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THE DESMOND LORDSHIP, 1540-1583

by

ANTHONY MARY McCORMACK

A dissertation submitted for the degree of Ph.D.
at the University of Dublin.

2001
DECLARATION

This thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university.

This thesis is entirely my own work.

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Anthony M. McCormack
Dedicated, with love and affection, to

Paul T. McCormack,

mi optime et suavissime frater.
I wish to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to my supervisor Dr Ciaran Brady for his insightful criticism, constructive suggestions, and wise counsel during my studies. His constant and good natured encouragement, advice, and support contributed immeasurably to the completion of this thesis.

I also wish to thank Mr James McGuire, M.A., and Dr Declan Downey for their advice and friendship, and my former teachers, Dr Art Cosgrove and Dr Margaret MacCurtain, O.P., who first introduced me to the early modern period. Thanks also to Dr Mary Henry, and to Dr Katharine Simms for her assistance with Irish bardic poetry.

Very special thanks to Sheila McMorrow of the Geography Department, T.C.D., for assistance with the production of the maps.

Thanks to Dr John Cooper, currently of Sussex, and to my friends and fellow doctoral students Dr David Murphy, Mr Ciaran Diamond, and Ms Keiko Inoue.

Special thanks to my old friends Tom Giblin, M.A., who assisted me with the translation of a number of Latin documents, and Darren MacEiteagain, M.A.

I wish to acknowledge the generous financial assistance provided by the University of Dublin, in the form of a Trinity College Postgraduate Award, 1996-9, and by the Department of Modern History, in the form of the Cluff Memorial Studentship, 1997. Awards from the Trinity Trust Travel Grant Scheme and the Department of Modern History greatly facilitated an intensive research trip to England.

I wish to thank the staff of the following: Library, Trinity College, Dublin; National Archives of Ireland; National Library of Ireland; Royal Irish Academy; Public Record Office, Kew; British Library, London; Lambeth Palace Library, London; Bodleian Library, Oxford.
I especially wish to thank my parents for their endless support, love, and encouragement. Thanks in particular to my mother who proof-read the text of this thesis. Any errors, however, are mine.
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SUMMARY

In this study the careers of James, fourteenth earl of Desmond, and Gerald, fifteenth earl, are analyzed, both in terms of their relationships with other lords, vassals, and allies in Munster, and their dealings with Dublin and Whitehall. In doing so, it is hoped that the causes of the collapse of the Desmond lordship will be elucidated.

The study commences with an examination of the historical development of the Desmond landholdings, from small beginnings in the late twelfth century down to the sixteenth century when the earldom was estimated to extend over half a million acres. The attenuated nature of the lordship, and the consequent implications for its defence, are then discussed. In the following chapter, the administration of the earldom is described, with particular emphasis on the heavily militarized character of the system, and the resultant economic and political costs for the Desmonds.

Having established the power and regional context of the Desmonds, the career of Earl James is then examined. His deliberately cultivated relationship of mutual support with Lord Deputy Sir Anthony St Leger is described, as is his renewal of the earldom, and the restoration of Desmond preeminence in Munster.

The career of his son Gerald is then evaluated. The series of military and legal disputes which he became embroiled in with Thomas Butler, tenth earl of Ormond, is analyzed, as are the repercussions, most notably the sharp deterioration in his relationship with Dublin, and his arrest on three occasions. His last arrest resulted in his detention for over five years, and in his absence command of the earldom was given to James Fitz Maurice, Gerald’s first cousin. Fitz Maurice’s use of his position to launch a rebellion in order to restore the Roman Catholic faith in Ireland is described, as are his possible influences. Gerald’s negotiations with both Whitehall
and Dublin for his return to Munster are then surveyed, as are his escape from Dublin and his brief, armed resistance. His relationship with the returned Lord Deputy Sir Henry Sidney, and with Lord President Sir William Drury, is then explored, as are the negotiations which culminated in his eventual acceptance of composition and the abolition of coyne and livery.

Before that agreement could be implemented, however, Fitz Maurice launched a second rebellion. The character of the conflict is analyzed, as are the tactics of the rebel forces, both of which were influenced by the attenuated nature of the Desmond lordship, and which reflected the continuity of the problems which had beset the earldom pre-rebellion. The nature of the English forces charged with the defeat of the rebellion is also examined. The confederate nature of the rebel leadership, and their various motivations for participation in the fighting, are then explored. The importance to Gerald’s strategy for survival of his contacts with Catholic powers in Europe is investigated, as are the negotiations he entered into with English officials. Finally, the social and economic consequences of the conflict are shown.
The term Hiberno-Norman is used in this study to denote the ethnic grouping which the Fitzgerald, earls of Desmond, and the Desmond Geraldines were part of. The term is descriptive and does not signify political allegiance. The Hiberno-Normans were politically ‘English’. They owed political allegiance to the Crown of England, and were born and lived in the lordship (and kingdom) of Ireland which was a constituent part of the dominions of that Crown. Geographically they were ‘Irish’, in that they were born, lived, and died in the lordship of Ireland, while their estates were exclusively, or predominantly, located in Ireland. Ethnically they were descended from the Norman conquerors of England. The term Hiberno-Norman, therefore, does not indicate a national identity shared by the descendants of the Anglo-Norman invaders of the late twelfth century and the native Gaelic-Irish.

The numbering of the Fitzgerald, earls of Desmond, is consistent with that employed in the New History of Ireland, ix, pp 168, 232-3.

Dates are given in Old Style unless otherwise stated. The year is taken to commence on 1 January.

Modern spellings of placenames are used in the text.

Sums of money mentioned in the text are denominated in Sterling unless

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1 The choice of term applied to the descendants of the Anglo-Norman invaders of the twelfth century has generated considerable historical debate, particularly in relation to the assumptions and implications associated with them. For the view that the most correct or appropriate term is ‘English’ (‘English by blood’, ‘English of Ireland’) see Michael Richter, ‘The interpretation of medieval Irish history’ in I.H.S., xxiv, no. 95 (May 1985), pp 289-98; S.G. Ellis, ‘Nationalist historiography and the English and Gaelic worlds in the late middle ages’ in I.H.S., xxv, no. 97 (May 1986), pp 1-18; idem, ‘Historiographical debate: representations of the past in Ireland: whose past and whose present ?’ in I.H.S., xxvii, no. 108 (Nov. 1991), pp 299-302. For the view that the term ‘English’ is not appropriate see Brendan Bradshaw, ‘Nationalism and historical scholarship in modern Ireland’ in I.H.S., xxvi, no. 104 (Nov. 1989), pp 329-51; Art Cosgrove, ‘The writing of Irish medieval history’ in I.H.S., xxvii, no. 106 (Nov. 1990), pp 97-111. For a ‘middle way’, which accepts that ‘English’ or ‘English-Irish’ was most commonly used by contemporaries but which uses a different term, such as ‘Anglo-Irish’, in a purely descriptive way, see Ciaran Brady, ‘Spenser’s Irish crisis: humanism and experience in the 1590s’ in Past & Present, no. 111 (May 1996), pp 17-49.
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INTRODUCTION

In January 1541 James fitz John Fitzgerald was formally recognized as earl of Desmond, the fourteenth in a line which stretched back over two centuries. James allied himself very firmly with Lord Deputy Sir Anthony St Leger, supported the latter’s political programme, and helped maintain law and order in Munster, so much so that the province was largely devoid of violence for the duration of his rule. In return, St Leger assisted James as he established a position of preeminence over both the Desmond Geraldines and the wider Munster community. In this way James ushered in an era of political and economic regeneration for the earldom and his family. His son and successor Gerald, it seemed, should have enjoyed a long and prosperous rule as earl in continuation of his father. Instead he destroyed the earldom and the fortunes of his family, for in November 1583, little over forty years after the recognition of James, Gerald would be hunted down and killed whilst in rebellion, his earldom physically and politically in ruins. This thesis sets out to explain the demise of the Desmond Geraldines.

The Desmond Geraldines had been one of the most successful Hiberno-Norman families in Ireland between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. Descended from one of the first Anglo-Norman invaders in the late 1160s, they had come to dominate the political, economic and social life of Munster for much of the succeeding four centuries. Their lands stretched throughout the province, and by the sixteenth century were believed to provide them with an annual income of several thousand pounds. Their position among the first rank of the Hiberno-Norman nobility ensured that the earls had played a significant role in the political development of the lordship of Ireland. Thus three of the earls had served as lord deputy or justiciar, while others

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1 For the use of the term Hiberno-Norman in this study see Notes and Conventions, p. ix.
had held lesser posts of national or regional importance.

In spite of their prominence and longevity, however, relatively little has been written about the Desmond Geraldines. That this is so is due to two main factors, the first of which is the lack of records which relate to the Desmonds. In stark contrast to the Butler earls of Ormond, the historical records, documents, and personal papers of the Desmonds have not survived, the administrative records of their earldom and lands destroyed in the series of conflicts which engulfed Munster in the late sixteenth century. The fire in the Four Courts in 1922 compounded this difficulty when it destroyed vast quantities of the records of central government and the law courts. As a result almost nothing remains of the written records of the Desmonds, their earldom, or their lordship, save for occasional items copied by industrious antiquarians in the nineteenth century. What remains extant, therefore, consists largely of letters to or from central officials which refer to the Desmonds and Munster in document collections such as the State Papers, the Carte papers and the Carew papers. The limited range of documents thus restricts the aspects of the Desmonds which can be written about.

Additionally, the historiography of medieval and early modern Ireland has traditionally been concerned with the degree to which the English controlled the island and the problems associated with the maintenance of that control. In particular, the history of sixteenth century Ireland has been written largely in terms of 'the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland', the largely military process whereby the Elizabethan state crushed a whole series of rebellions which left the crown in complete physical control of Ireland by the start of the seventeenth century. This concentration on the actions of, and reactions to, central government reflects not only the subject matter of the extant historical material, but also the desire of historians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to construct political narratives for nation states. The
political narrative of Tudor Ireland has traditionally been centred on the Pale and the administrative capital Dublin. The relative remoteness of Munster from the Pale, together with its relative freedom from central government supervision, meant that almost the only occasions the Desmonds appeared in the political narrative were the rebellions they participated in. The nature of the political narrative thus narrowed the focus of historical writing.

These two related factors thus served to limit the range of topics about the Desmonds which were written about, although two general histories of the family written by Desmond loyalists appeared in the seventeenth century. These aside, the vast majority of works about the Desmonds concern their involvement in rebellious activity, and during the latter half of the sixteenth century these centred on the rebellions of 1569 and 1579. The historiography of the Desmonds contains a wide variety of explanations for these rebellions. Seventeenth century Catholic writers viewed James fitz Maurice’s rebellion in 1569 as an attempt to vindicate the rights of Gerald, fifteenth earl of Desmond, and to secure his release from detention in London, while Desmond’s Catholic faith was described as being the mainstay of the 1579 revolt. Other seventeenth century writers gave variations on these explanations. The Four Masters state that Fitz Maurice in 1569 led the opposition to the reformation, while ten years later Desmond rebelled because his lands had been destroyed by crown forces despite assurances that they would be safe. Russell believed that Fitz Maurice sought to defend Desmond’s rights in the earldom and to reestablish the Roman Catholic faith in Ireland in 1569, while he blamed Desmond’s rebellion in 1579


4 *A.F.M. sub annis*, 1569, 1579.
on the earl’s flawed character and the actions of Fitz Maurice and his brother Sir John. English writers, such as Camden, referred to Desmond in 1579 simply as a traitor, and highlighted the influence Nicholas Sanders, an English Catholic exile, had had on him.

This divergence of views continued on into the nineteenth century. Musgrave, writing about the 1798 rebellion, placed the two rebellions in a long list of Irish Catholic revolts. Froude believed the 1569 outbreak was due to fears over land titles and colonization, with religion being used to elicit support from Catholic Europe, while the actions of the English military forces in 1579, especially Sir Nicholas Malby, convinced Desmond he was beyond hope of pardon which led him to rebel. Bagwell, for his part, stated that Fitz Maurice had rebelled in 1569 due to a belief that Desmond had been condemned to death or life imprisonment, while Desmond had only rebelled in 1579 after he had been proclaimed a traitor.

In the twentieth century, up until the 1970s, surveys of Irish history formed a consistent view that fears over colonization and, for Fitz Maurice, religion had caused the outbreak in 1569, while Desmond had been forced out into rebellion in 1579 by circumstances, although once out he was fully committed. Subsequent popular histories such as those of Brian FitzGerald and Richard Berleth, based on printed and

5 Russell, op. cit., pp 376-8, 384, 387, 393.
7 Richard Musgrave, Memoirs of the different rebellions in Ireland, from the arrival of the English: also a particular detail of that which broke out the 23rd of May, 1798; with the history of the conspiracy which preceded it, eds S.W. Myers and D.E. McKnight (4th ed., Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1995), pp 18-20.
calendared material, gave similar explanations. Sasso amended the view of 1569 slightly to stress Fitz Maurice’s impoverishment, while Chambers saw Fitz Maurice’s actions in both 1569 and 1579 as attempts to usurp Desmond’s position in the earldom.

A number of scholarly monographs specifically about the 1579 rebellion also give various interpretations, from the view that the rebellion was caused by religion and fear over the prospect of the destruction of the Desmond earldom and the loss of its lands, to the opinion that the crown’s coercion which followed Fitz Maurice’s return to Munster pushed Desmond out, while faction, both in Ireland and in England, was also put forward as a contributory factor. Canny’s book on mid-Elizabethan Ireland portrayed the 1569 rebellion as an attempt by Fitz Maurice to usurp Desmond, stressing Fitz Maurice’s landless status, and as a reaction to English plans for conquest and colonization, while Brady’s monograph found the instigation for events in 1569 in Fitz Maurice’s reaction to plans for reform in Munster, and for events a decade later in the disenchantment of Desmond’s brother Sir John and other Geraldines, together with the English military reaction.

Many factors have thus been put forward as having contributed to the rebellions of 1569 and 1579 and to the resultant collapse of the Desmonds, factors

which have ranged from the political and economic, to the religious and ideological. Evidence can be found to support each of these factors, but individually they are insufficient to explain the collapse. What is needed, therefore, is a broader context in which to examine the actions of earls James and Gerald, one which will show how each of these factors apply and how they interrelate. That context is to be found in the attempt by the early modern European state to reach an accommodation with magnates whose great power at the periphery gave them greater leverage in central politics.

In most European states during the early modern period the central authorities sought to redefine the relationship between the centre and the powerful aristocratic magnates in the regions. Whereas in the medieval period political power in the regions had traditionally been devolved, whether by design, circumstance, or neglect, to regional magnates, the early modern state sought to reclaim control over the entire realm. This trend of centralization was common to much of Europe and reflected in part the state’s increasing need to levy tax in order to wage war or defend itself. As a result the magnates faced a reduction in their military power, increased subordination to laws passed by the centre, and greater supervision of their local factional networks of family, servants, allies, and clients. They also faced usurpation in the role as advisers and counsellors of the crown by professional administrators, often lawyers.18

This process has sometimes been described as a ‘crisis of aristocracy’, whereby the aristocracy or upper nobility apparently lost their traditional role in society through a combination of impoverishment and the rise of a new ‘service nobility’.19 Thus in England by the end of the sixteenth century the power of the nobility had been weakened by that of courtiers. While Henry VII had ‘governed in

partnership with territorial magnates and their affinities’ his granddaughter Elizabeth governed ‘through her courtiers, their servants, and clients’. In Spain the sixteenth century witnessed the rise of the educated lesser nobility, while the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in France saw the rise of the noblesse de robe, those who achieved ennoblement through service in the state administration, allegedly at the expense of the noblesse d'épée, the nobility who served in the military.

More recent research has modified this view of a crisis and redesignated it as a period of political change. Thus, for example, the noblesse d'épée and the noblesse de robe had more in common than has been previously realized, while the preponderance of the latter in the administration of France did not presage the demise of the former. Both continued to exist thereafter. The state had no wish to destroy the nobility, who were often the most enthusiastic supporters of the crown, but instead sought to limit the ability of the magnates to obstruct or oppose the state’s policies, particularly in the regions. The practical manifestation of this witnessed the state reduce to the greatest possible degree the capacity of the magnates for violence or for military action independent of the central authority. The nobility would continue to serve in the various European armies, but they would have their remaining private retinues controlled by the state. Private disputes would, therefore, be resolved by the law, without resort to violent, private feuds or raids. In this way powerful magnates would be accommodated within the emerging early modern state system.

In drawing upon the comparative perspective it is not intended to explain away the events in Munster during the later sixteenth century in terms of some preconceived model. Rather, it is intended that such an approach will set aside the traditional notions of the relationship between the Tudor state and feudal magnates in

Ireland, and in doing so allow the attempts of the Desmond Geraldines and the English crown to reach a mutual accommodation, and the character of the ultimate collapse of the Desmond lordship, to be seen in a clearer light.

The process of such accommodations has received little attention for early modern Ireland. Brady's article, which acknowledged the inadequacies of the traditional explanations for the 1579 rebellion, hints at that context by dealing with the crown and central officials in Whitehall, but limits the discussion to the role faction and English court politics played in the crisis. The only systematic examination of that process of accommodation with a peripheral magnate in Ireland has been Ellis's comparative study, which focused on the earl of Kildare in Ireland and lord Dacre in the north of England in the 1530s. Ellis argues that the lordship of Ireland and the north of England presented a largely common problem to Henry VIII. These two border regions were the only extended land frontiers along Henry's dominions, and both witnessed very high levels of raiding and small-scale warfare. In the absence of a standing army responsibility for the defence of these areas had been delegated to local marcher lords such as Kildare and Dacre. In the 1520s Henry had made unsuccessful attempts to replace both Kildare and Dacre. Both were reinstated, but their relationship with the king had been damaged. In 1534 Henry's trust in them collapsed completely as he suspected that an organized conspiracy of nobles, disaffected by his divorce and the reformation, was plotting to overthrow him. He, therefore, launched preemptive attacks on Kildare and Dacre, the two most militarily important nobles. As a result Henry was forced to reorganize the regional governments and pursue a more interventionist policy, a move which was not very successful in either region.

Dacre was tried for treason but was surprisingly acquitted. He did, however, lose his offices in the administration of the north of England, and also suffered very substantial economic penalties. Nevertheless he remained in possession of his lands
and was eventually rehabilitated and restored to some of his offices by Protector Somerset in 1549. Kildare, in contrast, died in the Tower, while his son, ‘Silken Thomas’, launched an unsuccessful rebellion, after which ‘Silken Thomas’ and his five uncles were executed. Only his half-brother survived by being secreted out of Ireland. He was eventually restored to the earldom in 1554, but did not regain all the Kildare lands, nor did he attain high political office. The houses of Kildare and Dacre thus achieved an eventual accommodation of sorts with the Tudor dynasty.23

The Tudor state tried to reach a similar accommodation with the Desmond Geraldines. There were, however, significant differences in the circumstances of Desmond’s position and that of Kildare. The process of accommodation with Desmond was designed to involve him in Dublin’s policy in Munster. In stark contrast Henry had sought to lessen Kildare’s power and influence on the administration of Ireland. The two processes thus set out to achieve fundamentally opposite objectives. Furthermore, Desmond, unlike Kildare, was not strictly a frontier lord for he faced potential enemies from all directions. While the eastern borders of Kildare’s lands were largely secured by the Pale, Desmond’s lands had no such safe borders. Desmond thus found himself more akin to an ‘outpost’ lord rather than a frontier lord.

This study will examine the actions of earls James and Gerald in the context of the Tudor state’s attempt to forge a new accommodation with these regional magnates. The first chapter places the Desmonds in their geographic setting and plots the growth and development of the earldom of Desmond from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. The following chapter then describes the administrative system which the Desmonds employed to govern their lordship. Central to this system was coyne and livery, a system of exactions which not only allowed the Desmonds to

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wield great military strength but also brought them into conflict with officials in Dublin and Whitehall who viewed coyne and livery as one of the main obstacles to the campaign to reform and Anglicize Ireland. Chapter three describes James, fourteenth earl of Desmond's, relationship with Lord Deputy Anthony St Leger and his enthusiastic acceptance of reform as a means to shore up his position. The following three chapters describe the actions of his son, Gerald, fifteenth earl of Desmond, his relationship with Lord Deputies Thomas, earl of Sussex, and Sir Henry Sidney, and Lord Justice Sir William Fitzwilliam, and in particular his strained and often violent relationship with Thomas Butler, tenth earl of Ormond. Chapter seven describes the course of the Desmond rebellion of 1579-83, analyzes the nature of the conflict, and characterizes the English military forces in Munster. Chapter eight explores the motivation of those who rebelled. Chapter nine reveals the diplomatic and political negotiations which were pursued against the background of the rebellion, while the final chapter describes the social and economic consequences of the conflict for Munster.

This study then is an attempt to move away from the conceptually narrow contexts in which the Desmonds have traditionally been assessed and to place earls James and Gerald in a context which will allow for a fuller explanation of their relationships with Dublin and Whitehall, and their ultimate collapse in the 1580s.
CHAPTER ONE
THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT
OF THE EARLDOM OF DESMOND

Munster in the sixteenth century was dominated by the two great earldoms of Desmond and Ormond. The latter was a relatively compact entity, composed of a largely coherent block of territory centred on the palatinate of Tipperary and the adjacent county of Kilkenny. In contrast, the earldom of Desmond was a much more dispersed entity, an amalgam of regions spread throughout Munster. This served to increase the amount of border areas the Desmonds had to contend with, a feature which allowed the earls to intervene militarily throughout the region, but which also necessitated strong defences against their neighbours. The nature of the earldom, therefore, had important consequences for the Desmonds in how they ran the earldom.

The topographical features of sixteenth century Munster were largely the same as those of the present-day, with the notable exception that there were many more areas of woodland and forest extending over greater areas than there are now. The Dingle peninsula was virtually split in two with the Brandon, Stradbally, and Slieve Mish mountains which ran east-west practically the whole length of the peninsula. The Kerry-Limerick-Cork border was dominated by the Mullaghareirk mountains, which extended into eastern Kerry close to Castleisland, western Limerick close to Shanid, and north-western Cork close to Buttevant. West of these were the Stack and Glanaruddery mountains. To the north and south of the Stack mountains respectively, were the Feale and the Maine rivers, which ran westward. Around
Lough Leane was the wood at Glenflesk, which in 1571 was estimated to cover an area of eight square miles (5,120 acres), while there were others at Glanrought, along the Roughty river, (about 7,600 acres), and Glengarriff (about 5,100 acres) on the Beara peninsula.¹

Across the Mullaghareirk mountains in Limerick were the rivers Deel and Maigue, which ran northwards into the river Shannon, while in the south of the county were the woods at Cleanglass (about 38,000 acres) and the Great Wood at Kilmore (about 28,800 acres).² To the east of the county lay Killhoogy woods, estimated at 44,800 acres, which was once referred to as the ‘the strongest fastnes’ in Munster.³ Along the Cork-Limerick-Tipperary border lay the Ballyhoura and the Galty (Slieve Grot) mountains, while to the east of Mitchelstown on the Cork-Tipperary-Waterford border were the Knockmealdown mountains. South of the Knockmealdown mountains, between Fermoy and Lismore, lay the Dromfinen woods, estimated to cover 7,680 acres.⁴ The three main rivers in Cork and Waterford, from north to south, the Blackwater, the Lee, and the Bandon, ran eastward across the length of Cork. Situated in central Cork between the Blackwater and Lee were the Boggerah and Nagles mountains.

The Comeragh mountains were in north-central Waterford. The last major river was the Suir which ran south down the centre of Tipperary and along the Tipperary-Waterford border. The Glen of Aherlow, between Slievenamuck to the north and the Galty mountains to the south, was heavily wooded and contained an estimated 30,000 acres of forest.⁵

¹ Munster, 1571 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 635, f. 117f).
² Munster, 1571 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 635, f. 117f); Certificate of castles defaced and fortified by Desmond, Mar. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/7, enclosure i).
³ Munster, 1571 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 635, f. 117f); Lord President Perrot to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 16 Sept. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/37/59, enclosure v).
⁴ Munster, 1571 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 635, f. 117f).
⁵ Certificate of castles defaced and fortified by Desmond, Mar. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/7, enclosure i).
These features served to determine the routes of communication within the province. Rivers were used to transport goods, with the Maine navigable by ‘hoies or bigg pinnaces’ up to Castlemaine, and by big boats after that point, while a ‘skiff’ of 12 tons burden could go up the Deel to Askeaton ‘at springtide’. Similarly, the Blackwater was navigable by a ‘boate of two tunnes’. The Shannon was navigable by ocean going vessels up to the city of Limerick which had a large harbour. A number of rivers were also bridged, with the Maine bridged at Castlemaine, while the Deel was bridged at both Askeaton, and Rathkeale, each of which were protected by castles. Perhaps the most famous, or notorious, bridge of the time was O’Brien’s Bridge over the Shannon, constructed of ‘ould tymber’ and estimated to be about 300 paces in length. With at least seven arches, it was protected by ‘two ffortresses, sett at eyther end of the same bridge’, one of which was ‘builded strongly xv or xvi foote high aboue the water’, which reflected its strategic importance in allowing for O’Brien intervention into the rest of Munster.

The topographical features also influenced the pattern of human settlement, with virtually all towns of the period located on the coast or along rivers. As well as the cities of Waterford, Cork and Limerick, the walled towns of the province included Dingle, Kinsale, Youghal, and Dungarvan, all port towns, along with Adare, which was built on the banks of the Maigue river, and Kilmallock, built along the Loobagh river which flowed into the Maigue. Other towns which may have had walls include the

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6 Lord Justice Pelham to the privy council, 9 July 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 351V-355V).
7 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 21-2).
9 Pelham to the privy council, 9 July 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 351V-355V).
10 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 21-2).
11 Pelham to the lords of the council, 29 Mar. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 286V-292V).
port of Tralee, and Askeaton and Rathkeale, both on the Deel, Croom, on the Maigue, and Mallow, on the Blackwater, while Ardfert was just a few miles inland from Tralee Bay.  

Although their location allowed for sea borne travel between the port towns, most traffic, however, went over well established land routes. There were two main routes for travel from Limerick into Kerry, the first of which went around the northern foothills of the Mullaghareirk mountains. A traveller would go west from Askeaton, in north-western Limerick, on to Glin or Tarbert or Carrigafoile, close to the Limerick-Kerry border, south to Listowel, or another crossing point on the Feale, and south to Tralee. The other route took the traveller over the Mullaghareirk mountains, from Newcastle West in south-west Limerick to Abbeyfeale or Port (Portrinard) castle, and south from there to Castleisland, to the east of the Glanaruddery mountains. The main route between Cork city and Limerick city went through a valley between the Boggerah and Nagle mountains, on to Mallow, where the Blackwater was crossed, around the western edge of the Ballyhoura mountains, through Kilmallock, and on over the Limerick plains. The Cork to Waterford route went via Youghal and Dungarvan.

Travel on these and other routes in Munster could be comparatively speedy, as indicated by analysis of tours around Munster undertaken by Lord Deputy Sir Henry Sidney in 1567 and 1575-6, Lord Justice Sir William Drury in 1578, and Lord Justice Sir William Pelham in 1580. Most of these journeys were completed in stages of between 12 and 19 miles, all completed in a day. Pelham’s march from Castlemaine to Cork city, which took five days, averaged about 12 miles a day, although this included searching for rebels. Above this range were Pelham’s 21 mile hike over the Mullaghareirk mountains, his two-day trip from Cork city to Limerick city, which

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13 For the walled towns of Munster see Avril Thomas, *The walled towns of Ireland*, ii, (Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 1992), passim.
averaged about 27 miles a day, and his one-day march from Askeaton to Buttevant of around 29 miles. While these figures are based on a small sample, with no information as to how many hours a day were spent marching, they give an indication of the speed at which a body of troops could travel around Munster. When compared with a European average of about forty kilometres for an ‘ordinary’ days journey in the period c.1450-c.1620, a pace equivalent to twenty five miles a day, travel around Munster on the main routes was not particularly slow, the topographical features not presenting any great difficulties to communication, at least in fine weather.

When weather conditions deteriorated, however, travel could become almost impossible. This was particularly true for travel over the Mullaghareirk mountains, which in the sixteenth century were known as the Slieve Luachra mountains. On one occasion Pelham found the ground so soft due to rain that he had to go around the mountain, while on another occasion the stormy weather left his men and horses completely exhausted after a twenty one mile march over the mountain. Pelham found weather conditions on Slieve Luachra so bad that he complained that ‘small difference appered (or yet doth) between this sommer and the moisteste tyme of winter’. Similarly, Wallop was once prevented from crossing the mountain by three

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14 Lord Deputy Sidney to the queen, 20 Apr. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/20/66); Sidney to the privy council, 27 Feb. 1576 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/55/19); Lord Justice Drury and Sir Edward Fitton to the privy council, 20 Nov. 1578 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 386v-392v); Pelham to the privy council in England, 9 July 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 351v-355v).


16 Pelham to the lords of the council, 29 Mar. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 286v-292v); Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, p. 41).

17 Slieve Luachra should not be confused with the modern Ciarral Luachra, an area on the Mullaghareirk mountains which stretches approximately between Castleisland in Kerry, Abbeyfeale in Limerick and Kanturk in Cork.

18 Pelham to the lords of the council, 29 Mar. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 286v-292v); Pelham to the privy council, 9 July 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 351v-355v).

19 Pelham to the privy council, 9 July 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 351v-355v).
days and nights of continuous rain. This was more than an occasional difficulty as western Munster is one of the wettest regions of Ireland, with rain in Munster on between 250 and 300 days a year, compared with about 200 days for the east coast. Furthermore, the amount of rainfall was also greater, with between 1,500 and 2,000 mm of rainfall in the Kerry mountains, between 1,000 and 1,500 mm for the rest of the Desmond earldom, and under 750 mm in the area around Dublin. In this context Pelham’s comment appears justified.

The rain could also seriously affect the rivers, swelling them to the point where they were impassable. This was a problem with the Feale and the Deel, but undoubtedly the most imposing river in the Tudor period was the Munster Blackwater. In winter the river would be so swollen by the rains that the ford at Mallow would be too dangerous to use. Instead, travellers would have to cross in small boats, the river at that point large enough to accommodate a boat of ten tons, if the weirs at Lismore were dismantled. Not surprisingly there were numerous calls for a bridge to be built at Mallow, although by 1584 these calls had gone unheeded, and the Blackwater continued to present a very significant obstacle to movement between Cork and Limerick. Likewise, the rains made travel through the woods even more difficult, and could even prevent troops from entering woods such as Aherlow.

It was the weather, therefore, rather than the topographical features, which hampered communication within Munster. Given that Munster had more than its

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20 Treasurer Wallop to Walsingham, 9 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/21).
22 Pelham to the lords of the council, 29 Mar. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 286v-292r).
share of what Giraldus Cambrensis called Ireland’s ‘plentiful supply of rain’, this was a real difficulty, but one which ultimately was not impossible to surmount.

The earldom which Gerald, fifteenth earl, forfeited by his posthumous attainder in 1586 was the product of close to four centuries of expansion, contraction, and consolidation, a process which was determined by the relationships of the Desmonds with the Gaelic-Irish and the Hiberno-Norman communities within the province. The former relationship was characterized by conflict and conquest, the latter by dynastic interaction. The combination of the two gave the earldom its particular character.

In the late 1160s a large number of Anglo-Norman knights came to Ireland at the request of Dermot McMorrough, the deposed Gaelic-Irish king of Leinster, one of whom was Maurice fitz Gerald. Fitz Gerald, usually known by his sobriquet ‘Maurice The Invader’, was a member of a prominent Anglo-Norman family. His father, Gerald fitz Walter, was constable of Pembroke castle, while his mother was Nesta, the legendary daughter of Rhys ap Tewdr, prince of South Wales. Such was his family’s position that he brought with him to Ireland a force of ‘ten knights and thirty mounted archers, and about a hundred foot archers’. Maurice, who died in 1176, left a number of sons whose descendants were to have a significant and often dramatic impact on the political development of the Anglo-Norman lordship in Ireland. These included Gerald, progenitor of the Fitzgerald earls of Kildare, Robert, progenitor of the Fitzmaurice barons of Lixnaw, and Thomas, progenitor of the earls

The Anglo-Norman conquest of the Gaelic-Irish kingdom of Limerick at the end of the twelfth century witnessed the penetration of the Geraldines into Munster, the province they were to dominate until the Elizabethan era. In 1199 King John granted Thomas fitz Maurice five knights fees in the tuath of 'Eleur' in the cantred of 'Fontymkill', in the south east of modern County Limerick and a similar amount in the tuath of 'Ui hAinmire' on the north bank of the Shannon, holdings of over 40,000 acres, as well as 'a burgage ...... within the walls of Limerick' for 12 d per annum. Thomas fitz Maurice died in either 1213 or 1214, and was eventually succeeded by his son John.

The Anglo-Norman advance into Munster continued in the early thirteenth century, when it reached as far as western Cork and southern Kerry. John fitz Thomas participated in this wave of conquest and, along with his brother Maurice, is thought responsible for the construction of the castles of Currans, Molahiffe, Clonmellane, Castlemaine, Callanafersy, Dunloe, and Killorglin in this period. In 1244 he was granted 'free chase and warren' on his lands in the cantreds of Shanid (Okonyl), Trughenackmy (Kery), Magunihy (Yonach), Iveragh (Orathat) and 'Muskry', which shows that the gains made in southern Kerry had been consolidated. However, he was not to enjoy his lands in south Kerry for long for in 1261 Fitz Thomas was part of an Anglo-Norman force which was defeated by the

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30 Grant to Maurice fitz Gerald, 11 June 1244 (Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251, no. 2680).
MacCarthys at the Battle of Callan, in the cantred of Glanerought. Fitz Thomas and his son Maurice were both killed, and the Gaelic-Irish recovered control of Kerry south of the River Maine.31

An *Inquisition post mortem* of Fitz Thomas’s lands taken in 1282 confirms this loss of territory.32 Half a cantred at Dunloe, County Kerry, previously worth £40 *per annum*, was only worth 20 marks. Losses were even greater in County Cork. Three carrucates of land in ‘Ogenathydonethud’ was valued at nothing, down from £2, ‘because it lies wholly in the power of the Irish’, while three knight’s fees in ‘Clonlachtyn’ and ‘Dromynargyl’ (worth 10 marks *per annum*) were also worthless due to being ‘wholly destroyed by the war of the Irish’. The inquisition also found that over one and a half cantreds of land in Thomond, worth 270 marks *per annum*, were similarly ‘laid waste by the war of the Irish of Thomon’. Fitz Thomas’s estate thus suffered very heavily from the Gaelic-Irish after his death.

Further evidence of the damage inflicted on the Desmonds by the Gaelic-Irish was revealed by the inquisitions which were made in 1420-1 after the death of John, fourth Earl, in 1398.33 The Desmond lands in counties Kerry, Limerick, and Tipperary appear to have survived unscathed, but the Desmonds’s other possessions were not so fortunate, particularly in counties Cork and Waterford. The ‘barony of Donmarke and Donm6omound’ was ‘worth nothing’, the manor of Mallow was similarly valued at only £1 *per annum* as it was ‘waste and destroyed by Irish enemies of the King’, while the manor of Broghill was valued at only 10s ‘on account of war’. In County Waterford the manor and town of Dungarvan was worth a mere £5 *per annum* as it was ‘wasted by the Irish enemies of the King’. Further losses were incurred outside Munster. In Connacht the lands held of the heir of Richard de

32 *Inquisitions concerning John fitz Thomas, 1282 (Cal. doc. Ire., 1252-1284, no. 1912); Inquisitions concerning John fitz Thomas, 1282 (Cal. inq. post. mort., ii, Edward I, no. 437).*
33 *Inquisitions of the Desmond earldom, 1420-1 (Ormond deeds, 1413-1509, no. 45).*
Burgh, the manor (or barony) of Ardrahan, and the manors of Sligo, ‘Bernesheaghe’, and ‘Moydath’, were described as ‘now worth nothing per annum because they are wasted by the Irish’, while similarly the manor of ‘Courthrad’, and the lordship of ‘Oregane’, in County Kildare were worth nothing ‘because of the Irish enemies’.

Although these were the major territorial losses, there were other instances of conflict with Gaelic-Irish lords. In 1370 Gerald, third earl, (Gearóid Iarla) was captured by Brian O’Brien (Brian Sreamhach) of Thomond at Monasteranenagh, Co. Limerick, while in 1430 James, seventh earl, captured Kilbrittain castle from MacCarthy Reagh. James, ninth earl, was captured by the MacCarthys in 1471 and ransomed the following year, while James, eleventh earl, fared little better when he suffered a severe defeat in 1520 at the hands of Cormac Óg MacCarthy Reagh, then in alliance with James’s uncle Thomas, later twelfth earl, in which he lost around 2,000 men.

In contrast to their dealings with the Gaelic-Irish, the relationship with the rest of the Hiberno-Norman community was characterized by dynastic politics. The basis of this relationship was grants of royal favour. As described above, the first such award came when King John granted Thomas fitz Maurice lands in Co. Limerick in 1199, but by far the most important came on 27 August 1329 when Maurice fitz Thomas was created first earl of Desmond. Edward III granted Maurice and his heirs male the title and honour of earl of Desmond by the service of a knight’s fee. As well as the honour of earl, Maurice also received Kerry as a Palatine county. By this measure the tenants-in-chief within the liberty of Kerry held their lands of Maurice,

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34 G.E.C., Peerage, iv, p.244.
35 N.H.I., viii, p. 159.
36 N.H.I., viii, p. 172.
37 The lord lieutenant and council of Ireland to Henry VIII, 25 Sept. 1520 (S.P. Hen. VIII, ii, 46-7).
38 Grant to Thomas fitz Maurice, 6 Sept. 1199 (Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251, no. 93).
and not the king. The last significant royal grant came in 1546 when James, fourteenth earl, was granted the manors of Croom and Adare in County Limerick for life.40

Upon this base the Desmonds built up their holdings by judicious exploitation of the possibilities offered by dynastic politics. As one historian put it, ‘marriage to a rich heiress is a time honoured means by which family fortunes are established and improved’,41 and so it proved for the Desmonds. Similar to Thomas third Lord Dacre’s marriage to the wealthy heiress Elizabeth Greystoke, which transformed the Dacres ‘from impoverished border barons into great regional magnates,’42 John fitz Thomas’s marriage to Margery fitz Anthony dramatically improved his financial wellbeing. Margery was the daughter of Thomas fitz Anthony, seneschal of Leinster, to whom Fitz Thomas had been granted in wardship following his father’s death in 1213/4, for which Fitz Anthony had paid the King 600 marks (£400).43 In due course John married Margery, one of Fitz Anthony’s five daughters. As he had no sons, upon his death Fitz Anthony’s estate passed in equal share to his daughters, but Margery was eventually to inherit the estate by herself due to the treason of three of her sisters’ husbands, and by her fourth sister’s death without an heir.44 John thus stood to inherit Fitz Anthony’s lands in their entirety.

Fitz Anthony’s estate was based on a grant of 3 July 1215 when he had received custody of the counties of Waterford and Desmond, except the city of Waterford, and the city of Cork, and of the castles of Waterford and Dungarvan,45 for which he paid a fine of 100 marks and rent of 250 marks per annum. He was also to have custody of the king’s demesnes and escheats of the counties of Waterford and

40 Grants in November 1546 (43) (L.&P. Hen. VIII, 1546-7, no. 476).
43 Mandate to the justiciar, 4 July 1215 (Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251, no. 583).
45 Grants to Thomas fitz Anthony, 3 July 1215 (Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251, no. 576).
Desmond (Cork and southern Kerry), and was granted a moiety (half) of the prisage of wines of Waterford city. These he held until 1223 when the king rescinded the grant.46 On 23 May 1251 John fitz Thomas obtained a provisional grant of £25 per annum in compensation for his portion of Decies,47 while eight years later, on 7 November 1259, Prince Edward granted him all the lands of Decies and Desmond which had belonged to Thomas fitz Anthony, together with custody of Dungarvan castle, at a rent of 500 marks per annum, by the service of one-tenth of a knight’s fee.48 By this marriage Fitz Thomas was thus transformed from a minor landowner in Co. Limerick into a substantial regional power.

Maurice fitz Thomas, later first earl of Desmond, also did very well when he married Katherine, daughter of Richard de Burgh, earl of Ulster in 1312. On 12 January 1323 De Burgh granted Maurice lands in Connacht.49 In the mid fifteenth century lord Barry gave Thomas, later eighth earl, Conna and Mocollop on his marriage to his daughter Alice Barry, which helped consolidate Desmond possession of the cantred of Kinnatalloon, Co. Cork.50

John fitz Thomas’s inheritance of the Fitz Anthony estates also highlights the beneficial impact the failure of the male line of other land owning families had on the Desmonds. This was quite a common occurrence, as approximately a quarter of noble families in England had their direct male line fail every twenty-five years between 1300 and 1500. While these figures need not necessarily replicate themselves in Ireland, it does indicate the level of opportunity for estates to change hands, as well as

46 Henry III to the archbishop of Dublin, 3 June 1223 (Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251, no. 1108).
47 Grant to John fitz Thomas, 23 May 1251 (Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251, no. 3146).
48 Feoffment by Prince Edward to John fitz Thomas, 7 Nov. 1259 (Cal. doc. Ire., 1252-1284, no. 629).
49 G.E.C., Peerage, iv, p. 240.
the availability of rich heiresses. Nor was the Fitz Anthony line’s failure the only one the Desmonds’s prospered from, as they were also enriched by the death of Thomas de Clare in 1321.51

Following De Clare’s death custody of his lands was given jointly to Maurice, later first earl, and Maurice de Rocheford. De Clare’s two sisters, and co-heiresses, then sought their purparties and the lands were partitioned. Maud’s purparty included the manors of Askeaton and Knockainy, two manors which would later be integral parts of the Desmond lands. Maud and her husband Sir Robert de Velle appear to have had little difficulty in gaining possession of her lands. Her sister Margaret was less fortunate. Margaret, married to Bartholomew de Badlesmere, received as part of her purparty the manors of Mahoonagh, and Inchiquin, County Cork. However, Maurice kept possession of Margaret’s lands until 1345 when the crown took his lands. Maurice thus held these lands from 1321 to 1345, in spite of orders being given to the Justiciars in 1324, 1327, and 1330 to seize Margaret’s lands from him. Possession of the manor of Inchiquin in particular, which comprised much of the cantred of Imokilly, would not only increase his income, but would also help secure his Decies possessions and give him control of the port of Youghal. Thus Maurice kept possession of these lands in the face of royal opposition. Eventually much of the De Clare lands, including the manors of Askeaton, Knockainy, Mahoonagh, and Inchiquin, became integral parts of the Desmond lands.52

Thomas de Clare was also one of number of lords to grant the Desmonds some

lands. Sometime before 1290 De Clare granted the manor of Killorglin,53 along with lands in Magunihy, Iveragh, and Valencia Island, in Co. Kerry.54 The reign of James, seventh earl, brought several acquisitions in Co. Cork. In 1425/6 the Barretts agreed by indenture ‘to be obedient to the Earls of Desmond’.55 In 1439 Robert Cogan granted James, seventh earl, all his lands. By this grant the Desmonds gained the cantred of Kerrycurrihy, including the manor of Carrigaline, and the manor of Charleville (Rathcogan).56 In 1442 earl James was enfeoffed by Geoffrey FitzPatrick Gallway of the manor of Ballingarry in the cantred of Kinelea.57 This period thus witnessed the consolidation of Desmond lands in County Cork. This made their holdings more contiguous, and consequently easier to defend, and helped secure the western borders of Decies. James, fourteenth earl, received lands in Connello in 1556/7 from John Óg FitzGibbon, the White Knight, which included the manor of Mayne (Meane), and the Short Castle at Askeaton.58

The Desmonds themselves also granted lands to family and political allies. The greatest such transfer of land, and the most politically important, occurred in 1529 when James, seventh earl, divided his patrimony between his two sons. His elder son Thomas succeeded him as eighth earl, while his younger son Gerald was made lord of Decies and received the territory of Decies as a separate lordship. This effectively removed Decies from Desmond overlordship, a process finalized in 1569

54 Pleadings between Emelina, wife of Maurice fitz Maurice, and Thomas fitz Maurice, 1290-1292 (Cal. doc. Ire., 1285-1292, no. 1028).
55 Notes out of Desmond’s evidences (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 608, ff 80r-83f).
56 K.W. Nicholls, 'The development of lordship in county Cork', p. 171.
57 Notes out of Desmond’s evidences (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 608, ff 80r-83f); K.W. Nicholls, ‘The development of lordship in county Cork’, p. 190.
when Sir Maurice lord of Decies was created viscount Decies by Queen Elizabeth.\footnote{Sir Maurice was created baron of Dromana on 27 January 1569, and four days later was created viscount Decies. Indenture, 1529 (N.A.I., M 7068, p. 8); The queen to Lord Deputy Sidney, 16 July 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/39); Grant to Maurice Fitzgerald, 27 Jan. 1569 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 1249); Grant to Maurice Fitzgerald, 31 Jan. 1569 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 1251).}

The last feature of the growth of the lands of the Desmonds was purchase and exchange. In 1338 earl Maurice bought the manor and town of Clonmel, and the manors of Kilsheelan and Kilfeakle in County Tipperary from Peter de Grandison for 1,100 marks,\footnote{R.F. Frame, \textit{English lordship in Ireland}, 1318-1361 (Oxford, 1982), p. 59.} while in 1430 Earl James acquired Kilcolman from William, lord Barry.\footnote{K.W. Nicholls, 'The development of lordship in county Cork', p. 190.} In 1282 Thomas fitz Maurice received the manor of Mallow, worth 70 marks \textit{per annum}, from Henry de Roche in exchange for other lands.\footnote{Inquisitions concerning John fitz Thomas, 1282 (\textit{Cal. doc. Ire.}, 1252-1284, no. 1912); Inquisitions concerning John fitz Thomas, 1282 (\textit{Cal. inq. post. mort.}, ii, Edward I, no. 437).} James, fourteenth earl, acquired the towns of Mogeely and Aghacross in Cork from William, Knight of Kerry, in exchange for lands in Kerry in 1551/2.\footnote{Notes out of Desmond's evidences (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 608, ff 80f-83\textsuperscript{r}); K.W. Nicholls, 'The development of lordship in county Cork', p. 190.}

The accumulation of lands by the Desmond Geraldines was thus achieved by the use of English methods, such as grants, marriages, purchases, and exchanges, together with the method of the conquest of Gaelic-Irish territories, along with two other methods which their English contemporaries could not access. They profited from the difficulties faced by absentee lords in the mid-fourteenth century when numerous ordinances were passed in an effort to compel English-based lords who owned Irish estates to defend, fortify, and develop their Irish possessions. It was in this context that Peter de Grandison, an absentee, sold Clonmel, Kilfeakle, and Kilsheelan to Maurice, first earl, while the heirs to the De Clare inheritance eventually sold their Irish lands for similar reasons, some of these lands, such as Inchiquin and Imokilly, ultimately coming into Desmond hands.\footnote{Frame, \textit{Eng. lordship}, pp 58-60; Indenture between James, earl of Ormond, to James, earl of Desmond, 31 Jan. 1422 (Ormond deeds, 1413-1509, no. 51).} Additionally, the level of
questionable activities which the Desmonds occasionally engaged in was much greater than would have been allowed in England, due to the unfinished nature of the Hiberno-Norman conquest of Gaelic Ireland. This was especially true of Maurice, first earl, who denied Margaret de Badlesmere her purparty of the De Clare inheritance between 1321 to 1345. Similarly, Sir John, thirteenth de facto earl, illegally occupied the lands of Croom and Adare after their forfeiture by the attainsder of ‘Silken Thomas’, Thomas, lord Offaly, tenth earl of Kildare, in 1536.65

The lands of the Desmond Geraldines thus accumulated against a background of conquest, royal favour, and dynastic interaction over a period which stretched from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, a process of growth which can be divided into four periods of enlargement. Between 1176 and 1298, when Thomas fitz Maurice died, the estates of the Desmond Geraldines grew into quite a substantial holding. At his death Fitz Maurice held the cantred of Trughenackmy of Miles de Courcy, worth £50 despite the destruction of the Gaelic-Irish, the cantred of Shanid, worth 100 marks, the cantred of Killeedy (Kylyde), worth £100, half a theodum at Glenogra, worth 100 marks, as well as the three and a half cantreds in Decies. Fitz Thomas thus left land in the Counties of Kerry, Limerick, and Waterford, along with other smaller parcels of land in counties Cork, Kilkenny, and Kildare. He also held the two manors of Killorglin and Castleisland in County Kerry, the manors of Glenogra, Newcastle West, Shanid, and Killeedy in County Limerick, the manor of Mallow in County Cork, and the manors of Dungarvan and ‘Comrith’ in County Waterford.66 The period 1298-1356 witnessed the reign of Maurice, first earl, who added significantly to the Desmonds’s possessions by his marriage to Katherine de Burgh, his creation as earl of Desmond, and by his purchase of Clonmel, Kilsheelan, and Kilfeakle. His

65 N.H.L., ix, p. 199.
66 Extents of the lands of Thomas fitz Maurice, 1298-9 (Cal. doc. Ire., 1293-1301, no. 551); Inquisition coming Thomas fitz Maurice, 1300 (Cal. doc. Ire., 1293-1301, no. 727); Inquisition concerning Thomas fitz Maurice, 1300 (Cal. inq. post. mort., iii, Edward I, no. 596).
actions thus added the palatinate of Kerry and the Tipperary manors, as well as lands in Connacht.

The expansion in the Desmonds’s lands continued in the period 1356-1463 with gains in counties Limerick and Cork, while there were losses outside Munster. The third comprehensive view of the earldom of Desmond came in 1420-1 when, following the death of John, fourth earl, inquisitions were made of his lands which show some additions. In County Limerick the manors of Askeaton and Fedamore, along with ‘Mineterscourt’ (possibly Courtmatrix), and the manor of ‘Kylroddane’, held of the bishop of Limerick were added. County Cork also witnessed expansion as earl John had held the manor of Knockmourne and Ballynoe of lord John de Barry, the manor of ‘Cloncourch’ of the bishop of Cloyne, and the manor of Broghill of John Roche. These inquisitions are also the first record of the manors of the New Manor near Tralee, the manor of Tralee (Castlemore), and Tarbert in County Kerry. Also mentioned are the manors of Dingle, and ‘Kylbanwane’ of the bishop of Ardfert. The lordship of James, seventh earl, saw the addition of the manor of Inchiquin, Imokilly, and the town of Youghal, along with Barretts, Kerrycurrihy, and Kinnatalloon in Co. Cork. Losses occurred in Co. Cork, and in the de Burgh lands in Connacht. The last 120 years, 1463-1583, witnessed the major losses of Decies, which became a separate lordship, and the Tipperary manors of Clonmel, Kilsheelan, and Kilfeakle, which returned to the Butlers by way of marriage. Some gains were also made, such as in the strategically important Croom and Adare in Co. Limerick.

By judicious use of the methods available to them, therefore, the Desmond Geraldines grew from local knights to provincial magnates. Starting from a small base divided between modern County Clare and south-east County Limerick in 1199, over the succeeding four centuries the Desmond Geraldines increased their holdings until in 1583 their overlordship was estimated to extend over approximately half a million
acres,\textsuperscript{68} encompassing northern Kerry, the western half of Limerick, territories in eastern Cork, and western Waterford. In Kerry the earls held the cantreds of Trughenackmy and Corca Dhuibhne. The Fitzmaurice barons of Lixnaw held the cantred of Clanmaurice of the earls, as did the O’Connor Kerry who held the cantred of Oireacht Ui Chonaibhair.\textsuperscript{69} In County Limerick the earls held Connello, along with the Small County in the east of the county, while the cantred of Kenry was held by the Knight of Glin, a cadet branch of the Desmonds.\textsuperscript{70} In Cork the earls held the cantreds of Orrery & Kilmore, Imokilly, Kerrycurrihy,\textsuperscript{71} Kinnatalloon, and Barretts, along with the manor of Mallow.\textsuperscript{72} The lands of the White Knight, another cadet branch, consisted of the cantred of Condados & Clangibbon, and that part of County Limerick south-east from Kilmallock. In Waterford they held the cantred of Coshmore & Coshbride.\textsuperscript{73}

The Desmonds thus proved extremely successful in the aggrandizement of their lordship. From a small initial grant of land in the late twelfth century, they had expanded until they held land throughout Munster. However, their very success was to prove a ‘doubled edged sword’, for while it was the basis for their great power and influence, it also brought with it significant dangers, the first of which lay in the dispersed nature of the Desmond lands

The earldom of Desmond was highly attenuated. It stretched from Dungarvan in the east to Dingle in the west, a distance of approximately 108 miles. From Askeaton on the Shannon Estuary to Kinsale on the south coast of Ireland was a

\textsuperscript{69} Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, passim).
\textsuperscript{70} Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038, passim); Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, passim).
\textsuperscript{71} The MacCarthys of Muskerry held Kerrycurrihy for a short time in the 1530s/1540s: K.W. Nicholls, ‘The development of lordship in county Cork’, pp 175-6.
\textsuperscript{72} Lands which Desmond claims, 3 July 1566 (\textit{Report on the manuscripts of Lord De L’Isle and Dudley, preserved at Penshurst Place}, ii, p. 3).
\textsuperscript{73} Lands which Desmond claims, 3 July 1566 (\textit{Report on the manuscripts of Lord De L’Isle and Dudley, preserved at Penshurst Place}, ii, p. 3).
distance of over sixty miles. This was a feature the Desmonds shared with the major nobility of England. The estates of Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham, at the time of his execution in 1521 were located between Holderness in East Yorkshire and Newport in South Wales,\(^\text{74}\) while the lands of Francis Talbot, fifth earl of Shrewsbury, c.1558-60, stretched over the counties of Shropshire, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Gloucestershire, and Herefordshire.\(^\text{75}\) Similarly, those of the Percies, earls of Northumberland, were ‘based on half-a-dozen of the most formidable strongholds in the north, ramified through the Border counties, and down into Yorkshire, with outliers in Lincolnshire, Sussex, Kent and the Southwest’.\(^\text{76}\)

The dispersed nature of the Desmond holdings was thus not uncommon within the realms of the Tudor monarchs, but it did create problems for them as they, unlike most of their English counterparts, did not reside in a peaceful country. Wales had been largely devoid of significant violence since the defeat of the revolt of Owain Glyn Dwr in the early fifteenth century,\(^\text{77}\) while England, after the Wars of the Roses, had suffered only relatively localized revolts.\(^\text{78}\) The main exception was in the north of England where marcher lords such as the Percies and the Dacres persisted in a chronic war with the Scots on the other side of the Anglo-Scots border.\(^\text{79}\) In Ireland, where the Anglo-Norman conquest had only been a partial success, much of the north, west, and south of the island, including large parts of Munster, remained unconquered and


\(^\text{79}\) S.G. Ellis, *Tudor frontiers and noble power*, pp 28, 36-7.
under the control of powerful Gaelic-Irish lords. As in the north of England, chronic raiding continued unabated.

The nature of the threat posed by the Gaelic-Irish lords, however, was significantly different from that faced by English marcher lords. For one thing, the process of expansion itself created difficulties for the Desmonds. Unlike marcher lords, such as the Dacres, who did not wish to expand their territories north of the Anglo-Scots border, the Desmonds were engaged in an ongoing expansionist drive which continued well into the sixteenth century. This growth severely disrupted the pre-Norman political order which had prevailed in the twelfth century, and gave rise to longstanding tensions and rivalries. Thus, after the expulsion of the Hiberno-Normans from southern Kerry after the Battle of Callan in 1261, the Desmonds maintained an uneasy ‘truce’ with the various MacCarthy lords of Kerry and Cork, one which broke down into violence on numerous occasions from then until the late sixteenth century.80 This process also created internal enemies among the Desmond Geraldines, as over time dissidents sought increased freedom from Desmond overlordship. Foremost amongst these were the Fitzmaurice barons of Lixnaw and the Fitzgerald lords of Decies, who were particularly troublesome during the sixteenth century.81

Additionally, the geography of the respective threats was different. In Dacre’s case the threat came from a single source and direction, from the Scots north of the border. Challenges emanating from other directions were not significant. This was also true to a lesser degree with marcher lords in Ireland such as Kildare, where the threat came largely from the Gaelic-Irish lords to the west and south of their

80 Lord Lieutenant Surrey and council of Ireland to Henry VIII, 25 Sept. 1520 (S.P. Hen. VIII, ii, 46-7); Desmond to the privy council in Ireland, 27 Mar. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/45/33); Desmond to Essex, 4 Apr. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/45/55).
81 For the efforts of Lixnaw and Decies to reduce Desmond overlordship in the 1520s and 15302 see A.M. McCormack, ‘Internecine warfare and the decline of the house of Desmond, c.1510-c.1541’ in I.H.S., xxx, no. 120 (Nov. 1997), pp 502-4.
territories, the northern and eastern borders of the Kildare lands effectively secured by the Pale.82 The Desmonds, in contrast, faced a more complex situation for they had potential enemies in all directions. The O’Brien’s of Thomond could intervene from across the Shannon to the north, while to the east and south lay the various neighbouring lords of the region, including independently-minded Hiberno-Norman lords such as lords Barry and Roche in Cork. Even the Atlantic coast of Kerry allowed for the intervention of lords such as the O’Flahertys of Connacht or the royal navy, as the latter did at Smerwick in 1580. Unlike the Dacres and the Anglo-Scots border, the Desmonds had in effect several borders to guard. There was no single ‘front line’ across which lay the enemy. Instead the Desmonds were surrounded by potential enemies.

The greatest threat, however, came from their arch rivals, the Butler earls of Ormond. From the twelfth century on both the Desmonds and the Ormonds pursued expansionary policies, but until the fourteenth century the Desmonds were primarily concerned with western Limerick, Cork, and Kerry, while the Ormond’s concentration was further east in north-east Limerick, Tipperary, and Kilkenny. However, as their territorial interests moved geographically closer the level of competition between the two intensified, fuelled by the maintenance of soldiers necessitated by the ongoing Hiberno-Norman conquest and by the competition for royal favour which increased following the creation of their respective earldoms in 1328 (Ormond) and 1329 (Desmond). This rivalry degenerated into armed conflict during the lifetime of Maurice Fitz Thomas, first earl of Desmond.

Fitz Thomas had a most controversial career, both prior to and after his elevation to the peerage.83 In 338 he transformed the relationship between the two
houses forever. In April Desmond was granted custody of Ormond’s lands following the latter’s death earlier in the year, initially for a thirty month period. This grant was subsequently renewed, and in 1344 Desmond was granted custody during the minority of Ormond’s heir James, later second earl, along with the latter’s marriage. By the end of that year, however, Desmond had lost the custody of the lands. For almost six years, therefore, Desmond had enjoyed the profits of the Ormond inheritance with little regard for his ward, and when compelled to relinquish possession he destroyed much of the lands.84 Also in 1338 Desmond bought Clonmel, Kilfeakle, and Kilsheelan in Tipperary.85 By this purchase he gained a strategic foothold in the palatinate of Tipperary, a foothold which was deeply resented by the Butlers. These manors were to remain a major source of contention between the houses of Desmond and Ormond, even after they were settled on Joan, daughter of James, eleventh earl, as her dowry in 1532 when she married James, later ninth earl of Ormond.86

Fitz Maurice’s actions changed the nature of the Desmond-Ormond relationship, and for the ensuing two and a half centuries their feud was occasionally interspersed with periods of violence. In 1384 Gerald (Gearóid iarla), third earl of Desmond, quarrelled with James, third earl of Ormond, which necessitated a fifteen-day conference to produce a treaty to resolve the dispute, while fifteen years later John, fourth earl of Desmond, was drowned in the river Suir at Ardfinnan as he returned from an incursion into Butler territory.87 Further violence occurred in 1402, 1444, and 1446,88 while the 1520s witnessed a concentrated period of warfare

86 W.P. Burke, History of Clonmel (2nd ed., Kilkenny, 1983), p. 15; G.E.C., Peerage, x, p. 144. For the role these manors played in contributing to the conflict between Gerald, fifteenth earl of Desmond, and Thomas, tenth earl of Ormond, see chapter four.
87 G.E.C., Peerage, iv, pp 244-5.
between James, eleventh earl of Desmond, and Piers Ruadh Butler, who was restored to the earldom of Ormond following the death of Sir Thomas Boleyn, earl of Wiltshire and Ormond. By the mid-sixteenth century the potential for conflict remained as great as ever as the palatinate of Tipperary bordered a number of Desmond possessions such as Small County in Limerick, Condons & Clangibbon in Cork, and Coshmore & Coshbride in Waterford.

The animosity was usually contained, however, as neither house had the means to achieve total victory. As a result various efforts at rapprochement were made down the centuries, usually by way of that staple of dynastic politics, marriage. The first such marriage was proposed in May 1429 when James, seventh earl of Desmond, and James, fourth earl of Ormond, agreed that Desmond’s son and heir Thomas, subsequently eighth earl, should marry Ormond’s daughter Anne. Such was their desire for the union that they agreed to substitute another son or daughter respectively if either party died before the marriage. The objective of the marriage was to produce a situation whereby the two earls would ‘maintain cherish, love and defend each and either of the two and their heirs and children against all men, saving their allegiance, in the parts of Leinster, Meath and Uriel and all other parts within Ireland that fall hereafter’. The two earls agreed to jointly enfeoff Thomas and Anne with Imokilly, Inchiquin, and Youghal on their future marriage, part of the agreement being that Desmond was to ‘have and enjoy the said barony and town during the tender age of Thomas and Anne’. In this way Desmond gained possession of these important properties east of Cork, and his descendants retained them long into the sixteenth century, even though the marriage never took place.89

A double marriage was proposed between the two houses in January 1541 when James, fourteenth earl of Desmond and James, ninth earl of Ormond, signed an

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89 Indenture between James, earl of Ormond and James, earl of Desmond, 10 May 1429 (Ormond deeds, 1413-1509, no. 88).
indenture which was designed to end their mutual hostility. Ormond’s son Thomas, subsequently tenth earl, was to marry either ‘Margaret or Johan or Ellyn, Desmond’s daughters, ‘or else such daughter as it shall please God to send him lawfully begotten within six years’. The marriage was to be performed as soon as Thomas was twenty four years old (c.1555), and if he died before the solemnization of the marriage ‘then the next heir apparent of Ormond shall conclude the marriage’. Likewise Desmond agreed to marry his son and heir Gerald, later fifteenth earl, to a daughter of Ormond born within six years of the agreement. This treaty was part of Lord Deputy Anthony St Leger’s attempts to reconcile the two earls, the cross-weddings designed ‘for the further assurance of the faithful love and amity to be continued between the parties’.90 In the event neither of these marriages took place, although a Fitzgerald-Butler marriage did take place apparently in the 1560s or 1570s.91

Their spectacular success in the acquisition of territory, and in particular the nature of that success, thus exposed the Desmonds to the danger of having very powerful lords situated along their borders. Consequently they had to protect themselves from all sides and all eventualities. This requirement resulted in the stagnation of politics within the earldom around the question of defence and security, rather than on political, social, and economic development. The Desmonds needed a mechanism which would allow them to keep large numbers of fighting men in readiness to defend their borders. They found that mechanism in a hybrid administrative system which combined elements of the Hiberno-Norman legal tradition with an adaptation of the Gaelic-Irish system of coyne and livery.

90 Indenture between James, earl of Ormond and James, earl of Desmond, 18 Jan. 1541 (Ormond deeds, 1509-1547, no. 253).
By the mid sixteenth century the earl of Desmond controlled an earldom which was huge in size. Estimated to contain over half a million acres spread over five counties, the earldom probably effected the lives, both directly and indirectly, of a majority of the population of Munster, whether they were tenants or servants of the earl, inhabitants of towns with which the earl traded, or potential allies or opponents. The scale of the earldom meant the regulation of its society, the maintenance of order within the earldom, and its defence against external threat were complex tasks which required considerable thought and ingenuity on the part of the earls. The result was a sophisticated administrative system, which had emerged over the preceding centuries, which allowed the earls to successfully direct this instrument of great power.

The administration of the earldom was carried out by a combination of Hiberno-Norman and Gaelic-Irish officers, servants and retainers using an amalgam of Hiberno-Norman and Gaelic-Irish legal, military, and financial methods. The Gaelic-Irish had not been fully defeated or Anglicized following the arrival of the Hiberno-Normans at the end of the twelfth century. As a result Gaelic-Irish systems, such as the Brehon laws, had continued in use throughout much of the island. Contact with such Gaelic-Irish lords as the MacCarthys and O'Sullivans in Munster brought the Desmonds an eventual understanding of the Gaelic-Irish system which led to their gradual adoption and adaptation of elements of that system. By the sixteenth century this 'borrowing' had produced a hybrid administrative system which was well suited to the particular circumstances of the Desmonds, as it drew upon the most beneficial, practical, and profitable elements of both systems.

Unfortunately, a full reconstruction of the earldom and its workings is
impossible as its records have not survived, destroyed during the periods of conflict which afflicted the province in the latter half of the sixteenth century, most notably in the rebellion of James fitz Maurice (1569-73), the Desmond rebellion (1579-83), and the rebellion of the Sugán earl (1598-1601). The vast majority of the castles and tower houses in the earldom were burnt during these rebellions, their contents stolen or destroyed. Thus the household accounts, the manor rolls, the pleadings in the courts, and the correspondence of the Desmonds were lost, a problem compounded by the bombardment of the Four Courts in June 1922 which destroyed much of the records held in the Public Record Office, the loss including the surveys taken of the Desmond lands in 1584, although portions of summaries have survived. The following partial reconstruction is, therefore, as complete as the evidence allows.

