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War, Politics and the Irish of Leinster

1156-1606

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

by

Emmett O'Byrne

Trinity College Dublin

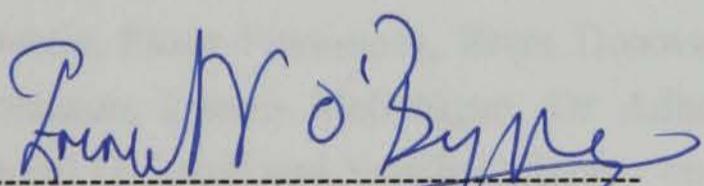
Department of Medieval History

April 2001

Declaration

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Emmett O'Byrne

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<i>Stat. Ire., Hen VI</i>	<i>Statutes rolls of the parliament of Ireland, reign of King Henry IV. Ed H.F.Berry. Dublin, 1907.</i>
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Introduction

From earliest times war and politics in Leinster have mattered, playing a defining role in the history of Ireland. Paradoxically, the purpose of this thesis is to redress an imbalance. Until now there has been no linear political narrative of the Irish of Leinster between 1156 and 1606. Indeed, the pursuance of such an objective is also hindered by the absence of a much needed history of Gaelic Ireland. These limitations have compelled students and historians to view this period of Irish history through a series of published histories, focusing upon how successive English governments attempted to extend royal jurisdiction throughout Ireland.¹ This thesis will attempt through the medium of a political and military narrative to trace the history of the Irish of Leinster from the death of Toirdhealbhach O'Connor (Ó Conchobhair) in 1156 to the establishment of County Wicklow in 1606 - the last Irish and Leinster county.

The neglect of the Leinster Irish originates in a failure to objectively analyse their society. This view dates from the earliest years of the Norman arrival in Ireland during the 1170s. In particular it arises in Gerald of Wales's remarkable account of the early Norman conquest. From his writings, Gerald makes it quite clear that the world he encountered in Leinster was radically different to what he previously experienced. Indeed, Gerald leaves his readers in no doubt that in Leinster, he felt, Latin Europe was standing toe to toe with the face of the barbarian. Even more remarkably, Gerald ascribes barbaric tendencies to the highest of the Leinster nobility, describing how Diarmait MacMurrough (MacMurchadha), the provincial king, allegedly gnawed the severed head of one of his MacGillpatrick (MacGiollapádraig) enemies after a battle in Ossory.² It is a pertinent point to note that Gerald relied upon second hand experiences of

¹A.J.Otway-Ruthven, *The Medieval History of Ireland* (New York, 1993); E.Curtis, *A History of Medieval Ireland* (London, 1938);

²*Expugnatio*, p. 37.

Diarmait for his descriptions. But Gerald's failure in the twelfth century to understand this warrior dominated society has passed into the twentieth century. Then, for instance Cyril Falls infamously described the sixteenth-century Fiach O'Byrne (Ó Broin) as little more than '*..a simple-minded savage*'.³

Thus, the perceptions of the Leinster Irish between 1156-1606 have remained trapped in a time warp. Much of the misinterpretation of the Leinstermen also arose because of where they dwelt, living well beyond the well-ordered land of peace in mountainous and densely forested regions that have been characterised as the angry world of the Celtic fringe. Indeed, the usual ruggedness of their homelands has doubly reinforced their popular image of being wild and untamed. Usually our only glimpses of this society in its natural habitat comes from accounts of government campaigns into these lands. But rarely do we get a cogent picture of the world of the Celtic fringe at peace. There is, however, one remarkable insight beyond the external glowering and warlike image of the Leinster Irish. It tells of how Henry Crystede was captured during the 1360s by Brin Costerec⁴ - a probable O'Byrne warlord.⁵ Instead of treating Crystede harshly, Brin Costerec took his captive to his fortified residence in the Wicklow mountains, keeping him there for seven years and gave Crystede a daughter in marriage. After Crystede was released by Brin Costerec in exchange for his own freedom, Crystede and his family eventually went to live near Bristol. Even more remarkably, Crystede because of his knowledge of Irish ways was appointed by Richard II in 1395 to deal with the Irish provincial kings during their stay in Dublin. However, this image of mutual toleration was to be superseded. More commonly, we are presented with images of conflict. In particular, the impressive figure of Art Mór MacMurrough had been immortalised in his descent from the Wicklow uplands to parley with Richard's army during summer 1399.⁶

³C.Falls, *Elizabeth's Irish Wars* (London, 1950), p. 199.

⁴G.Brereton *Froissart chronicles* (Penguin Books, 1968), pp 409-16.

⁵ Brin is usually a corruption of Braen - the traditional O'Byrne forename. Costerec seems to be a corruption of 'the victorious'.

⁶J.Webb, 'A Translation of a French Metrical History of the Deposition of King Richard the Second written by a Contemporary, and comprising the Period from his last expedition into Ireland to his Death', *Archaeologia* xx (1824), 39-43. (hereafter

Great advances have been made over the past thirty years in the field of Gaelic Ireland because of the emergence of a number of academics. These have included Professor Alfred Smyth, Dr Katharine Simms and Mr Kenneth Nicholls.⁷ Their work has thrown considerable light upon the Irish, allowing younger academics to follow in their footsteps. As yet Dr Simms' unpublished doctoral thesis 'Gaelic lordships in Ulster in the Middle Ages' remains the only major thesis focusing upon the Irish in the latter medieval and early modern periods.⁸ With regard to Leinster, we know more about the province and its kings before 1156 than we do in the middle ages or the early modern period due largely to the work of Professor Smyth, Professor F.J.Byrne, Professor Donnchadh Ó Corrain and Dr Ailbhe MacShamhráin.⁹

This examination of the Leinster Irish between 1156 and 1606 shares common problems with any study of Gaelic Ireland. Indeed, the greatest single problem facing the historian of Gaelic Ireland is the fragmented nature of its sources. As Dr Katharine Simms points out that the staple diet of any student of Gaelic Ireland are the various annals.¹⁰ To the uninitiated eye, these sources are a jumble of births, deaths, plagues, battles and marriages. But if viewed from regional and dynastic perspectives, they are laden with continuities, allowing the historian to track the activities of a dynasty and its leading figures over long periods of time. Furthermore, the tracking of a dynasty over centuries through the various annals reveals insights which may not have been instantly recognisable. For example, the annals are the best indicators of political alliance in Gaelic Ireland as they are full of references to marriage, gossprid and fosterage. And if followed

Webb, 'A Translation of a French Metrical History of the Deposition of King Richard the Second')

⁷Nicholls, *Gae Ire*, pp 170-75.

⁸K.Simms, *Gaelic lordships in Ulster in the later Middle Ages* 2 vols unpublished Ph.D., thesis (University of Dublin, 1976).

⁹A.Smyth, *Celtic Leinster* (Dublin, 1981) (hereafter Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*); Byrne *Ir.Kings*, pp 130-65; F.J.Byrne, 'The Trembling sod: Ireland in 1169', In N.H.I., iii (ed.) A.Cosgrove (Oxford, 1993), pp 21-8. (hereafter Byrne, 'The Trembling Sod'). D.Ó Corrain, *Ireland under the Normans* (Dublin, 1972). Idem, 'The Career of Diarmait mac Mael na mBó', part 2, *Old Wexford Soc. Jn* no. 4 (1972-3); A.MacShamhráin, *Church and Polity in Pre-Norman Ireland: The Case of Glendalough* (Maynooth, 1996). (hereafter MacShamhráin).

¹⁰K.Simms, *From Kings to Warlords* (Boydell Press, 1987), p. 3. (hereafter Simms, *From Kings to Warlords*).

through time, it becomes very clear who were the natural allies and rivals of a particular dynasty.

With regard to Leinster, there is no set of annals devoted to the politics of the province. This greatly hinders our understanding of what exactly was happening amongst the Leinstermen. Consequently, we are forced to rely upon annals compiled in far off Irish territories for scraps of information relating to Leinster lordships and their nobles. The information extracted from the annals can be mixed in with individual genealogical studies of each Leinster dynasty, Anglo-Irish annalistic sources as well as government accounts further improve our knowledge of the political dynamics of a particular Leinster dynasty. In turn, this method of individual dynastic case studies contributes to a greater understanding of how a dynasty interacted with its Irish neighbours within a particular region.

However, a key point in tracking the pattern of warfare and politics in Leinster, is the adoption of the geopolitical approach used by Professor Smyth in his pioneering book '*Celtic Leinster*'.¹¹ This approach allows greater freedom to concentrate upon regional politics. In Leinster, the province consisted of two regions, reflecting the ancient division of the province between the competing royal Leinster dynasties of the Uí Dúnlainge and the Uí Cheinnselaig. These regions were known as Laigin Tuathgabhair (North Leinster) and Laigin Desgabhair (South Leinster).¹² Because this thesis focuses upon the medieval and early modern period, these regions for the purposes of this thesis shall be referred throughout as West Leinster and East Leinster.

The eastern part of the province was a well defined political and territorial unit, reflecting the Uí Cheinnselaig overkingship and that of their MacMurrough descendants. It stretched through the modern counties of Wexford, Carlow and Wicklow to Dublin. In the Middle Ages, its border with West Leinster was formed by the strategic Barrow valley. Indeed, it can be suggested that the imposition of Norman settlement throughout this vital artery actually

¹¹Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, pp 3, 17.

¹²Byrne, *Ir kings*, p. 130

preserved and accentuated the division between West Leinster and East Leinster. To the east its frontier was marked by the Irish Sea. However, it could also be argued that East Leinster because of its geographical location was somewhat isolated from the rest of Ireland, having more in common with parts of Wales than with Connacht or Ulster. This point has been made by Dr Sean Duffy in his doctoral thesis 'Ireland and the Irish Sea Region', pointing to many social connections between Wales and Leinster and the troubles in both lands in 1282 and 1295.¹³

In comparison to East Leinster, West Leinster formed part of the wider region of the midlands. This was always a hotly disputed land that was regularly subject to the ambitions of those seeking to impose themselves upon the island.¹⁴ Indeed Professor Smyth in '*Celtic Leinster*' placed a considerable degree of emphasis upon the midland landscape and its passes.¹⁵ And through his use of literature, historical accounts and maps, he illustrated that the physical features of the midlands changed little until the seventeenth century.¹⁶ His work demolished the perception that this region was just wilderness. Of great importance was his identification of what he termed '*the midland corridor*', lying on the eastern bank of the middle Shannon basin, running north to south from modern Westmeath for about twenty miles to Birr on the fringes of Munster.¹⁷ Indeed, Smyth's identification of the significance of the midland corridor and his emphasis upon the importance of the region's passes was not disputed by Nicholls in his review article, 'Land of the Leinstermen'.¹⁸ And Smyth's thesis was further complemented by Cunningham's 1987 book, '*The Anglo-Norman Advance into the South-West Midlands of Ireland, 1185-1221*', focusing on the Norman penetration of the midlands.¹⁹ In a sense, this interaction sphere was

¹³S.Duffy Ireland and the Irish Sea Region, 1014-1318 unpublished Ph.D thesis (University College Dublin, 1993), pp 135-42, 147-50. (hereafter Duffy, Ireland and the Irish Sea Region)

¹⁴ F.J.Byrne, *The Rise of the Ui Neill and the high-kingship of Ireland* (O'Donnell Lecture) (N.U.I., 1969), p. 12; Idem, *Ir kings*, pp133-34, 144-45.

¹⁵ Smyth, *Celtic Leinster* (Dublin, 1981), pp 69, 70, 75, 86.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.76.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 86.

¹⁸ K.W.Nicholls, 'Land of the Leinstermen', in *Peritia*, 3, (1984), pp 535-55. (hereafter Nicholls, 'Land of the Leinstermen'.)

¹⁹G.Cunningham, *The Anglo-Norman Advance into the South-West Midlands of Ireland, 1185-1221*, (Roscrea, 1987), pp 39-47, 170-73. (hereafter Cunningham, *The Anglo-Norman Advance*).

the great facilitator and communicator of warfare throughout the island.

The aim of this thesis is to present a coherent political history of the Irish of Leinster between 1156-1606. Consequently this thesis is divided into six parts, consisting of eleven chapters. Part 1 will focus upon the dramatic events in Leinster between the death of Toirdhealbhach O'Connor in May 1156 and 1180. In particular this chapter will focus upon the role played by Diarmait MacMurrough during the high-kingships of Muirheartach O'Loughlin (Ó Lochlainn) and Ruaidhrí O'Connor. It will chart how Ruaidhrí attempted after 1166 to build a kingdom of Ireland and his struggles with MacMurrough. From 1171 to 1180, it will also examine the differing reactions of the Leinster nobility to the arrival of Normans, focusing on the relationships between the natives and the newcomers.

Part 2 examines the aftermath of the Norman conquest in Leinster between 1180-1270. Chapter 2a seeks to show how the Irish nobility of East Leinster interacted with the Normans. In particular it will examine through a combination of Irish and Norman sources and the work of Marie Therese Flanagan²⁰ how the incorporation into the new order of the dynasties of O'Toole (Ó Tuathail), MacGiollamochoilóc, and MacMurrough encouraged their clients to follow their example. This led to a long-lived regional co-operation between both races. Chapter 2b deals with the reaction of West Leinster and Connacht to the Normans. In comparison to East Leinster, it shows that the accommodation between the Normans and the Irish of West Leinster only lasted a few decades. Also this chapter seeks to examine the evidence in the annals that depicts members of the O'Connor dynasty of Connacht continuing to influence events in West Leinster and the midlands between 1180-1270. Furthermore, it will show how the emerging struggles between the Normans and the Irish in this region were set by its topography.

Part 3 will examine the separate conflicts that emerged in both parts of Leinster between 1270 and 1320, particularly focusing upon

²⁰ M.T. Flanagan *Irish Society, Anglo-Norman Settlers, Angevin Kingship* (Oxford, 1989). (hereafter Flanagan, *Irish Society*).

such sources as the Calendars of Justiciary Rolls as well as the work and theses of Professor James Lydon, Professor Robin Frame, Dr Seán Duffy and Dr Cormac Ó Cléirigh.²¹ This will be combined with considerable annalistic and genealogical work to trace the political struggles among the Leinster Irish and how they began to co-ordinate their attacks against the weakening power of the Dublin government. In Part 4 this process had been traced with the aid of the magnificent thesis of Dr C.A.Empey upon the Butler lordship between 1185-1515 - in particular its sections focusing upon the Gaelic Resurgence.²² Indeed, the important work of Nicholls upon the MacMurrough-Kavanagh and O'Byrne dynasties of this period had also proved to be of invaluable assistance.²³

Part 5 looks at the dramatic rise of the Anglo-Irish in Leinster between 1420-1520 - in particular the Butlers of Ormond and the Fitzgeralds of Kildare. The effects of this shift in the provincial equilibrium upon the Irish will also be charted and traced. Again Empey's thesis has proved its worth here, while those of Dr Elizabeth Matthew and Dr David Beresford also combine to clear up any misconceptions I may have had.²⁴ Moreover, the work of Dr Steven Ellis was most helpful for my examination of the Fitzgerald dynasty between 1450 and 1534.²⁵ Part 6 charts the period between 1520 to 1606. It begins with the Kildares standing at the height of their power and will show how Henry VIII and his ministers advanced the reform of the Irish lordship, resulting in the collapse of the Kildares in 1534/5. Also it will chart the failure of reform and adoption of a much

²¹J. Lydon, *The Making of Ireland* (London, 1998), pp 62-84 (hereafter Lydon *The Making of Ireland*); R. Frame *The Dublin Government and Gaelic Ireland 1272-1361*, unpublished Ph.D thesis (University of Dublin, 1971) (hereafter Frame, *The Dublin Government*); S. Duffy, *Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Dublin, 1997) (hereafter Duffy, *Ireland in the Middle Ages*); C. Ó Cléirigh, *John fitzThomas, fifth lord of Offaly and first earl of Kildare*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Dublin, 1996) (hereafter Ó Cléirigh, *John fitzThomas*).

²²C.A.Empey *The Butler lordship in Ireland, 1185-1515* unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Dublin, 1970).

²³K.W. Nicholls, *The Kavanaghs 1400-1700*. In *Ir Geneal.*, 6 no. 2, (1983); Idem, 'Crioich Branach: The O'Byrnes and their Country', In C. O'Brien (ed.) *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne: The Wicklow Firebrand* (Dublin, 1998).

²⁴E. Matthew, *The Governing of the Lanacastrian Lordship of Ireland in the time of James Butler, fourth earl of Ormond*, unpublished Ph.D thesis (University of Durham, 1994) (hereafter Matthew; D. Beresford, 'The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515', Ph.D thesis, University of Dublin, 1998).

²⁵S. Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power; The Making of the British State* (Clarendon Press, 1995). (hereafter Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*)

harsher policy by the government towards the Leinster Irish, leading to the imposition in the 1550s of plantations in the O'More (Ó Mórdha) and O'Connor Faly (Ó Conchobhair Failghe) lordships of Laois and Offaly. Throughout this, my staples has been the State Papers and the Carew Manuscripts. But I have also relied heavily upon the poems of the Leabhar Branach to show the attitudes of the Leinster opponents of the Dublin government.²⁶

Before proceeding further, it might be useful to set out the terminological conventions used throughout this thesis. For Irish surnames I have used their most common Anglicised version for simplicity's sake, e.g. O'Byrne instead of Ó Broin or Ua Broin. Generally speaking patronymics will be used, e.g. Cormac mac Airt or Cathaoir mac Airt. However, there are some exceptions. Where an Irish leader is so central to the text, he shall be referred to after his introduction through his forename, e.g. Féilim O'Connor is referred to as Féilim.

²⁶S.MacAirt (ed.) *The Leabhar Branach* (Dublin, 1944). (hereafter *Leabhar Branach*.)

Part I

The Leinstermen and Ireland, 1156-80

Chapter 1

The Kings of Leinster in an Age of Conflict and Change, 1156-80

Chapter 1

The Kings of Leinster in an Age of Conflict and Change, 1156-1180

The death of Toirdhealbhach O'Connor in May 1156, was a decisive turning point in the history of Leinster. Throughout his career, Toirdhealbhach sought to forge a kingdom of Ireland under his suzerainty. In this endeavour, Toirdhealbhach must have modelled his view of Ireland on the careers of his predecessors. Particularly, he must have learned a great deal from those of Toirdhealbhach and Muircheartach O'Brien (Ó Briain), his grandfather and uncle. No doubt he cannot but have observed how they built their successive high-kingships upon control of Leinster and its kings.²⁷ The advance of the O'Briens into Leinster resulted from the weakness of the Uí Dúnlainge and Uí Cheinnselaig - the two competing royal Leinster dynasties. More particularly, though, the O'Briens were facilitated by the victory of Conchobhar O'Melaghlin (Ó Máelshechlainn) in 1072 over Diarmait mac Máel na mBó - the king of Leinster.²⁸ Diarmait's death left Leinster disorientated and defenceless, opening the door for the O'Briens. In effect, Leinster's weakness removed its kings from the race for the high-kingship - reducing it to the level of a client state. Also Toirdhealbhach must have been influenced by the increasing regularity of his own dynasty's incursions from the 1050s²⁹ into West Leinster and the midlands. Moreover, the rising power of the O'Connors along the Shannon routeway and its hinterland resulted in a series of wars in the 1080s and the 1090s with the O'Briens.³⁰ Indeed, the importance placed by the O'Briens upon their dominance of Leinster - particularly its midland region - was evidenced by the severity of their response to such threats. What follows is a

²⁷ *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 228-31, 240-1, 272-5; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 66-7; MacShamhráin, p. 101; Ó Corrain, *Ireland before the Normans*, p. 138; *Ann. Tig.*, ii, pp 303-4, 306, 311, 340; *A.U.*, ii, pp 88-9; *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 231-2; *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 913-5; Duffy, *Ireland in the Middle Ages*, p. 46; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 3-5.

²⁸ *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 900-1; *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 228-9; Ó Corrain, *Ireland before the Normans*, p. 137; Duffy, *Ireland in the Middle Ages*, p. 40.

²⁹ *Ann. Tig.*, ii, pp 270, 278-9, 292; *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 846-7, 890-1; *A.U.*, ii, pp 582-3, 592-3; *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 211-3, 214-5, 220-3; Ó Corrain, *Ireland before the Normans*, pp 134-5; *Ann Clon.*, p. 178; M.C.Dobbs (ed), 'The Ban-shenchas', In *Revue Celtique*, xlviii (1931-32), p. 190. Aodh O'Connor was the son of Dearbhorgaill, daughter of Tadhg MacGillapatrik of Ossory.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 311, 317-8; *A.L.C.*, i, p. 77; *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 944-5; *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 245-7.

continuation of this theme, focusing on the momentous events between 1156 to 1180. It will show, chiefly, how Toirdhealbhadh's son, Ruaidhrí, attempted to build a centralised kingdom of Ireland and the role of Diarmait MacMurrough's Leinster in this process. Furthermore from 1171 to 1180, it shall treat with the infancy of the Norman epoch in Leinster, and chart the course of Leinster's political and military history, focusing on the relationships of settlers with the Leinster nobility.

Toirdhealbhadh's demise confirmed that conflict was unavoidable between Connacht and Muirheartach O'Loughlin. And one of the first effects of the falling out was conflict in West Leinster and the midlands. When news of Toirdhealbhadh's death reached O'Loughlin, he seized the initiative and marched into Leinster, taking hostages from MacMurrough.³¹ From there O'Loughlin subdued the MacGillpatrick king of Ossory before burning Durrow. The first clash between Connacht and O'Loughlin came in Meath. There the old enmity between MacMurrough and Tigernan O'Rourke (Ó Ruairc) of Breifne surfaced with the Leinsterman emerging victorious.³² This brought O'Loughlin again into the midlands. Like earlier high kings, O'Loughlin saw West Leinster as a critical battleground. On this chessboard O'Loughlin and Ruaidhrí grappled to impose their own clients and topple their opponent's ones. To illustrate this point, O'Loughlin expelled the kings of Laois, Ossory, Offaly as well as Diarmait O'Melaghlin of Meath to Connacht.³³ In addition he completed his circuit by taking the pledges of Munster and divided it between Conchobhar O'Brien and Diarmait MacCarthy (MacCárthaigh) of Desmond.³⁴

This advance of O'Loughlin's influence into central Ireland forced Ruaidhrí to respond. Now secure as king of Connacht, Ruaidhrí consolidated his foothold in Westmeath before attacking Tyrone.³⁵ Then moving with the speed that characterised his campaigns, Ruaidhrí swept into Munster to reverse O'Loughlin's

³¹ Ó Corrain, *Ireland before the Normans*, pp 163-64.

³² *Ann. Tig.*, ii, p. 396; *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1120-1.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 397; *Ann. Clon.*, p. 202; *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1118-9, 1124-5.

³⁴ *Ann. Clon.*, p. 202.

³⁵ *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1122-3.

division.³⁶ In 1157 O'Loughlin was back in the midlands, deposing and raising kings throughout Meath, Leinster, and Munster. It was Ruaidhrí's clients who felt the full brunt of O'Loughlin as evidenced by the flight of rulers of Laois and Ossory to Connacht yet again.³⁷ On the other hand, Ruaidhrí was not inactive during this period. Indeed, he proved himself a skilful intriguer, seeking to undermine O'Loughlin's gains. In 1158 Ruaidhrí briefly reimposed his midland suzerainty by marching as far west as Leighlin in Uí Cheinnselaig, extracting hostages from Ossory and carried Macraith O'More of Laois over the Shannon to captivity.³⁸ As a parting shot he encouraged the successful deposition of Donnchadh O'Melaghlin of Meath by the O'Kearys (Ó Ciarda) of Carbury and the Tethbae and oversaw the installation of Diarmait O'Melaghlin before burning O'Loughlin's northern coast.³⁹

The year 1158 saw Ruaidhrí attempt to follow up his success. Drawing support from Thomond and O'Rourke, Ruaidhrí challenged O'Loughlin to battle at Ardee in Louth. There O'Loughlin inflicted a crushing defeat on him, forcing him over the Shannon to Connacht.⁴⁰ The consequences of Ruaidhrí's reverse quickly clarified. With MacMurrough, O'Loughlin wreaked vengeance on supporters of Ruaidhrí in West Leinster, deposing several O'Connor clients - including the king of Uí Fáeláin. The aforementioned king of Uí Fáeláin seems to have been Fáelán, a half-brother of Domhnall MacFháeláin who had been Toirdhealbhach's puppet king of Leinster in the late 1120s.⁴¹ As a reward for MacMurrough's service, O'Loughlin invested him with Uí Fáeláin and confirmed his provincial kingship.⁴² For O'Loughlin this was not punishment enough for the ambitious Ruaidhrí. Faced by this onslaught, Ruaidhrí proved how formidable he could be fighting on home ground. Despite the burning

³⁶ *Ann. Clon.*, p. 202. There he appointed his half-brother Muirheartach O'Brien and Diarmait of Desmond as its rulers

³⁷ *Ann. Tig.*, ii, p. 397; *Ann. Clon.*, p. 202; *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1118-9 and pp 1124-5.

³⁸ *Ann. Clon.*, p. 203.

³⁹ *Ann. Tig.*, ii, p. 399; *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1130-1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 402.

⁴¹ *A.U.*, ii, pp 115-7; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 121-3; Emmett O'Byrne. *The Origins of the Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow and their lordship to 1434* (Unpublished M.Phil thesis University of Dublin, 1996), pp 23-4, 95. (hereafter O'Byrne, *The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow*). ; One source, *The Annals of Tigernach*, mentions that O'Loughlin killed him, but *The Annals of the Four Masters* state he was expelled probably to Connacht. See *Ann. Tig.*, ii, p. 403; *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1134-5; *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae*, p. 13.

⁴² *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1136-7.

of several fortresses, Ruaidhrí forced O'Loughlin to retire disappointed.⁴³

In Ruaidhrí's attempts to master the midlands and West Leinster, two purposes stand out. Ruaidhrí was concerned by the effect of midland turmoil linked to O'Loughlin's manoeuvring on Connacht's troubled eastern frontier. A study of Ruaidhrí's activities reveals that he sought to consummate his father's old policy of fusing Connacht and the midlands into one geopolitical region.⁴⁴ Thus, Ruaidhrí also sought to emulate his father by improving existing fortifications, building new chains of Irish castles stretching from the western seaboard of Connacht to the Shannon and threw new bridges over that artery. In 1161 Ruaidhrí crossed again into the midlands to detach the Uí Dúnlainge kingdoms of West Leinster from MacMurrough's kingdom.⁴⁵ Aiding him in this enterprise were contingents of Leinster exiles. Prominent among these emigres was Fáelán MacFháeláin of Uí Fáeláin and Máelsechlainn O'Connor Faly. After a successful campaign through Meath, Ruaidhrí took hostages of Offaly and Uí Fáeláin, leaving Máelsechlainn and Fáelán as kings over their respective territories.⁴⁶ In spite of this, O'Loughlin's armies forced Ruaidhrí to do him homage in Tethbae.⁴⁷ Despite Ruaidhrí's obeisance, his dynamism paid off as both Máelsechlainn and Fáelán were left as rulers of their kingdoms, suggesting that Ruaidhrí and O'Loughlin agreed to allow these Leinstermen retain their kingdoms. As the price of their restoration these princes, albeit O'Connor clients, recognised the overlordship of MacMurrough. In any event this sequence of events suggests that O'Loughlin, despite his victory, acknowledged the advance of Connacht into the midlands. Consequently his de facto recognition of the developing situation forced MacMurrough to adapt. This he did by taking Fáelán's son hostage and by seemingly maintaining the Mac Con Lothair dynasty as a check upon the Uí Fáeláin king.⁴⁸ In Offaly evidence suggests that

⁴³ *Ann.Tig*, ii, 403.

⁴⁴ *A.U.*, ii, pp 124-5.

⁴⁵ C.Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Normans in Laois', in *Laois History and Society*, eds P.Lane and Wm. Nolan (Dublin, 1999), p. 164. (hereafter Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois')

⁴⁶ *Ann.Tig*, ii, p. 406; *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1141-43.

⁴⁷ *A.U.*, ii, pp 139-41.

⁴⁸ K.W.Nicholls, 'Mediaeval Irish Dynasties: Three Topographical Notes', in *Peritia*, vol. 5., (1986), pp 414-15.

