesty's affairs in parliament.[68]

This letter and a later representation to the Treasury in September 1722 yielded no response, but the commissioners had made their position clear at this early stage. This would become important later.

The commissioners were destined to have an important bearing on whether the controversial halfpence were to be introduced. The method devised in London to force the introduction of the currency was to bring pressure on the Commissioners of the Revenue to accept the coin. If they accepted the coin, then the army would be paid in the halfpence and it would enter circulation. This situation was anticipated by the Irish parliament in December 1723, which in a petition to the King advised him to give directions to the officers of the revenue not to receive the coinage.[69] Conolly as Speaker of the House of Commons was party to this petition, which was ignored in London. The issue was, however, raised again by Swift in the first Drapier's letter:

> 'But Wood is still working *under hand* to force his halfpence upon us; and if he can by help of his *Friends* in *England* prevail so far as to get an order that the *Commissioners* and *Collectors* of the *King's* money shall receive them, and that the *Army* is to be paid with them, then he thinks *his work shall be done'*.[70]

Attempts had already been made in the summer of 1723 to introduce the halfpence into Ireland. In July 1723 the Collector of Cork, William Maynard, refused to allow a quantity of halfpence to be landed at Cork unless 'a great duty' was paid for them. The commissioners wrote to him advising 'that they did not think they were empowered to admit them to be entered duty free, but they don't apprehend

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[68] Conolly, Harrison, Medlycott and William Yonge to Edward Hopkins, 7 Aug. 1722 (T.N.A., SP 63/380 f. 110).
[69] Goodwin, 'Wood's halfpence' p. 122.
[70] Jonathan Swift, *A letter to the shopkeepers...* (1724) in *The Drapier's letters,* ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1966), p. 5.

that they are liable to a higher duty than copper'. They also suggested that the coinage could be transferred to another ship and sent back to Bristol without the payment of duty at the collector's discretion.[71] Their instructions seem to have been deliberately vague, the halfpence were being treated not as coinage but as a quantity of copper, and by concentrating on the question of duty the commissioners were not explicitly rejecting the coinage.

In May 1724, on the day Conolly was sworn again as a lord justice, following the recall of the duke of Grafton, the Lord Justices and Privy Council submitted an address in opposition to the halfpence, including a rejection of the strategy of using the Revenue service as an instrument to introduce the coinage. Conolly himself, in a letter written in the previous month, had outlined the effects of the affair on parliament:

> I hope you will pardon me to say something upon an affair that I foresee will create great trouble and uneasiness to this whole kingdom, that is Wood's patent for the brass money the whole nation is entirely bent against it, and I think (with submission) it cannot be thought prudent after the unanimous representations of both Houses of Parliament to force them upon Ireland. I hope it will be well considered and that it will appear it is not tanti (sic) (for I may say anything to you for I am confident my name will not be made use of) that if any methods are used to enforce the Patent there will be no meeting this Parliament again. And if a new one I fear it will be worse for His Majestys affairs and I wish it does not create a great disaffection.[72]

The reference to methods of enforcement seems to allude to using the revenue service, and the political effects are clearly spelt out. Despite these warnings, the English Privy Council ordered in July that the Revenue Commissioners revoke any orders they had given relating to the obstruction of the halfpence. Conolly assured Charles Delafaye that upon receipt of this order in August, 'the Commissioners of

[71] Minute Book of the Revenue Commissioners, 6 July 1723 (T.N.A., CUST 1/17 p. 55).
[72] Conolly to Charles Delafaye 23 April 1724 (T.N.A., SP 63/383 f. 180).

the Revenue nor any of them ever gave any orders, directions, significations or intimations whatsoever, directly or indirectly, publicly or privately to hinder or obstruct the receiving or uttering this copper money'.[73] This merely repeated the language of the Privy Council order, and in light of the commissioner's instructions to Maynard in 1723 it was economical with the truth.

The lord justices continued to hinder any attempt to introduce the coinage, taking the minimalist stance that the Privy Council order was, in Conolly's words, 'conditional, that in case the Commissioners had given any orders, directions or intimations to obstruct the copper money then to revoke them, and they having solemnly declared under their hands was never any such order it is hoped no further is required or expected to issue from the lords justices'.[74] This stance was based on political considerations, especially the potential parliamentary repercussions. By only enquiring of the Revenue Commissioners whether or not they had given any orders regarding the acceptance of the halfpence, and not instructing them to receive the coinage, the lord justices employed a policy of obstruction, at least in the eyes of the duke of Newcastle:

> they suppose the Order of Council to have been conditional and that it was necessary for them to know whether the Commissioners of the Revenue had given such orders or not ... it is very easy to see that this is the only view they could have in sending the Commissioners of the Revenue in that manner, which one of them being one of the Lords Justices, could have informed me of this fact without such a formal enquiry.[75]

As he noted, Conolly could by virtue of his dual role have answered directly for the commission without further correspondence between the various parties in

[73] Conolly to Delafaye, 15 Aug. 1724 (T.N.A., SP 63/384 f. 40).
[74] Same to same, 20 Aug. 1724 (T.N.A., SP 63/384 f. 42).
[75] Newcastle to Walpole, 29 Aug. 1724 (T.N.A., SP 63/383 f. 44-51).

Dublin. Conolly and the other commissioners had already signified they would not comply with further orders from the Lords Justices arising from the Privy Council orders.[76] In September they also refused to comply with an order from the Treasury regarding the halfpence.[77] Whether such compliance would have been possible is a moot point, as another ship laden with the coinage had been turned away from Cork harbour that month by an angry mob.[78]

The issues of political independency as espoused by Swift did not motivate Conolly's role throughout the controversy; in fact he explicitly rejected them.[79] Instead his conduct, both as a lord justice and as Commissioner of the Revenue, was motivated by economic concerns. Throughout the crisis the Revenue Commissioners were centrally involved. They had been the first to reject the scheme in 1722, and subsequently acted in such a way as to frustrate the introduction of the coinage. Walpole's intention of bringing the coinage into circulation through the instrument of the Custom House was frustrated by the Irish Lords Justices. Conolly's dual role was central to this and demonstrated the advantages of simultaneously sitting on the Revenue Board and in the Council chamber in Dublin Castle. The affair also emphasised the dominance of the resident commissioners and their independence of the Treasury. If the Englishman at the board truly represented the voice of the Treasury, now was their time. The commissioners' actions were dictated not by London but by the political and economic situation in Dublin.

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[76] Ibid.
[77] Coghill to Southwell, 7 Sept. 1724, in Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill, 1722-1738*, p. 10.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Goodwin, 'Wood's halfpence', p. 142.

Conolly despite his role in the opposition to the halfpence survived in his position of influence. No attempt was made to remove him from the Revenue Board nor indeed to bolster the presence of the English commissioners in Dublin to prevent a similar rebellion. Conolly had little choice in the way he had acted if he were to retain his influence at the board; as he told an English correspondent, 'you must have acted in the same circumstances just as I did'.[80]

The Wood's halfpence crisis of 1722-25, while in many ways an exceptional period, gives important insights into Conolly's career at the Revenue. It provides the best example of the close connections between Conolly's political and administrative careers, although as has been shown, since his initial appointment to the commission in 1709, and especially after 1714, these ties were always close. Conolly's emergence as the dominant commissioner, if not chief in name, dated back to 1714, but was rarely more evident than in the period of the halfpence controversy. This emergence as the de facto chief commissioner owed much to his diligent attendance at the board, and his attention to detail, as well as to his political eminence. His wider political role however meant that he was able to communicate with the leading British ministers on almost equal terms on behalf the board. This was important in terms of maintaining the patronage prerogatives of the board as will be shown in the next chapter, but also in making sure that the revenue service continued to be managed locally. This was to prove very important during the Wood's Halfpence crisis, when Conolly's dual role ensured the revenue service could not be manipulated to provide an instrument to introduce

[80] Conolly to Delafaye, 20 Jan. 1725 (T.N.A., SP 63/385 f. 19).

the controversial coinage. Conolly's role at the Revenue combined excellent administrative capability and diligence with shrewd political skills.

His combination of the offices of speaker and lord justice with his commissionership was unusual both in the Irish and British context. In the British context, the Place Act had removed the customs commissioners from active politics, although the Treasury Lords remained in parliament, and is perhaps with them that comparisons are best made. In an Irish context the combination of Conolly's roles in government and at the revenue was followed by his successors as speaker, Henry Boyle and John Ponsonby, until the reform of the revenue service under Lord Townsend in the 1770s. This, however, had much to do with Conolly's perceived success in using the patronage resources of the revenue to assist his political career. It is this use of patronage that the next chapter examines.

Chapter 7

Conolly's control of patronage

In June 1728 when William Conolly first began to show signs of the illness that would eventually lead to his death over a year and a half later, his close political ally Marmaduke Coghill assessed the importance of the speaker. Coghill examined Conolly's career in terms of the three major roles in the Irish government which he occupied: lord justice, speaker of the House of Commons and Commissioner of the Revenue. Conolly in Coghill's assessment was irreplaceable because of the manner in which he combined these offices to maximise his influence within the Irish administration, particularly Conolly's ability to 'unite and keep people together.'[1] This was partly achieved as Coghill recognised through the disposal of patronage, particularly within the revenue service, but also more generally. The centrality of patronage in eighteenth century politics has long been recognised by historians. Indeed as McNally has written, any interpretation of eighteenth century Irish political behaviour that does not acknowledge the importance of the pursuit of patronage is seriously flawed. In his formulation, 'the ability to obtain patronage from the government was the yardstick by which political interest was measured. Political interest gave a man influence over patronage, which in turn resulted in increased political interest. In this self perpetuating circle the ability to influence the disposal of patronage was the key to political power.'[2] This argument echoes Coghill's assessment of Conolly's position of power. This chapter will examine the role of patronage in maintaining Conolly's central position in the government of Ireland in

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[1] Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell, 13 June 1728 in D.W. Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill*, pp 53-4.
[2] Patrick McNally, 'Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-27' (PhD, Queens University Belfast, 1993), p. 247.

the period after 1715 through an examination of his roles as Revenue Commissioner, speaker and lord justice, and the patronage that each position provided.

Historians in the past viewed patronage in eighteenth century politics in somewhat restricted terms – as the naked pursuit of office, but this has been somewhat modified. Instead a more nuanced picture has emerged focusing on the reciprocal relationships between patrons and their dependants or followers; Connolly and Malcomson have highlighted the importance of concepts like honour, patriotism, personal contacts, sociability, friendship and oratorical reputation in determining political behaviour.[3] But despite this revision of the role of patronage as political cement, most historians agree that the building up of a stable majority in the House of Commons was the focus of successive Dublin Castle administrations.[4] Conolly has long been recognised as the most important government manager in early Hanoverian Ireland, with successive commentators from contemporaries like Coghill, Archbishop Boulter and Charles Delafaye through to modern historians such as Burns, Hayton and McNally, highlighting his key role.[5] Crucial to this role was his ability to dispose of patronage and to maintain a position of strength despite several changes in administration on both sides of the Irish Sea. This chapter examines how he managed to do this.

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[3] S.J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power*, pp 86-7; A.P.W. Malcomson, *John Foster: The politics of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy* (Oxford, 1978), pp 236-43. For the most succinct discussion of the historiography on this subject see Patrick McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers*, pp 88-90.

[4] D.W. Hayton, 'The beginnings of the undertaker system' in D.W. Hayton and Thomas Bartlett (eds.) *Penal era and golden age: essays in Irish history, 1690-1800* (Belfast, 1979), pp 32-54; David Dickson, *New Foundations*, pp 76-7.

[5] R.E. Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics*, I, p. 250; McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers*, pp 106-110.

Controlling the Custom House

The revenue service had, with the exception of the army, the largest staff of any government department in early eighteenth-century Ireland, with over one thousand employees. These ranged from the seven commissioners based at the Customs House to the lowliest tidewaiter or boatman at Killybegs or Dingle. The commissioners controlled appointments to all of the positions below the rank of the commissioners themselves. Unlike in England and Scotland, as discussed in chapter six, the Treasury, even under Robert Walpole, took little interest in the disposal of this patronage, so the Irish commissioners were not subject to the levels of Treasury inference seen elsewhere in the British polity, although there were exceptions. This was partly because few positions in the Irish Revenue were sufficiently attractive for English candidates, but also because of the protective stance zealously adopted by the Irish commissioners, especially Conolly, over their rights of nomination. It has also been shown in the previous chapter how in reality it was the three Irish commissioners who dominated proceedings at the Custom House because of their devotion to duty, and their almost permanent physical presence in Dublin. Of these, it was Conolly who emerged as the dominant presence at the board. McNally has argued that whoever controlled the distribution of revenue patronage, 'would have the opportunity to become one of the dominant figures in Irish politics'.[6] Conolly's career would appear, at first glance, to confirm this argument, but the failure of other commissioners, such as Thomas Keightley in Queen Anne's reign, or Thomas Southwell or Thomas Medlicott after 1715, either to sustain or carve out a position of political influence from the Custom House suggests that other factors were also necessary. Instead it is

[6] McNally, 'Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-27', p. 107.

arguable that Conolly was able to use the revenue service as a means of supporting his political position, rather than as a primary means of achieving political power. Positions in the revenue service could be used to gratify supporters and constituents, but a political base could not be carved out solely from appointees to the revenue. This section will examine how Conolly used revenue patronage to bolster his own position and that of the government, two things that were not always the same.

Much of the historiography of the Revenue Commission in the early eighteenth century period has focused on the alleged increased politicisation of the board in the period after 1715. By 1703 according to the historian of the Williamite revenue, the service had 'evolved...into a recognisable and coherent professional bureaucracy which was capable of meeting the increased financial demands placed upon government by the Glorious Revolution.'[7] However, as he notes, this achievement was conditional, the collection service was imperfect and as the century progressed it suffered from a range of disparate pressures. Revenue patronage, McGrath suggests, became increasingly politicised, leading to a more corrupt and venal bureaucracy.[8] McNally shares his view that the distribution of revenue posts became increasingly subordinate to wider political machinations, as suggested by his study of Hanoverian patronage. He does, however, also stress that the commissioners did make strident efforts to improve the efficiency of the service.[9] This, however, is tempered by his assertion that the dual role of William Conolly, as de-facto chief commissioner of the revenue and chief manager of the government's political interest, must have made the

[7] C.I McGrath, 'The Irish revenue system: government and administration 1689-1702' (PhD, University of London, 1997), p.309.
[8] Ibid. p.310
[9] McNally, 'Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-27', p. 105.

service more politically orientated than it might otherwise have been.[10] This section will conclude with a discussion of the validity of this analysis.

The major function of the Revenue Commissioners was to manage the appointment of personnel within the service. The evidence of the board's minute books suggests that appointments, promotions and dismissals of inferior officers took up most of their time. Most of these decisions were made by the commissioners, with very little interference from outside interests in either the British or Irish administration. Conolly's dual role as either speaker or lord justice and revenue commissioner obviously complicated this separation of powers somewhat, but the extent to which that was so remains to be explored. Patronage decisions were in practice the preserve of the commissioners resident in Dublin and in attendance at the board. This, as demonstrated in chapter six, meant that the three Irish commissioners, Conolly, Medlycott, and Southwell/Harrison, in effect controlled the majority of appointments. Of these three Conolly by virtue of his superior attendance record and greater personal influence enjoyed the most power. Nominations were allocated to each commissioner through a rotational system with each commissioner nominating candidates for vacancies as they arose in turn. This system could however be manipulated.

Commissioners could exchange turns, if they wished to make a certain appointment. Conolly in particular regularly exchanged turns with his fellow commissioners, or even on occasion was given their rights of nomination, especially when the positions were within his geographical sphere of influence in Ulster. This control of revenue

[10] Ibid. p.111.

patronage is analysed in detail below. Another frequently used strategy was for commissioners to nominate individuals, not to a specific vacancy, but to 'be instructed' in the revenue or the excise. This put these candidates in pole position to be nominated for the next available vacancy. This also raises the thorny issue of training and qualifications. Political patronage and expediency certainly played an important role in the appointment of revenue officers. Certainly, in common with the situation in Britain, the period immediately after the Hanoverian succession did see an increase in politically motivated appointments and, more importantly, dismissals. Tory officeholders were purged and were replaced by loyal Whigs.[11] In Ireland this was exacerbated by a higher than usual level of interference from London in appointments to Irish places in 1715. Many of those suggested by the lord lieutenant, Sunderland or the Treasury subsequently proved to be incompetent. The Irish commissioners were, however, often reluctant to follow the suggestions of their English masters. In 1715 the commissioners wrote to Sunderland asking him to desist from forwarding further applications, while in the following year they refused to accept Walpole's nominee to the prestigious and lucrative position of collector of Cork.[12] These refusals to comply with the British ministers were based on more than political expedient. They reflected concerns, often well founded, about the capability of those recommended to do the job.

While political motivations played a prominent role in the patronage decisions of the Revenue Board in the immediate aftermath of the accession of George I, they became increasingly less important, as the commissioners became more concerned about the

[11] McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers,* pp 72-3; Patrick McNally, 'The Hanoverian accession and the Tory party in Ireland', in *Parliamentary History,* xiv (1995), pp 263-83.
[12] Conolly, Southwell and Medlycott to Sunderland 18 Jan. 1714/15 (B.L., Add MS 61,636 ff. 210-211).

efficient operation of the revenue service. The clearest statement of this policy came in July 1726 when Conolly wrote to the chief secretary, regretfully expressing the impossibility of the board complying with a recommendation from Walpole:

> But I am sorry to acquaint you that we find compliance in this case of Mr Phillips to be impracticable: for excepting the few that follow all the places at our disposal fall very short in value of his pretension; and all that come near it, require a long and thorough experience in the execution and cannot safely be given to persons unacquainted with the laws and the practice of the revenue.[13]

Recommendations of non-qualified candidates would not be entertained. This reflected a long-standing policy that prospective candidates for revenue posts would be instructed in the rules of the revenue before they would be appointed to a position of responsibility. This instruction was not standardised and, according to Gerard Aylmer, it meant that entry had 'merely been formalized into a system of written recommendations.'[14] Certainly prospective officials were often ordered to be 'instructed' on one day, only then to be appointed the next, implying that they were to be trained on the job. This was why William Edgar's *A collection of several statutes and clauses of acts made and passed in this kingdom, and in Great Britain, relating to his majesty's revenue of Ireland*, a handbook of relevant statutes and measurements published in 1720 was so important, quickly becoming a veritable bible for revenue officials.[15] It was the first of a number of such handbooks produced by or for the Irish Revenue Commissioners throughout the century, although such works were already in common usage in Britain. In January 1721 the commissioners, in this case Conolly and Medlycott, ordered the publication of a more idiosyncratic work, the Rev. Jasper

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[13] William Conolly to Thomas Clutterbuck. 18 July 1726, (N.L.I., Ms 16007, p. 167). There is a copy of this letter in the Castletown Papers in Katherine Conolly's hand, (I.A.A., 97/84 A3/37). See also Same to Same, 3 Sept. 1726 (I.A.A., 97/84 A3/39).

[14] G.E. Aylmer, 'From office holding to civil service: the genesis of modern bureaucracy', in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 5th series xxx (1980), p. 95.

[15] William Edgar, *A collection of several statutes and clauses of acts made and passed in this kingdom, and in Great Britain, relating to his majesty's revenue of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1720).

Brett's *Sin of Withholding tribute,* an improving sermon directed against the evils of smuggling and tax evasion.[16] It was printed by the King's printer Samuel Fairbrother and circulated to all ports to be read by revenue officers.

Instruction was necessary for the appointment of officials but experience at a lower grade was also becoming increasingly important for further promotion within the service. Conolly, in the letter quoted above, noted 'that by our rules no person can be appointed an officer in any of the upper stations who has not first served in some inferior post of the same branch.'[17] Similarly a request made by MP Henry Maxwell that a client be appointed a supervisor of the Hearthmoney was refused because it was incompatible with the rules of the board, 'by which no person can be supervisor of the Hearthmoney without having first being a collector.'[18] This practice suggests a growing awareness of the need for skilled and experienced officers, as well as a willingness to disregard political advantage, where it was not compatible with the better management of the revenue. Previously collectors and other senior officials had often been appointed regardless of their suitability. The case of Sir John Eccles, collector of Dublin, dismissed in 1720 for financial irregularities, suggests the inadequacies of such a policy. He like other MPs appointed to collectorships in 1715 was appointed as a means of political reward by Sunderland. Eccles was a wealthy Dublin merchant who also had an interest in a parliamentary seat at Carysfort.[19] Future appointees were usually more closely vetted. The case of Christopher Carleton,

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[16] Jasper Brett, *The Sin of With-Holding Tribute by the running of goods, concealing excise, & c. laid open and addressed to the trading part of the nation* (Dublin, 1721); James Forth to Reverend Mr Jasper Brett, 19 Jan 1720/21 (N.L.I., Ms 16,007 p. 93). See also Patrick Walsh, 'The Sin of With-Holding Tribute, Contemporary pamphlets and the professionalization of the Irish revenue service in the early eighteenth century', in *E.C.I.,* xxi (2006), pp 48-65.
[17] William Conolly to Thomas Clutterbuck. 18 July 1726, (N.L.I., Ms 16007, p. 167).
[18] Minute Book of the Revenue Commissioners, 24 Mar. 1721 (T.N.A., Cust 1/15 p. 82).
[19] Sir John Eccles to Charles Delafaye, 8 Aug. 1717 (T.N.A., SP/63/375, f. 154).

collector first of Strabane and then Dundalk, provides a revealing example. In March 1720 he was raised to the collectorship of Strabane, having previously served as surveyor of excise at Killybegs. Upon the death of the incumbent in September 1726, he was promoted to become collector at Dundalk.[20] Having served his apprenticeship in Killybegs, he had risen to become a collector before ending up in the busy district of Dundalk. Even within each grade, as this example shows, there were different levels. His successor at Strabane could not just be appointed to an important station like Dundalk but had to prove his worth in Strabane. Such progress through the ranks was common and demonstrated the determination of the commissioners to ensure an efficient, well-managed service.