Authority within the earldom rested in the person of the earl by virtue of the patent which Maurice fitz Thomas received on 27 August 1329 when Edward III granted Fitz Thomas and his heirs male the title and honour of earl of Desmond, to hold by service of a knight's fee.1 By this move, which elevated him to the highest level of the Irish peerage, Fitz Thomas began the transformation of the Desmonds from local lords to a provincial and national power. Perhaps even more importantly, as well as the earldom Fitz Thomas received palatine status in Co. Kerry (modern north Kerry), being granted 'omnes regales libertates' of the county.2 He thus exercised jura regalia within Kerry. He was empowered to make knights and barons in his own right, and to oversee the administration of justice, both civil and criminal, within the palatinate, and was free to appoint his own judges, seneschals, sheriffs, and

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1  G.E.C., Peerage, iv, p. 237; Charles Smith, The Ancient and Present state of Kerry, (reset ed., Dublin, 1979), p. 288. His was the third of the early modern earldoms to be created, John fitz Thomas having been created earl of Kildare in 1316, while James le Botiller (Butler) became earl of Ormond in 1328: Otway-Ruthven, Med. Ire., pp 175, 232.
other officials for same. The powers and responsibilities of the earl as palatine lord of Kerry were subsequently reiterated in an *inquisition post mortem* where the earl was found to hold ‘a Liberty and regal jurisdiction’, and had ‘cognizance and jurisdiction of all pleas both royal and personal before his seneschal and justices’. He was empowered to ‘enquire of all seditions, felonies, contempts, transgressions and other offences and extortions whatsoever, and to hear and terminate them’. He also had the power of pardon, since he could ‘grant charters of peace for all seditions, felonies, trespasses and all other offences whatsoever committed within the Liberty’. The earl thus had virtually complete authority within the palatinate ‘under the seal of the Liberty’.

However, there were some limits to the earl’s power. The four pleas of forestalling, rape, treasure trove, and arson, were reserved by the earl’s patent to the crown, as were cases involving treason, while cases of abuse could also be investigated by crown officials. Furthermore, the ‘Cross of Kerry’, those properties owned by the church in Kerry, was similarly exempt from the earl’s jurisdiction and had its own sheriff appointed by the crown. These two measures appeared to be a check on the power of the palatine lord, but given the absence of representatives of the Dublin administration in Munster down to the sixteenth century the Desmonds were left to do virtually as they pleased within the palatinate, where their local dominance ensured that little if any complaint was made of their rule. Similarly, the independence of the ‘Cross of Kerry’ was questionable, as the earls had the

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3 Sir John Davies, *A discovery of the true causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued ... until ... his majesty’s happy reign* (London, 1612) in Henry Morley (ed.), *Ireland under Elizabeth and James I* (London, 1890), p. 279.

4 Inquisitions of the Desmond earldom, 1420-1 (*Ormond deeds*, 1413-1509, no. 45). The inquisition investigated the holdings of John, fourth earl, at the time of his death in 1400.

5 The buying of, or contracting for, cattle or foodstuffs before they came to market, or dissuading persons from marketing their goods or provisions, in order to enhance the price.

6 Treasure (gold, silver, money, plate, or bullion) found hidden in the ground or other place, the owner of which was unknown. Such treasure was claimed by the Crown.

7 Indenture between James, earl of Desmond, and Edmund, Lord Fitzmaurice, 1 June 1541 (*Ormond deeds*, 1509-1547, no. 261).
advowsons of numerous churches in the diocese of Ardfert, including those at Tralee and Castleisland, while John, fourth earl, held the office of ‘serjeant of the Cross’ of Kerry at the time of his death in 1400.8

The Desmond’s thus had immense legal powers and a very high level of autonomy and control within Kerry, and this was to have a very significant effect on their rule in the rest of their lands. The earls’ patent technically divided their territories into two distinct jurisdictions; the palatinate, where they had *jura regalia*, and the rest of the earldom, where they had the normal rights and obligations of a tenant-in-chief of the crown. However, such was the weakness of the Dublin administration within Munster for most of the earldom’s lifespan that the power and autonomy which the Desmonds possessed in the palatinate was extended throughout their dominions. As a result there was little *de facto* difference between the administration of the two parts of the earldom.

Built around the earl’s personal power was a large administration, at the apex of which was the council, the select group of servants and retainers who advised the earl on important matters. Gonzalo Fernandez’s report to Charles V in May 1529 gives a rare insight into the workings of this body. Following James, eleventh earl’s, entreaties to Charles for an alliance in 1528 and early 1529, Fernandez had been dispatched to Ireland to assess the situation. Fernandez landed at Dingle, and, after banqueting, Desmond and his councillors adjourned to Fernandez’s private chamber, where Fernandez explained his mission in English, and then handed his orders in Latin to the councillors. Desmond then ‘conversed for a while with his councillors’ before replying. Later in the meeting Fernandez asked for a written report of Desmond’s forces, a request which ‘both the Earl and his Council’ agreed to, whereupon ‘orders were immediately issued for an official report to be drawn up’. Towards the end of

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8 Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, p. 30); Inquisitions of the Desmond earldom, 1420-1 (*Ormond deeds*, 1413-1509, no. 45).
the meeting Desmond, ‘after consulting with his Council’, agreed to limit his requests of Charles to realistic levels.9

The first point which emerges from this description is that the council was involved at every stage of the negotiations, as Desmond consulted with them on a number of occasions before replying to Fernandez. The second aspect is that Desmond’s councillors were educated men, possibly clerics, since they understood Latin, the language of medieval diplomacy. The composition of Desmond’s council is unknown, but his supplicatio (petition) to Charles V may provide a clue to the identity of three of them, namely Denis McDonel, Doctor of Arts and Medicine, Denis Cather, and Maurice Herly, dean.10 Given that they witnessed such an important document, allied to their education, these three were most likely members of Desmond’s council.11

Of greater certainty are the identities of some of the councillors of Maurice, first earl, who in September 1343 convened a meeting of his council at Newcastle West in Co. Limerick. Those who attended included Walter and Thomas de Mandeville, John Coterel, Thomas fitz John, and Philip de la Chapelle.12 John Coterel was Maurice’s steward, while Thomas fitz John may have been his nephew who died in 1390.13 The purpose of this meeting was to decide on a strategy for dealing with the question of the barony of Inchiquin, which Maurice had held since 1338, as crown officials had taken possession of the barony some days previously. In the end they decided to retake the barony and installed Robert de Stanton as steward

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10 Magistris Dionisio Mitdonle (sic) Artium et Medicinae, Dionisio Cather, Mauricio Herly decano.
11 Petition of the earl of Desmond, 28 Apr. 1529 (Cal. S.P. Spain, 1527-9, no. 680); Gonzalo Fernandez to Charles V, 28 Apr. 1529 (L. & P. Hen. VIII, 1529-30, pt 3, no. 5501 (ii)).
13 Genealogical table of the FitzGeralds, Earls of Desmond, 1329-1632, and their antecedents in N.H.I., ix, p. 36.
and Philip de la Chapelle as sergeant.14 Presumably De Stanton was also a member of the council.

A further example of an earl's circle of advisers is to be found in 1568 when Gerald, fifteenth earl, sent letters from London to nineteen people concerning the vital task of revenue collection. Of the nineteen, five were to family members and kinsmen; his wife Eleanor, who was an important adviser to Desmond throughout their marriage, his first cousin James fitz Maurice, captain of the Desmond Geraldines in Desmond's absence, his bastardized half-brother Thomas Roe (Ruadh), the Knight of Kerry, and the Seneschal of Imokilly. Five more were sent to officials/servants of the earl; Gerald fitz John, his steward at Lismore, Nicholas Fitz William, his receiver, John Óg, constable of Castleisland, Rory McSheehy, captain of galloglass, and 'Andrew Skidmour' of Cork city, presumably a reference to Andrew Skiddy, the earl's longtime legal adviser. A further two were sent to John and Thomas Browne, who were attainted in 1586.15 That Desmond thought these individuals would be able to levy his revenues would indicate that they were of sufficient seniority and stature within the earldom to accomplish the task.

However, the council should not be thought of as a standing committee akin to the privy council. It was more likely a body of key servants, kinsmen, and allies which assembled when called upon to counsel the earl. Attendance was probably dictated in part at least by proximity to the earl and the nature of the issue to be discussed. The council may have been less formal than contemporary English baronial councils, although information on these is similarly incomplete, so an accurate comparison is impossible.16


Below the level of the council, although not necessarily under its direct command, were numerous officials and servants in what might be termed the earl’s household. The most important of these was the secretary, who dealt with the earl’s correspondence, and as such was often intimately involved in significant negotiations. In 1537 Patrick Gold, secretary to James Fitz John, subsequently fourteenth earl, was paid £3 by Henry VIII for carrying various documents between Fitz John and the king’s commissioners who were then attempting to negotiate Fitz John’s submission. Maurice Sheehan, secretary to Gerald, fifteenth earl, was similarly engaged during the various attempts to initiate negotiations on Desmond’s behalf with the crown during the second Desmond rebellion. The secretary would appear to have had some responsibility for the storage of Desmond’s records. Gerald, fifteenth earl, complained in October 1579 that Malby had taken away some of his ‘evidences and other writings’ from the manor of Rathmore, the residence of Maurice Sheehan. The secretary may also have been the keeper of the Desmond seal.

There was also a doctor, chaplains, and numerous messengers, couriers, emissaries and envoys. These messengers ranged from those who merely delivered a letter to those who acted as diplomatic agents. One such agent was Sherek (Sherlock ?), leader of a four man delegation from James, eleventh earl, to Charles V in October

17 St Leger, &c. to Cromwell, 2 Jan. 1538 (S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, no. 196); Account of William Brabazon, ii (payments), 1537 (L. & P. Hen.VIII, 1537, pt 2, no. 1310).
18 For Sheehan’s role in the negotiations see below, chapter nine. Such was Sheehan’s importance that Desmond granted him Rathmore and its appurtenances in 1571 for ninety nine years at the nominal annual rent of one grain of pepper: Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 13-4).
19 Gerald, earl of Desmond, to , 10 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/51).
20 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, p. 65); Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 53-4); By the Lord Justice and Council, 29 Mar. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 288v-292v).
21 Memo of James Goghe’s last will, 28 May 1563 (Ormond deeds, 1547-1584, no. 118); H.F. Berry, ‘The Manor and Castle of Mallow in the Days of the Tudors’ in Cork Hist. Soc. Jn., 23 (1917), p. 155. In 1558 Robert Remon, chaplain to James, fourteenth earl, journeyed to Cardinal Caraffa in Flanders to obtain a papal dispensation to allow James’s daughter Honora marry Donal, MacCarthy Mór, earl of Clancar: Berry, pp 152-4.
1528, who was described as holding a ‘high place’ with Desmond. In this Sherek performed the role of a nuncio, a messenger ‘speaking with the voice of his principal’. This role as explicitly stated when in the following November another of earl James’s servants named Gere (Galfridius) arrived at the Spanish court commissioned to speak ‘in his master’s name’. At the lower end of the household would have been numerous domestics, such as cooks, serving boys, and the like. An indispensable category of retainers, whose function was far more important than that of any household servant, was that which consisted of the Gaelic-Irish bards, poets, ‘rhymers’, historians and harpers who were employed by the Desmond Geraldines. The Desmonds patronized many of these, particularly the bardic families of the O’Dalys of Kilsarkan, Co. Kerry, and the O’Hifernains of Shronell, west of Tipperary town, as well as members of the McGrath, the O Maolchonaire, and the MacBruaidheada families. David Dubh Fitz Gerald was an

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22 T. Batcock to , 26 Oct. 1528 (L. & P. Hen. VIII, 1526-8, pt 2, no. 4878).
24 Gere, 11 Nov. 1528 (Cal. S.P. Spain, 1527-9, no. 582).
29 Domhnall Mac Daire MacBruaidheada composed a poem for James fitz Maurice c.1570s. For the importance of this poem see chapter five. MacBruaidheada also composed a poem for Patrick Fitzmaurice, baron of Lixnaw: Osborn Bergin (ed.), Irish bardic poetry, pp 52-60, 233-7.
Hiberno-Norman poet connected with the Desmonds in the late sixteenth century. These bards fulfilled a very valuable function for the earls in that they helped legitimize Desmond overlordship in Gaelic-Irish Munster and maintain Desmond prestige in a manner which was immediately comprehensible to the Gaelic-Irish of the province. Their employment thus reflected the bi-cultural nature of the Desmond lordship, a feature which survived until the late sixteenth century in spite of disapproval and criticism from Dublin and Whitehall. Indeed, the importance of these cultural contacts with the Gaelic-Irish was reinforced not simply by the degree of patronage, but also by the fact that Gearóid Iarla, Gerald, third earl, was himself an exponent of a remarkably sophisticated bardic style.

The discussion of the earl’s household must be largely impressionistic due to the lack of relevant records, but an insight into this grouping may be garnered from those Gerald, fifteenth earl, had with him in London in 1562. In September Desmond sought passports for thirty nine of his servants to return to Ireland. Amongst these were Sir Derby Wine, steward, ‘parson of Offinge’, John Nelane, a ‘physician dwelling in the city of Limerick’, Dennis Cahissie, priest and chancellor of the city of Limerick, Matthew Hoirlie, Desmond’s chaplain, Andrew Skiddy, long time legal adviser and judge of the Desmonds, and John Coppinger, who in 1556 had served as a

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31 For the manner in which the Hiberno-Norman lords made use of Gaelic-Irish bardic poetry see Katharine Simms, ‘Bards and brehons: the Anglo-Irish aristocracy and the native culture’ in Robert Bartlett and Angus McKay (ed.), Medieval frontier societies, pp 177-97.
32 For the negative view Dublin and Whitehall had of Gaelic-Irish poets see Marc Caball, ‘Innovation and tradition: Irish Gaelic responses to early modern conquest and colonization’ in Hiram Morgan (ed.), Political ideology in Ireland, 1541-1641 (Dublin, 1999), pp 62-82.
33 Cliodna Cussen, Gearóid Iarla (Dublin, 1978); Duanaire Ghearóid Iarla, ed. Gearóid MacNiacail, in Studia Hib., iii (1963), pp 7-59. Other earls may also have written bardic poetry, while Maurice, first earl, composed two poems in Old French, and Gerald, fifteenth earl, composed a poem in English entitled ‘Against blame of women’: Alan Bliss & Joseph Long, ‘Literature in Norman French and English’ in N.H.I., ii, pp 719-20; Brian FitzGerald, The Geraldines, p. 312.
34 The names of the servants of the earl of Desmond, 7 Sept. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/7/9, enclosure i).
35 Memo of James Goghe’s last will, 28 May 1563 (Ormond deeds, 1547-1584, no. 118).
sergeant under James, fourteenth earl.36 Two others on the list were Barnabe Dalie, who may have been Barnabe described in 1546 as ‘an Irishman, servant to the earl of Desmonde’, who was paid £7 10s by the Privy Council, presumably for carrying letters,37 and David Hobbart, who would appear to have been the father of David Óg Hobert who in 1584 was found to be the constable of Newcastle West.38

This list, therefore, comprises both individuals involved in the administration of the earl’s estate and household, and servants engaged in more menial chores. The figure of thirty nine was not the full figure for the household, for some of his servants presumably remained with him in England, while there would likewise have been other servants who had remained in Ireland during the earl’s stay in England. Therefore, the total for Desmond’s household may have been double that of the list, around eighty. An estimate of this size would be well within the range of English households of the period. In 1533-4 Henry Bourchier, earl of Essex, employed fifty servants,39 while in 1519 the household of Edward, duke of Buckingham, aside from the family, contained ‘nine gentlewomen and seventeen gentlemen, a chancellor, a dean, an almoner and a physician, yeomen, grooms, and pages’, a total of 148.40 While these figures should be treated with care, as the term ‘household’ may not have the same meaning in all cases, they do indicate the position of the earls of Desmond relative to their near contemporaries among the English nobility.

As well as the council and household there were three main sections in the administrative system of the earldom. The first of these was the legal administration, at the hub of which was the liberty court. There the inhabitants of the palatinate were obliged to answer ‘the commands and writs which shall be directed to them by the

36 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, p. 125).
37 The privy council, 29 Aug. 1546 (L. & P. Hen.VIII, 1546, pt 1, no. 1523).
38 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, pp 102-3, 114).
authority of the same court'. The court was presided over by the seneschal of the liberty who was authorized to enquire and determine 'all indictments for any causes, offences and crimes whatsoever committed in the precincts of said liberty', including all 'pleas, namely of debt, trespass and convention, or any other cause committed or to be committed within the circuit of the said liberty', and all 'pleas of lands and tenements'. Exempt from the seneschal's jurisdiction however, were all 'causes and pleas to which the Earl or his heirs shall be party'.

The only record of a legal proceeding which has survived is that of an assize of *novel disseisin*, which was held at Dingle before Thomas Coppinger, seneschal of the liberty, in 1485. The case concerned a claim that certain named individuals had 'unjustly and without judgment' disseized Edmund Fitzmaurice, baron of Lixnaw, of certain lands in the county. The jury found that Lixnaw had held the lands and that 'the disseisin was made with force of arms', and requested that damages should be 'assessed according to the discretion of the Seneschall'. Coppinger then ordered the properties be returned to Lixnaw's control, and fined the guilty parties £1.

There was a 'great session for the government' of Co. Kerry, which was held annually at certain times of the year in the town of Tralee. The earl's tenants 'were obliged by their tenure' to attend for 'the whole term of the said session', and had to pay for the victuals and lodgings for the earl, his servants, and retainers, while the tenants' wives were required to cook for the earl and his men. Any woman who failed to do so was fined £1 half-face money (£1 6s 8d sterling). It is uncertain whether this 'great session' was merely another term for a session of the liberty court or something entirely separate.

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41 Indenture between James, earl of Desmond, and Edmund, Lord Fitzmaurice, 1 July 1541 (Ormond deeds, 1509-1547, no. 261).
43 Half-face: money used in Ireland with the profile or 'half-face' of the monarch on the coin, worth one-third more than Sterling.
44 Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, pp 11-2).
The courts of the manor of Castleisland, both the court baron,45 and lesser courts, held on a weekly basis, had jurisdiction to deal with all 'offences and trespasses' of the inhabitants of the entire cantred of Trughenackmy. The 'amercements and other casualties' were levied by the 'seneschals, constables of the castle, and other officers of the said manor.46 These courts at Castleisland imposed a fine of 3s 4d half-face upon those who would 'excite perturbation' by assaulting another person within the cantred. The fine would be higher if the incident had occurred in the town of Castleisland.47 There were similar courts baron in the manor of Tralee,48 at Knockainy, kept by the steward of the manor, where the freeholders of Small County barony did 'owe suite of Courte, ward, mariadge, and reliefe twyse the year',49 at Mallow, where there was also a Hundred court,50 at Dungarvan, which also had a hundred court,51 and at Rathkeale and Croagh for the barony of Connello.52

Rathkeale and Croagh also held sessions of a 'Court of piepowder'53 The earl’s portreeve held a court at Clonmel every fortnight which dealt with pleas below the value of £2 1d, while in the mid fourteenth century Robert de Stanton, steward of the barony of Inchiquin, Co. Cork, held a court every three weeks within the barony and dealt with indictments of felony and trespass, and in March 1344 De Stanton heard cases of murder and robbery at Ardagh in the presence of Maurice, first earl.54

45 Court Baron: a court for the freeholders of a particular manor.
46 Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, p. 15).
47 Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, p. 16).
48 Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, p. 12).
49 Estimate of the lands and possessions belonging to Gerald, earl of Desmond, 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/106/69); The yearly extents of the earl of Desmond's lands, 1572 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 611, pp 205-216).
52 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, p. 65).
53 Court of Piepowder: a summary court formerly held at fairs and markets to administer justice among itinerant dealers and others temporarily present.
Two elements of the Gaelic-Irish system which were used in the legal administration of the earldom, were the customs of ‘aonach’ and ‘oireachtas’. ‘Shane mac an iarla of Desmond’ [Sir John, thirteenth de facto earl] was reputed to have held an aonach and high oireachtas ‘on the green in front of his dwelling and good town’ of Knockainy, this ‘gathering’ and ‘convention’ an assembly of the people of a territory which had legal, as well as sporting and social, connotations.55

At the head of the administration was the seneschal, the earl’s chief officer, who had responsibility for judicial, financial, and military affairs. The position appears to have been geography specific, with seneschals appointed for particular regions, although it is unclear whether one had higher rank and prestige than the others. Certainly there was a seneschal of the liberty of Kerry,56 along with the hereditary post of seneschal of Imokilly, while there may also have been a seneschal for east Cork, as Gerald fitz John of Lismore, Co. Cork, was described in 1584 as Desmond’s ‘late seneschal and Receiver’.57 Twenty years earlier Fitz John had been described as Desmond’s steward.58 The two terms may possibly have referred to the same office.59 The variety of tasks the seneschal was charged with was reflected in the description of one Moore or McMoore, steward to Desmond in 1580, who was described as ‘a cheiffe doer for the Earle’ and ‘cheiffe survayor of all his landes and lyveinges’.60 There would have been numerous judges in the earldom, these being

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57 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 67-8).
59 For the interchangeability of the two terms in England see Kate Mertes, The English noble household 1250-1600, p. 22.
60 Bingham’s diary from 9 to 30 June, 2 July 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/74/5, enclosure i); Bingham to Walsingham, 2 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/75/4).
variously described as the earl’s justice (tribunnus), the ‘Justice of his liberty’, and one who was called ‘Breehuff an Erle’ the earl’s judge, while there would also have been lawyers, such as one ‘Welshe, solicitor for the Earl’, who successfully defended James, fourteenth earl, against accusations made by Edmund Sexton in 1546.

The financial affairs occupied the second section of the administration. The earl’s most important financial officer, after the seneschal, was the receiver general who acted as treasurer, and had responsibility for the financial organization of the earldom, the post held by Nicholas fitz William in 1581. The position was common to contemporary English lordships. The receiver general was aided in his work by the sergeants, John O’Connor (O’Konnor) being described in 1584 as one of the ‘Earl’s serjeants or under receivers’.

The wealth of the Desmonds was primarily based upon the exploitation of the land. The main mechanism for this was the manor. The manor of Knockainy, which contained approximately 900 acres, had a total value in 1584 of £93 16s 1d. The ruined castle was worth 13s 4d, while the 900 acres of demesne lands were worth a further £6 16s. A further £36 1s 3d was accounted for by rents from tenants. Twelve burgesses who rented approximately 675 acres within the borough of Knockainy paid £6. A water mill on the Camoge river brought in £1 13s 4d, while fees from a two-day fair each August contributed an additional 13s 4d. Other features of manors which were exploited were fisheries, woods, quarries, and mines. Income was similarly

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61 Grant of land by James fitz Maurice, 20 Dec. 1524 (Ormond deeds, 1509-1547, no. 113).
62 Desmond to Justice Walshe, 28 Dec. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/43/26).
63 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, pp 127-8).
64 The privy council, 18 May 1546 (L. & P. Hen. VIII, 1546, pt 1, no. 853).
65 A.F.M., sub anno 1581; Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, pp 57, 172-4).
67 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, p. 94).
68 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038 b, pp 5-9).
derived from towns. Rathkeale paid over £13 p.a. for rents for burgages, perquisites from the courts held there, and fees from fair days. Port towns contributed fees from foreign fishermen who paid for the right to fish off the south-west coast, customs on goods imported or exported, and the prisage of wines. These amounted to £33 6s 8d for Dingle and county Kerry. The casualties and profits of the various courts within the earldom contributed further funds. The fine for a conviction for an ‘effusion of blood’ at the ‘great session’ at Tralee was £5, two-thirds of which (£3 6s 8d) went to the earl.

In many ways the administration of the earldom was comparable to that of similar institutions in England. The prominence of lawyers, such as Andrew Skiddy who had studied at the Inner Temple, as counsellors, administrators, and advisers mirrored the position in England, as did the part played by clergy, at least until the reformation. Long family service was also a common experience, with different generations of the Coppinger serving the Desmonds. Personal advancement was

69 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038 b, pp 64-5).
70 Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, p. 4).
71 Wounding and drawing blood.
72 Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, pp 12, 15).
75 Thomas Coppinger was seneschal of the liberty of Kerry in 1485, John Coppinger was a sergeant for James, fourteenth earl, in 1556, while John was joined by Philip and James Coppinger in England in 1562: ‘The story of the Slught Edmund’ in Kerry Arch. Mag., iii, no. 15 (Oct. 1915), p. 186; Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, p. 125); The names of the servants of the Earl of Desmond, 7 Sept. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/7/9, enclosure i). Similarly, the Greve family served the earls of Shrewsbury as receivers and bailiffs between 1470 and 1560: G.W. Bernard, The power of the early Tudor nobility, pp 158-9. For a general view of family service in English households see Kate Mertes, The English noble household 1250-1600, pp 60-8.
also possible for officials, with the most spectacular examples amongst those involved with the accounts.\textsuperscript{76} Thus Sir John Coterel, or Coterill, rose from the post of auditor of the accounts of the manor of Dungarvan in 1338, to an attorney for the earl five years later, to the earl’s steward by 1345, during which time he was one of the key advisers to Maurice, first earl.\textsuperscript{77}

However, the earldom of Desmond possessed marked differences from contemporary English earldoms. This was particularly true of the financial administration of the earldom which can not be understood simply in terms of the collection of rents or the levying of feudal dues, for alongside these forms of income was the system of coyne and livery. These exactions were central to the economic system of the earldom, as they produced a mass of revenue for the Desmonds. The example of the cantred of Trughenackmy in 1584 shows the importance of these exactions to the overall income of the earldom. The charge of ‘shragh’ brought in 192 marks half-face, or £138 5s 7.5d sterling, while ‘mart’ of 67 cows was valued at another £44 13s 4d. The ‘bonnaght’ for 48 galloglass, each with a boy attendant, was assessed at a rate of 3d per day, or £219 per annum. These exactions thus accounted for £401 18s 11.5d. The total income of the cantred was estimated at £734 8s 9.5d, so that the exactions accounted for approximately 60% of the total income of the cantred. Even allowing for the low estimates for the income from the destroyed manors within the cantred, the fact remains that coyne and livery exactions accounted for over half the income of this cantred.\textsuperscript{78} In Knockainy manor the ‘shragh’ and ‘mart’ alone accounted for approximately 32% of the total income.\textsuperscript{79} Indeed the value of the

\textsuperscript{76} For cases of advancement in English households see Kate Mertes, \textit{The English noble household 1250-1600}, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{78} Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, pp 8-16).
\textsuperscript{79} Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 6-9).
exactions could have been even greater, for in Limerick it was estimated that collectively, the other exactions could be worth 'ten times as much in value as the 'shragh' and 'mart' aforesaid are worth yearly'.

The exactions thus garnered a huge income for the Desmonds, but this did not allow them to build up a large reserve of cash. Instead they needed the exactions to pay for their defence, the third section of the administration. The presence of many powerful lords along their extensive borders meant that the Desmonds had to maintain huge numbers of men on a near permanent war footing, ready to respond to any aggression towards the earldom. The exactions enabled the Desmonds to do that. The primary exaction used to support the Desmond military forces was the 'bonnaght', which was a charge for meat, drink, and wages on a particular region for 'Souldiers kept in readines as well in peace as in warre'. This exaction could either be taken in kind, when it was known as the 'bonnaght-bony', or commuted to a cash charge, known as the 'bonnaght-beg'. The cantred of Corca Dhuibhne in Co. Kerry was charged with 'lodgings and food for 48 Galloglass and 48 boy attendants' who were 'retained during the whole year at the charge and expense of the aforesaid barony'. At a rate of 3d per day for each galloglass and his boy, the value of the bonnaght-beg was £219.82 A second exaction was 'kearnety', a charge of between 3s 4d and 4s per quarter of land for the maintenance of the earl's kerne', while two others were 'sorren' and 'galloglas'. 'Sorren' was a charge upon the lands of the freeholders of a region for a number of galloglass for a set number of days every quarter of the year, while 'galloglas' was a charge for a number of soldiers on a

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80 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, p. 42).
81 Customs and exactions of the earl of Desmond, (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 617, pp 212-213).
82 Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, p. 2).
83 Customs and exactions of the earl of Desmond, (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 617, pp 212-213).
particular region or county.\textsuperscript{84} The ‘sorren’ for the tuath of Clonecrawe, one of eight church tuaths in Connello, was for twelve galloglass for two days and nights every quarter year, which amounted to 96 galloglass for one day and night per year, valued at £1.\textsuperscript{85}

The Desmond method for the support of their soldiers was thus very different from those employed by their English contemporaries. English noblemen in the fifteenth century had exploited ‘bastard feudalism’ to support their men, but this only allowed for short periods of military service. Extended service, except in a crisis, was uncommon. The Dacres employed a different system on their estates along the northern march of England. There, where effective border defence was of paramount importance, the Dacres used ‘tenant right’. In that system tenants paid comparatively low rents but in return were obliged to provide their own horse and weapons when called for military service along the Anglo-Scottish border. In this way Dacre could raise a large force quickly with little cost to himself.\textsuperscript{86} Furthermore, the Desmonds appear to have been more rapacious than any of their contemporaries in Ireland in their exploitation of coyne and livery. The impression from the extant sources is that the Desmonds charged the highest level of exactions in Ireland. They certainly charged more than the Butlers of Ormond, where the use of coyne and livery was regulated and controlled.\textsuperscript{87}

By the exploitation of coyne and livery to its fullest the Desmonds were able to support very substantial numbers of men, both to put large forces in the field and to garrison their many castles. James, eleventh earl, claimed to have had 1,500 cavalry and 16,500 foot soldiers, but this was part of his efforts in 1529 to secure an alliance

\textsuperscript{84} Customs and exactions of the earl of Desmond, (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 617, pp 212-213).
\textsuperscript{85} Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 4039, p. 132).
with Charles V, and so can be dismissed as a gross exaggeration. A more reliable figure would appear to be around 4,000. In the late fifteenth century Desmond was estimated to have 400 horsemen, 3,000 kerne, between 480 and 640 galloglass, and between 60 and 80 crossbow men and gunners. In September 1520 James, eleventh earl, suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of Cormac Óg MacCarthy Reagh, where he lost close to 500 horsemen and over 1,400 galloglass. Given that James survived as earl, he must have had additional troops at his disposal. Forty years later Gerald, fifteenth earl, was reputed to have assembled a force of approximately 5,000 men. Such a figure of 4,000 would presumably represent the complete mobilization of the earl’s forces, and would be a huge force in comparison to the English army in Ireland which averaged less than 2,500 soldiers for most of the second half of the sixteenth century. It would also compare favourably with the ‘private armies’ of English noblemen in the fifteenth century, and with the forces of marcher lords in the north of England in the sixteenth century.

The earls’ forces were composed of three main types of soldier, horsemen, galloglass, and kerne, their choice of arms and armour dictated by physical conditions. The wooded and mountainous terrain of Munster, combined with the wet climate, influenced warfare in the province in favour of skirmishes and raids rather than
pitched battles. Speed and mobility were more useful than heavy armour in these
conditions, and so the Desmonds's horsemen wore lighter armour than their English
counterparts. They wore shirts of mail and used loose reins, and did without stirrups
and saddles. The galloglass were hereditary warriors, foot soldiers usually armed with
a double-headed axe, who were descended from Scottish warrior clans. They were
noted for their commitment and ferocity in close-quarter combat. The kinne were
lightly-armed soldiers, commonly armed with spears and swords.94 The Desmonds
also had small quantities of crossbow men and gunners.

These men provided the garrisons for the numerous castles and tower houses
which dotted the landscape between Dingle and Dungarvan. In Kerry the most
important castles were those from Castlemaine Harbour along the Maine river valley.
These castles, at Killorglin, Castlemaine, Curran's, and Castletisland, guarded the
'Killorglin Line', the dividing line between Hiberno-Norman northern Kerry and
Gaelic-Irish southern Kerry. The castles at Brosna and Port (Portrinard) straddled the
Kerry-Limerick border and protected the route over the Mullaghareirk mountains.
The Desmond castles at Tarbert, and Shanid, along with the Knight of Glin's castle at
Glin, and O'Connor Kerry's castles at Carrigafoile and Tarmons, controlled the land
route around the northern slopes of the Mullaghareirk mountains between Kerry and
Limerick, and supervised the ships which came into the Shannon estuary. The Deel
river valley in central Connello was guarded by the castles at Askeaton, Rathkeale,
Court matrix, Newcastle West, and Mayne, while the eastern borders of Connello were
protected by the four castles of Knockainy, Rathmore, Fedamore, and Lough Gur in
the Small County, and by the cantred of Kenry, held by the Knights of Glin, which
lay to the north-east of Connello. The castles at Kilcolman, Broghill, Kilbolane, and
Castletlishen secured the southern borders of Connello, while the 'highway' between

94 Richard Stanihurst, 'De rebus in Hibernia gestis' part trans. as 'On Ireland's Past' in
Colm Lennon, Richard Stanihurst, The Dubliner, pp 151-2; Gonzalo Fernandez to Charles V,
May 1529 (Cal. S.P. Spain, 1529-30, no. 24).
Cork city and Limerick city was protected by the castles at Mallow and Charleville (Rathcogan). Mallow also protected the strategically important fording point on the Blackwater river. The cantreds of Imokilly, Kinnatalloon, and Coshmore & Coshbride constituted a contiguous block of territory which controlled the mouth of the River Blackwater with castles at Mocollop, Shean, and Strancally.

These castles varied in size from basic tower houses to elaborate, multi-structure complexes. The tower house at Rathmore was a six storey structure, the top two stories consisting of a smaller, subsidiary chamber, while the tower entrance was protected by a barbican on the north side of the building. There was an adjoining three storey hall on the east side, and some other, smaller buildings within the bawn. In 1584 the castle was held by Maurice Sheehan, one of Desmond’s most senior aides, and appeared to have a garrison of seven.95 The castle at Askeaton, one of the Desmonds’s main residences, was a much larger complex. It was situated on a small island in the Deel river, and comprised two towers, a large hall, a chamber, three cellars, a kitchen, bedrooms, and other buildings, together with a triangular garden, all enclosed by a bawn. Such a large structure would have been served by a large staff and garrison, possibly numbering thirty six.96

Overseeing these forces was the seneschal, the chief military official within the earldom. When James, eleventh earl, negotiated with Francis I of France in 1523 he was aided by David McMorris, his ‘master of war (senescallo guerrarum)’.97 The seneschal was assisted by two marshals. One of these posts were filled by the barons

95 Limerick survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 13-4); C.J. Donnelly, The tower houses of county Limerick (Unpublished Ph.D., Queen’s University, Belfast, 1994), i, pp 181-2, ii, pp 164-6; Pardon to Maurice Sheehan, et al., 20 Aug. 1584 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 4513).
97 Treaty between Francis I and James, earl of Desmond, 20 June 1523 (L. & P. Hen. VII, 1521-3, pt 2, no. 3118).
of Lixnaw on a hereditary basis, while the captains of the McSheehy galloglass were similarly hereditary. These galloglass leaders occupied important positions within the earldom. Owen McEdmund McSheehy was described in 1579 as the 'chiefe foster father to the Erles sonne', while Rory McSheehy was the chief captain of the galloglass and one of earl Gerald's main supporters during the second Desmond rebellion.

The position of constable of a castle was especially important due to the dispersed nature of the earldom, as he had responsibility for the defence and administration of the castle and its lands. Some constables merely looked after what was their own private residence, such as John McClankey, the earl’s judge, who was constable of Corgragg castle, Co. Limerick, while others would appear to have been put into particular castles to guard the local area, such as Tirrelaghe McEdmund Óg McSheehy at the strategically important Port (Portrinard). Somewhat apart from the military officials, although very important to the defence of the earldom, was the master of the horse and keeper of the stud. This was the official who was presumably charged with the provision of a constant supply of horses for the Desmonds and their men, there being a specific exaction, ‘gillicrie’, for his upkeep.

The Desmonds also levied exactions on their allies as this helped secure their overlordship over vassal lords. Foremost in this regard were the exactions of ‘shragh’ and ‘mart’. These were charges of a yearly rent in money and cows respectively,

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98 Indenture between James, earl of Desmond, and Edmund, Lord Fitzmaurice, 1 July 1541 (Ormond deeds, 1509-47, no. 261); Estimate of the lands and possessions belonging to Gerald, earl of Desmond, 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/106/69). The office of marshal was also divided between two men in the earldom of Ormond, the barons of Caher serving as one of the two: C.A. Empey, The Butler lordship in Ireland, 1185-1515, pp 452-3.
100 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, p. 118).
101 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, p. 121).
102 The yearly extents of the earl of Desmond's lands, 1572 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 611, pp 205-216); Customs and exactions of the earl of Desmond, (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 617, pp 212-213).
assessed on a particular cantred or region. The barons of Lixnaw paid 'shragh' of 320 marks half-face (£284 8s 10.5d sterling), and 'mart' of 160 'fat cows', worth £106 13s 4d, for Clanmorris.103 As well as the obvious economic benefit, these payments symbolized and reinforced the Desmonds’s overlordship of the Fitzmaurices. Similar in effect were ‘cosshery’, which was a charge for the lodging of the earl and his retinue, and ‘cuddy’, a charge for food and drink for those who received ‘cosshery’.104 The ‘cosshery’ for Pobblebrian, paid by the O’Briens of Carrigogunnel, was to be charged ‘as often as he [the earl] should come or return by the country for 2 days and 2 nights at Christmas once a year’, and if the earl did not come then the O’Briens were to pay him £5 half-face.105 By means of these exactions the earl reinforced the ties between himself and the local population, and reminded them who their overlord was.

The exploitation of coyne and livery was thus of central importance to the Desmonds as it enabled them to maintain very large forces for the defence of their attenuated earldom. However, the integration of coyne and livery into their administrative system was not without very serious consequences for the Desmonds. As a method of estate management coyne and livery was highly inefficient. The system as it was operated in the earldom appears to have amounted to soldiers, whether appointed to a particular area or passing through an area, taking whatever food and drink they wanted for themselves and their horses. Unlike a fixed monetary rent where a tenant would know exactly how much they would have to pay, the exactions could vary depending on the numbers of soldiers and on how aggressive they were. The uncertainty of this system acted as a brake on improvements to the land or increases to the yields as the likelihood was that any increased surplus would merely be taken by the soldiers. In this way coyne and livery served as a disincentive for

103 Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, p. 2).
104 Customs and exactions of the earl of Desmond, (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 617, pp 212-213).
105 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, pp 31-2).
economic growth within the earldom.

The widespread application of coyne and livery also contributed to a very high level of violence which brought a large economic cost with it. The presentments made at the sessions held by Lord President Sir William Drury in Clonmel and Cork in 1576 contain numerous complaints about the levying of coyne and livery throughout the province, and numerous reports of the goods which were stolen or destroyed during raids. Furthermore, the large numbers of men necessary to collect the revenues consumed most of the revenue raised. This left little surplus and made the exercise largely economically self-defeating. The result of these two aspects was that the sums raised from the earldom do not appear to have come anywhere near the levels estimated by the commissioners in 1584. In 1568 Desmond’s income was estimated at approximately £1,000 per annum, while four years later the estimate was £2,500, though both estimates believed he received less than these figures. These were far below the estimated £7,000 level of the 1584 survey, although the figures from 1568 and 1572 were estimated at times of great violence and destruction within Munster. Perhaps the difference between the £7,000 and the £2,500 may have been the amount illegally collected in the form of exactions and consumed by the soldiers. Whatever the truth about the difference, coyne and livery was not the optimum way for the Desmonds to economically exploit their lands.

The second, and perhaps greater, problem was that coyne and livery was viewed by the English as an evil to be extirpated. Made illegal under the statutes of Kilkenny (1366) and subsequent legislation, one of Sidney’s primary objectives in the

Irish parliament of 1569-71 was the complete abolition of coyne and livery. Plans for the political reform of Ireland invariably discussed coyne and livery, while authors of political discourses railed against its malevolent presence. Politically, therefore, the continued use of coyne and livery was a considerable problem for the Desmonds, particularly as they were often cited as being the first of the Hiberno-Norman community to adopt coyne and livery. The liability of the system was further increased when Thomas, tenth earl of Ormond, agreed to forsake the exactions in 1564. Gerald, fifteenth earl of Desmond, thus compared even less favourably with Ormond.

The earldom of Desmond was, therefore, Janus-like in its employment of elements from both the Hiberno-Norman and Gaelic-Irish systems. From the former the Desmonds received the palatinate and the earldom, which together served to give

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108 Sidney failed to get a comprehensive bill against coyne and livery passed by the Commons, due in large part to opposition led by Ormond, although he succeeded in getting a 'captainries' bill passed, this giving the deputy the power to prohibit captains taking coyne and livery: Victor Treadwell, 'The Irish parliament of 1569-71' in R.I.A. Proc., xlv, sect. c (1966), pp 57-8, 69, 73-4, 79-81, 88-9.

109 For example see Brendan Bradshaw, 'A treatise for the reformation of Ireland 1554-5' in Ir. Jurist, xvi (1981), p. 313, where the writer deplores the 'abominable extortion called coin and livery'; Rowland White, 'The dysorders of the Irisshery, 1571' ed. Nicholas Canny in Studia Hib., xix (1979), pp 154-5; A note sett forthe by yor mates faithfull servant Patrick Sherlocke (B.L., Cotton MSS, Titus B XII, ff 68r-69v).

110 See Richard Beacon, Solon his follie, eds. Clare Carroll & Vincent Carey (Binghamton, NY, 1996) pp 101-2, where 'that horrible and detestable custome' is described as being 'the very nurse, and teate, that gave sucke and nutriment to all disobedience, rebellions, enormities, vices, and iniquities' of Ireland.

111 In 1515 Sir William Darcy blamed James, seventh earl of Desmond, for being the first Hiberno-Norman to levy coyne and livery: Such articles as Sir William Darcy, knight, put in before the King's council of England, 24 June 1515 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 635, ff 188f-188v). Sir John Davies placed the blame on Maurice, first earl of Desmond, and stated that he was 'the first English Lord that imposed coigny and livery upon the King's subjects', which raised his estate to 'immoderate greatness', and enabled him 'to dispend every way ten thousand pounds per annum', even though he possessed an inheritance worth only 1,000 marks p.a.: John Davies, A discovery of the true causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued ... until ... his majesty's happy reign (London, 1612) in Henry Morley (ed.) Ireland under Elizabeth and James I (London, 1890), pp 301, 307. However, the veracity of these claims is undermined by the fact that as early as 1202 William de Burgh's soldiers were allowed 'levy their own wages from the people on whom they were billeted': A.L.C., sub anne 1202; Katharine Simms, From kings to warlords, p. 119.


113 For the intense rivalry between Desmond and Ormond see below, chapters four to six.
them considerable autonomy from the Dublin administration. From the latter they took coyne and livery, which allowed them to support and maintain large numbers of soldiers which they could not have done otherwise. The combination of the two made the Desmonds extremely powerful and important, both regionally and nationally. They thus sought to enjoy the stability, wealth, and power of a Tudor earldom within a realm which had not been completely conquered or pacified. As a consequence they had to support a military system which was economically wasteful, diplomatically troublesome, and, as the sixteenth century progressed, increasingly politically unacceptable. The political careers of James, fourteenth earl, and Gerald, fifteenth earl, would be dominated by their intense and ultimately unsuccessful efforts to address this inherent contradiction.
CHAPTER THREE
THE EARLDOM UNDER JAMES, FOURTEENTH EARL, 1540-58

James fitz John Fitzgerald was recognized as fourteenth earl of Desmond when he submitted to Lord Deputy Anthony St Leger on 16 January 1541. His route to recognition was long and tortuous, the result of the death of Thomas, twelfth earl of Desmond, in 1534 and the consequent succession dispute. Earl Thomas tried to arrange for the succession of his grandson James fitz Maurice by continuing alliances, which had served him well in the past, with Cormac Óg MacCarthy, lord of Muskerry, James Butler, later ninth earl of Ormond, and John fitz Gerald, lord of Decies. In opposition was Earl Thomas’s younger brother, Sir John, and his son James. Sir John quickly gained possession of the earldom and ruled as thirteenth de facto earl until his death in 1536, when James fitz John assumed control over the earldom. James fitz Maurice, thirteenth de jure earl, failed to attract significant support within Munster apart from his father-in-law Cormac Óg MacCarthy, and withdrew to England by 1536.¹

In late July 1536 Lord Deputy Leonard Grey advanced as far as Limerick and communicated with James fitz John, who promised to send his two sons as hostages for his good behaviour.² That December Fitz John promised to be true to and serve the king, and to compensate those he had taken goods or cattle from.³ In September 1537 he agreed to assist the administration of justice in Munster, to levy taxes on his lands, to defend the cities and towns of the province, and to prove his title to the earldom to the satisfaction of the king,⁴ and by March 1538 he had delivered his

² The council of Ireland to Cromwell, 22 Aug. 1536 (S.P. Hen. VIII, ii, 361-5).
³ James fitz John’s promises, 17 Dec. 1536 (S.P. Hen. VIII, ii, 404-5).
⁴ Articles of submission of James fitz John of Desmond, 18 Oct. 1537 (S.P. Hen. VIII, ii, 517-8).
eldest, and bastardized, son Thomas into the custody of William Wise of Waterford. Fitz John appeared to be advancing his cause admirably, helped by Grey’s alignment with the Geraldine faction in Ireland, Grey claiming the actions of the Butlers were responsible for Fitz John’s difficulties.

However, the Butlers were to prove resolute opponents in Fitz John’s quest for recognition as Piers Butler, earl of Ossory, hoped his son James, subsequently ninth earl of Ormond, would inherit the earldom of Desmond as James had married Joan, daughter and heir general of James, eleventh earl of Desmond. Ossory and his supporters tried to discredit Grey, while Ossory campaigned militarily against Fitz John throughout 1538-9, in the course of which Ossory won the territories of Imokilly and Kerrycurrihy for James fitz Maurice, thirteenth de jure earl, who returned to Ireland in 1539. Fitz Maurice’s return, with royal approval and support, threatened Fitz John’s hopes for recognition. However, Fitz Maurice was killed on 19 March 1540 by James fitz John’s brother Maurice, which left Fitz John the only Geraldine claimant for the earldom, and four months later he and his brothers received pardons. Six months after that James fitz John submitted to St Leger.

His experiences between 1536 and 1541 were to have a profound influence on Desmond who, having fought so hard and long to become earl, was determined to secure his position as comprehensively as possible. He was also acutely aware that the earldom needed to recover from the ravages and disruption of the preceding three decades during which time the Desmond Geraldines had been riven by internecine warfare. By the time the conflict came to an end considerable damage had been done both to the earldom as an institution, and to the earls as the beneficiaries of its power.

5 The commissioners to Cromwell, 8 Mar. 1538 (S.P. Hen.VIII, ii, 549-50).
6 Lord Deputy Grey to Cromwell, 4 Feb. 1537 (S.P. Hen.VIII, ii, 404-7); Grey to Henry VIII, 4 June 1538 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 15-7).
7 Ossory to Robert Cowley, 20 July 1538 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 52-5); Robert Cowley to Cromwell, 5 Aug. 1538 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 63-5).
The economy of the earldom was severely disrupted, and physical damage was immense, while concessions had been made to cadet branches, and the earls’ responsibilities were compromised. What was needed was a period of sustained peace and stability which would allow for the renewal and consolidation of the earldom. Desmond’s actions as earl would be directed towards the defence of his position and the implementation of that renewal.9

The first task for Desmond was to change the negative image held of the Desmond Geraldines in Dublin and Whitehall. This was particularly important as during much of the preceding century, ever since the execution in 1468 of Thomas fitz James, eighth earl, relations between the Desmonds and Dublin and Whitehall had been extremely bad, with the Desmonds often involved in subversive and treasonable activities. Maurice, tenth earl, had supported the Yorkist pretender Perkin Warbeck, who claimed to be Richard, duke of York, King Edward IV’s son, in 1491-2 and again in 1495 when together they besieged Waterford for eleven days, with a reputed force of 24,000 men, before Warbeck was obliged to escape to Scotland. The following March, however, Maurice was reconciled to Henry VII.10 Even worse, James, eleventh earl, had signed treaties with both Francis I of France in 1523, and Charles V of Spain in 1529, and died in rebellion.11 These actions, together with the near-

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9 For the negative consequences of the internecine warfare on the Desmond Geraldines see A.M. McCormack, 'Internecine warfare and the decline of the house of Desmond, c.1510-c.1541' in I.H.S., xxx, no. 120 (Nov. 1997), pp 502-12.
11 Treaty between Francis I and James, earl of Desmond, 20 June 1523 (L. & P. Hen. VIII, 1521-3, pt 2, no. 3118); Gonzalo Fernandez to Charles V, May 1529 (Cal. S.P. Spain, 1529-30, no. 24).
constant internecine warfare which 1541 brought to an end, served to make officials in
Whitehall and Dublin equate in their minds the Desmonds with trouble, disloyalty, war, and expense. Little wonder, therefore, that Henry VIII had been prepared to aid James fitz John’s rival in 1539-40.

In order to negate this harmful reputation Desmond pursued a calculated policy to cultivate the goodwill of Henry and his successors. His submission to deputy St Leger was suitably humble and contrite, and marked the beginning of a rapprochement with his monarch. He recognized Henry as his king and sovereign, and promised to serve and obey him, while in a move which was both practical and symbolic he renounced the privilege of not attending parliaments or councils and of not entering walled towns which were loyal to the crown, a privilege which had been granted for life to James, seventh earl of Desmond, in 1445, and which had been claimed by successive earls since the execution of Thomas, eighth earl, at Drogheda in 1468. As a result Desmond was present in the Irish parliament in June 1541 when Henry VIII was made king of Ireland, presumably replete with a scarlet parliamentary robe which had been made for him by John Malte, the king’s tailor. The outward reconciliation was complete when he swore fealty to Henry at court on 29 June 1542.

This new relationship was to see Desmond serve the crown faithfully in a number of capacities for the following two decades. His advice was sought on

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14 Lord Deputy Sir Anthony St Leger to Henry VIII, 26 June 1541 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 304-5); St Leger and council of Ireland to Henry VIII, 28 June 1541 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 306-10).
15 Henry VIII to St Leger and council, 26 Mar. 1541 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 299); Augmentations, v (payments by warrants of the Council), 7 Apr. 1541 (L. & P. Hen.VIII,1542, no. 258); Augmentation accounts, viii (necessary payments by warrants of the Court), 1543 (L. & P. Hen.VIII, 1543, pl 2, no. 231).
16 Eustace Chapuys to the queen of Hungary, 29 June 1542 (Cal. S.P. Spain, 1542-3, no. 12, p. 22); Marillac to Francis I, 2 July 1542 (L. & P. Hen.VIII, 1542, no. 453); Henry VIII to the lord deputy and council, 5 July 1542 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 396-7); Eustace Chapuys to Granville, 8 July 1542 (Cal. S.P. Spain, 1542-3, no. 20).
important issues. He was one of those canvassed by the council in May 1544 for their opinion about sending kerne to England for service in France and Scotland,17 while in February 1551 Sir John Croft was instructed by the crown to get Desmond’s help in surveying Baltimore and Castletown Bearhaven as part of his review of coastal defences.18

On a more practical level he helped maintain order within Munster, such as in November 1548 when he was asked to keep the law and to ‘exort all suche as be about you to follow the same according unto theyr duties’.19 Similarly, in December 1552, he was praised for ‘trayni[n]ge the rude peopell there to the knowledge of their dutyes to the K[ing]es male there Sov[er]ayne lorde and to the obediens of hys highnes lawes’.20 He also dealt with rebels and malefactors. He persuaded O’Brien not to rebel in 1541,21 while in the summer of 1543 he apprehended both the White Knight and lord Roche, then in open conflict with each other, and delivered them to deputy St Leger at Carlow from whence they were transferred to Dublin Castle.22 In October 1548 he was called upon to deal with Cormac Óg MacCarthy of Duhallow who had burned three villages in Clanwilliam and taken a prey of cattle,23 and in December 1551 he captured his own son Gerald, and his brother Maurice, for having taken a prey from MacCarthy Reagh.24 Desmond’s service also extended beyond the confines of Munster. He contributed 120 kerne to Henry VIII’s forces in France in

17 Lord Justice Brabazon and council to St Leger, 24 Mar. 1544 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 492).
19 Sir William Wise to Desmond, Nov. 1548 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/1/131).
20 Mayor and brethren of Waterford to the privy council, 18 Dec. 1552 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/4/68).
21 St Leger and council to Henry VIII, 24 Oct. 1541 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 342).
22 St Leger to Henry VIII, 4 June 1543 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 466).
1544, while in 1546 and again the following year he was active against the O’Mores and O’Connors.

Desmond thus pursued a definite strategy of ingratiating himself to the crown through loyal service, a strategy which found a receptive response in the person of Anthony St Leger, deputy since July 1540, whose support was to be the key to Desmond’s recovery. The reason for this support lay in St Leger’s administrative programme. St Leger sought to reform the lordship of Ireland by a process of constitutional change supported by a policy of indentures which became known as ‘Surrender and regrant’. By the terms of these indentures Gaelic-Irish lords and chieftains surrendered their lands to the crown who then regranted them the lands to hold in fee of the crown. Although Hiberno-Norman, Desmond’s submission fitted into this scheme of a new start in his relationship with the crown as he ended a decades old, self-imposed embargo on the part of the Desmonds from attendance at the Irish parliament, his appearance at court being followed by a number of Gaelic-Irish lords.

St Leger recognized that Desmond’s conformity was necessary for the success of his plans. With the destruction of the house of Kildare in the 1530s the Geraldine faction ceased to function, which left the Butler faction unchallenged. When appointed lord deputy St Leger sought to free himself from subservience to Butler interests by establishing a ‘king’s party’ which would be bound to him, and the king, by ties of friendship and mutual benefit, underpinned by large grants of land at reduced rents. Thus, as part of St Leger’s developing scheme, Desmond was one of six lords who were to be granted lands in Dublin to facilitate their attendance at

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25 Note of the kerne written for by Henry VIII, [May] 1544 (P.R.O., S.P. 60/11/43, enclosure i); T.Blake Butler, ‘King Henry VIII’s Irish army list’ in Ir. Geneal., i (1937-42), pp 3-13, 36-40.
26 A.F.M., sub anno 1546; Edward VI to Desmond, 15 Oct. 1547 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/1/6).
27 For St Leger’s relationship with Desmond see Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, chapters one and five.
parliament, Desmond receiving a large part of the lands of St Mary’s abbey. During its existence Desmond was to be a leading member of this ‘king’s party’, acting as a counterbalance to Ormond, ‘a Rowlande for an Olyver’.29

Furthermore, St Leger viewed Desmond’s reconciliation with the crown as an advertisement for his programme, and advised Henry that his ‘kinglie enterteynmente’ at court would serve as an ‘exsample to all other Irishe and Inglishe disobeysantes, to reforme them selves to their deuties of obedience’. In a similar vein Lord Justice Cusack urged the privy council in 1552 to support Desmond’s suits of the time as his ‘good behavof here hath bene an example to others of great conformitie’.31 As long as Desmond was loyal and obedient, St Leger and others were prepared to back him. Fortunately for Desmond, St Leger was to remain as deputy until May 1548, and intermittently thereafter until finally replaced in May 1556 by Thomas Radcliffe, lord Fitzwalter, who in 1557 was made earl of Sussex. For most of his lordship, therefore, James dealt with a deputy who was sympathetic to him.

Encouraged by St Leger, Desmond’s eighteen years as earl bore witness to a level of cooperation not seen between the crown and the Desmonds since the mid-fifteenth century. This brought Desmond a dramatic improvement in his political standing. In July 1542, following his attendance at court, Henry informed the deputy and council how ‘thErle of Desmonde hath here used himself in soo honest, lowly, and humble a sorte towards Us, as We have conceyved a very good hope that he woll

28 Henry VIII to St Leger and council, [9 July] 1543 (S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, 472-7); Grant to Desmond, 20 Dec. 1543 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 386). The other recipients were to be Murrough O’Brien, first earl of Thomond, his nephew Donough O’Brien, lord of Ibrackan and future second earl of Thomond, Ulick Burke, first earl of Clannrickard, Barnaby Fitzpatrick, baron of Upper Ossory, and Con Bacach O’Neill, first earl of Tyrone. Desmond received most of the demesne lands of the abbey, located on the north bank of the Liffey, including most of the houses and buildings on that site. See Fr Colmcille, ‘The lands of St. Mary’s abbey, Dublin, at the dissolution of the abbey’ in Reportorium Novum, iii, no. 1 (1961-2), pp 94-105; Extents Ir. mon. possessions, pp 1-25.
29 St Leger to Henry VIII, 8 May 1542 (S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, 379-80).
30 St Leger and council to Henry VIII, 27 Aug. 1542 (S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, 413).
31 Lords Justices Thomas Cusack and Gerald Aylmer and council to the privy council, 30 Dec. 1552 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/4/70).
prove a man of greate honour, trouth, and good service’. They were, therefore, to help him in order that ‘his countrey maye growe to like civilitie and obedyence, as he seameth to have already planted in his harte towards Us’. The following year St Leger described how Desmond ‘hathe not only ben diligent in this, but in all other his proceedinges, to doo Your Majestie servyce according his bounden duetie’, and asked Henry to consider his suits favourably. The good opinions continued into the 1550s when Lord Deputy Sir James Croft praised his loyalty and described ‘howe noble a man he is made by the Kinges mate goodnes, wch before laules lyved without any good rule or ordre and nowe in Justice none more severe then he’.

These changed perceptions translated into tangible reward which helped Desmond to consolidate his position in Munster. Fittingly enough, the first such act came courtesy of St Leger, who decided to put an end to the conflict between James and his namesake the ninth earl of Ormond who had attempted to inherit the earldom of Desmond himself. In February 1541 St Leger, afraid that the ‘cancer’ which remained between the two would threaten the fragile political stability within Munster, tried to put a ‘fynall ende’ to Ormond’s ambitions and arranged a treaty between the two earls. With this agreement Desmond’s position was secure.

Further benefits accrued. In October 1547 Edward VI offered to educate his eldest son at court, an offer Desmond declined, while the following year he was appointed to the office of admiral of the south-west coast between Dungarvan and Galway. However, his ultimate accolade came in March 1547 when Edward VI appointed him lord treasurer of Ireland, one of the highest posts in the kingdom.  

32 Henry VIII to St Leger and council, 5 July 1542 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 396).
33 St Leger to Henry VIII, 4 June 1543 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 466).
35 St Leger to Henry VIII, 21 Feb. 1541 (S.P. Hen.VIII, iii, 287-8).
36 Edward VI to Desmond, 15 Oct. 1547 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/1/6).
38 S.G. Ellis, Ireland in the age of the Tudors, 1447-1603, p. 371.
For someone whom Henry VIII had initially opposed, Desmond had succeeded to the highest levels of power and prestige.

St Leger also helped Desmond in his relationship with the other lords of Munster. This was particularly the case in September 1542 when St Leger brought 400 troops into Munster to pacify MacCarthy Mór and MacCarthy Reagh who had ‘long hynderyd’ Desmond’s territories and the towns of Cork, Kinsale, and Youghal by their ‘evyll behavor’. On 26 September St Leger signed indentures with lord Barry, MacCarthy Mór, lord Roche, MacCarthy Reagh, MacCarthy Muskerry, Barry Óg, O’Sullivan Beare, Domhnall O’Ceallaghan, Barry Roe, and McDonough MacCarthy, and Sir Gerald fitz John, lord of the Decies, by the terms of which a system of arbitration was to be established to resolve disputes without recourse to violence. The year previously, when Desmond had postponed his journey to court, he had cited trouble with the MacCarthy’s, along with a lack of money, as his excuse. St Leger’s actions thus appear to substantiate Desmond’s difficulties, and also appear to have been successful for further trouble between Desmond and those lords is not recorded.

Furthermore, Desmond’s position as the ‘king’s man’ allowed him to curb elements in Munster who sought to disrupt the peace of the province. Hence he dealt severely with the White Knight and lord Roche in 1543, and with his brother Maurice, and his son Gerald in 1551. Similarly, following MacCarthy’s raid on Clanwilliam in 1548 the mayor and council of Limerick informed Lord Deputy Sir Edward Bellingham that they had contacted Desmond ‘att whose handis we suppose the said mattf may be redressed’, which demonstrated the confidence the corporation of

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39 St Leger and council to Henry VIII, 9 Sept. 1542 (S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, 420-1).
40 Indenture between St Leger et al., and Lord Barry et al., 26 Sept. 1542 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 603, ff 60r-63r; S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, 422-7).
41 St Leger and council to Henry VIII, 28 Aug. 1541 (S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, 315).
42 William Striche, Mayor, and council of Limerick to Lord Deputy Bellingham, 24 Oct. 1548 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/1/113).

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Limerick had that Desmond could successfully intervene in Duhallow, an area traditionally outside his influence. As a result of Desmond’s harshness, done as it was with Dublin’s approval, the period 1541-58 was one of the quietest and most peaceful in Munster during the sixteenth century, as Desmond’s role as the crown’s agent allowed him to keep trouble to a minimum.

The changed relationship was also reflected in the provision of Desmond’s candidate to the diocese of Emly. The diocese lay east of Limerick diocese and comprised an area roughly from Knockainy in Co. Limerick to just east of Tipperary town, including the disputed cantred of Onaght. Shortly after his departure from court Desmond petitioned Henry to grant the see of Emly, then vacant, to Aeneas O’Hernan (O’Heffernan). O’Hernan was preceptor of the Knights Hospitallers’s preceptory of St John the Baptist at Knockainy, Co. Limerick. He was also most likely a member of the O’Heffernan family of Shronell which provided many poets and bards for the Desmonds in the sixteenth century. Granted a pension by the crown of almost £29 in June 1541, he participated in the dissolution of the monasteries in Cork, Kerry, and Limerick, and received a grant of English liberty. Faced with Desmond’s request, Henry sought St Leger’s opinion of O’Hernan, who replied that he considered him a very honest man, O’Heman having done much to engender Desmond’s loyalty. St Leger’s recommendation was thus to support O’Hernan’s candidacy, since ‘being favored as he is with thErle of Desmonde, he shall ondoubted do miche good in the countrey’. A few days earlier he had already been granted custody of the possessions of the bishopric, and following St Leger’s reply

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43 Henry VIII to St Leger and council, 5 July 1542 (S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, 397).
46 Grant to Eneas Hernan, 30 June 1541 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 212).
47 Order of St Leger and council, 24 Aug. 1541 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 251).
48 Grant of English liberty, 1542 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 285).
50 Grant to Eneas Hernan, 19 Aug. 1542 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 329).
Henry nominated O’Hernan to the see on 8 October, O’Hernan receiving letters patent on 6 April 1543. Desmond’s success in securing the post for his candidate confirmed that his credibility with Whitehall and Dublin had been restored, while the presence of an ally in such a senior post would have helped Desmond maintain his influence in Onaght.

Of greater importance was Henry VIII’s grant to Desmond of the manors of Adare and Croom. These lands, which had long been part of the Kildare patrimony, had been forfeited to the crown by the revolt of Silken Thomas, Lord Offaly, tenth earl of Kildare, in 1534, but had in fact been occupied by Desmond and his father Sir John. When he submitted in 1541 Desmond asked for a lease of the Kildare possessions in Co. Limerick. By July of the following year these manors had been leased to him, the rent on which was not charged, and as reward for his continued good service these lands were granted to him for life in November 1546. This helped Desmond protect his holdings in Co. Limerick, physically connecting his territory of Connello with that of the Small County, as well as with the lands of the Knights of Glin in Kenry. As a result Desmond’s lands in east Limerick were less isolated from the Desmond heartland of north Kerry and west Limerick. Possession of Croom and Adare also gave Desmond control over the Maigue river valley which, together with his existing control over the Deel river valley, secured his lines of communication within Limerick. The strategic importance of these lands thus matched Desmond’s eagerness to get hold of them.

An additional, and much needed, benefit of James’s cooperation with Dublin was that it created the peaceful conditions which were necessary for an improvement in his finances. After decades of warfare and destruction the economy of the earldom,
and indeed the province, was extremely depressed, so much so that Desmond was virtually penniless when he was recognized as earl. His ‘lacke of mony’ was such that he had to postpone his intended trip to court in September 1541 until the following year,\footnote{St Leger and council to Henry VIII, 28 Aug. 1541 (S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, 315).} which prompted St Leger to ask Henry to subsidize Desmond’s stay in England.\footnote{St Leger and council to Henry VIII, 2 June 1542 (S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, 389-90).} His situation was not without hope, however, for the lord chancellor, John Alen, believed that his lands could be revitalized to produce revenues of perhaps close to £7,000 \textit{p.a.}\footnote{John Alen to Henry VIII, 4 June 1542 (S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, 392-3).} The key condition for this was the maintenance of peaceful conditions within Munster, which Desmond strove hard to achieve. His success in this regard meant that agriculture in the province, the basis of the economy, could recover.

A more direct way in which his financial prospects improved was the royal grant of lands. Desmond received several properties upon Henry VIII’s closure of the monasteries. In 1541 he got a three-year lease on St Saviour’s Dominican priory at Kilmallock, worth £3 16s \textit{p.a.}\footnote{Lease to Desmond, 29 June 1541 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 210); Extents Ir. mon. possessions, p. 211.} and two years later was granted St Saviour’s Dominican priory at Limerick, worth £5 2s \textit{p.a.}\footnote{Grant to Desmond, 7 June 1543 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 362); Extents Ir. mon. possessions, p. 210.} Also in 1543 he received a grant in tail male of lands which had formerly belonged to St Mary’s Cistercian abbey at Dublin,\footnote{Grant to Desmond, 20 Dec. 1543 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 386).} and seven years later Desmond got a 21-year lease on the monastery of the Augustinian canons (O.S.A.) at Molana, Co. Waterford, worth £3 12s \textit{p.a.}, together with the rectory of Mogeely which had previously belonged to the Cistercian Chorus S. Benedicti\footnote{Lease to Desmond, 2 Dec. 1550 (Irish Fiants, Edward VI, no. 645); Extents Ir. mon. possessions, pp 148-9, 150-1.} monastery at Midleton, Co. Cork, worth a further 6s 8d.\footnote{Extents Ir. mon. possessions, pp 143-4.} Desmond also had the Cistercian abbey at Tracton, worth £5 3s 4d \textit{p.a.}\footnote{Extents Ir. mon. possessions, pp 143-4.} as well as the...
Hospitaller preceptory at Morne,\textsuperscript{62} while his brothers Maurice and John had the Dominican priory at Youghal and the Franciscan friary at Galbally respectively.\textsuperscript{63}

These properties brought substantial new income to Desmond at a time when his revenues were greatly diminished by the previous decades of violence. Furthermore their value to Desmond was increased by two factors, the first of which was that Desmond, along with numerous others, received these lands at very low rents. Thus he paid £1 6s 8d rent for Kilmallock (worth £3 16s), and 5s 2d for Limerick (worth £5 2s).\textsuperscript{64} Secondly, these yearly valuations, given in 1540-1, were assessed in the immediate aftermath of decades of internecine war at a time when many of the properties were described as being waste. As a result the valuations underestimate their worth in peaceful conditions prior to the internecine conflict. Hence the rectory of Mogeely, valued at 6s 8d, was deemed to have previously been worth £1 \textit{p.a.}, while the abbey at Molana, £3 12s, had previously been worth an additional £20 10s \textit{p.a.}\textsuperscript{65} Given the peaceful conditions which pertained in the period 1541-58, these properties were worth a good deal more to Desmond than the valuations of 1540-1 allow.\textsuperscript{66} The acquisition of the strategically important manors of Adare and Croom also had a significant economic benefit, with these lands being valued in 1540-1 at £25 11s 9d \textit{p.a.}. The peacetime value of these lands was almost double that in 1540-1, worth an additional £24 8s 9d, and given the fact that he was only charged rent of 4d, these lands proved a financial windfall for Desmond.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{62} Extents Ir. mon. possessions, pp 120; Lease to Dermot McCormac Óg, 9 July 1545 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 461).