MacMurrough set to curb Ruaidhrí's advance by maintaining the O'Dempseys (Ó Diomsaig) against Máelsechlainn O'Connor Faly, Ruaidhrí's client. Also to the south of Offaly he maintained the Uí Chremthannain of Dunamase against their O'More overlords and replaced the neighbouring rulers of Uí Buidhe with his own supporters. Similar patterns can be detected in Ossory where MacMurrough tried to intrude his foster family, the O'Keallys (Uí Caellaide), at the expense of the MacGillapatricks.⁴⁹

In effect, the events of 1161 created two distinct political zones in Leinster. The midlands and West Leinster, despite MacMurrough's nominal suzerainty, were increasingly falling under the sway of Connacht, while in eastern Meath and East Leinster, the O'Loughlin/MacMurrough axis remained firmly embedded. Far from settling down, provincial politics ebbed and flowed as each side sought to gain the upper hand. The year 1162 opened with O'Loughlin and MacMurrough campaigning to consolidate their hold on East Leinster and Ostman Dublin.⁵⁰ To the west, Ruaidhrí engaged in a similar enterprise, forcing Diarmait O'Melaghlin to disgorge five score ounces of gold for Westmeath.⁵¹ This sparring resulted in constant friction between these two spheres, a process which at times resembled a political game of musical chairs. For instance in 1163, the Meathmen deposed Diarmait O'Melaghlin and did homage to O'Loughlin, but Ruaidhrí forcibly reinstalled him two years later.⁵² From annalistic evidence of these years, Ruaidhrí was stripping away O'Loughlin's power in the southern half of Ireland: twice subduing Munster between 1164-5, burning as far as Dublin in 1164, and razing Meath and its neighbour of Carbury in 1165.⁵³

For MacMurrough, Ruaidhrí's rise was threatening. In 1166 the storm broke. The fateful maelstrom was surprisingly unleashed by O'Loughlin's blinding of Donnchadh O'Carroll (Ó Cearbhaill) of Oriel's foster-son - Eochaidh MacDunleavy (MacDuinnshléibe) of

⁴⁹ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Normans in Laois', p. 164.

⁵⁰ The capitulation of Dublin rendered six score ounces of gold to the coffers of the high-king. See *A.F.M.* ii, pp 1144-5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ann. Tig.* ii, pp 409-11.

⁵³ *MacCarthaigh's Book*, p. 43; *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 411; *A.F.M.* ii, pp 1154-5.

Ulaid.⁵⁴ This brought about a countrywide crisis of nightmarish proportions for MacMurrough, leading to a chain of events which demolished his kingship of Leinster. An indignant O'Carroll repaired to Connacht, where he gave his allegiance to Ruaidhrí - speeding the crumbling of O'Loughlin. Realising his time had come, Ruaidhrí marched on Dublin and was acknowledged as high-king.⁵⁵ Deep within O'Loughlin's sphere at Drogheda, Ruaidhrí took O'Carroll's submission. Instead of attacking O'Loughlin, Ruaidhrí first dealt with MacMurrough - drumming up support among the Uí Dúnlainge of West Leinster. There he took the homage of Fáelán MacFháeláin of Uí Fáeláin and the O'Connor Falys of Offaly - MacMurrough's natural enemies. This signalled the rebellion of West Leinster against MacMurrough and the invasion of Uí Cheinnselaig.⁵⁶ Caught by the sheer momentum of events, MacMurrough set Ferns aflame and resolved to fight. In the face of overwhelming odds, he submitted to Ruaidhrí.⁵⁷ Now having removed the possibility of MacMurrough coming to O'Loughlin's aid, Ruaidhrí marched to Donegal, while his allies closed on O'Loughlin, killing him in Tyrone.⁵⁸

In Ruaidhrí's absence, MacMurrough attempted to reassert himself by procuring O'Brennan (Ó Braenain) to kill Domhnall MacGiollamochoilmóc, the rebel lord of the Wicklow/Dublin territory of Uí Briúin Chualann.⁵⁹ This act combined with O'Loughlin's demise again exposed MacMurrough's already precarious position, sparking a second Uí Dúnlainge revolt. The O'Connor Falys and Fáelán, perhaps nervous of MacMurrough's revival, gave pledges to Ruaidhrí's lieutenant, Diarmait O'Melaghlin of Meath. These forces along with the Dublin Ostmen and O'Rourke marched into Uí Cheinnselaig. In response, MacMurrough executed the son of Fáelán as well as the captives of Ossory.⁶⁰ At this critical point MacMurrough's brother, Murchadh, along with the second Uí Fáeláin lord, Murchadh O'Byrne, deserted him collapsing his resistance.⁶¹ 'The Song', recounts how a

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 45.

⁵⁵ *Ann. Tig.*, ii, pp 413-17; *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1161-3.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 413.

⁵⁷ *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1161-3.

⁵⁸ *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 300-1.

⁵⁹ *Ann. Tig.*, ii, p. 416.

⁶⁰ Ibid, pp 415-25.

⁶¹ *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1161-3; *The Song of Dermot*, pp 12, 46, 158; Butler and Bernard, 'The Charters of the Abbey of Duiske', *R.I.A. Proc.* (C) xxxv (1918), p. 5. (hereafter 'The Charters of the Abbey of Duiske').

desperate MacMurrough disguised as an Augustinian pleaded with O'Byrne to aid him. Enraged, O'Byrne ejected him from his house, breaking decisively with him.⁶² Abandoned and betrayed, MacMurrough fled in search of Henry II of England. The Uí Dúnlainge gamble appeared to have paid off when Uí Cheinnselaig was divided between Murchadh MacMurrough and Domhnall MacGillpatrick of Ossory.⁶³ Before the close of the year Ruaidhrí rewarded all his clients who had played decisive roles in his capture of the high kingship. Among those rewarded was Fáelán who was given a stipend of twelve score cows and the two MacGillpatrick rulers of Ossory.⁶⁴

Like every high-king before him, Ruaidhrí had to contend with the centrifugal ambitions of the provincial kings, particularly the O'Loughlins. Ruaidhrí resolved to rule these disparate kingdoms, campaigning throughout Ireland. That year Ruaidhrí took further steps to the achievement of effective royal government by presiding over a near national synod at Athboy in Meath. To this secular and ecclesiastical convention came princes and churchmen, including Donnchadh MacFháeláin and 2000 followers.⁶⁵ Later that year with a bevy of sub-kings, Ruaidhrí destroyed O'Loughlin resistance, forcing them to share Tyrone with the O'Neill dynasty (Ó Néill). From a Leinster perspective this is interesting as the Uí Dúnlainge princes again displayed their loyalty to Ruaidhrí through their attendance upon this campaign.⁶⁶ But Ruaidhrí's plans were fatally entangled by MacMurrough's revenge. In August 1167, MacMurrough finally returned bringing Norman troops. He quickly re-established himself by reconquering Uí Cheinnselaig, deposing his estranged brother - Murchadh.⁶⁷ Concerned by Diarmait's success, Ruaidhrí and O'Melaghlin, probably with the aid of the Uí Dúnlainge, again forced his submission. Broadly speaking, Ruaidhrí seemed confident that he could contain MacMurrough. In fact, this becomes clear in 1168. The sense of security enveloping Ruaidhrí is evident in his celebration of the fair of Tailtiu, an act proclaiming his dominance throughout the

⁶² *The Song of Dermot*, pp 12-5.

⁶³ *Ann Tig*, ii, p. 417.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 418.

⁶⁵ *AFM*, ii, p. 1163-5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

⁶⁷ *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 300-1.

island.⁶⁸ The same apparent lack of concern is inscribed in the pages of the virtual O'Connor court chronicle, *The Annals of Tigernach*.⁶⁹

However, 1168 saw events pick up speed. Among the kingdoms lying on the fringes of Connacht a rash of succession disputes broke. Consequently, Ruaidhrí's attention was deflected away from Leinster while MacMurrough prepared. In Thomond, Muircheartach O'Brien, the Connacht sponsored ruler and Ruaidhrí's half-brother, was assassinated, paving the way for the dual accession of his brothers, Domhnall O'Brien and Brian O'Brien of Ormond. Once secure Domhnall O'Brien, who also MacMurrough's son-in-law, blinded Brian and annexed Ormond.⁷⁰ Even more alarming for Ruaidhrí was Meath. There his ally Diarmait O'Melaghlin publicly disobeyed him, executing a dissident under the protection of Connacht. Even though Diarmait gave Ruaidhrí the man's honour price, the trouble did not stop there. Resulting from his payment of the fine, Diarmait was deposed as king by the Meathmen. And Ruaidhrí's troops sent to restore Diarmait were routed by Art O'Melaghlin.⁷¹ At the close of 1168, Ruaidhrí still dominated the country as evidenced by the attendance at his convention at Athlone. There he soothed the worries of MacGillpatrick, kept Munster weak by dividing it between Domhnall O'Brien and Diarmait MacCarthy, accepted compensation for the death of Muircheartach O'Brien and took the submission of the kings of Tyrone.⁷²

In May 1169 MacMurrough's long awaited Norman troops landed, beginning his challenge to Ruaidhrí's high-kingship, taking Ostman Wexford. MacMurrough acknowledged the strategic importance of West Leinster. Unsurprisingly, MacMurrough's first targets were Ruaidhrí's clients. MacMurrough tore into Ossory.⁷³ This campaign irreversibly changed Irish warfare. For the first time the contrasting styles of Irish warfare and that of Latin Europe clashed in a major confrontation. Having been bested amid Ossory's forested

⁶⁸ *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 421.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 422. '...wealth and abundance of every good thing bestowed by God on the kingship of Ruaidhrí O'Connor'.

⁷⁰ *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 302-3.

⁷¹ *A.F.M.* ii, pp 1168-9;

⁷² *Ibid.*; *A.U.* ii, pp 1158-61.

⁷³ *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 423.

hills by Domhnall MacGillpatrick, the Normans feigned flight and drew the Irish into the plains, slaughtering them.⁷⁴ In that instance warfare changed forever in Ireland. MacMurrough then turned north and began his revenge upon the Uí Dúnlainge, utilising the full force of this new military technology on Fáelán MacFháeláin of Uí Fáeláin.⁷⁵ Giolla Chomghaill O'Toole, another of those who had deserted MacMurrough three years earlier, refused to parley with MacMurrough and was punished by the Norman plundering of Glendalough.⁷⁶ After this, Dublin meekly submitted. Not content, MacMurrough ministered another dose to Domhnall MacGillpatrick. Now MacMurrough had Ruaidhrí's attention, forcing the high-king to deal with him in Uí Cheinnselaig.⁷⁷ And after some sparring amidst its forests, Ruaidhrí's sense of security was dispelled. As a consequence, he avoided a trial of arms, dispatching clerics to treat with the Leinster king. They found him receptive and struck a deal. By its terms MacMurrough was confirmed as king of Leinster in return for recognition of Ruaidhrí's high-kingship. The Normans were to be sent home. Lest the Leinsterman again rebel, Ruaidhrí took the precaution of taking hostage MacMurrough's last legitimate son, Conchobhar. Lastly Conchobhar was to be betrothed to one of Ruaidhrí's daughters.⁷⁸ Thus satisfied, Ruaidhrí departed.

MacMurrough had no intention of keeping his word. With a new supply of Norman troops, he again rattled Ruaidhrí's supporters within the midlands. Ossory was ravaged and upheavals in Meath also suggest MacMurrough's involvement. There Ruaidhrí's lieutenant, Diarmait O'Melaghlin, was cut down by his nephew - Domhnall of Bregia.⁷⁹ To prevent the further deterioration of his midland equilibrium, Ruaidhrí expelled Domhnall of Bregia, kept Westmeath for himself and gave the east to O'Rourke.⁸⁰ But as Ruaidhrí plugged one leak, others appeared. Early in 1170, MacMurrough magnified Ruaidhrí's difficulties, dispatching Norman troops to aid Domhnall

⁷⁴ *Expugnatio*, pp 36-7

⁷⁵ *The Song of Dermot*, pp 65-7.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp 67-68; *Ann.Tig*, ii p. 441.

⁷⁷ *MacCarthaigh's Book*, p. 49; *Ann.Tig*, ii p. 423.

⁷⁸ *Ann.Tig*, ii p. 423; F.X.Martin, 'Allies and an overlord, 1169-72', in *N.H.I.*, ii, (ed.) A.Cosgrove (Oxford, 1993), pp 69-70. (hereafter Martin, 'Allies and an overlord, 1169-72').

⁷⁹ *A.U.*, ii, pp 160-1. Amongst the accomplices of this Domhnall of Bregia was the O'Kelly dynast, Donnchadh Ceinnselach, who was fostered in Uí Cheinnselaig.

⁸⁰ *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1172-3.

O'Brien of Thomond. This again drew Ruaidhrí's attention away from Leinster. Aided by these Normans, O'Brien forced Ruaidhrí's withdrawal from Thomond.⁸¹ Undeterred Ruaidhrí wasted Ormond and split the O'Brien kingdom by knocking down Killaloe bridge. Despite expending this considerable effort, he failed to subdue O'Brien.⁸²

By late August 1170 MacMurrough was ready, having been boosted by the arrival of two Norman fleets. Richard de Clare, better known as Strongbow, landed on 23 August 1170. Waterford fell to them two days later. And there amidst the ruins, Strongbow married MacMurrough's daughter, Aoife, before setting out for Dublin. Defending Dublin was Hasculf MacTurkill (Mac Torcaill), its Ostman ruler. He appealed to Ruaidhrí. Ruaidhrí swept to Dublin, conferred with MacTurkill and awaited MacMurrough.⁸³ Through his spies, MacMurrough learned of Ruaidhrí's plans. Moreover, he had a plan of his own. He led his army into the Wicklow wilderness, bypassing Ruaidhrí by knifing through the mountains to reach Dublin. MacMurrough had psychologically bested Ruaidhrí, as the high-king left Dublin to its fate.⁸⁴ It fell within days, but MacTurkill escaped.

Ruaidhrí's retreat left MacMurrough in control of virtually all East Leinster. Ruaidhrí's withdrawal also removed the screen that protected his clients in West Leinster. There MacMurrough struck at the nerve centre of Ruaidhrí's high-kingship. The impact of Norman cavalry forced the flights of Fáelán MacFháeláin and Domhnall MacGillpatrick to Connacht.⁸⁵ The repercussions reverberated throughout the region as MacMurrough and Strongbow flayed Meath, taking the submission of Domhnall of Bregia. O'Rourke's kingdom of Breifne and neighbouring Oriel were devastated.⁸⁶ Even Ruaidhrí's hold on Westmeath was under threat as Art O'Melaghlin, Domhnall of Bregia's half brother, declared himself king.⁸⁷ As has been stressed

⁸¹ Martin, 'Allies and an overlord, 1169-72', p. 72.

⁸² *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 426.

⁸³ Martin, 'Allies and an overlord, 1169-72', p. 77.

⁸⁴ *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1178-9.

⁸⁵ *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 424.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 426.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*; Dobbs, 'Banshenchas', p. 191 Aillbi O'Keary (Ó Ciarda) of the O'Keary dynasty of Carbury was the mother of Domhnall of Bregia. The mother of Art was Ingen Chon leamna hUí Ginga.

throughout, control of the midlands was the cornerstone of any high-king. This was a fact that Ruaidhrí was all too well aware of. Now with MacMurrough rampant and Ruaidhrí's high-kingship in crisis, this fact was graphically illustrated when Ruaidhrí was forced to execute MacMurrough's relatives to stave off the revolt of O'Rourke, his father-in-law.⁸⁸ Despite the scale of MacMurrough's inroads, Ruaidhrí recovered. But he was unable to reap full advantage of the turning tide. For example in early 1171, Diarmait MacCarthy of Desmond inflicted a series of defeats upon the newcomers, penning them in Waterford.⁸⁹ Ruaidhrí, who was keen to march to MacCarthy's aid, was prevented by the O'Brien rebellion. However, on the Shannon, the high-king was still supreme, using his naval superiority to force O'Brien's submission by mid-year.⁹⁰

In May 1171 Ruaidhrí's luck seemed in when MacMurrough suddenly died.⁹¹ Sometime during summer 1171, MacTurkill returned from the Western Isles, bringing a fleet. After a brave fight MacTurkill was routed and executed.⁹² More seriously MacMurrough's successors were confronted by a Leinster rebellion led by his disgruntled brother, Murchadh, Archbishop Lorcan O'Toole, and the Uí Dúnlainge, including Fáelán MacFháeláin, O'Byrne, and O'Toole. Initially they enjoyed success by regaining control over much of East Leinster, forcing Domhnall Kavanagh to flee to Strongbow at Dublin.⁹³ Domhnall's succession to the Uí Cheinnselaig kingship was rejected by Murchadh who claimed it through Irish law. He also refused to acknowledge Strongbow as MacMurrough's successor in Leinster. With Leinster in arms, Ruaidhrí struck at Strongbow. Through August and September 1171, Dublin was ringed by Ruaidhrí's armies and their siege reduced the city to desperate straits. Ruaidhrí, on the point of success, held his nerve, dictating a peace. Strongbow could retain Dublin, Wexford, and Waterford at Ostman expense but no more. Rather than accept these terms, Strongbow attacked and lifted the blockade, allowing the pursuit of the war deeper into Leinster.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 52-3.

⁹⁰ *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 427.

⁹¹ *Expugnatio*, pp 173, 294, n. 32, p. 306, n. 115; *The Song of Dermot*, pp 129, 133, and 141.

⁹² *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 428; *Expugnatio*, p. 77.

⁹³ *Expugnatio*, p. 79.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 83.

As the challenge of the Uí Dúnlainge was neutralised, Strongbow crushed the hard-liners. Now recovered, the motor of Norman conquest was humming. For those Leinstermen who refused to submit, Strongbow proved truculent. Early in 1172 Murchadh was killed by the Normans.⁹⁵ O'Byrne's fate was worse. Strongbow captured him and his son and executed them at Ferns before feeding their bodies to his hounds.⁹⁶ This did not end the war as Murchadh MacMurrough's son, Muircheartach burnt Ferns.⁹⁷ But according to the 'Song', Strongbow and Muircheartach later agreed a settlement whereby Strongbow recognised him as king of Uí Cheinnselaig, while Domhnall was appointed seneschal of the Irish of Leinster.⁹⁸ Bereft of Ruaidhrí's protection, many of the Uí Dúnlainge grasped the significance of the arrival in Ireland of Henry II. Henry II was eager to brake the ambitions of Strongbow. Accordingly Fáelán and the O'Tooles were anxious to avail of Henry's protection, and were prominent in the scramble to declare fealty to him at Dublin during winter 1171-2.⁹⁹ But the earlier political pragmatism displayed by Fáelán and the Uí Dúnlainge didn't save them as their kingdoms were granted to Norman adventurers.¹⁰⁰

From 1172 onwards the Normans gradually consolidated their hold on East Leinster. However, a desperate struggle was emerging in West Leinster. One reason for this turmoil was that the Norman conquest of the eastern midlands terminally threatened the wider geopolitical ambit of the Irish provincial kings. In these vital midland passes, leading deeper into the O'Connor, MacCarthy and the O'Brien kingdoms the real battle for countrywide dominance was to be fought. Clearly Irish methods of waging war were also changing. And through skilful usage of dense forest and mountain, Irish resistance stiffened. Concentration in this advantageous landscape allowed Irish kings to attack Norman armies in terrain which rendered their heavy cavalry

⁹⁵ *A.U.*, ii, pp 174-5.

⁹⁶ *The Song of Dermot*, pp 46, 158

⁹⁷ *Expugnatio*, p. 173.

⁹⁸ *The Song of Dermot*, p. 161.

⁹⁹ *Expugnatio*, p. 95.

¹⁰⁰ M.T.Flanagan, 'Henry II and the kingdom of Uí Fáeláin', in *Settlement and Society in Mediaeval Ireland*, (ed) J.Bradley, (Kilkenny, 1988), p. 233. (hereafter Flanagan, 'Henry II and the kingdom of Uí Fáeláin').

useless.¹⁰¹ This landscape-driven warfare in Leinster is encapsulated in two examples. A case in point is Strongbow's attack on Diarmait O'Dempsey in Offaly during 1172. After failing to penetrate the interior of Offaly, Strongbow ordered a withdrawal to Kildare. This, in fact, became a messy affair as O'Dempsey used the topography to maul the Norman rearguard as it passed through a valley.¹⁰² Another incident from 1171-2 also depicts the Leinster Irish attempting unsuccessfully to trap Strongbow in the pass of Idrone.¹⁰³ However, the Normans had some answers to these problems. One way of stabilising their foothold in the midlands was their exploitation of existent rivalries within Irish dynasties. This was illustrated through the careers of Art O'Melaghlin of Westmeath and Domhnall O'Rourke of Bréifne.¹⁰⁴ More importantly though, when the Norman cavalry could not master the rigours of the land, the castle was employed. Castles positioned in strategic passes and river valleys proved to be their most potent weapon to break the connections between interacting regions. Even so, from the outset the inhospitable character of midland topography blunted colonisation. From the 1170s Irish kings began to see Norman settlement as a noose around the neck of regional polity. This realisation led to the most destructive element of Irish warfare, settlement eradication.

Strongbow's grip on Leinster still remained tenuous. Indeed, dissent was rising among the provincial nobility, especially those of Uí Cheinnselaig. In 1172 during Henry II's visit, Domhnall Kavanagh submitted before him at Dublin. According to *The Annals of Tigernach*, the Angevin then assumed the kingship of Leinster which may have offended Domhnall Kavanagh.¹⁰⁵ By comparison Muircheartach MacMurrough expressed his satisfaction with the

¹⁰¹ K.D.O'Connor, *The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland* (Royal Irish Academy, 1998), pp 98-99. (hereafter O'Connor, *The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland*).

¹⁰² *The Song of Dermot*, pp 203-4. On another occasion, the compiler of the *Song of Dermot* captures Norman discomfort at their inability to bring their cavalry to bear upon the nimble Irish. See *The Song of Dermot*, p. 51 'Lords barons all, Let us pass through this valley promptly So that we may be on the hill On the hard field and in open ground'

¹⁰³ '... Interea comitie Guiesfordiam tendente, Lagensium exercitus in passu Odrone, quanquam in sui natura arto nimis et invio, concidibus tamen plurimum arte munito, illi obviam venit. Ubi et commisso gravi conflictu, interemptis tandem hostium multis, preter iuvenis unius casum cum suis omnibus ad campana comes indemnis evasit, Meilerio per aliis ibidem solita strenuitate micante.' See *Expugnatio*, pp 86-7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ann. Tig.* ii, pp 432-34.

¹⁰⁵ *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 56-7; *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 429.

peace concluded with Strongbow, visiting Winchester with the burgesses of Wexford at Henry II's expense between 1172-73.¹⁰⁶ However, Domhnall Kavanagh and his sons seemingly were also discontent with Strongbow's recognition of their cousin as king of Uí Cheinnselaig. In 1173 this tension exploded, threatening the colony in East Leinster. Early in the year both Domhnall Kavanagh and Muirheartach campaigned with Strongbow in Meath in 1173.¹⁰⁷ For although the MacMurroughs seemed reconciled, they were significantly labelled the earl's '*enemies of Leinster*', indicating that tension still brooded.¹⁰⁸ It may be coincidental, but roughly at the same time the neighbouring territories of Ormond and Ossory were aflame. On the approach of Domhnall O'Brien and Ruaidhrí, the townsmen of Kilkenny and their ally Domhnall MacGillpatrick fled to Waterford.¹⁰⁹ Therefore it is possible to postulate that Domhnall Kavanagh chose this opportune moment of colonist chaos to pressurise Strongbow to grant better terms than those of 1172. What seemingly occurred was a series of clashes between Strongbow and the supporters of Domhnall Kavanagh (Caomhánach).¹¹⁰ Generally speaking, Domhnall Kavanagh seems to have been quite successful. In any event this was only a foretaste of the storm to befall the colony in 1174. On its eve, Strongbow's hosting to Meath of 1173 demonstrated his grip upon Leinster. In addition to the MacMurroughs, most of the Leinstermen, including Fáelán MacFháeláin, O'Dempsey of Offaly and O'More of Laois were in attendance.¹¹¹ Yet as subsequent events were to show, many of these were biding their time. Central to their grievances was the issue of land. Fáelán MacFháeláin is a perfect example of frustration. Despite his submissions and service, Fáelán's discontent because of the subinfeudation of Uí Faeláin was palpable.¹¹² In summer 1174, his opportunity came to reverse Strongbow's division.

¹⁰⁶ *C.D.I., 1171-1251.*, no. 39, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ *The Song of Dermot*, pp 233-5.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 233.

¹⁰⁹ *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 434. Indeed, O'Brien's campaign may have picked up considerable support from the relatives of his MacGillpatrick mother within Ossory, increasing the colonist terror on their flight to Waterford. See Dobbs, 'The Banshenchas', p. 233.

¹¹⁰ *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 434; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, p. 59.

¹¹¹ *The Song of Dermot*, p. 235.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p. 65, p. 234-5.

This chance came after the annihilation of a large Norman army at Thurles in July 1174 by Domhnall O'Brien and Conchobhar Maenmhaighe, Ruaidhrí's most able son.¹¹³ Flushed with success, Ruaidhrí crossed the Shannon into Meath.¹¹⁴ His intention was twofold: to follow up this victory and to exploit the absence of Hugh de Lacy, lord of Meath, in Normandy. For the Uí Dúnlainge, the allure of their old master was too much and they rode to meet Ruaidhrí. Much of Meath, including Trim Castle was burnt, and Ruaidhrí even penetrated to Dublin but failed to deliver a fatal blow.¹¹⁵ Ruaidhrí then pulled back to the Shannon, exposing his Leinster clients to the Norman backlash. This came when Raymond le Gros expelled Fáelán yet again in 1174.¹¹⁶ The repercussions continued into 1175. Meath was wasted from Drogheda to Athlone and Magnus O'Melaghlin was hanged by the Normans at Trim.¹¹⁷ The scale of the Norman onslaught forced many of Ruaidhrí's midland supporters to flee to Connacht. The rest of Leinster took longer to quell. Domhnall Kavanagh again may have become hostile to Strongbow, as he is described as king of Leinster that year.¹¹⁸ But after his killing that year, East Leinster became significantly more peaceful.

Perhaps the most notable result of all this warfare was its effect on Ruaidhrí. After 1174, Ruaidhrí clearly lost confidence in his ability either to drive them out or subdue the Normans.¹¹⁹ Instead of prolonging hostilities, Ruaidhrí gradually came to accept them as part of an evolving political landscape. This realisation had immediate consequences. In 1176 Ruaidhrí used them to check O'Brien's rebellion, replacing him temporarily as king of Thomond with his own nephew.¹²⁰ But the defining moment in Ruaidhrí's career had come. On 6 October 1175 Ruaidhrí submitted, through his emissaries, to Henry II, acknowledging him as his lord.¹²¹ By the terms of the treaty of

¹¹³ *Ann.Tig*, ii p. 435.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*; *Ann.Inisf*, pp 306-7; *A.U*, ii, p. 179; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 59-61; *The Song of Dermot*, p. 235.

¹¹⁵ *Expugnatio*, pp 140-1.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 137.

¹¹⁷ *Ann.Tig*, ii, pp 437-38; *A.U*, ii, pp 182-3.

¹¹⁸ *Expugnatio*, n. 32, p. 294; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 20-1; *Ann.Tig*, ii, p. 437.

¹¹⁹ H.Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier: Connacht and the Normans', in *Colony and Frontier in Medieval Ireland*, (eds) T.Barry, R.Frame and K.Simms (London, 1995), p. 119. (hereafter Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier').

¹²⁰ *Ann.Tig*, ii, p. 439.

¹²¹ R.Frame, *Ireland and Britain, 1170-1450* (London, 1998), p. 16. (hereafter Frame, *Ireland and Britain, 1170-1450*).

Windsor, Ruaidhrí promised not to interfere in Leinster.¹²² He was also to compel the refugees from Meath and Leinster in Connacht to return home.¹²³ In effect Ruaidhrí ceded his overlordship over Leinster, and abandoned his claims to islandwide dominance. In return Henry II promised not to dispute Ruaidhrí's overlordship over Connacht as long as he fulfilled his obligations as liegeman.¹²⁴

As events transpired, neither placed much faith in the Windsor agreement. But Ruaidhrí's acknowledgement of reality in Leinster was profound. In effect, the treaty bisected Leinster between Ruaidhrí and the Angevins. Having been unable to militarily defeat the Normans, Ruaidhrí recognised their primacy over East Leinster. But West Leinster was a different matter. As illustrated, over the previous century successive O'Connor kings expended considerable resources on locking West Leinster into Connacht's sphere. And in the western lands of Meath, Offaly, and Tipperary, a vibrant Irish web of social interaction woven together by alliance and kinship continued to survive under Ruaidhrí's protection. Indeed, Clonmacnoise was such an integral part of Connacht that it housed a royal mint which continued to coin money into the 1170s.¹²⁵ The O'Connor commitment to Clonmacnoise was illustrated by the fact that it remained the burial place of Connacht princes. Hence, the durability of the O'Connor patronage of Clonmacnoise ensured that the surrounding Irish kingdoms benefited from this protective aegis.

The major casualties of Ruaidhrí's political expediency were the Uí Dúnlainge. With Ruaidhrí pinned back on the Shannon, the second phase began of the feudal colonisation of Leinster. Deprived of Ruaidhrí's protection, lords like Fáelán MacFháeláin sought to adapt to these circumstances. It opened with the expulsion of the more troublesome indigenous ruling classes often from fertile lands to more

¹²² *His. & mun. doc. Ire.*, pp 22-24. '...to meddle with those lands, which the lord king has retained in his lordship and in the lordship of his barons; that is to say, Dublin with all its appurtenances; Meath with all its appurtenances, even as Murchat Ua Mailethlachlin held fully and freely or as others held it of him; Wexford with all its appurtenances, that is to say the whole of Leinster; and Waterford with its whole territory from Waterford to Dungarvan, including Dungarvan with all its appurtenances'.

