

Repository: Wicklow County Archives
Creator: Frizell Family
Title: Frizell Papers
Reference code: WWCA/PP2
Extent: 1 box

Description: The private papers of the Frizell family of Castlekevin are one of the more insightful private collections deposited in the Wicklow County Archives. From the vantage point of their estate near the village of Annamoe, the Frizells left behind ample documentary evidence of their lives in Wicklow, which spanned all the way from 1789 to 1922.

Middling gentry

Overall, the Frizells could be considered members of the middling gentry, whose land holdings were not extensive by the standards of the more well established titled families of the county. Nevertheless, it is middling-gentry types like this particular Anglo-Irish clan who were guaranteed a place at the local administrative table by virtue of their estates, Anglican faith, and public reputation for much of this 133 years period.

Of course, while the power base of such families was rapidly eroding due to the democratic transformations of the late 19th century – households cut from a similar cloth as the Frizells effectively dominated the key civic offices of Wicklow for a great majority of the pre-independence era.

An insightful archival collection

As the British author L.P. Hartley once famously put it “the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.” Using the five Frizell deed holders at Castlekevin as our travel guide to exploring this peculiar, by-gone age, we find abundant evidence of the repercussions of evolving political conditions on the traditional landlord class. Each Frizell on the estate was a character in their own right, and this series of articles attempts to track their relationship to the property, give some key details regarding their backgrounds, and survey their respective professional accomplishments.

Valued donation

We owe a significant debt of gratitude to the descendants of the Castlekevin branch, who kindly donated a superb collection of highly revealing documents, maps and land records to Wicklow County Archives. Indeed, the initial contact was made through our partnership with the National Museum of Ireland and this very community archives site Our Wicklow Heritage.

Charles Frizell DL (1738-1812)

The first Frizell to establish himself at Castlekevin was Charles Frizell Junior, born in Wexford in 1738. Both his father, Charles Frizell Senior, and his elder brother, Richard, were professional land surveyors and

cartographers based in the wider county. Although Charles Senior may have begun life as a humble freeholder, by 1748 he was employed under the Deputy Surveyor General of Ireland. Demands for his highly skilled services brought Charles Senior in touch with many of Ireland's premiere landowning families, most prominent among them being the Viscounts Loftus, who held their impressive Wexford family seat at Loftus Hall.

Talented surveyors

Trained in the vocation by their adroit father, Charles Junior and Richard rapidly made a name for themselves by the sweat of their brow, and their artistic prowess as map-makers. Indeed, a significant volume of their undertakings are still intact in the National Library. Unlike many of their contemporaries in the profession, the Frizell brothers went a step beyond simply depicting measurements of allotments, and the names of tenant farmers. As a matter of fact, they frequently added elaborate notes to their surveys, giving instructions on how to maximise the agricultural utility of the estates. This was likely a factor in Richard's hiring as the land agent to Henry Loftus, 1st Earl of Ely (1709-1783) in 1777, who entrusted the family with the care of his lands at Rathfarnham Castle.

Castlekevin heir

Twice a widower, Frizell first married Sarah Adrien in 1768, which eventually produced the future Castlekevin heir in 1781, also named Charles Junior. After Sarah died in 1786, he wedded the much younger Mary Ball in 1792, the daughter of a Dublin merchant with landed interests in Newtownmountkennedy. Unfortunately, she too passed away within a year of the ceremony. Yet Charles' first experiences in dipping his toes in the Wicklow waters date back to at least the end of the 1760s. In 1767, Charles single-handedly surveyed the estate of Piedmont in Ballinacor in the possession of Robert Hellen – who later rose to become a Wexford MP and Solicitor General of Ireland. Additionally, by 1771, the brothers conducted a contract for Colonel Thomas Cobbe, the MP for Swords, who held the deeds to lands in the villages of Lacken and Ballyknockan.