These moves towards a more professional service did not mean a complete end to political appointments, but these were becoming less pervasive. Thomas Pearson MP, a personal connection of Conolly's, was, for instance, appointed collector of Drogheda in 1723 despite a lack of experience.[21] He succeeded another political and personal associate of Conolly's, Theophilus Clements, as collector. Clements was promoted from his collectorship to become agent to the pensioners on the Irish establishment.[22] But such appointments were becoming more unusual. In 1728 Walpole again recommended a client, Christopher Phillips, as collector of New Ross, but once again the commissioners refused him on the basis of his lack of experience although they did accommodate him at a lower grade.[23] But it was not just those at the highest level who were aware of the Board's policies regarding appointment. In

[20] Minute Book of the Revenue Commissioners, 24 Mar. 1720 (T.N.A., Cust. 1/14); Ibid., 28 Sept. 1726 (T.N.A., Cust. 1/19 p. 66).
[21] Minute Book of the Revenue Commissioners, 11 Jan. 1723 (T.N.A., Cust. 1/17 p.10).
[22] For Clements see A.P.W. Malcomson, *Nathaniel Clements: Government and the governing elite in Ireland, 1725-75* (Dublin, 2005), pp 14-22.
[23] Conolly, Harrison and Medlycott to Walpole, 13 Sept. 1728 (N.L.I., Ms 16,007 pp 177-78).

September 1723, a John Jennings of Ballyshannon wrote to Conolly requesting the appointment of his son to a vacant position in the local revenue district, noting that he was already an 'officer of the walk'.[24] Similarly a Richard O'Neill, in the same year, seeking promotion to the rank of gauger, emphasised his two years of experience as a supernumerary officer in the revenue.[25] The realisation that mere supplication was not enough and that experience was also necessary was permeating through all levels of the revenue service. The appointment of such experienced officers would help alleviate the problem identified by Jasper Brett of officials not having 'subtlety enough to detect the frauds of an old experienced trader'.[26] Experienced officers would be less likely to fall for such ruses.

The commissioners' stated preference for experienced officers did not preclude political involvement in their nomination. Individual commissioners could still take the credit for appointments and could ensure that own clients within the possible pool of candidates were appointed, and they got the opportunity to make the more prestigious appointments. Conolly was particularly adept at this and was able to nominate a number of collectors, not just those like Pearson who could be seen as primarily politically motivated, but others like Christopher Carleton. Conolly also nominated the new collectors of Cavan, a Mr Thomas Nesbitt, in 1727, and Trim, a Mr James Clarke in 1729.[27] Both had risen through the ranks of the service, although Nesbitt was also MP for Cavan and was a witness to Conolly's will.[28] In 1725 he nominated Henry Sandford as collector of Coleraine following the dismissal of a

[24] John Jennings to William Conolly 6 Sept. 1723, (I.A.A., 97/84 A4/1-65).
[25] Richard O'Neill to William Conolly 19 Oct. 1723, (I.A.A., 97/84 A4/1-65).
[26] Brett, *The Sin of With-Holding Tribute* P.17.
[27] Minute Book of the Revenue Commissioners, 5 Aug. 1727; 26 Aug. 1729 (T.N.A., Cust 1/20 p.35; Cust 1/21 p.238).
[28] Will of William Conolly, 18 Oct. 1729 (N.A.I., T92).

Marmaduke Hutcheson, who had been nominated to that post by the Treasury three years earlier.[29] Sandford was promoted from the lowly position of a tidewaiter on Custom House Quay to the collectorship. The appointment to such senior posts was almost invariably made by Conolly rather than by any of his colleagues on the board, although William Harrison, enjoyed a rare coup in 1729, when he appointed the new collector for Londonderry, although this may have had something to do with Conolly's health problems, which were particularly severe at this juncture, and therefore hindering his effectiveness.[30]

The appointment of Roger Harrison as collector of Londonderry in 1729 was, however, particularly unusual, both because the appointment was at the behest of Harrison but also because it was one of the few revenue appointments made to an Ulster posting between 1715 and 1729 that was not made on Conolly's recommendation. Conolly's control of revenue patronage in this region has been hinted at in chapter five, both in relation to this period and to his earlier stint at the board in 1709-10. There is little evidence other than rumours and innuendo to support his alleged use of patronage in the earlier period, but it is clear from the commissioner's records that he oversaw the distribution of patronage in the province in the period after 1715. Conolly's particular sphere of influence extended beyond his own political and landed heartlands in Counties Donegal and Londonderry to encompass the whole province from Killybegs to Belfast and onto the two Co. Louth ports of Dundalk and Drogheda. Drogheda, in particular, was one of the main out ports for Ulster merchants trading into the Irish Sea, and was thus part of Conolly's

[29] Minute Book of the Revenue Commissioners, 13 Mar. 1722; 15 Oct. 1725 (T.N.A., Cust 1/16 p. 70; Cust 1/18 p. 139).
[30] Minute Book of Revenue Commissioners, 12 Mar. 1729 (T.N.A. Cust 1/21 p.86.); Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell, 15 Mar. 1729 in Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill,* p. 64.

natural hinterland. Conolly's close association with the interests of these two ports could be seen in the nominations of Thomas Pearson and Christopher Carleton to be collectors of Drogheda and Dundalk respectively.

Conolly was especially concerned in the appointment to places in Counties Donegal and Londonderry, and officials for their part recognised his controlling interest here, sending their enquiries and requests directly to him. In 1717 Charles Milne, Collector of Killybegs, reported the seizure of a large consignment of brandy and wine at Inniskeel in Co. Donegal to Conolly's agent Robert McCausland, who passed on the information to Conolly, instead of Milne reporting the incident through the official channel of the commission's secretary.[31] Similarly in February 1722 Milne obtained three weeks leave from his post having applied directly to Conolly. In November 1724, Conolly was sent information on a quarrel between a Strabane shopkeeper and a local revenue gauger, further suggesting that he was regarded as the best person to interpose in this local dispute, presumably because of his strong local interest.[32] This local interest was evident in the nomination of inferior officers within the service. Whenever a vacancy occurred in any of the north-western districts, Conolly was given the 'turn' or made an exchange with one of his colleagues at the board. This allowed him to gratify his supporters, but also his friends and relations. Several members of families closely linked with Conolly including various Knoxes, Conynghams, McCauslands and Coans were all nominated to revenue positions in the Killybegs, Londonderry and Coleraine Districts. [33]

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[31] Minute book of the Revenue Commissioners, 31 May 1717 (T.N.A., Cust 1/13 unfoliated).
[32] Ibid., 6 Nov. 1724 (T.N.A., Cust 1/18 p. 31).
[33] For example, three members of the McCausland family, William, John and Oliver were all appointed to revenue posts in County Londonderry in between October 1719 and February 1720. Ibid., 6 Oct. 1719, 12 Feb. 1720 & 15 Feb. 1720 (T.N.A., Cust 1/14 unfoliated).

Conolly's ability to provide places in the Revenue for his constituents and regional connections was crucial to his development of a powerful political interest in north-west Ulster. Through his almost unlimited access to the revenue patronage of the region he was able to gratify a large number of supporters and adherents. Furthermore he was able to continue to support the careers of those he nominated because of his long stewardship of the Revenue. Loyalty and support could not be bought alone through one act of patronage. Expectation of future gains and promotion was necessary to secure continued support. Conolly could use his influence to raise a prospective client from a lowly tidewaitership to a collectorship, as in the case of Henry Sandford junior. The case of Anthony Coan, a relation of Conolly's, gives another example of a possible career trajectory.[34] He was ordered at Conolly's request to be instructed in both the customs and the excise in February 1718. He was then appointed a supernumerary gauger at Ringsend, before eventually rising over a period of six years to become supervisor of the hearthmoney in Co. Sligo.[35]

Conolly's perceived and actual ability to control revenue patronage can be seen in the letters of supplication he received from his tenants and constituents. The case of John Jennings of Ballyshannon has already been noted but there were others. In February 1723, William Jackson of Coleraine, a member of a one-time rival political interest in Co. Londonderry wrote to Conolly requesting the promotion of a Mr Wilkinson within the Excise saying that it 'would be lasting obligation and a particular one

[34] Conolly's mother was possibly a member of the Coan family. Two of Conolly's uncles Terrence and Thady Coan acted as his agents at Ballyshannon in the early eighteenth century. See their accounts and correspondence with Conolly, (T.C.D., Ms 3974/1) and (I.A.A., 97/84 C/25.) See also Anthony Coan (Strabane) to Dr Coghill, 30 July 1730 (about Conolly's estates) (P.R.O.N.I., D/2094/18A).
[35] Minute book of the Revenue Commissioners, 28 Jan. 1718, 7 June 1718, 25 Sept. 1718 & 21 Mar. 1724 (T.N.A., Cust 1/14 unfoliated; Cust 1/15 unfoliated; Cust 1/17 p. 129).

done'.[36] In September of the same year George Blaine from Killybegs reminded Conolly that he had promised to find a place in the revenue for Blaine's second son Charles.[37] His elder son Thomas was already employed as a boatman at Ballyshannon. Conolly duly obliged, six months later, with Thomas Blaine being promoted to become a supernumerary gauger at Lisburn, having 'been qualified and certified' in the excise, while younger brother Charles succeeded to his place as boatman at Ballyshannon.[38] These examples show Conolly's willingness to gratify his constituents' wishes, although these appointees as witnessed in the cases of Coan and Thomas Blaine had to be trained in the same manner as other possible candidates.

Conolly was also able to use revenue patronage to reward his supporters in the House of Commons. Occasionally other MPs were permitted to nominate prospective candidates for vacancies in the revenue. Theophilus Clements for instance nominated a William Higginsbottom to be instructed in the excise. He was then appointed a supernumerary gauger in Co. Wicklow on Conolly's recommendation.[39] Conolly also provided Theophilus's younger brother Nathaniel with his first revenue position, nominating him as Clerk of the Wool Accounts in November 1720.[40] Nine years later Nathaniel Clements, already on his way to a dominant position within the Irish treasury, was given the right alongside another close Conolly ally, Marmaduke Coghill, to nominate two candidates for a series of vacancies at Ringsend caused by a particularly spectacular case of smuggling and mismanagement, which led to the dismissal of 42 officers.[41] Other Conolly associates who made successful

[36] William Jackson (Coleraine) to Conolly, 14 Feb. 1723 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/4/1-65).
[37] George Blaine (Killybegs) to Conolly, 9 Sept. 1723 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/4/1-65).
[38] Minute Book of the Revenue Commissioners, 21 Mar. 1724 (T.N.A., Cust 1/17 p. 129).
[39] Ibid, 8 Dec. 1720, 24 Jan. 1721 (T.N.A., Cust 1/15 pp 52 & 65).
[40] Ibid, 19 Nov. 1720 (T.N.A., Cust 1/15 p. 44).
[41] Ibid., 21-24 July 1729 (T.N.A., Cust 1/21 pp 198-203).

recommendations for posts in the revenue included Charles Campbell and Henry Maxwell. For instance in 1723 Maxwell and Hercules Rowley, MP for Londonderry, appeared before the Board representing the cause of John Slater, a former gauger in County Londonderry seeking that he put on the charity establishment. His case was particularly recommended because he 'had been formerly maimed defending a seizure'. Conolly duly recommended that he be put on the charity list.[42] Such nominations served to strengthen Conolly's interest as they were only made with his concurrence, indebting both the MP and their client to him.

The Revenue Commissioners also had other offices within their gift, which lay outside the countrywide network of collection officials. These included the posts based at the Custom House itself such as the Clerk of the Wool Accounts, the Clerk of the Land Permits and the Registrar of the Forfeitures, as well as a number of other clerkships and supervisory offices including the Examinator of the Excise filled by Darby Clarke since 1709. Clarke was a long time associate of Conolly's and may have owed his introduction to the revenue to Conolly who was a commissioner at the time. He acted as Conolly's representative with the board, when Conolly was absent exercising his duties as lord justice, recommending candidates for vacancies on his master's behalf. Apart from this extra-curricular service he was also a conscientious administrator. In 1727 when he applied for an increase in his salary he noted that the number of gauger walks he had to oversee had increased from 196 to 260 since his appointment eighteen years earlier.[43] John Brewer has shown that in Britain 'private connection and public duty were not necessarily incompatible and it behoved both

[42] Ibid, 11 Dec. 1723 (T.N.A., Cust 1/17 p. 102).
[43] Minute book of the Revenue Commissioners, 15 Sept. 1727 (T.N.A., Cust. 1/20 p. 47).

patron and client to ensure they were consonant.'[44] His view of the eighteenth-century bureaucracy peopled by gifted amateurs is more generous than the conclusions reached by Gerard Aylmer who argued that civil servants in eighteenth-century Britain contained 'an extraordinary patchwork of old and new, useless and efficient, corrupt and honest – mixed in together.'[45] Clarke was very much of the former type, efficient as well as loyal to his patron. Conolly rewarded this personal loyalty when he secured the patentee office of Searcher of Londonderry for Clarke in 1724 and then later when he left him £500 in his will.[46] Clarke like Bruen Worthington, Clerk of the House of Commons, combined exemplary public duty with private service to his master.

Other Custom House officials who owed their careers to Conolly included Robert Walker, Clerk of the Land Permits, and Robert Norman who acted as deputy and agent to several of the patentee officers. Walker conformed to the worst excesses of the negative image of an eighteenth-century civil servant. He was suspended in 1726 for breaking into the bedroom of the Provost of Trinity College while drunk. This attempted assault on the Provost was exacerbated by his regular dereliction of duty and his employment of an unlicensed deputy.[47] Despite this less than diligent attitude he was not dismissed, even though officers who employed deputies were normally removed from the service. He had owed his original appointment to Conolly and this may have saved him, but he was suspended and then reassigned to a more junior office. Interestingly, specific mention is made in the minute relating to these

[44] John Brewer, *The sinews of power: war, money and the English state, 1688-1783* (London, 1989), p.74.
[45] Aylmer, 'From office holding to civil service: the genesis of modern bureaucracy', p. 106.
[46] J.L.J. Hughes, *Patentee officers in Ireland 1173-1876* (Dublin, 1960), p. 27; Will of William Conolly, 21 Oct. 1729 (N.A.I., T92).
[47] Minute book of the Revenue Commissioners, 25-27 Aug. 1726 (T.N.A., Cust. 1/19 pp 52-57).

disciplinary procedures that the commissioners waited until Lord Justice Conolly could attend before making their decision on Walker's fate.

Norman started his revenue career as a landwaiter on Custom House Quay before being appointed agent to the patentee officers by Conolly in 1718.[48] He probably owed his appointment to his own and his brother's close connection with Conolly. Both were aldermen and merchants in Derry, with Robert serving as Mayor of Derry from 1715 to 1719. His elder brother Charles was MP for Derry from 1703 to 1727; he also remitted Conolly's rents and served as a burgess at Limavady from 1706. Robert Norman also later sat in the Irish parliament for Derry, and presumably out of respect to his patron named his son Conolly.[49] Norman's appointment seems to have been a straightforward political appointment, aimed at increasing Conolly's interest in Derry. The careers of Clarke, Norman and Walker give an insight into the different types of individuals that owed their career to Conolly, and the benefits that could accrue from close association with him.

It is possible that Conolly's influence extended beyond the normal remit of the Revenue Commissioners to include the appointments of other associated officers including the law officers attached to the commission. These included two of the Commissioners of Revenue Appeals, Thomas Upton and Thomas Trotter. Upton was MP for County Antrim from 1716 until 1727 when he was returned for Derry. He had replaced Robert Rochfort as Recorder of Derry in 1707, where he would have come into close contact with Conolly. A brother of prominent Presbyterian MP Clotworthy Upton who was closely linked with Conolly in parliament, it is probable that he owed

[48] William Conolly to Charles Delafaye, 14 Jan. 1718 (T.N.A., SP/63 Vol. 376 f.1).
[49] *H.I.P.*, v, pp 359-60.

his advancement to the speaker. Trotter almost certainly owed his commissionership to Conolly, having been closely associated with him since at least 1713.[50] He was both a personal and political connection of Conollys and was amongst those who benefited from Conolly's will, alongside other trusted confidants like Coghill, Clarke, Worthington and Thomas Marlay.[51] The third legal officer who possibly owed his position to Conolly's support was Henry Rose MP for Ardfert, who was appointed Counsel to the Revenue Commissioners in 1722 upon the elevation of John Parnell to a judgeship.[52] He like other known Conolly supporters was lampooned in the ballads produced following the controversial Westmeath by-election in 1723, and was listed among those 'collectors and others concerned in the revenue' who voted with Conolly in this crucial division.[53]

This list was drawn up Lord Midleton, Conolly's adversary in the dispute and rival for governmental affection and patronage in the period after 1715. This letter together with other references to 'Custom House dependants' in Brodrick's correspondence has led historians to speculate that there was a revenue party carefully cultivated by Conolly in the House of Commons similar to Walpole's Treasury party at Westminster.[54] Certainly Conolly used revenue patronage to 'unite and keep people together.'[55] According to Marmaduke Coghill, in an astute assessment of Conolly's career, he was able to oblige MPs by finding places in the revenue for their friends

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[50] Thomas Trotter to Conolly [undated but probably 1713] (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3/2A).
[51] For his close connection with Conolly see Charles Maddocks (Castletown) to Edward Hopkins, 4 Oct. 1724 (BL. Hopkins Papers Add Ms 64,929 f.5). His expertise as a commissioner of appeals led Archbishop Boulter to recommend him as a possible successor to William Harrison, when the latter died in 1736 Hugh Boulter, *Letters to several ministers of state in England*, ii, p. 131.
[52] Minute Book of the Revenue Commissioners, 5 June 1722 (T.N.A., Cust 1/16 p. 98).
[53] Lord Midleton to Thomas Brodrick, 21 Oct. 1723 (S.H.C., 1248/5 ff. 323-324). D.W. Hayton, 'Two ballads on the Co. Westmeath by election of 1723', p 21.
[54] Lord Midleton to Thomas Brodrick, 17 Dec. 1721 (S.H.C., 1248/5 ff 122-123). McNally, 'Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-27' pp 107,111, 219. Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics,* I p. 252.
[55] Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell, 13 June 1728 in Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill,* pp 53-54.

and relations. We have already seen how Conolly used his position at the Revenue Board to control the nomination of all officials in Ulster, thus consolidating his support where he already had an important electoral interest and where he enjoyed the greatest part of his natural political support. The support of other MPs such as the Derry pair Upton and Norman was augmented through the use of revenue support, while the appointments of Trotter and Rose to revenue positions, like the continued support for Theophilus Clements, only served to strengthen existing bonds of loyalty.

It would be misleading, however, to assume that all revenue employees in the House of Commons were automatically either Conolly or government supporters. Patronage could be used to reward previous service, but did not mean that the recipient would be forever dependant upon their initial patron. Future loyalty could not be guaranteed. This was especially true in the years after 1715, when the more ideological party divisions of Queen Anne's reign had broken down, to be replaced by a series of interests centred on important individuals like Conolly. Conolly's own breach with Alan Brodrick after 1715 demonstrated the potential for ambitious lieutenants to set up themselves up as generals. Of Conolly's own lieutenants, the career of George McCartney demonstrates the danger of assuming absolute loyalty without considering the details. McCartney, as shown in chapter five, sat for Conolly boroughs in the 1703 and 1713 parliaments before choosing to sit for his native Belfast in 1715. His longstanding interest there was reflected in his appointment as collector of Belfast, although when this appointment was made is not clear. He was also recommended as Examinator of the Customs in 1720, a position worth £300 per annum, more than any collectorship.[56] His previous association with Conolly coupled with his revenue

[56] James Forth to George McCartney, 6 Dec. 1720 (N.L.I., Ms 16,007 p.89).

position did not mean that he followed Conolly's line in parliament. He acted as a teller for the Brodrick-led opposition in the division over the Westmeath by-election, and was not therefore a dependant of the Custom House, although a cursory glance at his employment and electoral history might suggest otherwise.[57]

Similarly other collector MPs could not be automatically relied on as government supporters. Often they had their own independent interest, or had been appointed to the revenue long before Conolly's time at the board. These included Edward May, collector of Waterford, and John Wooton, collector of Londonderry. Henry Sandford, collector of the excise in Dublin, who had been appointed on the recommendation of Sunderland in 1715, (partly because of his connection to the Earl of Kildare) did however align himself closely with Conolly, although it would be perhaps inaccurate to refer to it as a patron-client relationship, as Sandford enjoyed his own parliamentary and political interest. His support of Conolly's interest in the House of Commons was rewarded by the promotion of his relations in the revenue. His son, Henry Sandford junior was, as seen earlier, appointed by Conolly to become Collector of Coleraine, while another relation James Sandford was also employed in the Revenue.[58] Revenue dynasties, such as the Sandfords, were not uncommon: others included the Custs of Armagh, and the Bowens of Trim and Mullingar, who were also supported by Conolly with members of the family employed to collect his estate rents in the county as well as the public revenue.[59]

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[57] Hayton, 'Two ballads on the Co. Westmeath by election of 1723', p. 14.
[58] Minute book of the Revenue Commissioners, 27 Apr. 1721, 15 Oct. 1725 (T.N.A., Cust 1/15 p.89; Cust 1/18/ p.135).
[59] L.A. Clarkson and E.M Crawford, *Ways to wealth. The Cust family of eighteenth century Armagh* (Belfast, 1985). Hugh Bowen was Collector of Trim, as well as being a tenant of part of Conolly's estates in Co. Meath, where he also collected Conolly's rents. Other members of the Bowen family employed in the revenue included Hugh Bowen junior and John Bowen who was declared not duly returned for Mullingar in the 1727 election. For correspondence of Hugh, John and William Bowen with Conolly on revenue and estate business see the Castletown Papers (I.A.A., 97/84 A/4/1-65).

It is now necessary to return to the question as to whether there was a revenue party in the House of Commons as suggested by Alan Brodrick. There were certainly a number of MPs, who held revenue offices. In a 1719 list of 72 MPs in government employment found in Conolly's papers, at least 11 were employed in the revenue service.[60] These included Conolly and Medlycott, as well as James Forth, Secretary to the Commission. Not all of these MPs could be described as dependants of either Conolly or of the Treasury, as Patrick McNally has rightly pointed out. Some like Theophilus Clements and perhaps Thomas Upton could indeed be described as dependants of Conolly, but others like Forth, Medlycott and William Maynard could not.[61] The identification of a Custom House party by Brodrick overstated the case, and should be seen the context of his earlier description of Sir Ralph Gore, Chancellor of the Exchequer, as a 'creature of Conolly's', an exaggerated comment based on the exigencies of a political battle which he was in the process of losing.[62]

This does not mean that revenue patronage was not important politically to Conolly. It provided him with a means to reward his supporters and also perhaps more importantly to demonstrate his credit with the government by making local appointments across the country, but particularly in Ulster. The supplicating letters from prospective clients show that they understood this aspect. They wrote directly to Conolly knowing that his influence was all they needed, provided of course that the candidate was suitable for appointment. As a Commissioner of the Revenue, Conolly

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[60] List of MPs in employment, 1719 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3/9A). The MPs definitely employed in the revenue service were, Conolly, Medlycott, Humphrey May, George Macartney, Thomas Upton, Theophilus Clements, James Topham, James Forth, Michael Tisdall, Edward May and William Maynard

[61] McNally, 'Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-27', pp 108-9.