¹²³ *Ibid.* 'And if any of them are unwilling to return and their lords have called upon the king of Connaught, he shall compel them to return to their land, so that they shall dwell there in peace'.

¹²⁴ Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p. 119.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

economically marginalized territories. In eastern Ireland, mottes, manors and peasant settlers came to take the places of the depossessed. The Uí Dúnlainge kingdoms are a good example of this process. As constituted by Strongbow, the medieval county of Kildare was stitched together from shreds of three kingdoms, including fragments of the O'Toole kingdom of Uí Muiredaig, Uí Fáeláin as well as parts of Offaly, while the cantred of Wicklow lying against the Leinster coast formed the final piece of the Kildare jigsaw.¹²⁶ In 1177 Máelmorda MacFháeláin, perhaps Fáelán's son, was killed by the O'Tooles of Uí Muiredaig.¹²⁷ His death suggests two possibilities. As it coincides with the introduction of a second wave of settlers from the de Clare lands in Wales and England into Leinster, and the enforcement of Strongbow's earlier grant of Uí Muiredaig to Walter de Riddlesford, it suggests that the MacFháeláins were either forced southward into Uí Muiredaig by colonist pressure or that they were auxiliaries in Norman service.¹²⁸

The defeat of the O'Tooles in 1177-8 brought the active colonisation of Kildare.¹²⁹ To hammer down his prize, Walter De Riddlesford planted castles and colonists to control the more belligerent O'Tooles before pushing into Imaal in Wicklow to complete the conquest.¹³⁰ As a result of De Riddlesford's victory and the killing of Dúnlaing O'Toole in 1178, some of the O'Tooles fled to the lands of the bishopric of Glendalough.¹³¹ There Archbishop Lorcán O'Toole of Dublin, Dúnlaing's brother, seems to have created a sanctuary for them by granting lands around Glenmalure to the priory of the Desert of St. Coemgen.¹³² In Uí Fáeláin, the colonisation followed a similar path. Norman mottes and villages were grafted onto both secular and ecclesiastical centres at Naas, Clane and Cloncurry.¹³³ The density of the Norman settlement in Kildare is evident by the fact that the majority of smaller moated sites, perhaps farmsteads, are in

¹²⁶ A.J.Otway-Ruthven, 'The Medieval County of Kildare', in *I.H.S.*, vol.xl, no. 43 (March, 1957), pp 182-83. (hereafter Otway-Ruthven, 'The Medieval County of Kildare').

¹²⁷ *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 298.

¹²⁸ B.Eagar, 'The Cambro-Normans and the lordship of Leinster', in *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland*, (ed.) J.Bradley, (Kilkenny, 1988), p. 201. (hereafter Eagar, 'The Cambro-Normans and the lordship of Leinster').

¹²⁹ *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 448;

¹³⁰ *Expugnatio*, n. 113, p. 305; *C.O.D.*, i, no. 8, p. 4; *C.D.I.*, 1171-1251, no. 1757, p. 262.

¹³¹ *The Song of Dermot*, pp 67-69; *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 441.

¹³² *Alen's Reg.* p. 8; *Placenames*, p. xl.

¹³³ D.Murtagh, 'The Norman Earthworks of Co.Kildare', Unpublished Ph.D thesis, (T.C.D., 1993), p. 151. (hereafter Murtagh, 'The Norman Earthworks of Co.Kildare').

southern Kildare. A programme of castle building under Hugh de Lacy set about fortifying the Norman grip on southern Kildare in 1180-1.¹³⁴ Inevitably the pressure for land led to losers - the Irish. Unsurprisingly by the fourteenth century there were Irishtowns south of Mullaghmast and near Moone, indicating racial segregation.¹³⁵

But as the Normans pushed further into the interior, their problems increased. There the challenging midland topography impeded a full conquest, protecting the Irish opposing their advance.¹³⁶ In Offaly despite the conversion of the O'Connor Faly centres of Lea and Rathangan into Fitzgerald manorial hubs, Norman settlement never reached the same intensity as that of East Leinster.¹³⁷ Equally, the same could be said of much of Westmeath and Laois. In other words, the engine of conquest was stuttering. As mentioned already, the Normans offset the protection which the region's physical features afforded the Irish princes by patronising their rivals. This seems to have been the case in Offaly, where the O'Connor Falys had traditionally held sway. Despite initial opposition, Diarmait O'Dempsey, described as lord and defender of Offaly in 1172, seemingly allied himself with the Normans by 1173.¹³⁸ This alliance seems to have elevated Diarmait beyond his traditional vassal status to superiority over his former O'Connor Faly overlord. Other facts confirm the probability of this position as he, a hitherto unknown, was able to found the Cistercian house of Monasterevin in 1178.¹³⁹ Such was the relative political eclipse of the O'Connor Falys that Diarmait was lauded as lord of Offaly at his death in 1193.¹⁴⁰

Similarities can be found in the experiences of the O'Mores of Laois. Throughout MacMurrough's difficulties in the 1160s, O'More remained loyal.¹⁴¹ But despite this faithfulness and his later service with Strongbow in 1174, O'More warred with the colonists as the

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 13 and p. 94.

¹³⁵ *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 191; *CJR*, 1305-1307, p. 29.

¹³⁶ C.Ó Cléirigh, 'The Problems of Defence: A Regional Case-Study', in *Law and Disorder in Thirteenth-Century Ireland*, (ed.) J.Lydon, (Four Courts Press, 1997), p. 29. (hereafter Ó Cléirigh, 'The Problems of Defence: A Regional Case-Study').

¹³⁷ Idem, 'John fitzThomas, fifth lord of Offaly and the first earl of Kildare, 1287-1316', Unpublished Ph.D thesis, (T.C.D., 1996), pp 11-12. (hereafter Ó Cléirigh, 'John fitzThomas, fifth lord of Offaly and the first earl of Kildare, 1287-1316')

¹³⁸ *D.N.B.*, xv, p. 852.

¹³⁹ Gwynn & Hadock, *Med. relig. houses*, p. 142.

¹⁴⁰ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 186-7.

¹⁴¹ Martin, 'Allies and an overlord, 1169-72', p. 71.

1170s closed. O'More's hostility may be linked to the feud between Domhnall Kavanagh, his traditional overlord, and Strongbow between 1173-75. The circumstances of Domhnall Kavanagh's death may throw some light on the origins of O'More's war. In 1175 Domhnall Kavanagh was killed in an incident surrounded by considerable confusion. According to *The Four Masters* his killers were the O'Nolans of Forth, but *The Annals of Tigernach* record that Uí Nialláin, who lived on the borderlands of Offaly and Laois, cut him down. While he possibly was enforcing his mandate as seneschal of the Irish of Leinster, the O'Connor chronicle describes him as king of Leinster - perhaps indicating the resurgence of his hostility to Strongbow.¹⁴² If so, this would fit in the context of the ongoing rivalry between Domhnall Kavanagh and his cousin, Muircheartach. Indeed, Muircheartach's new found closeness to Strongbow finds expression when a MacMurrough, tentatively identified as him, was part of the Norman campaign to Limerick in 1175.¹⁴³ Significantly Domhnall MacGillpatrick of Ossory, the enemy of MacMurrough and Domhnall Kavanagh, also joined this hosting. This may suggest that Muircheartach and Domhnall MacGillpatrick allied themselves with the colonists to protect themselves from Domhnall Kavanagh. If Domhnall Kavanagh was killed in the midlands by the Uí Nialláin, he may have been drumming up support amongst his vassals such as O'More for his war. If so, it would be unsurprising given his activities in the aftermath of O'Brien and Ruaidhrí's offensive of 1173.

According to Gerald of Wales between 1181-2, Laois was given to Meyler FitzHenry. Indeed, Gerald stressed the enormity of the task facing FitzHenry, describing Laois as a difficult, hostile and wooded land.¹⁴⁴ But it is important that FitzHenry's subsequent partial conquest of Laois is not examined in isolation. It must be taken in the context of the main Norman drive, originating amongst the colonist nobility of Meath, into Ruaidhrí's sphere dating from 1176. Then the de Lacys with Art O'Melaghlin and some of the O'Rourkes, plundered Carbury and Meath.¹⁴⁵ Meath did not only provide the launch pad for advances into Connacht. The southern Irish kingdoms

¹⁴² *Expugnatio*, n. 32, p. 294; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 20-1; *Ann.Tig*, ii, p. 437.

¹⁴³ *Bk Leinster*, i, p. 186; *The Song of Dermot*, p. 161.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 195; *Chartul. St Mary's*, i, p. 13.

¹⁴⁵ *Ann. Tig*, ii, p. 441; *A.U.*, ii, pp 182-3.

of Ulster also were exposed. Faced by the same problem as Ruaidhrí, Máelsechlainn O'Loughlin razed much of northern Meath including Slane Castle.¹⁴⁶ Although the Norman advance contravened the terms of Windsor, it secured the royal nod in 1177.¹⁴⁷ Thereafter Connacht was under siege. It began with the rout of a Norman probe into Westmeath.¹⁴⁸ More serious, though, was the aborted invasion of Connacht by Miles de Cogan in 1177.¹⁴⁹

Despite de Cogan's failure, the pressure on Connacht grew in 1178. Within this context Ruaidhrí's cherished Clonmacnoise and his satellite of Fearceall were attacked by Hugh de Lacy, lord of Meath.¹⁵⁰ While Ruaidhrí drove him out, the Norman tide just rolled back to Connacht's doorstep. And drawing on the support of the co-operative Art O'Melaghlin and the O'Connor Falys, the Normans returned and routed Máelsechlainn Beag O'Melaghlin and the Tethbae, Ruaidhrí's clients.¹⁵¹ This gradual loosening of Ruaidhrí's control upon this region led to chaos. The annals for 1178 reveal an ever changing political landscape littered with broken diplomatic and military ties and dotted with new ones. Clearly a new political pattern emerged indicative of changed conditions and stressful times. The turmoil between the competing spheres of Ruaidhrí and the colonists spawned a political void in the midlands. These fractious and sometimes confusing political patterns are amply captured in the Norman defeat in 1178 by the O'Connor Falys - their recent allies.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 442.

¹⁴⁷ Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p. 121. For in May 1177, Henry II granted Desmond and Thomond to the restless Norman expansionists and created his son John, lord of Ireland.

¹⁴⁸ *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 445.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 446. This proved harder than most expected. Aided by Ruaidhrí's renegade son, Murchadh, de Cogan penetrated the Connacht heartland to Ruaidhrí's capital of Tuam, tearing at the fabric of the O'Connor kingdom. At the time, Ruaidhrí was visiting his sub-kings in the west of the province. When news reached him of the invasion and of his son's betrayal, he acted with alacrity. De Cogan and his companions had fatally underestimated him. For although Ruaidhrí in recent years had been much diminished in stature, he still cut a magisterial figure in Connacht. And while they awaited the arrival of their king from the west, Ruaidhrí's subjects pursued a fabian policy, denying the Normans food and rest. On hearing of Ruaidhrí's rapid advance, the Norman army fled for the Shannon ford of Athleague. There Ruaidhrí caught them fording the river, slaughtering their panic stricken rearguard. Ruaidhrí's revenge on his renegade son was swift and terrible, blinding him personally. See also *Expugnatio*, pp 182-3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 447.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 448.

¹⁵² Ibid.

The O'Connor Falys switch possibly prompted the formation of a wider Leinster confederation in 1179. Ruaidhrí possibly gave it his covert encouragement. If so, he must have hoped that the Leinstermen could tie down the Normans, deflecting their focus from Connacht. It seems that while these Leinstermen temporarily relieved the pressure on Connacht by their routs of Normans at Tochar Cluana Eidhneach and Fiodh Mór in Laois in 1179, they were essentially pursuing their own agenda.¹⁵³ Perhaps their successes forced lords like Meyler Fitzhenry to acknowledge the rights of the Irish within the settlement. In fact, this may well be the case. Ironically the Normans seemingly adopted the age old midland policy of the high-kings, creating a ring of clients to stabilise their colony against the more hostile Irish. Within this Norman strategy, political arrangements were flexible. Those who resisted, risked annihilation. Other local rulers, although curtailed, were often left in place. This can be postulated in the cases of O'Connor Faly, O'More and perhaps Diarmait O'Dempsey. In reality they merely switched masters, exchanging Ruaidhrí's overlordship for a Norman one. The evidence tends to confirm this situation. Later in 1196 Domhnall O'More was killed while defending the colonists from the marauding O'Connors of Connacht, and an O'Connor Faly dynast fell during a Norman expedition to Ulster.¹⁵⁴ These new regional alignments and the setting up of these native sentinels to watch over the colonists may not have been to the liking of Ruaidhrí. Thus, perhaps to redress the midland equilibrium, Ruaidhrí shifted for himself by giving the hand of Rose, his daughter, to Hugh de Lacy shortly after 1180.¹⁵⁵

Between 1156-80, Leinster belonged to a great age of change, whose most striking characteristic was instability. What is more, the political landscape of Leinster by 1180 was unrecognisable from that of 1156. The proverbially discontented Uí Dúnlainge of West

¹⁵³ *MacCarthaigh's Book*, p. 69. See also Cunningham, *The Norman Advance*, p. 29. That the colonists were defeated in Laois indicates the involvement of the O'Mores with the O'Connor Falys. Cluana Eidhneach was the royal monastery of the O'More kings of Laois, see Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 84.

¹⁵⁴ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 198-9; *Ann. Conn.*, pp 214-5. The O'Connors of Connacht again attacked O'Connor Falys in 1200. With regard to Diarmait O'Dempsey, his father Cú Brogha was killed by Ruaidhrí's client, Máelsechlainn O'Connor Faly, in 1162. See *AFM*, ii, pp 1148-9.

¹⁵⁵ S.Duffy, 'The Problem of Degeneracy', in *Law and Disorder in Thirteenth-Century Ireland*, (ed.) J.Lydon, (Four Courts Press, 1997), pp 91-92. (hereafter Duffy, 'The Problem of Degeneracy').

Leinster, MacMurrough's enemies and Ruaidhrí's allies, lived now under Norman overlordship. For the most part, Ruaidhrí's midland balance was in tatters and his high-kingship of Ireland was greatly curtailed. As for MacMurrough, his descendants had been superseded by a collateral MacMurrough line. Norman Leinster was the new reality by 1180.

Chapter 2a

The Reaction of the Irish Nobility of East Leinster

1180-1265

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Part II

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... and ...

Chapter 2b

The Reaction of Connacht and West Leinster, 1180-1270

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Chapter 2a

The Reaction of the Irish Nobility of East Leinster

1180-1265

Always a neglected feature in past studies of the Norman arrival is the rise of a Normanised native elite in East Leinster. In the past nationalist historians have tended to paint the effect of the Normans upon the Irish in apocalyptic terms. This chapter will show the reactions of the Irish dynasties to the new reality of Norman dominance in this part of the province. It does not confine itself to Leinster's high nobility. The second rank of nobility are also examined to show a broader provincial picture. It is based upon the Norman sources which show interaction between native and newcomer. Irish annalistic and genealogical sources also complement this analysis. However, the absence of a set of Leinster annals obscures a complete view of the Leinstermen.

It has been demonstrated that earlier Irish adoption of Viking personal names indicated contact between native and newcomer.¹⁵⁶ This continuity is paralleled later by common Irish usage of Norman appellation. This shift in native naming practices through the adoption of their new overlords' forenames indicates a desire to assimilate culturally and socially.¹⁵⁷ For example in East Leinster, the O'Tooles adopted Walter the forename of their De Riddlesford overlords, while several O'Byrnes are named Gerald after their thirteenth-century masters, the Fitzgeralds.¹⁵⁸ Significantly in West Leinster where the settlers were not so thickly planted this naming practice occurs less frequently.¹⁵⁹ After 1177 settlers from de Clare lands in Wales and France flooded Leinster.¹⁶⁰ The necessity of stability for the

¹⁵⁶ B.Ó Cuiv, 'Personal Names as an Indicator of Relations between native Irish and settlers in the Viking Period', in *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland*, (ed.) J. Bradley, (Kilkenny, 1988), p. 86.

¹⁵⁷ R. Bartlett, 'Colonial Aristocracies of the High Middle Ages', in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, eds R. Bartlett and A. McKay, (Oxford, 1992), pp 27-28. (hereafter, Bartlett, 'Colonial Aristocracies')

¹⁵⁸ S. Pender (ed.), 'The O'Clery Book of Genealogy', in *Anal Hib*, no. 18, (1950), para 1749, p. 130 (hereafter O'Clery); *Red Bk Ormond*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, para 1767, pp 131-32, para 1768, p. 132.

¹⁶⁰ Eagar, 'The Cambro-Normans and the lordship of Leinster', p. 201.

budding colony preserved some of the Leinstermen's power. This recurrent theme saw some Irish dynasts employed as overseers of their followers or guardians of the marches. There is evidence to suggest the emergence of a growing hybrid society in Leinster, as has been suggested in parts of Connacht, particularly in the decades following the Norman arrival.¹⁶¹ On the other hand some settlers quickly assimilated themselves into Irish society, adopting nicknames or assuming Irish variants of their surnames like Gilbert de Angulo who was in service to Cathal Cróibhdhearg O'Connor in 1195. He became Mac Oisdealbaig and subsequently his descendants were known as MacCostellos.¹⁶²

In East Leinster the obvious candidate for this discussion is the MeicGiollamochoilmóc dynasty of the Wicklow territory of Uí Briúin Chualann. Domhnall MacGiollamochoilmóc, lord of that territory, was married to Diarmait MacMurrough's daughter, Derbforghaill, and had aided his father-in-law and his Norman allies.¹⁶³ Following MacMurrough's death in May 1171 he grew ambiguous in his support for the Normans. And when Dublin's deposed Ostman ruler, Hasculf MacTurkill, attempted to retake Dublin, Domhnall held aloof until the struggle turned against MacTurkill. Soon afterwards he joined the Leinster princes and Ruaidhrí to besiege Dublin.¹⁶⁴ But after the breaking of the high-king's siege in autumn 1171, Domhnall wisely accepted Strongbow's overlordship. In fact, his salvation was ensured by the fact that he was brother-in-law to both Strongbow and Domhnall Kavanagh, and that two of his sons were Diarmait's grandsons.¹⁶⁵ In winter 1171-2 Domhnall joined the throng to submit to Henry II. And by the terms of his submission he was to directly hold his lands of the king - an act ensuring his dynasty's survival as major landowners for a further

¹⁶¹ Duffy, 'The Problem of Degeneracy', p. 103; O'Byrne, 'The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow', pp 29-33; H.Walton, 'The English in Connacht', unpublished Ph.D thesis, (T.C.D., 1980), p. 197. (hereafter Walton, 'The English in Connacht')

¹⁶² Ibid, p. 95.

¹⁶³ L.Simpson, 'Anglo-Norman Settlement in Uí Briúin Chualann', in *Wicklow History and Society* (eds) K.Hannigan and Wm.Nolan, (Dublin, 1994), p. 193, pp 195-96, p. 202, p. 210 and p. 214. (hereafter Simpson).

¹⁶⁴ *Expugnatio*, p. 85.

¹⁶⁵ *Chartul. St Mary's*, i, p. 32.

century and a half.¹⁶⁶ His lands, however, at Santry, Raheny and Clontarf in North Dublin were granted to the newcomers.¹⁶⁷

Subsequently Domhnall's family was to acquire and emulate the trappings of the new order. They became Normanised, adapted their forenames to the Latin norm and changed their surname to Fitzdermot.¹⁶⁸ The cultural leap of Domhnall's dynasty may not have been such a drastic change. For centuries the MeicGiollamocholmóc had lived in the shadow of Dublin with its high stone walls and densely packed streets. Dublin was always a transmitter of new ways which influenced its hinterland and in turn Ireland. The city's importance had long been realised by those with aspirations to the high-kingship. Before the Normans, Domhnall lived in an age of church synods, Latin, imported wine, coin and charters. In short, something of a contradiction from Gerald of Wales's picture of simple-minded savages. Indeed, his dynasty in the early twelfth played a role in the foundation of the Cistercian abbey of St Mary at Dublin.¹⁶⁹ He saw his innovative father-in-law, MacMurrough, raise up new foundations for Cistercians at Baltinglass and Killenny and for the Augustinians at Ferns and All Hallows in Dublin. Thus MacMurrough enthusiasm for the Continental model percolated down to lesser men. Diarmait O'Ryan (Ó Riain), lord of Idrone, with MacMurrough assent collaborated in the foundation of Killenny.¹⁷⁰ And before the Norman arrival a form of castle was already a feature in the Leinster landscape. MacMurrough himself dwelt in his stone house of Ferns, while it has been suggested he encouraged the construction of Machenlodher's castle in Uí Faeláin to check its restless lords.¹⁷¹ Without doubt this relative sophistication eased Domhnall's transition from Irish king to nobleman.

Domhnall's quick assimilation is evident when he witnessed Strongbow's charter confirming Glendalough's lands in 1172.¹⁷² A

¹⁶⁶ Flanagan, *Irish Society*, p. 223.

¹⁶⁷ J. Burry, 'The Pattern of Medieval Settlement in the Barony of Nethercross, Co. Dublin', unpublished M.Litt thesis, (T.C.D., 1995), p. 36. (hereafter Burry).

¹⁶⁸ Byrne, *Ir. kings*, p. 151.

¹⁶⁹ *Chartul. St Mary's*, i, p. xv.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, ii, p. 231; Orpen, *Normans*, iii, p. 57; 'The Charters of the Abbey of Duiske', p. 5.

¹⁷¹ *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 417; *C.O.D.*, i, no. 37, p. 19; Nicholls, 'Medieval Irish Dynasties: Three Topographical Notes', p. 414; *Red Bk Ormond*, p. 33.

¹⁷² *Alen's Reg.*, p. 84.

document from the reign of Archbishop Luke of Dublin (1228-55) is revealing about Domhnall's commitment to the new way. It tells that during Archbishop John's reign (1181-1212) *Gilleholmoc and other good men* enclosed a common of turbary and pasture on the mountain called Slestoll.¹⁷³ Later Archbishop Luke granted it to the burgesses of Radcull. In the early years of the Norman arrival, Domhnall's charters featured Ostmen, Leinster aristocrats and newcomers.¹⁷⁴ During the lifetime of Diarmait, Domhnall's son, the pace of feudalization and Normanization of the MacGiollamochoilmóc dynasty gathered momentum. In the late twelfth century, we find him issuing grants of lands to Richard de Felde. Another sign of the times was that Norman witnesses predominated in the family's later charters.¹⁷⁵

Their change of surname of MacGiollamochoilmóc to Fitzdermot further bound them culturally to the Normans.¹⁷⁶ Diarmait mac Domhnaill the Fitzdermot eponym described himself as Dermot filius Gillemolmoc.¹⁷⁷ He received lands as Dermot Mac Gilmeholmoc in 1207. In 1230 John I, his son, described himself as Johannes [Gillemo] Holmoc.¹⁷⁸ However, in an undated charter after 1230 his widow called him Johannis filius Dermicii.¹⁷⁹ This John earlier had been summoned along with several magnates of Ireland by Henry III to perform military service in 1227.¹⁸⁰ Transformation can be traced of the forenames of the family over the generations from Diarmait to Ralph.¹⁸¹ John had a son, known as John fitzJohn. In turn he had at least two sons, both bore Norman names, Ralph and Robert. Indeed, Robert's own son was known as

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 2.

¹⁷⁴ *Chartul. St Mary's*, i, pp 31-4.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, pp 34-6; J.Gilbert (ed.), *The Register of the Abbey of St Thomas* (London, 1889), pp 149-50. (hereafter *Reg St Thomas*). J.Mills, 'The Norman Settlement in Leinster - The Cantreds near Dublin', in *R.S.A.I.Jn*, vol. 24., (1894), p. 172.

¹⁷⁶ Simpson, p. 193, pp 195-96, p. 202, p. 210 and p. 214.

¹⁷⁷ *C.D.I., 1171-1251*, no. 356, p. 53; *Chartul. St Mary's*, i, nos 6-7, pp 32-33. It seems Domhnall had more than one heir. In these charters there is a John mentioned alongside Domhnall and his wife, Dervogilla MacMurrough. Before Diarmait mac Domhnaill always seemed to have been his father's sole heir; *C.D.I., 1171-1251*, no.569, p. 88. There is a John Deremot called nephew and heir of Gillehom. The lands associated with him are within the Newcastle Lyons region. Does this indicate an east/west division of the MeicGiollamochoilmoc lands between Domhnall's line and the sons of a brother named Diarmait?

¹⁷⁸ *Chartul. St Mary's*, i, pp 34-35

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 35.

¹⁸⁰ J.Gilbert, *A History of the City of Dublin*, vol.i., (Dublin, 1854), p. 233. (hereafter Gilbert, *A History of the City of Dublin*).

¹⁸¹ Bartlett, 'Colonial Aristocracies', p. 28.

William fitzRobert.¹⁸² It seems either John fitzJohn or his son Ralph fitzJohn assumed the Fitzdermot surname.¹⁸³ There was also an ethnic revolution in their choice of wives. Clarice Fitzgriffin and Joan, the wives of John I and his grandson Ralph fitzJohn, were both Normans.¹⁸⁴ Their transformation was so complete that without earlier evidence of their Irish lineage, the Fitzdermots were indistinguishable from the settler aristocracy.¹⁸⁵ The only trouble was either in late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries when a Donohoe MacGiollamochoilmóc slew Roger fitzGilbert, a Englishman.¹⁸⁶

The family's traditional overlordship in Uí Briúin Chualann was to stabilise the feudal settlement just south of Dublin. For example, land tenure among the thirteenth-century tenantry of Uí Briúin Chualann, the O'Kelly (Ó Ceallaigh) and O'Tire families displays a strong strand of continuity from pre-Norman times.¹⁸⁷ In Uí Briúin Chualann itself the Fitzdermots held at least eight carucates. And Diarmait MacGiollamochoilmóc is recorded as holding another fifteen carucates in the Vale of Dublin for the service of one knight and two otterskins in 1207.¹⁸⁸ Until 1215, at least, their lands stretched to Glencullen and included Newcastle Lyons. And grants of lands to Glendalough and St Mary's Abbey further display the extent of their holdings.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸² K.W.Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland and After', in *Peritia*, vol. 1., (1982), n. 3, pp 381-82. (hereafter Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland and After')

¹⁸³ Byrne, *Ir kings*, p. 151. Byrne confirms that the family did actually change their name.

¹⁸⁴ *C.O.D.*, i, p. 35.

¹⁸⁵ Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland', p. 381.

¹⁸⁶ *Alen's Reg.*, p. 110.

¹⁸⁷ *C.D.I.*, 1285-1292, no. 149, p. 60, no. 180, p. 85, no. 264, p. 114, no. 341, p. 150, p. 153, p. 329; Nicholls, 'Medieval Irish Dynasties', p. 412; Simpson, p. 195, p. 202, and pp 224-25; *Red Bk Ormond*, p. 24. Three O'Kellys, probably members of the former ruling dynasty of Uí Cheallaig Chualann, between 1285-87 appear in the records of County Dublin. They were conquered in the 1030s by the ancestors of Fitzdermots. Donald O'Kelly appears between 1285-87, while in 1285-86 Thomas and Gillekeyvin O'Kelly were fined half a mark each for disseisin. Other Irish freeholders within the feudal settlement of the northeast Wicklow can be found. Nicholls identifies a John Otyr, a prominent freeholder, as being of the O'Tire family. He accounted substantial rents between 1295-97 for various forestlands including Glencree. Land tenure, as Simpson suggests, in thirteenth-century tenantry of Uí Briúin Chualann displays a strong strand of continuity from pre-Norman times.

¹⁸⁸ *C.D.I.*, 1171-1251, no. 356, p. 53; *D.K.R.*, xxxviii, p. 78. In 1300-01 rents were accounted from two parts of the manor of Rathdoun and Kylmanach which had both belonged to Ralph fitzJohn.

¹⁸⁹ *Alen's Reg.*, p. 21; *Chartul. St Mary's*, i, pp 31-7.