Estate map 1777

By the time Richard had established himself as land agent to the Earl of Ely, Charles managed to acquire an old map of the Castlekevin demesnes, which surely influenced his decision to ultimately settle on the expansive property. In elaborately illustrated detail, each building, tenancy, and acreage of the various land holdings are carefully listed by a professional cartographer, Michael Curwen. Note that slight amendments have been made to the list of tenants in the bottom left hand corner under the heading of "references", most likely in the handwriting of Charles himself, along with some adjustments to the acreage allotment on the face of the map itself. It seems the Wexford native was planning to settle at Castlekevin from at least 1785, paying an initial instalment of £2000 in 1789, and setting up shop there shortly thereafter. As proprietor, Frizell primarily dwelt around the north-eastern portion of the map, in and around Willmount House. That being said, it took a number of decades

before all this land fully belonged to the Frizells – as the estate was purchased gradually in parcels, with further acquisitions continuing until 1826.

1798 Rebellion

After arriving at Castlekevin, using his business and marital ties advantage – Charles quickly advanced up the ladder of local government. By April 1792, Frizell was recorded as a member of the Wicklow Grand Jury. The following year, he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of the County, entitling him to use the post-nominal letters “DL”. But trouble brewed on the horizon, as the British Isles entered a prolonged period of warfare with Revolutionary France. Local militias and yeomanry corps were established nationwide for internal defence, and like many men of similar status – Frizell joined their ranks. His loyalism made him a target of Joseph Holt and his United Irishmen followers, and Willmount House was put to the torch by the insurrectionists in June 1798. Present in the burning building during this incident, Charles is rumoured to have dived out the window with a bag of money in his hand, barely escaping alive. Subsequently, he put in a claim with Dublin Castle, reporting the loss of his “house, furniture, cattle, wine, hay, straw.”

Troubles with United Irishmen at Castlekevin continued during the period of post-rebellion unrest. In December 1800, the infamous Rathdrum Calvary attempted to hunt down a number of Michael Dwyer’s associates hiding on the estate – Andrew Thomas, John Harman, and John Byrne. A Castlekevin tenant, Matthew MacDaniel, was reported to be concealing arms and rebels in his cottage. Seeing the writing on the wall, McDaniel sprinted towards Willmount House, only to be identified (probably by Charles himself) and quickly apprehended. McDaniel’s cottage was then set ablaze by loyalists, and not realising the amount of gunpowder hidden within – they accidentally provoked an earth-shaking explosion. The fate of the remaining rebels at the hands of the Calvary was rather grizzly. Thomas was pistol whipped, shot in the leg, and trampled with a horse until death. Subsequently, his corpse was decapitated – and the severed head displayed as a warning atop the Flannel Hall in Rathdrum. Harman succeeded in fleeing to the hills, but Byrne was captured, and turned against his allies to save himself from the hangman’s noose.

Final days

When stability eventually returned, Frizell resumed his activities as a land surveyor, long into old age. In August 1810, he wrote his last will and testament during a map-making expedition to Cavan. After suffering what was, in his own words, a “very severe attack of the bowels”, Charles requested to be laid to rest in St. Canice’s Churchyard in Finglas. Nevertheless, he survived this bout of illness, although the ailment probably diminished his last reserves of strength. When Charles died on 5 January 1812, at close to 74 years old, he left Castlekevin to Charles Junior, and donated £200 to provide meals to the underprivileged of Finglas.

Doctor Charles Frizell (1781-1866)

Charles Frizell Junior was a very different character to his father, and broke away from the family profession – opting instead for a career in medicine. As a result of his father’s mobile occupation, it is almost impossible to definitively establish his place of birth (most likely Dublin or Wexford), but his headstone helpfully records a date of birth of 1781. Charles Junior attended Trinity College Dublin to become an obstetrician, where he gained a B.A. in 1805, an M.B. in 1808, and eventually – an M.A. in 1832.

Estate development

In 1812, the heir married Margaret Jones of Westmeath, and the marital alliance came with a respectable dowry – which was used to construct Castlekevin House, and to assume ownership of further lands on the estate. An expert in the field of maternity care, Charles worked in British Lying-In Hospital in Holborn, London, from 1815 to 1817. As he made a name for himself in the profession, he established a practice out of 16 Warrington Place, South Dublin, and was renowned for being the “discoverer of the therapeutic effects of the larch bark in bronchital and intermitting affections.”