\textsuperscript{63} Extents Ir. mon. possessions, p. 154; Grant to John of Desmond, 20 Jan. 1544 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 398).

\textsuperscript{64} Lease to Desmond, 29 June 1541 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 210); Grant to Desmond, 7 June 1543 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 362).

\textsuperscript{65} Extents Ir. mon. possessions, pp 150-1, 148-9.

\textsuperscript{66} On the widespread disposal of Crown lands at below market values see Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 33-40.

\textsuperscript{67} Crown surveys of lands 1540-41; with the Kildare rental begun in 1518, ed. Gearóid MacNiocaill (Dublin, 1992), pp 177-83; Grants in November 1546 (43) (L. & P. Hen. VIII, 1546-7, pt 2, no. 476).
Overall, therefore, Desmond was well rewarded for his service to the crown.

In spite of his successful consolidation of his position, however, Desmond remained vulnerable. Internal Geraldine elements, such as the White Knight, caused trouble in the 1540s, while other lords of Munster, particularly the MacCarthys and lord Roche, threatened potentially widespread violence. Even Thomas, the young earl of Ormond, represented a latent threat to Desmond should he choose to renew his claim to the earldom as heir general of James, eleventh earl.

Over and above such inherent dangers there loomed the far more perilous prospect of instability in his relationship with Dublin following St Leger's recall in 1548. Between May of that year and November 1553 there were six changes of administration, with two deputies (Bellingham and Croft), two justices (Bryan and Brabazon), joint justices (Cusack and Aylmer), and a short return by St Leger as deputy. Most served for a year or less, with only Bellingham there for approximately nineteen months. While there was to be a high degree of continuity in policy terms between these administrations, they need not be quite so supportive towards Desmond as St Leger had been. Desmond, therefore, felt obliged to protect his position.  

Thus in August 1548, barely three months after Edward Bellingham had become deputy, Desmond called an assembly of the lords of Munster where they swore to obey him. This greatly alarmed Bellingham, who felt that something had to be done with him, and it was around that time that Bellingham was reputed to

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68 For the periods of office for the various deputies and justices see S.G. Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors, 1447-1603*, p. 368. For the continuity of policy throughout this period see Ciaran Brady, *The chief governors*, pp 48-52.
69 Simon Geffre, vicar of Dungarvan, & Thomas Floyd, Chaplain, to Lord Deputy Bellingham, 8 Aug. 1548 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/1/54).
70 Bellingham to John Issam, [Dec.] 1548 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/1/163).
have briefly captured Desmond and detained him at Dublin.\textsuperscript{71} If the report is accurate, Desmond’s detention may have been Bellingham’s response to the convening of the assembly.

Four years later, in 1552, during the deputyship of Sir James Croft, Desmond was implicated in a conspiracy centred on northern Gaelic-Irish lords such as O’Donnell and exiled Geraldines who were attempting to solicit aid from Henry II of France for an invasion of Ireland. Desmond was accused of being one of a group of Irish lords who had dispatched an ambassador to negotiate with the queen of Scots in order to get troops from Scotland to invade the north of Ireland as part of the overall plan.\textsuperscript{72} However, given Desmond’s efforts to maintain his relationship of mutual benefit with the crown, it would seem unlikely that he would partake in such a speculative effort. Perhaps his name was used by the conspirators to lend weight to their claims of support, or perhaps his name was added to the reports by his enemies to cause trouble for him.\textsuperscript{73} Either way, Desmond survived this accusation, and by the end of the year Lord Justice Cusack had praised Desmond for his good behaviour and had urged the privy council to look favourably on Desmond’s current suits.\textsuperscript{74}

While such allegations can never be confirmed nor disproven, Desmond definitely supported the dissident O’Briens in Thomond. On 9 January 1550 an agreement was reached between Desmond and Murrough, first earl of Thomond, which was designed to end the ‘great displeasures striffe & debate’ between them, the cause of which was ‘thone maynteyning owtlawes & malefactors of others countrey against other’, which resulted in ‘great hurt & damage ensuyd to both p[ar]ties ther countreys & followers’. However, the agreement was broken and the conflict

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{71}] John Hooker, ‘The chronicle of Ireland, 1547-83’ in Raphael Holinshed, Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland (1808-9 edn) vi, pp 323-4.  
\item[\textsuperscript{72}] Privy council to Lord Deputy Croft, 23 Feb. 1552 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/4/11).  
\item[\textsuperscript{73}] For a description of the conspiracy see D.L. Potter, ‘French intrigue in Ireland during the reign of Henri II, 1547-1559’ in The international history review, ii (May 1983), pp 159-80.  
\item[\textsuperscript{74}] Lords Justices Cusack and Aylmer and council to the privy council, 30 Dec. 1552 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/4/70).
\end{itemize}

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continued, as Desmond maintained ‘O’Chono’r Kery, Teig McMahon, & Tirrelaghe McDowghe Oge’ upon Thomond’s lands from whence they did ‘bring spoyles, baddrags and robberyes dayly’ to Desmond’s lands. A further cause of dispute arose from the failure of Thomond’s son Dermot to marry Desmond’s daughter, for which Desmond sought the return of four chief horses which he had given Thomond as part of the dowry.

This resurgence of the conflict caused Lord Justice William Brabazon and the council to broker a further agreement between the two earls on 11 March. The countesses of Desmond and Thomond, along with some others, were appointed to hear the evidence, and if they could not agree, Sir Donough O’Brien, lord of Ibrackan and future second earl of Thomond, was to determine the issue. Each earl was to clear his territories of the malefactors, and keep the peace, on pain of forfeiting £500, and both were also to give a pledge each to the mayor of Limerick, William Lacy of Bruff, Co. Limerick, for Desmond, and Rickard Mc Gillariaghe of Donogan for Thomond.75

When ‘great contencion’ again arose between them again the following year Lord Chancellor Thomas Cusack took one each of their sons as pledges, together with ‘the sev[e]rall pledge of all the freendes & Captens on bothe sydes’.76 Walter Cowley, one of Ormond’s adherents, proposed the appointment of one or two commissioners to remain continuously with both Desmond and Thomond to keep the peace, doubtless an opportunity to cast doubt over Desmond’s intrinsic loyalty.77

The death of Thomond in 1551, and the subsequent succession dispute once again drew Desmond into conflict with the O’Briens. Thomond’s nephew Donough, who had married a sister of James, ninth earl of Ormond, succeeded as second earl, and was opposed by his half-brothers Sir Donald and Turlough, whose mother had been

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75 The agreement made between Desmond and Thomond, 11 March 1550 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 603, ff 57r-59v).
76 St Leger to Cecil, 19 Jan. 1551 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/3/3).
77 Walter Cowley to the earl of Wiltshire, 21 Feb. 1551 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/3/12).
Ellice, the daughter of Maurice, tenth earl of Desmond. When Donough died in 1553 Sir Donald was inaugurated as O’Brien and began a long-running battle with Donough’s son Conor for control of Thomond. In March 1558 and again in May the queen ordered Desmond, together with Clanrickard and Ormond, to support Thomond.78

In spite of these allegations and difficulties, Desmond managed to avoid any serious consequences and by and large continued to enjoy the support of the crown throughout his suzerainty. However, the attacks during St Leger’s absences had demonstrated his reliance upon his close relationship with St Leger. The temporary replacements had not shared St Leger’s benevolent opinion of Desmond, nor had they proved so supportive. Desmond, therefore, sought a means to shield his recovery from the whims and prejudices of future deputies. The mechanism he chose was a provincial presidency.

Desmond’s conversion to the idea of a presidency was not immediate, but gradual, and in part it was brought about by his experience of service on the numerous commissions to which he had been appointed in the 1540s, service which he perceived to have extended his influence into many different aspects of the administration of Munster. In August 1541 he was appointed to a commission, along with O’Hernan, Thomas Agard, and Edmund Sexten, to take inventories of the religious houses in the counties of Limerick, Cork, Kerry, and Desmond (south Kerry), and to see to their dissolution.79 Ten years later he was on another commission, part of whose remit was to aid the reformed church in the province.80

He also acted as arbitrator in disputes on a number of occasions. In September 1542 Desmond, along with deputy St Leger, vice-treasurer William Brabazon, master

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78 The queen to Desmond and Clanrickard, 12 Mar. 1558 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/2/23); The queen to Ormond, Desmond, Clanrickard, et al., 11 May 1558 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/2/41).
79 Order of St Leger and council, 24 Aug. 1541 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 251).
80 Instructions given by Lord Deputy Croft and council to Desmond et al., 1 July 1551 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/3/38, enclosure i).
of the ordnance John Travers, and Sir Osborn Echingham, master of the militia, negotiated the indentures with Barry et al. on behalf of the crown. Under the terms of these indentures, when instances of contention arose between them they were to agree to the arbitration of a nine-man body which included the bishops of Cork, Ross, and Waterford, and the mayors of Cork and Youghal, and the sovereign of Kinsale. If those arbitrators were unable to resolve the issue within 20 days of the start of proceedings the plaintiff could complain to Desmond and the said three bishops who would determine the issue. If the defendant refused to cooperate, Desmond and the bishops were empowered to order the forfeiture from the defendant of double the value of the damage done to the plaintiff, while the defendant would also have to pay a fine to the crown. Desmond and the bishops would then, upon direction from the deputy and council, collect the said fine, one-third of which went to the crown, while the remainder was to be divided between Desmond and the bishops. Where cases required knowledge of the law, complaints were to be presented for adjudication to the commissioners or others dispatched by the crown to Munster twice a year, at Easter and Michaelmas.81

Similarly, in September 1554 a panel of arbitrators was established to settle the dispute between Conor O’Brien, third earl of Thomond, and Donald O’Brien over possession of Thomond. On behalf of Thomond were Richard, viscount Mountgarret, Edmund, baron of Dunboyne, and Thomas, baron of Caher. The presence of the heads of these three cadet branches of Ormond’s family indicates Thomond’s factional allegiance to Ormond, Thomond’s mother being Black Tom’s aunt, Ellen, daughter of Piers, eighth earl of Ormond. O’Brien’s three were O’Carroll, Thadeus O’Mulrian, and Mac-I-Brien. If those six failed to agree, the deputy, together with Desmond and

81 Indenture between St Leger et al., and Lord Barry et al., 26 Sept. 1542 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 603, ff 60r-63r).
the chancellor, were to decide the issue.82

As part of a commission in 1549 Desmond, along with fellow commissioners Edmund Butler, O.S.Trin, archbishop of Cashel, John Travers, and Thomas St Lawrence, baron Howth, made two ‘statutes’ at Limerick. The first outlawed the composition of poems called ‘amhráin’ unless composed for the king, while the second ordered that no one was to prevent goods coming to the market, save the local lord who could buy goods from his servants.83 These commissioners would appear to have had a wide-ranging brief, as on 9 January 1550 Butler, Travers, and Howth brokered an agreement between Desmond and Murrough, first earl of Thomond, to end the violence between them.84 Early the following year, 1551, Desmond was on a commission tasked with the establishment of order in Munster, the punishment of felons, and the redress of complaints,85 possibly with Butler, Travers, and Howth again as colleagues.

Later that same year Desmond was joined by three captains on a commission to keep order in counties Cork, Kerry, and Limerick. Desmond was to advise the captains on the best places to station their troops and on the publication of ordinances within the said counties, while he was to help them catch malefactors and others who used ‘unlawfull force’. The commissioners’ tasks even included the punishment of ‘harlottes’. The main part of their remit was to ensure the completion of a castle then being built in Cork harbour and the subsequent arming of the castle with sufficient ordnance, munitions and soldiers. Desmond and his fellow commissioners must have done a good job, for in November deputy Croft was full of praise for their actions which were ‘suche as is skarcely to be belyvyd, that so savage a countrey in so shorte

82 Ordnances between Conor O’Brien and Donald O’Brien, earl of Thomond, Sept. 1554 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 603, ff 26r-27r).
84 The agreement made between Desmond and Thomond, 11 March 1550 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 603, ff 57r-59r).
85 Walter Cowley to the earl of Wiltshire, 21 Feb. 1551 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/3/12).
Two points emerge from Desmond’s commissionary activities. The first is that there appears to have been an unusually high degree of enforcement of the law in Munster at this time. The numerous commissions, the production of ‘statutes’, the provision of captains to enforce decisions, all suggest a greater level of adherence to the law, as does the striking lack of reported violence in the documents of the day. This is also the impression which comes across from Desmond’s obituary in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, in which he was acclaimed as having ruled Munster so effectively that it had been unnecessary to ‘watch cattle, or close doors’ in the province. Certainly the liberty of Kerry continued to function, for Desmond informed deputy Croft in 1551 that he had sufficient warrant to ‘kepe courtes, call, examine, and determyne all manor causes within the said lib[er]tie’. The baron of Lixnaw was then trying to free himself from the jurisdiction of the liberty courts, and in a remarkable move Desmond offered to have ‘the chief Justice, justice Luttrell, M[e] of the rolls or any of theym that can speke the languadge here and Barnable Scorlock beinge well lerned’ come and ‘here, examine, and deter[myn] all manner causes here w’in this libertie’, both between Desmond and Lixnaw, and between Desmond and anyone else. Desmond even offered to pay their expenses while in Munster, and promised to see that their decisions were ‘put in due forme and execucion’, even if the decisions went against him.

By far the most explicit statement on the administration of justice within Munster came in May 1553 when Sir Thomas Cusack addressed his ‘book’ to the duke of Northumberland, the president of the council of England. Thanks to the efforts of Desmond, and the other lords and captains there, Munster was ‘in good
quiett, & sheweth greate obedience, so as the Justices of the peace rydeth their circuit in the Countyes of Limerick, Corke & Kerry’, where the inhabitants ‘obeyeth thorders taken by the Justices amongst them for theirie contenc[i]ons, and the Sheriffes be obeyed in the executinge of their office’. The transformation was such that the lords of the region, amongst whom he included Desmond, who ‘within few yeares would not heare speake to obey the lawe, beeth nowe in com[m]ission with the Justices of peace, to heare & determne causes who doth the same honestly and obediently’. Cusack, a longtime Geraldine supporter, described Munster as the most ordered and civilized region of the realm outside the Pale and credited Desmond for the change. He even said that ‘The wininge of the Earle of Desmonde, was the winning of the rest of Mounster wth small charges’. Even if Cusack was too generous in his praise of Desmond, the overwhelming evidence suggests that the period of Desmond’s lordship did indeed witness a marked increase in the observance and enforcement of the common law in Munster.

However, the most important aspect of these commissions was that they were effectively viewed as proto-presidential councils, where Desmond performed much the same tasks as if he were on a formal council. He dealt with matters of religion, arbitrated in disputes, and made statutes on social and economic issues. He saw to the administration of justice, punished felons and redressed complaints. He also participated in military affairs, where he helped with the defence of Munster, the placement of troops, and the construction of fortifications. By virtue of these commissions, therefore, Desmond attended to matters which would otherwise have been outside his responsibility. In this way Desmond was able to influence, and make, decisions which affected the whole province, with the full support and cooperation of Dublin. It was in this context that he dealt with ‘malefactors’ such as

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89 The state of Ireland, from Sir Thomas Cusack to the duke of Northumberland, 8 May 1553 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 611, pp 112-129).
lord Roche, the White Knight, Cormac Óg MacCarthy, his son Gerald, and his brother Maurice. The success of these proto-presidential councils, through which Desmond had access to the legitimate exercise of authority throughout the province far in excess of traditional Desmond power, convinced him of the great potential and value which a full presidential council would have for Munster, and consequently he tried to get one established.

The models for a presidential council, from which Desmond derived his ideas, were the two major councils then operating in the Tudor dominions, the council of Wales, which had been established in 1471, and the council of the north of England, which dated from 1525. Both these councils had been substantially modified and strengthened during the 1530s, and it was during that decade that the first proposals for presidential type councils for Munster were made. In 1533 former Lord Chancellor John Alen suggested a council for Counties Limerick, Cork, Waterford, Tipperary, and Kilkenny, which was to consist of Piers Butler, earl of Ossory, the mayor of Waterford, and the bishops of the province. The council would have responsibility for the enforcement of the common law in those counties, counties from which few litigants appeared at the Dublin courts. Six years later Sir William Brabazon proposed a similar council to cover the five aforementioned counties together with Wexford. Local lords were to be appointed to the council, and the garrison at Wexford was to help enforce their rulings. In 1546 Alen called for a council of a president, four councillors, and a secretary to be established at Limerick, again with the intention of increasing the use of, and access to, the common law.90

The presidency found new proponents in the 1550s. In a very detailed proposal c. 1552 Thomas Walshe recommended the appointment of a presidential council to comprise the president, the archbishop of Cashel, the bishop of Ossory, the

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commander of the president’s band of horsemen, the sergeant major of Munster, the receiver of the king’s rents in the province, and the clerk of the council. They were to have jurisdiction over the counties of Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Tipperary, and Kilkenny, and were to have commissions to enquire by what tenure the freeholders and gentlemen held their land, to survey crown lands, and to survey the benefices in Munster and reform the church there. They were also to collect all casualties and profits which belonged to the crown, to protect the king’s woods, and to have Admiral authority for the Munster coast and ports. Walshe envisaged a circuit of the towns of Waterford, Dungarvan, Youghal, Cork, Kilmallock, Limerick, Cashel, Clonmel, and Kilkenny, with the president allocated a house in each town. The counties would be cessed for 400 cattle and 600 sheep to provide for the entourage, while corn would be found near the towns or shipped in from England. If this were done Walshe believed Munster would be brought to perfection.91

In May 1553 Cusack called for a ‘stowte gentleman that weare skilfull and of estima[cion]’ to be established president at Limerick charged with ensuring justice was ‘indifferently ministred’, with a military force to enforce his decisions. This, he believed, would make more permanent the ‘co[m]odity of Justice’ and the ‘wealth of quietnes’ which the people of Munster had experienced in the last few years, and would leave Munster more ‘civill, obedient and p[ro]ffittable to his matY’.92

Around the same time as Cusack’s proposal, Edward Walshe also suggested a presidency for Munster. Concerned that a small number of lords and captains controlled the province for their own ends, Walshe believed a president would give the inhabitants the ‘commoditie and benifite which they have so longe looked for’, and

91 Treatise on reform by Thomas Walshe, c. 1552 (B.L., Add. MSS, 48015, ff 259r-265r). A truncated version of this treatise, containing approximately one third of the text together with some additions, is to be found in Report by Thomas Walshe on the state of Ireland, 1552 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/4/72).
92 The state of Ireland, from Sir Thomas Cusack to the duke of Northumberland, 8 May 1553 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 611, pp 112-129).
would bring the 'highe and obstinate' captains to obedience.93

There was a further call in 1554-5 for a president to be established in Munster, as well as in Connacht and Ulster, together with a garrison of 600 troops who would be available for use by the deputy and three presidents. The presidents and the soldiers would be provided for by a charge on each ploughland in the realm, in return for which coyne and livery would be abolished.94 This proposal called for reform through the administration of justice, as did Cusack's, as opposed to Edward Walshe's which was contained in a document advocating plantation.

With the idea current Desmond tried to appropriate the concept for himself as a means to bolster his position. In 1555 there was a suggestion, presumably made at his request or direction, to appoint Desmond himself as lord president, to be based at Limerick, with responsibility for counties Cork and Limerick as well as his own territories. He would receive £40 p.a. and have 'the chief prehemynencie when he resorteth to Lymerike or Corke', and would confer with the earl of Clanrickard when dealing with Thomond.95

Two years later, in a move which reflected his increasing frustration, Desmond went over the heads of the officials in Dublin and directly petitioned the queen for the establishment of a presidency in Munster. Having had the 'chieffe chardge and governannce' under the lord deputy of counties Kerry, Cork, Limerick, and the majority of Waterford since the time of his submission, Desmond had succeeded in pacifying the province, so that 'all is in quyett, evy[ry] man livyng uppon his owne, withowte any spoile or robberie'. The situation was so peaceful that merchants could pass through the 'wyldist place of all thies contries' in safety. However, he feared that if he died before the peace was truly ingrained in the locals, the people's

95 Propositions for services in Ireland, 1555? (P.R.O., S.P. 62/1/9).
obedience to the law would diminish and they would return to ‘their p[ro]crystynate disorder’. Therefore, he called for the establishment of a president and council, to be composed of ‘sutche men of knowledge and experience as the said Earle [himself] wooll nomynate’, the president and council to be associated with all Desmond’s proceedings. The benefits to the crown would be increased profits, which would quickly more than offset the cost of such a council, and an increase in the obedience of the crown’s subjects. Desmond again called for the establishment of a presidency the following year, and suggested to Queen Mary a commission of four to enquire into the state of the realm as a prelude to further change.

That Desmond should press his claim for a presidency so vehemently in 1557 and 1558 is explained by the fact that the days of his close relationship with St Leger were over. St Leger had been replaced by the Thomas Radcliffe, lord Fitzwalter, subsequently earl of Sussex, in April 1556. Not only was his friend gone, but the man who replaced him was an opponent who was to rely for support in Ireland on Desmond’s arch rival, the recently come of age Thomas Butler, tenth earl of Ormond. Indeed, the fact that Desmond sent his petition of March 1557, in which he asked for the deputy and council to determine the disputes between Ormond and himself, directly to Queen Mary demonstrated the new character of his relationship with Dublin. By the following year Desmond’s relationship with Sussex had deteriorated further, and he was by now openly critical of the deputy. Thus his proposal was contained in a critique of Sussex’s programme of military expeditions

96 Desmond’s instructions to his chaplain Dorby ne Royne, [1 Mar.] 1557 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/1/26).
97 Desmond, to the queen, 5 Feb. 1558 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/2/8); Desmond, to queen Mary, 23 Feb. 1558 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/2/11); The declaration of Desmond’s chaplain, [23 Feb.] 1558 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/2/12).
98 Desmond’s instructions to his chaplain Dorby ne Royne, [1 Mar.] 1557 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/1/26). Desmond’s requests were referred to Sussex in April of the following year: The queen to Lord Deputy Sussex, [19] Apr. 1558 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/2/35); The queen to Desmond, 19 Apr. 1558 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/2/36).
99 Fitzwalter succeeded to the earldom of Sussex in May 1557. For Sussex’s relationship with the Desmond Geraldines see chapter four, below.
against the MacDonalds in Antrim, Shane O’Neill in Ulster and the O’Mores and O’Connors in Laois and Offaly, actions which Desmond decried as unlikely to succeed, dangerous, and expensive.\textsuperscript{100} Against this background Desmond’s proposal in these years may thus be seen as a last, desperate attempt to establish his position and importance within Munster on a legal and contractual basis with Whitehall and Dublin, and thereby consolidate his gains.

Desmond managed to redress many of the problems and difficulties which had resulted from the period of internecine warfare between c. 1510 and c. 1541. He managed to maintain good relations with three monarchs, and at his death occupied the post of lord treasurer, one of the highest in the land. He successfully established his preeminence within the earldom, and increased his influence throughout Munster, while he also restored the economy of his dominion. However, his failure to get a presidency in 1557 and 1558 was to prove fateful for the Desmond Geraldines. A skilled political manoeuvrer, Desmond had grasped the idea of using a provincial presidency to bolster his position, but his failure to have one established left the maintenance of his achievements dependent upon his son Gerald. Unfortunately for the Desmond Geraldines, Gerald was to prove a far less able politician.

\textsuperscript{100} Desmond to queen Mary, 23 Feb. 1558 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/2/11); The declaration of Desmond’s chaplain, [23 Feb.] 1558 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/2/12).
CHAPTER FOUR
THE EARLDOM UNDER GERALD, FIFTEENTH EARL, 1558-67

Gerald fitz James Fitzgerald succeeded to the earldom of Desmond in relatively favourable circumstances. His father James had overseen a period of almost two decades of peace in Munster, which had allowed for the economic regeneration of the earldom and the political rehabilitation of the Desmond Geraldines. Gerald’s succession was accepted by the Desmond Geraldines without a debilitating internecine dispute, and he was speedily recognized as earl by the crown. Indeed, he seemed set to enjoy good relations with Dublin and Whitehall as he had the regalities of the liberty of Kerry confirmed to him in June 1559, while the following month he was appointed to the Irish council, and at the same time received a twenty one-year lease on the Cistercian monastery at Fermoy and the Augustinian priory at Bridgetown, Co. Cork.1 Desmond, it appeared, had the opportunity to maintain his father’s achievements and develop the earldom even further, but that was not to happen.

Instead, he became embroiled in a series of military confrontations and legal disputes which completely poisoned his relationship with Dublin, Whitehall, and Elizabeth. He attacked many of the lords of the region, caused great physical destruction in the process, and took a leading part in the last private battle between two noblemen within the dominions of the English crown. Such was the deterioration in Desmond’s relationship with Dublin and Whitehall that by the end of his first decade in charge of the earldom he had been brought to London as prisoner no fewer than three times, and had undone all that his father James had striven for in the previous two decades.

1 Confirmation of the regalities of Co. Kerry, 22 June 1559 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/1/35); Instructions given by the queen to the earl of Sussex, 16 July 1559 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 61r-62v); A memorial of such answers as the queen has given to sundry private suits, 16 July 1559 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/1/63; Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 65r-67v).
Desmond himself must be held partially responsible for the dramatic breakdown in his relationship with Dublin and Whitehall. Certainly contemporaries believed the earl to be rash, foolhardy, and prone to take bad advice. The queen complained of his folly and willfulness, while in the 1570s the lord president of Munster, Sir John Perrot, considered him devoid of reason and more fit for Bedlam than a civilized country. Ormond found he could not be persuaded by reason, while the privy council feared the influence of malicious counsellors over him. Even Desmond himself tried to excuse his difficult relationship with the crown by claiming it was due to his poor judgment rather than any malicious intent. This was exacerbated by Desmond’s inadequate education, for although he undoubtedly received martial training as a youth, it would appear that he did not receive a formal education, a deficiency Desmond himself referred to on a number of occasions when he described himself as being rude and ignorant, and bemoaned his lack of education.

Linked to this inadequate education was his distinct lack of beneficial political connections at Whitehall or even Dublin. In this context his father’s refusal of Edward VI’s offer in 1547 to bring the then seventeen year old Gerald to court was to prove a real squandered opportunity. The young Gerald was thus denied a formal education, as well as the opportunity to forge strong ties with the Dudley faction, and perhaps even to develop a close personal relationship with the young Princess Elizabeth, the type of relationship which Ormond was able to exploit in subsequent years.

However, by the sixteenth century the earldom of Desmond had developed a sophisticated administrative system, complete with a council composed of

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2 The queen to Joan, countess of Desmond, 7 June 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/19); Perrot to Burghley, 30 Apr. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/19); Perrot to the queen, 13 July 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/41/76.2); Perrot to Burghley, 13 July 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/41/76); Ormond to Burghley, 16 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/16); The privy council to Desmond, 19 Aug. 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/53/15); The deputy and council to the queen, 20 Apr. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/60/42).

3 Desmond to Cecil, 7 Sept. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/7/9); Desmond to Cecil, 16 Apr. 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/8/32); Desmond to the queen, 6 Oct. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/22/2).

4 Edward VI to Desmond, 15 Oct. 1547 (P.R.O., S.P. 61/1/6).
experienced and educated men to advise him, a system which should have been able to counteract any excesses brought on by his rashness and inadequate education.\textsuperscript{5}

Desmond’s lack of political connections was potentially more serious, but over time he could have cultivated such relationships as his father had done. These factors are thus insufficient on their own to account for the rapid deterioration of Desmond’s relationship with the crown. Of far greater significance was the attitude of the man who replaced St Leger as deputy, the earl of Sussex.\textsuperscript{6}

Thomas Radcliffe, then lord Fitzwalter,\textsuperscript{7} had arrived in Ireland in 1556 determined to implement political reform through the impartial application of the common law. This was based upon an explicit rejection of St Leger’s concept of a ‘king’s party’, and hence he did not continue to indulge Earl James as St Leger had done. Instead he chose to adopt a more distanced relationship with him. However, Sussex’s immediate objectives were the pacification of the Scottish MacDonalds in Antrim, Shane O’Neill in Ulster, and the O’Mores and O’Connors in Laois and Offaly, and so the Desmond Geraldines were not initially of particular concern to him. Thus Earl James remained lord treasurer until his death, while Sussex was Godfather to Desmond’s younger half-brother James, who subsequently was occasionally referred to as James Sussex of Desmond.\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{5} See chapter two.
\textsuperscript{6} Sussex was appointed lord deputy on 21 April 1556, and was appointed lord lieutenant on 6 May 1560: S.G. Ellis, Ireland in the age of the Tudors, 1447-1603, pp 368-9.
\textsuperscript{7} Lord Fitzwalter succeeded to the earldom of Sussex in May 1557.
\textsuperscript{8} For Sussex’s programme see S.G. Ellis, Ireland in the age of the Tudors, 1447-1603, pp 271-81; Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 72-112; Ciaran Brady, ‘England’s defence and Ireland’s reform: The dilemma of the Irish viceroys, 1541-1641’ in Brendan Bradshaw & John Morril (eds), The British problem c. 1534-1707: state formation in the Atlantic archipelago (Basingstoke, 1996), pp 96-100. For the baptism of James Sussex of Desmond see A journey made by the earl of Sussex, 25 July 1558 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 621, ff 20\textsuperscript{v}-23\textsuperscript{r}).
However, Sussex's attitude became more discernibly anti-Geraldine following Desmond's succession to the earldom, due in the first instance to Sussex's relationships with Ormond and Kildare. Ormond enjoyed a very friendly relationship with Sussex. While Ormond's opposition to the Geraldine faction undoubtedly helped, the main reason for Sussex's support was Ormond's avowal of the reform movement. He levied cess in Co. Kilkenny in aid of the forts at Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow, and Fort Protector (Maryborough), Queen's County (Leix, Laois), between 1556 and 1559, and helped levy the subsidy in his lands between 1559 and 1565. He also agreed to the introduction of musters in Cos Tipperary and Kilkenny in 1558-9, and, most importantly, began the removal of coyne and livery from his territories in the early 1560s. Ormond's cooperation clearly endeared him to Sussex.

In stark contrast, Sussex's relationship with Kildare was extremely confrontational. He believed Kildare was involved in 'a great treason' against the queen in the period before Christmas 1559, and suspected Kildare of conspiring to aid the return from France of Donald O'Brien, something which he feared would be the occasion for a full-scale French invasion of Ireland. This was a particularly dangerous charge given Elizabeth's fears of French encirclement through Ireland and Scotland. He, therefore, replaced Kildare as head of the Laois-Offaly plantation with his own brother, Sir Henry Radcliffè, and tried to get evidence in 1557 that Kildare had levied coyne and livery while not on the crown's service. Furthermore, in 1560 Sussex explicitly stated that the Geraldine faction was a danger to the peace and security of Ireland. He claimed it supported the malefactors of the country, and even described the Geraldines as being of Irish blood. Consequently, he called for Kildare to be given land in England in place of his estates in Ireland, so that he would no longer threaten

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10 For the threat of French encirclement in 1559-60 see S.G. Ellis, Ireland in the age of the Tudors, 1447-1603, pp 274-6.
the reform programme. In response Kildare helped lord Robert Dudley, subsequently earl of Leicester, bring Shane O’Neill to court, an act which severely undermined Sussex’s plans in Ulster.11

The cumulative effect of Kildare’s and Ormond’s behaviour was to confirm Sussex in his anti-Geraldine stance, and as a distant kinsman of Kildare and a rival of Ormond, Desmond aroused his suspicion. Desmond was implicated, along with Kildare, in the ‘great treason’ in 1559,12 and he reputedly opposed the acts of supremacy and uniformity in the Irish parliament in February 1560.13 More certain was his opposition to Sussex’s imposition of cess in 1560,14 while he was in negotiations with Lisagh McKedow in late 1560/early 1561.15 Desmond’s actions at this time thus served to confirm Sussex’s opinion of him.

It was against this background of a deterioration in his relationship with Dublin that Desmond became involved in series of protracted legal disputes with Ormond which concerned the prise wines of Youghal and Kinsale, title to the manors of Clonmel, Kilfeakle, and Kilsheelan, and title to Onaght. Unfortunately for Desmond, Ormond was to consistently gain the upper hand in these legal proceedings.

The prise wines were a fee, an import duty, paid on each ton of wine imported into Ireland and were traditionally the preserve of the Ormonds, but by the sixteenth century the towns of Youghal and Kinsale were within the Desmond sphere of

12 Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 15 Mar. 1560 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/2/9); A memorial of the queen’s instructions to Sussex, 27 May 1560 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 88-89v).
13 Bishop Quadra to the duchess of Parma, 12 Feb. 1560 (Cal.S.P. Spain, 1558-67, no. 88); Bishop Quadra to Philip II, 19 Feb. 1560 (Cal. S.P. Spain, 1558-67, no. 89). For the view that there was little opposition in the parliament see H.A. Jefferies, ‘The Irish parliament of 1560: the Anglican reforms authorised’ in I.H.S., xxvi, no. 102 (Nov. 1988), pp 128-41.
14 A memorial of the queen’s instructions to Sussex, 27 May 1560 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 88-89v).
influence. The prise wines of these two towns thus became a source of tension between the two houses, and when Lord Deputy Sir Anthony St Leger brokered a treaty in January 1541 between James, fourteenth earl of Desmond, and James, ninth earl of Ormond, one of the main provisions of this treaty concerned the disputed prise wines. Under the terms of the treaty a four-man commission was to determine the issue, the commission to consist of the archbishop of Cashel and one of his officials, along with a representative each of Desmond and Ormond. If they failed to reach agreement the matter would be resolved by the deputy, chancellor and chief justice of the king’s bench.16

This clearly did not resolve the dispute, for in 1546 the privy council suggested the division of the prise wines into three equal parts, with one-third for Desmond, one-third for Ormond, and the remaining one-third being paid into the crown’s coffers,17 while by March 1557 James, earl of Desmond, had still not given up, for he requested that the deputy and council determine the disputes between Ormond and himself, these including the prise wines of Ireland.18 Days later however, on 11 March 1557 Ormond received letters patent which reiterated his title to the prise wines of Youghal and Kinsale, and of the other ports of Ireland. The question over the prise wines appeared to have been settled.19

In July of the following year, however, the dispute had been revived as both earls agreed to have the deputy and council decide the matter, each being bound by recognizances of £2,000 to abide by their decision.20 In March 1559 a subcommittee

16 Treaty between the earls of Ormond and Desmond, 18 Jan. 1541 (Ormond deeds, 1509-47, no. 253).
17 Minutes of the privy council, 24 Sept. 1546 (S.P. Hen. VIII, iii, 581-2).
18 Desmond’s instructions to his chaplain Dorby ne Royne, [1 Mar.] 1557 (P.R.O., S.P. 62/1/26).
19 Letters patent to James, earl of Ormond, 11 Mar. 1557 (Ormond deeds, 1547-84, no. 68; N.A.I., R.C. 1/3, 3 & 4 Philip & Mary, no. 4, pp 519-524).
20 Indenture between the earl of Ormond and the earl of Desmond and his son Gerald, 11 July 1558 (The manuscripts of Charles Haliday, esq., of Dublin: Acts of the privy council in Ireland, 1556-1571, p. 57); Recognizances upon the earl of Desmond, etc., 12 July 1558 (ibid., p. 57).
of the privy council was established to deal with the controversies involving Ormond and Desmond, the six members being the earls of Sussex, Bedford, and Pembroke, along with the lord admiral, lord Clinton, Sir William Petre, and Mr Cave. The petitions of Ormond and Desmond were then referred to Sir Robert Catlin, chief justice of England, and Sir James Dyer, chief justice of the common pleas, who, on the basis of the letters patent of 1557, declared that Ormond should have the prise wines, and commanded Desmond not to make any further suits on the issue unless he had more substantive evidence to support his claim.

As was often to be the case, however, the appearance of finality in the Desmond-Ormond dispute was deceptive. In September 1562 Desmond was still concerned with the prise wines, while the following May he sought to retain possession of the prise wines until the queen had decided the issue. Desmond kept trying, and in December the queen ordered the sequestration of the prise wines of Youghal and Kinsale into her hands until the end of the following Trinity term, during which time commissioners would hear relevant evidence. If Desmond could show legal title they would be awarded to him, but if he failed to do so they would be granted to Ormond.

The issue came up again in December 1565 when both earls asked to have possession of the prise wines. The queen decided that they were to submit their legal papers to the court of chancery in Dublin, the papers would then be sent to the queen who would appoint commissioners to try the case. The prise wines of Youghal and Kinsale were to be received by an independent third party appointed by the lord

22 A final determination made by the queen concerning the prise wines of Youghal and Kinsale, 4 July 1559 (Ormond deeds, 1547-84, no. 85).
23 Desmond to Cecil, 7 Sept. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 64/7/9).
24 The conference had between Sidney and Desmond, 3 May 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/8/41).
25 Orders to be taken for Desmond, [20 Dec.] 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/9/75).
26 Desmond's requests to the queen, 13 Dec. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/15/64); Ormond's requests to the queen, [24] Dec. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/15/70).
deputy until legal ownership had been established. Ormond nominated his brother Sir Edmund Butler and Patrick Sherlock to act on his behalf in November 1566. By April 1568 the prize wines of Youghal and Kinsale had been taken into the possession of St Leger and Jacques Wingfield pending a final decision, and at the end of June 1569 Elizabeth awarded the prize wines of Youghal and Kinsale to Ormond.

Desmond had thus gone to great lengths for more than a decade to secure possession of the said prize wines, an indication of the welcome financial addition they would make to his revenues, while the continuing rivalry with Ormond must also have contributed to his determination to maintain his legal challenge after each defeat. Ormond was equally if not more determined as the issue for him was not just the prize wines of Youghal and Kinsale, but the prize wines of all the ports in Ireland. Concession on the prize wines of one port might have undermined his claims to the rest, so no challenge went unanswered. Hence he not only battled Desmond in the courts, but also successfully defended his rights to the prize wines against the corporations of Dublin and Drogheda.

The second main point of contention was the ownership of the manors of Clonmel, Kilfeakle, and Kilsheelan, lands in Co. Tipperary which had been bought by Maurice, first earl of Desmond, in 1338. In 1547 they passed into the Ormond dominion when James, fourteenth earl of Desmond, quitclaimed to Joan, widow of James, ninth earl of Ormond, his title and rights to the manors, baronies, and lordships
of Clonmel, Kilfeakle, and Kilsheelan. Ormond’s letters patent in 1557 confirmed
his title to these lands. Desmond, however, claimed that since he had married Joan
the lands had reverted to the Desmond dominion. The matter was heard before Sir
Robert Catlin and Sir James Dyer who found in Ormond’s favour, and in July 1562
the queen ordered that Ormond enjoy full possession of the manors without hindrance
from Desmond. The following May Desmond claimed he could show title to the
manors, while in December 1565 he again appealed to have the manors returned. Claims
that Ormond had illegally entered Kilfeakle in 1563 and that Desmond had
held Kilsheelan in 1565 were not upheld. Desmond thus failed in his attempt to
recover these valuable manors.

The cantred of Onaght was a further cause of tension, as both earls wanted to
gain control over this strategically located territory which was probably coterminous
with the deanery of Tipperary. Both earls petitioned the queen for the territory in
July 1559 and four years later Desmond was again seeking it. Again, however,
Ormond got the upper hand and received a lease in August 1566.

Thus in the early years of his lordship Desmond was uniformly unsuccessful
in all of the legal battles with Ormond. Desmond’s legal failure had substantial

33 Quitclaim of James, earl of Desmond, to Joan, countess of Ormond, 26 Apr. 1547
(Ormond deeds, 1547-84, no. 8).
34 Letters patent to James, earl or Ormond, 11 Mar. 1557 (Ormond deeds, 1547-84, no.
68; N.A.I., R.C. 1/3, 3 & 4 Philip & Mary, no. 4, pp 519-524).
35 Order by the queen, 6 July 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/46; Ormond deeds, 1547-84,
no. 111).
36 The conference had between Sidney and Desmond, 3 May 1563 (P.R.O., S.P.
63/8/41).
37 Desmond’s requests to the queen, 13 Dec. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/15/64).
38 Orders to be taken for Desmond, [20 Dec.] 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/9/75).
39 Award in favour of Ormond, 12 Mar. 1566 (Ormond deeds, 1547-84, no. 135).
41 Desmond’s requests to the queen, 16 July ? 1559 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/1/44); Ormond’s
petition to the queen, 16 July ? 1559 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/1/45); Ormond’s petitions, 16 July ?
1559 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/1/46).
42 Desmond’s requests to the queen, [9 Nov.? 1563] (P.R.O., S.P. 63/9/56).
43 The queen to the lord deputy, 21 Aug. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/18/94; D.B. Quinn
economic consequences in terms of income he would have received had he been successful, but more seriously it had telling diplomatic reverberations. Though they can not be held entirely responsible for Desmond’s losing, Sussex’s anti-Geraldine bias and his friendship with Ormond were undoubtedly factors in the outcome of the dispute. However, Sussex’s support of Ormond was not just due to friendship but was born of a more positive intent to reduce the power and influence of the Desmond lordship in Munster as a whole. As early as 1560 Sussex suggested MacCarthy Mór’s creation as an earl to act as a counterweight to Desmond in Munster, a proposal implemented on 24 June 1565 when MacCarthy Mór was created earl of Clancar at Westminster, while one of the key proposals in Sussex’s plans for reform which he drew up in 1562 was the removal of Desmond overlordship over lords of the region such as lords Barry, Roche, Fitzmaurice of Lixnaw, and Sir Maurice of Decies.

More importantly, Sussex’s conception of the purpose of a presidential council was to be deeply coloured by his growing suspicions of the Desmond Geraldines. Sussex envisaged that the presidency would be above and independent of the factional networks in Munster, and by the time he had formulated his plans in 1562 he had identified the Geraldine faction as the disruptive one. Consequently he intended to use the presidency as a means to control Desmond. He proposed that an English born president be based at either Cork, Waterford, or Limerick, and that he have command of forty soldiers. Desmond was included in the list of potential councillors, but so were opponents such as Ormond, Thomond, Roche, Barry, Lixnaw, Caher, and Dunboyne, as well as representatives of the church and towns. It was clear from this plan that Desmond would not be central to the presidency as his

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father James had hoped and expected. The failure of his legal suits, together with Sussex's intention to reduce Desmond overlordship and to use a presidency as an agency to control him, demonstrated Desmond's political isolation from Dublin.46

Desmond thus found himself threatened by a hostile deputy and devoid of friends at court. Faced with the breakdown of his traditional power and influence in this manner, Desmond reacted aggressively and determined to reassert his status in the region by force. He was particularly active against the group of minor lords of the region who, encouraged by Sussex, pressed for greater autonomy from Desmond overlordship. He invaded Decies in 1559/60 and again in 1562, and Clanmaurice in 1560/1. He intended to construct a castle within lord Roche's territory in 1562, and soon after destroyed a large part of lord Power's country.47 He even attacked his uncle Maurice in 1562.48 By these acts Desmond made it clear to his vassals and others that denial of his overlordship would not be tolerated. The message was also understood in Dublin where officials made Desmond's peaceful toleration of these lords a key point in negotiations with him in 1562.49

More importantly, Desmond also struck out at Conor O'Brien, third earl of Thomond. In 1559, with Thomond increasing his hold on the earldom, Teige O'Brien, leader of the dissident O'Briens, fled to Desmond for sanctuary while his brother Donough remained in possession of Inchiquin castle. Thomond then laid siege to Inchiquin in June and had almost captured the castle when Desmond brought his men

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47 Fitzwilliam to the privy council, 23 Apr. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/92); Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 17 May 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/9); Fitzwilliam to Sussex, 28 May 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/15); Submission of Desmond, 18 June 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/25).
48 Fitzwilliam to Sussex, 7 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/20); James Barnewall to Sussex, 8 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/25); Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 13 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/27); Fitzwilliam to Sussex, 13 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/28); Thomas fitz Maurice of Desmond to Fitzwilliam, 28 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/36).
49 Notes of matters to be ordered with Desmond, 20 May 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/11); A draft of articles for Desmond, 12 June 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/21); Articles exhibited by Desmond to the queen, 28 June 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/30).
into Thomond’s lands and forced Conor to retreat. Desmond then marched his forces to a point north of Ennis, Co. Clare, where Thomond and the earl of Clanrickard had encamped. The following day battle commenced and Desmond and Teige defeated Thomond and Clanrickard. With that victory Teige and Donough were secure in their own part of the earldom, and Desmond returned south of the Shannon in triumph.50

The main target of Desmond’s fury, however, was Ormond. Some of this was fought between vassals. The White Knight was involved in a series of confrontations with the forces of John Butler, William fitz Theobold Burke, and the baron of Dunboyne in 1559-60. On one occasion John Butler’s men stole 200 stud horses from the White Knight, while in December 1559 another of the Knight’s men had 120 cattle taken. A more serious incident occurred when Piers Butler raided the Knight’s lands and took away 500 cattle, 100 horses, 2,000 sheep and goats, and £100 worth of household goods, while ten people were also killed during the raid.51 James fitz Maurice Fitzgerald was active in 1563,52 and Desmond also supported Piers and Oliver Grace, who despoiled Ormond’s lands in late 1564,53 while his brother Sir John destroyed many towns in Co. Tipperary, including Grantstown, Kilfeakle, Nenagh, and Athassel.54

Most of the larger encounters, however, involved Desmond and Ormond directly. Early in the conflict, in 1560, the two earls assembled their forces just east of Tipperary town, with each earl reputed to have had 5,000 men. However, the situation was calmed by a combination of the intervention of Desmond’s wife Joan, Ormond’s mother, and the mediation of lords from both sides, doubtless aware of the

50 A.F.M., sub anno 1559.
51 Award for Desmond against Ormond, 23 Aug. 1560 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/2/32).
52 Ormond to Sussex, 17 Dec. 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/9/73).
53 Sir Thomas Wrothe to Cecil, 21 Oct. 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/95); Sir Thomas Wrothe to Cecil, 2 Nov. 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/98)
54 Sussex and council to the queen, 31 Mar. 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/8/24); Ormond to Sussex, 17 Dec. 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/9/73); Interrogatories administered to Sir John of Desmond, 18-20 Feb. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/43).
potential for disaster for both themselves and their overlords should battle be joined, and the earls were prevailed upon to disperse their forces.\textsuperscript{55}

The fighting continued in late 1561 when Ormond tried to capture Desmond as the latter returned to his lands in the company of the constable of Carlow, Francis Randall (Randolf). Desmond evaded capture, but several of his men were caught, while some of his goods were also taken, and when Randall tried to stop Ormond’s men they ignored him and killed one of his men.\textsuperscript{56} Shortly thereafter, in late February 1562, Desmond’s forces attacked some of Ormond’s men a few miles out of Limerick city and took £500 which they had been transporting.\textsuperscript{57}

Faced with such extreme violence, and the possibility of a full scale civil war between the earls’ respective factions, Dublin and Whitehall tried repeatedly to arbitrate the feud and end the fighting. However, given Sussex’s bias and Ormond’s relationship with Elizabeth, their attempts to end the conflict invariably ended up as attempts to control Desmond who was seen as the culpable party.

The potential for trouble between the earls had been evident from the start. As early as 16 November 1558, twelve days before Gerald’s formal recognition as fifteenth earl, Sussex had tried to preempt an outbreak of violence when he tried to resolve all matters of contention between them.\textsuperscript{58} This helped defuse tension for a time, but the narrowly averted battle in 1560 forced Dublin into action, unable to allow such a serious incident go unpunished. Sussex ordered both earls to attend upon him and the council at Waterford,\textsuperscript{59} where they were pardoned for assembling their forces and each fined 200 cattle. Sussex then established a three-man commission,
which consisted of Sir George Stanley, knight marshal, John Parker, master of the rolls, and Sir Thomas Cusack, to hear the dispute. The commissioners found in favour of Desmond and ordered the restitution of his cattle and goods on 23 August, a rare victory for Desmond. By that stage, however, the tension had abated, for on 2 August, the day following their appearance before the council at Waterford, both earls had been appointed to a commission to keep the peace in Munster and Thomond, presumably an indication that both earls had cooled their ardour. This period of restraint continued into the following year as both Desmond and Ormond participated in Sussex’s disastrous invasion of Tyrone in the autumn.

However, by the end of 1561 trouble had once again flared up, which prompted Sussex and the council to recommend that the earls be brought before the queen so that the feud could be resolved once and for all. By January 1562 Sussex felt the situation was getting out of control, and that unless the earls were brought before the queen the western part of Ireland would witness greater disorder than it had witnessed for many years previously. Faced with such stark advice, the queen ordered the earls to repair to court the following month, and provided £100 to help pay Desmond’s travel expenses, not as sign of special favour, but rather to prevent him using a lack of money as an excuse to remain in Munster. Almost simultaneously, as if to prove the queen’s poor opinion of him correct, Desmond provoked conflict with his uncle Maurice, largely as a delaying tactic, a view shared

60 Orders taken by Sussex and council, between Ormond and Desmond, 1 Aug. 1560 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/2/29; The manuscripts of Charles Haliday, esq., of Dublin: Acts of the privy council in Ireland, 1556-1571, pp 98-9).
61 Award for Desmond against Ormond, 23 Aug. 1560 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/2/32).
62 Commission to the earl of Ormond et al., 2 Aug. 1560 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 263).
63 A.F.M., sub anno 1561.
64 Sussex and council to the privy council, 23 Oct. 1561 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/4/63).
65 Sussex to the queen, 2 Jan. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/1).
66 The queen to Fitzwilliam, 6 Feb. 1562 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 58, f. 10; P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/19).
by Lord Justice Fitzwilliam and Maurice’s son Thomas. Eventually, after a meeting with Fitzwilliam in March, and the issuance of a proclamation for the protection of his lands during his absence from Munster, Desmond departed for England c. 29 April 1562.

Desmond’s first stay in London betrayed the weakness of his position relative to Ormond. His delaying tactics had annoyed the queen, while he was politically isolated with no personal friends at court. Indeed, Whitehall’s estimation of him was so low that upon arrival he was placed in the custody of William Paulet, first marquess of Winchester, lord treasurer of England.

Alongside discussions about the prize wines, the Tipperary manors, and Onaght, described above, the negotiations were concerned with securing Desmond’s obedience. Desmond went before the privy council on 3 June, and on 12 June he was presented with a draft of articles which were to govern his future conduct and ensure that he obeyed the law. Six days later he submitted and acknowledged a list of offences which included violence against the earls of Thomond and Clanrickard, support for dissident O’Briens, and invasions of both Decies and Clanmaurice. These he blamed on a lack of ‘knowledge civilitie and goodd education’, and promised to

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67 Fitzwilliam to Sussex, 7 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/20); James Barnewall to Sussex, 8 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/25); Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 13 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/27); Fitzwilliam to Sussex, 13 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/28); Thomas fitz Maurice of Desmond to Fitzwilliam, 28 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/38).
68 Fitzwilliam to the queen, 13 Mar. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/41).
69 Fitzwilliam and council to the queen, 17 Apr. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/85). It was proclaimed in Kilkenny on 15 April, in Clonmel on 16 April, in Youghal on 17 April, in Cork on 21 April, in Kinsale on 22 April, and in Kilmallock and Limerick on 27 April. The proclamation was also sent to Sir Edmund Butler, in command of Ormond’s lands during Ormond’s absence, as well as to the earls of Thomond and Clanrickard, and to Sir Maurice, Desmond’s uncle.
70 Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 4 May 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/5).
71 The privy council to Fitzwilliam, 4 June 1562 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 58, ff 24r-25v); The queen to Joan, countess of Desmond, 7 June 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/19).
72 The privy council to Fitzwilliam, 4 June 1562 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 58, ff 28r-29r); The queen to Joan, countess of Desmond, 7 June 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/19).
73 A draft of articles for Desmond, 12 June 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/21).
obey, honour, and serve the queen.74 His submission was presented to the privy council by the secretary on 21 June,75 and three days later Desmond appeared before the privy council, acknowledged his offences and asked to be pardoned and released.76 Four days later Desmond subscribed to the articles.77

The key conditions were that Desmond would help collect the crown’s prerogative rights in counties Kerry, Cork, and Limerick, and all subsidies which were applicable to the lands of Ormond and other lords; that he would obey and enforce the law within the said counties, and apprehend malefactors and deliver them to the relevant authorities, as long as it did not infringe upon his palatine rights in Kerry; that he would not assemble his forces without licence, nor invade another man’s lands, but would use the law to resolve disputes, as long as this applied equally to Ormond, Thomond, and all others who bordered his lands, although his family, kinsmen, and tenants were to be governed by him as earl; that he would not threaten the lords of Munster, as long as they paid all services and duties which they owed him, Desmond agreeing to abide by the order of the queen or the deputy and council where disputes arose; that he promised to ensure that merchants and others could travel freely between the cities of Cork and Limerick and the port towns of the three counties; and that he agreed to attend all parliaments and councils.78 These articles thus allowed for a high degree of supervision of Desmond’s activities, and it is evident from these that he was clearly thought of as the offending party in Munster.

Within a month of having agreed to the articles Desmond was pardoned,79 but it was to be another year and a half before he was free to return home, during which

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74 The submission of Gerald, earl of Desmond, 18 June 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/25).
75 Deliberations of the privy council, 21 June 1562 (Acts privy council, 1558-70, p. 105).
76 Deliberations of the privy council, 24 June 1562 (Acts privy council, 1558-70, p. 106).
77 Articles exhibited Desmond to the queen, 28 June 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/30); Deliberations of the privy council, 28 June 1562 (Acts privy council, 1558-70, p. 108).
78 Articles exhibited Desmond to the queen, 28 June 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/30); Deliberations of the privy council, 28 June 1562 (Acts privy council, 1558-70, p. 108).
79 The queen’s pardon to Desmond, 21 July 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/6/54).
time negotiations continued. He met Sidney at the latter’s house in London on 3 May
1563,80 and the following August agreed to orders for the governance of Munster
which had been formulated by Cusack.81 Eventually, after numerous appeals for his
release,82 the queen sanctioned a passport for Desmond,83 and by 9 November 1563
he had left for home.84 His sojourn had thus been twice as long as his rival’s, Ormond
being back at his manor at Carrick-on-Suir by early January 1563.85

In February 1564 Desmond agreed a treaty with the crown, by which a
commission would accompany him to Munster where it, together with Desmond and
the lords of Kerry, Cork, and Limerick, would decide upon the collection of the
subsidy, the organization of the ‘rising out’ on the queen’s service, the suppression of
poets and bards, and the abolition of the ‘Brehon laws’. Desmond was also to
withdraw any of his men who were aiding the dissident O’Briens, and was to
implement whatever the commissioners instructed for the advancement of the
reformed religion in Munster. He also asked for the appointment of four impartial
figures to determine the controversies between Ormond and himself.86

Within three months of this treaty Sussex was gone from Dublin, but his
legacy was to remain for many years to come. It was Sussex who proposed
presidential councils to govern Munster, Connacht, and Ulster in an attempt to

80 The conference had between Sidney and Desmond, 3 May 1563 (P.R.O., S.P.
63/8/41).
81 Desmond to Sir Thomas Cusack, 1 Aug. 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/8/60); Desmond to
the privy council, 4 Aug. 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/8/61).
82 Desmond to Cecil, 7 Sept. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 64/7/9); Desmond to Cecil, 16 Apr.
1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/8/32); Desmond to Cecil, Sept. 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/9/30).
83 Queen Elizabeth to all, &c., 20 Oct. 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/9/37).
84 The queen to Sir Thomas Wrothe and Sir Nicholas Arnold, 9 Nov.? 1563 (P.R.O., S.P.
63/9/55).
85 Ormond to Cecil, 11 Jan. 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/8/1).
86 Treaty between Desmond and the queen, 22 Feb. 1564 (Cal. pat. rolls Ire., Hen. VIII-
Eliz., pp 485-7). The terms of this treaty were based upon a set of articles proposed in
December 1563: Orders to be taken with Desmond, [20 Dec.] 1563 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/9/74).
For a discussion of this treaty, which dates it as February 1563, and the role of poets, bards,
and rymers in Gaelic and Gaelicised Ireland see Marc Caball, ‘Innovation and tradition: Irish
Gaelic responses to early modern conquest and colonization’ in Hiram Morgan (ed.), Political
ideology in Ireland, 1541-1641 (Dublin, 1999), pp 62-82.
formalize and institutionalize the relationship between Dublin and the lords in those outlying regions. Whereas Lord Deputy Anthony St Leger had sought to generate personal relationships with these lords, Sussex sought to tie them to institutions such as presidencies, a move designed to make the process of reform more resilient and less reliant on the person of the deputy. In this Sussex succeeded, for his successors, most notably Sir Henry Sidney, were to pursue similar policies based upon formal arrangements between lords and institutions of government.87

However, Sussex’s government had alienated many, and their combined criticisms finally contributed to his recall. Sussex’s heavy reliance on the cess caused a storm of protest in the Pale, aided and abetted at court by lord Robert Dudley, which ultimately led to the appointment of Sir Nicholas Arnold as commissioner to inquire into the finances of the army in July 1562. His preliminary report uncovered evidence of financial irregularities, and led to his joint appointment with Sir Thomas Wrothe with wider powers in October 1563. Sussex’s policies also came in for criticism. Kildare and Sir Thomas Cusack, again aided by Dudley, disrupted and undermined Sussex’s hardline strategy with Shane O’Neill, while Cusack also called for a more lenient approach with Desmond. He proposed presidencies for Munster, Ulster, and Connacht, which he believed would help bring civility and obedience to the populace and would in turn increase the revenues from Ireland. The queen would thus have her expenses reduced, while the burden on the loyal subjects for the upkeep of the garrison would also be lightened.88 Eventually, in April 1564, Sussex was recalled, and the following month Arnold was appointed lord justice.

87 Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 73-6.
88 Thomas Cusack to Cecil, 17 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/33); Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 101-6.
The appointment of Sir Nicholas Arnold as lord justice on 2 May 1564 marked a temporary, though ultimately illusory, improvement in Desmond’s fortunes. A Dudley adherent and the man whose commission of inquiry had contributed much to Sussex’s recall, Arnold appeared to offer Desmond the opportunity to repair both his reputation and his relationship with Dublin. For the first time since he acceded to the earldom Desmond faced the welcome prospect of a friendly governor.89

In the immediate term Desmond’s cooperation with the various commissioners improved. James Plunket, chief justice, and James Barnewall, queen’s attorney, were commissioned to receive Desmond and Ormond at Clonmel on 2 June.90 Desmond appears to have cooperated, for on 9 June both earls were named to a commission for the exercise of the queen’s ecclesiastical jurisdiction for counties Kerry, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Tipperary, Kilkenny, and Carlow.91 In July he met the commissioners at Cork, where he claimed that the lords of Cork were prepared to perform all the articles he had agreed to in England,92 and in September he agreed to deliver his pledges, to send his brother Sir John to England, and to restore cattle he had taken.93

However, Arnold’s administration was constrained by the results of his own campaign against Sussex. His investigation into financial irregularities in Sussex’s government meant not only that Arnold could not depend upon the cess to pay for his troops, but that the army was firmly alienated from him, as witnessed by the refusal of vice-treasurer Sir William Fitzwilliam and the army officers to hand over their accounts to him. As a consequence Arnold fell back upon Kildare for the defence of

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89 For Arnold’s government see S.G. Ellis, Ireland in the age of the Tudor, 1447-1603, p. 286; Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, 106-112.
90 Commission to John Plunket and James Barnewall, 27 May 1564 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 662).
91 Commission to Thomas, earl of Ormond, et al., 9 June 1564 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 666).
92 Desmond to Cecil, 26 July 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/37).
the Pale, which in turn encouraged members of the Geraldine faction to assert themselves once more.

One such person was Sir Donald O’Brien who recommenced his struggle with the earl of Thomond, and c. July 1564 the dissident O’Briens sought Desmond’s support, who sent 600 galloglass who would remain in Thomond until the end of the year. Arnold ordered Desmond to cease his support of Thomond’s enemies, and then Cusack met him at Limerick in early September and ordered him to remove his men from Thomond, to which Desmond agreed on 11 September.94

At the same time Desmond intensified his attacks on Ormond. He attempted to besiege Kilfeakle castle and supported Piers and Oliver Grace as they burned and spoiled Ormond’s lands, while Sir John attacked Athassel, Co. Tipperary, in November.95 With the attacks ongoing throughout November and December Desmond sought a meeting with Arnold at Waterford, but before that could be arranged the Desmond-Ormond feud reached a dramatic climax at the battle of Affane.96

Ormond appears to have finally determined to deal decisively with Desmond in early 1565. Freed by the death of his mother, Desmond’s wife, on 2 January, and frustrated by years of raiding and broken agreements between the two, he had seen his enemy Arnold take over the justiciarship. With Desmond and other members of the Geraldine faction increasingly belligerent, Ormond decided the time had come to act, and it was in this context that Affane occurred. The chance came courtesy of Sir

94 Lord Justice Arnold and council to Desmond, 1 July 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/19); Arnold and council to Ormond, 12 Aug. 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/72); Order taken between Desmond and Thomond, 2 Sept. 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/82); Desmond to Sir Thomas Cusack, 11 Sept. 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/86); Sir Thomas Wrothe to Cecil, 21 Oct. 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/95); Depositions of Moriertagh & Murrough McEdmund McSheehy, 8 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/9).
95 Sir Thomas Wrothe to Cecil, 2 Nov. 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/98); Sir Thomas Wrothe to Cecil, 14 & 17 Nov. 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/101); Interrogatories administered to Sir John of Desmond, 18-20 Feb. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/43).
96 Ormond to Cecil, 22 Nov. 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/108); Ormond to Cecil, 4 Dec. 1564 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/11/111); Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 7 Jan. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/4).
Maurice of Decies. On approximately 25 January Sir Maurice informed Ormond that he had heard that Desmond intended to come into Decies. This letter was allegedly to request Ormond’s help with the protection of his cattle, but it gave Ormond almost a week’s forewarning of Desmond’s intentions, sufficient time for him to assemble his men at Knocklofty and wait for the opportunity to ambush Desmond’s forces either in Tipperary or Waterford.97

Ormond’s objective appear to have been to inflict a significant military defeat on Desmond. That would reduce Desmond’s standing in Munster and encourage other lords of the region to resist Desmond overlordship. It would appear that Ormond did not intend to kill Desmond as that would have left him at the mercy of the privy council, some of whom, such as Leicester, would have been only too happy to be rid of Ormond. What Ormond wanted, therefore, was a much weakened, chastised, and more compliant Desmond along his borders.

Once Desmond entered Decies Sir Maurice informed Ormond by messenger. Armed with this vital information Ormond brought his forces into Decies, where they engaged Desmond’s in combat on the evening of 1 February at Affane, Co. Waterford. Ormond had at least 100 horsemen, 300 galloglass and kerne, plus various stragglers, as well as the forces of his brothers Sir Edmund, James and Edward, while Desmond had at least 56 horsemen, 60 galloglass, 60 footmen kerne, plus an indeterminate number of horseboys and stragglers. The battle would appear not to have lasted very long, perhaps an hour or less. By the end, Desmond’s force had been defeated, having lost perhaps 100 or more men through combat or drowning in the nearby Blackwater river. Desmond, who was shot in the leg by Sir Edmund Butler, was captured.

97 Deposition of Sir Maurice Fitzgerald, 28 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/52); Ormond’s answer to the articles ministered to him, 22 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/34).
Ormond had achieved his significant victory.\textsuperscript{98}

Even more damaging for Desmond were the political consequences of Affane. His prestige in Munster plummeted, his reputation at court as an incorrigible was confirmed, and Arnold’s ability to rehabilitate him evaporated. Furthermore, Ormond exploited his proximity with Elizabeth to further blacken Desmond’s reputation as an uneducated, unruly, brute who threatened his peaceful, civilized earldom of Ormond. To complete Desmond’s defeat Ormond waged a concerted campaign to have all responsibility for the battle ascribed to Desmond. This not only deepened Desmond’s problems but also served to deflect attention from Ormond’s part in a private battle, Ormond doubtless having realized that he had overstepped the mark and that some in Whitehall might use his actions against him.

Ormond brought Desmond to Waterford, via Clonmel, by 8 February, where he proceeded with great fanfare to ensure that all knew who was now preeminent in Munster.\textsuperscript{99} Ormond initially refused to hand Desmond over to Arnold for fear that the lord justice would be lenient on Desmond,\textsuperscript{100} and when he did finally deliver his prisoner to Arnold on his second day at Waterford Ormond declared that he delivered him as the queen’s prisoner captured in the field with his banner displayed, having burned and spoiled the queen’s subjects within shire ground accompanied by traitors. He then declared that he intended to charge Desmond with high treason, an intention he had written about to Cecil the previous day.\textsuperscript{101}

Arnold, together with those councillors present, Kildare, Plunket, Agard, and Stanley, spent over six weeks at Waterford, staying until around mid-March, during

\textsuperscript{98} Desmond’s answer to the interrogatories ministered to him at Waterford, 18 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/31); Ormond’s answer to the articles ministered to him, 22 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/34); George Butler, ‘The battle of Affane’ in Ir. Sword, viii (1967-8), pp 33-47.

\textsuperscript{99} Desmond’s petition to the queen, [1 June] 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/53).

\textsuperscript{100} Arnold, a Leicester client, allowed Desmond to take private lodgings at Waterford, guarded by three of the lord justice’s men.