To the south the Fitzdermots seemingly also gained additional lands at the expense of both Ostman and Irish dynasties, particularly at the expense of those MacTurkills dwelling within Uí Briúin Chualann and the former O'Farrell (Ó Fearghaile) rulers of Uí Garrchon.¹⁹⁰ In Uí Garrchon the Fitzdermots held lands at Newcastle and those of Ballinagran into the fourteenth century.¹⁹¹ Thus the O'Farrells and probably the Uí Fiachrach of Uí Enechglais (southeast Wicklow) were seemingly largely dispossessed by the Normans, but that is not to say they were not still living upon ancestral lands.¹⁹² This is strengthened if Klymanach mentioned in 1301 with Rathdown is Kilnamanagh near Glenealy.¹⁹³ Significantly included within the modern townland of Ballinagran is Ballyderborgeyle.¹⁹⁴ This Derbforghaill was possibly the MacMurrough wife of Domhnall MacGiollamochoilmóc, strengthening the Fitzdermot connection with this area. The family also held other lands well outside their traditional ambit. Through his mother Clarissa Fitzgriffin, John fitzJohn held lands in Carlow at Fynnore and Kelliston, enfeoffing William de Dene with a third of these lands before 1260.¹⁹⁵

Links between the Fitzdermots and their MacMurrough cousins persisted well into the thirteenth century. Two charters from the early Norman period highlight this continuing closeness. Henne MacMurchade, probably Énna MacMurrough, witnessed an undated charter of Derbforghaill MacMurrough, wife of Domhnall MacGiollamochoilmóc, to St Mary's Abbey at Dublin.¹⁹⁶ Domhnall's own charter also bears a MacMurrough witness, Maurico. MacMurrough witnesses continued to feature in later Fitzdermot grants. Between 1240-54, Clarissa Fitzgriffin confirmed an earlier

¹⁹⁰ Simpson, p. 193, pp 195-96, p. 202, p. 210 and p. 214; H.Long, 'Three Settlements of the Gaelic Wicklow 1169-1600: Rathgall, Ballinacor and Glendalough, in *Wicklow History and Society*, (eds) K.Hannigan and Wm.Nolan (Dublin, 1994), p.256. (hereafter Long).

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 218; *D.K.R.*, xxxviii, p. 96. John de Sutton, bailiff of Newcastle McKynegan, accounted for unclear rents from John fitzRalph in 1305.

¹⁹² *Grace*, p. 53.

¹⁹³ *D.K.R.*, xxxviii, p. 78. The possibility of the FitzDermots holding lands further down the coast is strong. The pedigree of Domhnall records a victory of an ancestor over the Uí Enechglais, mentioning that they were forced over the river Dee close to Arklow. See Gilbert, *The History of the City of Dublin*, i, p. 405.

¹⁹⁴ *Placenames*, p. 440. This is a local tradition in the Glenealy valley in Wicklow.

¹⁹⁵ *C.O.D.*, i, p. 35, p. 60 and p. 136. John fitzJohn is mentioned as a witness to Avice de la Cornere's grant to Lord Theobald Butler; E.St John Brooks (ed.), *Knights' Fees in Counties Wexford, Carlow and Kilkenny*, (Dublin, 1950), pp 64-65. (hereafter *Knights' Fees*).

¹⁹⁶ *Chartul. St Mary's*, i, pp 31-32; Flanagan, *Irish Society*, n. 67, p. 101.

grant of the church of Kelliston in Forth to the priory of Kells in Granard. Among the witnesses was Luke MacMurrough.¹⁹⁷ And much later in 1286-7, William MacMurrough was Ralph fitzJohn's pledge for good behaviour.¹⁹⁸ However, by the last decades of the thirteenth century their influence with the Irish of east Wicklow had all but disappeared. In 1276-7 their descendant Ralph fitzJohn was paid for defending the Vale of Dublin. Thus the transformation to marcher lord was complete.¹⁹⁹ In 1282 Edward I declared him a knight and he was part of a jury which determined the extent of Henry Marshall's lands in Newcastle Lyons.²⁰⁰ By 1291 Sir Ralph was dead, and his widow married Albert de Kenley in 1292.²⁰¹

Later Sir Ralph's estates, during his son John fitzRalph's minority, were given into de Kenley's custody.²⁰² In 1301 their decline is clear when the Irish burnt east Wicklow, including Rathdown.²⁰³ By 1305 the Fitzdermots had sold their remaining lands in Uí Briúin Chualann to Nigel le Brun.²⁰⁴ Those Fitzdermot lands in the Glencapp and Glencree uplands seem under continuous attack as evidenced by the killing of John Shilgry, the king's sergeant of Glencry (Glencree), by the Harolds in 1305.²⁰⁵ Either in 1306 or 1307 John fitzRalph granted away all his rights to a carucate at Kilnamanagh near Tallaght.²⁰⁶ In 1311 Robert fitzRalph, perhaps John fitzRalph's brother, and a Robert fitzJohn, who may have been a cousin, held small holdings in the Butler manor of Bray.²⁰⁷ William son of John Ralph, a possible son of John fitzRalph, appears in the extent of Swords in 1326²⁰⁸, while an Augustinian monk, Brother Richard Dermot, seemingly of this family, was famously murdered at the Augustinian Friary of the Holy Trinity in 1379. He was described

¹⁹⁷ Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland', p. 382; For another example of Irish accommodation within the feudal settlement, see *Red Bk Kildare*, no. 51, p. 48; *Placenames*, pp 296-97, Luke MacMurrough's son, Maurice, held lands in freehold from the archbishop of Dublin at Stagonnell among the Fitzdermot uplands, now within the Powercourt Demesne. *C.D.I.*, 1285-1292, no. 309, p. 137.

¹⁹⁸ *C.D.I.*, 1285-1292, no. 309, p. 137.

¹⁹⁹ *C.D.I.*, 1252-1284, no. 1496, p. 285.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, no. 2003, p. 458, and no. 2344, p. 562.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, no. 1122, p. 493.

²⁰² *Ibid*, no. 1123, p. 493.

²⁰³ *Dowling, Annals*, p. 47; *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 330.

²⁰⁴ *Simpson*, p. 218.

²⁰⁵ *CJR*, 1305-1307, p. 480.

²⁰⁶ *Alen's Reg.*, p. 161.

²⁰⁷ *Red Bk Ormond*, p. 25.

²⁰⁸ *Burry*, p. 215.

as an *Anglicus* and had access to the law.²⁰⁹ The FitzDermots continued to hold lands around Rathdown into the fifteenth century. An unpublished pipe roll of Henry IV records a John son of Dermot behind in his rent for Rathdown in 1408.²¹⁰ Even more remarkably it seems some of the FitzDermots held land in North Dublin at Lusk until the middle of the sixteenth century.²¹¹

Having said that others, however, were neither so lucky nor so prudent. Following the beheading of the virulent Hasculf MacTurkill in summer 1171, Walter de Riddlesford I, hero of the Norman victory, was rewarded with the MacTurkill lands around modern Bray.²¹² As a further punishment Strongbow also confiscated the properties of *Sigerith and Torphin MacTurkil*, granting them to the Abbey of St Mary.²¹³ The price of defeat didn't end there as the dynasty also lost their extensive lands at Portrane, Malahide, Portmarnock and Kilbarrack.²¹⁴ Their disfavour was, however, temporary. About 1174 Hamund MacTurkill's title to his lands of Kinsealy was confirmed as were those of his brothers.²¹⁵ Although considerably reduced in status, the MacTurkills of Dublin, from their surviving charters to the Abbey of St Mary, were to remain reasonably important.²¹⁶ King John's confirmation of the possessions of Holy Trinity further reveals the extent of MacTurkills and other Ostman lands in 1203.²¹⁷

The case of the MacTurkills is consistent with other Ostman families. This prevailing Norman favour towards this community has recently been commented upon by Linzi Simpson. She has suggested that, in general, the Ostmen were incorporated at a higher social level than most Irish. Her hypothesis is supported by the evidence as there

²⁰⁹ F.X.Martin, 'Murder in a Monastery, 1379', in *Keimelia*, (eds) G.MacNiocaill and P.Wallace, (Galway University College, 1998), pp 468-498. My thanks to Dr Sean Duffy for these references.

²¹⁰ Gilbert, *A History of the City of Dublin*, p. 235.

²¹¹ Burry, p. 37; See M.Griffith (ed.) *Calendar of Inquisitions*, (Dublin, 1991), Hen VIII 6/7 (c), p. 4. Walter Dermot of Swords was part of the jury determining the lands of the Archbishopric of Dublin in January 1552. See also Jas I (109) n. 2, p. 391. William Dermot of Dublin was a saddler. Thomas Dermot was part of a jury at Dublin in 1612, see Jas I (154), p. 407. (hereafter *Cal. Inquisitions*)

²¹² *The Song of Dermot*, p. 181; *C.D.I., 1171-1251*, no. 355, p. 53.

²¹³ *Chartul. St Mary's Abbey*, ii, no. 83, p. 83.

²¹⁴ Burry, p. 37; *CJR, 1308-1314*, p. 28.

²¹⁵ Duffy, 'Ireland and the Irish Sea Region, 1014-1318', p. 61.

²¹⁶ *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, no. 244, p. 477, no. 269, pp 504-505 and no. 210, p. 233.

²¹⁷ *Alen's Reg*, pp 28-29.

are thirty six identifiable Ostman rents for lands within the Vale of Dublin.²¹⁸ The Ostman Reginald McKause of Shankill was a freeholder of the archbishop of Dublin in 1304. It is clear also that they had some access to the law as an Ostman, Hodo McFoyde, was fined for theft between 1228-55.²¹⁹ Other prominent Ostman families in Uí Briúin Chualann and the barony of Wicklow were the Harolds and perhaps the Archbolds.²²⁰ The Harolds were incorporated within the feudal settlement early on, particularly on the archbishop's lands. Between 1181-1212 a Elias Harold, sometimes known as Elias de Muta, witnessed two grants of Archbishop John.²²¹ Perhaps Elias Drolde, seneschal of the archbishopric's lands during Archbishop Henry's reign (1213-1228), was the same man.²²² Others of this lineage held lands at Three Castles, then known as Haroldstown, near modern Blessington. This situation is also reflected in the neighbouring Fitzgerald barony of Wicklow. Unlike the MeicGiollamochlmóc the O'Tooles of Uí Muiredaig were hostile to the Normans in the 1170s, resulting in their gradual subjugation between 1176-80. Consequently, some of them fled to the lands of the bishopric of Glendalough.²²³ As mentioned above, there Archbishop Lorcán O'Toole of Dublin possibly granted lands around Glenmalure to the priory of the Desert of St. Coemgen to protect them.²²⁴ The dynasty seems to have split into two families, one based in Kildare and the other in the Wicklow mountains. However, like most of the Irish nobility of East Leinster, both families gradually adopted a more conciliatory attitude to the Normans, and sought to carve a place within the new order.

²¹⁸ Simpson, p. 203.

²¹⁹ *Alen's Reg.*, p. 113, and pp 158-9.

²²⁰ K.W.Nicholls, 'Crioch Branach: The O'Byrnes and their Country', in *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne*, (ed.) C.O'Brien (Dublin, 1998), p. 17. (hereafter Nicholls, 'Crioch Branach').

²²¹ *Alen's Reg.*, p. 31. This Elias witnessed the grant of the tithes of the land of the Mackinegas to the church of Grace Dieu. See p. 32, he witnessed a grant to the burghers of Swords. See pp 49-50.

²²² *Ibid.*, p. 168, and p. 18. Other Harolds held lands at Three Castles, then known as Blessington, near modern Blessington. Coran Harold may have been a follower of Lord Edmund Butler in 1300. A Richard fitzReginald Harold, though, accused of murder was favoured by prominent Anglo-Norman landowners such as Nigel le Brun and Walter Lenfant in 1306. Among the freeholders in the neighbouring Fitzgerald barony of Wicklow in 1308 were six Harolds and one Archbold. However, they increasingly appeared as rebels after 1270. See *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 306; *CJR*, 1305-1307, p. 476 and p. 515; *CJR*, 1308-1314, p. 285; N.A., R.C. 7/13 (iv), pp 22-24; *C.D.I.*, 1252-84, p. 313; *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 330 and p. 349; Nicholls, 'Crioch Branach', p. 17.

²²³ *The Song of Dermot*, pp 67-69; *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 441.

²²⁴ *Alen's Reg.*, p. 8; *Placenames*, p. xl.

Although the O'Tooles lost most of Uí Muiredaig, they were not evicted wholesale. The O'Tooles remaining in Kildare seem to have been accommodated easily into the Norman settlement. When in 1199, King John granted Milo le Bret twelve carucates at Loug in fee of Othothel, it was achieved with the minimum of disturbance, testifying to the good relations between native and newcomer.²²⁵ Furthermore in the same year, Murchadh and Alexander O'Toole with several Normans, including Milo le Bret, appear as witnesses to a charter of Domhnall MacGiollamochoilmóc, further indicating good relations.²²⁶ In addition there was a shift in their nomenclature as the O'Tooles adopted names as Meyler, Agatha, David, Richard and Walter. Later in 1209 Giollapádraig O'Toole was enfranchised with the law by William Marshall, lord of Leinster, and hung onto ancestral lands.²²⁷ Interestingly a probable O'Toole named Gilkogil of Johnstown was admitted to the Dublin Merchant Guild Roll between 1235-36.²²⁸ Furthermore the obit of Féilim O'Toole describes him as lord of Uí Muireadhaigh in 1259, suggesting the survival of a much reduced O'Toole lordship in medieval Kildare.²²⁹

Giollapádraig O'Toole's great grandson, Walter, is a good example of this accommodation and was a man of some importance. He inherited access to the law from the charter granted to Giollapádraig by Marshall in 1209. Walter's ancestor was probably enfranchised because of his status as a free tenant rather than from a specific grant.²³⁰ In fact, during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, Walter accounted rents for one fifteenth of Kildare.²³¹ Earlier in 1298, this Walter with other landowners in Kildare pledged 100s for the release of the rapist, John Waas. From this incident we learn that his rival, Fáelán mac Giolla Chaomghin

²²⁵ *C.D.I.*, 1171-1251, no. 100, p. 15.

²²⁶ *Chartul. St Mary's*, i, p. 32

²²⁷ *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 271.

²²⁸ P.Becker, 'An Analysis of the Dublin Guild Merchant Roll, c. 1190-1265', unpublished M.Phil thesis, (T.C.D., 1995), p. 112. (hereafter Becker, 'An Analysis of the Dublin Guild Merchant Roll').

²²⁹ *AFM*, iii, p. 375; A.S.MacShamhráin, 'The Uí Muiredaig and the Abbacy of Glendalough in the Eleventh to Thirteenth Centuries' in *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, no. 25., (1993), p. 73. (hereafter MacShamhráin, 'The Uí Muiredaig and the Abbacy of Glendalough').

²³⁰ Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland', p. 376.

²³¹ *C.D.I.*, 1293-1301, no. 549, p. 246, no. 586, p. 278, and no. 612, p. 291; *C.D.I.*, 1301-1307, no. 563, p. 163.

O'Toole of Imaal, also had access to the law as he pledged 40s for Waas's bail.²³²

In 1299 Walter took legal action against the le Jordan brothers. Before Justiciar Wogan, he claimed that they had disseised him of a freehold at Corbaly Otohill near Tancardeston in the barony of Kilkea. The le Jordans replied they did not have to answer a hibernicus. Walter then produced a charter which enfranchised him with rights to common law.²³³ The government probably saw him as a counterpoise to the emerging Fáelán mac Giolla Chaomghin. Walter's importance among the O'Tooles is evident, when he was the only O'Toole included on the jury to investigate the state of the archdeaconry of Glendalough in 1299.²³⁴ Between 1300-1 Walter sat on a inquisition at Castledermot with Maurice MacMurrough and with the de la Hides gave 40s for John de la Roche's release in 1306.²³⁵ An extent of the barony of Kilkea for 1311, reveals that Walter held seven carucates of land.²³⁶ And later in 1328, the Adam Duff O'Toole, son of Walter Duff, burnt for heresy was probably his son.²³⁷

The O'Tooles living in the Leinster mountains were especially favoured by the archbishops of Dublin. They retained their tenure of the abbacy of Glendalough, Thomas and Tadeus O'Toole were abbots between 1170 and 1228.²³⁸ And in 1219 the men of the archbishop mentioned living in the royal forests in the former see of Glendalough were probably O'Tooles.²³⁹ And sometime between 1228-55 Abbot Tadeus of Glendalough granted Killmacbyrn to Archbishop Luke, while Alexander and Richard O'Toole, probably Abbot Thomas's son and grandson, witnessed charters confirming lands to the abbeys of St Thomas and St Mary.²⁴⁰

²³² *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 206.

²³³ *Ibid*, p. 271.

²³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 270 and pp 382-83.

²³⁵ *CJR*, 1305-1307, p. 497

²³⁶ *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 271. In 1299 Corbaly was referred to as Corbaly Otohill; *Red Bk Ormond*, p. 15.

²³⁷ *Grace*, pp 107-108; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 22; Adam is described in this entry as being the son of Walter Duff O'Toole of Leinster; Frame, *Ireland and Britain, 1170-1450*, fn. 12, p. 251. In 1315-16, Eglantina O'Toole brought a case before the Dublin bench.

²³⁸ *MacShamhráin*, p. 134.

²³⁹ *C.D.I.*, 1171-1251, no. 892, p. 133.

²⁴⁰ *Alen's Reg*, p. 76; *MacShamhráin*, p. 164.

In 1214 a Lorcán O'Toole was killed on campaign against Máelsechlainn Óg O'Melaghlin and O'Connor Faly in modern Westmeath.²⁴¹ It seems this Lorcán was part of the archbishop's contribution to the expedition. Meyler O'Toole, probably Lorcán's son, did homage to Archbishop Luke of Dublin for his father's lands between 1228-55.²⁴² The Archbishop's grant may have been meant to seal over an illegitimacy, rather than the confirmation of a doubtful inheritance.²⁴³ Meyler's family were not the only O'Toole family to enjoy this favour. Other O'Tooles held lands in the archbishop's western manor of Ballymore.²⁴⁴ In 1264 eight Irishmen, including two O'Tooles were jurors on an inquisition at Castlekevin and an Elias O'Toole was sergeant of Archbishop Fulk's lands.²⁴⁵ Later O'Tooles held church lands in freehold from the archbishops at Glenealy and Kilfee in east Wicklow. Maghnus O'Toole, the father of one of them, was granted his Glenealy lands by John de Sandford, Archbishop Fulk's nephew, before 1272.²⁴⁶

An exchange of lands between 1256-71 saw Archbishop Fulk de Sandford grant the lands of Glandeluri to 'Moriertagh' or Muircheartach O'Toole. In return Moriertagh transferred his lands within Imaal to the archbishop.²⁴⁷ It has been suggested Fulk tried to install Moriertagh as overseer of the Irish of his mountain estates, but close reading of this grant tells a slightly different story.²⁴⁸ It reveals that Moriertagh's ancestors had long rendered 3 marks for these lands to the archbishop's predecessors and it is likely that his family were long established as the archbishopric's Irish overseers.²⁴⁹ A strong possibility exists that Moriertagh was otherwise known as Meyler O'Toole when disguised by a Norman forename. By February 1264

²⁴¹ *Ann. Clon*, p. 228. This Lorcán may be the Laurentio filo Alexandri who witnesses the grants of Domhnall MacGiollamochmoloc and his grandson, John. Abbot Thomas of Glendalough had a son named Alexander and Laurence/Lorcán is a traditional O'Toole forename; see *Chartul. St Mary's*, i, pp 32-33.

²⁴² *Alen's Reg*, pp 181; MacShamhráin, 'The Uí Muiredaig and the Abbacy of Glendalough', p. 73.

²⁴³ Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland', p. 382.

²⁴⁴ *Alen's Reg*, p. 121.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp 110-11.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 137. There was a church at Kilfee in 1256-71; *Placenames*, p. 1; See *C.D.I.*, 1252-1284, no. 1577, p. 314. This Maghnus is probably the father of Richard.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 136, and p. 141; See also J. Gilbert (ed.), *Crede Mihi*, (Dublin, 1897), pp 93-94. (hereafter *Crede Mihi*).

²⁴⁸ *Placenames*, p. xlix.

²⁴⁹ *Alen's Reg*, p. 136.

Meyler was dead and the wardship of his only recorded legitimate child and heiress, Agatha, was purchased by Adam de Wudeford from Archbishop Fulk in April 1264.²⁵⁰

If Muirheartach was Meyler, he probably belonged to the O'Tooles living in east Wicklow.²⁵¹ The most prominent man of the eastern O'Tooles in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries was David McGilnecowil. He rendered sums for having peace twice in 1295 and the following year he paid rents of 8s and 4d for lands at Monedeledu. In 1297 his lands included all of Mondeleu, Balihauly and Balicolgan, for which he paid 32s and 16d.²⁵² By 1305 David McGilnecowil was a rebel and his lands of Kilfee, held in freehold of the archbishops, were redistributed to Sir Hugh Lawless two years later.²⁵³

Further evidence confirms the favoured position of the O'Tooles. The above mentioned Moriertagh O'Toole held land throughout the archbishopric. He held other lands in Uí Felemeda Tuaid, located in south Wicklow and north Carlow as well as those granted to him in Imaal by Philip FitzRhyss before 1256.²⁵⁴ Of particular interest are those lands held by various members of the leading O'Toole family of Imaal. In 1296 Richard McKyoghy O'Toole held part of Ballycolgan in east Wicklow²⁵⁵, while his brother Henry was recognised as one of the bishop of Ferns's betaghs in 1299.²⁵⁶ Cnoclorkan in Imaal was the recorded address of Henry and his brother Hugh in 1311.²⁵⁷ This family's holdings were better defined in the extent of Imaal dating from the same year. In it six O'Tooles,

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114; Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland', pp 382-83, and pp 375-376.

²⁵¹ *D.K.R.*, xxxv, p. 31. A Maclauchelin O'Toole in 1228 was convicted of poaching royal deer and it is clear he had access to the law practised in the courts of the time since he accounted a mark for his misdemeanour. This Maclauchelin may have been related to the O'Toole pledge of 1278, Donewich MacLawelin. See *C.D.I.*, 1252-1284, no. 1577, p. 314.

²⁵² *C.D.I.*, 1293-1301., no. 226, p. 97. A Simon fitzEly also gave money for peace. See no. 264, p. 114. This man may be the son of Elias O'Toole, sergeant of the archbishop's lands. See *ibid.*, no. 408, p. 189.

²⁵³ *CJR*, 1305-1307, pp 480-81. The prior of the Holy Trinity was charged with giving a coat to him. See also p. 484, a man of David's was wanted by the sheriff of Dublin for certain felonies. A William Otyr of Kylsthegham and his sister were also sought. *Ibid.*, pp 354-55; Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland', p. 376.

²⁵⁴ *Alen's Reg.* p. 141.

²⁵⁵ *C.D.I.*, 1293-1301., no. 329, p. 153. He was allied to David McGilnecowil.

²⁵⁶ *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 254.

²⁵⁷ *CJR*, 1308-1314, p. 173.

some known malefactors, were shown holding sizeable upland holdings of the Butlers.²⁵⁸

Norman records also cast light upon the O'Toole clients. One of their more prominent clients was the O'Kinaghan or O'Knigon family.²⁵⁹ These have been identified with the pre-Norman Ua Finnacháin or MacFhinnacháin rulers of the territory styled 'Mackineganes's Country' near Newcastle in east Wicklow.²⁶⁰ Between 1181-1212 Archbishop John granted the church of Newcastle and its tithes within Mackineganes's Country to the church of Grace Dieu.²⁶¹ Although their territory was swallowed by the settlers, the Mackineganes were still there. The construction of fortifications at Newcastle before 1190, buttressed the embryo settlement.²⁶² In 1307 Justiciar John Wogan and Edmund Butler exploited the vacancy within the archbishopric of Dublin.²⁶³ Their interference with churchlands in O'Toole tenure caused a revolt in east Wicklow. A William McWalter O'Kinaghan with some of the O'Tooles razed Castlekevin, killing the garrison before June 1308.²⁶⁴ Soon afterwards they burnt Courcowley and routed Justiciar Wogan's force at Glenmalure that June. In September William McWalter was captured and executed.²⁶⁵ It is clear from his patronymic and earlier evidence presented his family was accommodated, under O'Toole aegis, within the feudal system.

Another client family of the O'Tooles appear fleetingly in the records under variants of their surname such as MacNabboth, McKennabyth, McNabutht and Mcinabbe.²⁶⁶ Although their origin is presently uncertain from their patronymic they claimed descent from an unknown abbot, perhaps of Glendalough. Clearly they had access to the law as Obonechan MacNabboth's son owed 20s for

²⁵⁸ *Red Bk Ormond*, p. 20.

²⁵⁹ *Grace*, p. 53.

²⁶⁰ *Placenames*, p. lix; Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 26.

²⁶¹ *Alen's Reg*, p. 31.

²⁶² *Simpson*, p. 201.

²⁶³ *CJR, 1305-1307*, pp 354-55.

²⁶⁴ *Grace*, p. 53.

²⁶⁵ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 18.

²⁶⁶ *CJR, 1305-1307*, pp 484-85. Some followed Fáelán O'Toole, lord of Imaal, while others of the name owed their loyalty to David O'Toole of east Wicklow. Clearly this family had some access to the law. We find in 1297 a dispute over the estate of the deceased Philip Beneyt at Castledermot. It was claimed that Philip was not an Englishman but a McKenabbyth born in the mountains of the O'Tooles.

poaching royal game in 1228.²⁶⁷ Several of the name appear in a list of outlaws dating from 1305. This list extends from east Wicklow across the mountains to Imaal.

Probably the most interesting Irish reaction to the Normans was that of the MacMurroughs. After the killing of Domhnall Kavanagh and subsequent temporary eclipse of the political significance of his sons and grandsons after 1175, the tension which simmered amongst Diarmait's successors cooled. Much of MacMurrough's Uí Cheinnselaig overlordship became the administrative units of Wexford and Carlow and fell now to Strongbow as lord of Leinster and his eventual Marshall successors.

The union of Strongbow and Aoife, MacMurrough's daughter, was not the only marriage between the MacMurroughs and the Normans. Even the old rebel, Murchadh MacMurrough, married one of the de Barrys before his death in 1172.²⁶⁸ Indeed, these marriages and the fact that Strongbow and the settlers did not encroach too forcefully upon Uí Cheinnselaig made Muircheartach MacMurrough's co-operation much easier.²⁶⁹ These laid the planks of an alliance between Norman Leinster and the MacMurroughs that lasted for just under a century. Indeed, Strongbow's favour is possibly demonstrated in Muircheartach's epithet 'na Maor', meaning 'the stewards or rent-collectors'. This may indicate that he inherited, with Strongbow's approval, Domhnall Kavanagh's position as seneschal of the Irish of Leinster.²⁷⁰ And later upon Muircheartach's death in 1193, he was recorded as king of Uí Cheinnselaig and seemingly he used Ferns as an official residence.²⁷¹ Furthermore, an unnamed MacMurrough, described as the son of MacMurrough, grandson of Máel na mBó, fell alongside an O'Connor Faly and O'Phelan (Ó Faélaín) of the Déise during Ruaidhrí MacDunleavy's unsuccessful Norman aided campaign against the Irish of Tyrone in 1196.²⁷²

²⁶⁷ *D.K.R.*, xxxv, p. 31.

²⁶⁸ *A.F.M.*, iii, n.f, p. 96; O'Clery, para 1739, p. 129.

²⁶⁹ R.Frame, 'Two Kings in Leinster: The Crown and the MicMhurchadha in the Fourteenth Century', in *Colony and Frontiers in Medieval Ireland*, eds T.B.Barry, R.Frame and K.Simms, (London, 1995), pp 155-56. (hereafter, Frame, *Two Kings*).

²⁷⁰ *A.F.M.*, iii, n.f, p. 96; O'Clery, para 1739, p. 129.

²⁷¹ Orpen, *Normans*, ii, p. 390.

²⁷² Flanagan, *Irish Society*, n. 173, p. 226; O'Clery, para 1739, p. 129; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 195-97, *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 104-5.

The later MacMurroughs are found participating widely within the new order. Indeed, they were one of the five bloods enfranchised with a grant of common law by Henry III.²⁷³ Aoife MacMurrough's children by Strongbow held vast estates either side of the Irish sea through the legacies of Strongbow and MacMurrough.²⁷⁴ Other evidence points to the acceptance by the MacMurroughs of the prevailing political environment. MacMurrough's granddaughter and ward of Henry II, Isabella de Clare, married William Marshal, the earl Marshal of England in 1189. And probably in the following year Isabella set about building the town of Ross.²⁷⁵ That the town was not walled until 1265 is significant. Even then it was because of fear of attack from the feuding Normans, indicating good relations with the MacMurroughs who received an annual payment of 10 marks from the burghers of the town.²⁷⁶ This union of bloods was symbolically depicted in a cenotaph of Isabella set up in Ross within sight of the lands of her MacMurrough cousins. This closeness was to continue. Later in 1225, four of Isabella's MacMurrough cousins would fall on the Connacht campaign of William Marshal II, her son.²⁷⁷ This smooth transition in Uí Cheinnselaig is evident on another level. Until 1223 there was an Irish bishop of Ferns, the controversial Albin O'Mulloy (Ó Máelmhuaidh), as well as an Irish abbot of the Cistercian abbey of Baltinglass until 1227.²⁷⁸ Between 1218-28 a Maurice MacMurrough witnessed a grant to the church of St Mary and St Columba of Inistioge, while a Luke MacMurrough, sometimes known as Luke de Macmorth, bore witness to Richard de la Rochelle's grant of lands in Connacht to St Mary's Abbey in 1270.²⁷⁹ Maurice, Luke's son, held lands from Alymer de Valence at the unidentifiable Drumhad, and later with several English landowners of Kildare and Carlow he pledged money for the release of the Cheures from the prison of

²⁷³ J. Otway-Ruthven, 'The native Irish and English law in mediaeval Ireland', in *I.H.S.*, vii, no. 25, (March, 1950), p. 6. The others being the dynasties of O'Neill of Ulster, O'Melaghlin of Meath, O'Connor of Connacht and O'Brien of Munster.