It appears that Doctor Frizell was determined to expand the remit of Castlekevin, but it took him a number of years to put together the necessary funds to become the dominant landlord in the townland. In order to fulfil this ambition, by September 1826 – he was able to put together the means to buy out the remaining aristocratic landowners on the estate in a massive land-deal, probably falling into a mountain of debt to achieve this overarching goal. This would have surely been an immensely challenging undertaking – as the individuals with pre-existing claims to Castlekevin properties included Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston, William Henry Candevish-Bentick Scott, 4th Duke of Portland, and George William Pierrepont Bentick Esquire.

Managing the estate

Following the land deal, an 1831 entry in the Tithe Applotment Books renders some valuable information on the Doctor’s stewardship of the property. Frizell family members aside, 26 tenants are recorded as living at Castlekevin, guaranteeing the landlord £297 in annual rental revenues. Around this same time, Charles found himself in disagreement with a nearby landlord, Henry Grattan Junior, who occupied the Tinnahinch estate once owned by his famous father. It took until 1835 before a legal resolution was found, which involved Frizell and Grattan trading several of their respective tenants.

When Castlekevin appeared in Lewis’ Topographical Dictionary of Ireland in 1837, the property was depicted with high praise, as the author noted the landscape was “rich and diversified”, with the estate of “Dr. Frizell occupying a lofty eminence richly planted with firs and other forest trees, and commanding an extensive and delightful view.” Further

evidence regarding the condition of Castlekevin can be found in an 1843 entry of the Irish valuation records, which demonstrates the diversity of agriculture practised by the landlord.

Famine

When the Great Famine struck Ireland, the Frizell family felt obliged to do their part in securing local relief. The Doctor's son and heir, yet another Charles Frizell Junior – acted as Secretary to the Glendalough and Calary Relief Commission, and succeeded in raising £75 from the big-wigs of wider Wicklow.

Increased revenue

By the time Castlekevin was recorded in Griffith's Valuations in 1854, Frizell is noted as possessing over 1448 acres, containing 28 tenants – with families first appearing on the 1777 survey map still present on the estate. From the whole venture, the Doctor was earning £455 a year in rental revenues. However, debts from the 1826 land-purchase agreement appear to have still haunted the family, a problem that would greatly intensify once Charles Junior took charge as landlord.

In 1857, the Doctor accidentally stumbled across an undetermined type of fern on his property, which had not yet been documented by botanists. Subsequently, the sample was analysed by Botanic Gardens of Trinity College, where it was christened "Frizelliae" to credit its chief discoverer.

Final days

Short of money, Frizell continued to practise medicine well into advanced age, and it was at his Warrington Place practice that he eventually passed away on 19 March 1866 – at the age of 83. Charles was also laid to rest at St. Canice's Churchyard in Finglas, to be buried next to his father, wife, and sisters.

Additional biographical notes:

Spelling of family name varies, usually listed as either Frizell, Frizzell or Frizelle – the Frizzells of Castlekevin favoured Frizell.

The main deed holders of this family mentioned in the documents include the first occupant of Castlekevin House, Charles Frizell (1741-1812), Doctor Charles Robert Frizell MD (1781-1866), Charles Frizell Esquire JP (1818-1892), Rev. Charles William Frizell (1850-1920) and Walter Hugh Frizell J.P. (1855-1930).

Doctor Charles Frizell death notice in Belfast Newsletter (22 March 1866 Edition) following his death in Dublin on 19 March 1866 (www.ancestry.com).

The original Charles Frizell and Doctor Charles Frizell are buried in St. Canice's Church graveyard, Finglas.

Charles Frizell Esquire death notice in Belfast Newsletter (29 June 1892 Edition) following his death in Antrim on 28 June 1892 (www.ancestry.com).

Further information

Article on the Frizells by James Doyle, "The Frizell Family of Castle Kevin" Roundwood & District Historical Society Journal no. 22 (2011).
Article by James Robinson, "Charles Frizell (1738-1812): A Surveyor in Co. Kildare" Dublin Historical Record, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring 2005).

Doctor Charles Frizell maintained medical practice on 16 Warrington Place, Dublin (www.ancestry.com).

Charles Frizell Esquire donated a green sandpiper shot on Annamoe estate to the Natural History Museum of the Royal Dublin Society in 1870 (from The Journal of the Royal Dublin Society, Volume 5, p. 521).