\textsuperscript{101} Ormond to Cecil, 8 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/28); Marshal Sir George Stanley to Cecil, 3 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/4).
which time they examined both parties and various witnesses in an attempt to establish culpability. However, they were unable to do so, due largely to the fact that Desmond and Ormond gave such differing accounts of their actions in which each claimed to have been attacked by the other.\textsuperscript{102} Subsequent testimony from other witnesses, the most important of whom was Sir Maurice of Decies, supported Ormond’s charges against Desmond.\textsuperscript{103}

Ormond laid his charge of treason against Desmond before Arnold and the council on 26 February. His first claim was that Desmond had, with a force of over 1,000 men, including the traitor Lisaghe McMorrough O’Connor, burned two houses at Ballynamintra, about 3.5 miles east of Affane, each worth £2, and taken household goods worth a further £20, while at Bewley, about a mile east of Affane, he had burned three houses, each worth £2, and had again taken goods worth £20. Only for his intervention, Ormond claimed Desmond would have burned the rest of the said towns. The second charge was that Desmond had taken from fifteen named towns in Co. Waterford 340 cattle, 132 plough horses, and between £400 and £500 worth of sheep, pigs, and household goods. The third charge was that Desmond had assaulted a number of houses at Kilfeakle, including Ormond’s own house there, and would have burned the rest of the town had he not been stopped by the inhabitants and garrison of the castle there.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{102} Articles ministered to Ormond by Lord Justice Arnold and council, 18 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/30); Desmond’s answer to the interrogatories ministered to him at Waterford, 18 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/31); Ormond’s answer to the articles ministered to him, 22 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/34); Marshal Sir George Stanley to Cecil, 3 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/4).

\textsuperscript{103} Deposition of Sir Maurice Fitzgerald, 28 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/52); Deposition of Edmund Duff O’Hagan, 14 Mar. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/55); Examination of Lysaghe McMorish Moyle O’Connor, 1 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/1); Depositions of Morriertagh and Murrough McEdmund McSheehy, 8 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/9); Examinations of Gerald fitz James, dean of Lismore, and Brian McDonough, 21 & 23 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/17).

\textsuperscript{104} Ormond’s charge of treason against Desmond, 26 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/37).
The queen then ordered both earls to England,\textsuperscript{105} while a commission, composed of Sir George Stanley, marshal of the army, William Fitzwilliam, vice-treasurer, Sir Thomas Cusack, and Captain Francis Agard, was established to govern Munster during the earls’s absence from Ireland.\textsuperscript{106} The earls of Clanrickard and Thomond reminded those at court of Desmond’s support for dissident O’Briens in mid-April, while Sir Maurice of Decies again complained of Desmond.\textsuperscript{107} By the time Desmond arrived at Liverpool on 25 April, therefore, all of Ormond’s allies had done their part to condemn Desmond.\textsuperscript{108}

At court the earls reiterated their respective accounts of the battle during May and early June. Ormond restated Desmond’s links to the rebel O’Connors, O’Mores, and O’Briens which Desmond denied.\textsuperscript{109} In mid-June they both made fresh complaints of injuries inflicted upon their earldoms,\textsuperscript{110} and on 9 July the queen ordered Sir John to England after Ormond had included Sir John in his charges of treason.\textsuperscript{111} Later that month the privy council decided that the examination of witnesses and evidence relevant to the dispute would be undertaken by a subcommittee to consist of Sir Nicholas Bacon, lord keeper of the privy seal, William

\textsuperscript{105} The queen to Ormond, 28 Feb. \textsuperscript{1565}, (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/39); The queen to Desmond, 28 Feb. \textsuperscript{1565} (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/40).
\textsuperscript{106} Commission for Sir George Stanley, et al., 28 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/47).
\textsuperscript{107} Clanrickard to the queen, 12 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/11); Clanrickard and Thomond to the privy council, 13 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/13); Sir Maurice Fitzgerald to the queen, 22 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/20); Sir Maurice Fitzgerald to the privy council, 22 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/21).
\textsuperscript{108} Captain Nicholas Heron to Cecil, 25 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/27).
\textsuperscript{109} Note laid before the queen, [May] 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/52); Desmond’s petition to the queen, [1 June] 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/53); Ormond’s answer to Desmond’s allegations, 6 June 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/56); Desmond’s answer to Ormond’s book, 12 June 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/59).
\textsuperscript{110} Ormond to Cecil, 17 June 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/62); Desmond’s petition to the queen, 17 June 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/63). Some days earlier, between 12 and 14 June, Ormond had been imprisoned in the Fleet prison for having broken an order not to enter the city of London unless for the purpose of meeting a privy councillor: Deliberations of the privy council, 12 June 1565 (\textit{Acts privy council}, 1558-70, p. 219); Deliberations of the privy council, 14 June 1565 (\textit{Acts privy council}, 1558-70, p. 220).
\textsuperscript{111} A particular instruction given by Queen Elizabeth to Sidney, 9 July 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/8).
Parr, marquess of Northampton, the earl of Leicester, and the secretary.\textsuperscript{112} The examinations continued until September, during which time Ormond charged Desmond with having caused damage to the value of over £66,500,\textsuperscript{113} and on 12 September Desmond submitted and agreed to abide by the queen’s determination and judgment for all the charges against him.\textsuperscript{114}

Elizabeth, meanwhile, sought the views of Sussex, Sidney, Sir Henry Radcliffe, and Francis Agard. Sussex accused Desmond of having maintained traitors, of having illegally entered Decies, and of having spoiled the lands of Ormond and other lords of the region. Radcliffe largely supported Sussex’s statements. Sidney, however, stressed the fact that Desmond and his father had served the queen in the field, and declared that Desmond and his father had previously claimed rights and services from Decies and had taken distress for denial of same. Agard remembered Desmond’s service against Shane O’Neill, and claimed to know little about most of the charges against Desmond.\textsuperscript{115} In September both Sussex and Sidney declared that Desmond and Ormond should each be fined and bound over to keep the peace, but Sussex thought Desmond’s actions treasonable and Ormond’s justifiable, while Sidney believed Ormond’s fault was greater than Desmond’s.\textsuperscript{116}

In October the earls agreed to be bound by recognizances of £20,000 to abide the queen’s decision,\textsuperscript{117} and entered into the said recognizances the following

\textsuperscript{112} Deliberations of the privy council, 25 July 1565 (Acts privy council, 1558-70, p. 235).
\textsuperscript{113} A brief note of the matters objected to by Ormond against Desmond, [July or Aug.] 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/37).
\textsuperscript{114} Desmond’s submission to the queen, 12 Sept. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/65).
\textsuperscript{115} Interrogatories relative to Desmond’s treasons and contempts, 6 Aug. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/38); Sussex’s answer, 8 Aug. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/39); Sidney’s answer, 8 Aug. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/40); Sir Henry Radcliffe’s declaration, 8 Aug. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/41); Francis Agard’s answer, 8 Aug. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/42).
\textsuperscript{116} Sidney’s opinion, 16 Sept. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/70); Sussex’s opinion upon the submissions of Ormond and Desmond, 22 Sept. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/71).
\textsuperscript{117} Deliberations of the privy council, 13 Oct. 1565 (Acts privy council, 1558-70, p. 269).
month. In December the earls made their final arguments. Elizabeth then gave her decision on Christmas Eve. Characteristically, however, she merely passed responsibility back onto her officials in Ireland. In relation to the legal disputes over the prize wines and other possessions, the earls were ordered to submit their legal papers to the court of chancery in Ireland. Meanwhile, a commission was to establish responsibility for Affane, the guilty party having to pay the majority or all of the fines which would be levied. After eight months in England the dispute was no closer to a resolution.

With the final consequences of Affane still uncertain, Desmond returned to Ireland early in the new year to find a new administration in Dublin replacing that of the wholly discredited Arnold. The new deputy was Sir Henry Sidney, from whom Desmond expected much but who was ultimately to leave him bitterly disappointed.

Sidney arrived in Ireland in January 1566 intent on reforming Ireland through the establishment of the common law throughout the realm. To achieve this he proposed a programme which was fundamentally similar to Sussex’s. He sought to complete the plantations of Laois and Offaly, to expel the MacDonalds from Ulster, and to subdue Shane O’Neill. However, he tried to implement this programme without having to sacrifice the support which Arnold had garnered from the Geraldine

118 Recognizance of Ormond, 22 Nov. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/15/49); Recognizance of Desmond, 22 Nov. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/15/50); Memorandum of the order in council, 27 Oct. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/15/26); Recognizances of Ormond and Desmond, 22 Nov. 1565 (Acts privy council, 1558-70, pp 295-7).
119 Desmond’s requests to the queen, 13 Dec. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/15/64); Ormond’s requests to the queen, [24] Dec. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/15/70).
120 Orders taken by the queen in the causes of Ormond and Desmond, 24 Dec. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/15/71).
121 Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 109-12.
faction. In Munster Sidney envisaged a president and council, supported by regional lords and bishops, having jurisdiction over the counties of Kerry, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, and Tipperary. The president would be assisted by two justices, one for common law and one for civil law, and would alternate his residence between the cities of Limerick, Cork, and Waterford. Unlike Sussex’s proposal, however, Sidney’s president would be sympathetic to Desmond.122

By February Sidney had devised instructions for the Munster presidency. The president was to be assisted by two justices, Robert Cusack and Nicholas White, whose appointment was presumably a move designed to ensure that both main factions, Geraldine and Butler, could exercise some influence on the administration of the province. White was an Ormond adherent, being seneschal of the liberty of Tipperary when appointed, while Cusack was son of Sir Thomas Cusack, a Geraldine supporter of long standing.123 There would also be a clerk, Owen Moore, as well as a council to consist of Desmond, Ormond, and the earls of Thomond and Clancar, along with the archbishop of Cashel and the bishops of Waterford, Cork, and Limerick. The president would also have thirty horsemen and twenty footmen, and the entire structure was to cost more than £1,900 Irish in its first year, and just over £1,700 Irish in succeeding years.124

Sidney’s choice of president was Sir Warham St Leger, son of the former deputy Sir Anthony St Leger, who carried out the functions of president between January and December 1566.125 On 8 March St Leger and the members of the

122 Instructions for Sir Henry Sidney, 5 Oct. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/15/4); Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 117-9. For the contrasting view that Sidney’s government embarked on a dramatically different policy of colonization and conquest see Nicholas Canny, The Elizabethan conquest of Ireland: a pattern established, 1565-1576 (Hassocks, Sussex, 1976), passim.
123 The queen to Sidney, 14 May 1566 (Sidney S.P., no. 15); Jon Crawford, Anglicizing the government of Ireland, p. 309.
124 Draft of instructions for the government of Munster, 1 Feb. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/16/22); Estimate of charges for a president and certain councillors to be established in Munster, [1 Feb.] 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/16/23).
council, along with the mayors and recorders of Waterford, Limerick, and Cork, the
mayor of Youghal, and the sovereigns of Clonmel, Fethard, Kilmallock, and Kinsale,
were appointed commissioners for the peace in counties Waterford, Tipperary,
Limerick, Cork, and Kerry. St Leger was given command of the men levied.126

Sidney’s lord deputyship thus appeared to offer Desmond a second chance to
rebuild his relationship with Dublin after the false start during the Arnold
administration. Sidney was well disposed towards him, the presidency would be
more sympathetic to his needs, and the president would be the son of the man whose
support had been vital for Desmond’s father James.

However, the situation in Munster had been altered dramatically as a result of
Affane. As Whitehall had essentially placed the blame for the battle on Desmond,
Sidney had to be more circumspect in his support of Desmond than he had originally
intended. Sidney’s ability to help him was further restricted by the presence in
London of two powerful political opponents, Sussex and Ormond. Sidney was
unfortunate that by the time he arrived in Ireland Sussex had been largely politically
rehabilitated, due in part to Arnold’s shortcomings, and was an active counsellor on
Irish affairs. Sussex criticised Sidney’s efforts and undermined Elizabeth’s faith in
him, and also interfered with decisions Sidney was making in Dublin. Eventually the
relationship between the two deteriorated to such a degree that Sidney challenged his
tormentor to a duel.127

More damaging for Sidney, and Desmond, was the opposition of Ormond.
The mid-1560s saw the emergence of Ormond as a special favourite of Elizabeth,
something which Leicester resented deeply, a fact both Don Guzman de Silva, the
Spanish ambassador, and Paul de Foix, the French ambassador, remarked upon.128

126 Commission to Thomas, earl of Ormond, et al., 8 Mar. 1566 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no.
828).
127 Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 120-2.
Aside from upsetting Leicester, Ormond’s relationship with the queen brought with it material reward, such as a lease of Onaght in August 1566 in compensation for Desmond’s many breaches of the law which were to the ‘preiudice of the Erle of Ormondes Countrey’.\textsuperscript{129} It also gave Ormond the ability to directly influence Elizabeth’s policies. This was demonstrated most explicitly in relation to St Leger’s \textit{de facto} presidency. The queen was adamant in May 1566 that St Leger was not to meddle with any matters within the liberty of Tipperary, except those stated in Ormond’s patent,\textsuperscript{130} while she removed St Leger from his \textit{de facto} presidency in December,\textsuperscript{131} because she considered him too partial to the Geraldines. She rebuked Sidney for having chosen St Leger, and stated her amazement that he could have appointed, in St Leger, someone whose ‘inward preferrid frendship towards the Earle of Desmond was notorious both in England and Irland by manifest circumstances’.\textsuperscript{132}

Ormond’s influence was equally in evidence in the instructions Sidney received from the queen. Elizabeth told Sidney not to place too much trust in Gerald,\textsuperscript{133} and ordered him to reverse Arnold’s decision to give the baron of Dunboyne a captaincy within Co. Tipperary, while he was also to refuse Desmond’s request to release certain captains of his galloglass and other malefactors who had been condemned to die at sessions held in Clonmel before Nicholas White, seneschal of the liberty of Tipperary.\textsuperscript{134} Sidney was directed to cease legal proceedings against Sir Edward Butler for levying coyne and livery, the queen pointedly reminding him that he had failed to act in a similar manner with any of Desmond’s brethren or men,\textsuperscript{135} and

\begin{itemize}
\item[130] \textit{The queen to Sidney, 14 May 1566} (\textit{Sidney S.P.}, no. 15).
\item[131] \textit{Sidney to the privy council, 12 Dec. 1566} (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/71).
\item[132] \textit{The queen to Sidney, 16 Jan. 1567} (\textit{Sidney S.P.}, no. 32); \textit{The queen to Sidney, 11 June 1567} (\textit{Sidney S.P.}, no. 41; P.R.O., S.P. 63/21/10).
\item[133] \textit{Queen Elizabeth to Sir Henry Sidney, 6 Jan. 1566} (\textit{Report on the manuscripts of Lord De L’isle and Dudley, preserved at Penshurst Place}, ii, p. 2).
\item[134] \textit{The queen to Sidney, 14 May 1566} (\textit{Sidney S.P.}, no. 15).
\item[135] \textit{The queen to Sidney, 16 June 1566} (\textit{Sidney S.P.}, no. 18).
\end{itemize}
instead was to proceed with the abolition of coyne and livery among rebellious lords and malefactors first, and only then was he to proceed against loyal lords such as Ormond.  

136 Elizabeth admonished Sidney for not having apprehended rebels and outlaws maintained by Desmond and Sir John, and even suggested Sidney was suffering from ‘summe great mist of darkness in judgement’,  

137 while she ordered him to supply Sir Edmund Butler with ordnance, shot, and powder, this for the stated aim of capturing some castles in Tipperary held by Burkes and other rebels.  

138 As Sidney stated in his Memoir by the time he left Ireland in October 1567 he was physically tired from his exertions, but was ‘more wearied in mynde, with the sharpe and bitter letters which I almost wekely received out of England by the procurement of the Earl of Ormond, condemnping me for everie thing that was amisse in Munster’.

139 It was against this background that Desmond returned to Ireland. On 9 April 1566 he appeared before the council where Sidney attempted to resolve the dispute with Sir Maurice of Decies. Both sides were to release the prisoners they had captured, while they were to attend upon the deputy the next time he came to Youghal. In the mean time the dispute was to be examined by St Leger and the commissioners there.  

140 Desmond then returned to Munster by 1 July when he met St Leger at Lough Gur.  

141 The violence continued, however. Desmond invaded Clanmaurice with 2,000 men,  

142 while he also supported rebels, such as Piers Grace,

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136 The queen to Sidney, 14 May 1566 (Sidney S.P., no. 15); The queen to Sidney, 13 Aug. 1566 (Sidney S.P., no. 23; P.R.O., S.P. 63/18/80).
137 The queen to Sidney, 8 July 1566 (Sidney S.P., no. 22; P.R.O., S.P. 63/18/46); The queen to Sidney, 13 Aug. 1566 (Sidney S.P., no. 23; P.R.O., S.P. 63/18/80).
138 The queen to Sidney, 14 May 1566 (Sidney S.P., no. 15); The queen to Sidney, 30 Nov. 1566 (Sidney S.P., no. 28).
141 Shane O’Neill to Charles IX of France, 25 Apr. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/17/34); St Leger to Sidney, 3 July 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/18/54, enclosure i).
142 Adam Loftus, archbishop of Armagh, to Cecil, 3 Sept. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/1); A memorial of instructions for Edward Horsey, 20 Oct. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/25).
Conall McShane Glasse, and brothers Walter and John fitz Theobold Burke, in their raids on Tipperary and Waterford.\textsuperscript{143}

In an attempt to curry favour with Dublin and Whitehall, perhaps at the prompting of St Leger, Desmond went to Drogheda in mid-September to meet Sidney and offered to serve either in Ulster against O'Neill, or to safeguard the Pale with a force of horsemen while Sidney would be in Ulster. Sidney chose the latter option, and arranged for Desmond to bring his force on 22/23 September.\textsuperscript{144} He brought with him his brother John, Thomas, baron of Lixnaw, the White Knight, the baron of Caher, lord Power of Curraghmore, and numerous gentlemen of the region, together with 100 horsemen, 300 galloglass, and 92 gunners. There he was joined by St Leger and Captain Heron. In October he brought his forces into O’Reilly’s country, took 1,000 cattle, and advanced as far north as Ardee.\textsuperscript{145}

While he was away in the Pale, however, Desmond’s lands were heavily raided by Ormond’s forces under Edward and Piers Butler, Ormond’s brothers. Such was the intensity of the attacks that Desmond suffered losses of 3,500 cattle, 1,560 horses, £200 worth of corn and household goods, as well as the deaths of 106 of his men.\textsuperscript{146} By November Desmond’s losses had risen to £10,000.\textsuperscript{147} The situation between the two earls deteriorated further during the winter of 1566-7, when both Desmond and Sir John conducted raids on towns in Tipperary such as Nenagh,

\textsuperscript{143} Commission to Patrick Sherlock, et al., 22 June 1566 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 891); Ormond to [Cecil ?], [Sept.] 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/17).
\textsuperscript{144} Agreement between the deputy and council and Desmond, 8 Sept. 1566 (The manuscripts of Charles Haliday, esq., of Dublin: Acts of the privy council in Ireland, 1556-1571, p. 183); Sidney to the privy council, 9 & 14 Sept. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/11).
\textsuperscript{145} Sidney and council to the queen, 22 Nov. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/55).
\textsuperscript{146} Desmond to Sidney, 4 Jan. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/20/1); Note of burnings, spoils, and murders committed by the Butlers against Desmond, [4 Jan.] 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/20/1, enclosure i).
\textsuperscript{147} Sidney to Cecil, 20 Nov. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/52).
Kilfeakle, Kilsheelan, and Priorstown. When informed of these raids the queen declared that Desmond should be deemed to have broken his bond and forfeited his recognizance of £20,000, and called for Desmond to be arrested.

By that stage Desmond was already in custody. Sidney, under increasing pressure from both Sussex and Ormond, and afraid that the violence was about to culminate in another Affane-style confrontation, had set out for Munster on 27 January. The lords of the region, such as lords Barry, Roche, and the MacCarthys of Carbery and Muskerry, met him at Cork and appealed to be made subjects of the crown, being so ‘injured and exacted apon’ by Desmond that ‘in effecte they are or were becom his Thralls or Slaves’. Sidney heard how villages were destroyed, churches ruined, castles and towns wasted, all the work of Desmond’s men. Desmond was arrested at Kilmallock on 25 March and brought to Limerick, ‘blowinge out wourdes of evill digestion’ at his incarceration, having been informed by Sidney that should his men try to free him he would be the first to be killed. At Limerick, on 31 March, Sidney and the council signed the order for his imprisonment, citing Desmond’s breaches of the peace, his unlawful assemblies, his refusal to bring his servants to trial, and the lack of justice in his territories.

Elizabeth wanted the dispute between the earls examined as thoroughly as possible in Dublin, so that when he would eventually be sent over to court Desmond would be unable to claim, as he had done previously, that he could give better answers.

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148 Interrogatories administered to Sir John of Desmond, 18-20 Feb. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/43); Interrogatories whereupon Desmond was examined, 20 Feb. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/45); Information by Sir Edmund Butler and Patrick Sherlock to Sidney, Feb. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/59).

149 The queen to Sidney, 24 Mar. 1567 (Sidney S.P., no. 34); The queen to Sidney, 3 Apr. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/20/57; Sidney S.P., no. 37).

150 Sidney to the queen, 20 Apr. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/20/66); Desmond to Cecil, 24 June 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/21/27); Henry Sidney, ‘Memoir or narrative addressed to Sir Francis Walsingham, 1583’ in U.J.A., first ser., 11 (1855), pp 42-3.

151 Order for Desmond’s imprisonment in Dublin castle, 31 March 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/20/55); ibid., (Report on the manuscripts of Lord De L’Isle and Dudley, preserved at Penshurst Place, ii, p. 5).
back in Ireland.\textsuperscript{152} She then appointed a commission to determine the controversies between the two earls, although their remit specifically excluded any disputes concerning lands. The six-man commission, composed of Patrick, bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Sir William Fitzwilliam, vice-treasurer, Henry Draycott, master of the rolls in Ireland, Richard Finglas, sergeant-at-laws, Nicholas Nugent, queen’s solicitor, and Edward Fitz Symons, gentleman, was required to take Sidney’s advice.\textsuperscript{153}

Several books of complaints were submitted by Ormond which detailed various crimes committed by Desmond, Sir John, the White Knight, and other Geraldines. Desmond, then held in Dublin castle, refused the entreaties of first Draycott and Finglas, and then Sir John Plunket, chief justice of the common bench, and James Bathe, chief baron of the exchequer, to cooperate with the commission. The commissioners then tried to get Sir John to present the evidence on behalf of his brother, but Sir John refused as he had been prohibited from doing so by Desmond. The commissioners then proceeded to take the depositions from Ormond’s witnesses and delivered their judgment in October. Desmond was ordered to pay £20,894 12s 8d Irish in compensation to Ormond, this money to be paid at Cashel by the feast of St Michael the Archangel following (29 September 1568).\textsuperscript{154}

Desmond, who earlier in October had thrown himself on the queen’s mercy,\textsuperscript{155} and blamed his troubles on ‘untrue rumors’ propagated by his great enemy Ormond and his allies,\textsuperscript{156} was then ordered over to England,\textsuperscript{157} and on 13 December he

\textsuperscript{152} The queen to Sidney, 11 June 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/21/10).
\textsuperscript{153} Commission to Patrick, bishop of Waterford and Lismore, 30 June 1567 (Ormond deeds, 1547-84, no. 148).
\textsuperscript{154} Order of the commissioners, 31 Oct. 1567 (Ormond deeds, 1547-84, no. 150).
\textsuperscript{155} Desmond to the queen, 6 Oct. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/22/2).
\textsuperscript{156} Desmond to the privy council, 6 Oct. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/21/3).
\textsuperscript{157} The lords justices to Cecil, 23 Nov. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/22/24); The lords justices to the queen, 23 Nov. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/22/25).
embarked for England, arriving at Graycote, near Beaumaris, the following day.\textsuperscript{158}

Sidney, meanwhile, had put Sir John in charge of the earldom following Desmond’s arrest in March in one last attempt to stabilize the situation in Munster. More highly thought of than his older brother, and strongly favoured by Sidney, Sir John was knighted by the deputy and appointed ‘seneschall and captain of all the earles lands and seignories’. He was assisted by Andrew Skiddy and Henry Davells, and also received a commission to execute martial law in Cos Kerry, Cork and Limerick.\textsuperscript{159}

As well as the support of Sidney, Sir John also benefited from the fact that he had not participated in the battle of Affane,\textsuperscript{160} having been at Knockreagh, Co. Limerick, at the time of the conflict.\textsuperscript{161} He thus escaped the initial condemnation from Ormond. However, he was soon implicated in the charges against Desmond which related to the maintenance of the O’Connors. Under examination Lysagh McMorish Moyle O’Connor admitted that he had met with Lysaghe McMorrowhe O’Connor and Cahill McConne O’Connor at Caherconlish, Co. Limerick, in November 1564, and had gone with them to Sir John’s house at Ballybarre. There O’Connor saw Edmund Grace, one of Ormond’s men whom Sir John had captured, in chains. He further stated he had seen Sir John with Art O’Doran, a proclaimed traitor from Laois, and that both Desmond and Sir John had requested Teige and Donough O’Brien’s assistance on the incursion into Decies.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{158} The lords justices to Cecil, 13 Dec. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/22/41); Thomas Scott to Cecil, 14 Dec. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/22/45).
\textsuperscript{159} Order for Desmond’s imprisonment in Dublin castle, 31 Mar. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/20/55); Commission to Sir John of Desmond, 5 Apr. 1567 (\textit{Irish Fiants, Elizabeth}, no. 1007); Sidney to the queen, 20 Apr. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/20/66); Henry Sidney, ‘Memoir or narrative addressed to Sir Francis Walsingham, 1583’ in \textit{U.J.A.}, first ser., 11 (1855), pp 43-4.
\textsuperscript{160} Desmond’s answer to the interrogatories ministered to him at Waterford, 18 Feb. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/12/31).
\textsuperscript{161} Examination of Lysagh McMorish Moyle O’Connor, 1 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/1).
\textsuperscript{162} Examination of Lysagh McMorish Moyle O’Connor, 1 Apr. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/1).
Sir John was not called to London in April 1565, but Ormond did include him in the allegations against Desmond in May, and the following month the privy council ordered that pledges be taken from Sir John for his future behaviour. During this period Sir John was engaged in a sustained series of raids on Cos Tipperary and Kilkenny, which presumably contributed to Elizabeth’s decision in July to call him over to London. Sir John then appeared before Cusack at Cork in September where he, along with other regional lords, agreed to keep the peace. Cusack stressed Sir John’s obedience, but did note there was trouble between Sir John and Piers Butler. This did not satisfy the queen, however, who again called him over in October, and in December Ormond called for him to be arrested. In January 1566 Ormond and Sir Maurice told the queen of further spoils Sir John had committed within Decies. However, he remained in Munster, thanks in part to Cusack lauding his good service in March 1566, although he was in contact with Shane O’Neill in September, while the same month Ormond’s agent detailed more meetings between both Desmond and Sir John and various traitors. His service with Desmond in the Pale was presumably to compensate for these indiscretions.

Sir John’s stewardship of the earldom in 1567 appears to have been quite

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163 Note laid before the queen, [May] 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/52).
164 The privy council to Lord Justice Arnold, 22 June 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/13/69).
166 A particular instruction given by Queen Elizabeth to Sidney, 9 July 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/8); Memorial of matters to be dispatched for Ireland, 25 July 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/30).
167 Sir Thomas Cusack et al. to Arnold and council, 14 Sept. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/67); Sir Thomas Cusack and other commissioners in the west to Arnold, 14 Sept. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/68); Sir Thomas Cusack to Arnold, 15 Sept. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/69).
168 A particular instruction to Sidney, 5 Oct. 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/15/6).
170 The queen to Sidney, 8 Jan. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/16/6).
171 Sir Thomas Cusack to Cecil, 7 Mar. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/16/48).
172 Shane O’Neill to John of Desmond, 9 Sept. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/7).
173 Ormond to [Cecil ?], [Sept.] 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/17).
174 Sidney and council to the queen, 22 Nov. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/55).
successful. One of the tasks Sidney set him was the compensation of those who had been injured by Desmond, Sidney subsequently claiming that within three months Sir John had paid out over £5,000. Sir John also participated in the resolution of disputes as in September when he, along with the other commissioners, Henry Davells, Donough MacCarthy, Dermot McTeige, Edmond Cowell, mayor of Cork, and Andrew Skiddy, directed that David Tirry FitzEdmond, a Cork merchant, have the lands of Ballynesperry free of all exactions of coyne and livery, exactions which James, lord Barry had claimed. In October Fitzwilliam informed Elizabeth that Munster was quiet.

This impressive performance was not sufficient for the queen, however, who in June was annoyed that Sir John had not been arrested as Piers Butler had, and in November the queen ordered both Desmond and Sir John over to England. Afraid they would be unable to apprehend Sir John if Desmond was sent over first, the council delayed Desmond’s dispatch and waited almost three weeks until finally, when they were about to give up and send Desmond over, Sir John visited his brother on 12 December, whereupon he was immediately detained. The following day they embarked for England.

The period 1558-67 was thus an extremely unsettled time in Munster, with very high levels of conflict. The violence was near constant, with at least 150 encounters taking place between 1559 and 1567, with confrontations ranging in size

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176 Decree of her majesty's commissioners, 25 Sept. 1567 (Cal. pat. rolls Ire., Hen. VIII-Eliz., p. 532).
177 Fitzwilliam to the queen, 30 Oct. 1567 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 58, ff 91r-92v).
178 The queen to Sidney, 11 June 1567 (Sidney S.P., no. 41; P.R.O., S.P. 63/21/10).
179 The queen to Lords Justices Weston and Fitzwilliam, 3 Nov. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/22/20).
180 Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 12 Dec. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/22/38); The Lords Justices to the queen, 12 Dec. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/22/40).
181 The Lords Justices to Cecil, 13 Dec. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/22/41); Thomas Scott to Cecil, 14 Dec. 1567 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/22/45).
from small-scale raiding, involving perhaps less than fifty combatants, to a few large-scale battles involving many hundreds or thousands on each side. The conflict was geographically concentrated in eastern Munster, with skirmishes in eastern Limerick, north-eastern Cork, western Tipperary, and north-western Waterford, together with forays into Thomond. The fighting caused many thousands of pounds worth of damage in the province. By 1565 Ormond estimated that Desmond had inflicted over £51,000 worth of damage on Ormond, including 13,500 cattle, 6,000 plough horses, 31,000 sheep, and 10,000 pigs, as well as £8,000 worth of corn, money, and household goods. Ormond also accused Desmond of committing 165 murders.\textsuperscript{182} The following year Desmond claimed to have losses of £10,000.\textsuperscript{183} These extraordinarily high and consistent levels of violence were quite unlike anything else in Ireland at the time.

The period was a disaster for Desmond, typified by approximately two and a half years of detention in London between 1562 and 1566, while as 1567 drew to a close he was entered into a third period of imprisonment. He lost all his legal suits against Ormond, and witnessed the developing relationship between his arch rival and the queen. Sir John also lost out and ended up in prison with his brother, Sidney’s support proving no match for Ormond’s enmity. With both Desmond and his heir in prison a dangerous vacuum threatened to develop, but before that could happen someone emerged who was to have a most profound and explosive impact on the region, James fitz Maurice.

\textsuperscript{182} A brief note of the matters objected by Ormond against Desmond, [July or Aug.] 1565 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/14/37).
\textsuperscript{183} Sidney to Cecil, 20 Nov. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/52).
CHAPTER FIVE

THE EARLDOM UNDER JAMES FITZ MAURICE, 1568-72

The departure of Desmond and Sir John from Ireland in December 1567 left a dangerous political vacuum within the earldom. At a time when vassal lords sought to loosen the bonds of overlordship Desmond needed someone he could trust to protect his interests. The need was particularly acute, as Sir John, his natural deputy and heir, had been incarcerated alongside him in the Tower of London. Ideally Desmond wanted a Geraldine to take charge, but his choice was limited. His half-brother Sir James Sussex of Desmond was too young, aged about ten years old in 1568, while his uncle John Óg, who actually approached the commissioners and offered to rule the earldom, appears to have been too old, for he was described as an old man.  

Desmond could not entrust the earldom to his older half-brother, Sir Thomas Roe, as that would risk a dynastic conflict. The man Desmond chose was his first cousin, James fitz Maurice.

Desmond chose Fitz Maurice to head the earldom and act as captain-general of the Desmond Geraldines in part because he was a kinsman, but also because of his proven military ability which, given the turbulent nature of the period, was vital. Fitz Maurice’s father, Sir Maurice ‘an Tóiteán’, had served Desmond’s father, Earl James, as a military retainer. As his sobriquet ‘of the burnings’ implied, Sir Maurice was a particularly violent man. It had been Sir Maurice who had killed James fitz Maurice, thirteenth de jure earl, in March 1540, which had basically ensured Earl James’s succession to the earldom, and he was still active up until 1564 when he was beheaded.

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1 The commissioners in Munster to the lords justices, 1 Feb. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/32, enclosure vi).

2 He appears to have been knighted between 7 February and 17 April 1562, for he was first referred to as Sir Maurice on the latter date: Lord Justice Fitzwilliam to Lord Lieutenant Sussex, 7 Feb. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/20); Fitzwilliam and council to the queen, 17 Apr. 1562 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/5/85).
by the MacCarthys while on a raid into Muskerry. Fitz Maurice, who fulfilled a similar role for Desmond, came to prominence in 1560 when he, together with his older brother Thomas, invaded Carbery and advanced as far as Bandon before MacCarthy Reagh’s son drove them back. The brothers lost between 200 and 300 hundred men killed or drowned in the subsequent battle at Inishannon, Co. Cork. By the end of the decade Fitz Maurice was an experienced, battle hardened soldier. As his older brother Thomas had died in 1563, Fitz Maurice was thus the most senior Geraldine who was acceptable to Desmond, available, and qualified for the task. Unfortunately for Desmond, his choice of Fitz Maurice was to have far reaching consequences for both Munster and himself.

When he chose Fitz Maurice Desmond wanted someone to ensure the physical integrity of the earldom, defend its borders, and maintain order within his lands. Desmond also asked him to oversee the collection of his rents and services, both for the administration of the earldom, and to pay for his mounting expenses in London. First, however, Fitz Maurice had to establish his authority within Munster, a task which was to occupy much of his first year in charge.

Fitz Maurice’s authority was challenged almost immediately by Thomas Roe, Desmond’s bastardized older half-brother. James, fourteenth earl, had married Joan Roche, his grandniece, with whom he had a son, Thomas Roe, but subsequently divorced or repudiated her on the basis of consanguinity. Thomas Roe was, therefore,
bastardized and consequently removed from the succession to the earldom. Thomas Roe assembled his forces in late January 1568 in order to assume control of the earldom. Fitz Maurice did likewise, but before conflict could occur the countess and Hugh Lacy, the bishop of Limerick, managed to defuse the situation and apprehended the two antagonists. However, instead of handing them over to the two commissioners for Munster, Sir John Plunket and Edward Fitz Symonds, they set Fitz Maurice free by mid-March so that he could rule ‘accordinge the seid erles appoyntment’, while Thomas Roe was released by early-April. Although Lord Justice Weston refused to confirm Fitz Maurice’s appointment without the queen’s approval, the commissioners merely persuaded lord Power, Thomas Roe’s brother-in-law, to advise Thomas Roe to keep the peace, and to seek redress from the council for any outrages committed against him. Fitz Maurice had seen off Thomas Roe, but the latter was to prove a constant and active adversary of Fitz Maurice for years to come.

Shortly after his release, Fitz Maurice took possession of four of Desmond’s

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7 G.E.C., Peerage, iv, p. 252.
8 The commissioners in Munster to the lords justices, 1 Feb. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/32, enclosure vi); The lords justices to the commissioners in Munster, 3 Feb. 1568 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 58, ff 248r-248v); The lords justices to the countess of Desmond, 6 Feb. 1568 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 58, ff 252r-252v); The lord justice to the queen, 8 Feb. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/32).
9 Four commissioners had been appointed in late 1567, but the two other commissioners, the bishop of Meath and Henry Draycot, had already returned to Dublin by then: Lords justices and council to the queen?, 20 Dec. 1567 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 58, ff 129r-132v); Eleanor, countess of Desmond, and Hugh Lacy, bishop of Limerick, to the lords justices, 19 Mar. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/24/9, enclosure i); The lords justices to the queen, 23 Mar. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/74); The countess of Desmond to the commissioners, 4 Apr. 1568 (Calendar of the manuscripts of the Most Hon. the marquis of Salisbury, KG, &c, preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, i, p. 355); Lord Justice Weston to the queen, 18 Apr. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/24/9); The lords justices to the queen, 23 May 1568 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 58, ff 334r-337v).
10 Weston to the queen, 18 Apr. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/24/9; Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 58, ff 70r-72v).
11 The commissioners in Munster to the lords justices, 7 Apr. 1568 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 58, f. 395v).
castles, before he turned his attention to that dissident Geraldine, the baron of Lixnaw. Fitz Maurice launched a raid on Clanmaurice in early July, took away a large prey of cattle, and returned two days later to lay siege to Lixnaw. In response Lixnaw attacked Fitz Maurice’s two camps around Lixnaw on 20 July, killed as many as 300 men, including O’Connor Kerry and Edmund Óg McSheehy, Desmond’s chief captain of galloglass, and captured numerous others, including Rory McSheehy. Although he subsequently claimed it had never been his intention to spoil Clanmaurice, and instead insisted he had merely taken 200 cattle for rents the baron owed Desmond, this was a serious setback for Fitz Maurice. It did not deter him for long, however, as his forces were back in Clanmaurice by September.

Then in January 1569 Fitz Maurice seized possession of Kilmanahan, Co. Waterford, expelled Sir John’s ward and replaced it with his own. Sir John asked the privy council to direct deputy Sidney to restore Kilmanahan to his man, Philip McGrath. Sir John appears to have been aware of Fitz Maurice’s designs on Kilmanahan, as the previous month he had sought licence for Philip McGrath, then in attendance upon him in the Tower, who he claimed was ill, to return to Ireland. Fitz Maurice’s actions in this instance were part of a power struggle with Sir John for the position of deputy to Desmond within the earldom. Sir John at that stage was still Desmond’s heir as Desmond’s son was not born until c.1570. With his capture of Kilmanahan Fitz Maurice let Sir John know that he had, at least temporarily, moved

12 Weston to Fitzwilliam, 4 July 1568 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 58, f. 620v); Fitzwilliam to Cecil, 5 July 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/22); Weston and Fitzwilliam to the queen, 16 July 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/45).
13 Thomas, lord Fitzmaurice of Kerry, to the lords justices and council, 6 July 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/45, enclosure ix); Thomas, lord Fitzmaurice of Kerry, 6 July 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/45, enclosure x); James fitz Maurice of Desmond to the lords justices, 27 July 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/70, enclosure ii); Thomas, lord Fitzmaurice of Kerry, to the lords justices, 1 Aug. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/70, enclosure iv); Sir Maurice Fitzgerald to the lords justices, 5 Aug. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/70, enclosure vi); Piers Walshe to the lords justices, 11 Sept. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/86, enclosure iii).
above Sir John in the Desmond hierarchy.

By the start of 1569, therefore, Fitz Maurice had consolidated his position within the earldom and Desmond’s interests seemed secure. Then, however, Fitz Maurice exceeded his brief and proceeded to do something extraordinary which was to radicalize the already disturbed political situation in Munster. In January-February 1569 he appears to have convened an unprecedented assembly of the lords and prelates of Munster, the function of which was not to call for Desmond’s return, but rather to offer the kingdom of Ireland to a Habsburg. This assembly, to judge from its scarce extant material, claimed to speak on behalf of the nobility and the entire people of Ireland who had remained constant to the Roman Catholic church since the time of St Patrick. In the previous decades they had suffered from the heretical and schismatic behaviour of Henry VIII and Edward VI, and had seen the monasteries dissolved, Catholic clergy arrested, and the population thrown into confusion. Elizabeth had renewed this challenge and sent Protestant preachers into Ireland. The assembly, therefore, called upon Philip, as a Catholic king, to protect them from this heresy. They offered to put themselves under Philip, and to accept any Spanish or Burgundian blood relation of his, who would reside in Ireland, as their new king, subject to the agreement of the Pope. In this way they would remain in union with the Holy Roman Catholic church, and in alliance with the royal house of Spain.15

Before the assembly sent their two emissaries, Maurice FitzGibbon, O. Cist., archbishop of Cashel, and Thomas O’Herlihy, bishop of Ross, with a memorial of their offer to Philip, they first dispatched letters of introduction to cardinal de Espinosa, Philip’s private secretary, on 20 January, which de Espinosa appears to have received by 3 February. FitzGibbon arrived at Madrid in February and

15 Exposicion del estado de los negocios de Irlanda que se ha de hacer a su Santidad y a la Magd. Catolica de la parte de los obispos y nobles de Aquella Isla, 1569 in P.F. Moran (ed.), Spicilegium Ossoriense, i (Dublin, 1874), pp 59-62; ibid., (B.L., Add. MSS 26,056 B, ff 196f-197f).
thereafter endeavoured to extract a favourable response from the king. Frustrated by a lack of progress the assembly wrote to FitzGibbon in May 1570 with instructions to offer Ireland to Don Juan of Austria, subject to his brother Philip’s agreement.16

In its documentation the assembly claimed to be a national body, a claim which appears to have been at once exaggerated and even disingenuous. The memorial sent to Philip was purportedly signed by the four archbishops of Ireland, along with eight other bishops, six earls, and nineteen lords from all over Ireland, and was meant to represent the Catholic spiritual and temporal power of Ireland. This was not the case, however, as Cormac MacTeige MacCarthy, noted loyalist and future lord of Muskerry, described the assembly as a meeting of Fitz Maurice, MacCarthy Mór, McDonough MacCarthy, and the rest of the Irishry of the south west, and significantly did not mention lords from other parts of Ireland.17 Furthermore, both Ormond and Desmond, who allegedly signed the memorial, were in England at the time. In any case, Ormond would never have agreed with the memorial let alone sign such a document. The list of signatories is thus misleading.

Those who can be identified as having attended the assembly are the archbishop of Cashel, FitzGibbon, the bishop of Ross, O’Herlihy, and MacCarthy Mór. Hugh Lacy, bishop of Limerick, was almost definitely present, while the MacCarthy lords of Muskerry, Duhallow, and Carbery were probably there too. O’Sullivan Mór, O’Sullivan Beare, Nicholas Landes, bishop of Cork and Cloyne, and Patrick Walsh, bishop of Waterford and Lismore, all listed, might also have been there. As such the assembly represented the Catholic lords and prelates of Munster.

That the Catholics of Munster should have joined together in such a body was

17 Sir Warham St Leger to Sidney, 14 Feb. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/27/23).
due to a combination of factors. That the assembly was Catholic in outlook was influenced both by the presence of the bishops, and by Fitz Maurice’s religious beliefs which surviving evidence suggests were personal and sincere.18

Fitz Maurice’s faith may well have been influenced by a hard core of committed Catholics who were connected with Limerick. One of the Catholic prelates who signed the memorial to Philip was Hugh Lacy, bishop of Limerick, who was removed from his see in 1571. This was the same man who, together with the countess, had detained Fitz Maurice in 1568. It may be that bishop Lacy discussed the possibility of such an assembly with Fitz Maurice during the latter’s brief detention, and that his release was influenced by their agreement on their future plans. Fitz Maurice may also have known David Woulfe, S.J., who was greeted by Desmond on his return to Cork in January 1561 and who was in Limerick from then until late 1565.19

Others whom Fitz Maurice may have had contact with included Richard Creagh, a native of Limerick and subsequently Catholic archbishop of Armagh. He ran a grammar school at the former St Saviour’s Dominican priory in Limerick from c.1557 to 1562, the purpose of which was to educate the pupils and instill in them a strong Catholic faith. Given that the priory buildings had been granted to Earl James in 1543 it is likely that Creagh operated the school with Earl James’s approval. Creagh was assisted for a time in the school by Thomas Leverous, the former Catholic bishop of Kildare, who had previously run a similar school at Adare under the

18 Fitz Maurice had apparently once considered entering religious life, while O’Daly stated he was ‘fired with zeal’ for the Catholic faith. While O’Daly might be expected to highlight and even exaggerate Fitz Maurice’s religious convictions, the fact remains that the assembly and the appeal to Philip occurred almost a year prior to Pope Pius V’s excommunication of Elizabeth by the bull Regnans in excelsis: John Begley, The diocese of Limerick in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Dublin, 1927), p. 21; Dominic O’Daly, Initium, incrementa, et exitus familiae Geraldinorum ... ac persecutionis haereticorum descriptio (Lisbon, 1655), translated by C.P. Meehan as The rise, increase, and exit of the Geraldines, earls of Desmond, and persecution after their fall (3rd ed., Dublin, 1878), p. 69.

patronage of the Desmonds.20 Within three years of Creagh’s departure from Limerick the city had another Catholic school, this time run by two Jesuits, William Good and Edmund Daniel. Their school functioned in Limerick between February and October 1565, at which time it was closed by the authorities. Good and Daniel then moved their school first to Kilmallock, then to Clonmel and finally to Youghal. Interestingly, Daniel had a definite connection with Fitz Maurice subsequently for he was arrested in Limerick in 1572 with apostolic letters addressed to Fitz Maurice. He was also believed to have brought a copy of Pope Pius V’s bull of excommunication of Elizabeth for Fitz Maurice. Daniel was executed at Cork in October 1572.21

That the assembly offered the kingdom of Ireland to Philip was founded on the belief that the sovereignty of Ireland resided in the gift of the Papacy, a position doubtless derived from the papal bull Laudabiliter under which Pope Adrian IV had granted Ireland to Henry II ‘for the purpose of enlarging the boundaries of the church’,22 while their belief that Ireland was a kingdom was presumably based on Pope Paul IV’s erection of Ireland as a kingdom in June 1555. By her support for the reformation Elizabeth was deemed to have broken the underlying condition of Laudabiliter, and so the grant was void. The assembly thus felt entitled to offer the kingdom of Ireland subject to the Pope’s approval.

In this Fitz Maurice and the assembly may have been influenced by events in France during the 1560s. Upon the death of Henry II in 1559 the Guise faction had come to dominate the fifteen year old Francis II. When Francis died in December 1560 the queen mother, Catherine de Medici, moved quickly to reassert her control over the new king, her son Charles IX, and had herself proclaimed regent. In an

20 Colm Lennon, An Irish prisoner of conscience of the Tudor era: Archbishop Richard Creagh of Armagh, 1523-1586 (Dublin, 2000), pp 29, 41-8; Grant to James, earl of Desmond, 7 June 1543 (Irish Fiants, Henry VIII, no. 362).
attempt to further diminish the influence of the Catholic Guise, she sought the support of the French Protestants with the edict of toleration of January 1561. This allowed for limited toleration of the Huguenots, and was followed by similar edicts in January 1562 (Saint-Germain), March 1563 (Amboise), and March 1568 (Longjumeau). These measures, however, drew severe criticism and open hostility from the Catholic majority as the king of France, *Rex christianissimus*, was obliged by his oaths of coronation and consecration to defend the Catholic faith and to expel all heretics from his dominions. As a result the *Parlement* of Paris, one of the highest courts in France, initially refused to register the edict of Saint-Germain as it contravened the royal oath Charles IX was due to take. Even more dangerously, the Sorbonne, the theological faculty at the university of Paris, declared after the edict of 1561 that if the king of France changed his religion the people of France would be absolved of their oath of fealty and would not be bound to obey him.23

The assembly would appear to have mirrored these developments. Their decision to deny Elizabeth their loyalty was analogous to the threat issued by the Sorbonne, while their plea for assistance from Philip was comparable to the plea for aid made to the Spanish king by the triumvirate, the duke de Guise, Anne de Montmorency, and the sieur de St-André, in May and August 1562.24 Furthermore, the fact that the assembly represented Munster not only reflected the diocesan structure of the Church, where the archbishop of Cashel had responsibility for Munster plus small portions of Leinster, but it also had resonances with the local Catholic leagues and confraternities, based in particular towns or regions, which had formed in France in the 1560s.25

24 J.W Thompson, *The wars of religion in France 1559-1576: the Huguenots, Catherine de Medici, Philip II*, pp 143, 211.
More than that, however, it marked an attempt to redefine Munster as a place. The Desmond Geraldines held lands spread throughout Munster, but had not been traditionally interested in Munster as a corporate entity in itself. That had changed with earl James in the 1550s when he advocated the establishment of a presidency, with a president and council, for the province, both to protect his lands and to extend his influence over his enemies in Munster. The composition of Fitz Maurice’s assembly was presumably similar to that which James had envisaged. Indeed, the assembly is comparable to that proposed by Sussex in 1562, which was to include bishops, earls, lords, and town mayors.26 Ironically, therefore, the assembly was a Catholic version of what St Leger’s presidential council might have looked like.

Ultimately nothing came of FitzGibbon’s mission due to the prevailing circumstances in Spain’s international relations. At the time Philip stated that he would have liked to have supported the effort on religious grounds, but refrained from doing so as he feared it would prevent the successful conclusion of negotiations with England and push Elizabeth into alliance with France. Until Elizabeth’s attitude was known he decided to entertain FitzGibbon with fair words,27 and it was this concern with England and France, together with cool Spanish-papal relations and internal problems such as the Morisco rebellion in Granada, that consigned FitzGibbon’s mission to failure.

Undeterred by his failure to secure Spanish assistance or Papal backing, Fitz Maurice launched the next phase of the conflict on 16 June 1569 when he, together with MacCarthy Mór, attacked the cantred of Kerrycurrihy, which had been mortgaged by Desmond to Sir Warham St Leger, with a force estimated variously between 2,000 and 4,000, and besieged Tracton abbey. The following day Tracton fell, and on 18 June Carrigaline was captured. The attacks forced Lady Ursula St

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27 Philip II to the duke of Alba, 18 Nov. 1569 (Cal. Spanish SP, ii, p. 210).
Leger, Fulke Greville, and other Englishmen in the area to seek refuge in Cork city, whereupon Fitz Maurice came to the city and demanded they be handed over to him. Fitz Maurice also called for the release of prisoners held there, such as Barry Óg, and took a prey of cattle estimated at 10,000.28

Fitz Maurice then declared he would destroy all towns and cities which were loyal to the queen, and the corporation of Kilmallock, in spite of the fact that they traditionally paid tribute to the earls of Desmond, sent a deputation to Fitz Maurice to dissuade him from attacking their town. Significantly their deputation was accompanied by the bishop of Limerick, perhaps a recognition that the corporation was aware of Fitz Maurice’s alliance with the bishop. In any case their attempt to mollify him failed, and Fitz Maurice took the town’s cattle, burned the crops in the fields, and threatened to attack the town itself. The corporation offered to buy him off to avoid further damage, whereupon Fitz Maurice asked for £160 Irish. He also demanded a bond of £1,000 to ensure they performed a set of articles he imposed on them. The town was to use the Roman Catholic rite in their services each day, something which the majority of the town’s inhabitants may well have done anyway, and they were to sell victuals to his men as often as they came to the town. They were also to allow Fitz Maurice and his men pass through the town unmolested, and to give him the rents and customs they owed to the earl of Desmond. Faced with little option the townsmen agreed.29

The rebels then forced Kinsale to pay, and captured the Cistercian monastery at Abington, Co. Limerick,30 and on 2 July Castletown in Kenry, Co. Limerick,

28 Andrew Skiddy to [the lord deputy], 17 June 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/28/35); Mayor and officers of Cork to [the lord deputy], 17 June 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/28/36); Lady Ursula St Leger to [the lord deputy], 18 June 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/28/37); Jaspar Horsey to [the lord deputy], 18 June 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/28/38); Andrew Skiddy to Sir William Cecil, 20 June 1569 (Calendar of the manuscripts of the Most Hon. the marquis of Salisbury, KG, &c, preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, i, p. 413); The queen to Sidney, 2 July 1569 (Sidney S.P., no. 68, pp 114-5).

29 The sovereign and his brethren of Kilmallock, 3 July 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/2).

30 The mayor and corporation of Waterford, 8 July 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/5).
yielded to the rebels. Fitz Maurice had a conference with the earl of Thomond and John, son of the earl of Clanrickard, at ‘Blacke stones’ to the west of Limerick city on 8 July. When Fitz Maurice sent his demands to the city the corporation offered to hold talks with him but he declined.31 Fitz Maurice then wrote to the corporation of Cork to order them to expunge ‘that old heresy newly raised & invented’ from the city, to expel all ‘that be Huginettes bothe men & women’, including Greville’s family, and to restore the Roman Catholic service.32

Fitz Maurice was clearly motivated by religion, and very possibly by the influence of events in France, when he initiated the conflict. The militancy of the assembly and their readiness to take up arms against the heretics was resonant of the French Catholic leagues, while Fitz Maurice’s call for the towns of Munster to expel the protestants was similar to the king of Navarre’s proclamation of 26 May 1562 which expelled the Huguenots from Paris.33 The French influence was such that Fitz Maurice even referred to the protestants in Munster as Huguenots, a term which specifically denoted French Calvinists. This may also indicate that he wanted his actions to be readily comprehensible to potential European allies. The Huguenots, according to the Confession de foi (1559), one of the basic texts of French Calvinism, gave obedience to the temporal power only as long as it was not heretical, that is, as long as it was Protestant and not Roman Catholic. Similarly, the Protestants in the province gave their allegiance to Elizabeth whom Fitz Maurice believed to be a heretic and, as a woman, unfit to be head of the church. Fitz Maurice may, therefore, have described his opponents as subversive elements in a manner which would be intelligible in a wider European context. It is likely that Fitz Maurice had contact with

31 The mayor and corporation of Limerick, 10 July 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/6).
32 James fitz Maurice of Desmond to the mayor and corporation of Cork, 12 July 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/8).
Frenchmen, engaged on business in Munster ports such as Cork or Kinsale which were close to Kerrycurrihy, who would have informed him of developments in the French wars of religion. It certainly seems he had some contact as the term ‘Huguenot’ was apparently first used in France in the 1560s. Fitz Maurice’s critique of the situation in Munster and his response were thus heavily influenced by the beginnings of the French wars of religion in the 1560s.

But Fitz Maurice’s analysis of the situation was also influenced by more immediate and local circumstances. In particular, he tapped into the general sense of grievance and dislocation which prevailed in Munster during the late 1560s. Part of this was due to Sir Peter Carew who in 1568 presented claims for renewal of fourteenth century titles to land in Munster, including Imokilly and Coshbride, and Leinster. This was a serious threat to the Desmond earldom, particularly as Carew had successfully claimed title to the barony of Idrone in Co. Carlow, despite the fact that Ormond’s brother, Sir Edmund, and the Kavanaghs held those lands. If Carew could be successful against the brother of the favoured Ormond then he could do the same to others in Munster.

At the same time plans were being put forward for the colonization of the islands off the south-west coast of Ireland in order to exploit the fishing in the area. This scheme, subsequently expanded to include lands forfeited to the crown by attainder, was backed by a group including St Leger and Hiram (Jerome) Brett. This plan was never implemented, but Desmond had been informed of it in February 1569 and he may well have informed Fitz Maurice. The fact that Desmond had already mortgaged the barony of Kerrycurrihy to St Leger may have worried Fitz Maurice that St Leger and others were about to establish colonies throughout Munster at the

35 The parcels of lands within the province of Munster which Sir Peter Carew claims, [Aug.] 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/33/53).
36 Desmond to the privy council, 12 Feb. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/27/21).
expense of locals such as himself. Indeed, Kerrycurrihy had been held by Fitz Maurice's father before Desmond mortgaged it to St Leger, which may explain why St Leger's holdings were among the first to be targeted by the rebels. Fears over land ownership and colonization may, therefore, have contributed to the outbreak of the rebellion.

As part of his attempts to crystallize this unease into support for his actions Fitz Maurice employed the services of Domhnall Mac Daire MacBruaideadha who c. 1570 composed the poem *Cia as sine cairt ar chrich neill* in his support. MacBruaideadha, as was the practice of the genre, lavished praise upon the Geraldines. He claimed they were descended from the royal house of Greece and that there was no finer bloodline in Ireland. He praised Fitz Maurice in particular and linked him to Seadhna's prophecies of deliverance. In this MacBruaideadha not only strove to override and circumvent the animosity which had developed between the Desmond Geraldines and the native Irish since the twelfth century, but also to translate and transform the specific challenge faced by the house of Desmond into the traditional fear of invasion by the *gaill* which was so central to the Gaelic-Irish tradition of cultural resistance. MacBruaideadha thus stressed how Fitz Maurice was essentially more Irish than the Irish themselves and predicted a great victory for him, urging those who heard the poem to join with him.

Fitz Maurice also exploited the dramatic deterioration in the relationship between the Butlers and Dublin which occurred in the late 1560s. Lord Deputy Sidney supported Sir Peter Carew's claims to Butler lands in the barony of Idrone, Co. Carlow, and in December 1568 Sidney and the council ruled that the lands were to

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37 For an introduction to St Leger and Brett's proposals see P.J. Piveronus, 'Sir Warham St Leger and the first Munster plantation' in *Éire/Ireland*, xiv, no. 2 (Summer, 1979), pp 15-36.
38 I am grateful to Dr Katharine Simms, of Trinity College, Dublin, for this reference.
39 *Cia as sine cairt ar chrich neill* (N.L.I., G 992, ff 40f-41r). A slightly different version of this poem, with two verses omitted and one additional verse, can be found in (R.I.A., MS 23.B.35, pp 1-4).
be given to Carew. In retaliation Sir Edmund Butler opposed several bills in parliament in January 1569. When, in February, Carew’s title was confirmed Sir Edmund withdrew from Dublin and refused to surrender his lands in Idrone. Finally, unable to brook their disobedience any longer, Sidney proclaimed Sir Edmund, and his brothers Edward and Piers, traitors on 16 June 1569. Whether Fitz Maurice was aware of their proclamation when he attacked Kerrycurrihy is uncertain, but he launched his campaign at a time when Dublin was preoccupied with the Butlers.

Fitz Maurice thus fused a considerable number of factors - tradition, religion, major developments elsewhere, and direct experience of recent occurrences - to provide an ideological justification for his actions. He combined his own religious beliefs and the concerns of Lacy, FitzGibbon, and the other clerics, mediated through recent French experience, with the disquiet within the province caused by the arrest of Desmond and Sir John, Ormond’s pervasive influence with Elizabeth, and the behaviour of the English, typified by Carew, St Leger, and Greville, who threatened the existing land-ownership in the region. Elizabeth’s abrogation of the terms of Laudabilitier threatened the legality of the existing land-ownership in Ireland as the Hiberno-Norman and Gaelic-Irish lords held their lands of the crown. If the crown no longer had sovereignty over Ireland then the crown no longer had the authority to validate land titles in Ireland, and, therefore, the land titles of the Hiberno-Normans and Gaelic-Irish would be technically null and void. On a more practical level, if the crown was prepared to unilaterally terminate an international agreement which had stood for over four centuries then the crown would not hesitate to negate their land titles and grant their lands to someone else. Support for the assembly and the rebellion was thus a way to assert their land rights for the Hiberno-Normans and Gaelic-Irish in Munster. By 1569, therefore, Fitz Maurice had identified the plight of

the Desmond lordship with the condition of international Catholicism in the age of religious wars. He had unleashed a powerful and radical force in Munster.

Upon the outbreak of the initial unrest in 1568 the commissioners for Munster had wanted Fitz Maurice and Thomas Roe handed over to their custody, but when the countess and bishop Lacy released Fitz Maurice by mid-March the commissioners were effectively sidelined and had so little impact thereafter that Plunket and Symonds returned to Dublin by early May 1568.\textsuperscript{41} Lord Justice Weston tried to retain some authority when he refused to confirm Fitz Maurice’s rule in Desmond’s lands, but that had no practical effect.\textsuperscript{42} For his part Sidney, who had returned as lord deputy in October 1568, was preoccupied with the preparations for the parliament which would open in the New Year and so Fitz Maurice’s activities went unchecked. However, the revolt of the Butlers, motivated in large part by anti-Sidney sentiment, and Fitz Maurice’s decision to find common cause with them, altered Sidney’s attitude toward Fitz Maurice’s activities. Sidney now felt that Fitz Maurice was, like the Butlers, out to destroy him and his government. Consequently, when Fitz Maurice attacked St Leger’s lands in Kerrycurrihy, which he had in mortgage from Fitz Maurice’s master Desmond, Sidney led a force of 600 men westwards and relieved Kilkenny town. He then marched through Cos Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford, Cork, and Limerick, and captured a number of castles along the way, including the White Knight’s ‘Old Castle’, where Sidney had the corpses of the defenders thrown from the top of the castle, and the

\textsuperscript{41} Lords Justices Weston and Fitzwilliam to the queen, 16 July 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/45).
\textsuperscript{42} Weston to the queen, 18 Apr. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/24/9).
With the situation stabilized, Sidney appointed Humphrey Gilbert colonel and governor of Munster on 13 September 1569 and left him in command of a force of 700 men. Gilbert’s command was to last less than four months, but he was to have a profound effect on the rebellion as he set out to destroy the rebels’ will to fight with a campaign of unrestrained terror. Gilbert set out from Limerick on 23 September to clear Co. Limerick of rebels. Among his first acts was to successfully defend Kilmallock against a rebel force estimated at between 1,500 and 2,000 men, during which Gilbert displayed great personal bravery. He then captured the rebel-held castle at Garrystown, and by the end of October at least thirty castles in Co. Limerick had surrendered to him. He had intended to sail to Kerry in November, but tempestuous weather had driven him back to Limerick, whereupon he sent Captain Apsley with twenty horsemen into Kerry. Thereafter Gilbert appears to have concentrated his efforts on the eastern part of the province, particularly east Limerick, Cork, and Tipperary.

By means of this vigorous campaigning Gilbert successfully deprived Fitz Maurice of most of his allies. The White Knight came in in October, as did O’Sullivan

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44 A further 700 troops were ordered to be ready at Chester should they be required: Reckoning of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, 31 Mar. 1570 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/30/36); Accounts of William Fitzwilliam, 23 June 1569-31 Mar. 1573 (S.P. 65/7, f. 177v); Henry Sidney, ‘Memoir or narrative addressed to Sir Francis Walsingham, 1583’ in *U.J.A.*, 1st ser., iii (1855), p. 99; The queen to Sidney, 27 July 1569 (*Sidney S.P.*, no. 70, pp 117-8).

45 The participation of Donal, MacCarthy Mór, in this action alongside Fitz Maurice would appear to have been due to MacCarthy’s desire to defend the interests of his brother-in-law Desmond, who had married his sister Honora.

46 Capt. John Warde to Cecil, 26 Sept. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/64); Capt. John Warde to Cecil, 18 Oct. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/68).

47 Gilbert to Sidney, 1 Dec. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/82).

48 Gilbert to Sidney, 13 Nov. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/82#1). Note that this document is described in Cal. S.P. Ire, 1509-73, p. 423, immediately following item S.P. 63/29/78. However, in the manuscript the document is located between items S.P. 63/29/82 and S.P. 63/29/83. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, I have numbered this document S.P. 63/29/82#1.
Bear the following month.49 while the baron of Lixnaw, Sir Thomas of Desmond, and Rory McSheehy did likewise when Captain Apsley entered Kerry. Indeed, by the end of November Gilbert felt confident enough to declare that Kerry and Connello were more obedient to the crown than they had been at any time in the previous 300 years.50 Then in December MacCarthy Mór and McDonough, who had sought the queen’s pardon the previous month, went to Gilbert at Limerick, fell to their knees and desired the queen’s mercy. MacCarthy Mór offered his eldest son and the sons of two of his principal freeholders as pledges.51 By January 1570 the list of those who had delivered pledges included MacCarthy Mór, the knight of Kerry, Rory McSheehy, who was pardoned on 6 January,52 the White Knight and his son, John Óg, and many other lords and leading men of Munster.53 Without these powerful men, Fitz Maurice’s ultimate chances of success were limited. For his impressive achievement in the separation of Fitz Maurice from his allies Gilbert was knighted by Sidney,54 and he and his officers were also pardoned, which indemnified them for the killings they had been responsible for.55

In pursuit of this strategy, however, Gilbert had employed systematic brutality. Gilbert deemed it his task to extirpate the rebels. He declared himself to be ‘constantlie of this opinion that no conquered nation will ever yeld willenglie ther obedience for love but rathr for feare’. He offered defenders of castles only one opportunity to surrender, after which, if spurned, he would ‘not afterwarde harken to no parle but wynne yt p[er]force who manney of his soldiers lyves soever yt cost him and put man woman and childe to the sword’. Thus, after the capture of

49 Gilbert to Sidney, 13 Nov. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/82#1).
50 Gilbert to Sidney, 1 Dec. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/82).
51 Gilbert to Sidney, 13 Nov. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/82#1); Gilbert to Sidney, 6 Dec. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/83).
52 Pardon to Rory McSheehy, 6 Jan. 1570 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 1463).
53 Names of such in Munster as have given pledges to the lord deputy of Ireland, Jan. 1570 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/30/9).
54 Sidney to Cecil, 4 Jan. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/30/2).
Garrystown castle Gilbert ordered Captain Warde to kill all the prisoners on pain of
death himself,\textsuperscript{56} while he burned a castle in Aherlow with all its occupants inside.\textsuperscript{57}
Similarly, he did not spare the lives of malefactors who came into his hands. Thus he
had brothers Connor and William McSheehy, both captains of galloglass, hung, drawn,
and quartered at Limerick,\textsuperscript{58} while Owen Owre first had his right arm cut off, was
then half hanged, before he was quartered.\textsuperscript{59} With this philosophy of viciousness he
was soon considered more ‘a devell than a man’, a reputation he employed to strike
fear into the hearts of his enemies, as witnessed by the rebel submissions.\textsuperscript{60}

While this sort of brutality convinced the majority in Munster to side with the
Crown, Gilbert’s actions may have confirmed Fitz Maurice and his fellow
conspirators in their fears that the English were about to engage in a programme of
wholesale colonization. Gilbert did not know or understand the local personalities and
factional alliances in the region. He gave people one chance to express their loyalty
and if they failed to take it he treated them as rebels thereafter. This simplistic
attitude effectively classed everyone as a rebel until and unless they proved otherwise.
This threatened their lives, their children, and their lands, which would be forfeit if
they were attainted for treason. Gilbert thus ensured that by the start of 1570 the
majority of the population in Munster would not support the rebellion.
Paradoxically, his severe actions may have served to convince Fitz Maurice and his
remaining supporters that their opinion of the English was correct and that the English
had been intent on their destruction.