²⁷⁴ Flanagan, *Irish Society*, pp 124-30.

²⁷⁵ H.J. Leask, 'A Cenotaph of Strongbow's daughter at New Ross Co. Wexford', in *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, lxxviii, part 1, (1948), pp 65-67. (hereafter Leask, 'A Cenotaph of Strongbow's daughter').

²⁷⁶ Hore, *Wexford Town*, i, pp 50-56.

²⁷⁷ Leask, 'A Cenotaph of Strongbow's daughter', pp 65-67; *Ann. Conn.*, p. 12-3.

²⁷⁸ Orpen, *Normans*, iii, pp 29-31.

²⁷⁹ *C.O.D.*, i, no. 45, pp 22-3; *C.D.I.*, 1293-1301, no. 550, p. 247; *Chartul. St Mary's*, i, p. 257.

Dungarvan in 1297.²⁸⁰ In 1298 a Gerald Fitzdavid was fined for not producing Maurice. It seems he survived this case, emerging unscathed for we find him serving on an inquisition at Castledermot in 1300-1.²⁸¹

The brothers Muirheartach and Art MacMurrough enjoyed good relations with their cousin, the lord of Carlow, Earl Roger Bigod, who was also earl of Norfolk and earl Marshal of England. Earl Roger wisely continued the accommodating policies of his Marshall predecessors. Within his liberty of Carlow the MacMurroughs held a recognised position as heads of the Irish there and were very much his proteges.²⁸² The account of Ross records the buying of cloth and furs for the ceremonial gowns of Earl Roger's officers in 1279. This record reveals that Art received a robe with a hood lined with fur to match, implying strongly that he was an officer of Bigod.²⁸³ In early 1280 he met them while visiting his Carlow lands. To Art, he gave a robe, a cap, furs, money and even a cask of wine, while Muirheartach received money.²⁸⁴ That year Earl Roger wrote to Edward I acknowledging the MacMurroughs as his cousins and the accounts of his estates in Ireland reveal that they received fees as his officers until their murders in 1282.²⁸⁵ Despite the killing of the brothers, relations remained good between Bigod and the MacMurroughs as the earl's forces, including the MacMurroughs, crushed a rising of the O'Byrnes and O'Nolans at some date between 1279-94.²⁸⁶ Again the smooth flow of the earl's power is evident when Thomas MacMurrough was escorted to Dublin without incident to face trial.²⁸⁷ In 1306 upon Earl Roger's death his lands passed to the crown, but a 1307 extent shows Douenald Mcmurwoth holding two of the six carucates of Fynnagh for life.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁰ Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland', p. 382; *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 166.

²⁸¹ *C.D.I.*, 1293-1301, no. 550, p. 247, no. 764, p. 356.

²⁸² Nicholls, *Gaelic Ire*, p. 170.

²⁸³ Hore, *Wexford Town*, i, pp 14-5, 143, 146, 148.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp 14-15, 18, 143, 146 and 148.

²⁸⁵ J. Mills, 'Accounts of the Earl of Norfolk's Estates in Ireland', 1279-1294', in *R.S.A.I. Jn*, vol. ii., part. 1, (1892), p. 55. (hereafter Mills, 'Accounts of the Earl of Norfolk's Estates in Ireland', 1279-1294).

²⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 56.

²⁸⁸ *CJR*, 1305-1307, p. 347.

The pragmatic political example of the MacMurroughs moulded the attitudes of their vassals. The MacMurrough cousins, the O'Donnells (The Uí Domhnaill) and their offshoot, the MeicDalbaig, were accepted within the feudal system. Density of Norman settlement in the Uí Cheinnselaig overkingship reflected pre-Norman political divisions. Earlier Diarmait MacMurrough had placated the MeicDalbaig ancestors by marrying his sister to their eponym, Dalbach. In addition he made Dalbach king of Uí Felemeda Tuaid.²⁸⁹ This region located in north Carlow and south Wicklow probably represented the O'Donnell heartland. Through this dynastic engineering MacMurrough bound the MeicDalbaig to him and weakened his more inveterate O'Donnell enemies. During the war of the Leinster princes in summer 1171 the MeicDalbaig leader joined the attack on Dublin. But following its defeat MacDalbaig submitted with other Leinstermen to Henry II²⁹⁰ and was later among Strongbow's army in Meath in 1173.²⁹¹

Like the O'Toole kingdom of Uí Muiredaig, the MeicDalbaig patrimony was divided, evolving into the manor of Tullowphelim. About 1192 John, then lord of Ireland, granted Theobald Walter the manor of Tulauth in Ofelymth and later William Marshall confirmed John's grant.²⁹² On the whole, the Norman settlement in Uí Felemeda Tuaid seems quite dense. Nicholls identifies further settlement at Kilcommon near Tinahely.²⁹³ But it was not just Normans who acquired holdings there, the favoured Moriertagh O'Toole held land there before 1256 as did two fourteenth-century O'Byrnes.²⁹⁴ In any event the MeicDalbaig remained on ancestral lands, albeit reduced in status. A Milo MacDalbaig and his sons, Dermot and Malauthin, held lands near Aghowle before 1303. But by then most of them were rebels.²⁹⁵ In 1311 some O'Donnell

²⁸⁹ M.T.Flanagan, 'Mac Dalbaig, A Leinster Chieftain', in *R.S.A.I.Jn.*, cxi, (1981), pp 6-7.

²⁹⁰ *Expugnatio*, p. 85 and p. 95.

²⁹¹ *The Song of Dermot*, p. 233. In 1196 Cailleach MacMurrough-O'Melaghlin died as abbess of Aghowle deep in MeicDalbaig country.

²⁹² *Red Bk Ormond*, no. 2, pp 90-1; *Knights' Fees*, pp 80-81, and p. 258.

²⁹³ Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland', p. 373.

²⁹⁴ *Alen's Reg.*, p. 141; *C.O.D.*, i, p. 35, see also no. 136, p. 65. John fitz John FitzDermot was mentioned as a witness to Avice de la Cornere's grant to Lord Theobald Butler; *Knights' Fees*, pp 64-65.

²⁹⁵ *Red Bk Ormond*, no. 1, p. 6; In 1297 Johanna la Botiller cancelled the debts of Maurice fitzGeoffrey for his killing of Dúnlaing Mac Dalbaig, see *CJR, 1294-1303*, p. 156 and p. 186. Douenald McTalewy, a monk of Baltinglass, was implicated in the murder of William fitzRalph in 1297, and was accused of being in league with rebellious kinsmen in 1299,

freeholders at Aghowle, were charged with receiving Robert mac Gerald O'Byrne's following. These were Philip O'Donnell of Aghowle, his brother John and son Robert mac Philip. In their defence they pleaded that they were powerless against O'Byrne. Eventually the court found them loyal men and released them with a fine.²⁹⁶ However, in 1325 a William Odonnelan was captured with some O'Tooles from Imaal.²⁹⁷

Further research demonstrates similar accommodation among the MacMurroughs' O'Neill clients of the Shillelagh territory of Magh da Conn - later known as Moyacomb.²⁹⁸ The O'Neills became followers and tenants of their new masters. Walter O'Neill was bailiff of the Corlis lands of Jordan de Exeter in 1302, while Doneghuth and Gillcomdy O'Neill were among Hugh Taloun's followers accused of disturbance three years later.²⁹⁹ In 1314 the retinue of Philip fitzHenry Taloun included a Hugh O'Neill and several other Irishmen, notably some McCoditans. They were released from the jail of the Newtown of Duiske and bound to the peace. Their pardon was procured by the good service of Philip's brother John against the Irish of the Leinster mountains. The Ua Gaithin disappeared below the feudal horizon, unless they are the mediaeval Ogossan family.³⁰⁰ Territories of other MacMurrough clients were divided up by the Normans. O'Ryan, lord of Idrone, was killed in autumn 1171. Later Idrone along with Forth of O'Nolan and Glascarraig in northeast Wexford were granted by Strongbow to Raymond le Gros. Around 1185 Prince John granted the lands of O'Brennan and MacCrimthainn, MacMurrough's loyal retainers, to Alard fitzWilliam.³⁰¹ Strongbow granted O'Murphy's land of Uí Felemeda Thes to Gilbert de Boisrohard, dividing it into fifteen fiefs.³⁰² The O'Murphy thirteenth-century nomenclature also reflects some degree of

see *Ibid.*, p. 199. Their disaffection continued and Gilledonesagh Otauly was a noted rebel in the liberty of Wexford in 1312, see *CJR*, 1308-1314, p. 235.

²⁹⁶ *CJR*, 1308-1314, pp 233-4.

²⁹⁷ *Rotulorum Patentium et Clausorum Hiberniae Calendarium*, (Dublin, 1828), p. 31b. (hereafter, *Rot.pat.Hib*)

²⁹⁸ *Placenames*, pp 377-79; *Red Bk Ormond*, no.1, p. 3.

²⁹⁹ *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 380; *CJR*, 1305-1307, p. 51.

³⁰⁰ Byrne, 'The Trembling Sod', p. 25; *Rot.pat.Hib*, p. 31b. There is a Gillekeyvin Ogossan mentioned in 1325.

³⁰¹ *C.O.D.*, i, no. 7, pp 3-4; Byrne, 'The Trembling Sod', p. 27; *Ann Tig*, ii, p. 416.

³⁰² *The Song of Dermot*, p. 227; *Knights' Fees*, pp 42-43, pp 129-141.

Normanisation.³⁰³ Between 1279-94 the accounts of the liberty of Carlow throw light upon the O'Lorcans (Ó Lorcán). Nicholas O'Lorcan appears in the accounts of Old Ross accounting for lands between 1280-83.³⁰⁴ A kinsman, Tadhg, received an annual fee of 52s in 1283 and later Earl Roger Bigod, lord of Carlow, bestowed a gift of 40s upon him.³⁰⁵ A Maurice O'Lorcan also appears within Earl Roger's accounts as keeper of the wood of Fennagh with a salary of 1s a week.³⁰⁶ Similarities can be found among the O'Dermots (Ó Diarmait), for example a William O'Dermot accounted 16s and 2d for fifty four acres at Balidermod near Old Ross in 1280.³⁰⁷

In comparison with other Irish dynasties of East Leinster, virtually nothing is recorded of the O'Byrnes. The evidence argues that they became tenants of the Fitzgerald barons of Naas through Strongbow's division of Uí Fáeláin in 1173-4.³⁰⁸ The Fitzgeralds were granted Naas, Uí Fáeláin's most northern cantred, along with the cantred of Wicklow which held much of the O'Byrne territories. Fragmentary evidence gives some insight as to their status during the first decades of the thirteenth century. The genealogies reveal a kingly line presiding over a series of closely related families amid a hilly and thickly wooded territory and the occurrence of Fitzgerald forenames among their nomenclature suggests that they were on good terms with the Fitzgeralds for most of the thirteenth century.³⁰⁹

Those O'Byrnes living on Earl Roger's lands in north Carlow were recognised feudal tenants. Between 1279-1294 he made a gift of 66s to their leader, Maurice.³¹⁰ In 1299 O'Byrnes were also living on the Kilpipe lands of the bishopric of Ferns near Aughrim. Bishop Richard described Richard O'Byrne and other Irish as his betaghs, meaning tenants.³¹¹ This Richard's sons also held lands within the Fitzgerald barony of Wicklow. Indeed during the early fourteenth

³⁰³ *CJR, 1295-1303*, p. 69. In 1298 Maurice de Rupeforti in an attempt to divide Muiris mac Muirheartaigh MacMurrrough's followers urged the swift pardon of Simon Omurchod's men. See Hore, *Wexford Town*, i, p. 28 and p. 31.

³⁰⁴ Hore, *Wexford Town*, i, p. 18 and p. 23.

³⁰⁵ Mills, 'Accounts of the Earl of Norfolk's Estates in Ireland, 1279-1294', p. 61.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 55.

³⁰⁷ Hore, *Wexford Town*, i, pp 11-12 and p. 15.

³⁰⁸ *Expugnatio*, p. 143; *Gormanston Reg.* pp 145-46.

³⁰⁹ O'Clery, para. 1750, p. 130, para. 1760, p. 131

³¹⁰ Mills, 'Accounts of the Earl of Norfolk's Estates in Ireland, 1279-1294', p. 55.

³¹¹ *CJR, 1295-1303*, p. 254.

century, Murchadh mac Gerald O'Byrne seemingly was the leading feudal tenant there.³¹² This view of incorporation within the feudal structure is further supported by more evidence, depicting O'Byrnes holding lands of the Butlers at Aghowle near Shillelagh in 1303, and their recognised status as tenants of the barony of Wicklow in 1306.³¹³ Thus, the relatively peaceful acceptance of the Norman settlement by the MacMurrough clients indicates MacMurrough satisfaction and influence.

East Leinster did not become widely disturbed until several decades after the emergence of unrest in West Leinster. But there were rumblings. In 1209 Dublin's citizenry were slaughtered at Cullenswood by Irish probably from the Wicklow mountains.³¹⁴ As throughout Europe, the church gradually evolved into an arena fraught by fierce ethnic competition.³¹⁵ In 1216, the bishopric of Glendalough had been amalgamated with the archbishopric of Dublin. To help Archbishop Henry to secure Glendalough's former see through the erection of fortifications at Castlekevin, Henry III granted him the manor of Swords.³¹⁶ After the death of Bishop Albin O'Mulloy of Ferns shortly after 1223, an Englishman succeeded him. Similarly in Kildare Ralph of Bristol, another Englishman, succeeded Bishop Cornelius MacFháeláin of Kildare upon his demise in 1223.³¹⁷ By 1228 there were thirty-four Irish Cistercian houses in Ireland, only ten of which had been founded by the Normans.³¹⁸ From 1216 the Cistercian order in Ireland was engulfed in racial hatred and prejudice. Between 1216-17 Mellifont and her daughters of Jerpoint, Kilbeggan, Killeny, Bective and Baltinglass resisted attempts of delegations sent from France to reform them. In 1227 during this crisis the mountainous region around the Cistercian abbey of Baltinglass became disturbed. When the new Norman abbot attempted to take office, he was driven away by the supporters of the deposed Irish abbot. However, he returned with an armed force and forcibly took up his abbacy. In 1228 Stephen of Lexington was

³¹² N.A., R.C. 7/13 (iv), pp 22-24.

³¹³ *Red Bk Ormond*, pp 2, 6; N.A., R.C. 7/13 (iv), pp 22-24.

³¹⁴ Meredith Hanmer, *Ancient Irish Histories: The Chronicle of Ireland* (Dublin, 1809), p. 370.

³¹⁵ R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe* (Penguin, 1993), p. 221. (hereafter Bartlett)

³¹⁶ *Alen's Reg.* p. 161.

³¹⁷ *N.H.I.*, ix, p. 311 and p. 314.

³¹⁸ Bartlett, p. 228.

dispatched by the General Chapter to Ireland to break the increasing xenophobia of the Irish houses. Eventually Stephen imposed his will and re-introduced the internationalism of the order. His reforms, however, further alienated many among the Irish.³¹⁹

However, the reaction of the MacMurroughs, the founders of Baltinglass, is not recorded. Having said that, it should be borne in mind that MacMurroughs must have been in considerable disarray following the loss of four leading members during William Marshall II's campaign to Connacht of 1225.³²⁰ The recovery of the MacMurroughs took decades. In 1244 Henry III sent letters to several Irish kings to attend upon his forthcoming campaign against the Scots. None of the MacMurroughs received letters. Significantly Ross O'Phelan of Déise, their neighbour, did.³²¹

The progression of the violence was gradual. In April 1234 East Leinster was shaken by the fatal attack by the Fitzgeralds upon Earl Richard Marshall on the Kildare plains.³²² During the war the fighting extended into the Leinster mountains. Walter de Riddlesford II stormed the Marshall's vill of Comyn, now modern Blessington in County Wicklow.³²³ Soon afterwards Gilbert Marshall, Richard's brother and successor, ended the war. But de Riddlesford was determined to retain the vill, prompting Gilbert to complain to the king in 1235.³²⁴ The extent of the fighting is further revealed when Archbishop Luke of Dublin was awarded 300 marks for damage to his diocese during the struggle and it is possible that the neighbouring Fitzgerald barony of Wicklow was also a battleground between the protagonists.³²⁵ However, as of yet it is impossible to discern the effect of the upheaval upon the Irish.

Much of the growing Irish discontent in Leinster centred upon the issue of common law. In 1223 differences between the law of

³¹⁹ J.A.Watt, *The Church and the two Nations in Mediaeval Ireland*. (Cambridge, 1970), pp 93-94; O'Dwyer, *The Conspiracy of Mellifont*, pp 16-30.

³²⁰ *Ann. Conn*, pp 12-3 and p. 761 (index).

³²¹ *C.D.I., 1171-1251*, no. 2716, p. 405.

³²² *Clyn. Annals*, p. 7.

³²³ *C.D.I., 1171-1251*, no. 2255, p. 335.

³²⁴ *Ibid*, no. 2139, p. 317, nos 2224 and 2227, p. 330, no. 2255, p. 335.

³²⁵ *Ibid*, no. 2186, p. 324.

England and Ireland were noted by the royal government.³²⁶ It has been argued that the English interpretation of the common law was more rigorously enforced in Ireland from the middle of the thirteenth century. In Leinster the extinction of the Marshalls in 1245 allowed Henry III to extend royal law into the Marshall estates. Traditionally, the 1247 partition of the Marshall inheritance of Leinster following the 1245 death of Anslem Marshall is marked as the beginning of the gradual weakening of seigneurial and royal authority in East Leinster.³²⁷ If so, there was not a direct and obvious weakening of Norman Leinster, but the division undermined the land of peace in the long term. The introduction of royal law must have caused grave disquiet among the Leinstermen. In a letter of June 1246 the king spelt out his intentions to the seneschal of Leinster. Effectively royal jurisdiction and royal judges were installed throughout the courts of the Leinster lordship.³²⁸ In September 1246 Henry III reaffirmed his declaration by ordering that the common law of England be the observed writ without exception in Ireland.³²⁹ The law seems to have varied from court to court and from situation to situation. Nicholls offers an explanation to the question of the law. He argues that from the middle of the thirteenth century, English common law was imposed upon the colony. This overrode an older legal practice which seems to have dominated the baronial courts. Still it seems to have lingered on the courts of episcopal lands and liberties. But the introduction of English common law in its purest sense seemingly radically changed the status of the Irish freeholder for the worse.³³⁰ Increasingly ethnicity was defined by the law as well as custom and language.³³¹ Much later in 1277, an offer was made by the Irish, excluding those of Ulster, for a grant of common law to the justiciar, Robert de Ufford. Edward I agreed but the grant was never implemented.

The emergence of disturbance in East Leinster has also been interpreted in the context of a series of anti-Norman wars waged by

³²⁶ Bartlett, p. 214.

³²⁷ J. Lydon, 'The Expansion and Consolidation of the Colony, 1215-54', in *N.H.I.*, ii, (ed.) A. Cosgrove (Oxford, 1993) p. 168. (hereafter Lydon, 'The Expansion and Consolidation of the Colony, 1215-54').

³²⁸ *C.D.I.*, 1252-1284., no. 2836, p. 424, see also no. 2849, p. 426.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 2850, p. 426.

³³⁰ Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland', pp 376-377.

³³¹ Bartlett, p. 204.

Irish kings labelled the Irish Resurgence. However, in the case of East Leinster the reasons are more complex and local. In contrast to the Norman settlements of West Leinster, the settlers and the Irish of East Leinster were relatively insulated and isolated from growing Irish belligerence to the Normans by a swathe of settlement stretching from eastern Meath to Kilkenny.

But the Irish of East Leinster only gradually became more restless and aggressive during the late 1260s. Moreover, the reasons for the war in the Leinster mountains were local, and the war that exploded in 1269-70, had been brewing since the 1240s. One reason was the deterioration of relations among the English themselves. Between 1244-51 Archbishop Luke of Dublin granted lands in central Wicklow to Theobald Butler.³³² It is uncertain why the archbishop took this decision, but there is one clue. In 1243 Henry III ordered Maurice Fitzgerald to desist from interfering within the archbishop's manor of Sancto Bosco, perhaps Hollywood in west Wicklow. Possibly Luke under pressure from the Fitzgeralds granted these lands to Butler to shore up and bolster his own local position. The Butlers continued to expand in the region between the 1240s-60s.³³³ This growth of their influence probably began to unsettle the O'Tooles of Glenmalure and some of the O'Byrnes near Aughrim thus alienating the Fitzgeralds and the archbishops of Dublin. Luke's successor, Archbishop Fulk de Sandford, seemingly reversed his predecessor's policy. Between 1256-71 Archbishop Fulk granted Moriortagh O'Toole, possibly overseer of his mountain estates, Glenmalure as part of an elaborate property exchange.³³⁴ This has been interpreted as an attempt by Archbishop Fulk to legitimise the tenurial rights of his O'Toole servants, but it could represent an attempt to protect his Irish tenants from Butler attentions.

Theobald Butler further annoyed the Fitzgeralds during the English civil war between Simon de Montfort, the baronial leader, and Henry III in 1264.³³⁵ Indeed, violence exploded between these

³³² L.Price, 'The Case of Phelim McFeagh and the lands of Ranelagh', in *R.S.A.I.Jn.* lxxiii, (1943), pp 50-51. (hereafter Price, 'The Case of Phelim McFeagh and the lands of Ranelagh').

³³³ *Crehe Mihi*, p. 144.

³³⁴ *Alen's Reg.* pp 136, 141.

³³⁵ Lydon, 'The years of crisis, 1254-1315', p. 183.

protagonists at Castledermot. But this violence can also be interpreted as constituting part of a wider struggle between Maurice Fitzgerald and Earl Walter Burke of Ulster. At the close of 1264 the Fitzgeralds prompted countrywide fighting by capturing Burke's allies, including Justiciar Richard de la Rochelle and Butler.³³⁶ This crisis caused Geoffrey de Joinville, the acting justiciar, to provision Dublin against siege and dispatch further provisions to Butler's castle of Arklow.³³⁷ De Joinville's desperate measures indicate that Arklow faced a threat from the Fitzgeralds and perhaps their O'Byrne tenants. Further evidence suggests disturbances within the mountainous lands of the archbishopric. In 1265, jurors at an inquisition at Castlekevin replied that the archbishop's tenants never aided the enemies of the king.³³⁸ This may be connected to de Joinville's campaign against the Fitzgeralds early in 1265.³³⁹

As has been shown, the Irish dynasties of East Leinster were profoundly affected by the arrival of the Normans. By 1180 the conqueror's hand was evident throughout the province. However, East Leinster was more penetrated by the settlers. This is reflected in the change of land tenure, political structures and in naming practices. But from the evidence it seems the Irish were incorporated within the Norman settlement. The most notable were the MacMurroughs who became the hereditary seneschals of the Irish of Marshall Leinster. Indeed, as has been shown, a hybrid society of sorts emerged. However, it must be stressed that the dynasties of East Leinster adopted Norman customs and practices to varying degrees. And thus this mutual toleration promoted mutual indulgence, resulting in a long-lived peace. Indeed, this long peace was doubly insured by the relative insulation of the Irish dynasties of East Leinster from the rest of the Irish by a strong belt of settlement. But this peace must have come under pressure after the eclipse of Diarmait MacMurrough's Marshall successors after 1245. This led to the extension of royal law into the old Marshall lordship of Leinster, which must have placed considerable strains upon this peaceable coexistence. But while tension undoubtedly existed, it seems to have mainly remained

³³⁶Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 196.

³³⁷ Lydon, 'The years of crisis, 1254-1315', fn.6, p. 183.

³³⁸ *Hist. & mun. doc.Ire.*, p. liii and pp 150-54.

³³⁹ Lydon, 'The years of crisis, 1254-1315', p. 183.

dormant indicating good relations between the Irish and the Normans of this part of Leinster.

Chapter 2b

The Reaction of Connacht and West Leinster 1180-1270

Broadly speaking, Leinster retained its pre Norman divide of East/West. Ironically this division was reinforced by the Norman establishment of settlement stretching from Dublin, into Westmeath, Offaly, and Laois. And from Laois the settlers built castles down the strategic Barrow valley to the sea at Waterford. In comparison to East Leinster, the accommodation between the Normans and the Irish of West Leinster only lasted a few decades. This progression will be traced in this chapter. Also this chapter will examine how the O'Connors of Connacht continued to influence events in West Leinster and the midlands between 1180-1270. Furthermore, it will show how the emerging struggles between the Normans and the Irish in this region were set by its topography.

Meath was the pivotal piece in Connacht's midland mosaic. But by 1180 the Normans had almost pegged back Connacht's power to the Shannon. About 1180 Ruaidhrí O'Connor gave his daughter, Rose, in marriage to Hugh de Lacy, lord of Meath.³⁴⁰ For the best part of a decade, Ruaidhrí anxiously watched the Norman advance to the Shannon. He knew that Connacht's fortunes were bound up with those of Meath. To demonstrate the centrality of Meath to Ruaidhrí's earlier plans, he annexed its western part to Connacht in 1169.³⁴¹ Moreover, the dangers to Connacht of de Lacy's colonisation of Meath led to Ruaidhrí's campaign of 1174.³⁴² So by marrying his daughter to de Lacy, Ruaidhrí hoped to remain protector of Clonmacnoise and of the nearby Irish kingdoms. This option allowed Ruaidhrí to foster a regional *modus vivendi* with his former enemy. For a while it worked, dimming de Lacy's expansion, allowing Ruaidhrí to hold Connacht together. While this alliance may have briefly stabilised the region, Henry II viewed it with suspicion.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ Sean Duffy, 'The First Ulster Plantation', in *Colony and Frontier in Medieval Ireland*, eds T.B. Barry, R. Frame, and K. Simms, (London, 1995), p. 25.

³⁴¹ *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1172-3; *Ann. Tig.*, ii, p. 423.

³⁴² *The English Conquest of Ireland, 1166-1185*, (ed.) F.J. Furnivall (Kraus Reprint, 1973), pp 82-83; *Expugnatio*, p. 139.

³⁴³ *Expugnatio*, pp 191, p.338 footnotes 350-351.

Befriending Ruaidhrí gained de Lacy time to consolidate his hold on Meath. He also possibly helped to restore Ruaidhrí in Henry II's eyes. A sign of this rapprochement was given when one of Ruaidhrí's sons in 1180 accompanied Archbishop Lorcán O'Toole to visit Henry.³⁴⁴ This improvement may also have signalled Ruaidhrí's resumption of the payment of the tribute of Connacht.³⁴⁵ To his credit De Lacy tried to accommodate the grievances of the Irish who had fled Meath to Connacht, encouraging their return. Generally he seemed tolerant of the Irish, attempting to foster a co-existence between all those under his lordship.³⁴⁶ Some O'Melaghlin bore traces of de Lacy's favour. In fact, Art O'Melaghlin, Ruaidhrí's enemy, seemed allied to de Lacy throughout the 1170s.³⁴⁷ In 1184, this alliance appears to have ended as Diarmait O'Brien with Norman encouragement assassinated Art. Apparently de Lacy had found new O'Melaghlin allies.³⁴⁸

However, the O'Connor/de Lacy pact probably contributed to the wider bettering of relations between the Irish and the Normans in West Leinster. The best display of pragmatism of a former O'Connor client was that of Fáelán MacFháeláin of Uí Fáeláin. Despite his submission to Henry II and a private peace with Strongbow, Fáelán's kingdom was divided into three cantreds and were granted by the king in 1171-2 to Maurice Fitzgerald, Robert Fitzstephen and Meyler Fitzhenry.³⁴⁹ But after 1173, Henry reversed his decision, ceding the Uí Fáeláin cantreds to Strongbow along with the towns of Wicklow and Wexford. It has been suggested that the king's actions were motivated by Strongbow's good service in Normandy during 1173.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁴ Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p. 122.

³⁴⁵ *AFM*, iii, pp 70-1.

³⁴⁶ *Expugnatio*, p.191; He provided himself the example by fathering at least one son with Rose. See Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p. 134.

³⁴⁷ *Ann. Tig.*, ii, p. 448.

³⁴⁸ For example, a member of the dynasty was described as a knight. In turn, this figure was to christen his own son Henry. *A.L.C.*, i, pp 166-7; *Ann Clon.*, p. 216 and pp 231-2. Henry O'Melaghlin was killed by the colonists of Meath in 1227.

³⁴⁹ M.T.Flanagan, 'Henry II and the kingdom of Uí Fáeláin', in *Settlement and Society in Mediaeval Ireland*, (ed) J.Bradley, (Kilkenny, 1988), p. 233. (hereafter Flanagan, 'Henry II and the kingdom of Uí Fáeláin').

³⁵⁰ For his part, Strongbow confirmed Henry's grants to Fitzgerald and Fitzhenry but overturned Fitzstephen's in favour of his own supporters, the de Hereford brothers. This led to a prolonged legal dispute with Fitzstephen. He appealed to Henry upon the death of Strongbow in 1176. However, despite assurances Fitzstephen was to be disappointed and his cantred was to rest with the de Herefords. See Flanagan, 'Henry II and the kingdom of Uí Fáeláin', p. 232.