[62] Lord Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 14 June 1717 (S.H.C., 1248/4 ff 35-36).

had more opportunities than other political managers or leaders to demonstrate his power and influence. This advantage over his rivals ultimately played a part in his emergence as the dominant parliamentary undertaker.[63] The commissionership alone did not bestow these privileges, as demonstrated in chapter six, but it certainly helped.

The above analysis of Conolly's role in the distribution of revenue patronage suggests that it is wrong to see this period solely in terms of increased politicisation at the board, with revenue places becoming mere pawns in an extended game of political patronage. Political decisions were made, and appointments were often made, which carried political advantages, but there was as McNally has suggested moves made to increase the efficiency of the service, and it is possible to argue that this period of relative political stability saw the emergence of a more professional bureaucracy in line with the wider financial revolution going on in Britain and Ireland in this period. This increased efficiency can be seen in the policies of the commissioners, particularly in relation to the training and appointment of officials, but also in their refusals to appoint unqualified officers and their willingness to dismiss officials, even those with strong political connections, like Sir John Eccles, for mismanagement and neglect of duty. It could also be seen in 1729, when smuggled goods were seized at the house of an MP, Redmond Barry. They were subsequently returned due to political sensitivities, much to the disgust of one of the commissioners at the:

> little petulant revilings and sullen murmuring against us for executing our duty; but when a faithful honest legal and even gentlemanly discharge of the trust reposed in us becomes the matter of a public clamour and the resentment of private person is swelled into a parliamentary accusation we do hope and expect that public justice which is due to our conduct. [64]

[63] McNally, 'Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-27' p. 111.
[64] Edward Thompson to Ralph Gore, 16 Nov. 1729 (N.L.I., Ms 16,007, p. 206).

This increased efficiency and willingness to take on the venal and corrupt, even within the House of Commons, could not have happened without the approval and involvement of Conolly.

There were also political advantages to a more professional bureaucracy. The primary function of revenue officials was to collect the taxes that paid for the regiments and pensions on the Irish Establishment, thereby marking Ireland's contribution to the fiscal military state. Failure to raise sufficient income from taxation would only cause further parliamentary problems and damage the relationship between the Irish political managers, principally Conolly, and the English Treasury. Conolly's concerns about the lack of money in circulation in Ireland, and the ensuing difficulties in paying for the Irish establishment can be seen in his correspondence with the British ministers. In the aftermath of the South Sea Bubble Conolly reported that: 'we have …nothing here but misery, no money, no trade, no faith nor confidence. All the revenue of the kingdom with difficulty pays the subsistence of the army'.[65] Treating, the revenue service, therefore, solely as a reservoir of jobs, which could be used to buy votes in the House of Commons was not a viable strategy.

Patronage needed to be distributed in a manner consistent with prudent financial management. It could still be used as a valuable means of political cement, but not indiscriminately. Conolly's real talent was to combine political appointments with appointments that increased the efficiency of the service. It is perhaps notable that the officials who caused the greatest problems to the board in this period, the afore mentioned Eccles and Enoch Stern, (who was eventually appointed collector of

[65] Conolly to Charles Delafaye, 27 Dec. 1720 (T.N.A., SP/63/379 f. 87). See also Conolly to Delafaye, 31 Jan. 1718 (T.N.A., SP/63/376 f. 5); Conolly to the Duke of Grafton, 18 Oct. 1720, 10 Dec. 1720 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3/17, 19).

Athlone following unsuccessful Treasury attempts to have him installed as collector of Cork) were nominees not of the Irish based commissioners, but of the English Ministers.[66]

The somewhat erroneous image of a highly politicised revenue service under Conolly's control can at least be partly attributed to the conduct of his successors as speaker and revenue commissioners, Henry Boyle and particularly John Ponsonby, who also combined both offices. They were perhaps less selective in their use of revenue patronage than Conolly, and presided over a progressively more venal and corrupt system, which reached its nadir in the 1760s, leading to the reform of the service under Lord Townshend. John Beresford, chief commissioner in the 1780s and 1790s, continued these reforms but despite increasing efficiency continued to use the revenue service for electoral reasons, leading to calls for the disenfranchisement of revenue officials. Revenue officers participated in elections in Conolly's time and the pages of the commissioner's minutebook around the time of the 1727 election are full of requests for leave to go and vote, but there does not seem to have been the same attempt to use revenue officials as an electoral block, as was happening in Dublin in the 1780s.[67] Conolly was neither the first political commissioner and neither was he the worst.

Conolly's patronage as speaker of the House of Commons

Conolly enjoyed little direct patronage as speaker of the House of Commons. As a parliamentary undertaker and regular appointee to the commission of lords justices he

[66] On Sterne see Conolly to Charles Delafaye, 3 Dec. 1720 (T.N.A., SP/63/379 f.85); James Forth to Enoch Sterne, 22 Apr. 1729 (N.L.I., Ms 16,007 pp 192-3); McNally, 'Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-27' p. 101.
[67] Minutebook of the Revenue Commissioners (T.N.A., Cust 1/20 pp 51-56); *H.I.P.,* ii, pp 101-02.

had great influence over the distribution of patronage because of his access to the lord lieutenant and the English ministers. These roles were inextricably linked to Conolly's tenure as speaker of the House of Commons, but the office itself did not provide a reservoir of places to gratify followers and supporters. Historians have not closely studied the Irish speakership. The best study of the office focuses on the career of John Foster, the final Irish speaker, with some discussion to the development of the office.[68] Conolly's tenure in the chair was highly significant; he served longer as speaker than any previous holder of the office. He was also, unlike either of the speakers elected during Queen Anne's reign, a government supporter: Alan Brodrick in 1703 and 1713, and John Forster in 1710 were leading opposition figures when they were elected to the chair, with Brodrick in 1713 famously defeating the court's candidate.[69] Conolly was initially a reluctant candidate; his primary concern was to regain his former post at the Revenue Board, and he was concerned that he would not be able to combine the two offices. Sunderland managed however to persuade Conolly to accept the speakership.[70] The Revenue Commission provided more opportunities for patronage, but the speakership carried more prestige. Conolly's combination of the two maximised the benefits of each.

The Speaker enjoyed jurisdiction not only over the members of the House of Commons during each session of parliament, but also over the officials of the House. These included the clerks of the commons, the serjeant at arms, various other clerks and the doorkeepers, as demonstrated by the table below.

Table 7.1 *Officials of the House of Commons and their salaries 1715.*

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[68] A.P.W. Malcomson, 'John Foster and the speakership of the Irish house of commons', in *Proc. RIA,* lxxii Section C (1972), pp 271-303. See also A.P.W. Malcomson, 'Speaker Pery and the Pery papers', in *The North Munster Antiquarian Journal,* xvi (1973-74), pp 33-60.
[69] F.G. James, *Ireland in the empire 1688-1770* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 82.
[70] See chapter 6.

Office	Name	Salary (£)
Clerk of House of Commons	Bruen Worthington	300
Clerk of House of Commons	Isaac Ambrose	150
Assistant Clerk	John Ker	150
Serjeant at Arms	Richard Povey	200
Clerk of Accounts Committee	Daniel Golborne	150
Clerk of committees	Henry Bulkeley	75
2 Doorkeepers	John Fieldhouse and William Kemsey	50
Total		**£ 1,075**

This table is based on information found in *C.J.I.,* III, p.45. Ambrose's salary was increased to £200 in 1717, when a second clerk of committees, William Bayly was also appointed, with both clerks now receiving £125 each. (*C.J.I.,* III, p. 139).

The speaker had the right of nomination to these positions.[71] During Conolly's time as speaker this right was curtailed because most of these positions were held on patents for life or for lives. For instance Richard Povey was Serjeant at Arms from 1697 to 1742, while Thomas Carter, Second Serjeant until 1723, was succeeded by his son and then by his grandson of the same name.[72] New clerks of the house were, however, appointed in 1717, on Conolly's recommendation.[73] At least one of the new clerks Bruen Worthington, had a long-standing connection with Conolly.[74] His patent as clerk was for two lives, his son Burdet was named as his successor.[75] Only a small number of offices were in the speaker's gift, but they were all quite valuable as the salaries in the table above show. These figures also exclude the fees charged for

[71] Malcomson, *John Foster*, p. 267.
[72] J.L.D Hughes,. *Patentee officers in Ireland 1173-1876* (Dublin, 1960), pp 24, 106.
[73] Col. Martin Bladen (London) to the Rt. Hon. Paul Methuen 13 Feb. 1717 (T.N.A., SP 63/375 f.15).
[74] Bruen Worthington (d.1736) was an attorney or notary, and had served Conolly in a legal capacity since at least 1709, See for example, Conveyance of 502 acres at Castletown from Thomas Dongan, Earl of Limerick to Bruen Worthington on behalf of William Conolly for £2,048l 8s.(I.A.A., Ref 97/84 E/3/22). He remained close to Conolly until the latter's death and was left £500 by Conolly in his will. (N.A.I., T92).
[75] *Liber Munerum*, I, part I, p. 94.

private bills and other parliamentary business, which could add to the profits available to the patent holder.

Malcomson has noted, in relation to John Foster, that the scope of the speaker's patronage extended beyond these offices, to include the actual parliament building. Building works and alterations were carried out under the supervision of the speaker. Foster was in a position to oversee the adding of new offices to the parliament house in what is now Foster Place, as well as overseeing the replacement of the roof of the parliament building following the collapse of the previous domed roof.[76] Conolly on the other hand oversaw the construction of a brand new parliament house in the late 1720s. The decision taken in 1728 to build a new parliament house was necessitated by the ruinous condition of the exiting parliamentary accommodation in Chichester House. It also, however, demonstrated the self-confidence of the members of the Irish parliament. This was emphasized by the revolutionary design made by Edward Lovett Pearce. The choice of Pearce as architect was significant. He was not the obvious choice: that would have been Thomas Burgh, the Surveyor General, who made his disappointment known at his usurpation by 'some young gentleman who hath ingratiated himself somewhere'.[77] That somewhere was Castletown; Pearce was a favourite of the Speaker, having previously worked on Conolly's new country house in Celbridge.[78] He was an inspired choice, producing a parliament building that was

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[76] Malcomson, *John Foster* , p. 268.

[77] Lord Midleton to Thomas Brodrick, 16 May 1728 (S.H.C., 1248/7 ff 241-42). See also Edward McParland, 'Edward Lovett Pearce and the Parliament House in Dublin', in *Burlington Magazine,* cxxxi, no 1 (1989), p. 92. McParland recites Burgh's credentials but does not record his disgruntlement as expressed by Midleton.

[78] On Pearce see, Edward McParland, *Public architecture in Ireland 1680-1760* (Dublin, 2001), pp 177-79; Idem, 'Edward Lovett Pearce and the new junta for architecture' in T.C. Barnard and Jane Clark (eds.) *Lord Burlington: Architecture, art and life* (London, 1995); Maurice Craig, 'The quest for Sir Edward Lovett Pearce', in *Irish Arts Review Yearbook,* xii (1996), T.U. Sadleir, 'Sir Edward Lovett Pearce', in *Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society,* x (1927). His exact involvement at Castletown has been the subject of much debate, see, Giles Worsley, *Classical architecture in Britain:*

unparalleled anywhere in contemporary Europe. Conolly's influence upon the eventual design can be seen in the primacy given to the commons chamber at the expense of the House of Lords, with the speaker's chair at its centre.[79] Conolly's influence was also perhaps evident in the use of native Irish materials, a practice he adhered to at Castletown. Conolly's precise involvement in the new parliament building is hard to uncover, but it is clear that he played a major role, none less than in the selection of his protégé Edward Lovett Pearce as architect. Another Conolly client and tenant, Robert Baillie, was appointed to produce tapestries for the House of Lords.[80]

Appointing the architect of the new parliament building was the most spectacular act of patronage during Conolly's speakership. It was, however, a unique opportunity for a speaker. The patronage available by virtue of occupying the chair has already been discussed, but there were other ways the speaker could reward his loyal followers. The speaker issued the writs for vacancies in the House of Commons caused by the death or removal of a MP. The timing of these writs was made at the speaker's discretion and this power could be used to benefit the court. Inside the house questions remained over the nomination of members to committees and the processes involved. Constant attendance and an aptitude for business certainly helped an MP get a committee nomination, as was demonstrated in Conolly's own case in the period before 1714. The speaker, however, presumably had some influence in the choice of

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the heroic age (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 164; Desmond Fitzgerald, 'New light on Castletown, Co. Kildare', in *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society,* viii, no 1 (1965) and Patrick Walsh, *Castletown, Co. Kildare* (Dublin, 2007), pp 4-5.

[79]McParland, *Public architecture in Ireland 1680-1760*, pp 191-99; McParland, 'Edward Lovett Pearce and the Parliament House in Dublin', p. 94.

[80] Robert Baillie was a Dublin upholsterer. His business premises were in Capel Street, while he also rented a large house from Conolly in Celbridge. See Lena Boylan, 'Celbridge in Vanessa's time' in *Journal of Kildare Archaeological Society,* XVI, (1986), pp 395-407.

committees and in the selection of chairmen of these committees. The number of Conolly supporters amongst the chairs of important committees is suggestive of the speaker's influence. The parliamentary activities of Henry Maxwell, Marmaduke Coghill (who sat on 78 committees between 1715 and 1727), or Thomas Trotter (who sat on 123 committees in the same period), confirm this impression.[81] Although the Speaker's precise influence over the nomination of committee members is uncertain, he certainly nominated the two members appointed to draw up the address at the start of each session.[82] Conolly was not always successful in having particular candidates nominated to chair committees. In 1717, he had attempted to get his 'neighbour in the country', Agmondisham Vesey, appointed chair of the Public Accounts Committee, but Vesey's former identification with the Tory interest was considered an impediment and the banker Francis Harrison, who was also acceptable to Conolly, was chosen instead.[83]

Conolly's patronage as lord justice

In March 1717 Conolly was appointed a lord justice for the first time. The office of lord justice has been described as 'the most dignified office an Irishman could hold.'[84] Lords justices, usually two or three in number, were appointed to oversee the government of Ireland in the absence of the lords lieutenant. Until 1767 it was unusual for lords lieutenants to spend more than the duration of parliamentary sessions in Dublin. Government was therefore entrusted to the lords justices for much of the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century.[85] Conolly was one of three lords justice appointed in October 1717; the others were Archbishop King and the Lord

[81] On Trotter see *H.I.P.*, vi, p. 443.
[82] Malcomson, 'John Foster and the speakership of the Irish house of commons', p. 300.
[83] Conolly to Charles Delafaye, 8 Aug. 1717 (T.N.A., SP/63/375 f. 152). Vesey, whose estate was at Lucan Co. Dublin, down-river from Conolly at Castletown, was being punished partly for the sins of his father the late Archbishop of Tuam.
[84] Malcomson, *John Foster*, p. 62.
[85] *N.H.I.*, iv, pp 61-64.

Chancellor, Alan Brodrick. They had been chosen for the offices they held as much as for their personal qualities. Since the 1690s the Lord Chancellor and either the Archbishop of Armagh or Dublin had been nominated as well as one other, usually a prominent peer, like the earl of Mount Alexander in 1701 or the commander of the army. Conolly was the first speaker to be nominated a lord justice, but his appointment heralded a new tradition whereby all subsequent speakers were included in the commission.

Conolly's appointment as a lord justice therefore signified a change in the policy for appointing lords justices. Alan Brodrick and John Forster, the previous two speakers of the House of Commons, were identified with the opposition during their terms as speaker, and would not have been considered candidates for the lord justiceship. The regular appointment of the lord chancellor, however, provided a precedent for Conolly's nomination. Conolly's appointment could also be seen as a reward for his service in the previous parliamentary session, where he had distinguished himself in managing the interest of the court. His continuance in a position of power and influence during the interval between parliamentary sessions would augment his position as speaker, and he became in Malcomson's words 'a fixed body in a constellation where lords lieutenants came and went like meteors'.[86]

Conolly's appointment as a lord justice was not however universally welcomed. Alan Brodrick questioned the ethics of Conolly acting as both a Commissioner of the Revenue and as a lord justice, while Sir John St Leger, a Baron of the Exchequer, claimed 'the quality' would be much offended by the appointment of a commoner like

[86] Malcomson, 'John Foster and the speakership of the Irish house of commons', p. 285.

Conolly.[87] Conolly, however, took up the lord justiceship and was nominated to the same office a further nine times before his death, serving longer in toto than anyone else. The lord justiceship carried more prestige than practical power. It was this expression of favour by successive lords lieutenants and their English masters that was regarded with greatest esteem by Conolly's posthumous eulogists.[88]

Conolly's continued appointment as a lord justice can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, nomination as a lord justice signified the confidence of the English ministers in Conolly. Failure to be reappointed a lord justice having served previously was particularly galling, providing a public sign of a fall from grace. Conolly never had to undergo this humiliation, unlike Archbishop King and Alan Brodrick. He was clearly apprehensive about the possibility in October 1717, when he wrote to Charles Delafaye:

> who his Grace will think fit to leave Lord Justices I cannot certainly tell but as usual I can understand I shall not have the honour to be one of the number if the greatest Ministers of State can prevent it. You know me to well, to imagine it will give me any concern (whatever it may to our friends). But if it be effected it will be apparent that his Grace can place no greater indignity upon me, having found me in that station than to leave me out and having gone into every step and measure for his Majesty's service and the ease of his Grace's administration.[89]

He was spared this indignity, but it was clear that he understood the ramifications of such an event. If he was not reappointed, his position as speaker and leader of the government interest in the House of Commons would be fatally compromised. Even at this early stage after only serving as a lord justice for a five-month period Conolly

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[87] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 21 Mar. 1717 (S.H.C. 1248/3 ff 412-13); St Leger to Chief Justice Parker, 21 Feb. 1717, (BL Add Mss 750-244).

[88] See the inscription on the monument erected by his widow in Conolly's memory. It is reproduced in translation from the original Latin in C.I. Graham, 'The Right Hon. William Conolly, speaker of the Irish house of commons', in *Journal of Kildare Archaeological Society,* III (1899), pp 113-117.

[89] Conolly to Charles Delafaye 18 Oct. 1717 (T.N.A., SP/63/375 f. 212).

had come regard the office 'as a concomitant of the chair'.[90] Conolly did not need to worry and he continued to enjoy the trust of successive lords lieutenants and English ministers.

Conolly did however remain apprehensive about his continuation as a lord justice, and was careful to record thanks for his continued favour. By 1724 he felt he was in a strong enough position to write to the Duke of Grafton, expressing his desire that Brodrick (now Midleton) should not be joined with him in government, as it would be prejudicial to the country's interest. Conolly told the lord lieutenant that he would lose credit with his supporters if they were both re-appointed as lords justices again. He went further saying that he would decline the office of lord justice if it were offered in such circumstances.[91] This turned out be an empty threat, as the English ministers were unable to find a suitable alternative to Midleton, especially since Archbishop King was already ruled out because of his increased opposition to the court.[92] Conolly's letter did signify, however, his confidence in the security of his own position. It would not be until 1725 that Midleton was finally dismissed and Conolly was left as the sole Irish representative on the lords justice's commission.

Conolly remained as a lord justice because the English ministers realised it was impossible to govern Ireland without at least one native chief governor, although after 1725 the ministers tended to deal primarily with the new archbishop of Armagh Hugh Boulter, rather than the other lords justices.[93] Conolly was regarded both negatively and positively as the representative of the Irish interest, depending on which side of

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[90] Malcomson, 'John Foster and the speakership of the Irish house of commons', p. 285.
[91] Conolly to Grafton, 10 Jan. 1724 (T.N.A., SP/63/383 f. 9).
[92] Lord Townshend to Grafton, 23 Jan. 1724 (T.N.A., SP/63/383 f. 59).
[93] D.W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685-1742*, pp 240-41.

the Irish Sea the observer was looking from. Conolly's role as a conduit for representations from Irish country gentlemen was recognised by Marmaduke Coghill, when he pointed out the necessity of having the speaker of the House of Commons included as a lord justice in 1733, when it was rumoured that the new speaker Henry Boyle would not be appointed as a lord justice:

> You know the circumstances of this country, and how necessary it is thought for the well-being thereof to have one of the country in the government, in whom there may be proper confidence placed by the country gentlemen...and without such a one they will not be pleased.[94]

In terms of the disposal of patronage, Conolly's presence was also regarded as important in securing patronage for Irishmen, especially with the apparent preference for appointing Englishmen to Irish places after 1725, although this has been somewhat exaggerated.[95]

The second reason for Conolly's regular reappointment as a lord justice was his acceptance of the parameters of the role. Here he differed from his more contrary and independent-minded colleagues, Alan Brodrick and Archbishop King. Unlike King he was keen to serve as a lord justice. In January 1718, when the archbishop had been appointed to the lord justiceship, he had complained that the lords justices' instructions were too restrictive, comparing their powers unfavourably to the powers of the lords lieutenant. He had succeeded in getting minor adjustments to these restrictive instructions, but he believed he could have obtained greater powers if his two colleagues had supported him. Neither Conolly nor Midleton seems to have supported him in this venture. King also believed that there was no reason why they should have fewer powers than the lord lieutenant considering that they knew the

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[94] Coghill to Edward Southwell, 22 Feb. 1733 in Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill,* p. 120.
[95] See Patrick McNally, '"Irish and English interests". National conflict within the Church of Ireland episcopate in the reign of George I', in *Irish Historical Studies,* 29, no 115 (1995), pp 295-314.

'interest and state of the kingdom, and were heartily attached and affected to his Majesty's service as any nobleman in England.'[96] Midleton shared some of King's reservations, especially regarding the disposal of patronage. In May 1717 he had questioned the wording of the patent appointing the lords justices, particularly the clauses relating to the disposal of patronage.[97]

Conolly was less vocal in his opposition to the restrictive powers under which the lords justices operated, writing in January 1718 that 'the lords justices are tied down by instructions from the lord lieutenant (as usual) which makes my colleagues uneasy. The truth is there is little in our power.'[98] His sanguine attitude can be viewed either as confirmation of the view propounded by Alan Brodrick, that Conolly was too obliging, and subservient to the English ministers, or alternatively that he was aware of the pitfalls of adopting a confrontational attitude.[99] His climb-down in 1724 would suggest the former.