In March 1570 Gilbert, who had left Munster at the beginning of the year, was

\textsuperscript{56} Capt. John Warde to Cecil, 18 Oct. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/68).
\textsuperscript{57} Gilbert to Sidney, 1 Dec. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/82).
\textsuperscript{58} Capt. John Warde to Cecil, 18 Oct. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/68).
\textsuperscript{59} Gilbert to Sidney, 1 Dec. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/82).
\textsuperscript{60} Capt. John Warde to Cecil, 18 Oct. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/68); Gilbert to Sidney, 6
replaced as commander of English forces in Munster by Ormond. Ormond’s term as commander, which lasted until February 1571, brought a significant change to the prosecution of the conflict by the English forces, in that while Ormond continued to engage the rebels in battle, his conduct of the conflict was compromised by his need to effect the reconciliation of his brothers to the crown, and to ensure the safety and integrity of his lordship. His brothers, who had besieged Kilkenny in concert with Fitz Maurice and MacCarthy Mór, not only defied the queen, but also threatened Ormond himself. In recognition of the danger, Ormond returned to Ireland to deal with his brothers in August 1569, and soon after his brothers submitted to him near Kilkenny. When, at the end of February 1570, Sir Edmund and Piers submitted, it appeared Ormond had rescued his family from disaster, and the following day Ormond was appointed commander in Munster, apparently free to concentrate on Fitz Maurice.

However, Edward Butler had rejoined the rebellion, and it was not until July 1571 that he offered to come in, when he asked for a grant of protection and a guarantee of his life in return for service against Fitz Maurice. Lord Justice Fitzwilliam and Chancellor Weston recommended acceptance of Butler’s offer, even though his crimes were ‘woorthy of x deathes and odios to any lawes’, as they believed it would help shorten the rebellion and would also help keep the queen’s costs down. The offer was eventually accepted and in January 1572 Ormond agreed

61 Commission and instructions by the lord deputy and council to the earl of Ormond, 1 Mar. 1570 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/30/23).
63 Ormond to Cecil, 28 Aug. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/47); Richard Walshe to the lord chancellor, 17 Aug. [1569] (Calendar of the manuscripts of the Most Hon. the marquis of Salisbury, KG, &c, preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, i, p. 417).
64 Nicholas White to Cecil, 3 Sept. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/57); Ormond to Cecil, 7 Sept. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/60).
65 Submission of Sir Edmund Butler and Piers Butler, 28 Feb. 1570 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/30/19).
66 Fitzwilliam and chancellor Weston to the queen, 31 July 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/33/15).
to pay for 400 of his troops to serve against the rebels under the command of Edward Butler who had protection for four months until the end of April.67 Butler was particularly active in western Tipperary,68 and with this resolute action he was able to gradually rehabilitate himself, much to Ormond’s relief.

Ormond also had to protect his lordship, a task he accomplished by the concentration of much of his effort on those rebels along the borders of his lands. One such rebel was McBrien Ogonagh, whose lands were located in the cantred of Onaght. In March 1570 Ormond captured McBrien Ogonagh’s castle at Cloghdalton, Co. Limerick, then held by some of Fitz Maurice’s men. Ormond then captured and executed Conor Ecoyne, McBrien Ogonagh’s son.69 In this way Ormond removed a dangerous enemy from the western borders of his Tipperary lands. Ormond also reconciled his ally the earl of Thomond to the president of Connacht, Edward Fitton.70

Despite his preoccupation with his own immediate concerns, Ormond also confronted rebels beyond his own borders, such as in late 1570 when, upon word that Frenchmen had landed west of Dingle, Ormond set out with his force of approximately 1,100, and on the way captured and warded Port castle, took O’Sullivan Mór’s castle at Dunloe, where he killed twenty seven of the ward, and forced traditional opponents such as the Knight of Kerry and O’Connor Kerry to submit.71 However, such activity against rebels who did not directly threaten his lordship appears to have been less frequent, and so, while Ormond successfully reduced his brothers and those rebels along his borders, he did not have a great impact on those rebels who held out.

67 Fitzwilliam and council to the queen, 4 Jan. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/35/3).
68 Ormond to Fitzwilliam, Jan./Feb. ? 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/35/23, enclosure i); Edward Butler to Ormond, Jan./Feb. ? 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/35/23, enclosure ii).
69 Ormond to Cecil, 3 July 1570 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/30/67); Note of Ormond’s service in Ireland, [Mar.] 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/62).
70 Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 183-4.
71 Note of Ormond’s service in Ireland, [Mar.] 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/62).
Sir John Perrot replaced Ormond as commander in Munster in December 1570 when he was appointed lord president of Munster, although it was late February 1571 before he arrived in Ireland. His appointment brought a renewed intensity in the prosecution of the conflict following the lull during Ormond’s period. Over the following two years Perrot pursued the rebels relentlessly throughout the province. He appears to have carried out more operations in the east of the province than in the west, with a number of actions around the Glen of Aherlow, a favoured rebel retreat. That said, he did launch a series of attacks in Kerry, including an unsuccessful siege on Castlemaine castle in June-July 1571, and a successful siege at the same location between June and August the following year. Perrot also launched an attack on the McSweeney galloglass, Fitz Maurice’s main source of support, but was forced to abort the action as the ship which carried the victuals was forced back to Cork due to adverse weather conditions. Soon after, though, Edmund and Turlough McSweeny, the leaders of the galloglass, submitted to Perrot, which further isolated Fitz Maurice.

In spite of his constant harrying, however, Perrot found it extremely difficult to engage the rebels in combat. Although the rebel numbers had been reduced by Sidney, Gilbert, and Ormond to the point where only Fitz Maurice and his most ardent supporters were still in rebellion, those who remained were the most committed to their cause. Certainly, Fitz Maurice was bolstered by his own religious convictions, and perhaps some of his supporters were too. Either way, by July 1571

72 The queen to Sidney, 13 Dec. 1570 (Cal. pat. rolls Ire., Hen. VIII-Eliz., p. 546); Fitzwilliam to Burghley, 15 Mar. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/31/21).
73 Nicholas White to Burghley, 9 Apr. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/32/6); Lord President Sir John Perrot to Fitzwilliam, 14 May 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/32/41, enclosure ii); Nicholas White to Burghley, 15 May 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/32/31); Ormond to Burghley, 23 May 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/32/42); Ormond to the queen, 24 May 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/32/43); Ormond to Burghley, 21 June 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/32/58); Perrot to Fitzwilliam, 14 Aug. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/34/4, enclosure i); Brief of the expense of time by the lord president in the province of Munster [7] Sept. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/34/6); Fitzwilliam to Burghley, 20 July 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/37/11); Perrot to [Fitzwilliam], 12 Sept. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/37/59, enclosure iv); Perrot to Fitzwilliam, 16 Sept. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/37/59, enclosure v); Perrot to Burghley, 2 Nov. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/38/29).
Perrot was increasingly exasperated, something which his failure to capture Castlemaine only exacerbated. Part of Perrot’s problem was that he had a small force at his disposal, an average of between 250 and 350 English troops. These figures could get even lower, as in August 1571 when Perrot only had 140 fit footmen and 40 fit horsemen, although these could be supplemented by Ormond’s own men, as well as by the forces of lords such as Sir Maurice of Decies, Sir Thomas of Desmond, the baron of Lixnaw, and former rebels such as Rory McSheehy and MacCarthy Mór. Perrot’s frustration continued to grow until in mid-November he challenged Fitz Maurice to combat. A battle was agreed between them with twelve horsemen and twelve footmen each, to take place at either ‘Konely’ or Knocklofty. Ormond was dismayed when he learned of this. He informed Fitzwilliam that he was

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74 Perrot to Fitzwilliam, 24 July 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/33/15, enclosure vi); Fitzwilliam to Burghley, 31 July 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/33/16).
75 Perrot had 30 horsemen and 20 footmen by virtue of his office, and Bourchier and Furr each had approximately 100 footmen. There were also wards of 6 horsemen, 3 arquebusiers, and 3 archers at Dungarvan under Davells, and of between 20 and 30 soldiers at Castlemartyr, first under Horsey, and subsequently under Berkeley.
76 Accounts of William Fitzwilliam, 23 June 1569-31 Mar. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 65/7, ff 16v-17v, 18v, 19v); Accounts of Edward Fitton, 1 Apr. 1571-30 Sept. 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 65/8, ff 16v, 18v-18v, 19v, 20v); Note of money due in Ireland for Connacht and Munster, June 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/32/67); Perrot to Fitzwilliam, 22 Aug. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/34/4, enclosure ii); Brief of the garrison of Ireland, 29 Sept. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/34/17); Book of the army and garrisons in Ireland, 1 Jan. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/35/1); Book of the army and garrisons in Ireland, 1 Nov. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/38/20, enclosure i).
77 Perrot to Fitzwilliam, 22 Aug. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/34/4, enclosure iii).
78 In March 1571 Sir Maurice recaptured Kilnatoona castle, north-west of Youghal, which had been used as a rebel base from which to threaten Youghal: Maurice, viscount Decies, to Fitzwilliam, 28 Mar. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/32/2, enclosure iii).
79 Sir Thomas’s most notable contribution was the capture of the Seneschal of Imokilly at Glenheeren, near Clonmel, in October 1569. Ormond, however, thought little of him, dismissing his attack on Sir William Burke fitz Edmund in April 1570 as having more to do with revenge than the queen’s service, while the following February, after a skirmish with Fitz Maurice, Ormond again dismissed Sir Thomas’s efforts, stating that he had inflicted no real damage upon Fitz Maurice’s force: Gilbert to Sidney, 13 Nov. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/29/82#1); Ormond to Sidney, 10 Apr. 1570 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/30/50, enclosure i); Ormond to Sidney, 3 Mar. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/31/33, enclosure i).
80 Lixnaw, McSheehy, and MacCarthy Mór, together with Sir Thomas, joined Captain Apsley in the relief of Dingle in August 1571. Fitz Maurice raised the siege upon word of their approach: Perrot to Fitzwilliam, 14 Aug. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/34/4, enclosure i); Perrot to Fitzwilliam, 20 Aug. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/34/4, enclosure ii).
81 Perrot to Ormond, 18 Nov. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/34/29, enclosure iii).
almost at his 'wittes end', and that he would do all he could to prevent the contest. Ultimately, however, Fitz Maurice did not turn up on the appointed day in February 1572 and the rebellion dragged on.

It was against this background that the negotiations in London were conducted. Desmond spent the first six months of 1568 in discussions with Whitehall in relation to his conflict with Ormond. The pressure quickly mounted on Desmond to the point where, by February, he was forced to concede that he had had contact with the O’Connors, and agreed that he had supplied food and drink to Lysagh McMorrough O’Connor, a kinsman on his mother’s side, even though he knew he was a traitor, although he denied he had helped him to commit any offences. He claimed he did not recall when he had last seen O’Connor, while he also denied he had spoken with Cormac O’Connor.

Desmond was then examined by Sir Francis Knollys, Sir Walter Mildmay, and Gilbert Gerrard, the attorney general, regarding allegations covering the period 1561-6 which included the maintenance of various named traitors, such as Piers Grace and the O’Connors, large-scale thefts of cattle and goods, the destruction of towns such as Kilfeakle, and numerous murders. Desmond denied most of the charges, although he did admit to the burning of Kilfeakle in 1564, and that he had taken goods from Kilsheelan as distress. Ormond’s agents, his brother Sir Edmund, and Patrick

82 Ormond to Fitzwilliam, 20 Nov. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/34/29, enclosure iv).
83 Fitzwilliam to the privy council, 27 Feb. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/35/24).
84 Examinations of Desmond and his brother Sir John, 17 Feb. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/42); Examination of Cormac O’Connor, 7 Jan. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/4).
85 Interrogatories whereon Desmond was examined, 20 Feb. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/45).
86 Examination of Desmond, 20 Feb. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/46).

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Sherlock, countered with further allegations, while Sir Maurice of Decies warned Cecil that Desmond, his ‘auncient enymye’, would ‘go aboute to worcke any thing to my hinderaunce or make untrewe surmises to sklander me or my title to my landes whiche I holde of the Quenes mate and not of him’. Desmond then submitted to the queen on 16 March.

The following month Ormond sought compensation of over £20,000 Irish, which had been awarded to him by the commissioners, for damage to his lands caused by Desmond. On 14 July Desmond again submitted, and agreed to a bond of £20,000 to observe his submission. Two days later the queen resolved the dispute between Desmond and Sir Maurice in the latter’s favour, decided to ennoble Sir Maurice as viscount Decies, and abated £200 of the £425 arrears which Sir Maurice owed for the subsidy on Decies. With all the evidence heard and all the witnesses interviewed, the negotiations stopped. Desmond could only wait on the outcome.

At that stage Whitehall considered quite radical proposals which, if enacted, would have had very serious consequences for Desmond. The most threatening was a call for the resumption of the liberty of Kerry, a direct attack at the heart of Desmond’s power. He would also have to relinquish his overlordship over the Desmond Geraldines, as well as his ‘usurped sov[er]enty’ over lords of the region such as Sir Maurice of Decies, the White Knight, and others, which removed him from a position of predominance over Cos Kerry, Cork, and Waterford. His ability to project his military power was also targeted, his right to impose galloglass on loyal subjects in Munster was to be ceded to the crown, while his claim of ‘bonaght’ of

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89 The submission of Desmond to the queen, 16 Mar. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/23/71).
90 Ormond’s petition to the queen, 25 Apr. 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/24/17).
91 The submission of Desmond, 14 July 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/34).
92 Recognizance of Desmond, 14 July 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/35).
93 The queen to Sidney, 16 July 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/39).
3,000 men from MacCarthy Reagh was to go. Instead MacCarthy Reagh would have to pay composition to the crown. Kilmallock was to be discharged from the payment of tributes to him, and the privilege he claimed of not having to appear before the deputy unless he agreed was also to go. Two further articles were considered for the repayment of Desmond’s debts to the crown. The chief rent of Youghal and Desmond’s house there, together with the cantreds of Imokilly, Coshbride, and Kerrycurrihy, and the manor of Kilmanahan, along with the town of Dingle, were to be occupied and held by officials. These proposals show the influence of both Sussex and Ormond and the corresponding impotence of Desmond.

Finally, the negotiations concerning the central dispute came to a conclusion in June 1569 when, as Ormond returned to Ireland to deal with his rebellious brothers, the queen gave her decision. Ormond was to receive the prise wines of Youghal and Kinsale and compensation for Desmond’s attacks on his lands and goods. Ormond’s lands were also exempted cess and other impositions, save the subsidy, he was to have victuals for his household at a reduced rate in Cos Tipperary and Kilkenny, and he was to be compensated by his tenants upon the abolition of coyne and livery. The question of compensation for the erection of the castle at Leighlinbridge during his minority was to be examined, while a lease on part of the properties of St Mary’s abbey in Dublin was also to be considered. Ormond had won the legal battle.

With Ormond’s victory contact with Desmond ceased, and for the following three and half years Desmond and Sir John were largely ignored by Whitehall, although they did try to take advantage of the continuing rebellion in order to secure their release from London. In August 1571, as the corporations of Cork, Kinsale and

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94 Note of those things which are to be taken from Desmond, July 1568 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/25/57).
95 The queen to Sidney, 30 June 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/28/59; Cal. pat. rolls Ire., Hen. VIII-Eliz., pp 530-1).
Youghal appealed for their return to Munster to assist Perrot against Fitz Maurice,96 Desmond and Sir John offered to lead forces against the rebels. Desmond wanted to end his captivity, get back to his earldom, and reestablish control over his vassals, while Sir John wanted to see off Fitz Maurice’s challenge to his position as second in command in the earldom.97 Later in the year Desmond again offered to serve in Munster if he was pardoned, freed, and loaned money to pay off his debts. In return he would apprehend or expel all rebels, reduce his country to obedience, and promote the reformed religion. He also promised to use only legal means to resolve disputes, to keep the peace, and would give sufficient security to the deputy for the observance of these promises once he was back in Ireland. He did, however, insist on having such ‘iuste and lawefull privileges liberties Immunyties and Jurisdict[i]ons’ as he and his ancestors had previously enjoyed, a clear reference to the continued operation of the liberty of Kerry. To help him end the rebellion he also asked for ordnance which he would return once he had accomplished the task.98 Neither this nor the previous offer was accepted.

By late 1572, therefore, the situation in Munster seemed as far from a resolution as ever. The queen and Whitehall were baffled that the violence appeared set to continue into a sixth year, disappointed that their military expenditure seemed to have little impact, while Desmond and Sir John grew ever more frustrated at their seemingly unending incarceration. In Munster the rebellion simmered on. Fitz Maurice and his remaining allies seemed oblivious to the impossibility of their position, while Perrot had settled on a war of attrition. It was in this context that

96 Michael Roche, sovereign, and the brethren of Kinsale to the privy council, 10 Aug. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/33/30); Maurice Roche, mayor, and the brethren of Cork to the queen, 15 Aug. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/33/32); Maurice Roche, mayor, and the brethren of Cork to the privy council, 15 Aug. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/33/33); The mayor and others of Youghal to the queen, 4 Sept. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/34/3).
97 Desmond to the privy council, 20 Aug. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/33/36).
98 Articles of the humble requests which Desmond doth make to the queen, Dec. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/34/39).
negotiations commenced when Fitz Maurice offered to be relieved of the captaincy of the Desmond Geraldines.99

Although Perrot rejected this offer,100 contact between the two sides continued for on 8 December Fitz Maurice met Captain George Bourchier at Downtoclieage, near Aherlow. Fitz Maurice apologized for his actions, threw down his spear, and craved the queen’s mercy as he knelt. He asked for protection for his men and himself, and a living from Desmond’s lands, until the queen decided what to do with him.101 The meeting at Downtoclieage was clearly an arranged one, so Dublin presumably knew about it ahead of time, and Whitehall may well have been sent a message at the same time. That Whitehall knew of the talks with Fitz Maurice by the end of December would make sense of the timing of their decision to reopen negotiations with Desmond in early January 1573.102

Ignored by Whitehall since 1569, Desmond was presented with a set of articles by the privy council on 3 January which were designed to regulate his future behaviour should he be returned to Munster. Eighteen days later Desmond agreed to the proposals with certain modifications and caveats.103 The same day Elizabeth agreed to return Desmond to Ireland. News of the negotiations in Whitehall, and possibly their successful outcome, may have reached Ireland by late February, for on 21 February the Seneschal of Imokilly and Owny McRichard, two of Fitz Maurice’s chief supporters, brought Fitz Maurice’s son to Perrot at Castletownroche. Two days later Fitz Maurice submitted to the president at Kilmallock in both English and

99 Perrot to Fitzwilliam, 12 Sept. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/37/59, enclosure iv); Perrot to Burghley, 2 Nov. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/38/29).
100 Perrot to Burghley, 2 Nov. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/38/29).
101 Andrew Skiddy to Perrot, 10 Dec. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/38/54).
103 Note of articles to be observed by Desmond, 3 Jan. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/1); Desmond’s answer to the articles of January 3, 21 Jan. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/15).
A month later, on 25 March, Desmond and Sir John arrived in Dublin.\textsuperscript{105}

Fitz Maurice’s meeting with Bourchier in early December 1572, the negotiations with Desmond the following month, the submission of Fitz Maurice in late February and the return to Dublin of Desmond in late March would thus appear to have been part of an overall scheme to bring the rebellion and Desmond’s detention to a successful conclusion. A letter could pass between Cork and London within a month,\textsuperscript{106} although the winter weather could have increased the duration of such a journey. Furthermore, Perrot was of the opinion that Fitz Maurice had only submitted once he had heard that Desmond was to return to Ireland.\textsuperscript{107} If not entirely coordinated, the initial moves by Fitz Maurice appear to have contributed to the initial moves in London, and once Whitehall decided Desmond was to be returned the two processes became linked.

Fitz Maurice must have realized the impossibility of his situation. Within six months of his attack on Kerrycurrihy most of his allies, or potential allies, had pledged their obedience to the crown, which left him with little active support within Munster. He got no assistance from Catholic Europe. Some French ships did land at Dingle in 1570 to assess the situation, but they soon departed and did not return. Fitz Maurice may, therefore, have used the return of Desmond to save face and achieve something for his effort.

Whitehall, for its part, was happy to bring to a conclusion the rebellion which had been the most severe test of the crown’s position in Ireland since the rebellion of ‘Silken Thomas’, lord Offaly, tenth earl of Kildare. The two challenges bore some similarities. Both were led by surrogates of earls who were detained in London and

\textsuperscript{104} The humble submission of James fitz Maurice, et al., 23 Feb. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/33); Perrot to the privy council, 3 Mar. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/40); Perrot to the queen, 6 Mar. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/43).
\textsuperscript{105} Sir Edward Fitton to Burghley, 10 Apr. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/7).
\textsuperscript{106} Perrot got a letter in Cork on 13 July which had been written by Burghley in London on 17 June: Perrot to Burghley, 13 July 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/41/76).
\textsuperscript{107} Perrot to Burghley, 30 Apr. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/19).
both involved calls for Papal and Spanish assistance. Such similarities should not be overemphasized, however, for ‘Silken Thomas’ only sought foreign aid once in rebellion. Furthermore, his rebellion was purely intended to defend and restore Kildare hegemony in Dublin rather than replace the reigning monarch as Fitz Maurice hoped. In terms of the military threat posed by the two uprisings, that of ‘Silken Thomas’ was much the weaker. Although his forces quickly gained control of the Pale his unsuccessful siege of Dublin and the subsequent landing of English forces marked the turning point in the conflict. By spring 1535 most of his castles had been captured, and he was compelled to surrender in August 1535 after fourteen and a half months.108

The Fitz Maurice rebellion was much more extensive and serious, with at least fifty military encounters between June 1569 and February 1573. The vast majority of these incidents were skirmishes and cattle raids, with no large-scale battles with large numbers of combatants on both sides. After the initial assaults on the towns of the region the rebels relied on small-scale raids from their hideouts in the woods and mountains, although Kilmallock was attacked in 1569, 1570 and 1571, Youghal was threatened in 1571, Dingle was unsuccessfully besieged the same year, and Clonmel was raided in 1572. Most rebel-held castles surrendered to Crown forces without a fight, although some held out. The use of ordnance was required by the English forces on two occasions at least, against Castlemartyr in 1569 and against Carrickittell in 1571. By April 1573 Perrot alone had killed over 800 rebels by common or martial law,109 while perhaps three or four times that number were killed in the fighting.

While the physical and human cost of the rebellion was considerable, the political consequences were even more significant. By joining the defence of his faith

109 Perrot to the privy council, 9 Apr. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/6).
with a defence of the political, social, and economic order in Munster, Fitz Maurice transformed a regional conflict based on factional and dynastic differences into a conflict which now had very obvious religious and constitutional overtones. This would have very serious consequences for the nature of future conflicts. In the more immediate term, it meant Desmond would have to balance the needs of a nervous government with the turbulent state of Munster.
CHAPTER SIX

THE EARLDOM UNDER GERALD, FIFTEENTH EARL, 1573-78

The decision of the queen to release Desmond in January 1573 and his return to Dublin the following March appeared to bring to a successful conclusion the negotiations which he had been engaged in with Whitehall. Desmond was about to end his captivity which had lasted for over five years, while Whitehall had secured his loyalty. These conditions were not only to ensure his future behaviour, but also to explicitly associate Desmond with the reform process. That would strengthen that process and reinforce Dublin’s authority in Munster, which had been directly challenged by Fitz Maurice’s attack on the crown’s constitutional position in Ireland. However, the appearance of finality was deceptive as the negotiations with Desmond were not to end until September 1574.

That it took so long was not due to any deep-seated commitment to destroy Desmond but was due to a number of factors, prominent amongst which was the incoherent nature of the Tudor decision making process. The crown’s interests in these negotiations were represented not only by the privy council in Whitehall, but also by the lords deputy and president in Ireland. While all these individuals and their officials were there to serve the crown, they did so in quite different ways. The purpose of the privy council, and to a lesser degree the deputy, was to formulate policy, while that of the president, and part of the deputy’s, was the implementation of that policy, a fact which was to have a direct relevance to the negotiations with Desmond. Furthermore, the deputy and president were linked to the factional networks in England, which in turn had connections with the factions in Ireland, and this meant that their implementation of policy was influenced, to a greater or lesser

1 The queen to Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, 21 Jan. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/13); Sir Edward Fitton to Burghley, 10 Apr. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/7).
2 Fitzwilliam, Ormond and others to the queen, 3 Sept. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/47).
degree, by factional sympathies and petty political considerations. In these negotiations faction was to have a significant impact. As a result Desmond had to conduct what amounted to two sets of negotiations, one with Whitehall, which was relatively straightforward, and one with Fitzwilliam and Perrot, which was anything but.

The fundamental issue in the negotiations was the character of the future relationship between the crown and Desmond. Whitehall wanted Desmond to be a good subject; one who would obey the law and keep the peace, and help maintain the crown’s position in Munster by supporting her officials in the province; who would in short remain loyal under stress. Whitehall also wanted to construct a situation where any future disputes which would involve Desmond were dealt with in Ireland, with Desmond’s mechanism for redress clearly laid out. The key to this was the set of articles which the privy council presented to Desmond on 3 January 1573, articles which Whitehall insisted on throughout the negotiations and which it was hoped would help bring ‘English civility’ to this troublesome region.3 Two of the articles were to ensure that Desmond was generally obedient. They required him to observe the oath he had made to deputy Sussex in 1558 and to support and maintain the church of Ireland. A further two referred to the immediate problem of James fitz Maurice’s rebellion. Desmond would be required to help suppress the rebellion and procure Fitz Maurice’s capture, and to aid in the apprehension of those who had solicited aid from foreign powers.4

Desmond’s relationship with the president was specified in two more articles.

3 Note of articles to be observed by Desmond, 3 Jan. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/1).
4 Articles one, two, seven and eight, respectively.
He was to keep the peace and not maintain rebels or other types of felons. Instead he was to apprehend such troublemakers. He was not to assemble a body of soldiers, unless specifically authorized to do so by either the deputy or president, and was not to disturb the neighbouring lords in the province, whether Hiberno-Norman or Gaelic-Irish. If he had a dispute with anyone concerning lands, rents or services he was not to invade the other party’s house or land but to prosecute the case through the courts or by complaint to the deputy or president. If anyone invaded his lands, Desmond was to inform either the deputy or president who would then either authorize him to levy his men to defend himself or would send help themselves. Desmond was to be answerable to the law just as Ormond or Kildare were, and was to assist the president and council in Munster in the administration of justice.5

A further three articles placed various restrictions on Desmond’s freedom of action. He was not to exercise his palatine rights in Kerry until his title to the palatinate had been proven before the council of Ireland, this to be examined within twelve months of his return to Ireland. In the mean time Kerry was to be governed as Cork and Limerick were. He was to accept the decision of the deputy and council regarding coyne and livery, while he was also to allow the queen to ward such of his castles as she required, and was to surrender legal ownership of the castles if the queen required them for the defence of the region.6 Finally Desmond was to agree to do all that would be required of him by the deputy and council upon his return to Ireland.7

It is clear, therefore, that Whitehall was not trying to destroy Desmond or even to substantially reduce his power. Instead the intent was that he would change his ways and no longer be a source of anxiety and expense but an example of quiet, obedient living. Articles three and four were designed to restrict Desmond’s ability to

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5 Articles three and four.
6 Articles five, six and nine, respectively.
7 Article ten. The deputy and council were additionally charged with resolving any disputes between Desmond and Ormond.
cause trouble yet still provide for his safety. They were also to provide a structure whereby future disputes which Desmond would be involved in would not escalate into military conflicts but would be resolved peacefully, primarily through the mechanism of the presidency. Articles one and two might be termed aspirational, as they sought vague promises from him to be good, while those concerned with Fitz Maurice’s rebellion were similarly aspirational as the rebellion was shortly to end. Articles five, six and nine were more exacting on Desmond, although Whitehall was prepared to compromise on them. Ultimately the crown offered to suspend the requirement for Desmond to disband his men, which meant a de facto continuation of coyne and livery, while the requirement to ward his castles was restricted to certain castles and only for a limited time, without prejudice to Desmond’s ownership of them. Similarly, the suspension of the liberty was expressly limited to one year, and would only be extended if Desmond could not prove his title to it.

Whitehall thus sought to establish a settlement which it hoped would be mutually beneficial. Desmond would be returned to the earldom and in return he would help secure the peace of Munster. Whitehall was prepared both to be flexible in its demands, which were framed in such a way as to avoid too many specifics, and to compromise on certain items as long as the overall agreement was implemented. If this were done Whitehall would have solved the immediate problem and would have freed itself from having to deal with most future problems.

In effect, Whitehall was trying to reach an outline agreement with Desmond and leave the details to be worked out by the deputy and president. Thus Fitzwilliam was empowered to alter or add to the articles which Desmond had agreed to. When Desmond reached Dublin in March, therefore, he did not finalize details to implement

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8 Fitz Maurice asked for mercy in December 1572, and submitted on 23 February 1573: Andrew Skiddy to Lord President Perrot, 10 Dec. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/38/54); The humble submission of James fitz Maurice, et al., 23 Feb. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/33).
9 The queen to Fitzwilliam, [July] 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/35).
10 The queen to Fitzwilliam, 21 Jan. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/13).
the agreement he had reached in London, but had to go through a second round of negotiations, negotiations which would be far longer and more difficult than those with Whitehall. In contrast, Sir John quickly agreed terms in Dublin and had departed the city by 25 May 1573.11

The lord deputy at the time was Sir William Fitzwilliam, who was an adherent of Sussex and also had a good relationship with Ormond. These relationships influenced in part his actions in 1573 when he let Desmond languish in detention in Dublin for over eight months,12 but a more substantial reason behind Fitzwilliam’s lack of urgency was his desire to preserve the newly-established power of the presidency in Munster. Not only did he want its work to proceed unhindered, he also wanted the presidency to be so developed that Desmond would be unable to reverse it. All facets of the presidency would be up and running, the populace would be accustomed to it, and its authority would be unquestioned. Upon his return to Munster, therefore, Desmond, whom Fitzwilliam considered to have ‘some defecth in him’,13 would be confronted with a fait accompli.

Fitzwilliam, however, gave responsibility for the formulation of a response to Desmond’s return to Perrot, who, as the person who had to establish and develop the presidency, was even less prepared to tolerate Desmond’s interference in his work. Perrot had, therefore, campaigned in 1572 against Desmond’s return to Munster, and had advised Whitehall that such a course of action would signify to the rebels a weakening of the crown’s resolve to prosecute the war and encourage them to hold out in anticipation of a possible general pardon.14

11 ‘Action at council’, 6 May 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/52, enclosure i); Fitzwilliam and council to the queen, 25 May 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/52).
12 Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 143-5, 184, 191.
13 Fitzwilliam and council to the privy council, 14 Aug. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/37/36).
14 Fitzwilliam to the queen, 13 Apr. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/36/2); Fitzwilliam and council to the privy council, 14 Aug. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/37/36); Fitzwilliam and council to the privy council, 26 Aug. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/37/42); Perrot to Burghley, 2 Nov. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/38/29).
His position became even more uncompromising following Desmond’s return. Initially Perrot said he would not be held responsible for anything untoward which Desmond might do. By May he had asked for Desmond to be kept away from Munster so as not to hinder the reform process, and two months later he asked to have him sent back to England, amazed that the queen could send over Desmond whom he described as being ‘rather meete to keepe Bedlem then to come to a new reformed contrie’. Failing that Perrot wanted Desmond firmly under his control in order to safeguard his achievements in the province, and when he left Ireland in late 1573 Fitzwilliam continued the same uncompromising stance.

As early as 1572, therefore, sensing Desmond’s return was a distinct possibility, Perrot drafted a set of preconditions which he regarded as essential for the successful integration of Desmond into the presidential system. These preconditions sought to eradicate three of the main components of Desmond’s autonomy. The first was the liberty of Kerry which for most issues was outside the president’s control. This was unacceptable to Perrot who saw it as a clear impediment to the work of the presidency, and so he strove to have the liberty terminated. Two of the articles dealt with the liberty. The first called for Desmond not to use any of his ‘olde pretended liberties’ within Kerry, which Perrot claimed had no legal basis and was merely an anachronistic convention. Another article stipulated that Desmond was not to obstruct any crown official, such as a sheriff, from executing a writ, precept, warrant or commandment within any part of Desmond’s territory. This was clearly aimed at the liberty which was exempt from such actions, and was another attempt to subvert the palatine jurisdiction.

15 Perrot to Burghley, 12 Apr. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/11); Perrot to Burghley, 30 Apr. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/19); Sir Edward Fitton to Burghley, 4 May 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/26); Perrot to the privy council, 21 May 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/49); Perrot to Burghley, 13 July 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/41/76); Perrot to the queen, 13 July 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/41/76, enclosure ii).
16 Articles devised by Perrot for Desmond to be bound to observe, May 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/36/33).
Perrot's preconditions had influenced the articles drafted in January 1573 but only to a limited degree. Thus the privy council only sought a suspension of the liberty for one year, during which time Desmond could prove his title to it. This was far less than he had wanted, and so Perrot tried to toughen the conditions during the negotiations in Dublin. He proposed in August 1573 that the liberty be suspended for one year, during which time it would be surveyed and any abuses examined. The liberty would then be restored to Desmond or the abuses would be reformed. During the suspension the liberty would be administered by crown officials. In this way, even if it was restored, Perrot would have a proper survey of the liberty and a sounder grasp of its workings which would assist him greatly in the implementation of the provisions regarding the pleas in the liberty which were reserved to the crown. If the liberty had to continue Perrot was determined that at least it would be open to the fullest scrutiny possible.

Perrot had also tried to ensure that there would be no military forces independent of his authority within Munster. The articles in London placed restrictions on Desmond's ability to maintain soldiers and invade his neighbours, but Perrot sought much tighter controls when articles were presented by the Irish council to Desmond in Dublin in May 1573. Desmond was not to maintain galloglass or kerne, nor levy 'bonaght', unless he did so under warrant from the deputy or president, which in effect placed Desmond's forces directly under government command. He was to be forbidden to levy blackrent, one of the clearest manifestations of Desmond overlordship. He was not to provide horses or weapons to any soldiers unless they were his own men or crown officials, while he was to compile a 'book', or list, of all his soldiers within six weeks of his return to Munster.

17 Note of articles to be observed by Desmond, 3 Jan. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/1).
18 Articles for reformation of Munster, Aug. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/42/7).
19 A note of certain things from which Desmond is to be restrained, [18 May] 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/43).
These provisions would give Perrot a complete breakdown of the earl’s forces, and allow for strict supervision and examination of their actions, and would curtail Desmond’s ability to raise or employ additional soldiers, which was hoped would make armed conflict harder to provide for and consequently less likely. He was also to be prohibited guns larger than a caliver or arquebus within his castles, which would severely limit Desmond’s ability to assail the castles of other lords of the region, and was not to levy coyne and livery, the very key to Desmond’s military strength. The effect of these articles would be to substantially reduce Desmond’s ability to conduct independent military operations. Perrot did not want Desmond to have sufficient military capacity to withstand his authority.

A third element of Desmond’s power which Perrot had wanted abolished was Desmond’s use of Gaelic-Irish practices in the administration of his earldom. The president was not prepared to have a parallel system within the earldom which was outside his control and so tried to eradicate it. Desmond was not to assemble his tenants upon hills, except under warrant, which presumably referred to the Gaelic-Irish custom of ‘aonach’ and ‘oireachtas’.\(^20\) He was to cease his use of the Brehon laws, and was to forgo the use of fines for criminal acts. Thus he was not to take ‘canes’ for trespass, nor ‘erics’ for murders. Instead he was to utilize the common law in his territories and punish wrongdoers in the courts. He was not to take distress without warrant, and was not to imprison suspects for longer than twenty four hours before he was to hand them over to the sheriff or jail of the county, which ended his ability to demand ransoms for the release of suspects.\(^21\) Perrot also wanted to replace coyne and livery with rent, with disputes to be subject to legal resolution.\(^22\) That Perrot itemized the Gaelic-Irish elements so minutely would indicate that he regarded

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21 A note of certain things from which Desmond is to be restrained, [18 May] 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/43).

22 Articles for reformation of Munster, Aug. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/42/7).
them as a particularly large problem and a barrier to the universal acceptance of the presidential system in the province. If Desmond's earldom could function using the Gaelic-Irish elements the population would not need or use the presidency and Perrot would not be able to control, or even be aware of, what was going on within his jurisdiction.

In contrast to Whitehall, therefore, Fitzwilliam and Perrot were more demanding of Desmond because they both wanted to copper fasten the institutional gains made by the presidency. As a consequence, instead of merely finalizing a few remaining details, the discussions in Dublin ended up as a renegotiation. Desmond interpreted this as a clear breach of faith on the part of Perrot and Fitzwilliam, and faced with this perfidy he held fast to the deal he had struck in London.

Desmond wanted to secure his future. He wanted to be in full possession of his lands, to be able to defend himself and his earldom, and to ensure that his legal position was in no way inferior to that of Ormond. As a consequence the issues which Desmond was most stubborn on were the same ones which Perrot was most insistent upon, namely the liberty of Kerry, coyne and livery, and retention of the castles. Desmond was adamant on the question of the liberty. In January 1573 he rejected the suspension of the palatinate for even one year, and specified to the deputy and council in Dublin in May 1573 that his response to their set of articles would in no way jeopardize or prejudice his title to the liberty.\textsuperscript{23} This remained his view throughout the negotiations. Desmond would not make any concession on the existence of the liberty. Furthermore, Ormond's palatinate of Tipperary was specifically excluded from Perrot's jurisdiction, save for the usual reserved pleas, and

\textsuperscript{23} Desmond's answer, 6 Jan. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/5); Desmond's answer to the articles proponed unto him by the lord deputy and council, [18 May] 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/39, enclosure i); Desmond's answer touching his county palatine and coyne and livery, [18 May] 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/42).
Desmond was not prepared to countenance an inferior position to Ormond.\textsuperscript{24}

Desmond was equally insistent on coyne and livery. He was willing to renounce the use of the exactions but intended to wait until the country was peaceful and he was able to defend his earldom. He also offered to forsake coyne and livery if other lords followed suit, but refused to do so unilaterally.\textsuperscript{25} Desmond could not afford to weaken his defences against the neighbouring lords for the threat they posed was real, as MacCarthy Mór’s incursion into north Kerry in 1574 attested to.\textsuperscript{26}

Retention of his castles was similarly of pressing concern for Desmond. In January 1573 he refused to surrender the title to any of his castles, although he did agree to the crown’s temporary placement of wards in some of them provided they would be returned to him. In July 1574, in response to a similar demand, he asked the crown to either try his title in court or use the crown’s prerogative and ward them for a limited period of time.\textsuperscript{27} Desmond was prepared to grudgingly accept the temporary loss of a few castles but he would not accept their alienation to the crown as that would give the presidency a permanent foothold within his territories. The castles in question were Castlemaine, which guarded a strategically important bridge on the Maine, Glin, which was located on the northern route around the Mullaghareirk mountains, and Castlemartyr, which lay along the Cork to Youghal route. Possession of these castles would give the president the ability to intervene within the earldom, while possession of Castlemaine would be a threat to Desmond’s autonomy within

\textsuperscript{25} Desmond’s answer, 6 Jan. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/5); Desmond’s answer to the articles proposed unto him by the lord deputy and council, [18 May] 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/39, enclosure i); Desmond’s answer touching his county palatine and coyne and livery, [18 May] 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/42); Fitzwilliam and council to the queen, 25 May 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/52).
\textsuperscript{26} Desmond to the privy council in Ireland, 27 Mar. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/45/33); Desmond to Essex, 4 Apr. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/45/55).
\textsuperscript{27} Desmond’s answer, 6 Jan. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/5); Articles by the lord deputy and council delivered to Desmond, with the earl’s answers, 8 July 1574 (S.P. 63/47/3, enclosure i).
the liberty. Little wonder, therefore, that Desmond fought hard to retain control over the castles.

Desmond’s additional demands show he was determined to secure full possession of his estates. In January 1573 he wanted a commission established which would put him in possession of his lands. Similarly the commission was to enforce rulings in his favour for arrears of rent and restitution of goods and cattle which had been taken from his tenants and lands during his absence in England. He asked for this again in October, and continued to do so subsequently, as the commission would be the fastest way to ensure he enjoyed possession of his lands without contravention of the articles he subscribed to in England, and it would safeguard him from accusations of illegal activity.

Ultimately, however, with both sides unwilling to compromise the negotiations ended up in deadlock, and Desmond, angered and frustrated by Dublin’s apparent lack of urgency and honesty in dealing with him, escaped from Dublin on 16 November. He claimed he felt compelled to escape after Fitzwilliam and Perrot had rejected his offers and had increased the demands on him, and subsequently claimed that Fitzwilliam and Perrot had some ‘privy grudge’ against him.

Desmond received a great deal of support on his journey back to Munster. He

28 Desmond’s requests, 20 Jan. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/39/12).
29 Desmond to the queen, 28 Oct. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/42/59).
30 John Barnewall’s opinion of Desmond, 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/43/20, enclosure vi); Desmond’s requests for establishing peace and quiet in his country, Jan./Feb. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/42, enclosure viii).
31 Desmond to the privy council, 18 May 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/39); Desmond to the queen, 17 July 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/41/79); Desmond to the privy council, 18 July 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/41/82); Desmond to the queen, 28 Oct. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/42/59).
32 Fitzwilliam to lords Burghley, Sussex, Leicester, and Mr Walsingham, 18 Apr. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/45/72).
33 Desmond had offered surety of £10,000 to leave for Munster and return to Dublin when called by the council, as well as surety of £8,000 to be free to travel within a radius of thirty miles from Dublin. He had also offered his entire estate to the council in return for £2,000 p.a., his son to recover the estate when he came of age: Desmond to the queen, 13 Dec. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/43/15; Bodl., Carte MSS, 55 ff 132r-132v); Desmond to Burghley, 13 Dec. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/43/16).
34 Declaration by Mr Fitzgerald, Jan./Feb. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/37, enclosure iv).
was escorted by Rory Óg O’More and Piers Grace through Kildare and on to Laois, where he was received by 400 of the O’Mores. His wife met him at Bealandrohid and they continued on to Lough Gur where they put on Irish apparel. He then met Fitz Maurice at Limerick. Back in Munster Desmond quickly reestablished his authority. By the end of December he had recaptured the castles in Kenry, Castlemartyr, and Castlemaine, and had reinstalled the Catholic Hugh Lacy in the bishop’s residence in Limerick, and this, together with his efforts to attract allies, greatly alarmed both Dublin and Whitehall.

In response Dublin dispatched numerous envoys to Desmond, including John Barnewall, baron of Trimleston, in November 1573, James Dowdall, second justice of the Queen’s Bench, in April-May 1574, and the earls of Essex and Kildare in June-July 1574. Whitehall, horrified at the complete breakdown of negotiations over what should have been mere detail, sent an emissary of its own, Sir Edward Fitzgerald. The dispatch of Fitzgerald, brother to the earl of Kildare, and a highly

35 Justice Walshe to Burghley, 30 Nov. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/42/88); Justice Walshe to Fitzwilliam, 24 Nov. 1573 (S.P. 63/43/6, enclosure iii).
36 Justice Nicholas Walshe to Fitzwilliam, 24 Nov. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/43/6, enclosure iii); Justice Walshe to Burghley, 30 Nov. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/42/88); Justice Walshe to Fitzwilliam, 3 Jan. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/4, enclosure i); Edward Castelyn to Burghley, 16 Jan. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/8).
37 Desmond and Sir John met a Scottish gentleman in December with a view to hiring 200 Scots, and the following month Desmond met the earl of Clanrickard and Thady McMorrough O’Brien with the intention of dispatching a joint letter to Philip II, while by early February Sir John had been to Connacht, and Desmond had sent messengers to Turlough Luineach O’Neill, the O’Connors, and other rebels: Maurice O’Brien, bishop elect of Killaloe, to the lord deputy, 22 Dec. 1573 (S.P. 63/44/3, enclosure ii); Justice Walshe to Fitzwilliam, 3 Jan. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/4, enclosure i); Mulrony O’Carroll to Francis Cosbie, seneschal of Queen’s County, 8 Jan. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/21, enclosure vii); Patrick Sherlock, sheriff, to Mr Fitzgerald, 17 Jan. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/20, enclosure iii); Sir Peter Carew to his cousin Edmund Tremayne, 6 Feb. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/45/4, enclosure i).
38 Fitzwilliam and council to Desmond, 20 Nov. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/42/84); Instructions to James Dowdall, 17 Apr. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/46/41, enclosure ii); Essex to the lords, 10 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/3).
39 Articles of instruction, 23 Dec. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/37, enclosure i); Fitzwilliam to the privy council, 7 Jan. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/3).
placed courtier and ally of the earl of Leicester,40 was not only Whitehall’s attempt to rescue the negotiations before fighting broke out,41 but also an implicit criticism of the conduct of Fitzwilliam and Perrot. More explicit was the queen’s criticism of Fitzwilliam’s failure to accept Desmond’s offers in Dublin and of his use of her own direction in January 1573 to take Perrot’s advice as a pretence to refuse Desmond. Elizabeth was also dismayed that following Desmond’s flight, Fitzwilliam had neither personally taken charge in Munster nor sent anyone else to do so, and had left justice Nicholas Walshe the only government representative in the province.42 Ultimately Fitzwilliam’s perceived lack of impartiality led the crown to offer Desmond the opportunity to submit personally in England.43

Desmond’s meeting with Sir Edward Fitzgerald brought a degree of calm to the tense situation in the province, as Desmond agreed to a truce and agreed to perform all the articles he had agreed to in London. However, Desmond refused to deliver his castles to Captain Bourchier, and called for impartial councillors to discuss his difficulties with him.44 Desmond then contacted the earl of Essex in April, both to

40 Sir Edward was lieutenant of the Gentlemen Pensioners, the body charged with securing the presence chamber, as opposed to the privy chamber, at court, a position he had held since the reign of Queen Mary. As the de facto commander of the Gentlemen Pensioners, the earl of Sussex was the nominal commander as captain, he would have effectively been continuously present at court, and was entrusted by the queen with important tasks, such as taking the duke of Norfolk into custody in September/October 1569. He possessed good connections, his sister Elizabeth was married to Edward, earl of Lincoln, while his daughter Elizabeth was a maid of honour to the queen from 1571 until the late 1580s, and was closely allied to the earl of Leicester. See W.J. Tighe, The gentlemen pensioners in Elizabethan politics and government (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1984); P.W. Hasler, The house of commons 1558-1603, ii (London, 1981), pp 124-5.

41 It would also appear to have been an attempt by Leicester to influence events in Ireland and defuse the difficulties of Desmond who was loosely allied to his faction at court.

42 The queen to Fitzwilliam, 30 Mar. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/45/39); The lords of the council to Fitzwilliam, 30 Mar. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/45/40); Schedule of certain things to be advertised to the lord deputy of Ireland, 30 Mar. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/45/40, enclosure i; Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 56, ff 330r-330v).

43 The queen to Fitzwilliam, 18 May 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/46/20); Fitzwilliam and council to Desmond, 1 June 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/46/41, enclosure ix).

44 Fitzwilliam and council to the queen, 10 Feb. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/37); Seven new articles by Sir Edward Fitzgerald, Jan./Feb. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/37, enclosure ii); Desmond’s answer, Jan./Feb. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/37, enclosure iii); Declaration by Sir Edward Fitzgerald, Jan./Feb. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/37, enclosure iv).
explain his plight and to ask Essex to plead his case at the privy council. Two months later Essex wrote to Desmond to secure the release of Bourchier who had been captured by Fitz Maurice. Further contact then led to a meeting between Desmond, Essex and Kildare at Waterford where they persuaded Desmond to accompany them to Dublin in order to meet the council.

Fitzwilliam and the council presented Desmond with a set of proposals which called for the implementation of the articles agreed in London. They also demanded that those castles which had been in the crown’s possession at the time of his escape in November 1573, and any others the crown would want, should be warded by crown forces, those to remain in the crown’s hands at her pleasure. This wording left every one of Desmond’s castles at risk of indefinite crown occupation. Desmond refused and the negotiations failed. Fitzwilliam and the council then made preparations for war, apparently convinced that the use of military force was the only way to resolve the situation. They dispatched 400 troops to Munster, and considered a scheme to offer Sir John lands worth £400 if he remained loyal.

Upon his return to Munster Desmond appealed directly to the privy council to halt the impending conflict, and then conferred with some of his closest advisers about the failed negotiations and Fitzwilliam’s determination to proceed militarily against him. Those gathered, including Sir John, Rory McSheehy, the seneschal of

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45 Desmond to Essex, 4 Apr. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/45/55); Essex to Desmond, 5 June 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/46/52).
46 Essex to Desmond, 10 June 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/46/57); Fitzwilliam and Essex to Burghley, 20 June 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/46/70); Desmond to Essex, 20 June 1574 (S.P. 63/46/73); Essex to the lords, 10 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/3).
47 Essex to the lords, 10 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/3); Fitzwilliam and council to the privy council, 11 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/8); Articles by the lord deputy and council delivered to Desmond, with the earl’s answers, 8 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/3, enclosure i).
48 Fitzwilliam and council to the privy council, 11 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/8); Fitzwilliam to Burghley, 12 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/9).
49 Desmond to the privy council, 18 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/25). Fitzwilliam had dispatched 400 troops to Munster by 11 July: Fitzwilliam and council to the privy council, 11 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/8).
Imokilly, various of the O'Briens, and even the baron of Lixnaw, advised Desmond not to make any more concessions and to defend himself against Fitzwilliam. They also promised to aid him against the deputy. The signatories thus not only told Desmond to defy the deputy, but that they would do likewise, and left a written record of their intention.50

This ‘Desmond combination’ is a most extraordinary document, and highlights the pressures which Desmond and the signatories were under. The greatest pressure, of course, was on Desmond. Desmond had returned to Dublin in March 1573 with the belief that he had concluded the negotiations in London, but Fitzwilliam and Perrot then tried to renegotiate the terms of the agreement. Eventually, after close to nine months in Dublin, he escaped, confirmed in the opinion that Dublin had not acted in good faith by deviating from the original deal. Whitehall had then dispatched Sir Edward Fitzgerald, whom Desmond felt would be able to repair his relationship with the crown. However, when Desmond met with the Irish council in July 1574 they presented him with articles which he found unacceptable. Fitzgerald had disappointed him. When he returned to Munster, therefore, Desmond had lost all faith in outside forces and thus resolved to bolster his position from within Munster.

But this document also revealed the high level of fear and uncertainty which prevailed amongst all the signatories.51 Their own safety was in question as Justice Walshe had arrested some of them within the walled towns of the region, which prompted Desmond to ask for a proclamation to allow himself and his men

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50 The Desmond combination, 18 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/26; P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/27; Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 600, f. 46v; Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 616, ff 155v-156v; Cal. pat. rolls Ire., Eliz., p. 109). The various copies of the combination contain slightly different lists of signatories.

51 Sir Edward Fitzgerald reported after his meeting with Desmond that those around Desmond wanted a general pardon to cover all of Desmond’s supporters as they were afraid for their lives and lands: Declaration by Mr Fitzgerald, Jan./Feb. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/37, enclosure iv); Edward Fitzgerald to Burghley, 13 Feb. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/44).
unhindered access to the said towns. Their lands seemed under even greater threat as they had been threatened with attainder and confiscation of their lands in 1570 following the outbreak of Fitz Maurice's rebellion, not an empty threat given the attainders of the Knight of Glin in 1569 and of the White Knight two years later.

Desmond thus needed the support of his vassals and allies to strengthen his negotiating position, while they needed his support to defend their position in Munster. However, the presence of Lixnaw among the signatories may indicate that Desmond forced some of the signatories to support him. Desmond may have threatened to launch a rebellion if they did not agree to back him, which would have brought potential ruin for some of them. The 'combination' was thus at once both the product and a symptom of Desmond's political instability.

As both Desmond and Fitzwilliam maintained their hardline positions it appeared that Munster was about to witness yet another bloody conflict, but last minute discussions continued in an attempt to avert the looming crisis. Essex and Kildare had tried to convince Desmond to return to the negotiating table as they escorted him back to Munster from Dublin, while Desmond, aside from his appeal to the privy council, also wrote to vice-treasurer Fitton in an attempt to prevent the invasion of his lands. Desmond then met Ormond on 31 July, and offered, upon receipt of the queen's response to his answers given in Dublin, to deliver his pledges and his castles of Castlemaine and Castlemartyr. Fitzwilliam then advanced on Munster with his forces but continued the talks. He first met two of Desmond's chief

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52 Desmond to [the lord deputy and council], 17 Dec. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/43/21, enclosure i); Seven new articles by Mr Edward Fitzgerald, Dec. 1573/Jan. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/37, enclosure ii); Desmond's answer to the seven articles, Jan./Feb. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/37, enclosure iii); Desmond's requests for establishing peace and quiet in his country, Jan./Feb. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/44/42, enclosure viii).
53 Act of attainder of Thomas, knight of the valley, 1569 (Stat. Ire., i, pp 340-1); Act of attainder of John Fitzgerald, the White knight, 1571 (Stat. Ire., i, pp 387-9); Act of attainder for such as shall be indicted for treason, 1570 (Stat. Ire., i, pp 369-73).
54 Fitzwilliam to Burghley, 18 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/23); Desmond to Fitton, 26 July 1574 (S.P. 63/47/33, enclosure ii).
55 Desmond to Fitzwilliam and council, 1 Aug. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/39).
advisers, and then Sir John, who asked him to delay the proclamation of Desmond as a traitor until Sir John had had a chance to confer with the earl. Fitzwilliam, meanwhile, recaptured Derinalare castle which earlier in the summer had been taken from Sir Theobold Butler by Desmond and given to Rory McGrath. The capture of Derinalare fulfilled one important diplomatic function: it allowed Fitzwilliam to save face, it demonstrated his power and Desmond’s weakness, and thereby it facilitated the opening of negotiations. Desmond met Fitzwilliam the following day, 20 August, at Clonmel, as Sir John had previously arranged, where he agreed to disperse his forces and to hand over Castlemaine and Castlemartyr. Desmond then submitted in Cork on 2 September, and repeated his oath of allegiance in Limerick ten days later.  

With neither side willing to force the issue, Desmond had been able to negotiate his way out of his predicament and largely on his terms. He had put in his pledges by 12 September, but it appears only Castlemaine castle was handed over to the crown, which was in William Apsley’s custody by 3 September 1574, as Castlemartyr castle had been ruined by the ward after the siege of Derinalare. The status of the liberty of Kerry was also unchanged. Desmond had held out and had succeeded on most of the key items.

Desmond’s submission thus allowed for the first sustained period of peace in Munster since 1567, and it was in this context that a group of commissioners were appointed to govern Munster. Desmond, secure in his position, cooperated with their rule, the most notable instance of which occurred in July 1575 when Desmond helped the commissioners examine the seneschal of Imokilly and the White Knight following their return to Ireland from France, where they had left James fitz

56 Fitzwilliam, Ormond and others to the queen, 3 Sept. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/47); Fitzwilliam and council to the queen, 12 Sept. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/54).
57 Fitzwilliam, Ormond and others to the queen, 3 Sept. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/47); Fitzwilliam and council to the queen, 12 Sept. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/54).
58 The commissioners were Nicholas Walshe, John Meagh, and Francis Agard. Agard was replaced in 1575 by James Dowdall.
Maurice.59 The following month Desmond spent a week at Cork in the company of the commissioners who found him 'veray temperate, newe borne, and in a goode vain'.60 This cooperation brought tangible rewards for Desmond who, along with Sir John, had been pardoned within a month of his submission.61 Desmond received leases to the abbeys of Abbeydorney and Rattoo, Co. Kerry,62 and in between episodes of conflict with the baron of Lixnaw in late 157463 and mid 157664 the commissioners ruled that the baron owed him 1,260 marks old half face money and 1,080 cattle for rents due out of Clanmaurice which had been unpaid since 1566.65

Nonetheless, doubts remained over the sincerity of his conformity, doubts which came to the fore in 1575. It was feared that Desmond would react violently when Kildare was arrested,66 while some, such as Sir Thomas Smith, believed that Desmond had been privy to Fitz Maurice's intentions before he departed for France.67 It was even claimed that Desmond had declared that he would not allow the

59 Edmund McRuddery and John fitz Ulick to Desmond, 15 July 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/66, enclosure i); Desmond and Dowdall to Justice Walshe and the commissioners, 16 July 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/66, enclosure ii); The commissioners in Munster to Fitzwilliam, 16 July 1575 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 55, f. 308r); Interrogatories administered to James fitz Edmund Fitzgerald, the seneschal of Imokilly, and John McUlick, 18 July 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/66, enclosure iii); Answer of the seneschal and John McUlick, 18 July 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/66, enclosure iv); Dowdall, Walshe, and Meagh to Fitzwilliam, 20 July 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/66); The commissioners of Munster to Fitzwilliam, 9 Aug. 1575 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 55, ff 347v-347v).
60 John Meagh to Philip William, secretary to Fitzwilliam, 9 Aug. 1575 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 55, f. 364r).
61 Pardon to Gerald, earl of Desmond, 1 Oct. 1574 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2476); Pardon to Sir John of Desmond, 1 Oct. 1574 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2478).
62 Lease to Gerald, earl of Desmond, 28 May 1576 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2819); Lease to Gerald, earl of Desmond, 28 May 1576 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2820).
63 The baron of Lixnaw to Ormond, 3 Dec. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/48/70, enclosure ii); Justice Walshe to Ormond, 4 Dec. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/48/70, enclosure iii).
64 Lixnaw to Sidney, 25 Aug. 1576 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/56/21); Lixnaw to Sidney, 1 Sept. 1576 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/56/23).
65 Order passed by the commissioners of Munster, 30 Aug. 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/53/19).
66 John Symcott to Burghley, 14 May 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/51/23).
67 The queen to Ormond, 12 Apr. 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/50/60); Sir Thomas Smith to Fitzwilliam, 12 Apr. 1575 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 55, f. 258); [The queen] to Ormond, 22 Apr. 1575 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 184v-185f); Confession of Thomas Bracke, [31 May ?] 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/2, enclosure v); Desmond to the privy council, 12 June 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/21).
law to be enforced within his territories.\textsuperscript{68} As a consequence his appeals for the return of his son James from England, the release of his pledges from Dublin castle, and the return of his castles were all unsuccessful,\textsuperscript{69} although these reservations about Desmond were not sufficient to totally disrupt his rehabilitation and by late 1575 he was prepared to accept reintegration into the political life of Munster.

The peaceful conditions following Desmond’s submission also allowed for the renewal of the reform programme which at the time was moribund despite various attempts made earlier to relaunch it. Ever since the termination of St Leger’s \textit{de facto} presidency in 1566 much time and effort had been expended on numerous proposals to establish an official replacement. As early as June 1568 the queen had suggested Sir George Stanley as a suitable candidate. The proposal was never implemented, however, due to the large cost of the project, and financial considerations continued to stop the queen from proceeding on subsequent occasions.\textsuperscript{70}

Some time in 1568 Patrick Sherlock submitted a proposal for the reform of Munster which included a presidency. A former army officer and an Ormond

\textsuperscript{68} [The privy council] to Sidney, 16 Aug. 1575 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 178\textsuperscript{f}-179\textsuperscript{v}).

\textsuperscript{69} Desmond to Leicester, 10 June 1575 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 616, f. 165\textsuperscript{f}); Desmond to Burghley, 10 June 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/19); Desmond to secretary Smith, 10 June 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/20); Desmond to the privy council, 12 June 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/21); [The privy council] to Sidney, 16 Aug. 1575 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 178\textsuperscript{f}-179\textsuperscript{v}); [The privy council] to Desmond, 19 Aug. 1575 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 179\textsuperscript{v}-181\textsuperscript{v}); Desmond to Fitzwilliam, 17 Sept. 1575 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 55, f. 426\textsuperscript{f}); A note of the pledges, 26 Sept. 1575 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 55, f. 428\textsuperscript{f}).

\textsuperscript{70} The queen to Sidney, 11 June 1567 (Sidney S.P., no. 41; P.R.O., S.P. 63/21/10); Sidney to Cecil, 30 Nov. 1568 (\textit{Report on the manuscripts of Lord De L’Isle and Dudley, preserved at Penshurst Place}, ii, pp 10-1); The queen to Sidney, 10 Feb. 1569 (Sidney S.P., no. 60; P.R.O., S.P. 63/27/19).
adherent, Sherlock’s paper may have been written with the returning Lord Deputy Sidney in mind, who had been reappointed in April 1568, for it suggests a scheme for the reform of Ireland which was compatible with Sidney’s known preferences. Sherlock suggested Sir John Perrot for the post of president, and thought he should have a force of 100 horsemen and 200 footmen, together with a provost-marshal and a treasurer. He proposed similar presidencies in Connacht and Leinster, and suggested that the deputy, together with a council to consist of the knight marshal, the treasurer, and the master of ordnance, should reside at Athlone with a force of 200 horsemen and 400 footmen. Sherlock also called for the abolition of coyne and livery, a reform of the manner in which the garrison was paid, and a more active collection of the queen’s revenues in Munster which he estimated would yield over £5,000 more to the exchequer each year.

Sidney continued to advocate the benefits of a presidential system, and tried to capitalize on Elizabeth’s concerns in November 1568 when he declared that such a system would help him levy Desmond’s revenues, that at a time when the queen was very concerned at the expense she was having to bear for Desmond’s detention in London. The previous month Sir John Pollard had actually been appointed, but the desire to cut costs, together with his ill-health, contributed to his non-arrival in Ireland, and his commission was eventually withdrawn in 1570.

Finally, in December 1570, Sir John Perrot was appointed Lord President of

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71 Sherlock described himself as a former army captain who had served in the western parts of Ireland: A note sett forthe by yor mates faithfull servant Patrick Sherlocke, c. 1568 (B.L., Cotton MSS, Titus B XII, f. 72v). He represented Ormond with the commissioners in 1566-7: The queen to Sidney, 30 Nov. 1566 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/19/68).

72 A note sett forthe by yor mate faithfull servant Patrick Sherlocke, c. 1568 (B.L., Cotton MSS, Titus B XII, ff 67v-72v).

73 Sidney to Cecil, 14 Nov. 1568 (Report on the manuscripts of Lord De L’Isle and Dudley, preserved at Penshurst Place, ii, p. 9).

74 Pollard’s instructions were dated October 1568, and his commission was withdrawn in April 1570: D.J. Kennedy, The presidency of Munster under Elizabeth and James I, p. 26.
an appointment which posed a significant threat to Desmond’s position. Elizabeth suggested Perrot should have for his use the castle and parsonage of Dungarvan, along with houses in Limerick, Cork, and Kilmallock, and Desmond’s castle at Castlemaine, which would give him an important base within the earldom of Desmond. Furthermore, Desmond was not named among the councillors, doubtless due to his ongoing detention in England, while Ormond and Clancar were. Of greater concern for Desmond was the attitude towards the palatinate of Kerry. As Desmond had not shown legal title to the palatine jurisdiction Perrot was empowered to ‘determin all Manner of Causes’ within Kerry unless and until Desmond provided such legal title. Perrot’s instructions were tantamount to a suspension of the operation of the liberty of Kerry, at least temporarily, while Sidney was ordered to seize the liberty. However, it is uncertain whether the palatinate was in fact suspended as an estimate of Desmond’s income in 1572 stated he was still entitled to the profits of the court of the liberty. In stark contrast, Perrot was specifically barred from interfering with Ormond’s liberty, save in certain circumstances, as Ormond had shown a grant from Queen Mary which had confirmed his liberty of Tipperary. When Perrot arrived at Waterford in February 1571, therefore, the presidency which was established was very different from that imagined by Desmond’s father, Earl James. Instead of being a bulwark for the earldom of Desmond it appeared to threaten the continued existence of the earldom. Ormond had outmanoeuvred Desmond.

Although Perrot rarely found time to exercise his civil authority due to his military responsibilities, there were indications of what he would have liked to have done in the province. In 1571 he proclaimed laws and ordinances for the government

75 The queen to Sidney, 13 Dec. 1570 (Cal. pat. rolls Ire., Hen. VIII-Eliz., p. 546).
77 Fitzwilliam to Burghley, 15 Mar. 1571 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/31/21).
of Munster which covered such issues as proscriptions on coyne and livery, bards and rhymers, the Brehon laws, and the assembling of forces.\textsuperscript{78} In September of that year he entered into recognizances of £2,000 each with the earl of Clancar, lord Barry, lord Courcy, Sir Donough MacCarthey Reagh, Cormac McTeige, McDonough, Barry Óg, O’Sullivan Beara, and O’Sullivan Mór, who promised to help defeat Fitz Maurice,\textsuperscript{79} while two months later he was commissioned to shire Munster, although this appears not to have been accomplished.\textsuperscript{80} Such instances were, however, rare.

Thus the civil functions of the presidency remained underdeveloped, and it was not until late 1572 that Perrot was able to devote significant amounts of time to the employment of the common law throughout the province. When he held sessions at Cork, at which twenty people were executed for treason or felonies, Perrot found the freeholders ‘redie to present faultes, eithf uppon theese or traitor\textsuperscript{53}, no Jurie passing on any in the cessions, againste whome any iuste cause was that was not founde gilltie’,\textsuperscript{81} while in April of the following year, after Fitz Maurice’s submission and Desmond’s return, he executed forty five malefactors at sessions at Limerick, ‘some for Treasons, and some for murder and feellonyes’.\textsuperscript{82} The following November he, along with Matthew Sheyn, bishop of Cork, and Nicholas White, second justice of the province, decided a dispute between Cornell O’Driscoll and Owen McArt, over the office of proctor of Ross cathedral, in O’Driscoll’s favour.\textsuperscript{83} Circumstances seemed propitious for the further development of the presidency, but Perrot returned to England in late 1573, and when he was not replaced, the gains he had made in his final

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} Laws and ordinances proclaimed at Limerick by Sir John Perrot, 1571 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 614, ff 229r-232r). For a detailed analysis of these see D.J. Kennedy, The presidency of Munster under Elizabeth and James I, pp 60-70.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Articles agreed before Sir John Perrot, 26 Sept. 1571 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 614, ff 83r-84r).
\item \textsuperscript{80} Commission to Sir John Perrot, \textit{et al.}, 11 Nov. 1571 (\textit{Irish Fiants, Elizabeth}, no. 1846).
\item \textsuperscript{81} Perrot to Burghley, 2 Nov. 1572 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/38/29).
\item \textsuperscript{82} Perrot to Burghley, 12 Apr. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/40/11).
\item \textsuperscript{83} Confirmation of a decree of the president and council of Munster, 1 May 1574 (\textit{Irish Fiants, Elizabeth}, no. 2382).
\end{itemize}
year were lost. Although commissioners were appointed and occasional suggestions were made,\textsuperscript{84} the reform programme appeared to have squandered its opportunity until the reappointment of Sidney as Deputy in August 1575 revitalised it and gave it fresh impetus.