At first Fáelán appears to have grudgingly accepted the incorporation of Uí Fáeláin into Norman Kildare. Kildare as constituted by Strongbow was stitched together from shreds of another three kingdoms, including pieces of O'Toole's Uí Muiredaig and O'Connor Faly's Offaly. Kildare's borders were marked in the north-west by the modern baronies of east and west Offaly and in the south by the Laois baronies of east and west Maryborough, Strabally and Cullenagh.³⁵¹ The double grant to the Fitzgeralds of Naas, the royal Uí Fáeláin cantred, along with the Wicklow cantred where the O'Byrnes lived is significant for any study of Uí Fáeláin. That the Wicklow cantred was linked with the royal cantred implies that Uí Fáeláin's mountain lands fell under the personal jurisdiction of the MacFháeláin king. Indeed, this theory of an east/west split with the east subordinated to the MacFháeláin receives earlier support.³⁵² Thus in this context of a shared political heritage, Strongbow's association of the royal cantred of Uí Fáeláin and the Wicklow cantred is understandable.³⁵³

After Fáelán's desertion of the Normans to join Ruaidhrí's unsuccessful campaign of 1174, a Norman backlash was inevitable.³⁵⁴ Uí Fáeláin was devastated, forcing Fáelán to modify his attitude.³⁵⁵ And sometime between 1189-1203, Fáelán was granted lands at Killarney. Before his death in 1203, Fáelán in turn granted Killarney to the priory of Clonard. Later in 1293 a dispute arose between William de Vescy and other heirs of Leinster with the prior of Clonard, de Vescy complained that Fáelán had no right to grant Killarney to Clonard. Killarney has been identified within Carbury which traditionally lay in Offaly.³⁵⁶ Furthermore the O'Melaghlin of Meath and O'Kearys of Carbury were long associated with Clonard. Possibly Fáelán was compensated for losses in Uí Fáeláin with lands in Meath and Offaly, and acted as a guardian of the marches against the O'Connor Falys, O'Kearys and O'Melaghlin. Grants also reveal that the MacFháeláins enjoyed good relations with the de Herefords,

³⁵¹ Otway-Ruthven, 'The Medieval County of Kildare', pp 182-83.

³⁵² Then Domhnall MacFháeláin killed Gluniarainn son of Bran, lord of east Uí Fáeláin, in 1124. See *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1018-9.

³⁵³ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 50-2.

³⁵⁴ *Ann.Tig.*, ii p. 435; *Ann.Inisf.*, pp 306-7; *A.U.*, ii, pp 178-9; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 59-61; *The Song of Dermot*, p. 237.

³⁵⁵ *Exugnatio*, p. 137.

³⁵⁶ *C.D.I.*, 1293-1301, no. 22, pp 16-18; This grant seems to have been made between 1189-1203. Strongbow's daughter and heir, Isabella de Clare, married William Marshall in 1189. Flanagan, *Irish Society*, p. 124; Nicholls, 'The Land of the Leinstermen', p. 552.

who held the Uí Fáeláin cantred of Cloncurry. It has been suggested that the motte and manor near Cloncurry church was a later MacFháeláin residence.³⁵⁷ Indeed, Fáelán died a monk at Meyler Fitzhenry's newly founded abbey of Connell in 1203³⁵⁸, while Cornelius MacFháeláin was bishop of Kildare from 1206 until his death in 1223. In comparison to the O'Tooles, the MacFháeláins never recovered any of their former power in the later thirteenth century, becoming an ecclesiastical family. Others of the name clung to fragments of ancestral lands in the manor of Cloncurry.³⁵⁹ While another, Downild OHelyn, held church lands at Kill and was recorded as trading in clay for earthenware pots in 1343.³⁶⁰ However, the MacFháeláins were the biggest losers in the Norman settlement of Leinster.

To the south of Uí Fáeláin, Laois was given to de Lacy's son-in-law, Meyler Fitzhenry, to conquer in 1181. After the conquest Fitzhenry and de Lacy consolidated their advance, constructing Timahoe Castle in 1181-2.³⁶¹ And later Meyler erected another on the rock of Dunamase. Having said that, Fitzhenry like de Lacy saw the value of good relations with the Irish. In fact, Domhnall O'More of Laois was killed while defending Norman settlers from the O'Connors of Connacht in 1196.³⁶² Domhnall's service served as an example to his dynasty, who adopted forenames such as Henry, Simon and Nigel.³⁶³ As in Uí Fáeláin some of the Irish elites of Laois and Ossory possibly copied the colonists by building mottes at Monally and Srahan in the Slieve Bloom Mountains.³⁶⁴ To illustrate the point, the Pipe Roll of

³⁵⁷ *Reg St Thomas*, p. 78 and p. 82; Flanagan, 'Henry II and the kingdom of Uí Fáeláin', pp 235-36.

³⁵⁸ *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 136-7.

³⁵⁹ In November 1304 two Walters and a Thomas MacFháeláin held lands there of the Butlers. See *Red Bk Ormond*, pp 30, 32. Variants of the surname include Makylan, Makelan, Mckelan, Offelan, Macelan, MacGelan, MacKellan and MacGealan. See *Reg St Thomas*, p. 298; *The Irish Pipe Roll*, 1211-1212, p. 19; *C.D.I.*, 1293-1301, pp 17-8; *Red Bk Ormond*, pp 30, 32; *Cal. Gormanston Reg*, p. 145;

³⁶⁰ *Account Roll of the Priory of the Holy Trinity, Dublin*, p. 55 and p. 195. Much later in the census of 1659, the descendants of the MacFháeláins were shown still living in Kildare Offaly, Laois and Ossory and not on their ancestral lands See S.Pender (ed.) *A Census of Ireland circa 1659* (I.M.C., 1939), pp 399, 404-5, 496, 498, 500-5. Variants of the name include Helan, Felan alias Holan, Felan alias Helan, Hylan, Filan alias Hilan.

³⁶¹ *Expugnatio*, p. 195.

³⁶² *A.L.C.*, i, pp 198-9.

³⁶³ *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 178. Ó Cléirigh, 'The Problems of Defence: A Regional Case-study', p. 44.

³⁶⁴ T.McNeill, *Castles in Ireland*, (Rutledge, 1997), p. 73. (hereafter McNeill, *Castles in Ireland*); O'Connor, *The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland*, p.76; Idem, 'Norman Castles in Co.Laois', in *Laois History and Society* (eds) P.Lane and W.Nolan, (Dublin, 1999), p. 198.

1211-12 records that the Irish of Dunamase gave 53 6s 8d and after 1245 they were recognised feudal tenants of the Mortimers, holding much of western Laois.³⁶⁵

The same Norman approach can be detected in Offaly. There Diarmait O'Dempsey thrived as lord of Offaly, whilst seemingly recognising Norman overlordship. This was at the expense of the O'Connor Falys. Although there is a paucity of evidence, the surviving shreds suggest that the O'Connors Faly too integrated themselves with the Normans, serving on a campaign in Ulster during 1196 and against the O'Connors of Connacht in 1200.³⁶⁶ And it has been suggested that they acknowledged the lordship of the Fitzgeralds and the Berminghams, rendering an annual tribute. This probable situation has parallels with those of the O'Farrells (Uí Fhearghaile) of Annaly, O'Rourkes of Bréifne and the O'Neills of Tyrone.³⁶⁷ This recognition was achieved at a cost as many of their pre Norman centres such as Rathdangan and Geashill became hubs of Norman manors. Again parallels can be found among the MacGillapatricks of Ossory. Despite suffering the assault of MacMurrough and the Normans, Domhnall MacGillpatrick won over Maurice de Prendergast. From his recorded actions of 1171-2, Domhnall's power was initially relatively unhindered. Then he killed Domhnall O'Fogarty (Ó Fógartaigh) of southern Ely, and O'Kaelly (Ó Caellaidhe) in 1171 and 1172 respectively.³⁶⁸ In this period, Domhnall preserved his kingdom, allying with the Normans and submitting to Henry II in 1171-2. Indeed, he campaigned with them against Domhnall O'Brien and Diarmait MacCarthy of Desmond in 1175 and 1176.³⁶⁹ And the appearance of the MacGillpatrick annalistic obits attest to their continuing importance.³⁷⁰

But there were signs that the peace between the Normans and the Irish of West Leinster and the midlands was strained even before de Lacy's assassination in 1186. Reasons for this gradual deterioration

³⁶⁵ *The Irish Pipe Roll*, 1211-1212, p. 13; Nicholls, *Gaelic Ire*, p. 174.

³⁶⁶ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 194-5, and 214-5.

³⁶⁷ A.J.Otway-Ruthven, 'The Partition of the De Verdon Lands in Ireland in 1332', in *P.R.I.A.*, vol 66, Section C, no.5, (1968), p. 413; *The Irish Pipe Roll*, 1211-1212, p. 37, and p. 67.

³⁶⁸ *A.U.*, ii, pp 174-5; *Ann. Tig.*, ii, p. 428.

³⁶⁹ *Expugnatio*, p. 95, pp 161-63; *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 308-9.

³⁷⁰ *Ann. Tig.*, ii, p. 441; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 170-1 and pp 188-9.

lie in the Norman advance to the Shannon. And it was to De Lacy that the task of incastellation had fallen.³⁷¹ The provincial kings and Ruaidhrí knew that the outright loss of this region to the Normans threatened their kingdoms. As a result any attempt to plant these territories was bound to be strenuously resisted. However, Ruaidhrí was unable to push the Normans back because of the emergence of rebellion in Connacht during the early 1180s.³⁷² And in 1185 Ruaidhrí resigned in favour of his son - Conchobhar Maenmhaighe.³⁷³ Conchobhar Maenmhaighe was a confident figure, believing that he could restore the O'Connor high-kingship.³⁷⁴ Also he was less inclined to temporise with the Normans. Indeed, he had a right to be confident, having bested a Norman army at Thurles in July 1174. Conchobhar Maenmhaighe like his father fully understood how the colonization of West Leinster affected Connacht. Consequently, he and his successors sought to preserve their overlordship east of the Shannon. The imposition of castles astride the passes and fords of West Leinster represented the attempted subjugation of the former O'Connor ambit there. Naturally the siting of these castles astride the region's natural keys alarmed the Irish.³⁷⁵ This led Conchobhar Maenmhaighe to exploit their fears, linking up with Máelsechlainn Beag O'Melaghlin to raze a castle belt in Westmeath during 1185.³⁷⁶ What favoured Connacht's kings in this struggle was the partial Norman failure to comprehend the strategic importance of the middle Shannon basin

³⁷¹The Norman apologist, Gerald of Wales, sums up his strategy: '...when they (the Irish) had been hemmed in by castles and gradually subdued, he compelled them to obey the laws'. See *Expugnatio*, p. 191.

³⁷² *Ann. Tig*, ii, p. 440; *Ann. Inisf*, pp 314-5; *AU*, ii, pp 198-9; The major threat to Connacht was Flaithbertach O'Muldory (Ó Maeldoraidh), king of Donegal. He was married to Ruaidhrí's daughter, see *D.N.B.*, xv, p. 852; See also *Ann Tig*, ii, p. 391. Earlier Dubhchobhlaigh, Toirdhealbhach O'Connor's daughter, was married to another ruler of Donegal, Flaithbertach O'Canannan (Ó Canannain). They drowned when their ship was wrecked in 1153; *AU*, ii, pp 198-9, 213; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 160-1; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 70-1; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 162-5.

³⁷³ *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 72-3.

³⁷⁴ M. Joynt (ed), 'Echtra Mac Echach Mugmedoin', *Eriu*, 4, (1908-10), pp 91-111; See B. Ó Cuív, 'A Poem Composed for Cathal Croibhdhearg O'Conchobhair', *Eriu*, 34, (1983), p. 170. And during the first year of his kingship, Conchobhar signalled his intention of rebuilding Connacht's power by finally crushing Donnchadh O'Connor. See *AU*, ii, pp 204-5.

³⁷⁵ For instance, in 1184 Art O'Melaghlin seems to have become disaffected with his Norman masters, leading them to procure Diarmait O'Brien of Ormond to assassinate him. See *A.L.C.*, i, pp 166-7; *AU*, ii, pp 202-3.

³⁷⁶ *AU*, ii, pp 202-3. Earlier in 1178 Hugh de Lacy with Art attacked Máelsechlainn Beag and the people of Tethbae. See *Ann. Tig*, ii, pp 447-8. In this attack Muirheartach the son of An Sionnach was killed. This to be the reason for de Lacy's assassination in 1186. See *Expugnatio*, p. 235, p. 353 footnote 480. This Máelsechlainn Beag was the half-brother of Art O'Melaghlin (d. 1184)

centred on Clonmacnoise. By contrast with the northern and southern midlands, the eastern middle Shannon basin was less thickly planted because of its harsh topography.³⁷⁷

The reemergence of Ruaidhrí stalled Conchobhar Maenmhaighe's efforts to push back the Normans. Matters were complicated by the landing of John, lord of Ireland, at Waterford in April 1185.³⁷⁸ John brought plans for an offensive into Munster to the Shannon, building Tibberaghny, Ardfinnan and Lismore castles.³⁷⁹ Ostensibly their establishment was designed to protect the royal lands lying between Waterford and Dungarvan and to the Munster Blackwater in the west.³⁸⁰ This royal wedge was flanked to the east by the Leinster marches and by MacCarthy Desmond to the west, while its northern frontier faced Thomond and Connacht. John's advance into the southern midlands was explosive, drawing responses from Domhnall O'Brien of Thomond and Diarmait MacCarthy of Desmond. On 24 June 1185 O'Brien attacked Ardfinnan Castle before burning Norman Ossory.³⁸¹ Gerald of Wales writing at the time of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe points out that O'Brien's offensive into Ossory enjoyed widespread support among the Irish, suggesting that it was co-ordinated.³⁸² His treatise, in places, paints a picture of a conquest slowly running out of steam because of mounting Irish resistance and the inhospitable nature of the terrain.³⁸³ Tellingly, it is Gerald's recognition that Irish warfare adapted in response to the Normans, noting the evolution of Irish tactics with regard to archery and the laying of ambushes.³⁸⁴ From the annals, the basic principles of Irish warfare, and its relationship with the landscape can be discerned. Firstly, dispersal from unfavourable ground upon the approach of a superior force to a naturally protecting environment, usually a densely wooded and mountainous territory. Concentration in this advantageous landscape allowed Irish kings to attack Norman armies

³⁷⁷ Ó Cléirigh, John FitzThomas, p. 11.

³⁷⁸ Orpen, *Normans*, ii, p. 93-95.

³⁷⁹ *Expugnatio*, p. 234-35.

³⁸⁰ F.X.Martin, 'John, lord of Ireland, 1185-1216' In A.Cosgrove (ed.), *A New History of Ireland*, ii (Oxford, 1993), p. 128. (hereafter Martin, 'John, lord of Ireland, 1185-1216').

³⁸¹ *Expugnatio*, p. 235. In Desmond, the Irish fared worst as Diarmait MacCarthy (MacCarthaigh) was killed at a parley with Theobald Walter and the Ostmen of Cork in August 1185.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

in terrain, which rendered heavy cavalry useless.³⁸⁵ Thus, the landscape allowed Irish kings to dictate the pace of warfare against the Normans who now faced Irish horsemen wielding weapons similar to their own. Improvements had also been made in Irish armour. Clearly the Irish learned Norman military techniques, modifying increasingly their traditional armour with coats of mail.³⁸⁶

Indeed, Gerald like many of his Norman contemporaries acknowledged the immense military strength lying behind the Shannon. To counter Conchobhar Maenmhaighe's push against the castle builders, Gerald offered a remedy - proposing the transformation of the Shannon into the western frontier of Norman Ireland.³⁸⁷ Gerald's proposed fortification of the Shannon probably reflected the circles in which he moved. According to Gerald, its success depended upon communication between the outposts to be achieved by the cutting of passes in Irish territories.³⁸⁸ The year 1186 was disastrous for the Norman colonisation of the midlands. That year de Lacy was assassinated by the Irish during his inspection of Durrow Castle. Although *The Annals of Loch Cé* and Gerald reported that de Lacy's death resulted from the vendetta of An Sionnach O'Kearney (Ó Catharnaigh)- a neighbouring Irish lord.³⁸⁹ De Lacy's death opened up opportunities for Conchobhar Maenmhaighe. Having seen off Ruaidhrí's challenge, Conchobhar Maenmhaighe capitalised upon the mounting anti settler feeling. Significantly after 1185 Domhnall O'Brien of Thomond, Domhnall MacCarthy of Desmond, Ruaidhrí MacDunleavy of Ulaid, Aodh O'Rourke of Bréifne, and Máelsechlainn Beag O'Melaghlin of Meath pledged their vassalage to him.³⁹⁰ And in 1187 Conchobhar Maenmhaighe destroyed Killare Castle in Westmeath with Máelsechlainn Beag O'Melaghlin.³⁹¹ In spite of unrest in Connacht, Conchobhar Maenmhaighe partly restored Connacht's fortunes in West Leinster.³⁹² Also he tried to establish

³⁸⁵ O'Connor, *The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland*, pp 98- 104.

³⁸⁶ *Expugnatio*, p. 137.

³⁸⁷ 'Moreover, the less remote part of the country, as far as the river Shannon, which divides the three eastern parts of the island from the fourth region in the West, should be secured and protected by the construction of many castles'. See *Expugnatio*, p. 249; R. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, (Oxford, 1982), p. 185.

³⁸⁸ *Expugnatio*, p. 251.

³⁸⁹ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 174-5; *Expugnatio*, p. 235.

³⁹⁰ *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 85-7.

³⁹¹ *Ibid*, pp 78-9; Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p. 124.

³⁹² By striking an alliance with Domhnall O'Brien, Conchobhar Maenmhaighe secured his southern frontier. This left him the freedom to concentrate upon shoring up his ambit in

personal links with the Irish there, fostering a son in Tethbae.³⁹³ This policy of sending his sons to live among the Irish there did work. However, the long term effects of this strategy of positioning his sons as watch dogs in the midlands only emerged in the early 1200s.

The assassination of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe in 1189³⁹⁴ and subsequent O'Connor civil wars deflected Connacht's attentions from the midlands.³⁹⁵ Conchobhar Maenmhaighe's hitherto obscure uncle, Cathal Croíbhdearg O'Connor was his eventual successor. Cathal Croíbhdearg was aware of the dangers of settlement to Connacht and was determined to preserve his kingdom.³⁹⁶ If the Norman penetration of the midlands made him nervous³⁹⁷, it also had a similar effect upon Domhnall O'Brien and Domhnall MacCarthy. In 1189 MacCarthy displayed an impressive degree of regional mobility by razing castles from Desmond to Ossory, capping this performance with the defeat of a Norman army at Thurles the next year.³⁹⁸ These victories display the determined but often individualistic attempts of the Irish provincial kings to maintain their midland ambitions. Also Domhnall O'Brien in 1192 defeated the Normans at Thurles before burning Norman Ossory.³⁹⁹ O'Brien, though, was a pragmatist. And in an act reminiscent of Ruaidhrí, he married a daughter to William Burke - his

northern Connacht, Donegal and the midlands. It was from northern Connacht and Donegal that Ruaidhrí drew most of his support. Through diplomatic tacking, Conchobhar Maenmhaighe sought to undermine his father's support base within these interlocking regions. To this end he seemingly encouraged Flaithbertach O'Muldory's desire to reclaim the kingship of Donegal. Indeed one of his own sons bore the epithet 'Conallach', suggesting that the boy may have been given in fosterage to O'Muldory as part of an alliance. See *A.U.*, ii, pp 212-3; O'Muldory firstly killed Ruaidhrí O'Canannan in 1188 before helping Conchobhar Maenmhaighe and Domhnall O'Brien to trap de Courcy and the sons of Ruaidhrí in the pass of Assaroe that year. Later in 1207 Conchobhar Maenmhaighe's son, Donnchadh Conallach, and his cousin, Mathghamain, were killing while fighting for Eigneachan O'Donnell, king of Donegal, in Fermanagh. See *A.L.C.*, i, pp 236-7.

³⁹³ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 232-3. The name of this son was Muircheartach Teptach, he was killed by the sons of Ruaidhrí in 1204. Interestingly another Connacht dynast was fostered in Tethbae in about this period. The Four Masters mention the death of Sitric Teptach O'Kelly of Ui Maine in 1203. See *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 138-9.

³⁹⁴ *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 86-89. After Ruaidhrí's return in 1189, O'Muldory invaded Connacht. Since Ruaidhrí was king presumably it was he who opposed the invader. In 1190 Cathal Croíbhdearg and Cathal Carrach, the eldest son of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe formed an alliance at Clonfert. This peace seems to have given Cathal Croíbhdearg the kingship as he is referred to as O'Connor in the next entry.

³⁹⁵ Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p. 127.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

³⁹⁷ *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 92-3. The castles of Ardnurcher and Kilbixy were built in Meath in 1192.

³⁹⁸ *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 314-5, pp 316-7.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 316-7; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 94-5; In 1194 Tadhg son of Mahon O'Brien was executed at Cashel by the Normans, see *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 320-1.

Norman neighbour.⁴⁰⁰ After 1194, Cathal Cróibhdhearg showed himself as the inheritor of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe's policy. Much of this change has to do with the O'Brien/Burke alliance.⁴⁰¹ The forging of their alliance was possibly motivated by John's probable grant of Connacht to Burke in 1194.⁴⁰² Cathal Cróibhdhearg tried to delay Norman expansion into Connacht by creating trouble in Munster and the midlands. And in 1195 Cathal Cróibhdhearg showed that Connacht still packed a considerable punch, crossing the Shannon to campaign in Munster with the MacCarthys.⁴⁰³ The focus of much of his campaign was devoted to the destruction of several castles in Tipperary and the pillaging of Burke's lands near Athassel.⁴⁰⁴ Another example of renewed O'Connor activity in the midlands were the attacks of the sons of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe in 1196 upon the O'Mores and the Normans of Laois.⁴⁰⁵ All in all Cathal Cróibhdhearg's hostility served him well until 1199. Then serious divisions emerged between him and the sons of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe.⁴⁰⁶

By 1199, however, Connacht was under siege. Symbolically, a Norman motte stood at Connacht's doorstep, Athlone.⁴⁰⁷ Now with invasion looming, Cathal Cróibhdhearg again stirred up the midland Irish through the exchange of mutual military assistance.⁴⁰⁸ And interestingly from this date an eastward drift in countrywide warfare can be detected with Connacht acting as its engine. In Munster Cathal Cróibhdhearg was still promoting a war against the settlers, sending

⁴⁰⁰ Martin, 'John, lord of Ireland, 1185-1216', p. 129; One of the reasons behind O'Brien's somersault was his fear of the growth of MacCarthy power arising from Domhnall MacCarthy's victories. To doubly guard his position, O'Brien encouraged the erection of a Norman castle in the Tipperary parish of Clanwilliam to check any further extension of MacCarthy's influence. See *Ann. Inisf*, pp 318-9.

⁴⁰¹ Martin, 'John, lord of Ireland, 1185-1216', p. 129.

⁴⁰² Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p. 126; Martin, 'John, lord of Ireland, 1185-1216', p. 129; The O'Briens were also probably encouraging the O'Flatherty (Ó Flaithbheartaigh) against the O'Briens see *A.L.C.*, i, pp 194-5, Ruaidhri O'Flatherty fled West Connacht because of Cathal Crobhdhearg for the sanctuary of O'Brien's house in 1196.

⁴⁰³ *Ann. Inisf*, pp 320-1.

⁴⁰⁴ Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p. 128; *Ann. Inisf*, pp 320-1; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 74-5. But once back in Connacht, Cathal Crobhdhearg opened negotiations with the Normans. At Athlone he obtained recognition of his kingship from John de Courcy and Walter de Lacy before dispatching a second expedition to help Flaithbertach O'Muldory crush a rebellion in Donegal. See *A.L.C.*, i, p. 191-3; Orpen, *Normans*, ii, pp 153-56.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ann. Inisf*, pp 322-3; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 196-7; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 76-7.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ann. Clon.*, p. 215; Cathal Crobhdhearg may have attacked Cathal Carrach because of his earlier killing of Aodh son of Brian Bréifnech O'Connor in 1198, see *ibid.*, pp 228-9.

⁴⁰⁷ Orpen, *Normans*, ii, p. 183.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ann. Clon.*, p. 216. This is shown by the presence of the Knight O'Melaghlin amongst Cathal Crobhdhearg's troops during their attack on Cathal Carrach in 1199.

forces to attack the Normans in Limerick in 1199.⁴⁰⁹ However, his attention was quickly diverted back to the Shannon frontier with the midlands where the Normans were on the make. In response he punched into Westmeath.⁴¹⁰ But on his way back to Connacht, his forces were routed by the settlers. The effects of this defeat were doubly compounded by Cathal Cróibhdhearg's feud with Cathal Carrach - the leader of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe's sons.⁴¹¹ Cathal Carrach enlisted the support of Burke and the O'Briens⁴¹² and burnt Clonmacnoise before expelling Cathal Cróibhdhearg to Ulster.⁴¹³ In his absence Cathal Carrach installed himself as king of Connacht. By February 1200 Cathal Cróibhdhearg returned to Connacht, establishing his influence in Annaly⁴¹⁴ and raided Limerick in May.⁴¹⁵ In addition to these attacks, he also assaulted the O'Connor Falys of Offaly and burnt Norman settlements in Westmeath.⁴¹⁶ In 1201 Cathal Cróibhdhearg tried again to reclaim his kingship but Cathal Carrach was too strong.⁴¹⁷ For his part, Cathal Carrach had no intention of becoming a puppet and caused disturbances in the midlands, clashing with Justiciar Meyler Fitzhenry at Clonmacnoise late that year. Moreover, this outbreak of hostility possibly encouraged the O'Kearys to dispute control of Clonard with the Normans.⁴¹⁸

Eventually Cathal Cróibhdhearg was restored by John to his kingship in 1202 but only firmly secured his hold during 1203, earning a charter to Connacht in 1207.⁴¹⁹ Having come so close to losing, Cathal Cróibhdhearg avoided conflict with the Normans. In spite of the turmoil in Connacht between 1200-3, the links between the Connacht kings and the midland Irish remained close. Indeed, Cathal

⁴⁰⁹ *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 326-7.

⁴¹⁰ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 204-5; Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p.128; Orpen, *Normans*, ii, pp 183-84.

⁴¹¹ Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p.129.

⁴¹² *Ann Clon.*, p. 215-6.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, pp 216 The Knight O'Melaghlin was killed by the forces of Cathal Carrach in this encounter.

⁴¹⁴ *A.L.C.*, ii, pp 212-3

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 214-5; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 80-1.

⁴¹⁷ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 217-23. To cap his misery, Cathal Croibhdhearg was arrested for failing to pay the wages of his allies. And he was to languish in the dubious comforts of the confines of Nobber Castle until he had done so.

⁴¹⁸ *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 124-7

⁴¹⁹ Orpen, *Normans*, ii, pp 189-190; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 225-31; *Ann. Clon.*, p. 217-9; Martin, 'John, lord of Ireland, 1185-1216', p. 131; Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, p. 104; Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', pp 131-32.

Cróibhdhearg's interest in the midlands is evidenced by Raghnailt O'Farrell of Annaly - the wife of Aodh - his son.⁴²⁰ Moreover, the axis between the kings of Meath and Connacht was affirmed by Máelsechlainn Beag O'Melaghlin's erection of an altar at Clonmacnoise in 1205.⁴²¹ While both Máelsechlainn Beag and Cathal Cróibhdhearg avoided conflict with the Normans, discontent was rising among their junior branches. Indeed, after 1200, there was an increase in warfare between the Irish and the Normans of the midlands. When these lesser lords appealed to their dynastic overlords, help was not forthcoming. A survey of their attacks upon Normans reveals patterns. Because of their common enemy, the junior branches of the O'Melaghlin's, the O'Briens and the O'Connors began to co-ordinate their efforts. Thus, the rowdy frontierland of West Leinster and the midlands was transformed by an explosion of Irish anger. While Connacht still provided a focus for the midland Irish, it was in decline. But the anger caused by the attempted Norman conquest of Connacht destabilised the midlands. There the Irish enemies of the Normans were aggrieved over issues such as land, race and culture, sparking blazes along the Norman advance to the Shannon. But the Irish were now making serious inroads along the long frontier of Norman Leinster. Irish princes who once rode the tide of change were now pushing the Normans out of partly colonised peripheries. Herein lay the germ of what has been termed 'The Irish Resurgence'.

On the other hand, the sons of Art O'Melaghlin were not inspired by the plight of an embattled Connacht, having a history of enmity towards the O'Connors.⁴²² The sons of Art first come to notice

⁴²⁰ *Ann Conn*, pp 26-7.

⁴²¹ *Ann. Clon*, p. 221.