He might also have been influenced by the practical realities of the position. It was better to be in government than to constantly railing against it from outside. Their direct powers were admittedly limited, but the lord justices could still wield substantial influence over patronage decisions and over the government of the country. Lord justices did after all run the government for the majority of the time. Between March 1717 and September 1729, Conolly acted as a lord justice for 99

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[96] King to Archbishop William Wake, 17 Jan. 1718 (B.L., Add Ms 6117 f. 56). See also King to the Bishop of Carlisle, 8 Mar. 1718 quoted in McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers*, p. 49. King's terms as a lord justice and the frustration they caused him is discussed in Philip O'Regan, *Archbishop William King of Dublin,* pp 241-43, 302.
[97] Lord Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 31 Mar. 1717 (S.H.C., 1248/4 ff 1-4).
[98] Conolly to Delafaye, 14 Jan. 1718, (T.N.A., SP 63/376 f. 1).
[99] See for example Lord Midleton to Thomas Brodrick, 7 Nov. 1717 (S.H.C., 1248/4 ff 90-94).

months, the equivalent of just over eight years in a twelve-year period.[100] It is now worth examining the role of the lords justices in disposing government patronage.

The lords justices did not enjoy the rights of nomination to any specific places in the Irish administration. They did not even nominate officials to their own secretariat. Successive secretaries to the lords justices were nominated by lords lieutenant. These included Eustace Budgell, who owed his place to the influence of his cousin Joseph Addison. Conolly despised Budgell, and hoped that upon Addison's death Budgell would fall as fast as he had risen.[101] Charles Maddocks replaced him in 1718, on the recommendation of Bolton.[102] He enjoyed a closer relationship with Conolly and was invited to Castletown by the speaker, usually an accurate measure of Conolly's esteem for an individual.[103] Thomas Tickell, who also enjoyed excellent relationships with both Conollys, in turn replaced him. Despite his close connections with two latter secretaries after their appointment, neither Conolly nor any of his fellow lords justices had had any influence over their appointment.

The lords justices, if they did not have any specific places in their gift, did expect to be consulted when vacancies in the higher levels of the Irish administration occurred, particularly in the judiciary and in the Church of Ireland. Upon the opening up of a vacancy either in the Irish church or on the Irish bench, the lord justices were quick to recommend candidates for these vacancies, sometimes even before the incumbent had actually died. Conolly, for instance, recommended Sir Ralph Gore as a proper candidate for the chancellorship of the exchequer, hours before his predecessor

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[100] *N.H.I., ix* p. 492.
[101] Conolly to Delafaye 25 Jan. 1718; 15 Apr. 1718 (T.N.A., SP/63/376 ff 3, 25).
[102] Conolly to Delafaye 1 May 1718 (T.N.A., SP/63 /376 f.27).
[103] Charles Maddocks to Edward Hopkins, 4 Oct. 1722 (B.L. Add 64,929 f. 5).

Phillip Savage expired.[104] In this case he was trying to pre-empt his colleague in government and political rival, Alan Brodrick, from nominating a successor to Gore. Conolly's actions paid off and Gore became chancellor despite Brodrick recommending a rival candidate, Michael Ward. This example shows not only Conolly's use of his position to recommend his electoral and party ally, but also the conflicts that emerged between the lord justices as they attempted to secure patronage for their own clients and supporters.

Conolly was not always as successful in securing places for his supporters. McNally has highlighted the case of George Gore, who Conolly recommended for various promotions within the Irish legal system five times only to be thwarted on each occasion. McNally has suggested that his failure was primarily because Gore did not enjoy sufficient support in London, where there was a preference for English born judges anyway.[105] Conolly's support was therefore not enough to secure an appointment unless his wishes coincided with priorities in London. This was also evident, when appointments were made which the lord justices disagreed with. In 1720, Sir Richard Levinge was appointed Chief Justice of the Common Pleas despite Conolly's opposition, which was based on Levinge's lack of parliamentary interest and dubious political credentials. Conolly claimed when signing his warrant of office that the he never did anything with a worse will. [106]

Apart from judicial appointments, Conolly also took an interest in appointments within the Irish church. In 1724 he succeeded in getting his protégé and tenant Arthur

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[104] Conolly to Delafaye, 10 July 1717 (T.N.A., SP/63/375 f. 137).
[105] McNally, 'Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-27', p. 171. For Conolly's support of Gore, see Conolly to Grafton, 25 June 1720, 5 July 1720, 29 Aug. 1720 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3/11, 12 &15A).
[106] Conolly to Grafton, 18 Oct. 1720 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3/17); McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers*, p. 134.

Price appointed Bishop of Clonfert. This was particularly notable because it came during the height of the Wood's Halfpence crisis, when Conolly together with the other lord justices had departed from the policy of English ministers on the issue of the controversial coinage. The appointment of Price, who was closely identified with Conolly, signified his continued influence.[107] In the same year Conolly and Midleton were less successful when they both recommended Archbishop King as the best candidate to succeed to the vacant Archbishopric of Armagh upon the death of Primate Lindsay. King was rejected because of his closeness to what the English ministers perceived as the Irish interest, and Englishman Hugh Boulter was appointed in his stead.

Boulter's appointment, as both archbishop and as a lord justice, in the wake of the Wood's Halfpence dispute has been regarded as we have seen as a crucial shift in English policy. It did not though, end Conolly's influence in government, and he continued to be consulted on the distribution of patronage by the newly appointed lord lieutenant, Carteret, who quickly realised he could not govern without Conolly's support, despite initial attempts to so. Conolly clashed with Boulter over episcopal appointments, especially to the sees of Cashel and Dublin, which became vacant in 1728 and 1729 when Conolly pushed the candidacy of Theophilus Bolton, who eventually succeeded as Archbishop of Cashel.[108] Such disputes, however, mask the good working relationships that developed between Boulter and Conolly, and between Conolly and lord chancellors West and Wyndham. West's portrait even

[107] Ibid. p. 110
[108] Ibid. p.111.

ended up in the gallery at Castletown, alongside Conolly's great patron the Duke of Grafton, who had first nominated him as a lord justice.[109]

In conclusion, it is arguable that Conolly's position as a lord justice, while not directly providing him with access to substantial amounts of patronage, did increase his political power and influence through the added prestige it gave him in his other roles. The lord justiceship was a form of patronage in itself, and the enjoyment of government favour that it signified increased Conolly's ability to distribute other patronage, most notably at the Revenue Board. It also, as Malcomson has argued, increased the prestige of his role as speaker and contributed to Conolly's development of that office into one of much greater significance than it had previously been. Essentially, as Marmaduke Coghill realised, the combination of the three offices of commissioner, speaker and lord justice, increased the power of each individual office.[110]

[109] John Loveday, *Diary of a tour in 1732 through part of England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland made by John Loveday of Caversham* (Edinburgh, 1890), p. 49.
[110] Coghill to Southwell, 13 June 1728 in Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill,* pp 53-4.

Chapter 8

'The chief of our friends': Conolly, Castletown and the governance of Ireland, 1715-29

In 1715 Charles Delafaye described Conolly as 'the chief of our friends', and he 'to whose interest the King is more obliged than all Ireland besides'.[1] These descriptions by a leading government official give some indication of Conolly's political status, but they also raise some interesting questions. What interest? Why was the King so obliged? Whose friends? How had Conolly come to this position? These questions have been a recurring theme throughout this thesis. Chapters one to four examined Conolly's rise, covering the period up to October 1714, when Conolly having been 'honest during the worst of times' emerged as a leading player upon the Irish stage following the Hanoverian succession. His appointment as Commissioner of the Revenue, and more importantly his unanimous nomination as speaker of the House of Commons confirmed this ascendancy. The latter promotion was made partly on the basis of Conolly's extensive parliamentary experience (as discussed in chapter 4) as well as on the basis of his extensive electoral interest in north-west Ulster (as shown in chapter 5). His appointment to the Revenue Board, where he quickly became a dominant figure through a combination of his political skills and his dedication to duty (Chapter 6), increased his access to government patronage and influence (Chapter 7). His prominent role within the Irish administration was recognised by his selection as a lord justice in 1717, and nine successive times thereafter. Conolly's continuous employment in

[1] Charles Delafaye to James Stanhope, 14 Dec. 1715, 17 Dec. 1715 (T.N.A., SP 63/373 ff 306, 336).

government office for a fifteen-year period, only ended by his death, was unique amongst his contemporaries and suggested that he had become indispensable to successive British ministers.

Conolly's dominant role at the apex of the Irish government was recognised by many contemporaries. Some like Swift and Alan Brodrick saw this negatively, regarding Conolly's success largely as a product of a sycophantic attitude towards successive lord lieutenants, while other more favourable commentators such as James Arbuckle, Marmaduke Coghill and James Sterling, saw Conolly's achievements as the result of his patriotism and 'zeal for his country'. Concepts such as patriotism need to be treated extremely carefully by historians of the eighteenth century. Patriotism as used by Conolly's contemporaries did not equate to nationalism. It was instead used to denote devotion to the common weal and to the virtue of social responsibility. In Ireland, manifestations of this type of patriotism could be seen in the vogues for economic, moral and agricultural improvement that were such a feature of the early eighteenth century.[2] This pursuit of virtue could, according to his contemporaries, be seen in Conolly's career and in the words of one admirer, 'True to his King, and to his country just, Are titles that outlive the marble bust!'[3] His promotion of his country's interests was in this formulation a greater reward than advancement to a peerage, or other marks of honour.

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[2] J.T. Leersen, 'Anglo-Irish patriotism and its European context; notes towards a reassessment', in *E.C.I.,* iii (1988), pp 7-24. See also Patrick McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers*, pp 174-185

[3] James Sterling, *A Funeral Poem on the Death of the right honourable William Conolly Esq.* (Dublin, 1729).

Conolly's promotion of what can be termed 'economic patriotism' was evident in most facets of his career. It could be seen in his stewardship of the Revenue Service, where he oversaw the evolution of a more professional service despite the pressures of politics. It could be seen in his preference for qualified Irish candidates, with local knowledge and expertise, for promotions not only in the Revenue but also in the Irish church and judiciary. It was even clearer in his promotion of Irish economic interests during a period of great economic and financial uncertainty. This could be seen in his reactions to the crises occasioned by the South Sea Bubble, the Wood's Halfpence affair and the bad harvests at each end of the 1720s. His economic patriotism was also evident, it will be argued in his support of the national loan in 1716, and more controversially, in his support of the abortive bank of Ireland project in 1721. This commitment to the Irish economy could also be seen in Conolly's construction of Castletown in 1722 built as 'an ornament to the country' and as a symbol of the confidence not just on the part of Conolly but of the Irish Protestant elite. This confidence was even more evident in the construction of the new parliament house in the late 1720s, another development inspired by Conolly.

This final chapter will concentrate on two major themes, Conolly's relationships with his contemporaries on both sides of the Irish Sea, and secondly on this theme of economic patriotism. Included in this latter section will be a discussion of the construction of Castletown and its contested meanings. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of Conolly's position within the wider British polity and the significance of his career.

Relationships

Conolly's longevity in government depended upon a number of factors. Amongst the most important was his relationship with successive British ministers and officials. Conolly secured his first entry into the Irish administration through the patronage of the Earl of Wharton in 1709, when he was appointed to both the Revenue Commission and the Irish Privy Council at the Earl's request. These appointments reflected Conolly's prominent advocacy of the Whig cause in parliament as well as his good relationship with Wharton and his chief secretary, Joseph Addison. Conolly's good relationship with Wharton was not surprising considering their shared political beliefs, especially in relation to repeal of the Test Act, and their shared zeal for partisan politics. Conolly seems to have impressed Addison with his hard work and dedication to government service.[4] Addison was keen to offer his assistance to Conolly when he returned to the Chief Secretary's office in 1715, writing: 'I am glad to find my lord lieutenant [Sunderland] has so good impressions of you which I shall always endeavour to preserve and if possible improve'.[5] He further expressed his hope that Conolly would return his favour of calling him his 'intimate friend', suggesting that Conolly had made a significant impression.

Conolly's return to government in 1714 was greatly assisted by the patronage of Lord Sunderland who, although a reluctant and absentee viceroy, was very active in the remodelling of the Irish government, ably assisted by Addison. Sunderland entrusted much of the responsibility of reshaping the Irish administration to Conolly, Alan Brodrick and William Whitshed, all of whom received promotions

[4] Addison to Lord Godolphin, 7 May 1709 (*Addison Letters,* p. 136). See Chapter 4.
[5] Joseph Addison to Conolly, 26 October 1714 (*Addison Letters,* p. 304).

to high office.[6] He was particularly active in persuading an initially reluctant Conolly to take on the speakership of the House of Commons in addition to his role as Revenue Commissioner. Conolly was particularly appreciative of Sunderland's patronage, both towards himself and the kingdom: 'this country would be ungrateful if they did not always esteem the just service of your Lordships' many friendships to them'.[7]

Despite the subservient tone of some of Conolly's letters to Sunderland, a tone which can be partially understood within the context of the traditional forms of deference employed on such occasions, he did challenge the lord lieutenant, especially on matters relating to revenue patronage. Conolly was always zealous in his defence of the Revenue Commissioners' sole right to make appointments to the service and to reject candidates who they deemed unsuitable.[8] Conolly's relationship with the lord lieutenant survived such disagreements and they continued to correspond after Sunderland's term as viceroy ended. In 1718, not long after his first appointment as lord justice, Conolly wrote to Sunderland, expressing his thanks 'for the great part he had in placing me in the station I am now in'.[9] These nominations were normally at the discretion of the current lord lieutenant, but the approbation of the British cabinet, where Sunderland was a dominant figure, was also needed. Sunderland also intervened in 1718 when Conolly sought the appointment of a new secretary to the lord justices to replace Eustace Budgell, whom Conolly detested.[10] Charles Maddocks, with whom Conolly enjoyed a more satisfactory relationship, was duly appointed. In 1719

[6] R.E. Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics,* I, pp 44-5.
[7] Conolly to Sunderland, 23 Jan. 1716 (B.L., Add Ms 61,636 ff 239-240).
[8] See chapter 6
[9] Conolly to Charles Delafaye, 14 Jan. 1718 (T.N.A., SP 63/376 f. 1).
[10] Conolly to Delafaye, 15 Apr. 1718 (T.N.A., SP 63/376 f.25).

Conolly sought and received Sunderland's assistance in a private family matter involving his prodigal nephew, Williams Conyngham.[11] Previously Sunderland had also assisted Conolly in the passage of his private act for the purchase of the Ballyshannon estate through the House of Lords.[12]

Conolly was aware of the importance of his connection with Sunderland and he was mystified when the latter seemed to be sidelined within the British cabinet, exchanging his role as Secretary of State for the Northern Department for the office of Lord of the Treasury: 'It is past my understanding that Lord Sunderland has changed to be first Lord of the Treasury unless it follows as I hope it will that he be soon Ld Treasurer'.[13] Conolly seems to have misunderstood this situation as Sunderland's new position meant he was de-facto prime minister, and had greater power and influence rather than less. Sunderland did not forget Conolly either, procuring a £2,000 subscription for him in the South Sea Scheme, although it accrued no benefit to Conolly.[14] Instead Sunderland fell from grace during the South Sea affair removing Conolly's most powerful English patron.

The fall of Sunderland did not, however, have an important effect on Conolly's fortunes for several reasons. Firstly, Conolly was entrenched in his position as a leading Irish broker once he was appointed speaker. Unlike other Irish offices, such as that of lord chancellor occupied by Brodrick since 1714, the speakership was an elective office and the holder could only be removed if they lost the confidence of the Commons, or if they were raised either to a judgeship or a

[11] Conolly to Sunderland, 24 June 1719 (B.L., Add Ms 61,636 f. 244).
[12] Conolly to Delafaye, 21 Dec. 1719 (T.N.A., SP 63/378 f. 145).
[13] Conolly to Delafaye, 25 Mar. 1718 (T.N.A., SP 63/376 f. 15).
[14] Conolly to Delafaye, 27 Dec. 1720 (T.N.A., SP/63 379 f. 87).

peerage. A place on the Irish bench was out of Conolly's reach, because of his lack of a full legal education, so he could not follow Brodrick's example in 1709. The offer of a peerage would also have been an unsatisfactory solution, should the need have arisen. Elevations to the peerage were very rare in this period, so using one in this manner would have been unlikely. Raising Conolly to a peerage would also have caused problems because of his low birth. Every time such a promotion was rumoured it caused consternation amongst the 'old gentry'.[15] His security in the speaker's chair was therefore partly enforced because of the absence of an escape mechanism. The contrast with Brodrick, who was always wary of the stability of his position as lord chancellor, is instructive.

Conolly's electoral interest, combined with his control of patronage, also greatly strengthened his following and position within government. Driving him into opposition would have removed much of the Court's supporters in the commons. His use of his borough seats to return officeholders such as Isaac Manley and Thomas Marlay ensured that their loyalty would be to Conolly as much as it was to the Court. Furthermore Conolly's electoral interest extended beyond his own borough interest to include other members of an Ulster Whig network whose links with Conolly stretched back to the 1690s. These members were also unusually active in public affairs, adding to their potency as a political connexion.[16] All of these factors combined together to form the large 'interest' referred to by Delafaye. Conolly had needed the patronage of Sunderland to establish himself in his official roles. Once there he had access to the necessary patronage to maintain his following, and he was hard to remove.

[15] St Leger to Chief Justice Parker, 21 Feb. 1717, (BL Stowe Mss 750-244), Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 29 Jan. 1717 (S.H.C., 1248/3 ff 402-403).
[16] See chapter five.

Conolly's ready access to patronage and government goodwill was enhanced by his success in building and maintaining good links with Sunderland and Addison's successors. Particularly important here were the relationships he established with the Duke of Grafton, chief governor 1715-17 and 1720–24, and Charles Delafaye who was employed in a succession of secretaryships from 1713 onwards.[17] Grafton came to Dublin in 1715 to serve alongside the Earl of Galway as a lord justice.[18] Two joint chief secretaries Delafaye and Martin Bladen served them. Conolly while enjoying good relations with both Galway and Bladen, became much closer to Grafton and Delafaye. Grafton was neither a decisive nor an inspiring politician and was regarded as a fair-weather pilot during his two stints as chief governor in Ireland. He was partly responsible for Conolly's nomination as a lord justice in 1717, an appointment that was not universally welcomed but one that reflected Conolly's parliamentary service and indispensability.[19] Delafaye on the other hand was the model eighteenth-century civil servant. He first came to Ireland, with the duke of Shrewsbury in 1713, before serving as under secretary to Addison. He like Conolly was close to Sunderland, but he was also politically adroit enough to survive all changes in government. He became Conolly's main channel of communication with the Whitehall administration throughout the 1720s, and their correspondence included personal matters as well as matters of state.

It was during the Grafton/Galway government that Conolly first emerged as the government's primary manager or 'undertaker' in the House of Commons.

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[17] For Delafaye, see J.C. Sainty, 'A Huguenot civil servant Charles Delafaye 1677-1762', in *Huguenot Society Proceedings,* xxii (1982), pp 398-413.
[18] Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics,* I p.48.
[19] For Conolly's acknowledgement of Grafton's role in securing the lord justiceship for him, see Conolly to Grafton, 10 Jan. 1724 (T.N.A., SP 63/383 f. 9).

Conolly's rise as chief undertaker in this period has been comprehensively dealt with in the work of David Hayton and others, and will not be fully treated here.[20] It largely consisted of a reciprocal relationship whereby Conolly put his following at the disposal of the government in exchange for access to patronage and a role in deciding the legislative programme for each parliamentary session. Strangely, Conolly was less prominent during the viceroyalty of the duke of Bolton, which coincided with Sunderland's rise to the zenith of his powers in London.[21] This, however, serves as a warning into reading too much into Conolly's relationship with Sunderland.

Conolly seems to have anticipated a different relationship with Bolton than that which he enjoyed with Grafton, and was pleasantly surprised when he received a warmer welcome than expected writing,

> My Lord Lieutenant I must say is very civil to me & and as I am not nor do I desire or expect to be in the first rank of his favour I cannot say I am in the last which pleases me for I love moderation, the only favour I begged of his Grace was that he would take no representation of me but from myself...[22]

Bolton did, however, tend to confer with 'the other great man', Alan Brodrick, rather than with Conolly, leaving Conolly to grow fearful that he would suffer the indignity of not being reappointed a lord justice upon Bolton's departure, although this was an unnecessary worry. Conolly did, however, play a leading role in the

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[20] D.W. Hayton, 'The beginnings of the undertaker system' in D.W. Hayton and Thomas Bartlett (eds.) *Penal era and golden age: essays in Irish history, 1690-1800* (Belfast, 1979), pp 32-54, McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers,* esp. pp 118-48. See also J.L. McCracken, 'The undertakers in Ireland and their relations with the Lord Lieutenant 1724-71' (M.A., Queens University Belfast, 1941).

[21] For the Sunderland/Stanhope ministry's Irish policies see D.W. Hayton, 'The Stanhope/Sunderland ministry and the repudiation of Irish parliamentary independence', in *English Historical Review,* cxiii (1998), pp 610-36.

[22] Conolly to Delafaye, 13 Aug. 1717 (T.N.A., SP 63/375 f. 162).

greatest legislative initiative of Bolton's viceroyalty, the attempt to repeal the Test Act in 1719.[23]

Conolly was generally regarded as one of the leading advocates of the Dissenters' cause in parliament. Bolton even referred to him as our Barrington Shute (the English MP best known for his support of the Dissenters). Despite his personal espousal of repeal, this was one issue that Conolly could not motivate all of even his closest followers to support. The failure to secure repeal legislation was a source of great personal disappointment to Conolly. One observer noted how Conolly and his wife were:

> very sore at this time, for things does not go as he would have them, for they say he expected to have the Test taken off but has been so much opposed by the more considerable Whigs that they of his party has thought fit to drop the bill.[24]

The same observer further recounted how Conolly had become the subject of envy in some quarters because of his great wealth and power, and that attempts were being made to pull him down.[25] This was probably an exaggeration, but the episode showed how even the support of the lord lieutenant combined with Conolly's was not sufficient on such an emotive issue.[26]

Bolton was replaced in 1720 by Grafton whose arrival Conolly was only too eager to welcome in the hope of continuing their previous close relationship.[27] Even before Grafton's arrival in Dublin Conolly was in regular communication with the

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[23] Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics,* pp 84-90.
[24] Jane Bulkeley to Jane Bonnell, 18 July 1719 (N.L.I., Ms 41,580/3).
[25] Bulkeley to Bonnell, 25 July 1719 (N.L.I., Ms 41,580/3).
[26] See the chapters by David Hayton and Toby Barnard in Kevin Herlihy (ed.) *The politics of Irish dissent 1650-1800.* (Dublin, 1997).
[27] Conolly to Delafaye, 11 June 1720 (T.N.A., SP 63/379 f. 25). Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics,* I, p. 113.

new viceroy, recommending appointments to vacancies in the Irish judiciary. In a particularly significant letter he told Grafton that he was 'a very unfit undertaker' whilst discussing the promotion of those he termed 'the king's friends' in order to make Grafton's administration easier. The use of the term 'undertaker' is especially interesting because it was usually employed in a derogatory fashion, while Conolly was using it to describe his own role.[28] Most of Conolly's letters dealt with suggestions for promotion and he seems to have taken on the position of main advisor to Grafton. His advice particularly relating to promotions within the judiciary was not taken, although Grafton supported his suggestions in London. In particular, the appointment of Sir Richard Levinge as Chief Justice of the Common Pleas was disagreeable to Conolly. This suggests that while Conolly held a strong influence over Grafton, the latter was not always able to secure support at Whitehall.