Family tradition of expertise in surveying and map-making.

Significant evidence of periodic financial difficulties throughout the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, with their land holdings repeatedly sold or leased. Family was boycotted during the period of land agitation in the late 19th century.

Synge family rented Castlekevin family home for seven summers between 1892-1901, available for cheap rent due to boycott of Frizell family (from Wicklow: History and Society (Hannigan & Nolan (Eds.), 1994, p. 696).

Charles Frizell Esquire appears in records of Encumbered Estates in 1867, 1874, 1875 and 1876 (www.ancestry.com).

Charles Frizell Esquire brought before Petty Session Court in Rathdrum by Richard Cullen on 18 July 1889 (www.ancestry.com).

Charles Frizell Esquire and his father Doctor Frizell each contributed a sum to the Glendalough Famine Relief funds in 6 May 1847 (£2 and £3, respectively) where the younger Charles acted as secretary to the local relief commission (www.ancestry.com).

Information on the Frizell genealogy at <https://alison-stewart.blogspot.com/2013/08/> (accessed 1/11/23) - Charles Frizell Jr, son of Dr Charles Frizell married Jane Bourne (of Peter Bourne and Ellen Gibbs) in St Peter's Dublin, 1849. Their children include Charles Frizell born circa 1850 and Walter Hugh Frizell born 1856. Walter married Clara Maud de Vere Wellesley in 1896, their daughter Hyacinth was born in Singapore in 1897. Hyacinth married Arthur J Van Praagh, London 1922.

Oscar Bryan, Wicklow County Archives, December 2022

List of records

Leases and agreements

Title: Copy Marriage settlement of Reverend Edward Whitty of Queens County and Mary Hill

Date: 1776-1793

Ref. code: PP2/1/1

Description: Copy Marriage settlement of Reverend Edward Whitty of Queens County and Mary Hill of Dublin, document signed and dated 1793, referring to the earlier agreement dated 1776

Title: Property files for Doctor Charles Frizell

Date: 1775-1810

Ref. code: PP2/1/2

Description: Barrister Richard Walker's opinion and approbation of property files for Doctor Charles Frizell, includes details of deeds from 1775 and 1776, document is undated, probably circa 1810

Title: Castlekevin lands in Registry of Deeds

Date: 1711-1817

Ref. code: PP2/1/3

Description: Searches made for deeds relating to Castlekevin lands in Registry of Deeds between 1711 and 1817, authored by Doctor Charles Frizell

Title: Lease between Doctor Charles Frizell to lease farm to William Cullen

Date: 1820

Ref. code: PP2/1/4

Description: Agreement between Doctor Charles Frizell to lease farm to William Cullen of Castlekevin for the lifetime of Richard Cullen from 29 September 1820

Title: Lease between Doctor Charles Frizell and Francis Graham

Date: 1820

Ref. code: PP2/1/5

Description: Agreement between Doctor Charles Frizell to lease farm to Francis Graham for the lifetime of John Graham from 29 September 1820

Title: Lease between Doctor Charles Frizell and James McLoughlin

Date: 1820

Ref. code: PP2/1/6

Description: Agreement between Doctor Charles Frizell to lease farm to James McLoughlin for the lifetime of James McCoughlin, dated 29 September 1820

Title: Copy lease of Castlekevin from George William Pierrepont Bentinck Esquire and others (Lord Palmerston and Charles Frizell) to Walter Bourne Esquire

Date: 1826

Ref. code: PP2/1/7

Description: Copy lease of Castlekevin from George William Pierrepont Bentinck Esquire and others (Lord Palmerston and Charles Frizell) to Walter Bourne Esquire, dated 23 September 1826

Title: Legal advice to Doctor Frizell covering demarcation of lands with estate of Henry Grattan Junior

Date: 1835

Ref. code: PP2/1/8

Description: Case on behalf of Doctor Frizell for the advice and opinion of Edward Sutton, covering demarcation of lands between the estate of Doctor Frizell and Henry Grattan Junior., dated 30 July 1835