⁴²² Earlier in 1169 Art and his half-brother Domhnall Bregach killed King Diarmait O'Melaghlin of Meath, Ruaidhrí O'Connor's lieutenant. This forced Ruaidhrí to expel them. And in the years that followed Domhnall Bregach and Art gradually became estranged from each other. In 1173, Art killed his half-brother at Durrow, declaring himself king of Westmeath and allied with Hugh de Lacy. By 1184, however, this alliance lay in tatters and the colonists sponsored Art's assassination. Perhaps fearful of Norman intentions, Máelsechlainn Beag, Art's younger half-brother and successor, ended the enmity with the O'Connors by concluding a firm alliance with Conchobhar Maenmhaighe. Máelsechlainn Beag was to continue, with some success, Art's belated hostility to the Normans. See *Ann. Tig*, ii, p. 423; *A.U.*, ii, pp 160-1; *A.F.M.*, ii, pp 1172-3. *Ann Tig*, ii, pp 425-6. The dating of Art's declaration is hard to place. In 1170 he declared himself king of Westmeath, while Domhnall Bregach submitted to Diarmait MacMurrough. However, Domhnall Bregach is described as king of Meath in his obit of 1173, see *Ann. Inisf*, pp 306-7. See *A.U.*, ii, pp 182-3. Maghnus O'Melaghlin described as lord of east Meath was

in 1203, when they attacked the O'Connors.⁴²³ By 1205 Máelsechlainn Beag, their uncle and overlord, was weakening. As Máelsechlainn Beag declined, they led by Cormac mac Airt O'Melaghlin emerged. The reasons that facilitated Cormac mac Airt's rise were the weakness of Máelsechlainn Beag and the disintegration of Cathal Cróibhdhearg's midland ambit.⁴²⁴ In addition, he exploited the unrest amongst the midland Irish to build his power base. To the south of Westmeath in 1205, the previously pacific O'Carrolls of Ely were at war with the Normans.⁴²⁵ Also there was considerable unrest in the Meath territory of Kineleagh between the Mageoghegans (MacEochagáin) and O'Laeghaghans.⁴²⁶ But it is impossible to say whether this encouraged Cormac mac Airt to attack settlements.⁴²⁷ All that can be said with certainty was that he and his brothers in 1206 attacked the town of Baleloghoe in Westmeath, defeating Máelsechlainn Beag and the Normans.⁴²⁸ Again usage of terrain and adoption of Norman military techniques seem to be the key to his success. From his heartland, probably in the hilly and woody regions of southwest Westmeath where the settlers were lightly sprinkled, Cormac mac Airt waged a war of attrition upon them.⁴²⁹ Another major reason for Cormac mac Airt's success was Norman vulnerability. Here they formed the external frontier of Norman Leinster, shielding the settlement in East Leinster. Because of such a long frontier these settlers were exposed to the effects of threats, trends and influences promoted by resurgent rulers of the yet unconquered lands in Connacht, Munster and Ulster.

Another aspect of this warfare was the successful Irish usage of passes against the settlers. Since ancient times these corridors had always provided a nexus of communication between nobilities of

hung by the colonists at Trim in 1175. On his death Art is described as king of Meath in 1184, see *Ibid*, pp 202-3.

⁴²³ *AFM*, iii, pp 134-5. In this encounter Diarmait mac Airt O'Melaghlin was killed by the son of Lochlainn O'Connor. Lochlainn was the son of Toirdhealbhach O'Connor (d. 1156). He died in 1219. The O'Connor presence in West Leinster is further confirmed by the death of Cathal Crobdearg's son Tadhg at Clonmacnoise in 1205. See *AFM*, iii, pp 146-7.

⁴²⁴ Meenan, 'Deserted Medieval Villages of Co. Westmeath', p. 21; *Ann. Clon*, p. 221.

⁴²⁵ *AFM*, iii pp 146-7

⁴²⁶ *Ann Clon*, p. 221.

⁴²⁷ *AFM*, iii pp 146-7. The son of Guill Bhealach O'Carroll was killed by the Normans.

⁴²⁸ *Ann. Clon*, p. 221. Another sign of this trans Shannon world is the capture of Murchadh O'Kelly in this encounter.

⁴²⁹ Meenan, 'Deserted Mediaeval Villages of Co. Westmeath', p. 21; *AFM*, iii, pp 162-3; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 246-7.

Leinster, Connacht and Munster. Despite the turmoil caused by the Norman advances, this nexus still flourished. The great artery of the midland was Smyth's 'midland corridor', running for about twenty miles from Westmeath to Birr on the fringes of the North Munster lordship of Ely. Off it ran several interconnecting passes that drew in other territories. These were the hinges on which this Irish geopolitical region hung.⁴³⁰ As mentioned earlier the Normans did not fully comprehend the necessity of colonising these vital valleys.⁴³¹ Where they did incastellate these arteries as at Geashill, Leys and within the Barrow valley, the cohesiveness of Irish regional polity was limited. But their failure to hammer down the midlands through the plantation of these passes was their ultimate undoing.

But it was not solely the Irish that destabilised the midland colony. King John's feud with William Marshall, lord of Leinster, greatly contributed to the crisis in West Leinster. John was intent on extending the perimeters of royal law by breaking the over-mighty Norman magnates of Ireland.⁴³² In 1207 John encouraged Justiciar Meyler FitzHenry to seize the barony of Offaly and seemingly nearby Fearceall, causing uproar among Marshall's allies in Meath and Offaly. The resulting turmoil caused both men to be summoned before John late in the year, but the unrest created new opportunities for the Irish. More dangerous for the settlers was the intervention of Muircheartach O'Brien of Ormond.⁴³³ Like Cormac mac Airt and the sons of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe, O'Brien could not expect his overlord's protection. Thus, the upheaval presented him with a chance to inflict serious damage upon the midland Normans. Then he burnt the town of Birr, besieged its castle before sacking Ballyroan Castle in Laois with the O'Connors of Connacht.⁴³⁴ Moreover, he struck at Lothra, and Kinnity castles in the midland corridor. In the meantime Meyler's followers attacked Marshall's town of New Ross.

⁴³⁰ Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, pp 86-9.

⁴³¹ Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 11.

⁴³² There the repercussions of the collapse of John de Courcy's almost autonomous lordship of Ulster in the opening years of the thirteenth century were still becoming apparent, and the subsequent loosening of the bands of Norman power in Ulster may have encouraged Irish kings there to become more bold. See Martin, 'John, lord of Ireland, 1185-1216', pp 135-36.

⁴³³ *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 302-3. The father of this Muircheartach O'Brien was Brian of Slieve Bloom who was the brother of Domhnall Mór O'Brien (d.1194). This Brian was blinded by his brother in 1169.

⁴³⁴ *Ann. Clon.*, p. 222.

However, Marshall's supporters with the de Lacys ejected Meyler from Fearceall and captured him at Thurles, which forced John to reverse his tactics. Meyler was compelled to disgorge Offaly and John issued Marshall a charter confirming Leinster to him in April 1208.⁴³⁵

By 1210 the midlands were seriously disturbed by the king's struggle with the de Lacys. On 20 June that year John landed in Ireland to break the power of Hugh and Walter de Lacy as well as William de Braose. At Ardraccan in Meath, Cathal Cróibhdhearg met John and submitted before joining his expedition to Carrickfergus. By the end of July, the fighting was over. Its result was successful for John who now held Meath, Ulster, together with the lordship of Limerick.⁴³⁶ On August 12 Cathal Cróibhdhearg left the king and returned to Connacht after promising to present his son, Aodh, before the king at Rathwire in Westmeath. But after consulting his council and his wife, Cathal Cróibhdhearg did not bring Aodh, enraging John who then seized four hostages.⁴³⁷ This cooling in relations spurred John to order Justiciar John Grey to build castles along the Shannon. John planned to extend royal jurisdiction into Meath and Ulster. And to ensure Connacht's compliance with this matter, Geoffrey de Marisco and Donnchadh Cairbrech O'Brien of Thomond forced Cathal Cróibhdhearg to peace.⁴³⁸ By its terms Grey seemingly granted Connacht to him.⁴³⁹ This royal recognition pleased Cathal Cróibhdhearg who spent Christmas with Grey at Athlone.⁴⁴⁰ With Connacht pacified, and Meath and Ulster in the king's hand, Grey attacked the Irish kings bordering Connacht and the midlands.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁵ Orpen, *Normans*, ii, pp 210-217. See Martin, John, lord of Ireland, 1185-1216', p. 137; *Alen's Reg*, p. 31.

⁴³⁶ Lydon, *Lordship*, p. 65.

⁴³⁷ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 242-3.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid*, pp 244-5; Curtis, *Med. Ire*, p. 104.

⁴³⁹ Curtis, *Med. Ire*, p. 104.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 115.

⁴⁴¹ The primary targets for colonist expansion were the Irish ruled territories in Ulster. But before these intrusions into Ulster, the Irish of the region were already restless. See Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 82. Earlier during John's royal progress, Aodh Meith O'Neill, king of Tyrone, firstly feigned fealty before making off with much of the royal baggage train. See S.Duffy, 'King John's expedition to Ireland, 1210: the evidence reconsidered', in *I.H.S.*, vol. XXX., no. 117, (May, 1996), p. 24; *The Irish Pipe Roll of 14 John, 1211-1212*, p. 37, p. 39 and p. 63. When the royal emissaries demanded the renewal of O'Neill's pledge of loyalty, his reply captured the hardening of Irish attitudes to the colonists. 'Depart, O foreigners', 'I will give no hostages at all this time'. See *Ann. Inisf*, pp 32-3.

However, the humbling of Connacht and the erection of Athlone Castle made Cathal Cróibhdhearg look weak amongst his dynastic critics. Furthermore the construction of Clones and Cael Uisce castles astride these strategic arteries threatened the Irish. By 1211 the pressure of the Norman vice was showing. While Cathal Cróibhdhearg tried to preserve a kingdom for Aodh, this castle building only heightened the dissatisfaction of the junior O'Connor branches.⁴⁴² Furthermore, Cathal Cróibhdhearg's collaboration in the building of Cael Uisce Castle during 1212, showed that he no longer regarded the Shannon as a defensive frontier.⁴⁴³ Effectively he abandoned the junior O'Connors and their allies. In 1212 the castle building intensified. With the help of an O'Connor army, Archbishop Henry of London rebuilt Cael Uisce Castle. To the east the building of Clones continued despite attacks from Niall MacMahon and Aodh Meith O'Neill. Then the tide turned in Ulster in favour of the Irish. In an offensive co-ordinated by O'Neill, Cael Uisce, Clones and Carlingford castles were destroyed.⁴⁴⁴ But it was the construction of a castle at Clonmacnoise that ignited the midlands.⁴⁴⁵ Its erection along with that of Athlone provided the Normans with launch pads to conquer Connacht and the midlands. With no prospect of military aid from their overlords, the junior O'Brien, O'Melaghlin and O'Connor branches took matters into their own hands. At their head was Cormac mac Airt who had consolidated his position as the most powerful midland lord, killing Art O'Rourke of Bréifne in 1209.⁴⁴⁶ In 1212 Westmeath exploded, forcing Grey to order reinforcements from Munster. But at Kilnagcrann ford in Fearceall, Cormac mac Airt, the MacCoghlan and the sons of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe defeated Grey before expelling the Normans from Delvin.⁴⁴⁷ These victories produced a reaction throughout the region. And the Irish Pipe Roll of

⁴⁴² In 1211 the sons of Ruaidhrí and Conchobhar Maenmhaighe rebelled and attacked Connacht. Twice Aodh defeated them and drove them into Ulster and over the Shannon. See *A.L.C.*, i, pp 244-5; *AFM*, iii, pp 168-9. In the north Domhnall Mór O'Donnell and Aodh Meith O'Neill now laid aside their feud and united to defeat the colonist forces assembling at Cael Uisce in 1210. See *AFM*, iii, pp 166-7.

⁴⁴³ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 246-7. Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p. 132.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 249-51; *Ann Clon*, p. 225.

⁴⁴⁵ *A.U.*, ii, pp 252-3.

⁴⁴⁶ *AFM*, iii, pp 162-3.

⁴⁴⁷ The O'Connor dissidents were led by Conchobhair Maenmhaighe's son and grandson, Aodh and Máelsechlainn mac Chathail Carrach O'Connor. See Orpen, *Normans*, ii, p. 298. *A.L.C.*, i, pp 248-9; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 90-1; *Ann. Clon*, p. 225; *A.U.*, ii, pp 254-5; *AFM*, iii, pp 173-5. For the expulsion of the Normans from Devlin See *A.L.C.*, i, pp 246-7; *Ann. Clon*, p. 225. *AFM*, iii, pp 170-1. Máelsechlainn, the brother of Cormac mac Airt, killed Robert the constable of Duncomar in the aftermath of Kilnagcrann.

1211-12 further reveals that 'Murechot Offelan', Cormac mac Airt's neighbour, was now warring along the Uí Fáeláin marches.⁴⁴⁸

One of most surprising aftermaths of Cormac mac Airt's victories was his defeat in 1213 by his cousin - Domhnall Bregach O'Melaghlin. Domhnall's victory was remarkable because his allies included Cuilen O'Dempsey, Muirheartach O'Brien of Ormond and Domhnall Chlannaig MacGillpatrick of Ossory.⁴⁴⁹ Cormac mac Airt's power possibly frightened his Irish neighbours, causing them to unite against him. And given Cormac mac Airt's earlier clash with O'Rourke there is no reason why he could not have been trying to extend his power. But this also confirms the survival of a vibrant Irish web of communication stretching from Meath into Ossory and Ormond. Moreover, the fashioning of this alliance suggests a serious weakening of Norman power here. In any event Domhnall's triumph was short-lived as Meyler Bermingham killed him shortly afterwards.⁴⁵⁰ In spite of this defeat, Cormac mac Airt and the junior O'Connors defeated the Normans again at Kilnagcrann.⁴⁵¹ Then Muirheartach O'Brien ravaged Ely and Ormond, destroying five castles. Such was the intensity of his offensive that it must have been prompted by the success of Cormac mac Airt and the descendants of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe. Drastic action was needed. In autumn 1213, Justiciar Archbishop Henry of London proclaimed a royal service at Roscrea.⁴⁵² From Roscrea he marched into Offaly and defeated Muirheartach O'Brien and Máelsechlainn O'Connor at Killeigh.⁴⁵³

Now Norman power was devoted to the destruction of Cormac mac Airt. Indeed, the Normans of Ulster, Leinster, Meath and Munster were summoned to Westmeath. Cormac mac Airt struck first, attacking Ardnurcher and Kinclare castles. But when these Norman forces converged, Cormac mac Airt was defeated at the River Brosna, forcing him to flee probably to Connacht.⁴⁵⁴ Among the fallen was Ruaidhrí O'Keary and the later hanging of two O'Dempsey

⁴⁴⁸ *The Irish Pipe Roll of 14 John, 1211-1212*, p. 18.

⁴⁴⁹ Cunningham, *The Norman Advance*, p. 71; *Ann. Clon*, p. 225.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ann. Clon*, p. 226; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 174-5.

⁴⁵¹ Cunningham, *The Norman Advance*, p. 71.

⁴⁵² Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 83

⁴⁵³ *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 175-7. This Máelsechlainn was a son of Cathal Carrach.

⁴⁵⁴ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 250-1; *Ann. Clon*, pp 226-27; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 174-5.

leaders in 1213 at Dublin suggests that they had fought for Cormac mac Airt.⁴⁵⁵ To counter the further erosion of West Leinster, the colony's character became essentially defensive. The construction of castles attempted to deny Cormac mac Airt access to the natural routeways to Norman settlement. For example, in 1214, a chain of castles including Clonmacnoise, Birr, Durrow and Kinnity, were erected within the midland corridor to guard against him.⁴⁵⁶ Throughout 1215, he concentrated upon the eradication of castles⁴⁵⁷, burning Kinclare, Athboy, Smerhie castles, damaging Birr and forcing Máelsechlainn Beag O'Melaghlin to flee from Delvin.⁴⁵⁸ In his place then Cormac mac Airt assumed the lordship of Delvin. At that point Muirheartach O'Brien of Ormond then re-entered the fray. His entry was brief as the Normans hunted him down, killing him.⁴⁵⁹ But Cormac mac Airt's destructive sweep from Meath to Birr in North Munster illustrated two important points. Firstly the general Irish determination to destroy castles threatening freedom of regional manoeuvre. And secondly Cormac mac Airt's clever usage of the passes indicates that he utilised Smyth's 'midland corridor', illuminating the centrality of this honeycomb as a warlike conduit.

The contemporary recovery of the O'Connor Falys seems connected to the war in Westmeath. Why they became hostile to the settlers is uncertain. But it was probably linked to the castle building in Offaly during 1213/4. Another reason can be offered. Since the Norman arrival, they had undermined the power of traditional overlords in favour of lesser lords. An example of this may be Diarmait O'Dempsey whose military power over-shadowed the O'Connor Falys in the last quarter of the twelfth century. In 1212-3 the Norman grip on the midlands was shaken. And it is clear the O'Dempseys were attacking the settlers as evidenced by the hanging of two of their leaders at Dublin during 1213.⁴⁶⁰ This double body blow to the O'Dempseys perhaps allowed the O'Connors Falys to reassert themselves in Offaly. During 1214, another army was

⁴⁵⁵ *Ann. Clon*, p. 227. Donnchadh and Fionn O'Dempsey were later hung by Geoffrey de Marisco at Dublin in the year. The proximity of the references and severity of the punishment suggests their involvement in Cormac mac Airt's activities.

⁴⁵⁶ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 250-1; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 181-2.

⁴⁵⁷ *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 180-1.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 182-3.

⁴⁵⁹ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 251-2.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ann Clon*, p. 227.

dispatched to Westmeath to fight Máelsechlainn Óg O'Melaghlin - Cormac mac Airt's rival. Alongside Máelsechlainn Óg was the unknown O'Connor Faly lord.⁴⁶¹ In 1215, the resurgent O'Connor Faly killed his traditional client, O'Molloy of Fearceall.⁴⁶² The Normans sought to regain control of the region by hanging Gillekoewgyn O'Kelly at Trim that year⁴⁶³, while Meyler Fitzhenry aided by the O'Molloys reasserted Fitzgerald overlordship in Offaly, killing Máelsechlainn O'Dempsey in 1216.⁴⁶⁴ This probably restored order to the midlands.

Despite Cathal Cróibhdhearg's incorporation into the feudal system, he remained apprehensive.⁴⁶⁵ On 13 September 1215, John granted him Connacht⁴⁶⁶ but made a similar grant that day to Richard - William Burke's son.⁴⁶⁷ Faced by such double-dealing, Cathal Cróibhdhearg obtained papal protection for himself, Aodh, and their kingdom during 1220-1.⁴⁶⁸ Indeed, de Lacy activities in the midlands caused Cathal Croibhdhearg concern from 1218. Then the Normans and the O'Farrells of Annaly raided Connacht, resulting in O'Connor retaliation.⁴⁶⁹ From 1220 Cathal Cróibhdhearg's problems magnified, resulting from de Lacy expansion into Bréifne, Cavan and Leitrim.⁴⁷⁰ In 1221 they, accompanied by Aodh Meith O'Neill, attacked Meath and burnt West Leinster - which probably spurred Cathal Cróibhdhearg to ask Henry III for armed protection.⁴⁷¹ In 1222 Cathal Cróibhdhearg's sensitivity about his eastern frontier caused him to destroy Walter de Lacy's castle of Ath Liag in Annaly. Indeed, the 1223 burning of Clonmacnoise indicates midland unrest.⁴⁷² And later that year de Lacy castle building in Bréifne brought another Connacht army over the Shannon.⁴⁷³

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', pp 135-38.

⁴⁶⁶ Lydon, 'The expansion and consolidation of the colony, 1215-54', p. 161; *C.D.I.*, 1171-1251, no. 654, pp 100-1.

⁴⁶⁷ *C.D.I.*, 1171-1251, no. 653, p. 100.

⁴⁶⁸ Sheedy, *Pontifica*, i, p. 234; Byrne, 'The Trembling Sod', p. 36.

⁴⁶⁹ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 261-3.

⁴⁷⁰ Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, p. 127.

⁴⁷¹ *A.U.*, ii, pp 270-1; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 200-1; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 264-5.

⁴⁷² *A.L.C.*, i, p. 266-7.

⁴⁷³ *Ann Clon.*, p. 230; The dangers posed by William de Lacy in Bréifne and Conmaicne directly interfered with Connacht's interests. This caused Cathal Croibhdhearg to specifically spell out Connacht territorial claims east of the Shannon. In 1224 he asked

After Cathal Croibhdhearg's death on 27 May 1224, Aodh faced a struggle to preserve his inheritance.⁴⁷⁴ Although Aodh had cooperated with his father's temporising with the English crown, he was concerned by de Lacy probing of Connacht's Shannon frontier.⁴⁷⁵ His position was precarious as a confederation of enemies moved against him. Also Richard Burke with the support of his uncle Justiciar Hubert Burke of England pressed his claims to Connacht.⁴⁷⁶ Trouble flared in late 1224 but the intervention of Justiciar William Marshall II soothed Aodh's anger.⁴⁷⁷ About this time Aodh confiscated the lands of Donn Óg MacGeraghty (MacOireachtaigh). Encouraged by MacGeraghty, the Connacht nobility invited the sons of Ruaidhrí to challenge Aodh.⁴⁷⁸ With their invasion of Connacht, Aodh's support

that the lands of Bréifne and Conmaicne, now the counties of Cavan, Leitrim, and Longford, be granted in fee to Aodh. This request was part of a final effort by the old king to obtain a grant of Connacht for Aodh. The regency government did not grant his wish. Thus Cathal Croibhdhearg died, leaving his greatest wish unfulfilled on 27 May 1224. See Lydon, 'The expansion and consolidation of the colony, 1215-54', p. 161. Cathal Croibhdhearg's renewed interest in the midlands is evidenced by his foundation of the Franciscan monastery at Athlone in 1223. See *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 206-7.

⁴⁷⁴During the old king's reign, Aodh had acted as his lieutenant earning a reputation as harsh enforcer of his father's word. His actions were to earn him an ill reputation among his cousins and the O'Connor vassals See *A.L.C.*, i, pp 242-3 Aodh is first mentioned when his father refused to bring him before John at Rathwire in Westmeath during August 1210. See also *Ann.Clon.*, p. 223; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 244-5 Aodh drove the raiding Toirdhealbhach mac Ruaidhrí O'Connor in the north in 1211; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 166-9 This records the same incident, but including Diarmait mac Ruaidhrí along with Toirdhealbhach. The sons of Ruaidhrí and Tadhg mac Conchobhar Maenmhaighe and people of Annaly preyed Roscommon, Aodh drove them east of the Shannon. Later Aodh blinded Donnchadh O'Heyne (Ó hEidhin) with his father's permission, see *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 172-3. See also *Ann Conn.*, pp 26-7 and pp 76-7.

⁴⁷⁵ This concern to shore up his support in this region may have prompted his second marriage to Ragnailt O'Farrell of Annaly See *Ann Conn.*, pp 76-7.

⁴⁷⁶ Lydon, 'The Expansion and Consolidation of the Colony, 1215-54', p. 162.

⁴⁷⁷The deluge was delayed by the arrival of William Marshall II in Ireland to take up his post as justiciar on 19 June 1224. His mission was twofold: he was to expel Hugh de Lacy II and was to protect Aodh's position as the new king of Connacht. From England, Marshall brought with him the confirmation of Connacht's rights in Uí Briuin, Conmaicne and Bréifne as requested by Cathal Croibhdhearg. Once in Ireland, Marshall summoned the magnates to campaign against the de Lacys. His call to arms have had the effect of short circuiting the rising dissatisfaction of Aodh. At the time of Marshall's summons, Aodh was negotiating with the barons somewhere in Westmeath. On hearing of Marshall's arrival, he with the barons laid aside their dispute and hurried to his presence. There Aodh was presented with a grant of Bréifne, Conmaicne and Uí Briuin, but the all important grant of Connacht was withheld. After this Marshall assembled the magnates of Ireland, including Aodh, Donnchadh Cairbrech of Thomond and Diarmait Cluasach MacCarthy of Desmond, and marched against the de Lacys and Aodh Meith O'Neill. When the de Lacys were beaten, Aodh began his return to Connacht. On his way through Annaly, he vented his frustration by destroying Ardowlan Castle, killing all its inhabitants. This outrage shocked Marshall who now sought to restore calm by seemingly employing Rose O'Connor, Ruaidhrí's daughter and Hugh de Lacy I's widow, to bring Aodh to peace. See Orpen, *Normans*, iii, p. 43; Curtis, *Med Ire.*, p. 128; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 270-1

⁴⁷⁸ Ever since the accession of Cathal Croibhdhearg around 1190, there had been mounting opposition to the holder of the provincial kingship from within the O'Connor dynasty. Among the chiefest dissidents were the families of Ruaidhrí and his son Conchobhar Maenmhaighe. By the 1220s the sons of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe had

crumbled - culminating in Toirdhealbhach mac Ruaidhrí's inauguration by Aodh Meith O'Neill. Aodh fled to Marshall at Athlone.⁴⁷⁹ There Aodh gathered together an expedition to drive Toirdhealbhach mac Ruaidhrí out of Connacht. The support lent to Aodh by Cormac mac Airt and the O'Dempseys shows Connacht's influence in West Leinster and the midlands, while Marshall recruited MacMurrough support in East Leinster.⁴⁸⁰ After a series of destructive campaigns, Aodh drove his rivals into Ulster.⁴⁸¹

Ironically this success undermined Aodh's position, coinciding with Marshall's replacement as justiciar on 26 June 1226 by Geoffrey de Marisco.⁴⁸² The tension between Aodh and de Marisco exploded when he in early 1227 destroyed Athlone Castle.⁴⁸³ His actions established a pretext for the grant of Connacht to Burke. By May 1227 Burke was granted Connacht, expelling Aodh to Donegal.⁴⁸⁴ This invasion created unrest in the midlands - particularly in Offaly, Laois and Westmeath. Between 1226-7, Cuilen O'Dempsey, whose brother had been killed fighting for Aodh twice checked the O'Connor Falys who were possibly allied to Ruaidhrí's

faded. See *AFM*, iii, pp 196-7. In 1219 Máelsechlainn son of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe was killed by a rival; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 270-1. Aodh son of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe who fought at Kilnagcrann in 1213, died on his way home from Jerusalem in 1224. For growing anger of the sons of Ruaidhrí, see *A.L.C.*, i, pp 264-5. Most recently the annals mention that Diarmait mac Ruaidhrí had hired a Scottish fleet to overthrow Cathal Croíbhdearg in 1221. Fortunately for the Connacht king, Diarmait was intercepted and killed on route from the Hebrides to Connacht by Thomas MacUchtry (MacUchtraigh) of Atholl. The earlier drowning of Maelruanaidh O'Dowd during the assembling of this fleet also throws light upon the composition of the opposition. This setback was to delay the struggle for the Connacht kingship by four years.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ann. Conn.*, p. 9.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 11-9, the brother of Cuilen O'Dempsey and the four sons of MacMurrough were killed during these campaigns; *AFM*, iii, pp 228-9. Donnchadh Cairbrech O'Brien and Richard Burke also fought for Aodh in 1225, see Lydon, 'The Expansion and Consolidation of the Colony, 1215-54', p. 162.

⁴⁸¹ Orpen, *Normans*, iii, pp 159-63.

⁴⁸² Within five days Aodh was summoned to Dublin to surrender Connacht on account of his and his father's forfeiture. If Aodh was to refuse to come, de Marisco, as justiciar, was to grant Burke seisin of Connacht. He was to hold it of the king for three hundred marks for the first five years and five hundred thereafter. Furthermore five of the cantreds closest to the royal castle of Athlone were to taken into the king's hand. This radical plan caused much unease among the colonist magnates, many of whom had fought for Aodh a year earlier. Many such as Marshall were fearful that crisis could irreversibly destroy the carefully maintained equilibrium between the colonists and the kings of Connacht. Indeed, Marshall seems to have covertly warned Aodh of the probability of a trap laid by de Marisco in Dublin. See Orpen, *Normans*, iii, p. 167-70; See *Ann Conn.*, pp 94-5. This mentions that Marshall rescued Aodh from a trap in the court of the justiciar. However, Orpen disputes this.

⁴⁸³ *Ann. Conn.*, pp 24-5.

⁴⁸⁴ Lydon, 'The Expansion and Consolidation of the Colony, 1215-54', p. 163; E. Curtis, *A History of Medieval Ireland*, (Dublin, 1927), p. 97.

sons⁴⁸⁵, while O'More killed O'Molloy of Fearceall in 1227.⁴⁸⁶ In Westmeath, Cormac mac Airt's rivals engaged the settlers in a series of unsuccessful encounters. Significantly, Clonmacnoise, the emblem of the Connacht kingship, suffered sustained assault. Although the Leinstermen employed by Aodh to protect it killed Conchobhar Fox (An Sionnach) of Tethbae, they were later swamped.⁴⁸⁷ Prominent among the attackers was the son of Domhnall Bregach O'Melaghlin, the ally of Ruaidhrí's sons, ravaging Clonmacnoise three times that year.⁴⁸⁸ Significantly Cormac mac Airt, Aodh's ally, was captured at Clonmacnoise by the Normans that year.⁴⁸⁹ These incidents appear to fit into a campaign by the Norman supporters of the sons of Ruaidhrí to weaken Aodh's allies in Meath and Leinster. On Aodh's return to Connacht, he was defeated but escaped into Leinster.⁴⁹⁰ There he was murdered in 1228.⁴⁹¹

Burke's position was strengthened by his succession to the justiciarship on 13 February 1228. And with his support, Aodh mac Ruaidhrí O'Connor defeated his elder brother - Toirdhealbhadh - to claim the Connacht kingship.⁴⁹² But in 1230 Aodh encouraged by his vassals challenged Burke's provincial overlordship.⁴⁹³ Burke then allied with Féilim O'Connor, the deceased Aodh's brother, and exiled Aodh mac Ruaidhrí to Tyrone, paving the way for Féilim's installation as provincial king.⁴⁹⁴ In 1231 Féilim was incarcerated in Burke's Meelick Castle. Burke now turned to the repentant Aodh mac Ruaidhrí to take

485 *Ann.Conn*, pp 18-9; *A.L.C.*, i, pp 276-7.