Conolly's closeness to Grafton saw a reversal of his previous fortunes. During Bolton's time in government, Brodrick had enjoyed a more dominant position; now his star was falling while Conolly's rose. This was particularly evident during the attempts to establish a Bank of Ireland along the lines of the Bank of England in 1721. Conolly was much more enthusiastic in his support for the bank proposal and obtained Grafton's support for his position even after the Lords had rejected the proposal. The confirmation of this position came when Grafton chose to spend Christmas 1721 at Castletown in the company of Conolly. This mark of favour publicly confirmed the speaker's enjoyment of the lord lieutenant's support and

[28] Conolly to Grafton, 29 Aug. 1720 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3/15A), D.W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 117.

aroused the suspicion of Brodrick, who regarded Grafton's sojourn in the country as more than just a time for 'fox hunting and taking the air'.[29]

As Brodrick's relationship with Grafton and by extension with Conolly worsened, Conolly continued to gain the support of the duke. In spring 1724 Grafton retired to Castletown for a month at the end of the parliamentary session. He was in residence for up to a month, arriving sometime before the 10th of March and not leaving till after the 7th of April. While there he continued to conduct official government business, and Bishop Henry Downes reported that all official mail was being directed to Castletown.[30] In a telling phrase he made reference to 'the duke and his landlord', providing an excellent analogy for the relationship between Conolly and the lord lieutenant. This visit came at the height of the Wood's Halfpence controversy, and showed that Conolly still enjoyed the trust of the ministry. During this visit Conolly secured the bishopric of Clonfert for his client and tenant, Arthur Price, vicar of Celbridge. McNally considering the highly strained relationship between the English ministry and their Irish supporters at this time has seen this as a 'highly impressive' achievement.[31] Viewed in the context of Grafton's visit to Castletown, it is easier to speculate how Conolly might have achieved the coup.

While Grafton was at Castletown he received word that he was to be replaced as lord lieutenant by Lord Carteret. Conolly was once again left as a lord justice upon Grafton's departure, although as we have seen he had failed to have Brodrick

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[29] Lord Midleton to Thomas Brodrick, 16 Dec. 1721 (S.H.C., 1248/5 ff 121-24).
[30] Bishop Henry Downes to Bishop Nicolson, 10 March 1724, 7 April 1724 in John Nichols (ed.), *Letters on various subjects to and from William Nicolson D.D.* II, pp 564, 569.
[31] McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers,* p. 108. He, however, does not take into account Grafton's presence at Castletown during this time.

blocked from this honour.[32] It would, however, be Brodrick's last term as lord justice as he was replaced as chancellor in 1725. The third lord justice commissioned in 1724 was Hugh Boulter, the new Archbishop of Armagh, who was quickly to become a formidable presence in the Irish executive. Carteret's appointment, coupled with Brodrick's dismissal and replacement by the Englishman Richard West, constituted a new departure in the government of Ireland: the Irish administration would be in the future entrusted primarily to Englishmen to prevent a recurrence of the Wood's halfpence debacle. Conolly remained in office but would henceforth be the only native at the apex of the Irish government.[33] This new situation presented a fresh challenge for Conolly. He had emerged triumphant over Brodrick following their long struggle for supremacy in Dublin. He would, however, be potentially isolated in the new regime as the only Irish representative.

Conolly's close relationship with Grafton, exemplified by the latter's two known trips to Castletown at times of political crisis, was initially at least not repeated with Grafton's successor Lord Carteret. Carteret was a far more able politician than Grafton, and was indeed sent to Dublin as a form of exile. Grafton on the other hand was more typical of eighteenth-century viceroys with his impressive title and lineage and second-rate political skills. Grafton was therefore obliged to govern Ireland through the leading Irish politicians or undertakers. Carteret, however, intended to govern without undertakers, despite asking Charles Delafaye, the speaker's closest confidante in the British government, to 'cultivate Conolly'.[34]

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[32] Conolly to Grafton, 10 Jan. 1724 (T.N.A., SP 63/383 f. 9).
[33] Hayton, 'The beginnings of the undertaker system' , p. 33. McNally disputes the scale of the changes in the management of Irish affairs, McNally, *Parties, patriots and undertakers,* p. 168.
[34] Carteret to Charles Delafaye, 10 Sept. 1724 (T.N.A., SP 63/384 f. 67).

The cooler relationship between Conolly and the new lord lieutenant was commented upon. In January 1725 one observer noted that 'Mr Conolly is not as great a favourite at the Castle as in the Duke of Grafton's time'.[35] By May of that year Carteret had still not visited Castletown, something that was also commented upon.[36] Three months later, one of his aides (a Mr Butler) went to view the 'fine house now building' and fell from the scaffolding to his death.[37] The fact that Carteret's absence from Castletown was remarked upon gives some indication both of Conolly's contrasting relationship with him and his predecessor, as well as the significance that visits to Castletown were given by contemporary observers. Carteret and Conolly only came to a rapprochement during the 1725-6 parliamentary session when Carteret realised that he needed Conolly's full support to manage the House of Commons.

This led to a mutually beneficial situation. Carteret was weakened because of the hostility of Walpole and the Duke of Newcastle towards him, while Boulter had become the main channel of communication between Dublin and London. Boulter's influential role in the disposal of patronage both in the church and in the judiciary had come at the expense of Conolly and Carteret. Together they could build up a bulwark of support in opposition to the primate. In 1727 Carteret spent Christmas at Castletown further signalling his alliance with the speaker.[38] This alliance had been cemented following Conolly's re-election as speaker in 1727

[35] Owen Gallagher to Oliver St George, 7 Jan. 1725 (T.N.A., St George Correspondence, C110/46/313).
[36] Owen Gallagher to Oliver St George, 22 May 1725 (T.N.A., C110/46/367); Hayton, *Ruling Ireland*, p. 247.
[37] *Dublin Journal* 25 Aug. 1725. I am indebted to Mr John Montague for this reference.
[38] Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell, 30 Dec. 1727 in D.W. Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill*, p. 42.

after the general election caused by the accession of the new king. This election was unanimous despite rumours that first St John Brodrick and then Henry Boyle were going to challenge for the chair.

Conolly's role during the Carteret viceroyalty increasingly came to be seen by contemporaries as the defender of Irish interests against the encroachment of Englishmen sponsored by Boulter. Conolly had always espoused a preference for qualified Irishmen both for revenue positions and other positions, especially in the judiciary, and this if anything increased as the years went by. This role as defender of the 'national' interest probably increased Conolly's popularity and was certainly lauded by admiring contemporaries. His influence did, however, diminish during the last year of his life as he became increasingly troubled by ill health, which led him to spend more time at Castletown away from the centre of power. His influence was still significant as became obvious upon his death, when his former allies tried to fill the vacuum he left behind.

Conolly's good relationship with Carteret combined with his ability to maintain a working relationship with Boulter despite their differences over patronage (particularly relating to the appointment of a whole host (or bench) of bishops in 1728-29) ensured that Conolly remained an influential figure after 1725, despite the more hands-on approach developed in the aftermath of the Wood's Halfpence crisis. What remains unknown is, however, the nature of Conolly's relationship with the architect of this new governmental strategy, Robert Walpole. Walpole took little interest in Ireland after 1725, having expressed his hope that now that he

got Ireland quiet it would stay so.[39] This would explain his limited contact with Conolly, only corresponding with him on revenue matters, although Katherine Conolly did record her husband's thanks for 'Mr Walpole's kind and obliging letter' during a period of illness in April 1729.[40] Walpole and Conolly, although in many ways kindred spirits, had very little interaction, reflecting the prime minister's insular attitude.

The above section has examined Conolly's relationship with successive British ministers and has shown that he was adept at developing working relationships with all successive lord lieutenants, but also that these relationships were not always of the client/patron variety. While Wharton and Sunderland were definitely cast in the patron mould, Conolly's interactions with Bolton, Grafton and Carter were less clear-cut. In particular his role during Grafton's viceroyalty was perhaps his period of greatest dominance, exemplified by his role as Grafton's host at Castletown during two periods of political crisis. His relationship with Carteret is perhaps best viewed as a partnership, especially from 1726 when the lord lieutenant realised he couldn't govern Ireland without Conolly. He was still over ten years later 'the chief of our friends'.[41]

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[39] William Coxe (ed.), *Memoirs of the life and administration of Sir Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford*, (3 vols, London, 1798), I, p. 236.
[40] Katherine Conolly to Delafaye, 22 Apr. 1729 (T.N.A., SP 63/391 f. 46).
[41] Delafaye to James Stanhope, 14 Dec. 1715 (T.N.A., SP 63/373 f. 306).

Conolly and the Irish Economy

Conolly's central role in successive governments, combined with his support of what contemporaries called the Irish interest, demonstrated his championing of the public interest. This zeal and pursuit of virtue is examined in greater detail in the following section, where Conolly's promotion of Irish economic interests is situated within the context of the economic debates of early Georgian Ireland. Conolly was celebrated during his own lifetime for his commitment to the Irish economy. His knowledge of and expertise on financial matters was recognised during Queen Anne's reign when he served as Chairman of the Public Accounts, while his successful speculation in forfeited lands in the 1690s earned him a grudging admiration. His promotion of the Irish economy and the prosperity of the kingdom became more evident during his period in government after 1714.

In 1716 he demonstrated his personal confidence in the scheme to raise a £50,000 loan to pay off the national debt when he subscribed £5,000 of his own fortune, a sum which equated to his annual income at the time.[42] This investment by the wealthiest landowner in the kingdom helped encourage other investors in this novel experiment in Irish public finance. This would not be the only time he would use his private fortune to boost the Irish economy. In October 1720 when the ripple effects of the South Sea Bubble caused a run on the Dublin banks Conolly 'wisely and stoutly (as his manner is),' interposed with his private

[42] *C.J.I.,* iii part ii, pp cxiii-cxiv. On the national debt see C.I. McGrath, '"The public wealth is the sinew, the life, of every public measure:" The maintenance of a national debt in Ireland, 1715-45' in Daniel Carey and Christopher Finlay (eds.) *Money, finance and nationality in Ireland, Scotland and the American colonies: essays and perspectives on eighteenth century history*, Forthcoming) Conolly's income was estimated at £5,500 in 1713. See chapter one.

credit.[43] This intervention showed both the perceived and real strength of Conolly's fortune at this juncture. The scale of the existing crisis caused Conolly to express his fears about the decline of Irish trade, which he expressed in a letter to Grafton: 'We have no manner of trade and the kingdom is quite drained of money…Our revenue has fallen of late greatly, and where all this will end I cannot tell'.[44] Conolly himself did not lose personally by the South Sea Bubble. Unlike some of his wife's relations he does not seem to have invested in the scheme, although Sunderland, as noted earlier, did present him with a subscription.[45] His concerns were motivated instead by a concern for the national economy.

In the long run the effects of the Bubble on investor confidence contributed to the failure of the Irish national bank project along the lines of the Bank of England in 1721. Conolly was a supporter of the project. Two rival proposals for a national bank had been put forward in 1720 at the height of the speculative mania caused by the bubble.[46] The first petition was supported by amongst others the Earl of Abercorn, Viscount Boyne (the former Gustavus Hamilton), Sir Ralph Gore, Thomas Marlay, Henry Sandford, and Oliver St George, all of whom were known associates of Conolly. Amongst the other promoters were St John Brodrick, Francis Bernard and Michael Ward, who were all allies of Lord Chancellor Brodrick.[47] The second's leading supporter was Lord Forbes. The two petitions were referred to Conolly and Brodrick as lords justices to report on their merits.

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[43] Bishop William Nicolson to Archbishop William Wake, 21 Oct. 1721 (B.L., Nicholson-Wake Correspondence, Add Ms 6,116 f. 114).
[44] Conolly to Grafton, 18 October 1720 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3/17).
[45] Amongst the Irish subscribers was Jane Bonnell, Conolly's sister in law. See Thomas Pearson to Jane Bonnell, 12 Mar. 1720 (N.L.I., Ms 41,580/24); Jane Bulkeley to Bonnell, 4 Apr. 1721 (N.L.I., Ms 41,580/4).
[46] Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics,* I, p. 120.
[47] Michael Ryder, 'The Bank of Ireland 1721: land, credit, and dependency', in *Historical Journal,* xxv (1982), pp 559-60; Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics,* I, p.121-22.

Conolly saw benefits arising from each proposal: telling Grafton, that 'both were full of parliament men and men of fortune'.[48] Brodrick, however, favoured the first proposal, citing a feature in the second (to pay off the national debt) as dangerous for the future of parliament. He was, however, reluctant to support either scheme despite his son's enthusiastic championing of the idea.

In July 1721 a charter was granted to the Earl of Abercorn and his associates. Subscriptions were to be lodged by the following November. The nominal capital was set at £500,000 but individual subscribers were not permitted to subscribe more than £8,000.[49] The grant of a charter was the first step towards the establishment of the bank, but it still needed approval by parliament. Subscriptions were, however, collected while the matter was being considered by parliament, suggesting that the promoters were confident that such approval would be forthcoming. Interestingly there was a noticeable regional dimension to the putative subscribers, with a large proportion coming from Conolly's Ulster hinterland.

Conolly was not a subscriber to the bank, but a number of his associates and political allies were found amongst the subscribers. These included Robert and Theophilus Clements, Francis Burton, Thomas Medlycott, Thomas Marlay, Henry Maxwell and Isaac Manley, as well as Conolly's agent Robert McCausland.[50] The inclusion of so many of the speaker's friends, or as Brodrick termed them 'creatures', amongst the subscribers suggests that he approved of the project.

[48] Conolly to Grafton, 9 Jan. 1720 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3/21).
[49] F.G. Hall, *The bank of Ireland, 1783-1946* (Dublin, 1949), p. 18.
[50] Hall, *The bank of Ireland, 1783-1946*, pp 23-4.

Conolly did, however, express concerns about the ability of the subscribers to raise the necessary capital because of the depressed state of the economy.[51]

Conolly's support could also be seen in the deliberations over the charter in parliament. The proposed charter was included in the lord lieutenant's speech at the commencement of the parliamentary session in September 1721. The Commons enthusiastically welcomed the proposals and a committee was established to draw up heads of a bill. Their report was brought before the house on 14 October 1721, and they recommended that they be granted two further months to consider the proposal. The bank's supporters opposed this, but they were defeated by 98 votes to 91 in a tight contest.[52] It was not until December that the issue was raised again in the House of Commons. In the meantime, the Irish House of Lords voted against the bank, while a vociferous pamphlet debate continued outside parliament.[53]

The Lords' rejection of the bill created a dilemma for the Commons. Brodrick had championed the Lords' decision, and claimed that Conolly went to the Castle and told Grafton that the Commons would still vote in favour of the bill regardless. The Lord Chancellor regarded this as empty rhetoric and wrote that:

> I very well knew that the Speaker's creatures could no more carry any question in favour of the Bank or in opposition to the Lords resolution then he could carry the house on his shoulders; that the majority of the Commons were clearly now against any Bank and that such an attempt would only show their weakness.

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[51] Conolly to Grafton, 8 July 1721 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/3/30).
[52] *C.J.I.,* III, pp 267-8. Lord Midleton to Thomas Brodrick, 14 Oct. 1721 (S.H.C., 1248/5 f.97). Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics,* I, p. 129.
[53] For this debate see Sean Moore, 'Satiric norms, Swift's financial satires and the Bank of Ireland controversy of 1720-1', in *E.C.I.,* xvii (2002), pp 26-56, and Ryder, 'The Bank of Ireland 1721: land, credit, and dependency', pp 557-82.

This turned out to be an accurate assessment of the situation despite Conolly's efforts. These efforts included the dispatching of Henry Maxwell and William Gore, the chaplain of the House of Commons, to a tavern opposite the Custom House where a number of MPs were gathered to try and persuade them to support the bank.[54] Such machinations were conducted from Conolly's house on Capel Street which was the centre of his political operations. They were, however, unsuccessful and the Commons voted to reject the bank's charter on 9 December.

Despite this, Conolly did not lose credit with the government. Instead he seems to have strengthened his bonds with Grafton, who as we saw earlier spent Christmas at Castletown. The rejection of the bank bill was not seen as Conolly's fault. Instead it was the result of a number of factors, including what Michael Ryder has described as the perception that a national bank would be 'corrosive of the political society and values of the country gentry'.[55] The extra parliamentary pressure of pamphleteers like Swift contributed to this shift in opinion which was already gaining currency following the collapse of the South Sea Scheme. The dispute over the bank did, however, contribute to a further corroding of the relationship between Conolly and Brodrick.

Conolly's support for the bank project was unsurprising. His interest in the Irish economy had been demonstrated through his support for the national loan in 1716, and his intervention to help stem the ripple effects of the South Sea Bubble in 1720. In that year he had written in doom-laden letters, of the effects of the lack of specie in Ireland and the dangerous consequences for the revenue. His position as

[54] Lord Midleton to Thomas Brodrick, 9 Nov. 1721 (S.H.C., 1248/5 129-30).
[55] Ryder, 'The Bank of Ireland 1721: land, credit, and dependency', p. 559.

a Revenue Commissioner gave him a particularly good insight into the deteriorating balance of trade and the negative effects it was having on Irish society. The proposed bank would have helped alleviate some of these problems by increasing the amount of paper money in circulation. The speed by which subscribers for the nominal capital of £500,000 were found would suggest that others within the political/financial establishment shared this view. The problem was that the majority of the subscribers, who included a number of merchants, were neither parliament men nor were they representative of the views of the country gentlemen who predominated in parliament. The latter's views were better articulated by Brodrick and his supporters. Conolly's support for the bank should be seen as evidence that he subscribed not to the prevailing culture of complaint that typified so much of economic writing and action in the 1720s, but to a more constructive type of economic patriotism.

This economic patriotism can be seen in other facets of Conolly's career in the 1720s. His stewardship of the revenue service coincided with a period of increased professionalisation. His dedication to duty and his leadership role at the Custom House have been demonstrated in chapter six, while his pursuit of a more professional service through limiting patronage to appropriately qualified candidates, not just political lackeys, has been examined in detail in chapter seven. This development of a more professional bureaucracy in tandem with increased politicisation should be seen as Irish evidence of the broader financial revolution then taking place in the British Isles. The emergence of a better-managed revenue service was recognised by contemporaries including Thomas Prior and Arthur Dobbs, both of whom used statistics compiled at the Custom House to bolster their

arguments.[56] It should be stressed however that there is no evidence that either Dobbs or Prior had any personal connection with Conolly. Walpole, a relation through marriage, was Dobbs' great patron, while Prior's only contact with Conolly came through his management of George Berkeley's affairs, including the latter's unexpected inheritance from Esther Van Homrigh.[57] Conolly's role at the Revenue Board was also recognised by James Sterling, who linked his role as commissioner with improvements in the balance of trade:

> The important Board of Commerce claimed your care
> While fixed you sat, mourning our wealth decayed,
> To raise lost credit and advance our trade;
> Resolved luxurious imports to restrain
> And by our manufactures rate our gain.[58]

Sterling thus linked Conolly's term as Revenue Commissioner with the improvement of Irish prosperity. John Browne drew out the same connection when he dedicated his *Essay on trade in general and on that of Ireland in particular* (1728) to Conolly.[59]

Conolly's response to the wave of emigration that hit Ulster, following the severe famines of the late 1720s, can be seen in the same terms. The Conolly estates in Counties Donegal and Londonderry were particularly affected by this crisis.[60]

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[56] Prior, *List of absentees*; Arthur Dobbs, *An essay on the trade and improvement of Ireland* (Dublin, 1729), p. 4

[57] Desmond Clarke, *Arthur Dobbs Esquire 1689-1763* (London, 1958), p. 20; George Berkeley to Thomas Prior, 20 May 1727 in *The works of George Berkeley,* viii, p. 180.

[58] James Sterling, *A Funeral Poem on the Death of the Right Honourable William Conolly Esq* (Dublin, 1729). Sterling (1701-1763) was a clergyman, poet and playwright. He had dedicated his 1722 play *The Rival Generals* to Conolly in recognition of a favour conferred on Sterling's father, a captain in the army, by Conolly. See his entry in the *O.D.N.B.* Part of his funeral ode was printed in a bowdlerised version in C.I. Graham, 'The Right Hon. William Conolly, speaker of the Irish house of commons', pp 113-117.

[59] John Browne, *Essay on trade in general and on that of Ireland in particular,* (Dublin, 1728), p. 7.

[60] R.K. MacMaster, 'Emigrants to New England from the Conolly estates, 1718', in *Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies,* i, no 1 (2000),pp 18-23; Patrick Walsh, 'The differing motivations for preventing transatlantic emigration: A case study from west Ulster 1718-1729' in Shane Murphy, et

Conolly's response is particularly interesting because of his dual local and national perspective, as both landowner and lord justice. His agent Robert McCausland kept him informed of the situation on the ground, even pressing for Conolly to introduce legislation to prevent emigration. Such legislation was never introduced, partly because the crisis passed quite quickly, but also because it would have been impractical. Conolly did, however, encourage more direct forms of assistance and he took a lead in promoting charitable and philanthropic efforts across the province, but especially in Derry.[61] Together with Archbishop Boulter, he established a relief fund to purchase corn for the distressed farmers, with both lord justices each personally contributing £500. This charitable activity was praised by Sterling who wrote:

> Who shall bid famine cease and plenty smile,
> When meagre want dispeoples half our Isle?

This philanthropic activity can either be seen as another form of patriotism, or it can be seen in more sectional terms, when the composition of the emigrants is taken into account: most were substantial Protestant farmers. It is perhaps fairest to say that Conolly's actions like those of the emigrants were motivated by both economic and confessional considerations.