Title: Mortgage of Life Insurance Policy Document by Charles Frizell

Date: 1871

Ref. code: PP2/1/9

Description: Mortgage of Life Insurance Policy Document authored by Charles Frizell Esquire to Solicitor William Gosselin Toomey of York Street Dublin, dated 26 September 1871

Title: Registry of Deeds searches by Charles Frizell

Date: 1776-1866

Ref. code: PP2/1/10

Description: List of registry searches for land records conducted by Charles Frizell Esquire (covering period between 1776 and 1843) for the approval of Samuel Fenton Esquire, dated 19 May 1866

Title: Loan agreement between Charles Frizell and William Wentworth Fitzwilliam Dick of Humewood MP

Date: 1866

Ref. code: PP2/1/11

Description: Articles of Agreement for Charles Frizell to borrow £1,000 at 4.5% interest rate from William Wentworth Fitzwilliam Dick of Humewood MP, dated July 1866

Title: Charles Frizell transfer of funds to Symthe

Date: 1866

Ref. code: PP2/1/12

Description: Agreement between Charles Cannon, Elizabeth Abigail Smythe and Charles Frizell Esquire for Frizell to transfer funds to Symthe, dated October 1866

Title: Loan repayment agreement, Charles Frizell to repay Reverend Dunton Dick Hume

Date: 1867

Ref. code: PP2/1/13

Description: Memorandum of Agreement for Charles Frizell Esquire to repay loan to the Reverend Dunton Dick Hume, dated 1 April 1867

Title: Lease agreement, Charles Frizell and James Rotchford

Date: 1875

Ref. code: PP2/1/14

Description: Agreement between Charles Frizell Esquire and Shoemaker James Rotchford of Castlekevin regarding the letting of farm previously in possession of Peter Byrne, from 25 September 1875

Title: Lease agreement, Charles Frizell and Elizabeth Coleman

Date: 1876

Ref. code: PP2/1/15

Description: Agreement between Charles Frizell Esquire and Elizabeth Coleman of Tomriland regarding the letting of farm previously in possession of Abraham Williams, dated 26 July 1876

Title: Lease agreement, Charles Frizell Esquire and Henry Harding

Date: 1877

Ref. code: PP2/1/16

Description: Agreement between Charles Frizell Esquire and Henry Harding regarding letting of farm in previous possession of Abraham Williams, dated 25 June 1877

Title: Land Commission Fair Rent notice to Charles Frizell on behalf of Edward Smith

Date: 1882

Ref. code: PP2/1/17

Description: Notice of application to the Land Commission Court to fix fair rent by tenant Edward Smith of Castlekevin to landlord Charles Frizell of Castlekevin, dated 11 February 1882

Title: Land Commission Fair Rent notice to Charles Frizell on behalf of Peter Byrne

Date: 1882

Ref. code: PP2/1/18

Description: Notice of application to the Land Commission Court to fix fair rent by tenant Peter Byrne of Annamoe to landlord Charles Frizell of Castlekevin, dated 28 September 1882

Title: Lease agreement, Charles Frizell and Mary Farrell

Date: 1883

Ref. code: PP2/1/19

Description: Memorandum of Agreement between Charles Frizell of Castlekevin and Widow Mary Farrell regarding the tenancy of land, dated 4 April 1883

Title: Land Commission order to Charles Frizell to fix fair rent for Anne Doyle

Date: 1883

Ref. code: PP2/1/20

Description: Irish Land Commission Court order for Charles Frizell Esquire to fix fair rent for Anne Doyle, dated 28 April 1883

Title: Land Commission Appeal notice to Charles Frizell regarding tenant Anne Doyle

Date: 1884

Ref. code: PP2/1/21

Description: Irish Land Commission Court of Appeal notice to Charles Frizell Esquire concerning rents paid by Anne Doyle, dated 30 July 1884

Title: Land Commission letter to Charles Frizell concerning rent of Anne Doyle

Date: 1888

Ref. code: PP2/1/22

Description: Irish Land Commission letter to Charles Frizell concerning rate of rent of Anne Doyle, dated 28 July 1888

Title: Land Commission rent agreement between Charles Frizell Esquire and Martin Farrell