Sidney returned to Ireland with a determination to resolve the problems in the provinces of the realm quickly and efficiently. He sought to pacify Ulster with a policy of support for Turlough Luineach O’Neill, and even recommended that he be created earl of Clanconnell. In Connacht Sidney oversaw the end of the rebellion of the Clanrickard Burkes, the appointment of Sir Nicholas Malby as military governor of the province, and shired the province into counties Galway, Sligo, Mayo, and Roscommon. In Munster he was determined to restore the presidency, which would extend the queen’s writ throughout the province and increase her revenues, while the president would be able to suppress internal opposition without recourse to men and money from England.\textsuperscript{85}

Central to this was his intention to implement a composition scheme throughout Ireland. In this he was deeply influenced by Edmund Tremayne, clerk of the privy council, who had served as Sidney’s private secretary in Ireland between April 1570 and early 1571. Tremayne, in a number of reports, argued that the key to

\textsuperscript{84} Within weeks of Desmond’s submission the queen had called for a general consultation between Fitzwilliam and the council for the establishment of order within Munster, the prevention of further disorder, the reduction of costs, and the restoration of peace: The queen to Fitzwilliam, [19] Sept. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/62). At the end of 1574 Ormond suggested the queen keep possession of some castles in Munster and populate Kenry and the White Knight’s territory with loyal subjects: Ormond to Burghley, 8 Dec. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/48/70); Note of Ormond’s knowledge and opinion of Ireland, 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/48/70, enclosure i). The following year Perrot proposed the appointment of exclusively Englishmen to positions of authority in Ireland, that the lords of Ireland be forced to forgo coyne and livery, and the placement of the deputy at Athlone so that he could intervene more speedily in the troublesome areas of Munster, Connacht, and Ulster. He deemed a force of 400 horsemen and 1,400 footmen necessary, and recommended the deforestation of Munster to deny places of refuge to rebels: Note of the lord president of Munster’s opinion for reforming Ireland, 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/54/39).

\textsuperscript{85} Sir Henry Sidney’s plot for the government of Ireland, [July] 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/83); S.G. Ellis, \textit{Ireland in the age of the Tudors}, 1447-1603, p. 307; Ciaran Brady, \textit{The chief governors}, pp 268-9.
the Anglicisation of Ireland would be the enactment of a composition scheme. The composition, a fixed monetary charge upon the land, was to be used to pay for the English garrison stationed in Ireland, and was to replace the much resented cess in the Pale and the system of coyne and livery throughout the rest of Ireland. The island-wide nature of the scheme would increase the monies raised and allow for a larger garrison which would maintain the peace. In these circumstances the Hiberno-Norman and Gaelic-Irish lords would be able to forgo their private armies, which were maintained by coyne and livery, as the garrison would be sufficiently strong to enforce compliance if necessary. In this way disputes, which previously would have been resolved by recourse to arms, would be resolved peacefully by the law. Once in operation, the law would lead to the pacification and Anglicisation of Ireland.

To initiate his programme Sidney first toured Cos Waterford, Cork, and Limerick between December 1575 and February 1576. There he met with virtually all the lords and gentlemen of the region, both Hiberno-Norman and Gaelic-Irish, including Desmond, Sir John and Sir James of Desmond. He found them all favourably disposed to forgo coyne and livery and instead provide for English military forces which would keep the peace and help enforce the law. He called for a president to be appointed, along with the abolition of the liberties of Kerry and Tipperary which he viewed as impediments to the implementation of reform. By the time he left Limerick, therefore, Sidney had secured the agreement of all the regional figures for a relaunch of the reform programme which was to be centred on a presidency as envisaged in 1573-4, although Desmond had not agreed to forgo the liberty of Kerry.

To implement the composition in Munster Sidney appointed Sir John, along with representatives of other lords, the church, local corporations, and regional

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86 S.G. Ellis, Ireland in the age of the Tudors, 1447-1603, p. 304-5; Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 140-3.
government, to two important commissions in April 1576. The first was to survey those lands which had not previously been shired and those properties which had been forfeited to the crown, including former monastic lands, and assign them to the appropriate county. This would provide the Dublin administration with accurate information about the territories of the region and a reliable account of the crown’s holdings there. This in turn would allow for greater political control, and would hold out the prospect of increased revenues for the crown, from rents and taxes. The second commission was to establish whom every tenant and freeholder in the province held their land of and by what rents and services they held their lands. This would furnish Sidney with the necessary information for the enactment of the composition.88 By the summer of 1576 composition had been agreed in principle and the province was being surveyed in preparation for it. The next step was implementation.

Sidney achieved the resurrection of the Munster presidency in June 1576 when Sir William Drury was appointed to the post. Drury was an experienced military man who had first seen service as far back as 1544, although he had no previous experience of Ireland. Not a Leicester adherent, Drury’s appointment may have been due to Ormond’s influence.89

Drury’s instructions were largely the same as Perrot’s of 1570, although some differences are notable. Desmond was now appointed to the provincial council, whereas in 1570 he had been left out of the council, which reflected his improved standing following Sidney’s tour, while Thomond and Clancar were no longer on the council. Equally if not more important was the removal of that portion of the article in Perrot’s instructions which had questioned the validity and the continued existence

88    Commission to Conor, earl of Thomond, et al., 2 Apr. 1576 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2758); Commission to William, bishop of Limerick, et al., 23 Apr. 1576 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2771).
89    Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 197-8; J.G. Crawford, Anglicizing the government of Ireland, pp 313-4.
of the liberty of Kerry. However, the president was still authorized to hear cases concerning the four reserved pleas within the liberty, a right Drury would exercise in dramatic fashion the following year.90

Once in place Drury started to levy the cess, and just as Sidney’s attempt to agree a composition in the Pale provoked a determined reaction from the Palesmen which severely impaired Sidney’s freedom of action and ultimately contributed in large measure to his recall,91 so too did Drury encounter similarly fierce resistance when he first introduced a cess on the province. As president Drury had command of a force of thirty horsemen and twenty footmen, but he also had a band of 100 horsemen under his personal command, and it was these horsemen which caused problems when he levied cess for their maintenance.92

The lords of the region complained at the start of 1577,93 and then in March Desmond appealed directly to the lords of the privy council. He claimed that the inhabitants of the province were burdened with intolerably high levels of cess, with each horseman costing 20d per day on top of the food they received for themselves and their horses. The inhabitants were thus impoverished by the cess.94 The privy council thanked Desmond for his concern about the harmful effects the cess was having in Munster and ordered Drury to investigate the behaviour of the horsemen and correct any abuses he uncovered. They did, however, criticize Desmond for not

90 Instructions for the president and council of Munster, June 1576 (B.L., Cotton MSS, Titus B XIII, ff 215r-222f).
91 For the controversy over the cess see Ciaran Brady, The chief governors, pp 136-58, 208-44; J.G. Crawford, Anglicizing the government of Ireland, pp 369-407.
92 Lord chancellor Gerrard’s notes of his report on Ireland, May 1578 in Anal Hib., no. 2 (1931), p. 149.
93 Sidney to the privy council, 27 Jan. 1577 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 601, ff 63r-70v); Nicholas White, master of the rolls, to Burghley, 10 Feb. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/57/25); Sir William Drury to Walsingham, 24 Feb. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/57/27).
94 Desmond to Burghley, 20 Mar. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/57/43); Desmond to Leicester, 20 Mar. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/57/44).
having first written to the deputy or president about his concerns. But rather that it was considerably higher than he, and the rest of the province, had been led to expect. Perhaps Desmond had hoped for the types of exemptions from the cess which the earls of Clanrickard and Thomond would receive in the 1585 composition of Connacht, but Drury appears to have cessed everyone without exception. Desmond’s opposition was further fuelled by the fact that the presence of horsemen in his territories would give the president a foothold within the earldom and allow for greater supervision of Desmond’s activities, while he also viewed the cess as a test of his standing relative to Ormond as Ormond’s lands had been exempted from the cess in 1569, an exemption which was confirmed in May 1578. If Desmond agreed to Drury’s cess it would further demonstrate Ormond’s preeminence in the region.

In spite of the protests Drury pressed ahead with the implementation of the composition. In April 1577 Owen MacCarthy Reagh agreed to a composition of £250 p.a. for two years, while lord Barry agreed to pay £150. A year later these lords had been joined by lord Roche, who was to pay £40, Sir Cormac McTeige MacCarthy, lord of Muskerry, £100 (or 100 cattle), MacDonough MacCarthy of Duhallow, £60, and the earl of Clancar, £80 (or 80 cattle). The total composition for Co. Cork was £788 20d p.a. County Waterford brought in another £57 10s 10d, while

95 The privy council to Sidney, 10 May 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/15); The privy council to Drury, 13 May 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/17; Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 268V-269f); The privy council to Desmond, 13 May 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/19; Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 269f-270v); The privy council to Sidney, 14 May 1577 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 273V-275f).


97 The queen to Sidney, 30 June 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/28/59; Cal. pat. rolls Ire., Hen. VIII-Eliz., pp 530-1); Remembrance for Ormond, May 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/60/66).

98 Drury to the privy council, 24 Apr. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/4); Covenants between Drury and Owen MacCarthy, MacCarthy Reagh, Apr. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/7; Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 114V-115v); Lord chancellor Gerrard to Burghley, 20 May 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/31).
Co. Limerick contributed £144 15s. Thomond contributed a further £180, making a grand total for Munster of £1,170 6s 6d. This figure must be seen as a considerable success for Drury, particularly as Desmond had not contributed.99

Desmond’s appeal to the privy council had hurt Sidney, however, and for a time soured their relationship. A month after Desmond’s letter Drury arrested Sir John on suspicion of having agreed to support the rebellion of John Burke, Clanrickard’s son, and of having had contact with Fitz Maurice. Under subsequent examination Sir John disclosed that a marriage had been proposed between himself and Burke’s sister Marie, but denied that Burke had shown him letters from Fitz Maurice.100 The news that Sir John had negotiated with Burke, who, together with his elder half-brother Ulick, later third earl of Clanrickard, rebelled on a number of occasions during the 1570s and early 1580s, shook Sidney’s confidence in Desmond who appeared to be inching away from the deal Sidney had organized during his tour of 1575-6. Furthermore, Sidney believed there was a secret, orchestrated campaign in Munster to oppose the cess which was linked to the opposition in the Pale,101 and that Sir John was one of its leaders.102 The arrest of Sir John would, therefore, appear to have been a reaction by Sidney and Drury to Desmond’s criticism of the cess, particularly as Desmond had ignored them and appealed directly to the privy council.

It was in this context of decreasing faith in Desmond that Sidney allowed 

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99 Brief note of the yearly revenue already accrued to her majesty in Munster in lieu of cess, 29 Mar. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/60/28). Sidney estimated the yield from Munster would be £3,000 p a. if Desmond and Ormond had agreed to compound in Kerry and Tipperary: Sidney to the queen, 20 May 1577, in Arthur Collins (ed.), Letters and memorials of state, i, pp 180-5.

100 Sidney to the privy council, 17 Mar. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/57/39); Arthur Collins (ed.), Letters and memorials of state, i, pp 164-8; Drury to the privy council, 24 Apr. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/4); The council of Ireland to the queen, 12 Sept. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/59/6; Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 601, ff 76r-80v).

101 Sidney to the privy council, 27 Jan. 1577 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 601, ff 63r-70v); Sidney to Leicester, 19 May 1577 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 607, ff 26r-30v).

102 Sidney to the privy council, 15 May 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/25).
Drury introduce a further, more invasive, element into the provincial reform programme when Drury declared he would hold sessions at Tralee, Co. Kerry, in mid July 1577. He made it clear he only intended to hear cases which involved the four reserved pleas, and as such did not directly threaten the existence of the liberty of Kerry, but it was significant in that it was possibly the first time in the sixteenth century that the provisions of the four reserved pleas were actually to be employed. Faced with such an encroachment into his earldom’s heartland, Desmond assembled a force, estimated at 1,200 men, and lay in wait along the president’s route to Tralee. Desmond’s men appeared to be about to attack Drury but they eventually dispersed and Drury continued on to Tralee where he held the sessions. While Drury was fully entitled to act in this manner, it seems that his decision to do so was linked with the cess controversy. The arrest of Sir John had not stopped the campaign against the cess, and Drury, with Sidney’s blessing, may have used the occasion of the sessions in Tralee to punish Desmond for his continued opposition to the cess.

The dispute between Desmond and Drury over the cess and related issues poisoned their relationship and it appeared set to come to a violent climax in December 1577 when Desmond, in the belief that he was about to be arrested by Drury, retreated into Kerry and gathered forces estimated at 1,000 men. Faced with the possibility of another full-scale rebellion Sidney made his way to Kilkenny where he convened a meeting between Desmond, Eleanor, and Drury in early January 1578. Sidney managed to dispel Desmond’s fears and reconcile him and Drury. The crisis may have been initiated by the manner in which Drury wrote to Desmond as Drury agreed that some of the fault had been his. For his part Desmond agreed to keep a force of only twenty horsemen to attend him, to obey the president, and to set his

103 Drury to Leicester, 8 July 1577 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 619, ff 28r-28v).
lands for fixed rents.105

Although Desmond did not in fact enact the agreement on rents, Sidney’s intervention did bring an end to the hostility between Desmond and Drury and for the remaining few months of his presidency Drury received Desmond’s cooperation. Desmond attended the sessions at Limerick in March 1578,106 and later that year he delivered both Sir James and Grace O’Malley, ‘Granuaile’, the pirate, to Drury.107 Desmond’s improved relationship with Drury held out the prospect of the further integration of Desmond into the presidential model, but just as that might have happened Sidney was recalled and Drury was appointed lord justice.108 Once again the office of president was left vacant, but the retention of Drury in Dublin meant that the recent gains were not lost as Desmond continued his good relationship with the new lord justice.

Having made so much progress on the composition in Munster Drury sought to complete the task by getting Desmond to agree. Talks between Desmond and Drury continued throughout the second half of 1578, and meetings were held at Dublin in August and again two months later at Waterford and Youghal.109 Finally, in November, Desmond agreed to the replacement of ‘the uncerten customes and extraordinary chardges’ by a fixed rent of £2,000, and promised his support for the

105 Drury to the privy council, 15 Jan. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/60/3); Drury to Walsingham, 27 Jan. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/60/6); Sidney to the privy council, 20 Feb. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/60/14; Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 601, ff 71r-75v); The privy council to Desmond, 20 Feb. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/60/15); The queen to Desmond, 28 Feb. 1578 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 182v-183v); The queen to the countess of Desmond, 28 Feb. 1578 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 183v-184r); Henry Sidney, ‘Memoir of narrative addressed to Sir Francis Walsingham, 1583’ in U.J.A., 1st. ser., viii (1860), p. 187.

106 Drury to the privy council, 24 Mar. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/60/25).

107 Drury to the privy council, 1 July 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/61/29); Drury to the privy council, 1 July 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/61/30); Drury to Burghley, 25 Aug. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/61/60); Drury to Walsingham, 25 Aug. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/61/61); Drury to Leicester, 25 Aug. 1578 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 619, f. 26r).

108 Drury was appointed Lord Justice on 27 April 1578, and entered office on 14 September: S.G. Ellis, Ireland in the ages of the Tudors, 1447-1603, p. 369.

commission which was to assess his lands for composition, adding that ‘if the comyssioneres ... doe take paynes in that matter according the truste comitted to their chardge’, then he would be ‘glad to expect there good p[ro]ceedinge’. One official assured Drury that it would ‘doe a man good to see what conformity is growen in therle and howe he is altogether bent to kepe him selffe and his countrey in good order of civility’. This was truly a momentous decision on Desmond’s part, for he formally declared his intention to end the system of coyne and livery which had enabled his predecessors to extend their authority throughout much of Munster. With this agreement he brought the completion of reform in Munster within grasp.

However, as events unfurled, he never had to fulfill his promises, so his true attitude to the composition must remain uncertain. It is possible that he fully embraced the abolition of coyne and livery, tired of the vagaries and instability inherent in the system, but given his negative experience at the hands of the various arbitrators, commissioners, and officials during the previous twenty years, where he lost virtually every hearing against Ormond, it is doubtful if he would have freely entrusted his future to the same legal system which had failed him so consistently. Furthermore, the key person in the future arrangement would be the president who might not be friendly towards him, and the absence of coyne and livery, and the men it would support, would leave him at the president’s mercy.

Perhaps the lure of a guaranteed income of £2,000 p.a. was too strong for Desmond to ignore, given that his earldom had been badly affected by the violence of the 1560s and 1570s. Although the survey of his lands in 1584 put his income at over £7,000, estimates of this period gave a figure at or below £2,000. A secure income

110 Desmond to Drury, 28 Nov. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/65/4, enclosure iii); Drury to the privy council, 28 Nov. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/65/29); Gerrard to Burghley, 3 Jan. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/65/3); Drury to Burghley, 6 Jan. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/65/5).
111 John Verdon to Drury, 28 Nov. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/65/4, enclosure iv).
112 For a discussion of the financial state of the earldom of Desmond between the 1560s and the 1580s see Ciaran Brady, ‘Faction and the origins of the Desmond rebellion of 1579’ in I.H.S., xxii, no. 88 (Sept. 1981), pp 292-3.
for a time might have seemed a good way to rebuild his earldom, while he also owed considerable sums of money to the crown and other creditors from his detention in London.

These considerations reflect the seriousness of the decision Desmond had to make. His agreement brought with it major implications both for himself and his earldom, while the implementation of the decision was fraught with difficulty. However, with an active president, and coyne and livery increasingly problematic, Desmond was left with no acceptable alternative, and consequently accepted composition.

Thus by early 1579 Desmond seemed to have resolved most of the outstanding issues between himself and Dublin and Whitehall. Although his petition to have Castlemaine returned to him was rejected due to the threat posed by Desmond’s ‘unkinde kinesman’, James fitz Maurice, and a decision on his request to be granted the abbey lands in Kerry was deferred until after the lands had been surveyed, Desmond’s future seemed secure. Later in the year, however, that would change.

113 The queen to Desmond, 21 Dec. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/63/57); The queen to the Countess of Desmond, 21 Dec. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/63/58); The privy council to Desmond, 21 Dec. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/63/60); The privy council to Desmond, [9] Jan. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/65/31, enclosure i; Walsingham letter-bk, pp 32-3).
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CHARACTER, STRATEGY AND TACTICS
OF THE DESMOND REBELLION, 1579-83

The Desmond rebellion lasted four and a half years and was one of the most serious military challenges Elizabeth faced during her reign. Spanish and Papal troops intervened on two occasions, the second time to land a force of 600 men, with the possibility of further support for the rebels who numbered in their thousands. In response Elizabeth sent thousands of English soldiers to the province, along with substantial naval support. The conflict held out the promise of large clashes between rebel and crown forces, and indeed there were some, but the vast majority of the encounters between the two sides were small-scale incidents. The most numerous type of clash was a small skirmish with relatively small numbers of combatants on each side. As such the Desmond rebellion resembled a modern guerrilla war.

There are a number of narrative accounts of the conflict already available,¹ but these contain little analysis of the war. The following, therefore, will provide an analysis of the character of the rebellion, not only to throw light on an early modern feudal rebellion but also to demonstrate how the underlying problems of the Desmond lordship shaped the character of the conflict, determined its course, and how the lordship was in turn fundamentally transformed by its outcome.

The rebellion can, for the sake of clarity and analysis, be divided into four

phases. The opening phase, which lasted until November 1579, commenced on 17 July 1579 when James fitz Maurice landed in Kerry with a force of approximately 50-60 men. He fortified Dún an Óir, and initially received support from the O’Flaherty’s of Mayo and a few others. He did not, however, attract significant backing until Sir John and Sir James joined the rebellion on 1 August when they killed Sir Henry Davells, constable of Dungarvan, and his companions in Tralee. This gave the rebellion fresh impetus, but this was dissipated by 18 August when Fitz Maurice was killed by the Clanwilliam Burkes in a skirmish.

Effective leadership of the rebellion then fell to Sir John who achieved a notable victory over crown troops at the Battle of Springfield in early September. However, Sir Nicholas Malby, the English commander, exacted his revenge within the month when on 3 October his force overcame Sir John’s force at Monasteranenagh, Co. Limerick. Malby then proceeded to Askeaton where Desmond refused to submit. In response Malby destroyed the abbey, the town, and the corn in the vicinity. Then, when Desmond failed to meet the newly arrived Lord Justice Sir William Pelham in early November, Pelham proclaimed Desmond a traitor. Within two weeks Desmond responded with the sack of Youghal. The rebellion had


4 Drury to privy council, 22 Aug. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 135-8).

5 Malby to Walsingham, 10 Sept. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/17); Drury and the council of Ireland to the privy council, 12 Sept. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 172-4); Wallop to Walsingham, 14 Sept. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/28).


7 Desmond to Ormond, 10 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/50); Desmond to Ormond, 10 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/51); Malby to Walsingham, 12 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/52); Malby to Desmond, the countess, Maurice Sheehan, or the constable of Askeaton, 8 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/52, enclosure ix).

developed from one which consisted of a small expeditionary force into a Munster-
wide military conflict.

There was a dramatic increase in English military activity during the second
phase as the crown sought to crush the rebellion. In December Ormond, commander
in Munster between October 1579 and June 1581, burned the countryside as he
marched his forces through Limerick, Cork and Waterford. March 1580 witnessed a
sweep by Pelham and Ormond through Limerick and Kerry, which culminated in the
capture of Carrigafoile castle. Later, in June, Pelham and Ormond made another
sweep through Cork and Kerry.

By the summer of 1580, therefore, the crown forces had seized all castles in
rebel hands, had captured large amounts of prey throughout the countryside, and had
extended their search for rebels throughout Cos Kerry, Cork, and Limerick. As a
consequence of this campaigning, many rebels had sought pardons. Desmond,
however, held out, and his position was bolstered in mid-July when the Baltinglass
rebellion broke out in Leinster, which caused a redeployment of English forces away
from Munster. Soon after, however, Sir James of Desmond was captured and
was subsequently executed on 3 October.

In mid-September a force of around 600 Spanish and Italian troops landed in
Kerry and refortified Dún an Óir. This greatly alarmed Dublin and Whitehall, but
they remained in the fort and made virtually no contribution to the conflict. In
November Lord Deputy Arthur Grey laid siege and after three days bombardment the

9 Ormond to the privy council, 27 Dec. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/64; Walsingham letter-
bk, pp 258-60).
10 Pelham to the queen, 1 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/28); Ormond to Walsingham,
8 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/37).
11 Nicholas White to Burghley, 22 July 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/74/56).
12 Fenton to Walsingham, 29 July 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/74/78).
13 Patrick Grante to Ormond, 6 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/75/17); Ormond to
Walsingham, 8 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/75/25).
14 Lixnaw to the commissioners of Munster, 15 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/31).
fort surrendered, whereupon all but thirty were summarily executed. By November 1580, therefore, lord Grey had largely succeeded in his aim to contain the rebellion and had ensured that foreign forces did not establish a permanent presence in Ireland. Grey thus had a stable platform from which to bring the rebellion to a close.

Grey began the third phase with the establishment of garrisons throughout Munster in order to secure the province, such as at Dingle, Ross, Youghal, and Cork. However, the conflict continued unabated, with skirmishes throughout Kerry, Limerick, Cork, Tipperary, and Waterford during 1581. Grey toured Munster in September and October, and in early January 1582 the crown forces scored a notable success when they killed Sir John.

However, over the winter of 1581-2 the number of soldiers in Munster was reduced substantially, from 1,768 in October 1581 down to 747 in February 1582. These reductions in the English forces only served to encourage the rebels who annihilated the garrison at Bantry in March 1582, destroyed the garrison at Ardfert

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15 St Leger to Burghley, 13 & 18 Oct. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/77/43); ____ to Walsingham, [11] Nov. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/78/27); Grey to the queen, 12 Nov. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/78/29); Bingham to Walsingham, 12 Nov. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/78/32).
16 Gerrard and the council to Burghley, 30 Nov. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/78/69); Wallop and Waterhouse to Burghley, 8 Dec. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/79/4).
17 Captain Edward Berkeley to Walsingham, 19 Nov. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/78/48).
18 Wallop to Burghley, 24 Jan. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/80/25); Sir William Morgan to Walsingham, 23 Feb. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/80/76); Ormond to Grey, 13 Mar. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/81/36, enclosure i); Nicholas White to Burghley, 22 Apr. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/82/46); St Leger to Burghley, 3 June 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/38); Captain John Case to Walsingham, 15 June 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/58); Nicholas White to Burghley, 24 Oct. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/33).
19 Grey to the privy council, 6 Nov. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/51).
20 William Wendover to Secretary Fenton, 6 Jan. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/88/14, enclosure i).
21 Garrison in Munster, 20 Oct. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/28); An estimate of the garrison, 1 Nov. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/47); Numbers of horse and foot in pay, 31 Jan. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/88/55); Schedule of footmen discharged, and of those in pay, Feb. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/89/54).
22 St Leger to the queen, 12 Mar. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/41, enclosure i); St Leger to Fenton, 24 Mar. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/23, enclosure i); Fenton to the privy council, 13 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/31).
in May, killed over twenty of the garrison at Abbeydorney in September, and attacked Cashel the same month.

By the end of 1582, therefore, the rebellion had descended into an apparent military stalemate. Significant victories had been secured by both sides, but neither side appeared capable of achieving overall victory. Such was the lack of belief that a quick triumph was attainable that some officials suggested that Desmond be pardoned as a way to bring the rebellion to a conclusion. This did not happen, however, and the rebellion continued on into 1583 with Ormond restored as English commander.

The rebellion was almost brought to a conclusion as it entered its fourth and final phase when Desmond and his wife were nearly captured by the Kilmallock garrison on 4 January 1583. Meanwhile the Seneschal of Imokilly maintained a war of resistance. He led attacks on Cork and Youghal in January, and targets in central Cork, such as Castletownroche, Castlelyons, and the Great and Little Islands in Barrymore, the following month. By the summer, however, the course of the conflict had been altered as Ormond waged a war of attrition, while at the same time he denuded Desmond of allies by a policy of granting protection to increasing numbers of rebels, amongst whom was the Seneschal.

Desmond's situation became even more grave when first his chaplain was

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23 Fenton to Walsingham, 8 May 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/92/18).
24 Geoffrey Storye and Robert Woodward to Thomas Norris, 26 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/17, enclosure ii); St Leger to the lords justices, 26 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/10, enclosure i).
25 William Young, portreeve of Cashel, to the lords justices, 28 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/3, enclosure iv).
26 Fenton to Burghley, 14 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/95/45); Lord Justice Loftus to Burghley, 5 Nov. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/97/16).
29 Ormond to the privy council, 18 June 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/87); Ormond to the privy council, 10 July 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/103/15); Ormond to Burghley, 10 July 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/103/16).
30 Ormond to Lords Justices Loftus and Wallop, 15 June 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/84, enclosure i); Ormond to the queen, 18 June 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/86).
captured in September, and then his last captain of galloglass, Gorehe (Gofraidh) MacSweeney, was killed on 1 November. Reduced to the support of perhaps twenty followers, Desmond’s end came when his men stole some cattle and horses in the vicinity of Tralee. Alerted to the earl’s presence, a posse of kerne and soldiers from Castlemaine set out in pursuit. Tracked to a cabin near Glenageenty, his pursuers attacked the rebels on the morning of 11 November. Daniel O’Kelly, one of the kerne, injured Desmond on the right arm and the earl was taken prisoner. However, due to his injured state, Desmond was unable to walk and, as his remaining followers attempted to rescue him, his captors decided to execute him. O’Kelly then beheaded Desmond and the posse brought the head to Castlemaine. Presented to Ormond at Cork, the head was sent to Elizabeth and finally exhibited on London Bridge on 13 December 1583. The rebellion was over.

This skeletal discussion of the rebellion, while it describes the course of the conflict, does not, however, suffice in providing an explanation as to why the rebellion occurred. Similarly, while it provides the necessary structure to make the story of the events intelligible, this brief description also obscures the complexities and subtleties of the character of the conflict. The conflict was essentially conducted as a series of short, but intense, skirmishes which occurred throughout Munster in no particular geographic pattern at all times of the year over a four and a half year period. This reflected the fragmented nature of the earldom, spread as it was throughout much of the province. This disjointed nature of the conflict initially suited the rebels, but ultimately it accentuated the internal weaknesses of the pre-rebellion earldom. Before the events of the rebellion can be analysed to reveal its character, however, a number of fundamental difficulties must first be acknowledged.

31 Ormond to Burghley, 23 Sept. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/104/95); Lord Roche to Ormond, 19 Sept. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/104/95, enclosure i).
The first such difficulty relates to the source material. The vast majority of the information about the rebellion comes from documents written by English officials, advisers, and military commanders. These documents, gathered in collections such as the series of the State Papers and the Carew MSS, contain information about the successes of the English forces, the various plans proposed by English commanders, the difficulties they faced in operating in Munster, and their constant need for supplies. The result is that a relatively complete portrait of the English war effort in Munster can be reconstructed. In contrast, however, the picture which emerges of the rebel war effort is much more imperfect, due to the fact that these collections contain few letters written by Desmond or other rebels. This deficiency can, to a very limited degree, be rectified by Irish sources such as the Annals of the Four Masters, but such sources represent only a very small percentage of the extant material. The story of the rebellion must, therefore, be written almost totally from sources from one of the participating sides only.

What information has survived about the plans and intentions of the rebels, their numerical strength and geographic distribution, and their successes and failures, was largely written by Englishmen who rarely had full and accurate intelligence. Instead, often what was written down was the latest rumour, mere speculation, or their best guess. Other times the bias of the writer comes through in the use of such pejorative terms as ‘notorious traitor’ and ‘notorious malefactor’ for describing rebels, a practice which was common. The extant information about the rebels must, therefore, be treated with some degree of caution.

Similar caution must also be exercised with the reports of the military encounters which occurred during the rebellion. One difficulty is the great variety in the quality of the reportage. Some reports of encounters between opposing forces are extremely detailed, giving the date and location of the incident, the names of the
leaders on both sides, the size of the respective forces, and the outcome in terms of casualties and prey taken or lost. In such instances a detailed and precise analysis can be performed, allowing its importance and its place in the development of the rebellion to be fully established. Unfortunately, such cases are rare.

More often than not, some of that information is lacking. The dates of many incidents are not recorded, and can only be dated as having occurred on or before the date of the report of the incident, although the time-lag between an incident and a report would often be within two weeks. The strength of forces is also frequently missing, while figures for casualties are similarly infrequent. In these cases the analysis is necessarily truncated and incomplete, producing more qualified conclusions. Interestingly, this difficulty is more frequent towards the latter stages of the rebellion, where many reports merely note that particular rebels were killed without furnishing other details about the circumstances. Perhaps English commanders were more active towards the end, although the overall rate of incidents remained fairly constant.

A further consideration is the possibility, if not the probability, that there were incidents in the rebellion for which no record exists. Messengers and letters may have been intercepted, and some incidents may have resulted in the death of all participants, while some commanders may not have wished to inform their colleagues and superiors of embarrassing defeats, a possibility compounded by the scarcity of non-English sources. Any list of incidents, therefore, can only be considered as authoritative and exhaustive as the sources allow.

Between Fitz Maurice’s landing in July 1579 and Desmond’s death in November 1583 there were 170 identifiable military incidents, all but 8 of which can be dated to the month in which they occurred. Included among these incidents are actions such as large battles, ambushes, sieges, cattle raids, and the capture of
prisoners. Actions such as the siege of Smerwick in 1580, which witnessed military incidents over a number of days, are counted as one action. Identifiable individual actions which occurred during multi-day marches and sweeps through the countryside are counted separately.

Table 7.1 Distribution of military incidents by county over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1579</th>
<th>1580</th>
<th>1581</th>
<th>1582</th>
<th>1583</th>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>27*</td>
<td>49*</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: In 1579 3 incidents stretched into 2 counties.
In 1580 1 incident stretched into 2 counties.

Table 7.1 shows the number of military incidents which occurred in each county for each calendar year of the rebellion. The first point which comes across from this table is the diffuse nature of the fighting. The conflict was spread over each of the five counties, with each county witnessing a minimum of five separate incidents over the course of the rebellion. Five incidents occurred in County Waterford. In December 1579 Ormond burned Coshbride, including the town of Lisfinny, while by early February 1580 Sir Peter Carew had captured Strancally castle and taken a large prey of cattle and sheep. Later that month Coshbride was again targeted as Sir William Morgan burned all the towns there. In mid-1581 Desmond led a force of

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33 Ormond to Burghley, 27 Dec. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/64).
34 Waterhouse to Walsingham, 3 Feb. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/71/32).
around 1,400 men into Decies and was said to have burned 36 towns, villages, and settlements, and to have taken 7,000 cattle. In May 1582 the county was spoiled by the Seneschal of Imokilly and Patrick Condon. Virtually all parts of counties Kerry, Limerick, and Cork, along with much of the western parts of counties Waterford and Tipperary, were thus liable to witness a military incident.

This widespread distribution was continued over time. In all but the last year of the rebellion there were identifiable incidents in all five of the counties. Thus there occurred in 1580 incidents at Smerwick and Carrigafoile in Co. Kerry, Askeaton and Kilmallock in Co. Limerick, Muskerry and Cloyne in Co. Cork, Strancally in Co. Waterford, and Caher in Co. Tipperary. The theatre of operations thus continued to be very large for the duration of the conflict.

Interestingly, the woods of the province were relatively unimportant as locations for military encounters, there being only 18 out of 170 incidents, approximately 10.5%, identified as having taken place within woods. This would support the contention of various English commanders that they found it extremely difficult to engage the rebels within the woods, the rebels, with their greater local knowledge, being able to evade their pursuers.

Of the 170 military incidents there were two which closely equated with conventional battles, both of which took place during the opening months of the conflict. That these two battles occurred at this stage was due to the fact that the English troops were then entering Munster en bloc, and that the rebel forces were also congregated in a large formation. As such they were fought before the rebellion assumed its overall character.

The first was the Battle of Springfield, which occurred in September 1579 when a force of approximately 300 English and Gaelic-Irish troops encountered a

36 St Leger to Burghley, 3 June 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/38).
37 St Leger to Walsingham, 28 May 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/92/102).
force of rebels led by Sir John and Sir James in a clearing in the Great Wood of Kilmore. Once the English were in the open the rebels emerged from the woods and charged the crown troops who lost over 100 kerne and perhaps 40 English dead, including two captains of kerne and a captain of the shot, as well as many others wounded. Of the rebels, Sir John was hit in the face and ‘somewhat brused uppon the legge’, while Sir James had his horse killed under him.38

A month later, on 3 October, Malby gained his revenge and exposed the limitations of the Geraldine forces in conventional warfare at the Battle of Monasteranenagh. This time Malby’s scouts had alerted him to the presence of a rebel force under Sir John and Sir James, estimated at over 1,000 men. Malby, therefore, deployed his 500 footmen and 40 kerne to face the rebels, while he held his 40 horsemen in reserve. The two sides exchanged shots before the rebels charged the English forces ‘who had couched their pykes to receave them’. The two wings of Malby’s force then engaged the rebels who thereupon ‘began to wheele about’. The horsemen then charged the rebels who turned and retreated. In the end the rebels, who had forsaken their traditional allies, the woods and surprise, were defeated and lost between 140 and 160 men.39

After Monasteranenagh there were no other major pitched battles, although there were some large-scale sieges during the second stage of the rebellion. One such encounter occurred at the O’Connor Kerry castle at Carrigafoile, Co. Kerry, which Pelham besieged with a force of around 900 men. He commenced the bombardment of the castle on 29 March and the next day the defenders surrendered. Thereupon the garrison of fifty, amongst whom were sixteen Spaniards, was executed, with the

38 Malby to Walsingham, 10 Sept. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/17); Lord Justice Drury and the council in Ireland to the privy council, 12 Sept. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 172-4); Wallop to Walsingham, 14 Sept. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/28); A.F.M., sub anno 1579.
exception of the Spanish commanding officer.\textsuperscript{40} That the castle, one of the strongest in Munster, was taken in such a short time was doubtless due to Pelham’s expertise as a military engineer.\textsuperscript{41}

A better known siege, and undoubtedly the most infamous encounter of the entire rebellion, was the siege at Smerwick in November 1580. Two months previously a force of around 600 Spanish and Italian troops had landed in Kerry and fortified Dún an Óir at Smerwick. In response, Grey, who had arrived in Kerry with a force of 600 footmen and 200 horsemen, surrounded the rebel position, received eight pieces of artillery, along with powder and shot, from the fleet of Admiral Sir William Winter, and commenced preparations for the siege. The bombardment commenced on 7 November, and continued until 9 November when the fort signalled for a truce. Negotiations then took place and the following day the garrison surrendered, whereupon all but approximately thirty of them were summarily executed.\textsuperscript{42}

The circumstances of the executions at Smerwick had a deep resonance with events at Maynooth forty five years earlier. Almost immediately after the Smerwick executions rumours began to circulate that the garrison had surrendered on the understanding that they would all be spared, and that Grey had broken his word once in possession of the fort. ‘Grey’s faith’ thereafter became a byword for treachery and deceit. Similarly, the execution of the garrison following the surrender of Maynooth had been viewed as a breach of faith on the part of Sir William Skeffington. ‘Grey’s

\textsuperscript{40} Ormond to Burghley, 29 Mar. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/21); Pelham to the queen, 1 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/28); Ormond to Walsingham, 8 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/37).

\textsuperscript{41} Pelham was the lieutenant general of the ordnance, 1576-87: R.W. Stewart, \textit{The English ordnance office, 1585-1625: a case study in bureaucracy} (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1996), p. 151. For the post of lieutenant general see ibid., pp 11-3.

\textsuperscript{42} Lixnaw to the commissioners of Munster, 15 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/31); Lixnaw to ______, 18 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/43); Richard Bingham to Walsingham, 20 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/49); Fenton to Leicester, 16 Oct. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/77/36); St Leger to Burghley, 13 & 18 Oct. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/77/43); ______ to Walsingham, 11 Nov. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/78/27); ibid. in J.P. Hennessy, \textit{Sir Walter Raleigh in Ireland} (London, 1863), pp 207-11; Lord Deputy Grey to the queen, 12 Nov. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/78/29); Bingham to Walsingham, 12 Nov. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/78/32).
faith’ was thus clearly analogous to ‘the pardon of Maynooth’.43

The sieges at Carrigafolfe and Smerwick served to highlight the deficiencies and vulnerability of Desmond’s castles to siege warfare. The castles of Munster had been built to withstand the threat of cattle raids and sieges without the aid of artillery. Sieges with modern artillery did not form part of the expected threat, and thus the castles were not built to withstand them. Desmond would have been well aware of the siege capabilities of the crown forces, for in March 1535 the Kildare castle at Maynooth had been captured after a ten-day siege,44 while more recently Castlemaine had succumbed to a three month siege in June 1572, and two years later Derrinlaur had been captured by Fitzwilliam. Unable to withstand a properly equipped siege the rebels did not attempt to defend another castle against English troops after Smerwick.

These limitations had a profound effect on rebel strategy. Unable to hold fortified positions the rebels destroyed their castles, in order to deny them to their enemy, and took to the mountains and woods. Uns suited to battles in the open they did all they could to avoid such encounters. Consequently the rebels did not defend any of their territories or lordships, and sought to use their superior local knowledge to evade the English forces in Munster. Thus while Malby attacked Desmond’s towns of Rathmore, Rathkeale, and Askeaton in October 1579, the English did not have occasion to attack any other town in the province following Desmond’s proclamation the following month.45

In contrast, rebel attacks on castles and other fortified positions were relatively common as they could assemble their forces, strike at the target, and disperse before English reinforcements or relief troops could be despatched. That is what happened at Askeaton in December 1580 when the rebels scaled the town walls

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45 Desmond to , 10 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/51); Malby to Walsingham, 12 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/52).
of Askeaton, killed one of the soldiers of the watch, and opened the outer gates. They were unable to open the iron gates to the ‘iner forte or high castell’, however, and were then discovered by the watch and forced to withdraw. The failure to capture or destroy the castle at Askeaton left one of the largest and most important bases in Munster intact.

The towns of Munster were similarly targeted by the rebels. A case in point was Youghal, a town traditionally under Desmond influence. The first assault on the town was also Desmond’s first military operation after his proclamation. On Friday, 13 November 1579, Desmond, along with Sir John and the Seneschal of Imokilly and their forces, camped close to the town. There then followed some discussions with the townsmen about the payment of a tribute to the earl, but on the night of 15 November Desmond’s men entered the town and destroyed part of the town walls, robbed the inhabitants, and demolished part of the town’s castle. In a highly symbolic act, the rebels took down the queen’s coat of arms from the courthouse and destroyed it. Desmond then had the mayor and up to 140 townsmen killed.

That Desmond should have won the town so easily was due to a number of factors. For one thing, part of the town walls had collapsed from neglect around 2 November, while the town had refused on 9 November an offer to have a royal navy ship anchor in the port close to the breech in the town’s wall as they were unwilling to pay for the ship’s company, even at a subsidized rate. Even more important, however, was the fact that there were adherents of Desmond in the town’s population, some of whom ‘sent some ladders to help the rebelles to enter and som haled up rebelles wth cordes’. A further consideration was the fact that Youghal was a town traditionally under Desmond influence. The first assault on the town was also Desmond’s first military operation after his proclamation. On Friday, 13 November 1579, Desmond, along with Sir John and the Seneschal of Imokilly and their forces, camped close to the town. There then followed some discussions with the townsmen about the payment of a tribute to the earl, but on the night of 15 November Desmond’s men entered the town and destroyed part of the town walls, robbed the inhabitants, and demolished part of the town’s castle. In a highly symbolic act, the rebels took down the queen’s coat of arms from the courthouse and destroyed it. Desmond then had the mayor and up to 140 townsmen killed.

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46 Richard White to Malby, 10 Dec. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/79/10).
47 Andrew Skiddy to Burghley, 20 Nov. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/15); Thomas Arthur and Stephen White to Malby, [Nov.] 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/32, enclosure ii); Abstract of examinations touching the destruction of Youghal, (P.R.O., S.P. 63/71/3, enclosure i).
48 St Leger to Ormond, 1 Dec. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 245-6).
49 Abstract of examinations touching the destruction of Youghal, (P.R.O., S.P. 63/71/3, enclosure i).
was adjacent to the territory of one of the most ardent rebel leaders, the Seneschal of Imokilly, which meant a relatively safe march to the target, while the fact that Youghal was close to the woods at Dromfinen and Aherlow allowed for a speedy return to the woods. Youghal was thus a relatively ‘soft target’.

However, such operations against fortified positions such as castles and towns were high-risk ventures for the rebels. As these attacks necessitated the assemblage of large groups of rebels at fixed locations, they contravened the rebels’ usual reliance on small, mobile forces, and ran the risk of large losses, as occasionally happened. Furthermore, the vast majority of townspeople in Munster remained loyal, just as they had done during Fitz Maurice’s rebellion, for they guarded their independence and rights jealously. While some townspeople supported Desmond, most did not, and some even reacted violently against the rebels. Thus, during Desmond’s siege of Dingle in December 1582 the soldiers and inhabitants of the town issued out one night and killed 24 rebels.50 Similarly, in the course of the Seneschal’s attack on Youghal in January 1583, the soldiers and townsmen killed 52 rebels, including ‘men of accoumpt’, and injured as many more, some of them seriously.51 The presence of soldiers in both cases was undoubtedly a very significant factor in the bellicose nature of the townspeople, but their antipathy towards Desmond should not be underestimated.

Dramatic as these attacks could be, however, of greater importance to the rebels was the acquisition of sufficient victuals. This was absolutely vital for the continuation of the rebellion, for while the English forces would be supplied from outside the province the rebels had to survive on what they could find within Munster. As a consequence there were many cattle raids, such as that which occurred in March 1581 when the rebels attacked Cloyne and took 100 cattle, 600 sheep, 100

51 St Leger to Burghley, 16 Jan. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P 63/99/26).
goats, 40 pigs, and 20 horses. Two months later, in a very organized raid, Desmond led a force reputed to have been 1,400 men in the despoliation of Decies. From this he garnered an estimated 7,000 cattle. These raids provided much needed victuals, but also had the additional benefit of impoverishing two of Desmond’s enemies, namely John fitz Edmund of Cloyne and the Fitzgeralds, lords of Decies, both of whom remained loyal to the crown during the rebellion.

The importance of these victuals in Munster was reflected in the fact that these raids often drew violent reactions. Thus in August 1580 Sir James, with 200 of his men, raided Muskerry and took away approximately 2,000 cattle and horses. Domhnall McTeige MacCarthy immediately pursued the rebels and when he managed to overtake them he charged them five times. This slowed the rebels and allowed his brother, Sir Cormac McTeige MacCarthy, lord of Muskerry, to catch up with his main force who then killed at least 80 rebels and captured Sir James of Desmond. What had started out as a simple cattle raid thus resulted in the capture of one of the leaders of the rebellion, thanks to the determination of Sir Cormac and Domhnall.

The rebels were equally if not more determined to regain captured cattle as the Askeaton garrison found out in April 1580 when they took a large prey of cattle from the local woods, in defence of which 25 rebels were killed. At the same time, approximately 160 members of the Adare garrison, which had captured 25 cattle and 400 sheep off the rebels, were attacked by a force of about 500 under Desmond about two miles from Adare as they brought the animals back to their base. In the ensuing battle Rory McSheehy was shot through the shoulder, while Desmond was unhorsed. The pressure to keep their cattle was undoubtedly greater for the rebels

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52 Note of the spoils upon John fitz Edmund of Cloyne, [18 May] 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/29).
53 St Leger to Burghley, 3 June 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/38).
54 Patrick Grante to Ormond, 6 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/75/17).
55 Waterhouse to Walsingham, 20 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/55).
56 Wallop to Walsingham, 22 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/59); Edward Fenton to Burghley, 22 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/61).
as their only source of food was that which came from Munster. Consequently, they had to defend what they had, which would account for the fact that Desmond and Rory McSheehy were prepared to risk injury in order to rescue cattle and sheep.

In like manner the rebels targeted supplies of corn. In late 1582 they reaped the corn throughout Kerry, Imokilly, Decies, Condon’s and Roche’s territories, after which it was stored in the woods. They also intercepted supplies intended for English outposts. Sir John captured a supply column in May 1581 which consisted of ‘49 garrons laden wt wyne, Corne, and other provisions’, on its way to Kilmallock from Limerick, while in March of the following year David Barry did the same to a supply column sent from Castletown Bearhaven to Bantry.

The English launched similar operations against the food supplies of the rebels. These had a dual purpose, the first of which was to deny victuals to the rebels. The English forces thus conducted large sweeps through areas where they burned the crops in the fields and took the cattle they found. In December 1579 Ormond employed this ‘scorched earth’ policy as he marched through Limerick where he burned the territory between Askeaton and Newcastle West. From there he proceeded on to Waterford, where he burned Sir John’s lands in Lisfinny and Coshbride, and then on to Cork, where he destroyed Imokilly. The following year almost the entire length of the Dingle peninsula was destroyed in similar fashion.

Equally if not more important was the fact that captured cattle could be used to supplement the English food supply. Thus, when in September 1580 English forces took 1,400 cows and horses, it was noted with satisfaction that if well used, the

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57 St Leger to Burghley, 22 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/95/59); William Lyon, bishop of Ross, to Loftus and Wallop, 9 Oct. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/10, enclosure ii).
58 St Leger to Burghley, 3 June 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/38).
59 Fenton to the privy council, 13 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/31).
60 Ormond to the privy council, 27 Dec. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/64; Walsingham letter-bk, pp 258-60); Note of Ormond’s journey in Munster, (P.R.O., S.P. 63/71/3, enclosure ii).
61 Golde & Arthur to Wallop, 17 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/51, enclosure i).
cows ‘maie serve a great p[ar]t of the winter store for beef’, thereby subsidizing the English war effort. Such coups were a genuine boon for during the conflict English commanders, such as Grey, were concerned that troops would have to be withdrawn from important positions ‘for want of foode and vittelles to susteine them’, something which came to pass in October 1582 when the soldiers placed in Kerry were removed to Cork and Waterford for that very reason. The cattle herds of Munster were thus important prizes for both sides.

Besides the raids, much of the fighting consisted of what might be termed skirmishes. Some were planned beforehand, such as the two carefully orchestrated ambushes near Bantry in March 1582. The first began when David Barry and the MacSweeneys took a prey of cattle from Carbery. Barry then sent a ‘boy that spoke good English’ to the garrison at Bantry with a letter, allegedly from Sir Cormac McTeige MacCarthy, which purported to ask the garrison to rescue the prey. When the garrison set out from the abbey they were ambushed and annihilated. The next day, when James Fenton, constable of Castletown Bearhaven, attempted to unload supply ships at Bantry his force was attacked by rebels. Fenton had to hide amongst the rocks for three days before he made his way back to Castletown Bearhaven. The English presence in south-west Cork were thus destroyed in these two carefully planned operations.

Most skirmishes, however, were not planned. Superficially they appeared to be chance encounters, where one side accidentally ‘crossed the path’ of the other, but in reality they were the result of the search and destroy missions conducted by both sides. On these missions they set out on patrol and if they encountered the enemy

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62 Waterhouse to Burghley, 16 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/32); Wallop to Walsingham, 18 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/45).
63 Grey and the council to the privy council, 11 Dec. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/87/38).
64 Thomas Norris to Loftus and Wallop, 11 Oct. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/17, enclosure i); Thomas Norris to Loftus and Wallop, 21 Oct. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/87/15, enclosure i).
65 St Leger to the queen, 12 Mar. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/41, enclosure i).
66 Fenton to the privy council, 13 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/31).
they would engage them in combat. Thus, in early March 1580, as Ormond marched through the Great Wood of Kilmore, he encountered rebels on one occasion which resulted in a dozen dead rebels for the loss of three of his men injured. In late May 1582 Grey ‘bickered’ with Desmond in the Aherlow woods. The fighting continued all day, although it was uncertain who had won. In July 1582 Desmond unexpectedly encountered some O’Connors in Tipperary and lost 15 men and was wounded in the leg. Such clashes could thus prove costly.

For many incidents, however, little is known save the names or numbers of casualties as the extant reports give no further information on the circumstances of their death. Thus in November 1579 Sir William Stanley and Captain Carew killed 40 rebels in Kenry, Co. Limerick, on 3 July 1581 Edmund McRuddery, son of the White Knight, killed 43 of Desmond’s men, and by 15 April 1582 Lieutenant Smith had killed 8 of the Seneschal’s men. These last cases most closely resemble the ‘average’ incident which occurred during the rebellion. While there were some large incidents which involved careful planning and large numbers of combatants, most involved small numbers of men fighting each other in short intense bursts within very small areas.

As the foregoing discussion shows formal differentiation or categorization of the incidents of the rebellion is extremely problematic due to the imperfect and often fragmentary nature of the sources. For some incidents, such as the siege at Smerwick in 1580, there is detailed information which allows for definitive categorization, while for others that is not possible. However, sufficient information does exist to allow for some analysis.

67 Ormond to Walsingham, 8 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/37).
68 St Leger to Walsingham, 28 May 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/92/102).
69 Grey to Walsingham, 2 July 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/94/4).
70 William Wendover to Fenton, 6 Jan. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/88/14, enclosure i).
71 James Golde to Malby, 24 Nov. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/32, enclosure i).
72 Wallop to Walsingham, 17 July 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/84/23).
73 Wallop to Malby, 15 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/37).
Table 7.2 Distribution of incidents by year.

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<th></th>
<th>1579+</th>
<th>1580</th>
<th>1581</th>
<th>1582</th>
<th>1583</th>
<th>Total#</th>
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<th>Total*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1579 represents only 6 months. Total# represents incidents where date of incident is known. Total* represents total number of incidents.

Table 7.2 shows the relatively consistent character of the rebellion. Over the first 18 months of the conflict there were 24 incidents each 6-month period, while the number of incidents in 1581, 1582 and 1583 was also remarkably constant, being 29, 29 and 32. When the incidents are grouped according to size, as in table 7.3, the small-scale nature of the fighting becomes even more apparent.

Table 7.3 Distribution of incidents by size by year.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>1580</th>
<th>1581</th>
<th>1582</th>
<th>1583</th>
<th>Total#</th>
<th>No Date</th>
<th>Total*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1579 represents only 6 months. Total# represents incidents where date of incident is known. Total* represents total number of incidents.

Thus almost all the incidents were small-scale in nature. Only 6 incidents, 3.5% of the total, had large number of combatants on both sides.

When the incidents are analyzed by month, two trends emerge. The first is that incidents could happen at almost any time of the year, which forced the crown
forces to maintain their guard at all times. Indeed, there were only 6 months out of the 53 between July 1579 and November 1583 where military incidents were not recorded.

Table 7.4  Average number of incidents per month.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February-June</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July-October</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November-December</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second trend which emerges from Table 7.4 is that the busiest time of the year was from February until June when there was an average of almost four incidents per month during the rebellion. Next came the period from July to October which witnessed over two and a half incidents per month on average. Not surprisingly the winter months, the wettest, windiest, and coldest of the year, had the smallest average of recorded incidents, with considerably fewer reported in November and December than during January. Thus the period February to June was over twice as likely to witness a military incident as November to December. However, it must be remembered that these figures only indicate the number of incidents, and do not take into account the size or severity of those incidents. Hence the siege at Smerwick, with hundreds of combatants on each side, and which involved ships and artillery, and a small skirmish with a handful of combatants, each count as one incident.

The Desmond rebellion of 1579-83 was thus a long, drawn out affair, with the violence distributed over the entire span of the conflict. At least 170 military encounters and incidents occurred, the vast majority of which were small-scale actions. The number of armed combatants ran into thousands on both sides at the
height of the conflict, while the fighting was spread over a wide geographic area and affected the five counties of Kerry, Limerick, Cork, Waterford, and Tipperary. The rebellion was thus a guerrilla-style conflict.

That the rebellion was essentially a guerrilla war was due in part to the choice of tactics employed by the rebels. As described above the rebels, unable to defend their castles and towerhouses against artillery-assisted sieges, destroyed them and conceded control of the countryside to the English. This was a recognition of the English superiority in conventional battles, but this strategy was facilitated by the terrain of the province where the forests and mountains provided excellent bases for the rebels. The woods in particular were favoured as bases, and were also employed as a network of routes around the province, which allowed the rebels to keep ahead of English pursuers. Thus St Leger once remarked that if the rebel forces were in Dromfinen they would flee to the woods in Aherlow if pursued by English troops, and from there to the Great Wood of Kilmore, and so on.74 The rebel tactics were thus well suited to the terrain of the province.

The nature of the rebellion also reflected the rebels’ decision to exploit the obvious inadequacies of the English military establishment which was not equipped to deal with a sustained guerrilla war. During Elizabeth’s reign her military forces saw active service in two main types of operation, the first of which was the suppression of internal revolt. These conflicts were started by the rebel forces so that the crown’s troops initially had to react and respond to rebel activity. The English forces were hastily assembled and dispatched to the rebel region under the leadership of a lord

74 St Leger to Burghley, 3 June 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/38). The English had similar difficulties with the English ‘surnames’ among the woods and mountains along the Anglo-Scots border: S.G. Ellis, Tudor frontiers and noble power, pp 66-7.
with local or regional prominence. Against the rising of the northern earls (Northumberland and Westmoreland) in 1569 Elizabeth sent Sussex, the president of the council of the North. In this he was assisted by some of the lords, gentry, and officials of the region such as justices of the peace. The goal of this type of military action on English soil was to defeat and dismantle the rebel forces and to kill or capture the rebel leaders. The queen’s writ would then be reestablished and her sovereignty over the rebel area restored. The soldiers would then be withdrawn, although the local officials loyal to the crown would remain.75

Foreign expeditions, the second type of mission, were very different in nature. For one thing the crown initiated the operation. The mission was due to a conscious decision to intervene in the country in question rather than a reaction to the actions of internal rebels. As a consequence there was more planning involved at an earlier stage on the part of the English forces. In 1560, when Norfolk and Grey invaded Scotland to prevent a French takeover, almost four months elapsed between the initial order to assemble an invasion force and the final order to invade, although much of this delay was due to Elizabeth’s attempts to achieve a diplomatic victory without the expensive recourse to violence. Also, the commanders of such a mission need have no particular connection with the country, something neither Norfolk nor Grey had with Scotland, nor Essex had with France when he besieged Rouen in 1591-2.

The objective of these expeditions was similarly different, in that they were enacted to extinguish a direct threat to England. In the Scottish expedition of 1560 the aim was to prevent the French encircling England from France to the south-east and from Scotland to the north. In the Rouen expedition the goal was to counteract Spanish interest in France. The underlying assumption was that these were short-term, temporary military engagements. The army would be completely withdrawn

and returned to England once the objective had been attained, with no territorial conquest involved. A pro-English regime might be the result, but the country would remain foreign and outside Elizabeth’s dominions.76

Elizabeth’s military actions in Ireland were different again, although they contained elements of both suppression of internal revolt and foreign invasion. This was particularly true of the English military response to the Desmond rebellion of 1579-83. The conflict was started by Fitz Maurice’s return, but it involved considerable English planning in both Dublin and Whitehall. The crown reaction included both the available troops in Ireland and substantial reinforcements from England and Wales. The first English commander, Sir William Drury, had considerable experience of Ireland and Munster in particular, but his replacement, Sir William Pelham, had none. The English effort received support from the towns of the region such as Limerick, Cork, and Waterford, and from officials involved in the local administration, although some of these, such as Sir Warham St Leger, provost marshal of Munster, were not native to the realm. The rest of the population was less enthusiastic about the soldiers. The aim of the operation was the reestablishment of English government in the rebel area. Even though the soldiers were going overseas to a land which was not native to them they were nonetheless going to a realm which formed part of their queen’s dominions. When they left Ireland they would leave behind them an English government, not merely a friendly regime. Success would come not from the overthrow of a foreign monarch’s position but from the restoration of Elizabeth’s sovereignty in Ireland.

Service in Ireland was thus an amalgam of aspects of service against internal rebels and of service against foreign opponents. In one very significant way, however, it was unique for there existed in Ireland the closest thing to a standing army which the

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Elizabethan state ever possessed. This was the English garrison in Ireland, a force which during the latter half of the sixteenth century usually averaged around 2,500 men.\(^7^7\) By the summer of 1579 this figure was down to 1,200. The forces dedicated to Munster totalled 50 men, which included 25 horsemen under the provost marshal Sir Warham St Leger, a ward at Dungarvan, commanded by Henry Davells, which comprised 6 horsemen, 3 arquebusiers, and 3 archers, and a ward at Castlemaine, under Captain William Apsley, with a further 6 footmen.\(^7^8\)

This force proved inadequate to deal with the threat posed by Fitz Maurice, but it meant that there was a body of men already present in Ireland to confront the rebels while reinforcements were being readied by Whitehall. This helped stabilize the situation and doubtless discouraged others from joining the rebellion. The possession of two strategic sites in Dungarvan and Castlemaine meant that from the outset the English forces had useful bases from which to attack the rebels, while the steadfast loyalty of the key ports of Limerick, Cork, and Waterford, meant that supplies of troops, food, and munitions could be easily brought into the province. The existing command structure of the garrison also enabled the relatively straightforward absorption of the additional soldiers sent to Ireland. The circumstances for the English army in Ireland were, therefore, significantly different from those which pertained during other types of operation.

In command of the English forces in Ireland was the lord deputy who, along with his civil, legal, and administrative tasks, had responsibility for the planning and implementation of all military operations within the kingdom. In peaceful times these amounted to little more than 'police actions' such as the capture of criminals and malefactors, but during a rebellion he was empowered to do whatever was necessary.

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\(^{7^8}\) The numbers of the garrison, 1 June 1579 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 628, ff 394\(^{f}\)-396\(^{v}\)); The establishment for Ireland, 31 Mar. 1579 (*Walsingham letter-bk*, pp 50-62).
to subdue the rebels.\textsuperscript{79} No other Elizabethan official outside of central government possessed such an accumulation of power. Indeed, the Elizabethan-era official in the most analogous situation to the Irish deputy was the Spaniard, Don Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, duke of Alva, who possessed similar powers in the Spanish Netherlands where he served both as governor-general, the head of the civil administration, and captain-general of the army between 1568 and 1573.\textsuperscript{80}

Five individuals held the post of deputy or justice during the rebellion: Lord Justice Sir William Drury, Lord Justice Sir William Pelham, Lord Deputy Arthur, Lord Grey de Wilton, and joint lords justice Adam Loftus, archbishop of Dublin and lord chancellor of Ireland, and Sir Henry Wallop, vice-treasurer of Ireland.\textsuperscript{81} Drury was undoubtedly the most qualified to counter the threat posed by Fitz Maurice’s rebellion due to his service as lord president in Munster in 1576-8 which had given him personal knowledge of the province and its personalities. However, he died soon after the outbreak of the conflict. Neither Pelham nor Grey had any appreciable experience of Ireland,\textsuperscript{82} although both had extensive military experience, while neither Wallop nor Loftus had any military experience.\textsuperscript{83}

Regardless of their suitability, however, their greatest problem was that they were unable to devote all their time and energies to the rebellion due to their other responsibilities. Drury came closest, but he was in charge in Munster for only two

\textsuperscript{79} Grant to Adam, archbishop of Dublin, and Henry Wallop of the office of lords justices, 1 Nov. 1582 (\textit{Irish Fiants, Elizabeth}, no. 4084). For the unique powers of the deputy see Ciaran Brady, ‘England’s defence and Ireland’s reform: the dilemma of the Irish viceroys, 1541-1641’ in Brendan Bradshaw & John Morrill (ed.) \textit{The British problem}, c. 1534-1707, p. 89.

\textsuperscript{80} In Alva’s case, however, this double appointment was originally intended only to be a short-term measure, but prevailing circumstances dictated otherwise: Geoffrey Parker, \textit{The army of Flanders and the Spanish road} 1567-1659, pp 106-10.

\textsuperscript{81} For their dates of appointment and periods of service see S.G. Ellis, \textit{Ireland in the age of the Tudors} 1447-1603, p. 369.

\textsuperscript{82} Pelham had arrived in Ireland barely a month prior to his appointment as lord justice: Privy Council to Drury, 15 Aug. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 129-30).

\textsuperscript{83} Wallop had been given command of a band of 100 footmen upon the death of Captain Fisher in November 1579, but although he remained on the establishment accounts until September 1584 he apparently did not actually lead the formation: Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 34v).
months before he died. Pelham spent approximately eight months of his eleven month lord justiceship in the province, while Grey was there for less than four months out of the twenty-four months he was deputy. Wallop and Loftus did not enter Munster during their period in office, although Wallop had previously been in the province in 1579 and 1580. Between them the five spent approximately fourteen months in the province out of the total of fifty-three months the rebellion lasted, or 26.4%. For almost three-quarters of the time, therefore, the top military commanders in Ireland were absent from the conflict zone.

As a result the deputy had to rely on his subordinate officers for the direction and prosecution of the conflict to a far greater degree than his counterparts in command of English forces on foreign or internal service. While those other commanders also had to depend on junior officers to carry out their orders, the fact that those forces tended to remain in one large formation enabled them to issue orders and direct the conflict more easily than the deputy who could be very remote from his troops. For this reason the chain of command was of greater importance to the deputy than to other English commanders. Unfortunately for the English, the command structure proved grossly inadequate for the task.

Second-in-command of the forces in Ireland was the marshal of the army. In the English army the marshal was charged with the maintenance of order and discipline within the army, and the management and regulation of the camp.84 In Ireland he presided over the marshal’s court, maintained the marshal’s jail, and appointed subordinate officers such as provost marshals and seneschals to help assist in his work.85 The post was held by Sir Nicholas Bagenal, who in August 1579 brought


85 Grant of office of marshal of the army to Sir George Stanley, 4 Feb. 1560 (*Irish Fiants, Elizabeth*, no. 201); Grant of the office of marshal of the army to Sir Nicholas Bagenal, 4 Feb. 1566 (*Irish Fiants, Elizabeth*, no. 809).
two bands of footmen to Limerick to augment Drury’s force.\textsuperscript{86} However, he had left the province by November and took no further part against the rebellion.\textsuperscript{87}

With Bagenal in Ulster responsibility for the war during the deputy’s absence was given to the general of the army. The general was empowered to prosecute the rebels and to do whatever was necessary ‘for the furtherance of the service’, this last clause recognition that the framers of his instructions could not foresee every eventuality he would encounter.\textsuperscript{88} He did not, however, possess the power of the deputy to pardon rebels or to proclaim traitors.\textsuperscript{89}

The general of Munster was thus similar to the generals in command of English forces outside of Ireland. The first general in Munster was Sir Nicholas Malby, who served between 25 September and 18 November 1579.\textsuperscript{90} During his fifty five days as general, Malby only succeeded in making matters worse, for his method of dealing with rebels was ‘Veni, Vidi, Vici’,\textsuperscript{91} an approach he applied with equal severity in Munster. His heavy-handed tactics at Askeaton in October 1579, when he destroyed the town after Desmond had refused to submit to him, only contributed to the circumstances which pushed Desmond into rebellion and deepened the crisis in Munster. Although he had been the victor at Monasteranenagh, Malby’s overall contribution as general was to have made the situation worse by the time he left Munster at the end of 1579.

The second general was Ormond. He was general twice, between 12 October

\textsuperscript{86} Drury to the privy council, 9 Aug. 1579 (\textit{Walsingham letter-bk}, pp 118-20).
\textsuperscript{88} For similar instances of leeway in the instructions to other English generals see C.G. Cruickshank, \textit{Elizabeth’s army}, pp 44-6.
\textsuperscript{89} Commission to Thomas, earl of Ormond, 16 Oct. 1579 (\textit{Irish Fiants, Elizabeth}, no. 3602); Appointment of Thomas, earl of Ormond, to be Lord General, 6 Jan. 1583 (\textit{Irish Fiants, Elizabeth}, no. 4102).
\textsuperscript{90} Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 28\textsuperscript{f}).
\textsuperscript{91} Barnaby Googe to Burghley, 11 Mar. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/100/14).
1579 and 9 June 1581, and from 12 November 1582 until the end of the conflict. However, Ormond was something of an anomaly for he was quite separate from the regular military establishment and had a political agenda of his own. He will, therefore, be treated separately later.