Conolly's architectural endeavours both through his involvement in the new parliament house in College Green, and more importantly in the construction of his great house at Castletown, should also be seen as part of his interest in promoting the Irish economy. In 1722 when Conolly began building at Castletown, George Berkeley wrote to Lord Perceval describing his plans:

> Your Lordship knows this barren bleak island to well to expect any news from it worth your notice. The most remarkable thing now going on is a house of Mr Conolly's at Castletown, it is 142 feet in front and above 60

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al. (eds.) *Beyond the anchoring grounds: More crosscurrents in Irish and Scottish Studies* (Belfast, 2005), pp 324-30.

[61] News from Dublin dated 26 January 1729 in Cathaldus Giblin, 'Catalogue of material of Irish interest in the collection Nuziatura di Fiandra Vatican archives part 5 vols 123-32', in *Collecteana Hibernica,* ix (1966), pp 11-12. See James Kelly, 'Harvests and hardship: famine and scarcity in Ireland in the late 1720s', in *Studia Hibernica,* xxvi (1992), pp 65-106.

> in the clear, the height will be about 70. It is to be of fine wrought stone, harder and better coloured than the Portland, with outhouses joining to it by colonnades, etc. The plan is chiefly of Mr Conolly's invention, however, in some points they have been pleased to consult me. I hope it will be an ornament to the country.[62]

This much quoted comment can be read in several different ways. It can be seen as a commentary on the style of the house, upon which Berkeley after his particularly long grand tour of Italy was especially well qualified to judge. This reading can probably be dismissed when Berkeley's later description of the house, while it was under construction, is taken into account:

> I shall then give you the best account I can of Mr Conolly's house; in the meantime you will be surprised to hear that the building is begun and the cellar floor arched before they have agreed on any plan for the façade.[63]

This description suggests that there was still a certain amount of indecision regarding the final design, and that the purist in Berkeley was less than impressed. Lady Anne Conolly, upon her arrival at Castletown in 1733 echoed this view. She was distinctly unimpressed by its plain unadorned façade, and compared Castletown unfavourably with the other Conolly houses at Leixlip and Rathfarnham.[64]

Alternatively Berkeley's description can be read as a commentary on the image that Conolly was trying to portray. This image is itself contested. It can be seen as part of Conolly's attempts either to project what Toby Barnard has termed 'the grand figure', with Castletown's enormous size reflecting Conolly's great fortune

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[62] George Berkeley to John Perceval, 29 July 1722 in A.A. Luce & T.E. Jessop, *The works of George Berkeley,* (9 Vols, Edinburgh, 1948-57), viii, p. 123.
[63] Berkeley to Perceval, 7 Sept. 1722 in *The works of George Berkeley,* viii, pp 124-25.
[64] Anne Conolly to Lord Wentworth, 3 November 1733 (B.L., Wentworth Papers, Add Ms 22,228 f. 90).

and power.[65] This is perhaps too simple an explanation, and instead it might be better to look at another possible reading, which sees Castletown as the physical embodiment of the type of economic patriotism that was shared by both Conolly and Berkeley.

Castletown would in this reading be a symbol, not just of Conolly's fortune and social position but also of a new confidence in the Irish economy. It would truly be an 'ornament' in a 'bleak barren land'. The choice of building materials further reflected Conolly's commitment to the domestic economy and added to the symbolic value of Castletown. It was to be built of native Irish materials. The influence of Berkeley has been suggested as important in this regard. Certainly John Perceval, ironically an absentee landowner resident in London, advised Berkeley to ensure that Castletown would be 'the epitome of the Kingdom, and all the natural rarities she affords should have a place there'.[66] Conolly took this advice on board ensuring that though it was an Italian palazzo in the Irish countryside, it was one built of native manufactures. The front was built with Edenderry limestone. The same quarries had been used in the construction of Conyngham Hall/Slane Castle, the building of which had been overseen by Conolly over ten years earlier.[67] Inside Irish marbles and timbers were used throughout. Irish craftsmen it would seem were also employed to carry out the construction work.

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[65] See especially, T.C. Barnard, *Making the grand figure: Lives and possessions in Ireland 1641-1770* (New Haven, London, 2004), pp 70-78.

[66] Perceval to Berkeley, 5 August 1722 quoted in Desmond Fitzgerald, 'New light on Castletown, Co. Kildare', in *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society,* viii, no 1 (1965), p. 9.

[67] For Conolly's management of the Conyngham estates and the construction of Conyngham Hall see the correspondence and accounts relating to the Slane estate in the Castletown Papers (I.A.A., 97/84 A/6).

The use of native materials was undoubtedly important, and it is perhaps significant that Lovett Pearce insisted on the use of Irish stone and marble, when he was building the new parliament house, again under Conolly's patronage in 1728.[68] His choice of material reflected the confidence of this expert craftsman in the materials but also Conolly's patriotic credentials. This use of domestic produce also drew inspiration from one of the constant tropes of the voluminous economic literature produced in the 1720s, 'a veritable golden age' for such writings: the promotion of Irish goods, most famously expressed in Swift's *Proposal on the universal use of native manufacture,* published in 1720.[69] Conolly's advocacy of native manufactures was given its most famous expression at his funeral, when over 700 linen scarves were distributed to mourners to promote the Irish linen industry.[70] This was not the first instance of this practice, but it was a measure of Conolly's contemporary and later fame that his funeral is generally regarded as initiating this custom.

The use of Irish building materials, furnishings and craftsmen was not the only aspect of the construction of Castletown which would have found favour with Irish economic writers of the period. The major theme of much of the economic literature of the period was the problems of absenteeism amongst Irish landowners. Conolly's decision to make his career solely in Ireland, unlike his great rival Midleton and so many others, was a subject of particular praise, even from

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[68] 'Edward Lovett Pearce's memorandum of March 1728 concerning the designs for the Parliament House, Dublin' in Edward McParland, 'Edward Lovett Pearce and the Parliament House in Dublin', in *Burlington Magazine,* cxxxi, no 1 (1989), p. 99.

[69] See Patrick Kelly, 'The politics of political economy in mid-eighteenth century Ireland.' in S.J. Connolly (ed.), *Political thought in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000).

[70] Thomas Pearson to Jane Bonnell, 30 Oct. 1729 (N.L.I., Ms 41,580/24); Francis Burton to Bonnell, 9 Nov. 1729 (N.L.I., Ms 41,579/9). Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell, 8 Nov. 1729 in Hayton (ed.) *Letters of Marmaduke Coghill,* p. 77.

Conolly's enemies. Swift in an otherwise savage posthumous attack on Conolly claimed that that the only good thing he ever did was remain in Ireland.[71] His decision to invest his fortune in Ireland, was however, heralded in more effusive terms by other commentators including James Arbuckle, John Browne and Thomas Prior, who singled him out, alongside the earl of Kildare, for special praise in his seminal *List of the Absentees.*[72] Conolly's own views on absenteeism and the proper conduct of a landowner can be seen in a letter written to his sister-in-law, Jane Bonnell, about the recalcitrant ways of their errant nephew, Williams Conyngham:

> I am confident in the whole Barony where it says there is not …in money the tenants generally are starving for want of bread the most of their cattle dead and not a penny for those they have left, God help us for we are in a miserable condition, there is upward of a years rent due on that estate … I wish you would make our nephew sensible of all this and that it near more just and honourable in him to come with his lady straight over and settle his affairs than to spend his youth and time there…[73]

Conolly's concern that his nephew return to take care of his patrimony echoed his own philosophy of estate management and economic husbandry as well as reflecting the concerns of contemporary economic theorists, who diagnosed absenteeism as the most serious problem facing the Irish economy at this time.[74] Economic matters were undoubtedly important to Conolly and while it might be dangerous to view all of his actions through this lens it does certainly provide an important insight into discerning his primary motivations in both his personal and

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[71] Jonathan Swift to John Gay and the Duchess of Queensberry, 28 Aug. 1731 in David Woolley (ed.) *The correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D.D.* (Frankfurt, 2003), iii, pp 427-28.
[72] Thomas Prior, *A list of the absentees of Ireland...* (Dublin, 1729), p. 35.
[73] Conolly to Jane Bonnell, 17 June 1721 (I.A.A., 97/84 A/8).
[74] For another contemporary assessment of the problems caused by absenteeism see James Arbuckle *The Tribune* (Dublin, 1729) No. 4. I am indebted to Mr Richard Holmes who has confirmed Arbuckle's authorship of *The Tribune*, and who has shared his knowledge of this important periodical with me. On the real effects of Absenteeism as distinct from the imaginings of contemporaries, see A.P.W. Malcomson, 'Absenteeism in eighteenth century Ireland', in *Irish Economic and Social History,* I (1974), pp 15-35.

political life. Economic patriotism was however not the only motivation behind the building of Castletown, and the next section analyses its construction further.

Castletown

Castletown has perhaps been the most written-about house in Irish architectural history, with much ink being spilt on arguing over its significance, the identity of its architect, the role of successive ladies of the house in the development of Irish material culture, its landscape and the romantic and political escapades of its inhabitants.[75] But despite all of this work, little attempt has been made to answer the most obvious questions one could ask about it. Who built it? When was it built? Why was it built? What does it symbolise? What was its intended purpose? Or put more directly, why did William Conolly, a childless sixty-year old politician suddenly decide to invest so much of his capital in the construction of such a large house sometime between 1719 and 1722? Such a decision was clearly not taken lightly.

Conolly had, as discussed in chapter one, purchased the Castletown estate in 1709 from Thomas Dongan, Earl of Limerick. The timing of the purchase was perhaps significant, coming as it did in the same year that Conolly was first appointed a Commissioner of the Revenue and Privy Councillor. It provided him with a prestige estate in the vicinity of Dublin, and replaced his Co. Meath property at Rodanstown as Conolly's favoured country retreat. Just as Conolly used Rodanstown as a gathering place for political allies, including Henry Conyngham

[75] See for example, T.C. Barnard, 'A tale of three sisters: Katherine Conolly of Castletown'; Fitzgerald, 'New light on Castletown, Co. Kildare', , Finola O'Kane, *Landscape design in eighteenth century Ireland: mixing foreign trees with the natives* (Cork, 2004) esp. pp 47-88; Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox 1740-1832* (London, 1994); Giles Worsley, 'Castletown, Co. Kildare', in *Country Life,* (1994), pp 52-7.

and Alan Brodrick, he used Castletown as a venue for political entertaining as well as a country retreat in the years after its purchase, long before he replaced the original Dongan mansion with his new house.[76]

Visitors included Alan Brodrick who spent time at Castletown before the beginning of the 1711 parliamentary session, during which Conolly led the Whig opposition in the absence of Brodrick.[77] It is possible that his sojourn in the country included discussions on strategy for the upcoming session. He returned to Castletown in 1715 before the beginning of the first parliamentary session of the new reign. During this period Conolly and Brodrick were working particularly closely together as the Whigs took over aspects of the Irish government. Brodrick was not the only important visitor to come to Castletown: in 1721 as discussed earlier the Duke of Grafton spent Christmas there, presumably in the old Dongan Castle. Unfortunately little is known of that Castle as no visual depiction or written description has survived. In October 1722 Charles Maddocks, the secretary to the lords justice, told Edward Hopkins that he was in the old parlour at Castletown, where he was joined by both Conollys as well as Dean Arthur Price and Thomas Trotter MP, suggesting that the old house was still being used while construction was ongoing on the new structure.[78]

Conolly seems to have first considered building anew at Castletown in 1719, when Molesworth introduced him to the Italian architect Alessandro Galilei. The former had brought Galilei to England in 1714 to effect a revolution in architecture, only

[76] See chapter three for references to Conolly's use of Rodanstown.
[77] Alan Brodrick to Thomas Brodrick, 19 May 1711 (S,H.C., 1248/3 ff 49-50). See also chapter four.
[78] Charles Maddocks to Edward Hopkins, 4 Oct. 1722 (B.L., Add Ms 64,929 f. 5).

for the impetus to be taken over by Lord Burlington.[79] Following his failure to secure lucrative commissions in London, Galilei under the influence of Molesworth turned to Ireland. He attempted to secure the commission to rebuild St Werburgh's church in Dublin in 1715, but was thwarted by the Archbishop of Dublin, William King, who objected to the Italian's Catholicism. Instead the commission went to the leading native architect Thomas Burgh, the Surveyor General.

Molesworth had more success in introducing Galilei to private clients. In 1718, he introduced him to Conolly, perhaps realising that Conolly was one of the few Irish patrons financially capable of employing Galilei. In 1716 Archbishop King had noted the paucity of opportunities for 'valuable architects either finding employment or subsistence in Ireland,' while Molesworth in 1719 had commented, 'who knows how the humour of building may go on here? Not indeed for magnificent piles, but for handsome and convenient ones.'[80] Conolly's ambitions extended, however, beyond the handsome and convenient. In June 1719 Molesworth wrote to Galilei, telling him that Conolly was going ahead with his plans and would be glad of his advice, now and then. Molesworth reminded the architect that Conolly was the most generous of his employers.[81] In the same year Galilei, reported that he was working on '*il desegni d'un Palazzo di Villa p.il My Lord Governatore di quell regno.*' [the designs of the palace of the chief governor]

[79] Edward McParland, 'Edward Lovett Pearce and the new junta for architecture' in T.C. Barnard and Jane Clark (eds.) *Lord Burlington*, p.162.
[80] Both quoted in Edward McParland, *Public architecture in Ireland 1680-1760*, p. 7.
[81] Robert Molesworth to Alessandro Galilei, 30 June 1719 (Archivo di Stato Florence, Carte Galilei Filza N/1/10). I am indebted to Dr Edward McParland for this and other references in the Galilei papers.

- a reference that seems to point to Conolly who was one of the lord justices or chief governors at the time of his meeting with Galilei.[82]

Conolly did not begin the work on Castletown until the summer of 1722, three years after Molesworth had informed Galilei that Conolly was going ahead with the latter's designs. It is unclear, however, whether Conolly used the designs supplied by Galilei, when construction did begin. George Berkeley believed that many hands were involved in developing the design and reported in a letter to John Perceval, in September 1722:

> Several have been made by several hands, but as I do not approve of a work conceived of by many heads so I have made no draught of mine own. All I do being to give my opinion on any point, when consulted.[83]

This letter suggests that the final plans were not the work of any one architect, but were a group effort coordinated by Conolly himself.[84] Barnard has also pointed to the probable influence of Katherine Conolly, not a woman to keep her opinions to herself, who was boasting in polite Dublin society of the size of the hall and her bedroom.[85] Speculation on the roles played by the many heads, who seem to have included Galilei, the Irish master builder John Rothery, the rising young Irish architect Edward Lovett Pearce and possibly Thomas Burgh, is perhaps best left to the professional architectural historians, although conclusive answers are likely to be elusive unless further evidence is discovered.[86]

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[82] Alessandro Galilei to Molesworth, 1719 [date unknown] quoted in Ilaria Toesca, 'Alessandro Galilei in Inghilterra' in Mario Praz (ed.), *English Miscellany, III* (Rome, 1952), p. 213.
[83] Berkeley to Perceval, 7 Sept. 1722 in *The works of George Berkeley,* viii, pp 124-25.
[84] For a suggestion that Walpole oversaw a similar process at Houghton see John Harris, 'James Gibbs: Eminence grise at Houghton' in John Harris, (ed.) *New light on English palladianism* (London, 1990) , pp 5-9; Giles Worsley, *Classical architecture in Britain,* p. 108.
[85] A. Worth to Jane Bonnell, 21 Aug 1722, (N.L.I., Ms 41,580/27); Barnard, 'A tale of three sisters' , p. 276.
[86] For Rothery's possible involvement see Desmond Guinness and William Ryan, *Irish houses and Castles* (Dublin, 1971) p. 56. For a recent suggestion that Thomas Burgh was more involved than has previously been suggested see Worsley, 'Castletown, Co. Kildare', pp 52-57.

If the answers to this architectural mystery remain the subject of speculation, it is perhaps more fruitful to examine the reasons why Conolly decided to build such a large house, and why he decided to build it when he did. It has already been suggested that Conolly's particular brand of economic patriotism played an important part in determining the size and the materials used, but this was not the only motivation behind its construction. Particularly intriguing is the timing of its construction. Conolly in 1722 was sixty years old and had no direct heir.

Dynastic considerations so often at the centre of such building projects were thus of less significance than they might have been. His eventual heir, his nephew William, was still a minor, and as late as 1719 was not even universally regarded as Conolly's heir. In that year his wife's nephew Williams Conyngham was reportedly asked by George I, whether he was going to inherit his uncle's great fortune.[87] Conolly junior was still at this stage living with his mother in English obscurity.[88] Conolly's decision to leave Castletown to his widow in his will for her lifetime also suggests that dynastic considerations were not central to his decision to build.[89]

Financial considerations were probably important in the timing of Castletown's construction and could explain the delay between Conolly's original meeting with Galilei and the start of construction in 1722. Building on such a large scale required substantial investment. Conolly was still completing the drawn-out

[87] Polly Molesworth to John Molesworth, 1 Dec. 1719 (H.M.C. *Various Collections* viii, p. 282).
[88] His father Patrick, the speaker's brother, died in 1713, while his mother Frances Hewitt died in 1720.
[89] Will of William Conolly, 18 Oct. 1729 (N.A.I., T92).

purchase of the Ballyshannon estate in 1719, while his liquidity was also affected by the scarcity of money caused by the ripple effects of the South Sea Bubble and the harvest failures in north-west Ulster in 1718-19. Even Conolly with his great income and capital reserves was affected by these crises. However he recovered from these setbacks remarkably quickly and was able to start building Castletown in 1722 and to purchase his Rathfarnham estate in 1723 for £62,000, over half of which he paid upfront.[90]

It would also be unwise to ignore Conolly's changing political fortunes. In 1719 the failure to repeal the Test Act combined with the potential effects of the Declaratory Act the following year meant that Conolly's expectations for the future were less certain than they once appeared. The passing of the Declaratory Act led to fears that it would spell the end of regular parliaments, a view which was shared by at least some in the Conolly circle including Thomas Pearson, the speaker's brother-in-law:

> I fear now since the Parliament of England have thought fit to fall on us in this unmercifull manner, everybody's fortune here will sink soon. I am sorry 'tis not in my power to quit the kingdom, and since 'tis the case of others as well as mine, we that are fixed here ought I think to contribute as much as in us lies to assist the King to make him absolute. If ever it can be effected, we may expect better quarter from him than we are like to meet with from a free people. I find they treat us in as harsh terms as if we were actually in rebellion, and since it is their opinion of us, nobody can blame them if by the same power they take our estates from us to pay their debts, and indeed I expect this will soon be our lot, for I believe our parliaments will soon be at an end.[91]

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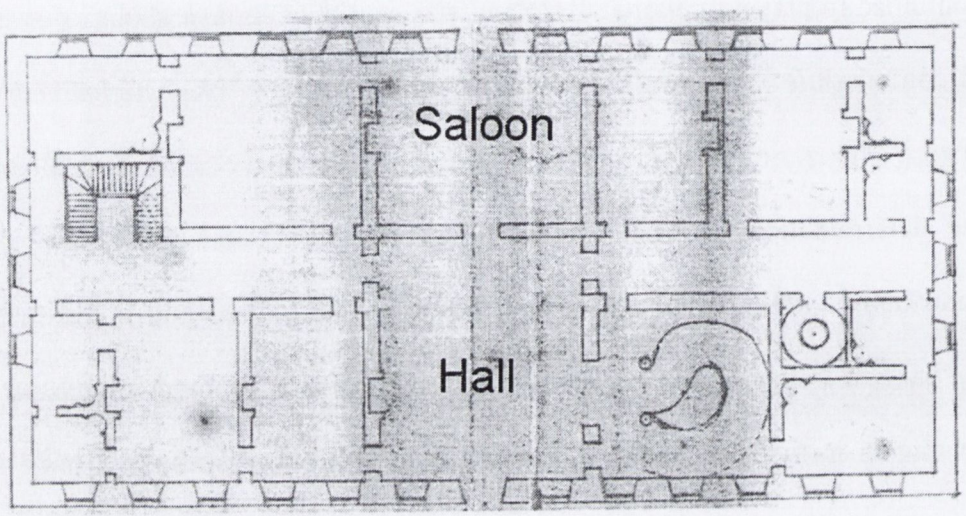
[90] See chapter one.
[91] Thomas Pearson to Jane Bonnell, 12 Mar 1720 (N.L.I., Ms 41,580/24).

This deeply pessimistic letter gives an indication of the gloomy future anticipated by one of Conolly's closest associates, who was likely to have articulated this view to Conolly himself. This future did not come to pass and the Irish parliament continued to play an important role and was confident enough about its own future to commission a spectacular new parliament house in 1728. Alternatively Lovett Pearce's houses of parliament could be seen as a defensive structure demonstrating the determination of Irish Protestants to safeguard their parliament. Conolly contributed to this parliamentary confidence and his actions during the debates on the bank of Ireland, when he defended the rights of the Commons suggested that he was again in the ascendant. In the two years following the bank dispute he was arguably at his political peak when he acted as Grafton's chief minister. It is not coincidental that it was during this period that the construction of Castletown began.

If Castletown was, as I have argued, the physical embodiment of Conolly's economic patriotism and political dominance, this was not the only image it served to portray. It also had a practical purpose serving as the venue for Conolly's political congresses, which were not dissimilar to those hosted by Walpole at Houghton during the same period. Conolly, as we have seen, used the old house as a venue for political entertaining before 1722, while his Capel Street house was at the epicentre of his Dublin life. His new house was designed with this purpose in mind, and this rather than any other reason perhaps best explains its great size. The original ground floor layout was not dissimilar to that later employed at Houghton, with the central axis of the hall and saloon surrounded by separate

apartments or closets, on all sides.[92] This is shown in Lovett Pearce's ground floor plan reproduced below.

Fig. 8.1 Ground floor plan of Castletown[93]



The main reception room, the long gallery, was on the *piano nobile* or first-floor level, and was filled with pictures of Conolly's political associates and connections. In 1732 when English traveller John Loveday visited Castletown there were portraits of Grafton, Lord Chancellor West and Walpole hanging there.

Castletown remained incomplete at Conolly's death and was not fully utilised in the manner he intended until the 1730s, when his wife developed a salon culture to rival the Duke of Dorset's court at Dublin Castle. Conolly's own use of Castletown in this manner was hamstrung by its unfinished state, although this has perhaps been exaggerated considering Grafton's presence in spring 1724 and particularly Carteret's visit in Christmas 1727. Conolly's regular bouts of serious

[92] Dan Cruickshank, *A guide to the Georgian buildings of Britain and Ireland* (London, 1985), p. 63.