Date: 1889

Ref. code: PP2/1/23

Description: Irish Land Commission Certificate of Agreement fixing Judicial rent between Charles Frizell Esquire and Martin Farrell of Castlekevin, from 6 May 1889

Title: Notice of application by Anne Doyle to fix fair rent

Date: 1889

Ref. code: PP2/1/24

Description: Notice of application by Anne Doyle to fix fair rent, dated 20 July 1889

Title: Rent agreement between Charles Frizell Esquire and John Byrne

Date: 1889

Ref. code: PP2/1/25

Description: Memorandum of Agreement between Charles Frizell Esquire and tenant John Byrne regarding annual rents, dated 7 September 1889

Title: Land Commission Order to Charles Frizell for tenant Mary Cullen

Date: 1890

Ref. code: PP2/1/26

Description: Irish Land Commission Order compelling Charles Frizell Esquire to freeze rent of Mary Cullen of Castlekevin at £13, from 14 January 1890

Title: Land Commission agreement fixing rents between Charles Frizell and Anne Doyle

Date: 1890

Ref. code: PP2/1/27

Description: Irish Land Commission Certificate of Agreement fixing judicial rents between Charles Frizell Esquire and Anne Doyle, dated 18 December 1890

Title: Hunting and mining agreement between Charles Frizell and Henry Harding

Date: 1891

Ref. code: PP2/1/28

Description: Memorandum of Agreement regarding tenant rights to hunt and mine between Charles Frizell and Henry Harding, from 22 May 1891

Title: Grazing agreement between Reverend C.W. Frizell and Henry Harding

Date: 1895

Ref. code: PP2/1/29

Description: Grazing agreement between Reverend C.W. Frizell of Belfast and Henry Harding of Castlekevin, dated 1 May 1894 to 1 April 1895

Title: Newspaper cutting from Irish Times, article featuring Castlekevin by C.L. James

Date: 1900

Ref. code: PP2/1/30

Description: Cutting from the Irish Times newspaper on The Castles of Ireland: Castlekevin authored by C.L. James, published December 29 1900

Title: Land purchase agreement between Walter Hugh Frizell and Arthur Cox

Date: 1921

Ref. code: PP2/1/31

Description: Land Purchase Agreement between Walter Hugh Frizell Esquire of Kensington, London and Arthur Cox Esquire of St. Stephens Green, Dublin from 1921

Title: Description of Castlekevin estate

Date: 1922

Ref. code: PP2/1/32

Description: Description of Castlekevin estate dated 25 April 1922

Title: Purchase agreement between Walter Hugh Frizell and Thomas George and Geraldine Stevens

Date: 1922

Ref. code: PP2/1/33

Description: Land Purchase Agreement between Walter Hugh Frizell of Kensington, London to Thomas George Stevens and Geraldine Stevens of Rathfarnham, Dublin dated 1922

Maps and plans

Title: Map of the lands of Castlekevin estate by Michael Curwen, 1777

Date: 1777

Ref. code: PP2/2/1

Description: Map of the lands of Castlekevin estate, dated 30 April 1777 by Michael Curwen. Includes names of tenants, numbered references to holdings, house drawings, location of Castle.

Title: Undated map of Castlekevin

Date:

Ref. code: PP2/2/2

Description: Undated map of Castlekevin

Title: Map of the lands of Castlekevin, dated 1823, 1883, and undated

Date: 1823

Ref. code: PP2/2/3

Description: Map of the lands of Castlekevin, dated 1823

Title: Map of commons between Castlekevin and Trooperstown, 1833

Date: 1833

Ref. code: PP2/2/4

Description: Map of commons between the townlands of Castlekevin and Trooperstown from survey conducted in August 1833

Title: Map of the lands of Castlekevin, dated 1883

Date: 1883

Ref. code: PP2/2/5

Description: Map of the lands of Castlekevin, dated 1883

Title: Undated map of Castlekevin

Date:

Ref. code: PP2/2/6

Description: Undated map of Castlekevin

Title: Watercolour sketch of Castlekevin House by Clara Maud Frizell, undated [early 20th century]

Date: [1896-1930]

Ref. code: PP2/2/7

Description: Watercolour sketch of Castlekevin House by Clara Maud Frizell, undated [early 20th century]