Amongst the professional English soldiers in Munster there were a number of mid-level ranking officers. One of these was the provost marshal of Munster, who was a constituent officer of the Munster council and as such was somewhat apart from the establishment of the ‘regular’ army in Munster. Although his primary responsibility was the maintenance of discipline and order within the ranks of the army, he also had a wider responsibility over the civilian population due to commissions for the execution of martial law. Arthur Carter served as provost marshal between 1 June 1579 and his death on 1 August 1579, whereupon he was replaced by Sir Warham St Leger, who in turn was superseded on 21 August 1580 by George Thornton, who continued in that role until 1584. Although as provost marshal they commanded a band of twenty five horsemen, it would appear that neither St Leger nor Thornton participated in any fighting.

There were also sergeant-majors and corporals in Munster, officers employed elsewhere in the Elizabethan military to strengthen the chain of command where they had responsibility for the orderly movement of the force in formation. In Munster William Walker, Henry Sheffield, William Furrs, and Frances Stafford all served as 

92 Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 28r); Commission to Thomas, earl of Ormond, 16 Oct. 1579 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 3602).
93 Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 28r); Appointment of Thomas, earl of Ormond, to be Lord General and Governor of Munster, 6 Jan. 1583 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 4102).
94 A patent for martial law to Sir Warham St Leger, 11 Jan. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 187r-188v); Instructions annexed to the aforesaid patent, 11 Jan. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 188r-192r).
95 Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 29v); The establishment for Ireland, 31 Mar. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 50-62); Commission to George Thornton, provost marshal of Munster, 2 Aug. 1583 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 4191). Note, this Thornton should not be confused with George Thornton, captain of The Handmaid.
96 D.J. Kennedy, The presidency of Munster under Elizabeth and James I, pp 102-3.
sergeant-major, while Richard Keyes served as a corporal. However, they too appear to have had little impact on the conflict, as they are hardly mentioned in the extant sources. In the context of Munster where there were few large formation actions they may have served as assistants to senior officers with little independent authority.97

The forces in Munster also adapted the post of colonel to their requirements, a post which was first created in continental European armies to aid the effective management of soldiers by grouping infantry companies together into regiments.98 The first colonel in Munster, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, had been appointed in September 1569 in order to defeat Fitz Maurice’s rebellion,99 although the post, together with the infantry regiment, did not appear in the mainstream of the English military system until the latter stages of the Elizabethan era.100 There were, however, some important differences, the first of which was that the title of colonel was conferred on a serving captain without the creation of regiments. Furthermore, the colonels were often appointed to take command of a particular area. Sir George Bourchier served as colonel in Munster between 28 August 1580 and 31 October 1581 with particular

97 Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 29V); Estimate of the garrison in pay, 30 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/77/19, enclosure ii). For the posts of sergeant-major and corporal in the English army see C.G. Cruickshank, Elizabeth’s army, pp 50-1.

98 In the French army this innovation occurred c.1559-63, the regiment being commanded by a master-of-camp, while in Alva’s army in the Spanish Netherlands the Spanish infantry were organized into tercios, commanded by the maestre de campo: J.B. Woods, The king’s army (Cambridge, 1996), pp 106-10; Geoffrey Parker, The army of Flanders and the Spanish road 1567-1659, pp 274-5.

99 A further 700 troops were ordered to be ready at Chester should they be required: Reckoning of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, 31 Mar. 1570 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/30/36); Accounts of William Fitzwilliam, 23 June 1569-31 Mar. 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 657, f. 17r-17v); Henry Sidney, ‘Memoir or narrative addressed to Sir Francis Walsingham, 1583’ in U.J.A., 1st. ser., iii (1855), p. 99; The queen to Sidney, 27 July 1569 (Sidney S.P., no. 70).

100 C.G. Cruickshank, Elizabeth’s army, pp 50-3.
responsibility for Co. Limerick. John Zouche served as colonel of Kerry between 16 October 1580 and 7 December 1582, and was ‘governor’ of Munster for the last two months of that time. He was replaced as colonel of Munster by Captain Thomas Norris, who served between 8 December 1582 and 31 January 1583. In August 1581 St Leger was appointed ‘chief colonel and general commander of the forces in the province of Munster’ and served until the following October. These colonels provided for a degree of coordination and direction, but their service as captains left them little time for their higher command functions. Their greatest impact on the rebellion was, therefore, as the captain of their particular band rather than as colonel.

The higher command of the English forces in Munster thus failed to provide an adequate level of leadership for the successful prosecution of the conflict. The deputy was often absent from Munster, the marshal ignored the province, while the general could only deal with one situation at a time. The provost marshal of Munster did not participate in the fighting, the sergeant-majors and corporals appear not to have exercised any authority, and the various colonels were essentially captains with slightly enhanced powers. The result was that most decisions were taken by the officers who did most of the fighting, the captains.

101 Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 28v); Lord justice and council in Munster to the lord deputy and council at Dublin, 23 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 424⁴v-425⁵); Commission for Sir George Bourchier, 27 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 448⁷r-449⁹); Instructions for Sir George Bourchier, 27 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 449⁷r-450⁵v); A direction delivered to Sir George Bourchier by the lord justice, 28 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 431⁷r-432²); Commission to St Leger, 1 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, f. 446¹); Lord Deputy Grey to the queen, 26 Apr. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/82/54).

102 Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 28v); Grey to the queen, 26 Apr. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/82/54); Nicholas White to Burghley, 28 Aug. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/94/103).

103 D.N.B.; Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 28v).

104 Grant of office of chief colonel to St Leger, 18 Aug. 1581 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 3740); Instructions for St Leger, 1581 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 3741).
Although near the bottom of the command structure, the importance of the captain should not be underestimated for he was virtually omnipotent in relation to the soldiers in his company. He was the leader of the band in battle, was responsible for the provision of their food and clothing, and most importantly was in charge of their payment. The captain thus dominated every aspect of his company, and wielded his authority with little interference from the higher command. This importance to his own men was mirrored in the role the captains were to play in the conduct of the war. Not only did the character of the conflict and the weakness of the high command mean that captains had considerable latitude in their prosecution of the rebellion, the captains also provided the colonels. The vast majority of the officer corps in Munster were, therefore, captains.

At least thirty five officers served as captains of bands in Munster during the rebellion. Seventeen of these commanded 100-strong bands, or companies, of footmen; four others commanded footmen together with small detachments of horsemen; nine led bands of 50 horsemen; and the remaining five had charge of both bands of horsemen and footmen. Nine of these captains had their bands increased in strength to what might be termed ‘super companies’. Ormond and captains Henry Harrington and William Russell each commanded bands of 100 horsemen, while both John Zouche and William Morgan led bands of footmen up to 300 strong, and George Bourchier, William Stanley, Anthony Deering, and Edward Berkeley led bands of 200 footmen.

At least eighteen of the captains, or slightly more than 51%, had some previous experience of service in Ireland. Twelve of these were on the establishment of the army in Ireland in the month prior to Fitz Maurice’s return. All four captains

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of horsemen in June 1579 saw service in Munster. The most involved of these was
Ormond, who commanded 100 horsemen, twice the normal size of a company, for
slightly more than half the time of the rebellion, and 50 horsemen for the rest of the
time.\textsuperscript{106} The earl of Kildare accompanied Drury with his 50 horsemen to Munster in
August 1579, but was back in the Pale by 20 September.\textsuperscript{107} Sir Henry Harrington had
his band of 100 horsemen in Munster in late October 1579, as did Captain Frances
Stafford, who had his band of 50 horsemen in the province between then and 31
January 1580.\textsuperscript{108}

Similarly, the four captains of footmen in pay in June 1579 also served in
Munster. Sir Henry Bagenal accompanied his father the marshal to Munster in
August 1579 and appears to have followed him out of the province by November.\textsuperscript{109}
Captain Thomas Fisher also came from Ulster and served in the province between
August and 10 November 1579, while William Furr was there over the winter of
1579-1580 and again in late 1580.\textsuperscript{110} Captain Humphrey Mackworth was in the
province, possibly continuously, between August 1579 and September 1580, prior to
which he had transported Desmond’s son to Dublin castle from Kilkenny.\textsuperscript{111}

Three pensioners in June 1579 were given command of bands. George
Thornton, mentioned above as provost marshal, had command of a band of horse

\textsuperscript{106} Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 31v).
\textsuperscript{107} Drury to the privy council, 9 Aug. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 119); Wallop to
\textsuperscript{108} The army in Munster, 28 Oct. 1579 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 87v-88v);
Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, ff 31v, 32v).
\textsuperscript{109} Drury to the privy council, 9 Aug. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 118-20); Sir
Nicholas Bagenal to the privy council, 25 Nov. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 238).
\textsuperscript{110} Drury to the privy council, 9 Aug. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 118-20); Malby to
the privy council, 4 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/48); Wallop to Walsingham, 23 Nov. 1579
(P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/19); Note of the forces in Ireland, 15 Dec. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/59);
Richard Bingham to Walsingham, 20 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/49); Vice-treasurer’s
accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, ff 34v, 35v).
\textsuperscript{111} Drury and Kildare to Gerrard and Loftus, 2 Aug. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 112-
4); Richard Bingham to Walsingham, 20 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/49); Vice-treasurer’s
accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 35v).
during the second half of 1582. Sir Peter Carew had 100 footmen in September 1579 and again during the first four months of 1580, while Anthony Deering had a band of footmen between November 1579 and April 1580. A twelfth person on the establishment was the treasurer-at-war Henry Wallop who had charge of a band of footmen from November 1579 on, although this was presumably commanded by his lieutenant.

A further six captains had previous experience of Ireland. William Apsley, who had command of 50 horsemen between 20 September 1579 and 20 April 1581, and 12 horsemen between 10 October 1581 and 27 January 1582, had been constable of Castlemaine until March 1579, while William Piers, Junior, son of William Piers, Senior, the former constable of Carrickfergus, who led a band of footmen in Munster between September 1579 and January 1580, and again between April 1581 and January 1582, had experience of his father’s proceedings in Ulster.

Another familiar with Ulster was Captain Edward Hollingworth. He arrived at Limerick in August 1579 as part of Bagenal’s forces at the head of a band of 100 English footmen who had been cashiered from other bands ‘whom their capten hath

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112 Pelham and council to the privy council, 26 Nov. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 238-44); Book of the numbers of the garrison in pay, 1 Sept. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/45); Edward Fenton to Burghley, 22 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/61); Distribution of the bands in Ireland, [Sept.] 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/95/88); Distribution of the army in Munster, [Dec.] 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/98/5).

113 Edward Fenton to Burghley, 22 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/61); Distribution of the bands in Ireland, [Sept.] 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/95/88); Note of the English serving in Ireland, [Nov.] 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/97/64).

114 Establishment for Ireland, 31 Mar. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 56, 57); Drury and the council to the privy council, 12 Sept. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 166); Malby to the privy council, 4 Oct. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 203); Pelham and the council to the privy council, 26 Nov. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 239); Certificate of the garrison in Munster, 20 Apr. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/12, enclosure ii); Garrisons now placed in Munster, 20 Oct. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/28); Book of the discharge of soldiers, Jan. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/88/40, enclosure i); Distribution of the bands in Ireland, [Sept.] 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/95/88).

115 Pardon to William Piers, Senior, and others, 13 March, 1571 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 1740); Book of the numbers of the garrison in pay, 1 Sept. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/45); Pelham to Burghley, 29 Jan. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/71/27); Certificate of the garrison in Munster, 20 Apr. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/12, enclosure ii); Book of the discharge of soldiers, Jan. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/88/40, enclosure i).
after a straunge manner held togither all this yere paste’, by living ‘uppon their owne adventure in Ulster, scamblinge with the Scottes and sometime with the bad Irishe’.

In response to the urgent need for men, Hollingworth’s band was put in pay and served in Munster during Bagenal’s short stay there.116

Two others had participated in Essex’s failed plantation in Ulster in 1573-5. These were Edward Berkeley, who led 200 footmen in Munster between April 1581 and January 1582, and Sir William Morgan, who had 100 footmen over the winter of 1579-1580 and between April 1581 and January 1582. Sir Peter Carew had also taken part in the scheme.117 The last of the eighteen to have had experience of Ireland was Sir George Bourchier, who commanded footmen in Munster from September 1579 until the end of the rebellion, having previously served as a captain earlier in the 1570s.118

The length of service in the province varied considerably between the captains. Some were in Munster for virtually the entire rebellion. Although Ormond himself spent approximately a year and a half in England his band was continuously in pay, while Sir George Bourchier was in Munster between September 1579 and the end of the rebellion save for some short journeys to England. Similarly, John Dowdall appears to have seen service continuously between September 1579 and the close of the rebellion.119 In contrast some captains were in Munster for only very short periods. William Hinde served for little more than four months, between 21

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116 Drury to the privy council, 9 Aug. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 118); Edward Fenton to Burghley, 22 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/61); Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 35v).
117 Names of the gentlemen who have subscribed to follow Essex, June 1573 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/41/64); Note of the forces in Ireland, 15 Dec. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/59); Certificate of the garrison in Munster, 20 Apr. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/12, enclosure ii); Book of the numbers remaining in pay, Jan. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/88/40, enclosure ii); Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, ff 35v, 36v).
118 Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 34v); Lease to George Bourchier, 28 Apr. 1574 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no.2380).
119 Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 37v); Malby to the privy council, 4 Oct. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 201); Estimate of the army in pay, [Oct.] 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/105/1, enclosure i).
September 1579 and 31 January 1580, before his company of footmen were transferred to Anthony Deering as Hinde was considered too old to continue on active service. Thomas Fisher spent about four months in Munster before his death at Limerick on 10 November 1579, whereupon his band was given over to Wallop.

Determining the precise stay of a particular captain in the province is made difficult by the incomplete nature of the information regarding the monthly deployment of troops in Ireland. Nonetheless, guarded estimates can be given. The 35 captains spent at least 450.5 months in Munster in charge of bands, giving an average of approximately 13 months each. This figure almost exactly matches the average for those who commanded either horse or foot bands, although those captains who led both horse and foot bands averaged 14 months, while those who had foot bands and small detachments of horse had a slightly lower average of 10.75 months. Of the 35, 21 (60%) served for 12 months or less in Munster. A further 9 (26%) spent between 13 and 18 months there, while the remaining 5 (14%) served for over 20 months. Most captains thus spent less than a year in Munster, so turnover in the officer corps was high, reflecting the intermittent nature of the conflict itself.

The short service also meant that the total number of captains was relatively high. While there might be up to perhaps 10 captains serving in Munster at any one time, a total of 35 served as captain. This represented an unprecedented level of English interest in Munster. Unfortunately for the inhabitants of the province, this brought a number of captains who would become some of the eventual undertakers in the Munster plantation to the province, men such as Raleigh, Bourchier, and Thomas Norris.

The English forces were thus commanded by officers who spent relatively

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120 Vice-treasurer's accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 36v); Some of the council to the privy council, 2 Oct. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 194); Pelham and the council to the privy council, 26 Nov. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 242).
121 Vice-treasurer's accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 34v); Wallop to Walsingham, 23 Nov. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/19).
little time in Munster and consequently had little knowledge or appreciation of the province or its inhabitants, a problem compounded by the lack of effective leadership they received from the high command. The rebel tactics exploited these weaknesses. The rebels shunned large battles and instead relied on small-scale raids conducted by small, independent groupings which were based throughout Munster. To counteract that the English placed troops throughout the province, both in wards and garrisons.

Prior to Fitz Maurice’s return in July 1579 only two castles in Munster had been warded by English soldiers, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, and Castlemaine, Co. Kerry. Following Fitz Maurice’s landing, however, the number of warded sites increased substantially, with wards at Cork castle and Glin, Co. Limerick, by August 1579, at Limerick castle by November, at Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, by February 1580, at Askeaton by April, at Adare and Bruff, Co. Limerick, by July, at Castletown Bearhaven, by August, and at Ballingarry, Co. Limerick, by November. There were also two short term wards at Youghal, from August to October 1579, and at Rathkeale, from November 1579 to April 1580.

There were also larger concentrations of troops placed in certain towns during the rebellion as circumstances dictated. Kilmallock maintained a garrison of around 200 men from September 1579 until the end of 1582. Askeaton had a similar sized garrison between early 1580 and late 1581, while Cork city was garrisoned from the latter half of 1580 to early 1582. Dingle had a garrison from late 1580 to late 1582, while Youghal had a garrison of between 100 and 500 men from January 1580 until the end of 1582, though not until after Desmond had attacked it. Dingle and Youghal also had small wards placed in them during 1583.

These wards and garrisons had a dual role. They were placed there for the

123 Estimate of the army, 24 Nov. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/38, enclosure ii); Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, ff 39v-42v).
defence of the town and surrounding countryside, while the towns were also to be used as bases from which to launch operations against the rebel forces in the woods and mountains of the region. Sometimes this tactic worked well, as in January 1581 when the garrison at Kilmallock almost captured Desmond in a nearby rebel camp. However, more frequently the rebels successfully evaded the English who were thus compelled to engage in futile sweeps through particular territories. These unproductive sweeps and patrols thus only wearied the English troops, consumed their provisions, and sapped their morale. The repeated failure to engage with rebel forces only served to engender the belief that the conflict would never end, a belief which dispirited the English even further. The rebel strategy was, therefore, to weaken the resolve of the English and drain them of resources until they gave up.

With the English unable to end the rebellion by other means their strategy devolved into a hunt for Desmond, for if he were captured or killed, or driven out of Ireland, the rebellion would be over. Desmond fully appreciated this fact and remained highly mobile during the conflict. He ranged throughout sub-Shannon Munster, and in just over four years, from his proclamation as a traitor on 2 November 1579 to his death on 11 November 1583 he appeared in the five counties of Kerry, Limerick, Cork, Waterford, and Tipperary. He took full advantage of the terrain available to him, as he operated from Dingle and Smerwick in western Kerry to Decies in western Waterford, and from Adare in northern Limerick to Youghal in south-eastern Cork.

As Table 7.5 shows, this mobility was continued over time. In 1579 (post-proclamation) he appeared in (at least) two counties, in 1580 and 1581 he appeared in three counties, and in 1582 and 1583 he appeared in four counties. Similarly, he appeared in each of the five counties in (at least) two different years. Indeed he visited counties Kerry, Cork, and Limerick in four different years. He thus traversed the province several times. Desmond’s movement would, therefore, appear to have been near constant, while he did not spend too long in one place.

Desmond thus proved extremely elusive throughout the rebellion. Two weeks after his proclamation as a traitor in November 1579 he led the attack on Youghal, but had returned to Newcastle West by the end of the month.125 Desmond then remained undetected until the spring of the following year. In April 1580 he led the attack on the garrison at Adare and was unhorsed but managed to escape capture. He was in Kerry during June and July, and in the following months was near the Aherlow woods and Connello.126 He then appeared near Smerwick during the siege in November but did not intervene.

After that the English forces did not catch sight of him for six months until late May/early June 1581 when he led an attack on Decies. By 10 June Desmond had

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125 Thomas Arthur and Stephen White to Malby, [Nov.] 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/32.2); Desmond and his brethren to various persons, 29 Nov. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 244-5).
126 Wallop to Walsingham, 22 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/59); Ormond to Walsingham, 21 July 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/74/54); Desmond to Sir William Winter, 12 July 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/74/25); Richard Bingham to Walsingham, 20 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/49).
returned to the vicinity of Castlemaine, Co. Kerry, where he and his wife Eleanor were nearly captured.127 After that close call he remained in hiding until January 1582 when the Kilmallock garrison came close to capturing him. Once again Desmond responded by lying low, not being spotted until that summer when between May and early July he was in the Aherlow/Tipperary region.128 In mid-September he assisted Donough MacCormac MacCarthy against O’Keefe in Duhallow, before he returned to Kerry where he encountered the garrison of Ardfert on 23 September. From then on he appears to have spent most of the rest of the year in Kerry.129

When next the English found him in January 1583 they again almost captured him, this time with his wife in Kilhoogy woods. For the rest of the year he kept mobile. He was near Dromfinen woods in February, back in Kerry in April, in south Kerry in May before he went back to Aherlow. In September, however, he was pursued by lord Roche across the Mullaghareirk mountains into Kerry. There he remained until he was found by soldiers based at Castlemaine in the Glenaginty woods near Tralee and beheaded.130 With that act the rebellion was over.

The rebellion thus proved remarkably difficult to quell. It took numerous changes at the top of the English military establishment and several thousand men before it was brought to an end. The rebel strategy was, therefore, quite effective as it

127 St Leger to Burghley, 3 June 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/38); Captain John Case to Walsingham, 15 July 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/58).
128 John Zouche to Wallop, 20 Jan. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/88/35); Justice Meagh to Walsingham, 28 May 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/92/103); Malby to Walsingham, 17 June 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/93/30); Grey to Walsingham, 2 July 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/94/4).
129 St Leger to Burghley, 22 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/95/59); Geoffrey Storye and Robert Woodward to Captain Thomas Norris, 26 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/17, enclosure ii); Information by William Lyon, bishop of Ross, 9 Oct. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/10, enclosure ii); Wallop to Burghley, 12 Dec. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/98/42); Loftus and Wallop to Burghley, 24 Dec. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/98/56).
130 Loftus and Wallop to Walsingham, 13 Jan. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/99/18); St Leger to Walsingham, 11 Feb. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/99/58); Ormond to the privy council, 23 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/101/39); Desmond to St Leger, 28 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/17, enclosure i); Captain Berkeley to Burghley, 16 May 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/33); Ormond to the privy council, 28 May 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/47); Lord Roche to Ormond, 19 Sept. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/104/95, enclosure i); St Leger to Burghley, 19 Oct. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/105/25); Ormond to the privy council, 15 Nov. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/105/66).
capitalized upon their traditional military strengths. Ultimately, however, it was undone by Ormond who understood not only the military strategy of the rebels but also the political nature of the conflict. With his personal knowledge of the province Ormond appreciated the fact that the rebel leadership was not a single, coherent body. Instead he realized that the rebels constituted a confederacy with political and personal objectives of their own.
CHAPTER EIGHT
THE CONFEDERATE ORIGINS OF THE REBELLION

The rebels’ tactics, although they appear coherent and structured, were not the result of any formal plan but were the inevitable result of the particular organisation of the rebel forces, which itself was a direct reflection of the structure and character of politics in the Desmond lordship. This determined that the rebellion would not be described as a single event but as several different rebellions, each of which was generated by different and particular sets of circumstances.

The return of James fitz Maurice Fitzgerald in July 1579 threw the province into turmoil. Less than five years after the tumult of Fitz Maurice’s first rebellion, Desmond’s flight from Dublin, the ‘Desmond combination’, and Fitzwilliam’s military campaign, the lords and gentlemen of the region had once again to deal with a ‘religious crusade’ aimed at the deliverance of Ireland from the heretical Elizabeth. In spite of the tensions which had been raised by the issues of the cess and composition, the period since 1574 had been relatively peaceful. Fitz Maurice challenged that peace when he called on the populace of Munster to support him in his endeavours. Almost overnight the political situation in Munster, which had been constructed out of a process of negotiations begun in 1573, was overthrown.

The lords of the province responded in a number of ways. Some remained steadfastly loyal to the crown. Among this group were lord Roche and Sir Cormac MacTeige MacCarthy of Muskerry, two Cork lords who protected their lordships against Desmond overlordship, and John fitz Edmund Fitzgerald of Cloyne, a Geraldine with a long history of loyalty to the crown. Another Geraldine who fought against the rebel forces was the son of the White Knight, Edmund fitz John FitzGibbon. His father John, the White Knight, had died in 1569 and had been

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posthumously attainted for his part in James fitz Maurice’s original rebellion in 1571,\(^1\) which left Edmund impoverished. He supported Desmond following his escape from Dublin in late 1573.\(^2\) In 1575 he went to France for a brief time in the company of Fitz Maurice in an attempt to impress upon Elizabeth the desperate nature of his plight.\(^3\) His bold move appears to have worked for in May 1576 he was pardoned and received a lease of part of his father’s lands.\(^4\) Three years later he surrendered this lease and received a new lease.\(^5\) By the time Fitz Maurice returned to Ireland in July 1579, therefore, Edmund’s lands were in the process of being regranted to him and consequently he dare not jeopardize the crown’s goodwill.

FitzGibbon’s example would appear to have influenced Edmund fitz Thomas Fitzgerald, heir to the putative title of Knight of Glin, to do likewise. His grandfather Thomas fitz John Fitzgerald, Knight of Glin, had been attainted in 1569.\(^6\) Like his kinsman FitzGibbon he had accompanied James fitz Maurice to France in 1575.\(^7\) It may be that he stayed loyal in order to encourage the crown to rescind the forfeiture of his lands, a hope no doubt sustained by the example of FitzGibbon. His first cousins, Edmund fitz David McRuddery, of Ballygleaghan, Co. Limerick, and his brother, David Óg, did rebel, however, possibly motivated by thoughts of revenge for

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1. Act for the attainder of John Fitzgerald, the White Knight, 1571 (Stat. Ire., i, pp 387-9).
2. Thomas Sackford to Burghley, June 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/46/76).
3. Edmund, the White knight, to Ormond, 10 Mar. 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/50/21, enclosure ii); Edmund McRuddery and John FitzUlick to Desmond, 15 July 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/65, enclosure i); The commissioners of Munster to Fitzwilliam, 16 July 1575 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 55, f. 308\(^f\)); The commissioners of Munster to Fitzwilliam, 9 Aug. 1575 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 55, ff 347\(^f\)-347\(^y\)).
4. Pardon to Edmund fitz John FitzGibbon, 5 May 1576 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2786); Lease to Edmund fitz John FitzGibbon, 14 July 1576 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2873).
5. Surrender by Edmund fitz John FitzGibbon, 2 June 1579 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 3551); Lease to Edmund fitz John FitzGibbon, 12 Aug. 1579 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 3583).
7. George Thornton’s declaration of the proceedings of James fitz Maurice, 25 May 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/51/42, enclosure v); Confession of Thomas Bracke, [31 May?] 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/2, enclosure v).
Other lords of the region appear to have managed to remain neutral in the conflict and escaped relatively unharmed. The most notable of these was MacCarthy Mór, earl of Clancar. A natural challenger to Desmond for preeminence in Kerry and Cork, MacCarthy Mór was happy to see Desmond consume himself and his forces in the conflict, protected in part by crown possession of the strategically located Castlemaine castle.

Many more, however, did join the rebellion, though for varying reasons. Some rebelled willingly, some were pushed into it, while others had to be coerced. Some sought to improve their own positions, while others took the opportunity to continue feuds with local rivals. From the outset, therefore, the rebel leadership was composed of a spectrum of rebels which ranged from those who were entirely committed to those whose commitment was conditional. As a result the leadership of the rebellion was not a cohesive body but one which changed over time and from place to place, according to local circumstances. In many ways, therefore, there was not one rebellion but several, which reflected the confederate nature of the rebel leadership.

The most determined of the rebels was James fitz Maurice Fitzgerald, whose path to the rebellion commenced in March 1575 when he set sail for France in the company of his family and some allies. He claimed he did so in order to get Henry III to intercede on his behalf with Elizabeth to grant him a pardon and to ensure that Desmond would grant him sufficient lands to live on. Fitz Maurice apparently felt aggrieved that Desmond had mortgaged Kerrycurrihy to St Leger despite the fact that
Fitz Maurice and his late father had held lands there, and that Desmond had reneged on an agreement, witnessed by the commissioners in Munster, to provide him with a suitable amount of land. Desmond’s failure to compensate Fitz Maurice with other lands was, according to Russell, due to Desmond’s wife, Eleanor, who insisted that Desmond did not sub-divide the earldom to the future detriment of their newly born son James. Embittered and landless as a result, Fitz Maurice sailed to France to get the king to help him.

While Fitz Maurice did get Henry III to write to Elizabeth, which may have been responsible for his pardon dated 7 May 1576, this explanation does not stand up to closer scrutiny. In April 1574 Fitz Maurice had been granted by Desmond the castle of Glin, Tarbert, and Carrigafoile, together with their lands and appurtenances, for the period Kerrycurrihy was in mortgage to St Leger. The manor of Glin consisted of approximately 8,000 acres, half of which was demesne land, while the manor of Tarbert encompassed about 12,500 acres, half of which was also demesne land, a total of over 20,000 acres not including Carrigafoile, and he was in possession of Glin, and presumably the two other castles, at the time of his departure. While the lands assigned to him may or may not have been of equal size or value to those he had previously held in Kerrycurrihy, Fitz Maurice was not the abandoned, landless retainer he claimed.

10 Names of those killed in the rebellion and their lands, 4 Nov. 1584 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 627, f. 129v).
11 Confession of Thomas Bracke, c.1 June 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/2, enclosure v).
13 For the view that Fitz Maurice’s abandonment was a major factor in his rebellion see Ciaran Brady, ‘Faction and the origins of the Desmond rebellion of 1579’ in I.H.S., xxii, no. 88 (Sept. 1981), p. 307; idem., The chief governors, pp 198-9.
14 Pardon to James fitz Gerald, 7 May 1576 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2787).
15 Grant made by Desmond to James fitz Maurice, 23 Apr. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/45/80).
16 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 117-20); Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, p. 166); Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, pp 20-1).
17 James fitz Maurice to Ormond, 28 Feb. 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/50/21, enclosure i); Confession of Thomas Bracke, c.1 June 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/2, enclosure v).
Fitz Maurice’s real motivation in going to France, therefore, would appear to have been the relaunch of a religious war. Although he had submitted to Perrot in February 1573 he remained committed to the reestablishment of the Roman Catholic faith in Ireland. In summer of 1575 Patrick O’Healy, O.F.M., subsequently Roman Catholic bishop of Mayo, met with officials in Rome to discuss the possibility of Vatican backing for an invasion of Ireland or England led by Fitz Maurice. Then in January 1576 Fitz Maurice sought support for an expedition to Ireland from Edward Mercurian, head of the Jesuits. Fitz Maurice remained in France until 1577 when he travelled to Rome where Gregory XIII lent him his backing. He then journeyed to Spain and Portugal to solicit aid from Philip II and King Sebastian of Portugal. Despite an abortive expedition in 1578 Fitz Maurice persevered, and in June 1579 he set sail for Ireland with a force of sixty, and landed in Kerry the following month. When he came ashore Fitz Maurice did so under a banner with a depiction of the Cross and the Virgin Mary and Saint John placed over his family crest, underneath which was the motto *In omni tribulatione et angustia spes nostra Jesus et Maria*, while his appeals to the lords and gentlemen of Ireland for support were couched in religious terms, which portrayed his expedition as a contest between the supporters of the ‘true faith’ and the ‘heretics, and barbarians, and unjust and lawless men’. Although Fitz Maurice was killed barely a month later as he made his way northwards through Clanwilliam, his radical analysis of the situation outlived him and ensured that

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the conflict became a long, bloody affair.

Sir John’s involvement in the rebellion was, by contrast, more complex, and was due to a succession of personal disappointments. Although favoured by Lord Deputy Sidney in the 1560s, his imprisonment in London between 1567 and 1573 had demonstrated how fragile and insecure his relationship with Dublin was, while the birth of Desmond’s son James c.1570 meant that his chances of succeeding to the earldom had diminished greatly. He was pardoned in October 1574, and again in May 1576, but was arrested the following year on suspicion of having agreed a combination with John Burke, the earl of Clanrickard’s son, which included a marriage with Burke’s sister, Marie. Under examination Sir John disclosed that such a marriage had been mooted, even though they both had living spouses, but denied he had secretly met John Burke or been shown letters from James Fitz Maurice about his proposed invasion. By the time of Fitz Maurice’s arrival in Ireland, therefore, Sir John, who had been released by 1578, had become totally disenchanted with Dublin and Whitehall. As a result Sir John reacted to news of Fitz Maurice’s landing like a man who had nothing to lose and killed Sir Henry Davells, constable of Dungarvan, Arthur Carter, and their eighteen companions on 1 August as they slept in Tralee, an act which allowed him to join Fitz Maurice.

Sir John’s entry into rebellion, however, was complicated by his animosity towards Fitz Maurice who, during his time as captain of the Desmond Geraldines had taken the opportunity to attack Sir John’s men in order to demonstrate Fitz Maurice’s status as second-in-command within the earldom. Sir John’s sudden and

22 Pardon to John Fitzgerald, 1 Oct. 1574 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2478); Pardon to John Fitzgerald, et al., 5 May 1576 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2779).
23 Lord Deputy Sidney to the privy council, 17 Mar. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/57/39); President Drury to the privy council, 24 Apr. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/4); The council of Ireland to the Queen, 12 Sept. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/59/6).
24 Drury and Fitton to Burghley, 10 Oct. 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/63/6).
violent killing of Dublin’s envoys would appear to have been designed to ‘up stage’ Fitz Maurice and may have been a way to gain control over the rebellion. In support of this view is the disagreement which occurred between Fitz Maurice and Sir John in August 1579 immediately prior to Fitz Maurice’s death. According to Russell, the dispute arose when one of Sir John’s men raped a woman in the rebel camp at Smerwick. Fitz Maurice heard of the assault and, in an attempt to enforce discipline amongst the rebel forces, ordered the soldier to be executed. Sir John refused to allow such a punishment, and, unable to resolve the matter, Fitz Maurice then determined to split up from Sir John so as to avoid ‘ciuill discord’ between the rebels. On the way north Fitz Maurice was killed. Ostensibly about the punishment of a crime, the matter was really a test of Fitz Maurice’s authority over the rebel forces, authority which Sir John clearly refused to recognise.26

Sir James of Desmond, the earl’s younger half-brother who was approximately twenty one years old in 1579, appears to have rebelled due to the close personal bond with his half-brother Sir John, as the two acted in concert for much of the conflict. His strained relationship with Desmond may also have contributed. With both his parents dead by 1560, custody of Sir James appears initially to have been given to his uncle, Donal MacCarthy Mór, earl of Clancar, whom he was with in 1569, though by 1574 he had been attending upon his Godfather, Thomas Radcliffe, third earl of Sussex, in England. Sir James was back in Munster by early 1576 where he met Sidney upon the latter’s tour of the region.27 His uneasy relationship with Desmond began in mid-1574 when Desmond forced Sir James to yield hostages to him,28 while Desmond also withheld lands including Strancally from him, but, after the queen’s

27 John Corbime to Cecil, 21 Mar. 1569 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/27/57); Articles by Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam and council delivered to Desmond, 8 July 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/3, enclosure i); Sidney to the privy council, 27 Feb. 1576 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/55/19).
28 Note of Desmond’s disorders, [June] 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/46/56, enclosure i).
intervention,\textsuperscript{29} he got some back, as well as the castle of Port, Co. Limerick, which was granted to him in 1577.\textsuperscript{30} In the same year, however, he levied coyne and livery in Duhallow, an act which signalled his refusal to accept the composition. After a period of temporizing, Dublin arrested and detained him briefly the following year.\textsuperscript{31} By 1578, therefore, Sir James had already placed himself outside the ambit of normal politics.

By far the most important rebel was the earl of Desmond, the man who quickly assumed nominal command of the rebellion. In contrast to what may be expected, however, he was also one of the most reluctant participants as the rebellion threatened everything he had negotiated so hard for since 1573. From the desperation which underlined the ‘Desmond combination’ in 1574, Desmond’s circumstances had improved to the point where, after initial difficulties with Lord President Drury, he had agreed to the abolition of coyne and livery in November 1578 and their replacement with composition. Desmond was looking forward to a more stable and more profitable era. The arrival of Fitz Maurice threatened to upset his new relationship with Dublin.

Desmond’s initial reaction was to alert Dublin about Fitz Maurice’s landing and to surround the latter’s base at Smerwick with his own men.\textsuperscript{32} After that, however, he procrastinated. He tried to avoid direct action against the rebels, but he was soon overtaken by the actions of his brothers when they killed Davells and Carter. This increased the pressure on Desmond to act decisively against the rebels. Drury met him at Limerick to discuss the worsening crisis in August and again at

\textsuperscript{29} The queen to Fitzwilliam, June 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/56).
\textsuperscript{30} President Drury to Walsingham, 5 May 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/9).
\textsuperscript{31} Drury to the privy council, 24 Apr. 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/4); Drury to Walsingham, 5 May 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/9); Sidney to the privy council, 1 July 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/61/29); Drury to the privy council, 1 July 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/61/30).
\textsuperscript{32} Desmond to Lord Justice Drury, 19 July 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/67/40, enclosure i); Desmond, the archbishop of Cashel, and William Apsley, to Drury, 20 July 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/67/43, enclosure i); Desmond to , 10 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/51).
Kilmallock in early September. At the latter meeting Drury briefly detained Desmond, but released him on 9 September upon a promise to deliver his son James to Drury, which the countess did within days.33

By the end of September the situation had become even more critical for Desmond as the fatally ill Drury was replaced as commander in Munster by Sir Nicholas Malby, governor of Connacht. Malby, impatient at Desmond's prevarication, increased the pressure on Desmond dramatically when, following the battle at Monasteranenagh on 3 October, he marched to Askeaton to demand the earl's submission. When Desmond refused Malby retaliated by burning the town and abbey.34

Command of the English forces was almost immediately transferred to Sir William Pelham, lord justice since 11 October, who arrived at Cashel by 24 October. He was willing to negotiate with Desmond and dispatched Ormond to him with a set of articles, under which Desmond was to prosecute the rebels, capture Dr Sanders, the papal legate, and the other foreigners, hand over possession of Askeaton or Carrigafoile castle, and submit to the lord justice. Failure to comply would result in his proclamation as a traitor. By that time, however, Desmond's faith in the words and actions of Dublin and Whitehall had been completely eroded by Malby's actions. Desmond feared that he would be destroyed by Englishmen, such as Malby, ignorant of circumstances in Munster and of his generally good relationship with Dublin since 1574. In his response to Pelham's offer, therefore, Desmond returned to the

33 Drury and Kildare to Gerrard and Loftus, 2 Aug. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 112-4); Drury and council to Desmond, 26 Aug. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 146); Drury and council of Ireland to the privy council, 12 Sept. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 166-71); Some of the council in Ireland to the privy council, 2 Oct. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 193-6); Desmond to ________, 10 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/51).

34 Remembrance of Malby, 22 Aug. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/68/46, enclosure 1); Malby to the Privy Council, 4 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/48; Walsingham letter-bk, pp 200-5); Desmond to ________, 10 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/51); Malby to Desmond, the countess, Meurice Sheehan, or the constable of Askeaton, 8 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/52, enclosure ix); Desmond to Ormond, 10 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/50); Malby to Walsingham, 12 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/52).
negotiations he had had in 1573. He agreed to hand over any manor except Askeaton once his castles had been returned to him, and promised to defeat the rebels. This was insufficient for Pelham who gave him until 8 in the morning on 2 November to present himself to the lord justice. When Desmond failed to do so, Pelham proclaimed him a traitor. Malby’s actions at Askeaton had thus been central to Desmond’s being pushed out into rebellion.

Two prominent rebels who appear to have joined the rebellion following Desmond’s proclamation and not before, were John fitz Edmund, the Seneschal of Imokilly, and Rory McSheehy. Fitz Edmund was to prove one of the most committed rebel leaders. Desmond’s chief official in Imokilly, the Seneschal was an experienced soldier, and had briefly participated in Fitz Maurice’s first rebellion in 1569. He had accompanied Fitz Maurice to France in 1575 but returned to Ireland within a few months and, following examination by the commissioners, resumed his position within the earldom. The following year he complained that Desmond had imposed horses and horseboys who were exacting ‘bonaght beg’ and ‘kearnety’ from the freeholders and inhabitants of Imokilly. This may have been an example of Desmond’s efforts to reassert his authority over Imokilly, or of Desmond’s


36 The commissioners of Munster to Fitzwilliam, 16 July 1575 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 55, f. 308v); Interrogatories administered to James fitz Edmund Fitzgerald, the seneschal of Imokilly, and John McUlick, 18 July 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/66, enclosure iii); Answer of the seneschal and John McUlick, 18 July 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/66, enclosure iv); Dowdall, Walshe, and Meagh to Fitzwilliam, 20 July 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/52/66); The commissioners of Munster to Fitzwilliam, 9 Aug. 1575 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 55, ff 347v-347v).

37 John fitz Edmund, seneschal of Imokilly, to the lord ________, 16 Nov. 1576 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/56/50).
dissatisfaction at Drury's imposition of cess. Either way, this was but a temporary upset in the Seneschal's relationship with Desmond for it appears he followed the earl into rebellion and was to be one of the most active and feared of the rebel leaders.

A less complicated case was Rory McSheehy, the leader of the McSheehy galloglass, the warriors who provided the backbone of Desmond's forces. McSheehy was one of Desmond's key military advisers and a member of his council, and as such would have been threatened by Desmond's agreement to implement a composition. McSheehy did, however, hold approximately 10,000 acres of land situated along the river Deel in Co. Limerick, so he could have survived the end of coyne and livery. It would appear, therefore, that his martial profession and his allegiance to Desmond induced him to rebel.

For others, however, particular circumstances, similar to the destruction of Askeaton for Desmond, contributed to their outbreak. In the case of David, lord Barry, it appears his motivation was revenge. That Barry should rebel was surprising. The Barrys were rarely allied to the Desmonds and as such would have been expected to remain loyal. Indeed, Barry's father James, who had been knighted by deputy Sidney on 30 March 1567, had pursued a policy of loyalty to the crown. He had received a commission to execute martial law in his territories in May 1576, and had agreed the following year to pay composition of £150 p.a. for two years in lieu of cess on his lands. He remained loyal upon the outbreak of the conflict, gave in pledges to

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38 Fenton to Burghley, 8 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/75/26).
39 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 48-9).
40 In 1574 lord Barry, together with lord Roche, was counted among those who disliked the Desmonds: The names of those who do mislike with the Geraldines being in Munster, 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/47/36). For the Barrys see K.W. Nicholls, 'The development of lordship in county Cork', pp 176-81.
41 G.E.C., Peerage, i, p. 442; Commission to Sir James Barry, 29 May 1576 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 2821).
42 Bond of £500 entered into by James Barry, viscount Buttevant, and viscount Roche, 18 Oct. 1576 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/56/38); Sidney to the privy council, 15 May 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/25); Gerrard to Burghley, 20 May 1577 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/58/31).
Ormond in December 1579, and attended upon Ormond and Pelham in 1580. However, James, whom St Leger described as the 'subtillest foxe, that ever Munster bredd', was suspected of having given mainly covert assistance to the rebels, and consequently was incarcerated in Dublin castle in September 1580, whereupon his health declined. Two days after his father's death in custody on 29 April 1581, Barry, along with his brother John, rebelled and was proclaimed a traitor. Bitterness at his father's fate was thus the primary reason for David Barry's entry into rebellion, although he may also have been influenced by local rivalry with Lord Roche.

Barry may well have influenced his brother-in-law, Patrick Condon, to rebel, as Condon was proclaimed a traitor in May 1581, although it would appear that a more significant motivating factor for his participation in the rebellion was a private feud which he was engaged in with his local rival, David, lord Roche. Thus it was that Condon killed four of Roches's sons and attacked his house at Castletownroche. An additional factor may have been a close friendship with the Seneschal of Imokilly who joined with him on the vast majority of his military operations during the rebellion.

Perhaps the most unwilling rebel was Thomas Fitzmaurice, sixteenth baron of Lixnaw, his reluctance born of his long running dispute with Desmond. In mid-1574 Desmond had taken hostages off him to ensure his support. After his submission Desmond refused to release the hostages, and used them as a lever to combat Lixnaw's
ongoing attempts to free himself from Desmond overlordship. Lixnaw’s campaign appeared to come to a definite, and unsuccessful, end in August 1575 when the commissioners declared that he was subject to the jurisdiction of the liberty of Kerry, which confirmed an earlier decision of the privy council. They awarded Desmond £2 in costs and decided that Lixnaw owed Desmond 1,260 marks old half face money and 1,080 cattle for rents due out of Clanmaurice which had been unpaid since 1566, and the deputy confirmed their decision the following February. It would appear that Lixnaw refused to pay and consequently Desmond invaded his lands in August 1576. Desmond captured Ballymacaquim castle, and took over 2,400 kine, and 200 horses, as well as sheep, goats, and hogs. Three months later Desmond, in an attempt to end the conflict, offered Lixnaw and his men safe conduct and protection on condition they answered at the liberty court in Kerry, an offer Lixnaw presumably declined. Two years later, in 1578, Lixnaw was again in dispute over his obligations to Desmond. The commissioners ruled that Lixnaw was to attend the liberty court of Kerry when called to do so, but found that Rattoo and Ardfert, the prise wines of Feenit, and the fishing rights of the river Cassan belonged to him.

Given Lixnaw’s attitude during this period it was not surprising that one of his first reactions to the outbreak of the rebellion was to claim in December 1579 that, due to Desmond’s proclamation as a traitor, he was free of ‘the Earls libertie Courte’, and sought ‘hir majesties pardon’ for himself, his sons, and his men. He briefly joined

49 Lixnaw to Ormond, 3 Dec. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/48/70, enclosure ii); Justice Walshe to Ormond, 4 Dec. 1574 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/48/70, enclosure iii); Agard, Walshe, and Meagh to Fitzwilliam, 11 Jan. 1575 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 55, ff 192r-192v).
50 Order passed by the commissioners of Munster, 30 Aug. 1575 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/53/19).
52 Lixnaw to Sidney, 25 Aug. 1576 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/56/21); Lixnaw to Sidney, 1 Sept. 1576 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/56/23).
53 Protection by Desmond to Lixnaw, 30 Nov. 1576 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/56/54).
54 The commissioners in Munster to Sidney, 3 Sept. 1578 (Bodl., Carte MSS, vol. 57, ff 135r-136v); Petition of Patrick Fitzmaurice to Sidney, 1578 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/64/14).
55 Lixnaw to Ormond, 17 Dec. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 253-5).
with Desmond thereafter, but the following March he claimed he had only done so in order ‘to save them selfes from his furry and radge till they might com to the Governo’. He was made sheriff of Kerry in July 1581, and helped prosecute the campaign against the rebels. However, following the escape of his sons Patrick and Edmund Fitzmaurice from Limerick castle in early August 1581, where they had been put as pledges for their father’s good behaviour the year previously, he joined with them in rebellion and took part in at least two attacks. Lixnaw submitted in April 1583 and insisted he had rebelled in response to the tyranny and oppression directed at him by Desmond, an explanation which, given his previous experiences with Desmond, seems valid.

Although MacCarthy Mór remained neutral, a number of Gaelic-Irish lords did rebel, amongst whom were some lords from south Kerry including O’Donoghue Mór, based at Ross castle, Killarney, Teige MacDermot MacCarthy of the Sliocht Cosh Maing of Molahiffe, Fineen MacCormac of the Clan Dermot, and Teige Roe of the Clandonnell Roe. Precisely when and why they rebelled is uncertain, although they may have viewed the rebellion as an opportunity of escaping from the overlordship of MacCarthy Mór.

For other lords the motivation for rebelling was linked to dynastic disputes within their lordships. One such person was Donough MacCormac, tanist and claimant to the MacDonough MacCarthy lordship of Duhallow. He was engaged in a dispute with Diarmuid MacOwen which would last into the early seventeenth century. He escaped from Cork in 1582 and used the rebellion to support his bid for

56 John Meagh to Walsingham, 31 Mar. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/23).
57 Articles subscribed to by Thomas, baron of Lixnaw, 23 July 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/84/45); The privy council in Ireland to the privy council, 31 July 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/84/53).
58 Wallop to Walsingham, 11 Aug. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/85/9); Wallop to Walsingham, 12 Aug. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/85/14); Submission of Thomas, baron of Lixnaw, [Apr.] 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/101/10, enclosure i).
59 For the lordships of these lords see Butler, Gleanings, pp 26-7, 49-62.
power in the lordship.60

A similar situation threatened to develop in the MacCarthy lordship of Muskerry following the death in 1583 of Sir Cormac McTeige, the captor of Sir James of Desmond. Both Sir Cormac’s brother, Ceallachan, and his nephew, Cormac Óg, laid claim to the lordship and assembled their forces. Ormond was concerned that Cormac Óg might rebel as Ormond believed him to be ‘veray nere alyed to the Geraldines’ due to the fact that his mother was Ellen, sister of James fitz Maurice Fitzgerald. Ormond, therefore, intervened, dispersed their forces, and got the two contenders to agree to have the matter dealt with by the justices of Munster.61 Unlike Grey who could not prevent Barry, Condon, and Lixnaw from rebelling, Ormond prevented the MacCarthys of Muskerry from being dragged into the conflict, although Ceallachan was forced to abdicate as thirteenth lord of Muskerry the following year when Cormac Óg succeeded as fourteenth lord.62

The men who constituted the rebel leadership thus had widely differing motives for entering the rebellion. Some had everything to lose and joined the rebellion only hesitantly, others felt they had nothing to lose and partook with enthusiasm. For some the rebellion provided the context in which to defeat local rivals, continue age old feuds, and contest with close relatives for various lordships. The principal rebels, therefore, wanted different things out of the rebellion. The widespread, dispersed nature of the rebels accentuated this. Although there were some coordinated attacks, they were infrequent, and consequently for the majority of the time de facto control of events in each area rested with the local rebel

60 St Leger to Burghley, 22 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/95/59); The lords justices to Walsingham, 3 Oct. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/3); Onor Cartye to the Lieutenant of the queen’s forces in Munster, [Sept.] 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/3, enclosure iii). For the rivalry between Donough and Diarmuid see S.T. McCarthy, The MacCarthys of Munster (Dundalk, 1922), pp 253-9.

61 Ormond to the privy council, 22 July 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/103/30); Ormond to Burghley, 22 July 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/103/31).

62 For the dispute between Cormac Óg and Ceallachan see S.T. McCarthy, The MacCarthys of Munster, pp 187-94.
commanders. This allowed the various rebel leaders to pursue their individual aims within the wider context of the rebellion. The rebellion thus remained from start to finish a confederate one.

The character of the conflict was, therefore, not only due to the terrain or the rebel strategy which sought to exploit English military weaknesses, but was also influenced by the political nature of the confederacy. The rebellion was above all a political act, and the crown commander who appreciated this was Ormond.

Ever since he had assumed control of his earldom in the 1550s Ormond had been engaged in a struggle with Desmond for supremacy in Munster. This conflict had, after the climax at the battle of Affane in 1565, resolved itself into a series of seemingly interminable raids. The intervention of the Irish council, the privy council, and even the queen herself had raised the prospect of an end to the conflict but none was forthcoming until the late 1570s when Desmond, in spite of all that had gone before, managed to rehabilitate himself to a significant degree. The outbreak of the rebellion in 1579 gave him a fresh opportunity to diminish Desmond’s prestige and to extend his own.

Ormond was unique among the high command of the crown forces in Munster in that he had a personal interest in the province as the vast majority of his estates and wealth was based there. Ormond was thus a ‘local’ general who attempted to quell an internal rebellion whilst in command of what was in effect an expeditionary army composed of non-local, English troops. Ormond was twice appointed general of the army in Munster. During his first term, October 1579 to June 1581, he served under both Pelham and Grey. However, his policy to harry the rebels out of their refuges in the woods and bogs was severely criticized by political opponents, the

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63 Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 28r); Commission to Thomas, earl of Ormond, 16 Oct. 1579 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 3602). 243
most notable of whom was St Leger, with whom he had a long history of animosity.\textsuperscript{64} Eventually the sustained criticism led to his recall.

However, by the end of 1582, with the rebellion still ongoing, and the Irish administration headed by the civilians Loftus and Wallop, circumstances had changed and in a bid to bring the interminable rebellion to a conclusion he was reappointed lord general on 12 November 1582.\textsuperscript{65} Again he came in for criticism,\textsuperscript{66} but this time he was protected by the greatest shield of all, success, for it was during his second term as general that Ormond defeated the rebellion.

Ormond understood that the rebel leadership was not a monolithic body but a coalition of lords and gentlemen with their own priorities. He, therefore, pursued a dual policy during 1583, by which he engaged the rebels in the field, while he simultaneously offered a peaceful alternative to those rebels who chose to forsake Desmond and sued for the queen’s protection and mercy. While Ormond did not hesitate to kill anyone who remained a rebel, he understood that the vast majority of the rebels did not seek to overthrow the religious order in Ireland, as Fitz Maurice had wanted, but had joined the rebellion for their own reasons. Ormond provided them with a way out. In this way he denuded Desmond of allies and reduced the ability of the rebels to function effectively until Desmond was finally hunted down and killed in November 1583. It was Ormond, therefore, and not the English military establishment, who defeated Desmond and brought the rebellion to an end.

Ormond’s success, however, was not unqualified. For one thing, he would not

\textsuperscript{64} One of the causes of this animosity was that Ormond had wrecked St Leger’s chance of being formally appointed lord president of Munster in 1566: Ciaran Brady, \textit{The chief governors}, p. 172. For St Leger’s criticism see St Leger to Burghley, 26 Jan. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/80/29); St Leger to Burghley, 24 Apr. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/82/50); St Leger to Burghley, 3 June 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/38); Ormond to Burghley, 15 July 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/84/19); Ormond to Burghley, 1 Oct. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/3).

\textsuperscript{65} Vice-treasurer’s accounts, 1 Apr. 1579-30 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., E. 351/230, f. 28f); Appointment of Thomas, earl of Ormond, to be lord general and governor of Munster, 6 Jan. 1583 (\textit{Irish Fiants, Elizabeth}, no. 4102).

\textsuperscript{66} St Leger to Burghley, 8 May 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/17); Sir George Bourchier to Wallop, 28 June 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/103/1, enclosure i).
have wished for the death of Desmond. Although Desmond had caused him considerable problems from the 1550s on, Desmond’s presence had served to highlight Ormond’s role as the ‘queen’s man’ in Munster, and to emphasize to Dublin and Whitehall how necessary Ormond was for the maintenance of the crown’s position in Ireland. With Desmond dead, Ormond’s importance was ironically weakened even as his position in Munster was preeminent. Ormond would doubtless have preferred a much reduced and more compliant Desmond to have remained in Munster, one he could control and manipulate, but that was not to be.

Furthermore, by the time he had undone his arch rival, Ormond faced an additional problem in that the captains had discerned the political nature of the confederacy, which itself had been a reflection of the local character of the earldom. The captains appreciated that local portions of land which had belonged to dead rebels would soon be available for allocation to English planters and they put in for their share. Ormond’s success in the rebellion thus saw him exchange one set of dangerous neighbours for another.
The Desmond rebellion was waged by a rebel confederacy which had various objectives. Although James fitz Maurice, the most radical of the rebels, may well have sought to expel the English from Munster and indeed Ireland, Desmond merely wanted to survive the conflict. His strategy was to employ guerrilla-style tactics in order to weary the English forces and weaken Whitehall's determination to prosecute the war. If successful in this, Whitehall would be receptive to a negotiated end to the rebellion and Desmond would be free to resume his recently improved relationship with Dublin. The inconclusive military campaign was thus the backdrop to sustained political efforts by Desmond as he sought a way out of the situation created by the forces unleashed by Fitz Maurice's return. In this way he sought the restoration of the status quo ante bellum.

At the same time, however, Desmond was in contact with both Spain and Rome. In these communications he claimed to be dedicated to the restoration of the Roman Catholic faith in Ireland, and sought assistance, both men and material, in order to help him achieve this goal. This would appear to directly contradict the assertion that he wanted to restore the status quo, but upon closer examination these contacts with continental Europe appear to have been largely designed to bolster his negotiating position in relation to Dublin and Whitehall.

A feature of the Desmond rebellion was the participation of forces from outside Munster. Fitz Maurice's landing with a small European force at Dingle in
July 1579 had brought a Papal/Spanish dimension to the rebellion right from the start, while he also received support from allies in Ireland, such as the O'Flaherty's of Connacht who had sent him two galleys by the end of July, ships which thereafter brought to Connacht 'some of the practisers' who had arrived with him. Fitz Maurice had thus established the pattern of involvement by forces from Europe and Ireland which was to continue, with varying levels of intensity, for the remainder of the conflict.

Around the beginning of November 1579 Desmond was believed to have sent letters to Spain via Galway, though this may have been an attempt by Pelham to bolster his case for Desmond's proclamation. Whatever the truth about that report, two ships arrived at Dingle in late January 1580 with letters for the rebels. The messengers, one Spanish and the other French, met Desmond at Castleisland where they told him that the kings of Spain and France had heard that all the Geraldines had been killed, and that Nicholas Sanders had been reported to have 'railed and reviled' the two monarchs for having broken their word to support the rebel cause. As a result of this purported news, the monarchs had stayed their forces intended for action in Ireland until their messengers had returned with definite news about the rebel leaders. The Spaniard stated that 30,000 troops were ready, among them Fitz Maurice's two sons, and that this force would sail for Ireland within a month of his return to Spain, 'winde and wether serveinge'.

Two months later two Papal envoys arrived, while the same month a most bizarre incident occurred when a Spanish ship was captured at Baltimore, on board of

1 Drury to Gerrard, 28 July 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 104).
2 Drury and Kildare to Gerrard and Loftus, 2 Aug. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, p. 113).
3 Instructions to Captain Edward Fenton, 4 Nov. 1579 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, f. 100v).
4 Lord Roche to Ormond, 9 Feb. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 245v-246v); Pelham to the privy council, 11 Feb. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 243v-245v).
5 St Leger to Burghley, 8 Mar. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/7).
which were found letters written in Spanish. In spite of the remarkable fact that he could not find anybody in Cork city able to read the letters, St Leger nonetheless felt able to deduce from fragments of the letters that the Spaniards had been sent to trade with merchants in the ports of Waterford, Cork, and Limerick, although he suspected that their real purpose was to communicate with the rebels.6

That September a second Papal expedition landed at Dingle. The force of around 600 Spanish and Italian troops fortified Smerwick, but rebel co-ordination and co-operation with this force was dismally poor, and the garrison surrendered in November 1580. Some months later, in early 1581, Desmond sent a priest to Spain seeking military aid, while in May of the following year a Spanish ship was observed off the coast near Castletown Bearhaven, believed to be carrying letters for the rebels and gathering intelligence on their strength.7 Later that year it was believed that Pope Gregory and King Philip had promised Desmond that he would have aid before the start of Lent 1583, and that Desmond had sent a number of envoys from Smerwick in a Spanish ship to ensure that the aid materialized.8 In January 1583 another priest arrived with messages for the rebels, and during the summer John Farrell, a friar from Askeaton, returned with news from Spain.9

Desmond’s relationship with the Vatican is better documented, with the texts of a number of his letters extant. Again, however, it was well into the rebellion before Desmond made his first recorded contact with Rome. In October 1580 he informed the Pope that he had lost more than thirty kinsmen and relations in the fighting, and that his lands had been so badly destroyed that there was not a hut left standing in his

6 St Leger and Justice John Meagh to the privy council, 23 Mar. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/16).
7 St Leger to Burghley, 11 Feb. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/80/57); St Leger to Burghley, 25 May 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/92/66).
8 William Lyon, bishop of Ross, to Lords Justices Loftus and Wallop, 9 Oct. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/10, enclosure ii); St Leger to the queen, 26 Nov. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/97/50).
9 St Leger to Burghley, 16 Jan. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/99/26); St Leger to Burghley, 5 Aug. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/104/3).
territories. He thanked the Holy Father for the Papal-sponsored force which had landed in Kerry the previous month, but considered it too small and too late, having hoped it would have arrived in May or June. Nonetheless he promised to remain constant in his support of God’s cause, and asked for further men and munitions in his campaign to help his land which had always been loyal to the Holy See.\textsuperscript{10}

Desmond wrote again in January 1582 and blamed the loss of Smerwick on the fort’s commander, Sebastiano di San Giuseppe, whom he accused of surrendering much too easily. Nevertheless, Desmond swore to persevere in the cause of God and the Church against the enemies of the Church of Christ. Ultimately he hoped to return the province to the jurisdiction of the Church, and again asked for more aid to help bring that about.\textsuperscript{11} The following September he once more asked for aid to expel the Lutherans and heretics from Ireland in order to return the realm to the laws and rule of the holy mother Church, and repeated those sentiments two months later when he described Ireland as a most fervently Catholic country.\textsuperscript{12} In a final letter Desmond noted how he was defending the faith against the nefarious and impious power of the queen of England.\textsuperscript{13}

In his intermittent communications with Spain and Rome, via letters, messengers, and emissaries, Desmond would appear to have been utilizing the reservoir of knowledge about diplomatic practice in the earldom, which included James eleventh earl’s dealings with both Francis I of France in 1523, and with Charles V of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Desmond to Pope Gregory XIII, 1 Sept. 1582 in J. Hagan (ed.), ‘Miscellanea Vaticano-Hibernica (1572-1585)’ in Archiv. hib., vii (1918-21), pp 305-6; Desmond to Pope Gregory XIII, 6 Nov. 1582, ibid., pp 310-1.
\end{itemize}
Spain in 1528-9, and to have developed the contacts which Fitz Maurice had established during his sojourn on the continent between 1575 and 1579.

But despite the superficial appearance of the continuation of Fitz Maurice’s earlier contacts, the reality was different. From the available evidence the first contact which Desmond initiated with Rome came in October 1580, while his first messenger to Spain may have been sent as late as 1581. For the first year after his proclamation as a traitor, therefore, Desmond’s relationship with the European powers was passive, having only received messages and envoys. Desmond’s negotiations with Europe were thus different from Fitz Maurice’s, where the latter had initiated the whole process and constantly set the tone of the talks. Desmond had not engaged with either Spain or Rome prior to his proclamation and when he did so he sent relatively minor emissaries. He appears, therefore, merely to have responded to the situation he found himself in with the tools at hand.

Additionally, Desmond was a most unlikely leader of a counter-reformation rebellion. In stark contrast to Fitz Maurice who spent virtually the entire time between 1569 and 1579 engaged in military or diplomatic endeavour designed to secure the restoration of the Roman Catholic faith in Ireland, Desmond had no history of concern for religious matters. At no stage had the question of religion entered the negotiations he had had with Whitehall and Dublin between 1572 and 1574, apart from his restoration of Hugh Lacy to the bishopric of Limerick in 1573. Nor had it been an issue with president Drury between 1576 and 1578, nor again when Drury became lord justice. Neither had he had any apparent contact with Rome prior to 1580. It was not until he had been proclaimed that he demonstrated any interest in the issue.

Admittedly, when he wrote to Rome he declared that he was engaged on a

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14 For the Desmond diplomatic connections with continental Europe see D.M. Downey, *Culture and diplomacy: The Spanish-Habsburg dimension in the Irish counter reformation, c.1529-c.1629*, chapters 1-3.
‘holy crusade’ and boldly asserted his fervent devotion to the Church and his undiluted enmity for the schismatic Elizabeth and her fellow Protestants. Yet his call for a grand, national crusade to liberate Ireland and to defend the Catholic faith in Ireland was contradicted by his own actions. The tactics he employed did not threaten to expel the English from Munster, let alone Ireland, and in the absence of this, the Catholic religion would not be restored. At a time when allegiance to the monarch’s religion was synonymous with allegiance to the state, neither Whitehall nor Dublin could afford to acquiesce in the creation of a Catholic refuge in Munster. Only a complete military victory, something which Desmond did not even attempt, could achieve that. Desmond’s calls for a Catholic crusade were thus at best tactical, opportunistic, if not disingenuous.

Desmond’s reticent attitude to these contacts may also have been influenced by the lessons of history, for Desmond and his advisers, aware of the long diplomatic tradition within the earldom, would also have been cognizant of the dangers of placing their hopes for the future on the vagaries of European politics. Polite letters and diplomatic envoys were relatively easy to get, the rebels doubtless aware that Spain and England sought to use the conflicts in Ireland and the Netherlands to further their own interests by proxy. Tangible, sustained support was another matter. Even if he did get assistance it would have had to be substantial, comparable perhaps to Aguila’s force of around 3,000 men which was to land at Kinsale in 1601, while the fleet required to transport such a force would have had to brave not only the weather conditions of the Atlantic, conditions which were to contribute greatly to the devastation of the Armada in 1588, but also the presence of English warships along the Munster coast. The prospect of a large invasion force was thus remote, if not fanciful, and after 1580 no further European assistance was forthcoming.

Perhaps the greatest benefit Desmond was to derive from his dealings with
Spain and Rome lay in his ability to generate and sustain Whitehall's anxiety over the situation in Munster. In this he was aided by the deterioration in Anglo-Spanish relations which occurred in the late 1570s, and the pontificate of the militantly anti-Protestant Pope Gregory XIII. Whitehall thus had to take the threat of foreign intervention seriously. Furthermore, the prospect of substantial support from Europe helped maintain morale of the rebel forces. In April 1582 the rebels were believed to be 'newlie encoradged by lres from the Pope', in which they were urged to stand firm until preparations then under way were finalized. These letters were presumably those delivered by Bishop O'Mulrian of Cork and Cloyne the previous month. O'Mulrian's news thus had a noticeable effect on the rebels.

Desmond's primary motivation behind his Catholic continental contacts, however, would appear to have been to encourage, and put pressure on, Gaelic-Irish and Hiberno-Norman lords in Ireland to support him. By stressing the Catholic nature of the revolt, and the prospect of foreign aid, he hoped to encourage others in Ireland to join him and thus strengthen his position.

In that search for allies in Ireland Desmond was able to communicate with the remnants of the traditional Geraldine faction, opponents of Ormond, and those who had suffered at the hands of encroaching government officials. In November 1579 Desmond, by then in rebellion, addressed a letter to various Irish lords, including the O'Connors, the O'Mores, and the Kavanaghs of Leinster, which appealed to their Catholic sensibilities. The text of the letter, one of the few to survive, is as follows:

16 Fenton to Walsingham, 12 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/23).
17 St Leger to the queen, 12 Mar. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/41, enclosure i); Advertisements out of Munster from Justice Meagh, 23 Mar. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/17, enclosure i).
18 Desmond and his brethren to various persons, 29 Nov. 1579 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, f. 131'); Desmond and his brothers to various lords, 29 Nov. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 244-5).
My wellbeloved friend I commend me to you, It is so that I and my brethren, are entered in defence of our Catholicke faith, and the overthrow of our Country by Englishmen, which had overthrown the holy church and goo about to overrone our Country, and to make it their owne, and to make us their bond men, Wherin we are to desire you to take parte with us, according as you are bound by conscience, and by nature to defend your Country, And if you be afraid we should shrinke from you after you should enter this cause, you shall understand that we took this matter in hand with great auctorite, both from the Pope’s hollines, and from Kinge Phillip who do undertake to further us in our affaires as we shall neede, Wherfore you shall not need to feare to take our parte of it, And be assured that we will never agree with none of your adversaries, with out your consent. And this letter shalbe a sufficient warrant for the same. Newcastell the xxix of November 1579.