[93] Edward Lovett Pearce, Ground Floor Plan of Castletown, Co. Kildare in the Elton Hall collection in the V&A Museum, London. This version is copied from a photographic copy in the Irish Architectural Archive. See Howard Colvin & Maurice Craig (eds.), *Architectural drawings in the library of Elton Hall by Sir John Vanbrugh and Edward Lovett Pearce* (Oxford, 1964).

illness in the last eighteen months of his life also curtailed his use of Castletown for political purposes, although he did spend considerable periods convalescing there, especially in the summers of 1728 and 1729. His busy schedule especially at the Revenue Board also precluded full enjoyment of his country house. Its later use by his widow and nephews, Conolly junior and Francis Burton, as a political salon coupled with its design does, however, suggest that this was the purpose conceived by Conolly.

Assessment and Memory

Castletown forms just one part of Conolly's legacy, albeit the best known aspect of his career, due partly to Castletown's prominence in the public campaigns to preserve Ireland's Georgian architectural heritage in the twentieth century. In the eighteenth century Conolly's contribution to Irish architecture was not regarded amongst his major achievements except by visiting travel writers, who included Castletown on their itineraries from as early as 1732.[94] Instead, contemporaries concentrated on his accumulation of a vast fortune and his contribution to the government of Ireland in the period after 1715. His commitment to spending his fortune in Ireland and his promotion of Irish economic interests was, as demonstrated in this chapter, particularly lauded by contemporary observers. His political talents, especially his success in uniting a large disparate parliamentary following was also recognised, especially during the parliamentary session

[94] See for example, A. de la Montraye, *Voyages en Anglois et en Francois D'A de la Montraye, en diverses provinces* (The Hague, 1732); John Loveday, *Diary of a tour in 1732...*(Edinburgh, 1890); John Bush: *Hibernia Curiosa* (London, 1769), p. 147; Richard Twiss, *A tour in Ireland in 1775* (London, 1776), p. 65; and Thomas Campbell *A philosophical survey of the south of Ireland* (London, 1777), p. 55.

following his death when it was realised that his successor as speaker, Sir Ralph Gore, could not unite the same clans together in support of the court. This ability to build up a strong political following, despite his arriviste status, was grudgingly admired by his rivals who while referring to Conolly's supporters as his 'creatures' recognised the skill with which he built up his following.

His great fortune was, however, regarded as the most remarkable facet of his career. The rumours and innuendo that circulated about his origins and the means by which he garnered his great wealth have been examined in chapters one and three. Conolly's dominant role in the government of Ireland did not prevent the continuation of such attacks on his origins and his fortune. His appointment as a lord justice in 1717 was, as shown in chapter seven, seen as particularly offensive to the old gentry, while persistent rumours that he was to be promoted to the peerage were treated with disdain. The mocking of Conolly's background in the anonymous 1723 ballad 'Sir Owen McHugh' gives some indication of the continued public perception of Conolly's lowly origins in at least some opposition quarters. The brogue attributed to Conolly in the ballad emphasised his supposed Gaelic origins, while the name Sir Owen conjured up images of various seventeenth-century Ulster bogeymen.[95] Alan Brodrick and his son and representative in the Commons, St John Brodrick, routinely referred to Conolly as Sir Owen in their correspondence, while a riot broke out in a Dublin theatre following a performance of the offending tune in 1724.[96]

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[95] For the words of the ballad see D.W. Hayton, 'Two ballads on the Co. Westmeath by election of 1723', pp 27-9.

[96] St John Brodrick to Lord Midleton, 11 Mar, 14, 21 Apr. 1724 (S.H.C., 1248/6 ff 161-62, 7-8, 9-10); Lord Midleton to St John Brodrick, 26 Apr. 1724 (S.H.C., 1248/6 ff 13-14). For the riot in the theatre see Hayton, 'Two Ballads', p. 27.

It is difficult to know whether Conolly would have accepted a peerage and indeed whether he was even offered one at the peak of his career. Promotions to the Irish peerage were much less common in the early eighteenth century than they were later.[97] Most of those made peers in this period were promoted for past military service. Included in this category were Gustavus Hamilton, Sir Gustavus Hume and Thomas Southwell, while Alan Brodrick owed his title to his position as lord chancellor. Conolly may have been offered a peerage in 1710. Certainly his sister-in-law Jane Bonnell was asked to sound him out on the possibility.[98] This never came to anything; whether because of Conolly's reluctance or because the offer was not genuine it is impossible to know. This offer was based partly on the fact that he was one of the few commoners who could support the dignity of a peerage, a recurring problem in this period. This shadowy episode, however, seems to have been the closest Conolly came to taking a seat in the Lords.

In his funeral poem upon Conolly's death James Sterling, echoing Juvenal's eighth satire on aristocratic values, praised Conolly for not taking a title

Self raised, with independent worth he shone
Immortalised by merits all his own;
True to his King, and to his country just,
Are titles that outlive the marble bust.[99]

James Arbuckle echoed Sterling's view in his tribute in *The Tribune* when comparing Conolly's career to that of successful Roman tribunes who were

[97] F.G. James, *Lords of the ascendancy: The Irish house of lords and its members, 1600-1800* (Dublin, 1995), pp 73, 128.
[98] Catherine O'Brien to Jane Bonnell, 30 Aug. 1710 (N.L.I., Ms 41,580/19).
[99] Sterling, *Funeral Poem*; Sterling quoted a passage from juvenal's eight satire as a preface to his poem. On Juvenal's eighth satire see John Henderson, *Figuring out Roman nobility, Juvenal's eighth satire* (Exeter, 1997).

heralded for their merits and virtues rather than for the titles they held.[100] These retrospective accounts of Conolly's career by sympathetic writers should not be taken as gospel but they are instructive insomuch as they note the significance of Conolly's lack of title in their attempts to justify its absence. Conolly's own view on the subject must remain a mystery. The possibility that he preferred to remain in the Commons, which became the undisputed dominant political arena symbolised by the layout of Lovett Pearce's new parliament, during his chairmanship rather than become a figure of less consequence in the Lords must remain a question for speculation.

Conolly's achievement of a position of dominance in the Commons and his role as chief undertaker to successive lords lieutenant remains his most substantial achievement. He was the first of the great undertakers, who were to dominate Irish politics until the late 1760s; his career paved the way for his successors, especially Henry Boyle and John Ponsonby.[101] At the height of his power during the Grafton viceroyalty, Bishop Timothy Godwin described him as 'prime minister'.[102] This appellation is significant in the context of Walpole's emerging role as the first English prime minister at this juncture. Conolly cannot be compared to Walpole in terms of his achievements and position, simply because of his subservient role to the British ministers. There were, however, similarities in their respective careers: both concentrated on domestic matters, especially economic/financial matters, while control of patronage and a strong electoral interest combined with a

[100] James Arbuckle, *The Tribune* no. 8 (Dublin, 1729).
[101] On the later undertakers see Eoin Magennis, *The Irish political system 1740-70*; R.E. Burns, *Irish parliamentary politics*, ii; Martyn J Powell, *Britain and Ireland in the eighteenth-century crisis of empire* (Basingstoke, 2003).
[102] Timothy Godwin to William Wake, 16 Jan. 1723 quoted in Patrick McNally's entry on Conolly in the *O.D.N.B.* In a similar vein Sterling compared Conolly to Lord Burghley and Lord Stanhope, Sterling *Funeral poem...*

dedication to duty and an aptitude for hard graft were the essential ingredients of their successes.

Conolly's indispensable position at the heart of the Irish executive, which was confirmed by his continued presence in office after the Wood's Halfpence crisis, gave him a position of security and influence that rivalled that of other provincial leaders in Walpole's British polity. This position was arguably strengthened by his lack of interest in or potential for involvement in affairs at Westminster. Unlike his rival, Brodrick, he did not try to maintain a political presence on both sides of the Irish Sea. This ensured that he was unlikely to get embroiled in Westminster party/faction disputes, especially in the period after 1715. In this manner Conolly was not only different to Brodrick or other Anglo-Irish figures like Molesworth or Perceval, but also to the leaders of the Scottish interest in London, especially the Duke of Argyll and his brother the Earl of Ilay. In the absence of a vice-regal system of governance in Scotland, Argyll and Ilay acted as neither undertakers nor as equivalents of lords lieutenants but as sub-ministers.[103] They had an interest in the disposal of Scottish patronage, especially in the Customs and in the legal profession, but Walpole's greater interest in Scottish Treasury patronage ensured that their role was not as great as Conolly's or later Henry Boyle's in Dublin.[104] Conolly's role in Dublin was thus greater than any Scottish sub-minister because Dublin unlike Edinburgh was not directly controlled from London. Dublin and by extension Conolly's part in the political management and governance of Ireland

[103] For Ilay and Argyll see J.S. Shaw, *The management of Scottish society, 1707-1764* (Edinburgh, 1983), pp 43-58; Alexander Murdoch, *The people above: politics and administration in mid eighteenth century Britain* 2nd ed (Edinburgh, 2003), p. 7; P.W. Riley, *The English ministers and Scotland, 1707-27* (London, 1964), p. 293.

[104] For a comparison between the Irish and Scottish managers see D.W. Hayton, 'Constitutional experiments and political expediency, 1689-1725' in S.G. Ellis and Sarah Barber (eds.) *Conquest and Union, fashioning a British state, 1485-1725* (London, 1995), pp 299-300.

only appeared on the radar of English ministers during times of crisis. Conolly for most of his career remained respected but relatively unknown in London.

His energies were instead concentrated in Ireland, where he became the unrivalled dominant figure on the domestic scene. His contemporary reputation and self-perception of his own worth can be perhaps best seen in his lavish funeral arrangements. Although his widow oversaw the arrangements it is inconceivable that Conolly did not partake in the planning of his own funeral, and this is borne out by the large sums laid out in his will to purchase mourning apparel. He also left £1,000 to defray the cost of his funeral.[105] The funeral itself did justice to Conolly's pretensions. Organised by the Ulster King of Arms it took the form of a elaborate heraldic funeral, following a pattern that had developed over the previous two centuries. The heraldic funeral had since the early seventeenth century become an important way for 'those whose social position was recently required to demonstrate their new place in a mobile social order and shake off all vestiges of their origins'.[106] In Conolly's case this was particularly apt. The funeral procession was very elaborate: it was attended by all the Members of Parliament, the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Mayor and various nobility and gentry. There were also 67 poor men dressed in black signifying Conolly's age.[107] The procession began at his townhouse on Capel Street in Dublin and continued out to the church at Celbridge. While based on the formulaic pattern of the heraldic funeral, it did have its quirkier elements, especially the provision of 700 linen scarves to promote the linen industry, which has been noted earlier.

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[105] Will of William Conolly, 18 Oct. 1729 (N.A.I., T92).
[106] Clodagh Tait, *Death, burial and commemoration in Ireland, 1550-1650* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp 43-44.
[107] *Dublin Weekly Journal*, 8 Nov. 1729.

This determination to mark his death with style was shared by his wife, Katherine Conolly. Much to the bemusement of polite Dublin Society she draped the main reception rooms and staircase of their Dublin House in black cloth.[108] Such ostentatious mourning it was felt was only appropriate for those of the first rank: even George I's passing in 1727 was not marked by such extravagance. Mrs Conolly seems not to have cared; she was devoted to the memory of her late husband. In 1731 she wrote to her sister expressing a desire to have some of her husband's hair set in a ring. 'I think a good transparent diamond over it–2 diamond, I mean brilliants in each side with a heart on each side of a death's head, with this motto, we part no more'.[109] At the same time she was already planning a physical representation of this romantic desire to 'part no more.'

This was the elaborate monument erected to Conolly's memory in the church at Celbridge. In 1732 she wrote to her sister Jane,

> I have great occasion for money now in London and must draw next post for £150 on Gould and Nisbet [sic] for marble I cannot get here for the monument I am making for my dear Mr Conolly which will cost me above £600 and I have this summer built an aisle to our church that has cost me above £300 for the church was by much to little for the people and though many people said they would contribute towards rebuilding the old church I found so many objections and so little money like to come in that I have done all at my own expense–and it's larger and ten times handsomer than the old church.[110]

This was the first mention of the monument she was having built in her husband's memory. It is significant that it gives some indication of the cost of the intended

[108] Francis Burton to Jane Bonnell, 26 Jan. 1730 (N.L.I., Ms 41,579/10).
[109] Katherine Conolly to Jane Bonnell, 26 Aug. 1731(N.L.I., Ms 41,578/6).
[110] Katherine Conolly to Jane Bonnell, 27 Nov. 1732 (N.L.I., Ms 41,578/6).

monument, information that is rarely found. It is also interesting that the marble figures of the speaker and significantly his wife were being made in London rather than Dublin, considering their preference for Irish materials at Castletown. The renovation of the church was also presumably carried out with the intention of providing a better situation for the monument. The figures of the speaker and herself were carved in London by the sculptor Thomas Carter and arrived in Dublin in 1736. It seems the rest of the monument was made in Dublin. In keeping with Conolly tradition, it was too big: the life-size figures were dwarfed by the pediment and the four supporting pillars. The church, only recently enlarged was too small, and the monument was therefore erected in an adjacent barn-like building known as the Death House, which was specially constructed for the purpose. In May 1735 Katherine described the monument and eventual cost:

> The figures I have made for your brother and myself that is to be put up in my church in the country where I have erected a handsome monument- and has been obliged to build the church quite new upon that account which altogether, church and monument, has cost me £2,000 at least.[111]

It had run oversize and over budget, but she had completed her monument. It is particularly interesting because it features not only the deceased Speaker but also his still living wife in the exquisitely carved effigies. She is given equal prominence in the sculpture - though not in the Latin inscription which only details her husband's achievements and service.

The inscription is typical of eighteenth-century encomia including as it does the following, 'he made a modest though splendid use of the great riches he had honestly acquired'. In his will Conolly had left funds for the establishment of a charity school in Celbridge village, and this generosity was stressed in the

[111] Katherine Conolly to Jane Bonnell, 24 Apr. 1735 (N.L.I., Ms 41,578/8).

inscription Conolly as the generous benevolent landlord was the image to be portrayed. This aspect would continue to be stressed. In the 1750s when the English poet, Henry Jones, visited Ireland, he visited the monument and wrote a poem stressing the same aspect:

> No Pride but Piety their strikes our eyes,
> And Meekness lifts yon Pillar to the skies,
> Why smokes at Dawn that hospitable dome
> To feed the fatherless, the orphans home...[112]

This commitment to charitable works was continued in the construction of Katherine Conolly's second monument to her late husband. In the harsh winter of 1740-41, she built what is known as Conolly's Folly, a stone obelisk supported by a series of superimposed arches rising to a height of 140 feet, to close the vista behind Castletown.[113] Partly built in memory of the late speaker, this dramatic structure was primarily a form of famine relief. It was not the only such structure built for such a purpose in Ireland, but it was certainly the largest.

Katherine Conolly through her energetic activities, not only as a monument builder but also as a political hostess, in both Dublin and at Castletown did her best to ensure her husband's memory entered posterity, and that his significant role in Irish affairs would not forgotten. The failure of his heirs William Conolly junior and Thomas Conolly to fully exploit the potential of their great political and financial inheritances diminished Conolly's achievements within the eighteenth

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[112] Henry Jones 'On viewing the monument to the right honourable William Conolly' in Jones. *Poems on several occasions* (Dublin, 1749), p. 128, on Jones see *O.D.N.B.*

[113] Mary Jones to Jane Bonnell, 14 Mar. 1740 (N.L.I., Ms 41,577/1); O'Kane, *Landscape design in eighteenth century Ireland: mixing foreign trees with the natives,* pp 54-5, David Dickson, *Arctic Ireland: The extraordinary story of the great frost and forgotten famine of 1740-41*, (Belfast, 1997), pp 42, 70.

century.[114] In modern times the chronological imbalance of eighteenth-century historiography since the days of Lecky and Froude has meant that Conolly has languished in much greater obscurity than might have been anticipated in 1729. Much work has been done on early-eighteenth century Ireland, particularly since the late 1970s, but Conolly has hitherto not been fully studied. This thesis has attempted to locate Conolly's political career and status as the greatest of the eighteenth-century undertakers, within the context of his whole career and will hopefully contribute to a greater understanding of the Donegal attorney, which links his great fortune, political prominence and building of Castletown into an integrated whole, which will in turn help develop our understanding of eighteenth-century Ireland.

[114] See A.P.W. Malcomson, 'The fall of the house of Conolly' in Eoin Magennis & Allan Blackstock (eds.) *Politics and political culture in Britain and Ireland, 1750-1850: Essays in tribute to Peter Jupp* (Forthcoming: Belfast, 2007).

APPENDIX I

Conolly Income Tables 1720-29

Table 1.2: *Summary of Conolly's income 1720-1729*

	1720	1721	1722	1723	1724	1725	1726	1727	1728	1729
Revenue Commissioner[1]	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
Speaker[2]			500		500		500		500	
Lord Justice[3]	1200	800	1000	800	600		800	1100	700	900
Customer of Londonderry[4]	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
Total	**2220**	**1820**	**2020**	**1820**	**2120**	**1020**	**2320**	**2120**	**2220**	**1920**
Land totals[5]	10966	10967	10971	13162	13191	13328	13764	14026	14026	14926
Total	**13186**	**12787**	**12991**	**14982**	**15311**	**14348**	**16084**	**16146**	**16246**	**16846**

[1] All Commissioners of the Revenue were paid £1,000 per annum. Rowley Lascelles, (ed.). *Liber munerum publicorum Hiberniae, or the Establishments of Ireland* (2 vols. London, 1852), I part II p.134.

[2] The speakers of the both Houses were paid per parliamentary session. *Liber munerum publicorum Hiberniae,* II, part VIII p.71.

[3] Each Lord Justice was paid £100 per month during each term of office. Warrant for Irish lord justices pay, 14 September 1714 (T.N.A., Signet Office 1/16/36). The lord justices terms of office can be found in T.W. Moody, F.J Byrne, and F.X. Martin (eds.), *Maps, genealogies, lists, a companion to Irish History part II.* (Oxford, 1984), p. 492.

[4] Conolly enjoyed this sinecure office from 1697, and its real value was probably greater when fees were taken into account. *Liber munerum publicorum Hiberniae* I, part II p. 152.

[5] See Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3: *Detailed Breakdown of Conolly's Income 1720-29*

Year	1720	1721	1722	1723	1724	1725	1726	1727	1728	1729
Revenue Commissioner	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
Speaker			500		500		500		500	
Lord Justice	1200	800	1000	800	600		800	1100	700	900
Collector of Londonderry	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
Official total[1]	**2220**	**1820**	**2020**	**1820**	**2120**	**1020**	**2320**	**2120**	**2220**	**1920**
Meath	[2]*1100*	*1100*	*1100*	*1100*	*1100*	*1100*	*1100*	*1100*	*1100*	*1100*
Limavady	[3]1236	1236	1236	1236	1236	1236	1236	1236	1236	1236
Cardigan and Carmarthen	[4]270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270	270
Castletown	[5]689	[v]690	[v]694	[v]694	[v]716	[6]796	[7]899	[vii]899	[vii]899	[vii]899
Leixlip & Stacumney										[8]*900*
Westmeath	[9]*1000*	*1000*	*1000*	*1000*	*1000*	*1000*	*1000*	*1000*	*1000*	*1000*
Roscommon	[10]*830*	*830*	*830*	*830*	*830*	*830*	*830*	*830*	*830*	*830*
Wexford[11]										
Abbotstown[12]	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
TCD Estate Rossnowlagh	[13]471	471	471	471	471	471	471	471	471	471
Castlefin	[14]145	145	145	145	145	145	145	145	145	145
Ballyshannon	[15]2100	[xv]2100	[xv]2100	[xv]2100	[xv]2100	[xv]2100	[16]2200	[17]2250	[xvii]2250	[xvii] 2250
Newporton	[18]528	528	528	528	528	528	528	528	528	528
Belleek Fisheries	[19]500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500	500
Dunsink, Scribblestown	[20]310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310	310
Rathfarnham				[21]2191	[xxi]2198	[xxi] 2255	[xxi] 2488	[xxi] 2700	[xxi] 2700	[xxi] 2700
2 townhouses in Waterford city	[22]6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Londonderry Church lands	[23]267	267	267	267	267	267	267	267	267	267
Vintners Proportion	[24]706	706	706	706	706	706	706	706	706	706
Grocers Proportion	[25]758	758	758	758	758	758	758	758	758	758
Estate total	**10966**	**10967**	**10971**	**13162**	**13191**	**13328**	**13764**	**14026**	**14026**	**14926**
Add Official Total	**2220**	*1820*	*2020*	*1820*	*2120*	*1020*	*2320*	*2120*	*2220*	*1920*
Total	***13186***	***12787***	***12991***	***14982***	***15311***	***14348***	***16084***	***16146***	***16246***	***16846***

[1] For official income figures see Table 1.2 above.
[2] The Meath estate included not only Rodanstown purchased in 1691 but also assorted other estates purchased from the Trustees of Forfeited Estates in 1703. The Rental figure is an estimate based on later rentals including a rental of 1766 (I.AA., 97/84 F/3). Most of the leases set by Conolly were still in operation at this time. For these leases see counterparts of leases of Rodanstown estate Co. Meath in list of deeds and papers sent to Castletown, 1729 (I.A.A., G/10). See also list of determinable leases in Co. Meath n.d. (N.A.I., Conolly Papers M 6917/79).
[3] Robert McCausland's accounts with Conolly, 1724-27 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/11).
[4] Lease from William Conolly to Thomas Philips of Cringal, Carmarthen, 25 June 1718 (N.L.I., Conyngham Papers Ms 35,423/ 4/c).
[5] Rental for Castletown estates 1720-24 (I.A.A., 97/84 H/1).
[6] Includes rental for Killadoon estate for second half of year. This estate was purchased in 1725 and was incorporated into the Castletown estate, see November rent 1725 (I.A.A., 97/84 H/1).
[7] Rental for Castletown estates 1725-29 (I.A.A., 97/84 H/1).
[8] The Leixlip estate was only purchased in 1728, and no contemporary rent roll exists. This figure is an estimate and is based on later rentals. For a list of Leixlip leases c. 1728 see (I.A.A., 97/84 E/16).
[9] This figure is an estimate and is based on extant leases for the Westmeath estate and the 1766 rental of the estate (I.A.A., 97/84 F/3). For individual leases see the list of deeds and papers sent to Castletown, 1729 (I.A.A., G/10), and Registry of Deeds memorials, 9.159.3,427, 50.368.33,394, 50.386.33,394 & 52.328.34,748.
[10] This figure is an estimate based on later rentals including one from 1760, (I.A.A., 97/84 F/2), and on Registry of Deeds memorials, 2.545.623, 3.66.669, 3.121.733 & 38.185. 23888.
[11] The Conolly estates in Wexford are virtually un-documented apart from the details of their purchase in 1703/04. This has meant it has it has been impossible to even estimate their rental value.
[12] Lease from Conolly to Robert Clements, 14 June 1708 (Reg. Deeds 1.9.54).
[13] Thomas Dicksons account with Conolly 30 October 1722, 1725, 1726 (I.A.A., 97/84 c/28). This included the head rent of £158 payable to Trinity, (T.C.D., Muniments, P24 Deeds, nos. 331c &331d).
[14] Robert McCausland's account with Lord Justice Conolly All Saints 1724, May 1725 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/6).
[15] Thomas Dickson's accounts with Conolly, May, November 1725 (I.A.A., C/28).
[16] Thomas Dickson's account with Conolly, Nov. 1726 (I.A.A., C/28).
[17] Ballyshannon Lease book, 18 June 1728 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/26).
[18] James Crawford's account with Conolly, 3 June 1727 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/20).
[19] Ballyshannon Lease book, 18 June 1728 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/26).
[20] Lease from Conolly to Messrs Gibson and Taylor 9 August 1729 (IAA 97/84 D/26). This was a renewal of an earlier lease on the same terms.
[21] Rathfarnham rent rolls 1723-27, (I.A.A., 97/84 D/12).
[22] Memorial of lease from Conolly to Simon Bashon and William Jones of two houses in Waterford, 30 March 1720 (Reg. Deeds 31.226.18,847).
[23] Robert McCausland's accounts with Conolly, 1724-27 (I.A.A., C/11).
[24] Ibid. Includes head rent payable to the Grocer's Company of £200. [25] Ibid. This includes the head rent of £212 payable to the Vintner's company.

Table 1.4: *Estate Purchase Details*

	Estate	Year acquired	From whom	Acres[1]
Donegal	TCD Rossnowlagh	1690	Leased from TCD[2]	[3]13,000
Meath	Rodanstown	1691-1704	Mr Noyce, Trustees for Forfeited Estates, William Cairnes[4]	[5]*3,300*
Londonderry	Limavady	1697	William Phillips[6]	[7]12,448
Dublin	Dunsink, Scibblestown	1700	Richard Barrett[8]	[9]798
Cardigan and Carmarthen	Welsh estate	1700	Henry and Mary Conyngham[10]	
Westmeath	Former Nugent estate	1702	Trustees for Forfeited Estates[11]	[12]9,717
Roscommon	Former Dillon & Nugent estates	1702-4	Trustees for Forfeited Estates and William Cairnes[13]	6,305
Wexford	Former Gilligan and Itchingham estates	1702-4	Trustees for Forfeited Estates and William Cairnes[14]	[14]2,398
Dublin	Abbotstown	1704	William Cairnes[15]	[16]223
Kildare	Castletown	1709	Thomas Earl of Limerick[17]	[18]2,329
Londonderry	Grocers Proportion	1709	Leased from Grocers Company[19]	[20]15,900
Donegal	Castlefin	1711	Heirs of John Kingsmill[21]	[22]3,476
Londonderry	See of Derry lands	1712	Leased from Bishop of Derry[23]	
Donegal	Ballyshannon	1718	Heirs of Lord Folliott[24]	[25]30,586
Fermanagh	Newporton	1718	Heirs of Lord Folliott[24]	[25]7,118
Donegal	TCD Cowlowdown	1718	Heirs of Lord Folliott[24]	[25]2,500
Londonderry	Vintners proportion	1718	Leased from Vintners Company[26]	[27]27,490
Dublin	Rathfarnham	1723	Philip Duke of Wharton[28]	[29]10,350
Kildare	Leixlip	1728	John White[30]	[31]809
Total Acreage				**148,487**

[1] All acres have been converted into English statute measure. Those figures in *italics* are estimates.
[2] TCD Board Minutes 1660-1740, 2 Feb. 1690 (T.C.D., Mun V/5/2 p. 284).
[3] This figure is taken from , R.B. McCarthy, *The Trinity College estates 1800-1923* (Dundalk, 1992), p. 221.
[4] This estate includes the Rodanstown estate in Co. Meath purchased in 1690 (I.A.A., 97/84 G/10) as well as 112 acres at Butlerstown purchased from the Trustees for Forfeited Estates in 1703, and the manor of Dirpatrick containing 799 acres purchased from William Cairnes in 1704. (*1825 Report*, pp 380, 388).
[5] This figure is an estimate and is based on the incomplete acreage figures found in Conolly's marriage settlement of 15 Dec. 1694 (I.A.A., 97/84 G/2/1), and the figures found in the *1825 Report* for the lands at Butlerstown and Dirpatrick.
[6] Deeds of purchase between Conolly and William Phillips, 24-25 June 1697 (P.R.O.N.I., D/2094/12A-C).
[7]E.A. Currie,. 'Landscape development in north-west and south-east Derry 1700-1840' in Gerard O'Brien, (ed.) *Derry and Londonderry, history and society* (Dublin, 1999), p. 334.
[8] There is no extant purchase deed for this estate, but it seems to have been acquired by Conolly in 1700, see the list of documents sent to Conolly, 9 July 1700 (I.A.A., 97/84 D/26).
[9] Lease from Conolly to Messrs Gibson and Taylor 9 August 1729 (IAA 97/84 D/26).
[10] Col. Conyngham and Lady Shelbourne's conveyance of the estate in Wales to Conolly, 16 July 1700 (N.L.I., Conyngham Papers Ms 35,423 (3)). Lady Shelburne had inherited this estate from her father, Sir John Williams of Kent. Her title came from her first husband, John Petty Lord Shelbourne. This estate consisted of impropriated tithes rather than land so there is no acreage. It was, however, always referred to as the Welsh estate.
[11] This was the former Nugent estate in Co. Westmeath purchased from the Trustees of Forfeited Estates in 1702 (*1825 report*, p. 350).
[12] This figure includes the former Nugent estates in the Barony of Lune in Co. Meath, also purchased in 1702 (*1825 report*, p. 386)
[13] 3,346 acres of the Nugent estates were purchased in 1702, while the remainder together with the Dillon estate containing 341 acres were purchased from William Cairnes in 1704 (*1825 Report* pp 380, 386).
[14] *1825 Report,* pp. 380, 386.
[15] *1825 Report* p. 380.
[16] Lease from Conolly to Robert Clements, 14 June 1708 (Reg. Deeds 1.9.54).
[17] Deed of purchase of Castletown, 21 Sept. 1709 (I.A.A., 97/84 E/2).
[18] This includes the manor of Killadoon containing 439 acres purchased in 1725 (I.A.A., 97/84 E/19) as well as 1,890 acres at Castletown, see survey of Castletown, 1709 (I.A.A., 97/84 H/1).
[19] Conolly purchased the lease of the Grocer's proportion from George Finch in 1709 for £7,250. See the copy of Conolly's minute to Nathaniel Hornby, 30 July 1709 (P.R.O.N.I., D/2094/18A).
[20]E.A. Currie, 'Landscape development in north-west and south-east Derry 1700-1840', p. 334.
[21] Deed of purchase between Conolly and Oliver McCausland of one part and heirs of John Kingsmill, 5 Dec. 1711 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/39).
[22] Survey of Castlefin, 1720 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/44).
[23] Rent Roll of the Church lands in Co. Londonderry, 1718. All leases bean in 1712, so it is likely Conolly acquired this lease at this time (I.A.A., 97/84 C/6). The acreage of these lands which were scattered across several parishes is unknown.

[24] Conolly purchased the former Folliott estates at Ballyshannon, including a lease of the T.C.D. estate at Cowlowdown, in Co. Donegal and the manor of Newporton, Co. Fermanagh in 1718 from the heirs of the second Lord Folliott. Deeds of lease and release 30/31 July 1718 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/22).
[25] These figures are taken from a 1718 survey of Ballyshannon (P.R.O.N.I., D/2094/24C).
[26] It is unclear when Conolly acquired the lease of the Vintners' proportion, but rental figures first appear in his accounts in 1718 (Robert McCausland's accounts with Conolly, 1724-27 (I.A.A., C/11). He was in negotiations with the Vintners' Company to purchase the lease at the time of his death, a process that was only completed in 1734, by his heir William Conolly junior. See Conolly to Robert McCausland, 15 Aug. 1729 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/27/1-92). See also the abstract of articles of agreement between Conolly and the Vintners' Company, 19 Aug. 1729 (P.R.O.N.I., History of Parliament Papers Env/5/HP/18/1-4).
[27] E.A. Currie, 'Landscape development in north-west and south-east Derry 1700-1840', p. 334.
[28] Memorial of deed of purchase of Rathfarnham estate, 31 July 1723 (Reg. Deeds 40.165,24811).
[29] Survey of Rathfarnham by Garrett Hogan, 1723 (I.A.A., 97/84 D/13).
[30] Deeds of purchase between Conolly and John White, 22 June 1728 (I.A.A., 97/84 E/15).
[31] State of Leixlip leases, 1803 (I.A.A., 97/84 H/1).

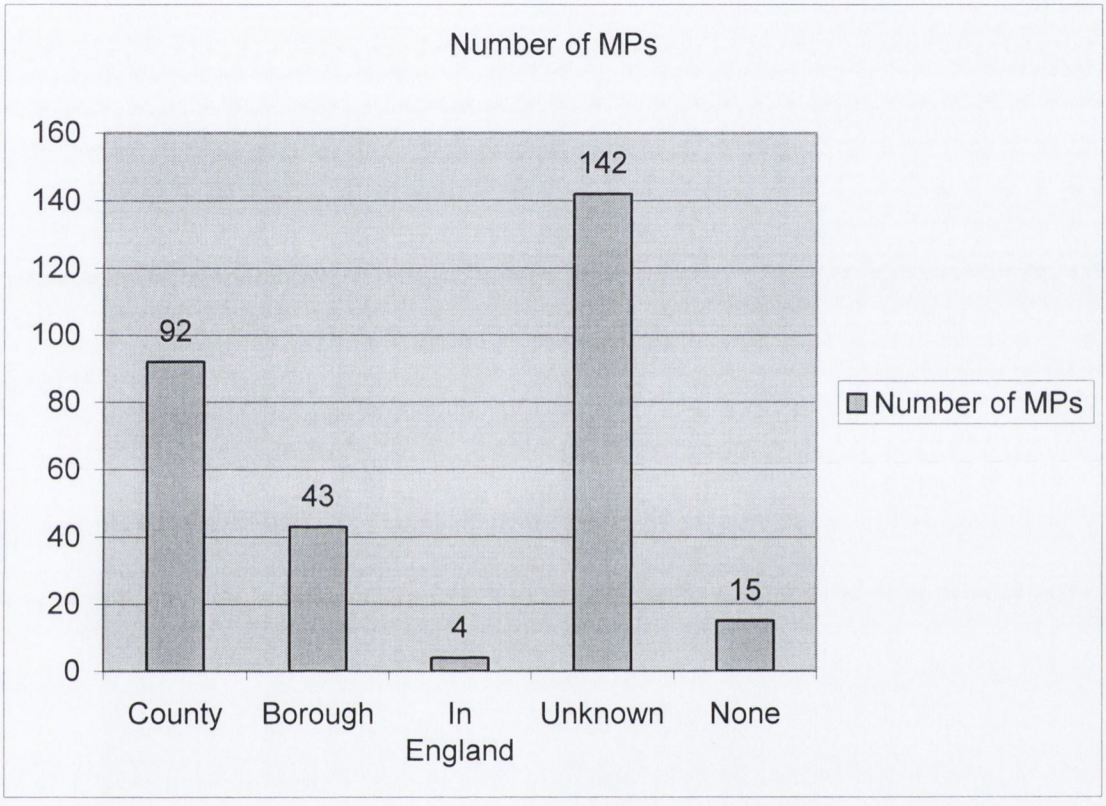
[24] Conolly purchased the former Folliott estates at Ballyshannon, including a lease of the T.C.D. estate at Cowlowdown, in Co. Donegal and the manor of Newporton, Co. Fermanagh in 1718 from the heirs of the second Lord Folliott. Deeds of lease and release 30/31 July 1718 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/22).
[25] These figures are taken from a 1718 survey of Ballyshannon (P.R.O.N.I., D/2094/24C).
[26] It is unclear when Conolly acquired the lease of the Vintners' proportion, but rental figures first appear in his accounts in 1718 (Robert McCausland's accounts with Conolly, 1724-27 (I.A.A., C/11). He was in negotiations with the Vintners' Company to purchase the lease at the time of his death, a process that was only completed in 1734, by his heir William Conolly junior. See Conolly to Robert McCausland, 15 Aug. 1729 (I.A.A., 97/84 C/27/1-92). See also the abstract of articles of agreement between Conolly and the Vintners' Company, 19 Aug. 1729 (P.R.O.N.I., History of Parliament Papers Env/5/HP/18/1-4).
[27] E.A. Currie, 'Landscape development in north-west and south-east Derry 1700-1840', p. 334.
[28] Memorial of deed of purchase of Rathfarnham estate, 31 July 1723 (Reg. Deeds 40.165,24811).
[29] Survey of Rathfarnham by Garrett Hogan, 1723 (I.A.A., 97/84 D/13).
[30] Deeds of purchase between Conolly and John White, 22 June 1728 (I.A.A., 97/84 E/15).
[31] State of Leixlip leases, 1803 (I.A.A., 97/84 H/1).

Appendix Two

Entry into Parliament, 1692

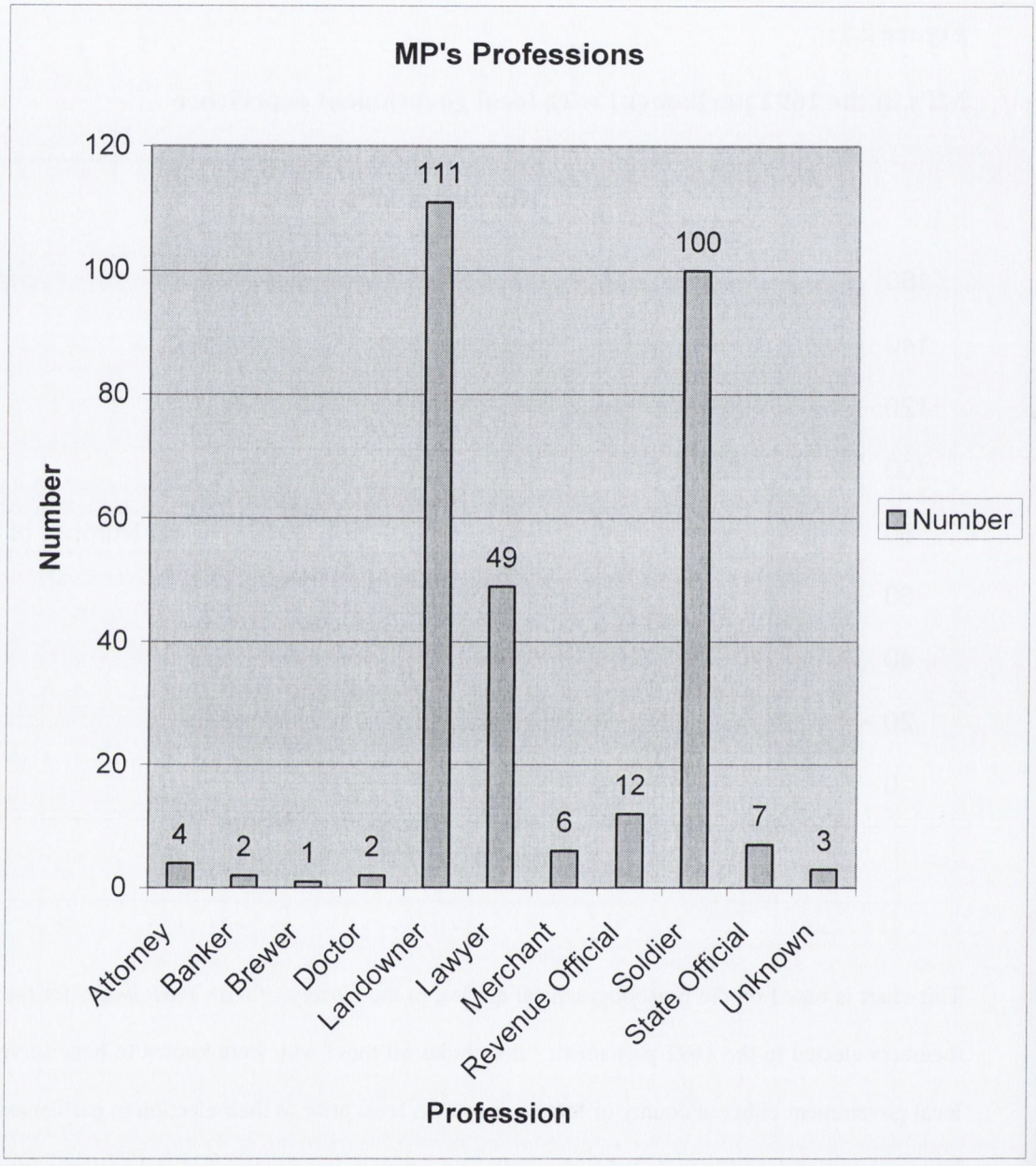
Figure 2.1:

MPs in the 1692 parliament with local government experience



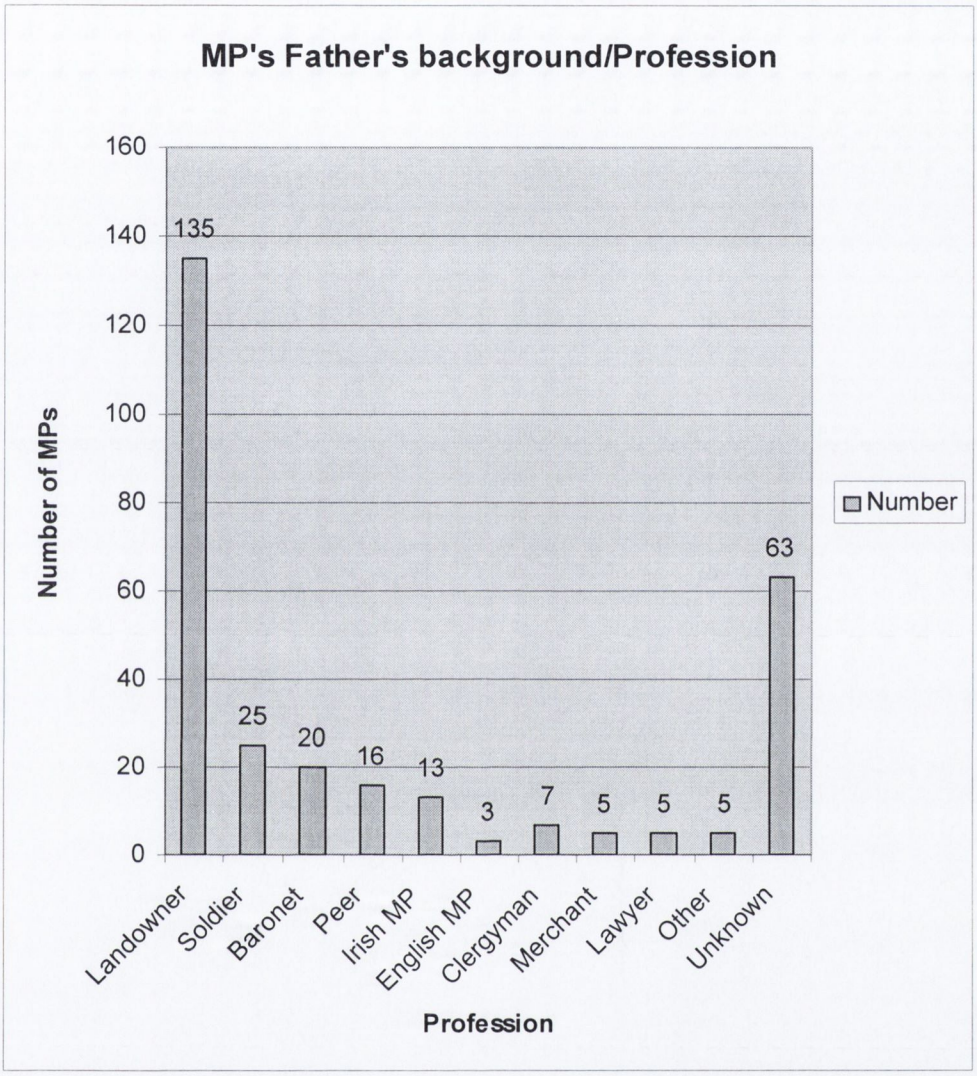
This chart is based on the prosopographical entries, in the *History of Irish Parliament,* for the 297 members elected to the 1692 parliament. It includes all those who were known to have served in local government either at county or local corporation level prior to their election to parliament. A large number of the MPs included in the unknown category were active in local government after their election to parliament, particularly as sheriffs or as Governors/Deputy Governors of their county. The large number in the unknown category also reflects the absence of detailed records for many corporations. It is therefore likely that much higher numbers of MPs were involved in government at either the county or borough levels. Those involved local government in England were all English MPs who also sat in the Dublin parliament. Those whom I have suggested had no local government experience were mostly members of English background or those for whom the surviving evidence suggests they were not active at a local level at this juncture.

Figure 2.2: MPs professions 1692.



The information in this chart is again based on data collated from the *History of Irish Parliament* entries. I have attempted to extrapolate what was the dominant extra parliamentary activity of each MP elected to this parliament. Many of the members in the other activities were also landowners. This is especially true of those who served in the military. The number categorised as soldiers may also be artificially high because of the involvement of so many of the Protestant gentry in the Williamite campaign in Ireland.

Figure 2.3: MPs fathers Professions/background.



The information in this chart is again based on data collated from the *History of Irish Parliament* entries. I have attempted to extrapolate what was the paternal background of each MP elected to this parliament. Many of the members in the other activities were also landowners for instance, especially the Peers and the Baronets. Those listed in the other category include Sir Patrick Dunn whose father was a dyer, Conolly's father who was an innkeeper, as well as the two sons of bankers and Sir Cyril Wyche whose father was a diplomat. Information on the backgrounds of MPs is quite scarce and this table can only act as a guide to the patrilineal background of the members elected in 1692.

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T 519	Transcripts of State Papers, Ireland 1717-19
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T 580	Transcripts of State Papers, Ireland 1723-24
T 610	Transcripts of State Papers, Ireland 1725-27
T 659	Transcripts of State Papers, Ireland 1727-29
T 2825	Castletown (Conolly) Papers
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