Your assured lovinge frende
G: Desmonde
Jo: Fitzgerald
Ja: Fitzgeralde.

In this letter Desmond based his call for assistance on the two doctrines of loyalty to one’s religion and loyalty to one’s country. Desmond claimed that he was defending the Roman Catholic faith against the heretical English who sought to completely destroy the Catholic Church in Ireland. He also stated that he did so with the official sanction of both the Pope and Philip II of Spain, each of whom had promised their full support. On religious grounds, therefore, participation in the rebellion was the right thing to do, while the backing of Rome and Spain gave the venture the possibility of success. The rebellion was also projected as a necessary reaction to the English who were determined to subjugate the lords and people of Ireland. Desmond asserted that only active opposition to this English plan could protect the traditional land and political rights the lords enjoyed. Failure to support the rebellion would lead to their virtual enslavement, something which the lords were
honour bound to prevent. Participation in the rebellion was thus not only right and rational, it was imperative on the lords of Ireland to do so.

Desmond’s appeal was very similar to previous appeals which had been made by James fitz Maurice. To Austin Kittagh MacDonnell, a galloglass leader in Munster, Fitz Maurice had written that he was ‘fighting for our faith and for the Church of God’ and ‘defending our country’ against ‘heretics, and barbarians, and unjust and lawless men’. In a second letter to him Fitz Maurice stated that he was ‘defending our religion and our country’ against those who were ‘abolishing the religion, and about to take our own country from us’. Fitz Maurice thus urged MacDonnell and neighbouring lords to enter into rebellion ‘first for the sake of God, and next to defend their country’. This call for the defence of religion and the country was also evident in Fitz Maurice’s proclamation and in his letter to the earl of Kildare, although in these documents Fitz Maurice claimed to be fighting ‘not against the Crown of England, but onely against the usurper thereof’.

Although the texts of Desmond’s other letters have not survived, it is reasonable to assume that they were similar in tone and content to his letters to the O’Connors and their allies. However, any participation on the part of other lords had more to do with local circumstances than with rhetoric about their religion or country. The two Mac-an-Iarla brothers, Ulick, subsequently third earl of Clanrickard, and his half-brother John, baron of Leitrim, who rebelled for a brief period in 1580-1, were frequently at variance with the Lord President of Connacht. Similarly, the O’Mores, O’Connors, and Kavanaghs, who rebelled in 1581 as part of William Nugent’s

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rebellion, itself brought on in part by the Baltinglass rebellion of 1580, rebelled because they had suffered greatly from the plantation of Leix-Offaly from the 1550s on. English encroachment on their traditional territories led to numerous periods of conflict which culminated in the massacre at Mullaghmast, Co. Kildare, in 1577 and the killing of Rory Oge O'More the following year. Their experience thus found a resonance with Desmond's warning that the English sought to make them their 'bond men'.

Desmond's first aim in these contacts was the procurement of reinforcements to bolster his own forces. Just as Fitz Maurice had secured some men from the O'Flaherty's in July 1579, Desmond's dealings with Turlough Luineach O'Neill later that year were believed to involve Turlough's negotiating for Scottish mercenaries to come to Ireland, not only for himself in Ulster but also for Desmond in Munster. Such an infusion of those Scottish warriors would have strengthened Desmond's military position immediately and dramatically improved his chances against the English.

More important than that, however, was Desmond's attempt to broaden the conflict beyond the confines of Munster, something which would force the English to maintain troops in those areas in which the other lords resided. This would restrict the numbers of troops available for service in Munster and could possibly even lead to soldiers being withdrawn from Munster to other areas.

Desmond was particularly active in seeking allies in Ulster where as early as December 1579 he was suspected of having 'contineweall intelligence' with Turlough

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Luineach O’Neill.\textsuperscript{23} He also reportedly wrote to O’Neill, O’Donnell, and Sorley Boy MacDonnell \textit{ante} August 1580,\textsuperscript{24} and again to O’Donnell in April 1582,\textsuperscript{25} and as late as August 1583 it was suspected that Desmond had sent his servant John Lacy, whom St Leger described as a ‘traitorely villane’, into Ulster ‘to practize mischief there’.\textsuperscript{26} The threat posed by the Gaelic-Irish in Ulster was sufficient for one of Drury’s first acts following Fitz Maurice’s landing to be the despatch of Sir Nicholas Bagenal, marshal of the army, to Newry in order to ensure Turlough Luineach O’Neill’s neutrality in relation to events in Munster.\textsuperscript{27} Desmond’s efforts to destabilize Ulster by encouraging others to rebel thus heightened Dublin’s fears about the province.

Similar reasoning lay behind Desmond’s approaches in Connacht. In April 1580 he wrote to various of the Burkes of Connacht, including Sean Burke, seventeenth lord of MacWilliam Íochtar, his tanaiste Richard an Iarainn (Iron Dick), later eighteenth lord of MacWilliam Íochtar, and the two Mac-an-Iarlas, Ulick and John, along with the Clandonnell and MacSweeny septs of galloglass. These letters were designed to persuade them to ‘rowse theire forces, and enter into oppen rebellyon’,\textsuperscript{28} which would enable Desmond to indirectly pressure Malby, president of Connacht, to remain in his province and not to repeat his actions of 1579 when he had brought around 700 men out of Connacht to help stabilize the situation in Munster following Fitz Maurice’s landing.

Undoubtedly the clearest example of the impact which unrest outside Munster

\textsuperscript{23} Pelham and council in Ireland to the privy council, 13 Dec. 1579 (\textit{Walsingham letter-bk}, p.250); Pelham to the privy council, 15 Dec. 1579 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 151\textsuperscript{V}-153\textsuperscript{V}).

\textsuperscript{24} Examination of Sir James Fitzgerald, 25 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/25, enclosure i).

\textsuperscript{25} Note of letters and copies sent to Mr Secretary, 12 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/26).

\textsuperscript{26} St Leger to Burghley, 5 Aug. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/104/3).

\textsuperscript{27} Drury to the privy council, 27 July 1579 (\textit{Walsingham letter-bk}, pp 100-1).

\textsuperscript{28} Discourse of Sir Nicholas Malby’s proceedings and journey, 8 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/39).
could have followed the outbreak of the Baltinglass rebellion in July 1580. As the crisis in Leinster worsened troop levels in Munster were reduced significantly, in part to free up soldiers to deal with Baltinglass, with the result that the figures for footmen and horsemen in bands fell from 1,100 foot and 250 horse in December 1579 to 700 foot and 80 horse in September 1580, immediately prior to the second Spanish landing at Smerwick.29

The English believed Baltinglass’s revolt was linked to Desmond’s, with Secretary Fenton of the opinion that Desmond and Turlough Luineach had ‘kindled this fyer in the Pale’ in order to divert troops away from Munster, which duly happened.30 Fenton would appear to have been incorrect in this, for the rebellion of James Eustace, third viscount Baltinglass, was brought on by his own earnest Catholicism, which led him to seek the reestablishment of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, and was not a mere reaction to events in Munster. That said, there were some links with the Desmond rebellion, though not of Desmond’s making. As part of his attempt to recruit allies, Fitz Maurice had written to Baltinglass in July 1579,31 and also to Gerald, earl of Kildare,32 with whom Baltinglass discussed his intentions. Furthermore, the bearer of the letter for Baltinglass was Fr Rochford, who had taught in a school at Youghal in the late 1570s and was known to the Geraldines.33 The following year Baltinglass sent at least three messages to Desmond inviting him to join ‘in defence of the popes cause’.34 In spite of these contacts, however, there was

30 Fenton to Walsingham, 29 July 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/74/78).
31 Examination of Christopher Barnewall, 12 Aug. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/104/38, enclosure i).
34 Pelham to Sir William Winter, 16 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 419r-421r); Examination of Sir James Fitzgerald, 25 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/25, enclosure i).
little practical cooperation between the two rebel forces, except when Sir John joined forces for a time with Baltinglass in the latter part of 1580, during which they unsuccessfully attempted to induce Sir Edmund Butler into rebellion.35

While the level of association with allies in other provinces hardly rose above that of letters and messengers, the threat of a coordinated, countrywide rebellion was sufficient to ensure the redeployment of English troops away from Munster, which increased Desmond’s offensive capabilities relative to the English forces within the province.

Desmond’s primary intention in pursuing these contacts within both Ireland and Europe would thus appear to have been to secure a tactical advantage for himself in relation to Dublin and Whitehall. His appeals for other lords to rebel throughout Ireland served to heighten English anxiety, to oblige the diversion of troops away from Munster to the other provinces, and to relieve the pressure on his own forces. His calls for a holy war with Spanish and Papal support likewise increased English apprehension, helped maintain the integrity of the rebel confederacy, and made a quick end to the rebellion a higher priority for Dublin and Whitehall. The cumulative effect was thus to highlight the difficulty which the English faced in defeating the rebellion by military means, something which made the notion of a negotiated settlement more palatable to them. Ultimately, therefore, Desmond’s search for aid was neither a deliberate nor a desperate attempt to generate a national, religious rebellion, but a sophisticated diplomatic move designed to strengthen his position in the negotiations he entered into with the English.

Desmond’s attempts to negotiate an end to the rebellion began during the

Waterhouse to Walsingham, 13 Oct. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/77/31).

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summer of 1580 when his representatives held discussions with Admiral Winter,\textsuperscript{36} while that September he sent his secretary to meet deputy Grey in Dublin.\textsuperscript{37} He approached Bourchier in September 1581,\textsuperscript{38} appealed to Ormond in April 1583 and again that June,\textsuperscript{39} and that summer sent one of his officials to London.\textsuperscript{40}

Desmond's wife, Eleanor, who acted throughout the conflict as his personal representative, also played a very prominent role in his attempts to engage the English in talks, and proved a very able spokesperson in dealing with senior officials.\textsuperscript{41} In early 1580 she sought a licence to travel to England in order to put her case to the queen.\textsuperscript{42} Late that summer she participated in the talks with Winter,\textsuperscript{43} and met Pelham at Askeaton that August.\textsuperscript{44} Eleanor met Ormond and the commissioners at Cork, in April of the following year, when she again asked to be licensed to go to the

\textsuperscript{36} Nicholas White to Burghley, 31 May 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/73/38); Bingham's diary from 9 to 30 June, 2 July 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/74/5, enclosure i); Bingham to Walsingham, 2 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/75/4); Sir William Winter to Pelham, 24 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 443\textsuperscript{f}-444\textsuperscript{f}).

\textsuperscript{37} St Leger to Burghley, 13 & 17 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/36).

\textsuperscript{38} Sir George Bourchier to Wallop, 9 Sept. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/14, enclosure ii).

\textsuperscript{39} Desmond to St Leger, 28 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/17, enclosure i); Desmond to Ormond, 5 June 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/87, enclosure i).

\textsuperscript{40} St Leger to Burghley, 5 Aug. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/104/3).

\textsuperscript{41} Eleanor apparently connived with the authorities, possibly with the knowledge of her husband, in the capture of bishop Patrick O'Healy, O.F.M., and Conn O'Rourke, O.F.M., in July-August 1579. She also handed over her son James to Drury that September. Both of these acts would appear to have been designed to demonstrate her, and her husband's, loyalty at a time when Desmond was coming under increasing pressure to act against the rebels. Benignus Millet, 'The beatified martyrs of Ireland (1): bishop Patrick O'Healy, O.F.M. and Conn O'Rourke, O.F.M.' in Ir. Theol. Quart., Ixiv (1999), pp 55-78; Some of the council in Ireland to the Privy Council, 2 Oct. 1579 (Walsingham letter-bk, pp 193-5).

\textsuperscript{42} Pelham to the queen, 31 Jan. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 228\textsuperscript{f}-229\textsuperscript{v}); Pelham to Leicester, 16 Feb. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 255\textsuperscript{v}-257\textsuperscript{v}); Pelham to Walsingham, 16 Feb. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 257\textsuperscript{v}-260\textsuperscript{v}).

\textsuperscript{43} Countess of Desmond to the privy council, 28 June 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/73/67); Bingham to Walsingham, 2 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/75/4).

\textsuperscript{44} Pelham to the queen, 12 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 413\textsuperscript{f}-414\textsuperscript{v}); Pelham to Walsingham, 12 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 414\textsuperscript{v}-416\textsuperscript{f}).
queen, and in June 1582 tried to broker an agreement with Grey. That September she tried to arrange a meeting between the lords justices and her husband, and in April 1583 she once more contacted Ormond.

Desmond, together with Eleanor and some of his senior officials, thus put a lot of time and energy into these talks. They contacted a number of senior English figures, and continued in their efforts throughout the conflict. Desmond thus sought a negotiated end to his participation in the rebellion and kept trying until a short time before his death.

In this Desmond was doubtless encouraged by the fact that the English actually offered him a deal on a number of occasions. As early as January 1580 Pelham sought direction from Whitehall in the event that Desmond offered to submit, while later that year he instructed Admiral Winter to continue his contacts with Desmond, and sanctioned Winter to offer to transport Desmond and his wife to England if the earl sought to submit to the queen in person. In April 1581 Lord Deputy Grey offered Desmond a pardon, while that September Bourchier also made Desmond an offer. The following year Grey again proposed a pardon, before St Leger made a concerted effort over the last year of the conflict, right up until October

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45 Ormond and the commissioners of Munster to Grey, 29 Apr. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/6, enclosure i); Petition of the Countess of Desmond to Ormond and the council of Munster [Apr.] 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/6, enclosure ii); St Leger to Burghley, 15 May 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/25).
46 Grey to Walsingham, 16 June 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/93/25).
47 Thomas Norris to the lords justices, 24 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/3, enclosure i).
48 Ormond to the privy council, 5 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/101/10); James Golde to Burghley, 13 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/101/23); James Golde to Walsingham, 13 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/101/24).
49 Pelham to the queen, 31 Jan. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 228v-229v); Pelham to Leicester, 16 Feb. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 255v-257v); Pelham to Walsingham, 16 Feb. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 257v-260v); Pelham to Sir William Winter, 16 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 419v-421v).
50 Grey to the queen, 26 Apr. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/82/54); Sir George Bourchier to Wallop, 9 Sept. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/14, enclosure ii).
51 Grey to Walsingham, 16 June 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/93/25).
1583, to get Desmond to submit.\footnote{St Leger to Burghley, 26 Nov. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/97/51); Burghley to the lords justices, 9 Dec. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/98/35); Burghley to St Leger, 9 Dec. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/98/36); Walsingham to the lords justices, 1 Feb. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/99/43); Desmond to St Leger, 28 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/17, enclosure i); St Leger to the queen, 8 May 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/16); St Leger to Burghley, 19 Oct. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/105/25).} Senior figures such as Winter, Grey, Bourchier, and St Leger thus all offered to accept his submission. Although Grey’s offers appear to have been made on his own initiative, it is reasonable to assume that he, no more than the others, would only have made an offer if he believed it would be approved by Whitehall.

Whitehall’s preparedness to accept a deal is particularly evident in the documentation regarding St Leger’s efforts over the last year. At the time when Ormond was being sent back to Munster as general, Elizabeth, Burghley, and Walsingham all encouraged St Leger to pursue this as a means of bringing the conflict to a swift, and cost effective, conclusion.\footnote{Burghley to the lords justices, 9 Dec. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/98/35); Burghley to St Leger, 9 Dec. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/98/36); Walsingham to the lords justices, 1 Feb. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/99/43); Walsingham to Ormond, 24 Mar. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/100/37).} Indeed, when Ormond met with Elizabeth prior to his departure from London she had specifically accepted that he could hold discussions with Desmond.\footnote{Walsingham to Ormond, 24 Mar. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/100/37).} Whitehall was ready to do a deal.

Further support for this contention comes from the fact that the English were willing to pardon other rebel leaders, including Rory McSheehy and Sir John of Desmond, and even Nicholas Sanders. In 1580 Pelham agreed to pardon McSheehy if he captured Sanders, while he also set out the terms under which St Leger could receive Sir John. Astonishingly, Pelham even ventured to suggest that he would contemplate sparing Sanders’s life if he would discuss his preparations on the continent before his landing.\footnote{Pelham to Lixnaw, 26 July 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 376V-377V); Pelham to St Leger, 15 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, pp 418f-419f).} If Pelham was prepared to leave a written record about the possibility of receiving Sanders, Elizabeth’s implacable foe, an agreement between
Desmond and the English was entirely possible.

The reason for Whitehall’s readiness to consider a deal was due to the peculiar nature of the conflict. Each time the rebellion seemed to be over, or was reported to be almost finished, the fighting would rear up again. Despite the deaths of Fitz Maurice and Sir John, the capture of Smerwick, and the destruction of vast quantities of countryside, the raids and skirmishes kept occurring. Even the frequent changes of command had no obvious impact on the war. It appeared to have no end, while the costs of the war kept rising. Whitehall wanted a victorious and speedy end to the rebellion. Consequently they tried both military and negotiated solutions, and were prepared to back which ever one produced results first. Negotiations, therefore, were not the principal end which Whitehall strove for, just one means to attaining it.

Thus Desmond wanted an agreement, Whitehall was favourably disposed to such an agreement, and offers were extended to Desmond on a number of occasions. A deal was possible, yet the whole process ultimately came to nothing. The reason for this lay in the fact that neither Desmond nor Whitehall were prepared to compromise sufficiently to agree on mutually acceptable terms.

Unfortunately, much of the documentation relating to these negotiations has not survived, itself a sign of the incipient and abortive nature of the discussions, but enough remains extant to identify the main areas of dispute. Whitehall wanted Desmond to place himself at the queen’s mercy and make a simple submission. This would allow them the greatest latitude in planning for the future political development of Munster. They would be free to execute him for treason, they could reinstate him without penalty, or they could do anything in between. In short, a simple submission would constitute an outright victory for Whitehall.

The terms which the officials in Ireland either insisted upon or offered differed only slightly from this position. In early February 1580 Pelham stated that ‘grace’
would be shown to Desmond if he captured his brothers and Nicholas Sanders. In August both Winter and Pelham demanded a simple submission. In April 1581 Grey offered Desmond a pardon if he captured Sir John and Sanders, dead or alive, while that September Bourchier demanded either a simple submission or else the delivery of Sir John in exchange for his 'redemption'. Grey offered him his life and liberty in June 1582 'upon some considerac[i]on', while St Leger sought a simple submission in October 1583.

For his part, Desmond was equally consistent in his demands. He wanted his life, his freedom, and possession of his lands to be guaranteed. This would ensure both his own future and that of his son and heir. He thus sought to escape without any penalty. In September 1581 he sought life and liberty, and some portion of his income until the queen's pleasure was known. In response to Grey's offer in June 1582 of his life and liberty, he demanded the restoration of his lands and possessions as well. In April of the following year he again sought assurances for his life, land, and liberty.

It was only at the end of that month, on 28th, that Desmond varied his demands when he offered to submit if his council and followers were put in charge of his son and his lands, and if he was given a passport to defend himself before the queen in London. If he could not convince Elizabeth that he had been wrongfully proclaimed he would return to Ireland and hand over his son and his lands to the

56 Pelham to Walsingham, 16 Feb. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 257'-260').
57 Bingham to Walsingham, 2 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/75/4); Pelham to Sir William Winter, 16 Aug. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 419'-421').
58 Sir George Bourchier to Walsingham, 9 Sept. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/82/54); Sir George Bourchier to Wallop, 9 Sept. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/14, enclosure ii).
59 Grey to Walsingham, 16 June 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/93/25).
60 St Leger to Burghley, 19 Oct. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/105/25).
61 Sir George Bourchier to Wallop, 9 Sept. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/14, enclosure ii).
62 Grey to Walsingham, 16 June 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/93/25).
63 Ormond to the privy council, 5 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/101/10); James Golde to Burghley, 13 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/101/23); James Golde to Walsingham, 13 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/101/24).

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queen's officials in Munster.64 In October he offered to submit if he was sure of his life and liberty, and if his son would inherit his lands after his death.65 These two offers, both made to St Leger, would appear to have constituted Desmond's 'bottom line' position in the negotiations. He was adamant that he would not be imprisoned or detained in any way, a point his wife also made,66 and was only prepared to forgo his enjoyment of his lands if his son's possession of them was guaranteed.

His reluctance to be imprisoned may be explained by his experiences between 1565 and 1573, most of which he spent in detention in London, and by his treatment by Fitzwilliam and Perrot in 1573 and 1574, while the example of 'Grey's faith' would hardly have induced him to accept English promises. Furthermore, Desmond steadfastly maintained that he was an innocent victim of his enemies's malicious actions. In June 1580 Eleanor laid the blame for his proclamation on Sir Nicholas Malby. The following month Desmond blamed Ormond, although when he wrote to Ormond in June 1583 he stated it had been due to 'folly, bad counsell' and 'sleightes'. It was to escape the jurisdiction of these 'crewell officers' and go before 'eny indifferent judg' that he wanted to go to London. Once there, Elizabeth would become aware of the 'cause & meanes wch were founde & devised' to have made him 'comitt folly', and he would be restored to good standing in her eyes.67

Surprisingly, it was not until April 1583 that the issue of religious freedom first featured to any significant degree in the negotiations, and even then Desmond's demands seemed curiously muted, seeking only to have 'me religion and consciens not barred'. Over the three and a half years since his proclamation, despite his calls for a Catholic crusade and his contacts with Spain and Rome, he never made it a central

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64 Desmond to St Leger, 28 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/17, enclosure i).
65 St Leger to Burghley, 19 Oct. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/105/25).
66 James Golde to Burghley, 13 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/101/23).
67 Countess of Desmond to the privy council, 28 June 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/73/67); Desmond to Winter, 12 July 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/74/25); Desmond to St Leger, 28 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/17, enclosure i); Desmond to Ormond, 5 June 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/87, enclosure i).
demand. Desmond’s final inclusion of a demand for religious toleration may have been an attempt to rekindle waning Vatican interest in the rebellion, or it may have been a negotiating ploy, a bargaining chip to toss aside as a concession in return for his success on his core objectives. In marked contrast to Fitz Maurice in the past, and Tyrone and O’Donnell in the future, demands for religious toleration do not appear to have been an important issue for Desmond.

Whitehall, however, did not accept his late negotiating position. The unsurmountable obstacle would appear to have been Desmond’s demand for possession of his lands. Just as in 1572-4, when possession of certain of his castles had been a major stumbling block, Desmond would not countenance losing possession of his lands and castles. When he made the concession to St Leger in 1583, he still demanded that his son be assured of his lands upon his death. Whitehall appears to have been unable or unwilling to accept this. Indeed, at no stage during the negotiations, as far as the surviving documents show, did any of the English offer Desmond his lands or make mention of them. It may be that Whitehall insisted upon a physical presence in Munster if Desmond were to be restored as a brake on further violent behaviour. Without such a strategic presence they may have felt that they would have to deal with a similar situation once again in the future.

Desmond may have been able to negotiate an acceptable compromise and survive the conflict. Plans were being discussed for the future disposal of forfeited rebel land while the conflict continued, but there were many dead rebels besides Desmond whose lands could have been granted, sold or planted. He may have been deprived of some of his lands and left politically weakened, he may have been imprisoned and the earldom broken up, or he may have been executed for treason as ‘Silken Thomas’ had been and his family destroyed.

68 Desmond to St Leger, 28 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/17, enclosure i); Colm Lennon, Sixteenth century Ireland, p. 315.
The precedents concerning the fate of rebels at the mercy of the Tudor regime were mixed, as shown by the treatment of the principal rebels of the Northern Rising of 1569 and their heirs. Thomas Percy, earl of Northumberland, was attainted and executed. His brother Henry did succeed him as earl, and had his brother’s estates by 1577, but he was forbidden to return to the north of England and was consequently compelled to reside at Petworth, Sussex. Charles Neville, earl of Westmorland, avoided capture and escaped to the Spanish Netherlands. Following his attainder the honour became extinct and the lands were confiscated by the crown. Henry Clifford, earl of Cumberland, managed to remain largely aloof from the rebellion and died in 1570. His young son George became a ward of the Puritan Francis Russell, earl of Bedford, was brought up a Protestant, and married Bedford’s daughter Margaret. He succeeded his father as earl, but rarely visited his northern estates. Following Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk’s, execution, the duchy lapsed and most of the lands were forfeited to the crown. His son and heir Philip did, however, succeed as earl of Arundel in 1580 upon the death of his maternal grandfather, while another son Thomas was eventually created earl of Suffolk.70

From this Desmond could have derived little clear indication of the consequences of surrender. Perhaps Desmond himself would be pardoned, as Fitz Maurice had been following his submission in 1573. Perhaps Desmond’s son, who was already in England at the time, might have succeeded to a restored earldom at a later date having been brought up and educated as a loyal Protestant. Perhaps the momentum of those who had been seeking land in Munster for over twenty years was already too strong to allow his son’s return. Whatever the possibilities, agreement was not reached and Desmond was killed in rebellion.

The rebellion lasted less than five years, but in that time it managed to devastate Munster. The social and economic consequences were immense, for it produced a very substantial depopulation of the province, while at the same time it brought with it a huge economic cost. The result was the overthrow and destruction of the traditional social order in Munster, an act which paved the way for the subsequent Munster plantation.

The extent of the devastation appears to have been quite unprecedented. It provided Edmund Spenser with the inspiration for one of the most striking, and frequently quoted, passages from his *View of the present state of Ireland*. He described how Munster, which previously had plentiful supplies of food, had been reduced to 'such wretchedness' that it would move even the strongest heart. The surviving inhabitants were so weak they had to crawl around on their hands and knees. Looking like 'anatomies of death', they spoke as if they were 'ghosts crying out of their graves'. Watercress and shamrock were consumed in the absence of other nourishment, and conditions got so bad that they were driven to eat carrion, and even the corpses of the dead. The result of the rebellion was that Munster, which had been 'a most populous and plentiful country', was left 'void of man and beast', the majority of whom were killed not by the sword but by famine.1

The boldness of Spenser's description at first seems to bear the hallmarks of sensationalism and literary hyperbole, which indeed may well be true, but upon examination of the extant records his description appears more accurate than not. The term 'waste' was commonly used in reports during the rebellion to describe conditions

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in the province, and in February 1582 Justice Meagh thought the three plagues of rebellion, famine, and sickness then affecting Munster ‘sufficient to destroy a whole realm’.

The destruction was heaviest in the west of the province, with large stretches of counties Kerry, Limerick, and Cork laid waste by the end of the conflict, devoid of food or people. Castleisland was badly damaged with only a few inhabitants left, and Clanmaurice did not have enough people to hold a court there, while Tarbert was similarly depopulated. Large parts of Kenry were destroyed, while Muskerry, Duhallow, Fermoy, Barrymore, and Imokilly were all described as waste, and Mallow was depopulated. Counties Waterford and Tipperary also suffered considerably. Strancally was depopulated and desolate, and Decies and Power’s country were badly wasted, while the towns of Tipperary were similarly damaged. However, Waterford and Tipperary appear to have escaped the worst ravages.

The extent of the devastation became even clearer in the aftermath of the rebellion. Wallop, one of the commissioners who surveyed the escheated lands in Munster in 1584 described how the population had been so decimated by ‘sworde, and by Justice but cheifelie by famyne’ that he found the province from Cashel west to Dingle completely waste and desolate, save for Kilmallock and Limerick city. He found that the mountainous and bog regions of Kerry bred very good cattle, but that at that time there was no food available in the county. Without the importation of food

2 Nicholas White to Burghley, 9 Dec. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/87/22); Lord deputy and council to the queen, 12 Jan. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/88/13); St Leger to the queen, 12 Mar. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/41, enclosure i); St Leger to Burghley, 20 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/41); St Leger to Sir John Perrot, 23 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/45).

3 Justice John Meagh to Walsingham, 8 Feb. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/89/23).

from England he felt the province could not be repopulated. Indeed, Kerry was so severely underpopulated that he estimated there was sufficient arable land in the county to sustain a population twenty times the current level.\(^5\) John Norris, president of Munster, formed a similar view and declared that the province was so waste and depopulated that it would take many years to redress the balance.\(^6\) The general impression of the widespread destruction of the province thus supports Spenser’s view that Munster suffered a massive drop in population.

Quantifying the depopulation which resulted from the rebellion, however, is extremely difficult. In the absence of anything resembling a census, some idea of the social dislocation caused by the conflict can be gleaned from the large number of pardons granted in Munster. Between July 1579 and December 1590 at least 185 pardons were issued to people in counties Kerry, Cork, Limerick, Tipperary, and Waterford. Taking into account the duplication of names, these pardons, contained in the Irish fiants, provide not only the names of approximately 4,400 people, but in many cases also supply the town or townland of their residence and their occupation. Of these 4,400, which included both rebels and loyalists, over 300, or about 7%, were described as gentlemen, while approximately 700 (16%) were soldiers, described as horsemen, footmen, shot, kerne, or galloglass. The agricultural nature of the province was reflected by the fact that 10% were classified as husbandmen, while a further 8% were categorized as yeomen, although this term was not defined. Fully half of those pardoned had no occupation listed, while the remainder, about 9%, included women, priests, merchants, tradesmen, and other miscellaneous categories. These pardons thus give some indication of the numbers affected by the conflict, but they do not provide information about the numbers who died or were killed.\(^7\)

\(^5\) Wallop to Burghley, 17 Sept. 1584 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/111/90); Wallop to Walsingham, 16 Oct. 1584 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/112/10).

\(^6\) President Norris to Burghley, 20 Nov. 1584 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/112/78); President Norris to the privy council, 7 Mar. 1585 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/115/13).

\(^7\) Information derived from *Irish fiants, Elizabeth*, nos 3561-5523.
Figures for mortality due to the rebellion can, however, be extracted from the available data. The first component in these figures, the number of deaths directly attributable to the fighting, the ‘body count’, is relatively easy to estimate. Although the vast majority of the military encounters consisted of small raids, the duration and widespread extent of the conflict meant that cumulatively the number of rebels involved was quite substantial, and as a consequence the number of rebel fatalities was correspondingly high. Thus at least 1,600 rebels were killed during the rebellion, a figure which represents the aggregate total of the rebel deaths noted in the extant information covering the 170 military incidents. Excluded are the 600 Spanish and Italian troops massacred at Smerwick as they were not native to the province, while it also under represents the numbers of rebel deaths as the reports of many military incidents contain no figures for rebel casualties. The figure of 1,600 is thus a minimum.

Supporting evidence for that contention can be found in the statements made by Ormond and other loyalists about their contribution to the war effort. Ormond calculated that during his first term as general in Munster, which lasted between October 1579 and June 1581, 15 prominent Geraldine rebel leaders, 14 other rebel commanders, and 3 of Desmond’s main counsellors had been killed. He also stated he had executed 643 notorious traitors, and that 4,000 others had been killed. In total he claimed that 4,675 rebels had been killed, either in combat or by martial law.8 During his second term as general, between November 1582 until the end of the rebellion, there were killed, as well as Desmond himself, a further 38 rebel leaders and 747 notorious malefactors.9 The total number of rebels Ormond claimed had been killed

8 Note of traitors executed by Ormond, [1 Oct.] 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/2); Note of traitors slain and executed during Ormond’s charge in Munster, [1 Oct.] 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/3, enclosure i); Ormond to Burghley, 15 July 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/84/19).
9 A short note of some parts of Ormond’s service, 1585 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 614, ff 222v-223r); Names of principal leaders executed and put to the sword in Munster, [Sept.] 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/104/68, enclosure ii); Names of rebels slain in Munster, [Nov.] 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/105/96).
during his two terms as general was, therefore, at least 5,461. To this figure must be added the statements of other loyalists such as Piers Butler, of Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, who had killed about 48 rebels by October 1581,\(^\text{10}\) as well as estimates for those killed during the terms of Lord Justice Drury and Lord Deputy Grey. Taken together, the number of rebels killed by English and loyalist forces would appear to have been around 6,000 or 7,000, far greater than the figure of 1,600. Even allowing for some exaggeration on Ormond’s part, the 1,600 figure appears to be just far too low.

As well as rebels, many neutrals and non-combatants were also killed in the fighting. John fitz Edmund of Cloyne had lost close to 600 men within his lands by April 1582,\(^\text{11}\) while Maurice, lord Roche, who succeeded his father David in 1583, lost five of his brothers and 400 of his servants and tenants.\(^\text{12}\) The baron of Dunboyne lost 60 men in a single skirmish with Sir John of Desmond.\(^\text{13}\) Similarly, the townspeople suffered at the hands of the rebels. The Mayor and around 140 townsmen had been put to the sword when Youghal was attacked in November 1579,\(^\text{14}\) while 60 townsmen of Cashel were killed during an attempt to rescue prey which had been taken from their town in November 1581.\(^\text{15}\) Combining these figures the total number of loyalist deaths may, therefore, have come to between 1,500 and 2,000. The aggregate total for both rebel and loyalist deaths would thus be in the range 7,500 to 9,000.

The second factor in the depopulation was famine and related illnesses. The fighting throughout the province severely diminished the capacity of the inhabitants to

\(^{10}\) Names of such traitors and malefactors slain by Piers Butler, [1 Oct.] 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/5).

\(^{11}\) St Leger to Burghley, 20 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/41).

\(^{12}\) Lord Roche to Burghley, 21 Dec. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/106/26); Livery to Maurice, Lord Roche, 28 Nov. 1583 (Irish Fiants, Elizabeth, no. 4261).

\(^{13}\) Nicholas White to Burghley, 22 Apr. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/82/46).


\(^{15}\) Grey to the privy council, 6 Nov. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/51).
produce sufficient quantities of food stuffs. Fields and seeds were destroyed, herds dispersed, and many of those previously engaged in agriculture were either forced to flee to neighbouring towns for safety, fighting for the rebels, or dead. As a consequence there was a very large drop in agricultural production in Munster, one which was noticeable by the second year of the rebellion and which became more pronounced the longer the conflict continued. As early as February 1580 Pelham noted with alarm the ‘great scarcitie of food’ which had, or was about to, manifest itself in Munster, and stated that the previous year’s harvest had already been consumed and that the province’s inhabitants had nothing to feed their cattle or horses.16 Two months later food shortages were apparent in Co. Limerick,17 while the following year soldiers were dying of famine and various related diseases throughout the province.18

The situation became even more critical during the final two years of the rebellion. Plague raged ‘very hott’ through Cork city in March 1582, the stench of dead carcasses being enough to poison even the healthy.19 The amount of crops produced fell dramatically due to the general destruction and to a shortage of men to till the ground.20 Although the rebels gathered what crops they could in counties Kerry, Cork, Limerick in the autumn of 1582,21 the following year Ormond reported that there was no harvest in Munster.22 The cattle herds experienced a similar decline.

Desmond was compelled to eat cattle on the day it was captured as he and his men

16 Pelham to the council in Ireland, 11 Feb. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, f. 244v).
17 Lord Justice Pelham to Burghley, 17 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/47).
18 Sir William Morgan to Walsingham, 23 Feb. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/80/76); Wallop to Burghley, 24 Oct. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/32); Wallop and Waterhouse to Burghley, 9 Dec. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/87/20).
19 Grey to Burghley, 14 Mar. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/90/23); St Leger to Secretary Fenton, 24 Mar. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/23, enclosure i).
20 Justice Meagh to Walsingham, 8 Feb. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/89/23).
21 St Leger to Burghley, 22 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/85/59); Information by William Lyon, bishop of Ross, 9 Oct. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/10, enclosure ii); Fenton to Walsingham, 12 Oct. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/15).
22 Ormond to Burghley, 4 Sept. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/104/60).
had no reserves left, while in 1582 there were reputed to be only 200 cows remaining in the barony of Carbery in Co. Cork and less than 1,000 in the whole county. The crisis got so bad that by the end of the rebellion good beef cost 30s a beast in Munster, a figure over twice the 13s 4d at which the Commissioners valued cattle in Limerick and Kerry in 1584. While these prices need not necessarily be directly comparable, they provide further evidence of the scarcity of cattle in the province.

It was also during these two years that the most shocking instances of hunger were reported. In September 1582 the garrison at the former Cistercian monastery at Abbeydorney, Co. Kerry, unable to get any victuals locally, declared that unless they received food supplies quickly they would be forced to eat their horses. The following year Desmond’s men were believed to have resorted to eating not only horse meat but also carrion, while conditions were so bad in Dingle that the poorest inhabitants had allegedly eaten corpses which had washed ashore following a shipwreck.

Estimating the numbers who died due to famine and illness is much harder than estimating the ‘body count’ as the information is much more impressionistic. Some figures do exist, however. In March 1582 St Leger stated that a staggering 30,000 people had starved to death in Munster in the preceding six months. The timing of

St Leger’s report is significant as the majority of the extant reports relating to the

23 William Wendover to Fenton, 6 Jan. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/88/14, enclosure i).
24 St Leger to Loftus and Wallop, 13 Oct. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/97/15, enclosure ii);
26 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 8-9); Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, p. 2).
27 Geoffrey Storye and Robert Woodward to Thomas Norris, 26 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/17, enclosure ii).
28 Ormond to the queen, 24 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/101/40).
29 Captain Edward Stanley to Ormond, 28 Apr. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/49, enclosure i).
30 St Leger to the queen, 12 Mar. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/41, enclosure i); St Leger to Sir John Perrot, 23 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/45).
devastation of Munster date from the last two years of the rebellion. The period late 1581 to early 1582 thus coincides with the worsening of the crisis in Munster from 1582 on. Furthermore, the large number of deaths related to hunger and disease appear to have continued for the remainder of the conflict as later that year Lord Justice Loftus stated that ‘greate nombers’ had perished due to famine and ‘sundrie oppressions’, while by May 1583 it was reported that ‘veray many’ of Desmond’s men were dying due to the effects of famine. It would seem likely, therefore, that substantial numbers of people in Munster died from starvation.

St Leger also reported on the situation within Cork city, where during one day and night in March 1582 there were 62 deaths from famine and plague. Not a single day went by without loss of life. St Leger put the lowest figure for daily mortality at 16, the decomposing corpses causing a stench in the city. The following month he noted that the high levels of mortality were unlike anything in living memory, with as many as 72 people dying a day in the city, the least number of daily deaths being 20. Importantly, St Leger stated that the situation was the same throughout the rest of the province, both town and country. He clearly, therefore, viewed the problem as a province-wide one.

If St Leger’s figures are accurate then famine killed far more people than the fighting. He estimated 30,000 people had died in six months. This may represent the peak of the mortality as St Leger may have been expected to notify Dublin and Whitehall if similar rates of mortality were experienced later during the rebellion. The evidence indicates that famine and illness continued to kill after March 1582, so the absence of subsequent reports of such huge numbers of deaths may mean that the mortality rates fell for the remainder of the conflict. If this were the case then perhaps

31 Lord Justice Loftus to Burghley, 5 Nov. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/97/16); Ormond to Walsingham, 28 May 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/102/50).
32 St Leger to Fenton, 24 Mar. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/23, enclosure I).
33 St Leger to Burghley, 20 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/41).
another 30,000 died between April 1582 and November 1583. The total number of deaths attributable to famine would thus be perhaps 60,000. If the mortality rate did not fall the total would be even higher, so the figure of 60,000 is perhaps a conservative estimate.

The total number of deaths in the province as a result of the fighting, famine, and illness would, therefore, appear to be in the region of 69,000. This would have been a very large proportion of the total population of Munster. Estimates put the population of Ireland in the sixteenth century at approximately 500,000. Figures for the eighteenth century indicate that approximately 30% of the population lived in Munster. If this ratio held true for the early modern period then the population in Munster in the sixteenth century would have been in the order of 150,000. A figure of 69,000 deaths would therefore equate to 49% of the Munster population, or 13.8% of the entire population of Ireland, dying as a result of the rebellion. The demographic loss was thus massive, with perhaps close to half the population of Munster losing their lives.

The rebellion also exacted a heavy economic price from those inhabitants who survived. The agricultural herds were devastated as evidenced by the privations visited upon Sir John fitz Edmund, lay dean of Cloyne. In mid-1580 he had approximately 3,000 cattle taken from his lands. By May of the following year the rebels had inflicted further huge losses on him. Fitz Edmund estimated he had lost over 3,200 cattle valued at £2,160, over 1,000 horses worth over £1,000, and over 21,000 sheep and goats worth over £2,100. He had also lost over 1,400 pigs valued at

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36 Sir John should not be confused with his namesake the Seneschal of Imokilly.
37 Richard Bingham to Walsingham, 9 June 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/73/49); Sir William Morgan to Walsingham, 4 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/75/10).
over £400, as well as five hackneys and five mares worth over £20. Corn worth £10
and a boat valued at £5 had also been lost, as had household goods worth £326. All
together he valued his losses at over £6,150, and that was excluding the costs
associated with the burning of the town of Cloyne and the castle at Ballycotton.38
Three months later he informed Walsingham of his ‘extreame povertie’,39 and suffered
further attacks that year and the next.40 In response to his difficulties the queen
awarded him an annuity of 100 marks Irish in May 1582, and ordered that he receive
100 marks worth of land from those which would be escheated to the crown in
Munster.41 The attacks continued, however. The Seneschal reaped what corn he had
in his fields in September 1582, while he had to contend with additional spoils and
robberies in the last year of the rebellion.42 The total cost to Fitz Edmund in
economic terms for his supporting of the queen probably came close to £10,000
sterling, almost all of which was related to agriculture.

Fitz Edmund’s herd losses were not unique, with very substantial numbers of
cattle and other animals taken in raids during the conflict. During individual incidents
140 cattle and 300 sheep were taken from Waterford, 7,000 cattle were taken from
Decies, and 300 cattle and 200 horses were taken from Dromfinnen.43 From
Kerrycurrihy and Kinelea were taken approximately 4,000 cattle, sheep, pigs, and
horses, while Muskerry once had 2,000 cattle and horses taken from it.44 A prey of

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38 Note of spoils upon John fitz Edmund of Cloyne, [18 May] 1581 (P.R.O., S.P.
63/83/29).
40 Remembrances for John fitz Edmund, Oct. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/86/44); St Leger
to Burghley, 20 Apr. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/91/41); Captain John Dowdall to _____, 3 May
1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/92/6).
41 The queen to Lord Deputy Grey and chancellor of Ireland, 16 May 1582 (P.R.O., S.P.
63/92/44).
42 St Leger to Burghley, 22 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/95/59); Remembrance of
43 Waterhouse to Walsingham, 3 Feb. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/71/32); St Leger to
Burghley, 3 June 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/38); St Leger to Walsingham, 11 Feb. 1583
(P.R.O., S.P. 63/99/58).
44 St Leger to Burghley, 29 May 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/83/33); Patrick Grant to
Ormond, 6 Aug. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/75/17).
300 cattle, 500 sheep, and 60 horses was once taken in the woods near Kilmallock, while 25 cattle and 400 sheep were taken from the vicinity of Adare.\textsuperscript{45} Kerry also suffered, with 80 cattle and 1,200 sheep being taken near Ventry, and 2,000 cattle from Castleisland.\textsuperscript{46} Large cattle raids were thus conducted throughout the province involving large numbers of animals. These proved very costly for the inhabitants of the province, not only in the value of their losses, but also in the replacement cost of those losses. Herds had to be replenished, which used up money which otherwise might have been employed for the improvement of their lands or their herds. The surviving inhabitants thus had to spend what financial reserves they had merely to replace what was lost. The destruction of the herds of Munster also directly contributed to the widespread appearance of famine and the subsequent depopulation.

The fields and crops of the province were also badly damaged by the conflict, with vast stretches of countryside being laid waste. In October 1579 when Malby burned Askeaton town he set fire to the crops in the surrounding fields at the start of a ‘scorched earth’ policy designed to deny the rebels access to food supplies, a policy which was particularly prevalent in the early years of the conflict.\textsuperscript{47} In late 1579 Ormond marched between Askeaton and Newcastle West ‘burning spoiling & praising the countrye’, before doing the same in Coshbride and Imokilly.\textsuperscript{48} The following year, when the people of Kerry failed to promise to maintain a garrison of English soldiers there, Bourchier was ordered to ‘borne ther come, and spoyle ther harvest to kyll and dryve ther cattell’, whereupon he burned the fields of the Dingle peninsula from Castleisland to Dingle.\textsuperscript{49} In like manner, the lands of Marie Woodhouse, a

\begin{itemize}
\item Edward Fenton to Burghley, 22 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/61).
\item Journal of Richard Bingham, [July] 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/74/5, enclosure i); Edward Fenton to Walsingham, 11 July 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/74/21).
\item Malby to Walsingham, 12 Oct. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/69/52).
\item Note of the earl of Ormond’s journey in Munster, [Jan. 1580] (P.R.O., S.P. 63/71/3, enclosure ii).
\item Richard Bingham to Walsingham, 20 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/49); Golde and Arthur to Wallop, 17 Sept. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/51, enclosure i).
\end{itemize}
widow, were ‘utterly loste’ and ‘lefte desolat’ by rebel incursions. The cumulative effect of this policy, and similar rebel attacks, was that large amounts of crops were destroyed, the soil of vast areas was damaged, and the amount of grazing for the herds of cattle and other livestock was severely diminished. Agricultural production, the heart of the province’s economy, was thus very seriously disrupted by the destruction inflicted upon the countryside.

As well as the wide-scale destruction of the herds and crops of the province, the towns also suffered considerable damage. Loyal to the crown, and a concentrated store of wealth, goods, and food supplies, the towns were particularly appealing targets to the rebel forces, so much so that virtually every town in the region was attacked, some more than once. The city of Waterford appears to have escaped relatively intact, although Cork was less fortunate. While the rebels did not even attempt to besiege the city, the rebel control of the countryside surrounding Cork denied the inhabitants access to the agricultural produce of the city’s hinterland. Limerick also experienced difficulties, although they appear not to have been as severe as those of Cork.

The five port towns were similarly targeted, especially Youghal. In November 1579 Desmond’s men demolished a large section of the town wall, destroyed most of the town’s castles, and took the goods of the inhabitants before setting fire to the majority of the town’s buildings. Just over three years later the Seneschal of Imokilly attacked Youghal again, burnt half the town, and carried away large quantities of corn, wine, salt beef, and hides. Tralee was burned in early 1580, with the

50 Malby to Walsingham, 25 May 1582 (P.R.O., P.R.O., S.P. 63/92/64).
51 St Leger to Burghley, 25 Jan. 1580 (P.R.O., P.R.O., S.P. 63/71/25); Sir William Morgan to Burghley, 22 Feb. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/71/55).
52 Lord Justice Pelham to Burghley, 17 Apr. 1580 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/47).
53 Andrew Skiddy to Burghley, 20 Nov. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/15); Wallop to Walsingham, 23 Nov. 1579 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/70/19).
54 St Leger to Burghley, 16 Jan. 1583 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/99/26).
within the town,\textsuperscript{55} and at the end of the rebellion was described as being ruined and broken, and formerly well inhabited.\textsuperscript{56} Dingle was ‘wholy sacked and brocken’ in November 1579, although by July 1582 it was reasonably well inhabited again. The town was briefly besieged later in 1582.\textsuperscript{57} Dungarvan was burned and spoiled in 1582, some of the townsmen being killed in the attack. The town walls were destroyed and all but 24 houses burnt. By the end of the conflict the townspeople were ‘pore, & nedye’.\textsuperscript{58} Kinsale appears to have largely escaped.

Of the other seven main towns Ardfert was the scene of conflict between the garrison and the rebels during the summer of 1582,\textsuperscript{59} while both Askeaton and Rathkeale were badly burned by Malby in October 1579.\textsuperscript{60} The countryside surrounding Mallow was described as depopulated in 1584.\textsuperscript{61} In November 1579 the townsmen of Kilmallock, which had been so badly affected by Fitz Maurice’s rebellion of 1569-73, threatened to depart the town if soldiers stationed there were relocated.\textsuperscript{62} The town suffered a cattle raid in early 1581.\textsuperscript{63} The vicinity of Adare experienced fighting in early 1580,\textsuperscript{64} while Croom would seem to have escaped largely
undamaged.

Of the towns in Co. Tipperary, Nenagh, along with other villages in Tipperary, was burned in March 1580, while Cashel experienced cattle raids in 1581, when 60 townsmen were killed trying to rescue their cattle, and 1582, when the rebels took away what few cattle the townspeople had purchased since their last attack.

These attacks resulted in large parts of the towns being laid waste, many houses ruined, and the goods of the inhabitants being stolen. The townspeople thus had their assets, their residences and goods, destroyed, the cost of replacing which would have used up much, if not all, of whatever savings or surplus of cash the townspeople had. The attacks, therefore, cost the townspeople dear individually, while collectively the town and corporation had to repair town walls, defences, and public buildings. They also caused severe disruption to trade within the province, and doubtless forced the cancellation of fairs and markets. A two-day fair was held at Rathkeale on the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at which were sold many kinds of mainly agricultural merchandise, including cows, horses, wine, beer, and uisce beatha (whiskey). A similar fair was traditionally held at Knockainy on 1 and 2 August each year. Given the attacks upon the towns and the danger in travelling through the countryside during the conflict these fairs, and others like them, would have been cancelled. This would have hurt the merchants and town corporations financially, the former being prevented from trading and making a profit, and the latter from lost taxes and charges upon the commercial activity.

The presence of English warships along the south-west coast severely

65 Sir Patrick Walshe to Walsingham, 28 Mar. 1580 (S.P. 63/72/19).
66 Nicholas White to Burghley, 24 Oct. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/72/19); Grey to the privy council, 6 Nov. 1581 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/76/51); William Young, portreeve of Cashel, to the Lords Justices, 28 Sept. 1582 (P.R.O., S.P. 63/96/3, enclosure iv).
67 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, p. 65).
68 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, p. 13).
inhibited trade between the province and the continent, the ports of the region having a long tradition of engaging in trade with Spain and France in particular. Large fleets of foreign ships, many from Spain, came to fish in the rich fishing grounds off the Munster coast, for which the fishermen paid fees to local lords. The O'Driscolls charged each boat 19s 2d, together with a barrel of flour, a barrel of salt, and hogshead (over fifty gallons) of beer, and a dish of fish, three times each week they were within the O'Driscoll territory which was centred on Baltimore and Roaringwater Bay. Each ship also paid a 4d sterling anchorage fee.69

Desmond likewise received fees from each ship that fished in his waters off the Kerry coast,70 but he may also have benefited more directly by exporting fish caught in the numerous fisheries attached to many of his castle and manors, such as Askeaton, Court Brake near Limerick city, Lough Gur, Glin, Fenit, Currans, and Castlemaine.71 In particular, he may have sold quantities of salmon which was highly prized on the Continent. Desmond was fortunate in that he possessed many salmon fisheries, including those at Aughinish Island, Brosna, 'Kyllcoyneley', Askeaton, Port, and Strancally, together with Mallow, which was also good for trout fishing, and Killorglin, which was also noted for pearls, while Tarbert was known for catching oysters.72

The other large export item was cattle hides, which was a substantial and profitable trade given the large herds in Munster. As well as selling some of his own hides, Desmond also profited from customs such as the Cocquet of Dingle, which was a charge on goods and merchandise imported or exported through the ports and creeks

69 Butler, Gleanings, p. 167.
70 Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, p. 4).
71 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5039, pp 111-2, 130); Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 10-2, 119); Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, pp 8, 12-3).

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of Kerry. Desmond also benefited from imports, particularly that of wine, where he received the prisage of wines landed in the aforesaid ports.73

The rebellion ended much of this lucrative trade as the English stationed warships along the coast to prevent Spanish ships bringing troops or supplies to the rebels. The presence of Admiral Winter’s fleet off the Kerry coast restricted Spanish activity around the Munster coast and this valuable source of income and goods was largely cut off. Much of the economic activity in Munster was, therefore, terminated for the duration of the conflict.

A further encumbrance on the towns, as well as the countryside, was the imposition of cess to provide for the English soldiers stationed in the province. This caused genuine hardship for the local inhabitants and bred a measure of resentment towards the English forces. As early as February 1580 Pelham recognized the problems which the demands for support were causing the towns and cities of Munster.74 Nonetheless the system continued, as did the criticism. The freeholders of Clanwilliam complained that not only did the rebels snatch what they found in the fields, but that the cessors ‘taketh what we sow with in the bare walles of our Castels’.75 Sir Cormac MacTeige MacCarthy bemoaned his ‘contynuall finding and answeringe of cesse’,76 while the earl of Clancar complained of being ‘greivouslie combred on ev[er]y side’, as the ‘traitors doe not spare me, the soldiers in like case doe take what they cane finde’.77 The negative effects of the systems were so obvious that they were criticized by Grey, St Leger, and Justice John Meagh. St Leger stated that the imposition of cess, together with the murders and spoils

73 Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, p. 4). For the imports and exports of Ireland in the sixteenth century see Colm Lennon, Sixteenth-century Ireland, pp 39-40.
74 Pelham to the privy council, 1 Apr. 1580 (Lambeth, Carew MSS, vol. 597, ff 296V-
299r).
75 Gentlemen freeholders of Clanwilliam to Ormond, 31 Aug. 1582 (S.P. 63/94/117).
76 Sir Cormac MacTeige MacCarthy to the queen, 18 Oct. 1582 (S.P. 63/96/19).
77 Donal, earl of Clancar, to the queen, 28 May 1583 (S.P. 63/102/46).
committed by the rebels and the killings and spoils committed by the English forces, had left Munster ‘so ruined and waste’ that he believed the province could not recover without aid from England.78

The effect of the devastation was to destroy the traditional social order which had held political power in Munster for centuries. The rebellion resulted in the destruction of the Desmond dynasty. Desmond himself had been beheaded, his brother Sir John had been killed in an ambush, and his half-brother Sir James had been executed following his capture by English forces. Of his brethren only his bastardized, older half-brother Sir Thomas survived. His first cousin James fitz Maurice had been killed in a skirmish, while at least twenty other leading Geraldine rebels had also died during the conflict. Desmond’s only son James, the putative heir to the earldom, was in prison. He was transferred in 1584 to the Tower of London where he was to remain until 1600. Not only that, the earldom of Desmond was dissolved and the palatine jurisdiction of the liberty of Kerry terminated, while Kerry was subsequently shired in an attempt to absorb and suppress any vestige of the existence of Geraldine lordship.79

The administrative system, which had evolved over the preceding centuries, was swept away. The end of the rebellion also brought the end of coyne and livery as an institutionalized system in Munster. The defence of, and the maintenance of order within, the earldom had necessitated the system for the support of large numbers of soldiers. The defeat of Desmond made reality what had been agreed in theory in 1578 when Desmond consented to cease levying the exactions of coyne and livery. The demise of the system had very serious consequences for Desmond’s former officers.

78 Grey and council to the queen, 12 Jan. 1582 (S.P. 63/88/13); St Leger to the queen, 20 Apr. 1582 (S.P. 63/91/41); St Leger to Loftus and Wallop, 13 Oct. 1582 (S.P. 63/107/15, enclosure ii); Justice John Meagh to Loftus and Wallop, 15 Oct. 1582 (S.P. 63/107/15, enclosure iii).

79 The medieval counties of [North] Kerry and Desmond (South Kerry) were united into the new county of Kerry by September 1606: C. Litton Falkiner, Illustrations of Irish history and topography, mainly of the eighteenth century (London, 1904), pp 132-3, 141-2.
and soldiers. Having previously been among the elite of the earldom, they suddenly found themselves without an employer and without a means of support. They were, therefore, faced with a difficult choice. They could become small farmers, but while many of them probably had a few acres of land anyway, they would have experienced a loss in social status and lifestyle, and they might have missed the thrill and excitement of military action. They could seek out new masters, perhaps in other parts of the realm, or become outlaws and bandits. Their last possibility was to leave Ireland with its increasingly Protestant English government and seek refuge and employment with the Catholic powers of Europe, particularly Spain. Many chose the third option, and started a trend of mass emigration from Munster which would accelerate in the early seventeenth century following the defeat at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601.  

For those who chose to remain, their immediate future was bleak. The vast majority of the castles, tower houses, and other buildings in the province had been very badly damaged if not completely destroyed, the commissioners of 1584 describing many of Desmond’s former castles, such as those at Knockainy, Shanid, Glenogra, Rathmore, and Courtmatrix in Co. Limerick, and Tarbert, Co. Kerry, as ruinous. Desmond’s former manors had also suffered very severe losses, reflecting the general economic destruction of the conflict.

In place of Desmond came new landowners in the shape of the undertakers of the Munster plantation. The escheated lands of attainted rebels were arranged into thirty-five seignories and granted to an assortment of men from England and Wales

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81 Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038b, pp 7, 11, 13, 26); Limerick Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5038, p. 119); Kerry Survey, 1584 (N.A.I., M 5037, p. 20).
who sought to transform Munster into a profitable, Anglicised colony. In this they
were hampered by the impoverished state of the province. Instead of taking charge of
a ‘going concern’, the undertakers had to rebuild the physical, agricultural, and
commercial infrastructure of their seignories. They thus had to expend considerable
amounts of time, effort, and money simply to make their lands viable. They then had
to work even harder to see any return for their investment. The devastation due to the
rebellion, therefore, helped stifle the fledgling plantation.

Indeed, the thoroughness of the destruction was to generate conflicts as yet
under appreciated for the English. The extent of the depopulation allowed the original
planners of the plantation to view the escheated lands in Munster as *tabula rasa*. They
proposed to create an English society in the empty wastes of Munster. The
bonus of that opinion was that the plantation would allow Whitehall to recoup some
of the £254,960 which had been spent quashing the Desmond rebellion.\(^{82}\) In contrast,
the group of undertakers known as servitors, army captains and officials who had
served in Ireland during the conflict, saw the plantation as a means to obtain monies
owed them by the crown. For the likes of St Leger, Raleigh, Bourchier, and Thomas
Norris, therefore, their grants of land were in lieu of back pay.\(^{83}\) The destruction
wreaked upon the province would ultimately contribute to the disappointment of
both groups.

An additional difficulty for the plantation was the fact that many of the pre-
rebellion landowners managed to survive the conflict. These Hiberno-Norman and
Gaelic-Irish lords and gentlemen sought to regain lands which had been escheated to
the crown and granted to undertakers. Although most of their suits were
unsuccessful, some did recover lands, while most of the undertakers lost some lands,

\(^{82}\) The cost of Queen Elizabeth's wars, [Mar.] 1603 (Calendar of the manuscripts of the
Most Hon. the marquis of Salisbury, KG, &c, preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, xv, p. 2).

\(^{83}\) For the conflict between the undertakers and the servitors see Michael MacCarthy-
either through legal verdicts or illegal occupation by claimants. This, together with disputes over whether inhabitants had been tenants of attainted rebels or freeholders, cost the undertakers dear in terms of delays, expenses and lost income, and further hindered the plantation.84

The rebellion thus had drastic consequences for Munster. The widespread destruction and curtailment of economic activity entailed a huge cost to the province, while the fighting, together with famine and diseases which accompanied the fighting, led to a massive drop in the population there. Sir Robert Cecil estimated that the Desmond rebellion had cost Elizabeth over £250,000.85 The cost to Munster and its inhabitants was far greater.

85 The cost of Queen Elizabeth's wars, [Mar.] 1603 (Calendar of the manuscripts of the Most Hon. the marquis of Salisbury, KG, &c, preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, xv, p. 2).
CONCLUSION

The collapse of the Desmond lordship was not inevitable, for it was not the intention of Whitehall to bring about its demise, while Gerald’s aspirations were not fundamentally incompatible with those of the Tudor regime. Rather, the collapse was due to a particular set of circumstances which prevailed between 1579 and 1583, circumstances which neither Gerald, nor those who sought to control him, were able to master.

Whitehall did not set out to destroy Gerald. They established provincial presidencies in Munster on a number of occasions in order to allow for the peaceful development of the province, negotiated his return to Ireland in 1573, and dispatched Sir Edward Fitzgerald in late 1573 to resolve Gerald’s difficulties with Dublin. In spite of his transgressions, Gerald remained in Whitehall’s plans for the future evolution of the political situation in Munster. Yet the policy makers in Whitehall rarely appeared to have considered the consequences of all they demanded of Gerald, while their proposals were mediated through a number of different groups in Ireland: a series of deputies and lords justices, a number of provincial presidents, and, during the two rebellions, a considerable number of captains. All of these had their own agendas, be they political, military, or selfish. The conceptual incoherence in Whitehall’s reform plans, and the equally erratic implementation in practice, contributed significantly to Gerald’s difficulty in accepting them. But for all its faults, Whitehall genuinely sought to reach an accommodation with him, and the rule of his father James had demonstrated that such could be mutually beneficial. Such an outcome was possible for Gerald, and indeed an agreement was eventually reached, although it took twenty years to do so, and by then it was very late in the day.

The lordship’s collapse can not be completely accounted for by the faults of
the Tudor policy making system, however. Other difficulties, not least Gerald’s own personal incapacity, contributed. Gerald appears not to have been as politically able as his father had been. This was to be important as he did not inherit a formal, stable relationship with Dublin. Despite its success, Earl James’s relationship with Dublin had in reality been a very personal alliance with deputy St Leger. With the eventual replacement of St Leger, that relationship had proved quite fragile, as his failure to secure the establishment of a presidency revealed. Gerald, who came across as wilful, undependable, and highly irascible, seems to have failed to appreciate the potential benefit of his father’s political strategy. Consequently, he failed either to develop a strong, personal alliance with a deputy, or to call for a Munster presidency fashioned to his advantage, and, as a result, was rarely able to influence Dublin and Whitehall’s policy on Munster for his own benefit. Even so, it would be insufficient simply to blame the collapse of the lordship on Gerald’s political and strategic inadequacies.

A more concrete and readily identifiable difficulty was the fact that the circumstances which Gerald found himself in were very different from those which his father had experienced. James had managed to remain on largely peaceful terms with both James, ninth earl of Ormond, and Thomas, tenth earl of Ormond, as there was little recorded violence between their houses during his rule. Gerald, by contrast, had a very violent relationship with Thomas, tenth earl of Ormond, and there would appear to have been a high degree of personal animosity between the two. Thus Sussex tried to ensure peace and harmony between them immediately prior to Gerald’s recognition as earl, while their forces, and those of their vassals and allies, were shortly thereafter engaged in open, if low intensity, warfare. Indeed, their relationship was so bad that after the narrowly averted climax in 1560 the violence reached a peak in 1565 at Affane, and continued thereafter for the rest of the 1560s. Unlike his father, whose maintenance of peace in Munster endeared him to Dublin,
Gerald’s violent clashes with Ormond poisoned his relationship with Dublin, and led to his imprisonment in London on three occasions, something which only made an accommodation harder to achieve.

Furthermore, James had not had to begin his rule with a hostile deputy as Gerald did. Dublin, in the period of James’s rule, was dominated by deputy St Leger who formed a very strong bond of mutual support with James. In contrast, when Gerald succeeded to the earldom the deputy was Sussex, a man who by 1558 was increasingly forthright in his opinion that the Geraldine faction was the more dangerous of those in Ireland. Sussex’s antipathy meant that the first plans for reform in Munster under Elizabeth were biased against Gerald, which made it more difficult for Gerald to support. By the time a more friendly deputy such as Sidney was appointed, Gerald’s situation had altered so much that it was harder for an official to give overt assistance to him. At the formative period of his relationship with Dublin, therefore, Gerald saw Dublin as an antagonistic aggressor to avoid and not a partner to work with.

Ormond’s personal relationship with Elizabeth also served to delay Gerald’s accommodation with the state. Ormond had been educated in England as a youth and had known Elizabeth as a princess. When she acceded to the throne Ormond used his friendship with the queen to further his own agenda in Munster. Thus he was able to block St Leger’s appointment as president, won virtually all his legal disputes with Gerald in the 1560s, was able to place the blame for Affane on Gerald, and interfered with the programme of deputy Sidney. In this way aspects of the reform process which favoured Gerald were minimized.

The cumulative effect of these was to make an accommodation between Gerald and the Tudor state extremely difficult, and it was only in the late 1570s that these factors were neutralized sufficiently for such an accommodation to be realized. The
reappointment of the friendly Sidney as deputy, Gerald’s eventual good working relationship with president Drury, some clear thinking on Gerald’s part, or that of his advisers, a decrease in tension with Ormond, and an apparent decrease in Ormond’s status as Elizabeth’s favourite, allowed for Gerald to engage with Dublin in a process of talks which led to his agreement to composition and the end of coyne and livery.

Quite how committed Gerald was to this agreement, and how successful its implementation would have been in practice, must remain some of Irish history’s imponderables, for before the composition scheme could be implemented, and Gerald’s willingness tested, the peace and political harmony in Munster was destroyed by the return of James fitz Maurice. Fitz Maurice’s rise to prominence was a direct result of Gerald’s third period of incarceration in London. Unfortunately for Gerald, Fitz Maurice used his prominence to attempt the restoration of the Roman Catholic faith in Ireland by means of a long and bloody rebellion. Although he eventually submitted, Fitz Maurice was released by Dublin and after a short period of quiet acquiescence departed for the continent in 1575 to continue his efforts. After four years of negotiations and false starts Fitz Maurice returned to Ireland in 1579 to launch a second rebellion. Although he did not attract particularly large support in Munster, the presence of foreign troops and English Catholic exiles greatly alarmed Dublin and Whitehall. The military response of the English became increasingly heavy-handed, especially when Malby, who was particularly insensitive to Gerald’s political needs, assumed temporary command upon the illness of Drury, and ultimately pushed Gerald into rebellion.

In spite of the rebellion and attempts to procure further European assistance, however, Gerald did not espouse a revolutionary agenda but rather tried to agree a negotiated end to the conflict. Given his experience of negotiations, particularly those which had involved Fitzwilliam and Perrot in 1573-4, and the example of ‘Grey’s
faith' at Smerwick, Gerald was especially wary of the intentions of those with whom he dealt. Consequently he insisted he would only submit if he was assured of both his and his son's life, lands, and liberty. Though Whitehall considered a deal possible, Gerald was unwilling to compromise sufficiently, apparently because of his lack of trust in Whitehall's agents in Ireland, and the negotiations ultimately came to nothing.

If Gerald had survived past November 1583 he may have been able to reach an agreement with Dublin. His life may have been spared, he may have retained some or all of his lands, and his son, already imprisoned in Dublin castle, may have been educated in England and returned to Ireland an educated, Anglicized courtier and nobleman, as Ormond had. Perhaps Gerald would have suffered the same fate as 'Silken Thomas', with his son left to rot in jail. But, in the face of the known facts, such possibilities must remain mere conjecture.
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