486 *Ann.Clon*, pp 234-5, In 1225 Cowlen O'Dempsey killed Moylemorey O'Connor Faly. Cullen O'Dempsey, most likely the Cowlen of 1225, slew Melaghlen O'Connor Faly; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 242-3. This entry dates the slaying to 1227.

487 *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 242-3 Again this entry is dated to 1227. But in the *Ann Clon*, pp 230-1, it is dated to 1226. However, for the same year it mentions that Geoffrey de Marisco expelled Aodh from Connacht. This clearly happened in 1227.

488 *Ann Clon*, pp 233

489 Although many of Cormac mac Airt's clients were killed, including Muirheartach O'Brien of Lune, Cormac mac Airt redeemed himself through the payment of a large ransom. *Ann Clon*, pp 232.

490 *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 246-7.

491 *Ibid*; *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 346-7.

492 *A.U.*, ii, pp 278-9; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 248-9.

493 K. Waters. 'The Anglo-Irish Gentry of Meath'. Unpublished M.Phil thesis University of Dublin, 1999, p. 36. (hereafter Waters). Arguably it seems that this belligerence must have been widespread as it is graphically reflected in contemporary obits from various parts of Ireland. *The Four Masters* describes Aodh Meith O'Neill, king of Tyrone, as the defender of Leth Chuinn against the English of Ireland in 1230. See *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 256-7; *Ann Clon*, p. 233.

494 *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 256-7; *Ann Conn*, pp 33-9.

Féilim's place.⁴⁹⁵ But before Burke could secure Connacht, Hubert Burke - his uncle - was dismissed as English justiciar on 29 July 1232.⁴⁹⁶ A month later Burke was ordered to release Féilim and was succeeded as Irish justiciar on 2 September by Maurice Fitzgerald.⁴⁹⁷ Furthermore, Burke was commanded to surrender Connacht but refused, angering Henry III. He ordered Fitzgerald and then Féilim to take Meelick. They declined.⁴⁹⁸ This sea change proved disastrous for Burke's settlement of Connacht. Féilim went on the rampage, levelling Burke's castles before defeating Aodh mac Ruaidhrí.⁴⁹⁹

Féilim's reemergence as king of Connacht heralded disturbances in West Leinster. It is clear that this region was disturbed by the early 1230s. There the MacFháeláins were disaffected with the Marshalls. In 1232, Roger de Hyda, the Marshall seneschal of Leinster, recorded sixty cows taken from 'Morchad Ofelan'.⁵⁰⁰ In the next year the wider region was torn by upheaval among the Normans. Then the feud between Earl Richard Marshall and Henry III spilled over into Ireland, culminating in the fatal stabbing of Marshall in April 1234 by the Fitzgeralds on the Curragh.⁵⁰¹ That year Féilim may have tried to exploit this unrest, burning Ardnurcher and Baleloghoe in Westmeath.⁵⁰² It was probably during this attack that Féilim allied himself with Cormac mac Airt.⁵⁰³ However, Burke was back in favour with the king because of his service against the Marshalls in 1234. In summer 1235 Burke defeated Féilim and Donnchadh Cairbrech O'Brien, forcing Féilim into Donegal.⁵⁰⁴ Shortly afterwards Féilim

⁴⁹⁵ *Ann Conn*, pp 43-5.

⁴⁹⁶ Lydon, 'The Expansion and Consolidation of the Colony, 1215-54', p. 164.

⁴⁹⁷ Orpen, *Normans*, iii, p. 197.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 180.

⁴⁹⁹ *AU*, ii, pp 288-9; *Ann Conn*, pp 44-5; *Ann Clon*, p. 234; *AFM*, iii, pp 268-9.

⁵⁰⁰ *D.K.R.*, xxxv, p. 133. But there is evidence that suggests earlier strained relations between the MacFháeláins and the Marshalls. In 1211-2 the Irish Pipe Roll records that William Marshall rendered a prey of eighty cows from the spoil of 'Murechot Offelan', perhaps a son or grandson of Fáelán MacFháeláin. See *The Irish Pipe Roll of 14 John, 1211-1212*, p. 18.

⁵⁰¹ *Clyn, Annals* p. 7.

⁵⁰² *Ann. Clon*, p. 234.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid*, pp 235; Cormac mac Airt's attachment to the house of Cathal Croibhdhearg was confirmed by his arrest by Justiciar Maurice Fitzgerald at Athlone during 1235. *Ann Conn*, pp 160-1. He seems also to have been present at Féilim's looting of the bawn of Randoon the following year.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ann Conn*, pp 52-3; *Ann. Inisf*, pp 350-1. Earlier in 1234, there was trouble between the MacCarthy dynasty and the colonists. At Tralee the colonists inflicted a heavy defeat on the Irish in which Diarmait the son of Cormac Liathanach MacCarthy was killed. Orpen, *Normans*, iii, p. 180, see also fn. 1. In the aftermath of their defeat, Donnchadh Cairbrech submitted while Féilim again fled to Donegal to the refuge of his brother in law, Domhnall Mór O'Donnell. For their part, Burke and Fitzgerald proceeded to reduce the province to the

submitted before the justiciar, obtaining the king's five cantreds in Roscommon. In effect, Féilim recognised the partition of Connacht. But before the end of the year, Féilim was again in the field.⁵⁰⁵ As a result Justiciar Maurice Fitzgerald depossessed him of the cantreds and drove him again into exile in Donegal.⁵⁰⁶ With Féilim out of the way, Fitzgerald gave the kingship back to the family of Ruaidhrí. According to *The Four Masters* Féilim was invited back by a series of Connacht lords, including Cormac mac Airt. His description as a Connacian again highlights the intricate relations between the midlands and Connacht.⁵⁰⁷ This close association between Cormac mac Airt and Connacht is confirmed in 1239. Then he died on the Connacht island of Inisdowginn on the Suck, demonstrating that parts of the midlands were still considered integral parts of Connacht.⁵⁰⁸

In 1236 Féilim returned from Donegal, burning Rinndown in Roscommon before defeating his cousins.⁵⁰⁹ Upon his return from England, Burke found Connacht in chaos. Leaving Fitzgerald to extinguish the struggle between Féilim and his rivals, Burke subdued Mayo and Galway.⁵¹⁰ Féilim established himself in Connacht in late 1236 or early 1237⁵¹¹, making peace with Burke, accepting the lease

royal will by launching a naval campaign around Clew Bay against the O'Connor sept of Clann Muircheartach Muimhnech. O'Donnell was also punished for harbouring Féilim and the MacDermot (MacDiarmait) island fortress of Loch Cé was taken. See *Ann Conn*, pp 54-5; *Ann Clon*, p. 235; *A.U.*, ii, pp 292-3.

⁵⁰⁵ Orpen, *Normans*, iii, pp 184-86.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 186.; *Ann Conn*, pp 58-9. The breaking down of Meelick by Féilim is placed after his submission. However, Orpen suggests that Meelick was destroyed before this date, suggesting that Féilim destroyed it on his way to join O'Brien, see Orpen, *Normans*, iii, fn. 1, p. 183.

⁵⁰⁷ *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 286-7.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ann. Clon*, p. 236; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 298-9.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ann. Conn*, pp 61-3

⁵¹⁰ Burke marched west to extinguish the fire kindled by the Clann Muircheartach Muimhnech in Mayo and Galway. In his account, Orpen suggests that Burke supported Féilim against his enemies by devastating the Mayo homeland of the Clan Muircheartach Muimhnech. However, Orpen's interpretation leaves much to be desired and is not reflected by evidence. The Irish annals clearly label the protagonists. Although the text in *The Annals of Connacht* seems to suggest that Burke intervened on behalf of Féilim, it is far from clear. There is little doubt that the Clan Muircheartach Muimhnech were among the firmest and most steadfast followers of Féilim at this time. The confusion tends to centre upon the person described as O'Connor in the text. Traditionally it has been thought that this was Féilim. However, one has to taken into account the existence of the rival claimant to the Connacht kingship, Brian of the family of Ruaidhrí. All in all it seems Burke intervened on his side and not on Féilim's. See Orpen, *Normans*, iii, fn.2, p. 187; *Ann Conn*, pp 61-3.

⁵¹¹ The majority of the Irish dynasties of Connacht and its ambit were in support of Féilim. In fact, among Féilim's supporters in 1236-7 were his nephews, the Clann Muircheartach Muimhnech, and an assortment of vassals and allies such as Domhnall Mór O'Donnell. See *Ann Conn*, pp 70-1. Domhnall was a brother-in-law of Féilim. The closeness of the Clan Muircheartach Muimhnech to the line of Cathal Crobdearg is borne out in

of the king's cantreds.⁵¹² Essentially, though, Connacht belonged to Burke, who induced settlers over the Shannon.⁵¹³ However, Duffy has pointed out that Connacht was destined not to become a little England.⁵¹⁴ Féilim turned to diplomacy. In 1240 he went to England to petition Henry III to confirm his tenure of his reduced inheritance.⁵¹⁵ By 1241, however, Féilim found it hard to control his nephews - the sons of Aodh.⁵¹⁶ And his task was magnified by the rapid

1210. Then Muirheartach Muimhnech, tanaiste of Connacht and brother of Cathal Crobhdhearg, died. However, in 1225 they had joined the general revolt of the Connacht princes against Aodh O'Connor (d. 1228), see *Ann Conn*, pp 14-5. See *ibid*, pp 53-55. In 1234 the son of Magnus O'Connor, lord of the Clann Muirheartach Muimhnech, engaged the colonists at sea during Féilim's outbreak in 1234. Conchobhar Ruadh the son of Muirheartach Muimhnech also fought for Féilim before going into exile with Féilim in Donegal. In 1237 we find the son of this Magnus killing Muirheartach son of Diarmait mac Ruaidhri O'Connor, see *AFM*, iii, pp 292-3; Later Muirheartach son of Magnus O'Connor died while campaigning for Féilim against the O'Reillys in Bréifne during 1244, see *ibid*, p. 311. Again during the revolts of the sons of Aodh and Aodh son of Féilim between 1247-49, the Clann Muirheartach Muimhnech prominently figure, see *Ann. Conn*, pp 93-5. Bolstered by his allies, Féilim routed family of Ruaidhri at Cluain Catha in late 1236 before beating them again and a royal force in the early months of the next year. See *AFM*, iii, pp 290-1.

⁵¹² Duffy, *Ireland in the Middle Ages*, p. 120.

⁵¹³ The best account of this process is pieced together by Orpen, see *idem*, *Ireland under the Normans*, iii, pp 190-224. Also see Walton, *The English in Connacht*. Also McNeill, *Castles in Ireland*, pp 130-37.

⁵¹⁴ Duffy, *Ireland in the Middle Ages*, pp 120-21.

⁵¹⁵ *Ann. Conn*, pp 72-3, p. 85; *Ann. Clon*, p. 237. See also *C.D.I. 1171-1251*, no. 2738, p. 408.

⁵¹⁶ In this period the sons of Aodh, Féilim's nephews, became increasingly powerful. Led by the eldest Tadhg, also Féilim's fosterson, they acted as his enforcers and mopped up the resistance of the family of Ruaidhri and their clients. In 1238 this Tadhg killed Donnchadh Uaithneach (fostered in the Limerick barony of Owey) O'Connor who was the son of Aodh mac Ruaidhri (d. 1231). See *MacCarthaigh's Book*, p. 117; He also captured Donnchadh O'Hara (Ó hEaghra), see *Ann. Conn*, pp 68-9. For proof of Tadhg's fosterage, see *Ann Conn*, pp 80-1. Féilim's other principal supporters the Clan Muirheartach Muimhnech also continued to eradicate the support base of the family of Ruaidhri. In 1238 Máelsechlainn the son of Conchobhar Ruadh O'Connor killed Maelruanaidh O'Dowd (Ó Dubha), see *MacCarthaigh's Book*, p. 117. For the O'Dowd attachment to the house of Cathal Croibhdhearg, see *A.L.C.*, i, pp 264-5 for the drowning of another Maelruanaidh O'Dowd during the assembling of a Scottish fleet by Diarmait mac Ruaidhri in 1221. However by 1241 Tadhg and his brothers were becoming restless and were acting independent of Féilim, see *Ann Conn*, pp 74-5; *AFM*, iii, pp 302-3. Apart from colonist advances in Connacht, Féilim increasingly had to contend with the gradual disillusion percolating through his leading supporters. Those objecting the loudest to his appeasing ways were his nephews, the sons of his brother Aodh whose territory seems to have been centred in Leitrim and south Sligo. Like the junior O'Connors of 1211-14, the sons of Aodh were under intense colonist pressure. Their principal tormentors were Justiciar Maurice Fitzgerald and the de Angulos. In 1241 the sons of Aodh led by Tadhg torched Fitzgerald's subinfeudation of Luighne in southern Sligo. A quick peace patched up this fracture, but the matter did not end there. Within the year they attacked the colonists settling in north Leitrim and Roscommon, leading to more fighting with Fitzgerald. By the following year their war against the settlers had grown in intensity. Now they had obtained the support of their cousin and new king of Donegal, Máelsechlainn O'Donnell. His involvement suggests that these Irish attacks were mainly concentrated in Northwest Connacht and were in response to Fitzgerald's activities. See *Ann Conn*, pp 72-3; *AFM*, iii, pp 304-5. Féilim, however, was clearly concerned that his nephews would upset the equilibrium and joined Fitzgerald's hosting into Donegal to capture Tadhg. During the course of the fighting, Máelsechlainn O'Donnell refused to surrender Tadhg and allowed him to escape into Bréifne before submitting. Yet Tadhg's activities still worried Féilim. Indicative of this concern was his role in Tadhg's capture. Secretly he conveyed a message to Tadhg's host, Cú Connacht O'Reilly, ordering him to capture his renegade nephew. When the deed was

development of anti-settler feelings among the Irish. Not only was Connacht threatened, but the colonists were advancing into Donegal⁵¹⁷, Tyrone⁵¹⁸, Munster⁵¹⁹ and the midlands. Crucial to our

done, Féilim interestingly did not press for Tadhg's transfer to his or colonist custody. Instead he opted to leave the young man in O'Reilly's care, hoping that he could use him in the future. The annals also hint at de Angulo involvement in Tadhg's capture as the captive's brothers shortly afterwards destroyed the de Angulo castle in Bréifne. See *AFM*, iii, pp 304-5; *Ann Conn*, pp 76-7. At an uncertain date in 1243-4, Tadhg was briefly released. Once free, he attacked Magh Lurg and kidnapped his mother, Etain MacCarthy. His plan seems to have been to marry his mother to his former captor, Cú Connacht O'Reilly. On his return to Bréifne, O'Reilly suddenly arrested him and blinded him. According to the annals, this was at the instigation of the Galls who were most likely the de Angulos. The mutilation of Tadhg broke the alliance between his family and the O'Reillys, setting the scene for a decade of bitter hostility. In response Tadhg's brother Cathal who was fostered with the O'Reillys, attacked them. More serious for the O'Reillys was Féilim's personal intervention in the crisis by leading his forces into Bréifne during 1244. In Féilim's eyes, O'Reilly had over stepped the mark by blinding his fosterson. However, the Connacht king may have had other reasons up his sleeve than revenge. Burke's death in 1244 may have caused some slippage in the tightness of colonist control over the Irish in Burke lands and this may have provided greater opportunity for Féilim to remind his kinsmen and vassals of their traditional adherence. Thus by revenging Tadhg, Féilim may have sought to reassert himself over his fractured dynasty as Burke expired. See *Ann Conn*, pp 77-9; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, p.121. Two of Tadhg's brothers died in 1243-4, Ruaidhri drowned in the Shannon at Ath Liag and Conchobhar died in the spring; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 120-3; *Ann Conn*, pp 78-9; *AFM*, iii, pp 312-3. The prescense of Muirheartach son of Magnus O'Connor of the Clan Muirheartach Muimhnech on Féilim's campaign of 1244 against the O'Reillys indicates his purpose to reunite his dynasty. Also the sons of Aodh were probably on this expedition to avenge their brother. See also *AU*, ii, pp 302-3 Although this is dated to 1243, it may actually have happened in 1244. This entry records the killing of Giollapádraig O'Hanlon (Ó h-Anluain), king of Oirgialla, by a Connacht archer. Did this king come to aid of Cú Connacht O'Reilly?, if so this indicates a much wider war.

⁵¹⁷ Burke granted Hugh de Lacy II, earl of Ulster, the five cantreds of modern Sligo which included the Connacht sub-territories of Cairbre, Luighne, Sliabh Luga and Tir nAililla, threatening Norman expansion into Donegal. See *Red Bk Kildare*, nos 21-22, pp 26-27; Orpen, *Normans*, iii, pp 194-95. The 1230s had seen prolonged O'Donnell consolidation of their rule over Donegal and subsequent expansion into neighbouring kingdoms. In 1231 Domhnall Mór attacked Cathal O'Reilly of Bréifne at Lough Oughter in Cavan, taking his wife hostage, see *Ann Conn*, pp 40-1, *AU*, ii, pp 284-5; In the following year Domhnall fought a series of defensive and offensive engagements against Domhnall O'Loughlin of Tyrone, burning deep into Tyrone, *Ibid*, pp 284-5. In 1235 O'Donnell clearly supported Féilim in his struggle against Burke by harbouring him and suffered a Norman raid for his pains, see *Ann. Conn*, pp 54-5. Because of O'Donnell strength and the closeness of the alliance, Féilimidh perhaps allowed him lordship over Cairbre? See also K.Simms, 'Late Medieval Donegal', in *Donegal History and Society*, Wm Nolan, L.Ronayne and M.Dunlevy (eds), (Dublin, 1995), p. 184. Fitzgerald also laid claim to the kingdom of Fermanagh. (hereafter Simms, 'Late Medieval Donegal')

⁵¹⁸ Both Fitzgerald and de Lacy were intent on transforming their claims into reality, leading to vigorous campaigns into both Tyrone and Donegal. During 1238 Fitzgerald, still justiciar, and de Lacy deposed and banished Domhnall O'Loughlin, king of Tyrone, to Connacht. In his place they promoted his deadly rival, Domhnall son of Aodh Meith O'Neill. On completing their task, they rounded off their circuit by taking the hostages of Donegal. Far from pacifying or subduing the Irish, this interference only enforced the besieged mentality of the Irish kings and made the situation more volatile in the longer term. Within a year Domhnall O'Loughlin had regained his throne by beating O'Neill and his allies at the battle of Carnteel, while the O'Donnells faced the prospect of further invasion by Fitzgerald. See *Ann Conn*, p. 69-71; *Ann Clon*, pp 236; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 116-7.

⁵¹⁹Parallels can be drawn with the developing political situation among the Irish in Munster. There the somewhat hesitant figure of Conchobhar O'Brien presided over his rapidly shrinking kingdom of Thomond. He like his father, Donnchadh Cairbrech, and his cousin Féilim of Connacht had tried to temporise with the colonists by attempting to keep his lands as a loyal tenant of the king through the payment of an annual rent. Unfortunately for him, Thomond like Connacht and Ulster stood directly in the path of this colonist expansion. Later grants to colonists along the west bank of the Shannon and

understanding of the phenomenon which has become known as 'The Irish Resurgence' was the emergence of new Irish leaders throughout the island at this time.⁵²⁰ Like the crisis of 1210-5, many of them were drawn from the junior branches of Irish dynasties or were princes frustrated with the temporising of their fathers. However, provincial kings were now on the receiving end of Norman aggression. Their exasperation destined any further explosion in violence to be greatly magnified. In late 1244 Richard Burke died⁵²¹ and because his sons were minors, Burke's lands in Connacht and Munster were taken into the royal hand.

In 1245 Féilim shifted closer to the crown by helping Fitzgerald to consolidate his grip in northwest Connacht. Also he and Fitzgerald brought an army to campaign in Wales for Henry III in October and November 1245.⁵²² But the loss of belief in appeasement is evidenced when Máelsechlainn O'Donnell of Donegal devastated northwest Connacht at end of the year.⁵²³ Fitzgerald then attacked Donegal, taking the hostages of O'Donnell.⁵²⁴ Although smarting from his reverse, O'Donnell laid siege to Sligo Castle. Then the colonists perhaps with the support of Féilim attacked the sons of Aodh, imprisoning their leaders.⁵²⁵ By autumn Toirdhealbhach O'Connor, their principal leader, escaped. Soon afterwards he was retaken and confined in Athlone reflecting the mounting tension.⁵²⁶ By early 1247

their establishment of settlements at Bunratty and Clare conspired to place Conchobhar in an impossible position. Eventually this frustration would drive the O'Briens into conflict with the colonists as it had driven Donnchadh Cairbrech to join Féilim's war against them in 1234-5. Same can be seen in Desmond, there the MacCarthy kings had proved reasonably co-operative with the colonists from about 1210 onwards. This amicable relationship came to an abrupt conclusion in 1234. Then fighting erupted near Tralee, ending in an MacCarthy defeat. See *Ann. Inisf*, pp 350-1; Orpen, *Normans*, iii, pp 136-37.

⁵²⁰ *Ann Conn*, pp 72-3 Domhnall Mór O'Donnell died and was succeeded by his son, Máelsechlainn. This Máelsechlainn then helped Brian O'Neill to defeat Domhnall O'Loughlin. See for the hostility of Tadhg O'Connor see *ibid*, pp 74-5.

⁵²¹ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 100. Richard Burke fell ill because of hardships at sea during Henry III's expedition to Poitou in 1242-43. This indicates that Burke before his death had been ill for some considerable time. For his death see *Ann. Clon*, p. 237.

⁵²² *Ann Conn*, pp 84-5; *Ann Clon*, p. 238; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 122-3 Féilim was ordered to build Sligo at his own expense for Fitzgerald. Does this indicate that the O'Connors had some expertise in building Norman style castle?

⁵²³ *AFM*, iii, pp 316-7.

⁵²⁴ *Ann Conn*, pp 88-9; *AFM*, iii, pp 317-9.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid*; *AFM*, iii, pp 318-9. The reason why Féilim may have been involved in the prosecution of the sons of Aodh is because Toirdhealbhach was confined on the crannog on Muckenagh Lough in east Roscommon. This seems to be in Féilim's lands. Also it is clear from the annals that he was imprisoned by Irishmen rather than colonists.

⁵²⁶ *AFM*, iii, pp 318-9

a major conflict was unavoidable. Then Toirdhealbhach escaped again, beginning a war against the settlers. The crisis magnified when the de Angulos expelled Cathal MacReynolds (Mag Raghnaill) from his territory in Leitrim.⁵²⁷ This proved to be the spark that engulfed the region.⁵²⁸

The level of support amongst the O'Connors for Toirdhealbhach indicates that Féilim lost control of his vassals.⁵²⁹ By early 1247 Toirdhealbhach welded together a Irish confederation stretching from Donegal to Ossory in the midlands. And with Donnchadh MacGillpatrick of Ossory, Toirdhealbhach scorched an arc of settlement stretching from Galway town to the Mayo barony of Carra.⁵³⁰ The annals are unequivocal, stating that he and Toirdhealbhach organised the Connacht Irish to fight a war purely against the Normans. This Donnchadh is crucial to our understanding of the politics of this period.⁵³¹ Among his Irish contemporaries,

⁵²⁷ *Ann Conn*, pp 88-9; for Cathal MacReynold's previous attachment to Féilim O'Connor in 1237, see *ibid*, pp 64-5.

⁵²⁸ We can not be certain as to the nature of relations between Toirdhealbhach and Féilim, his uncle. But it is safe to assume that they had become estranged because of Féilim's failure to protect his clients from colonist aggression. As to Toirdhealbhach's personal ambitions upon Féilim's crown, we are uncertain as to their nature. But it seems there is more to his actions than mere political opportunism. For the treatment of Féilim, see Duffy, 'Ireland and the Irish Sea Region', pp 118-21; *Ann Conn*, pp 84-5.

⁵²⁹ Most disconcerting for the colonists was the level of support within the O'Connor dynasty for Toirdhealbhach, indicating that Féilim had completely lost control of his vassals. Indeed, an argument can be made that Toirdhealbhach cast himself as the avenger of Irish grievances. By the early months of the year, he had welded together a Irish confederation stretching from Donegal to Ossory in the midlands. It is from the annals that we can track the pace and sequence of events. From the evidence Toirdhealbhach and his brother Cathal crossed the Shannon to pull down the de Angulo castle near Lough Derg before aiding MacReynolds to drive them from Feda Conmaicne a week later. His next move was to negotiate the evacuation of the besieged colonist garrison from the fort located within the barony of Boyle in Roscommon. With the war spreading with the intensity of a bush fire, Maurice Fitzgerald took decisive and drastic action. Then it seems he and his client Cormac O'Connor made a preemptive strike against Toirdhealbhach's cousin, Máelsechlainn O'Donnell of Donegal. If the annals are cross referenced in regard to the constitution of O'Donnell's forces, it produces some very interesting results. In addition to his own forces assembled to repel Fitzgerald, O'Donnell had the galloglass forces of MacSorley (MacSomhairle) of Argyll as well as those of Brian O'Neill of Tyrone at his disposal. In the ensuing struggle in Donegal, Fitzgerald was successful after a bitter battle. O'Donnell, for his pains, was killed and replaced by Fitzgerald's choice Ruaidhri O'Canannan as king of Donegal. However, given the constitution of O'Donnell's army, his close familial links to the O'Connor rebels, and his previous military alliances with the sons of Aodh, it strongly suggests a widespread Irish conspiracy against the colonists. See *Ann Conn*, pp 90-1; *AU*, ii, pp 306-9; *AFM*, iii, pp 318-9, 323; Waters, p. 36; *Ann Clon*, p. 238; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 124-5.

⁵³⁰ *AFM*, iii, pp 324-5; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, p. 125-7; *Ann Conn*, pp 91-3

Tellingly the Irish annalist summed up the scale of the devastation done to Norman Connacht by them: '...the Galls did not get such a terrorising for a long time as in that war of the kings' sons, for they did not leave a territory or a cantred in Connacht unpillaged in that year.'; For Walton's comments on the destructiveness of this war, see Walton, 'The English in Connacht', pp 204-5.

⁵³¹ Cunningham, *The Norman Advance*, p. 61 The MacGillpatricks of Ossory like most midland dynasties had a long history of connections to the O'Connors of Connacht,

Donnchadh was a legendary figure, believing that Irish resistance to the advancing settlement should aim to cause maximum devastation. He was the architect of a war that brought violence to Norman doorsteps. Donnchadh realised that systematic destruction of Norman settlement improved his communication with other Irish leaders. Indeed, Donnchadh's later obit illustrates how high the destruction of settlement was on the agenda of many Irish lords. In fact, Donnchadh was lauded in titanic terms as a model of what was required to be a good king.⁵³² Although we don't find him in the records until his Connacht expedition of 1247, he had been active from about 1241. By 1242, the settlers in north Ossory were regularly subject to a new type of warfare designed to stop their advance. Such was the intensity of the fighting that it reached Henry III that year. And to alleviate the pressure on colonists, he ordered Justicar Maurice Fitzgerald to clear the pass of Comsey, lying between Fethard (Tipperary) and the Ossory marches. It seems the war spread as the colonists expelled several rebels from Leinster to Connacht that year.

The war that broke out in 1247 lasted three years.⁵³³ Given the turbulence of 1247 and the long history of links between the

dating from the days of Toirdhealbhach and Ruaidhrí O'Connor. However, they cultivated good relations with the colonists in the aftermath of the initial invasion. But after the death of Máelsechlainn MacGillapatrik in 1193, they were either moved or were forced by the Normans from central Ossory to the Slieve Bloom Mountains. And by the early 1200s, the MacGillapatriks were hostile to the Normans. Now the links between the junior O'Connors and the MacGillapatriks were strengthened by the unrest caused by the advance of settlement.

⁵³² *Ann Conn*, pp 100-1.

⁵³³ In comparison to 1247, much of the fighting was concentrated along the western seaboard of Connacht during 1248. There Conchobhar Ruadh O'Connor of the Clan Muircheartach Muimhnech exploited the gradual loosening of colonist control over the seaboard territories of Mayo by utilising his maritime and land forces to capture the Umhall castle of MacHenry Butler, lord of the Owles. Further successes by his fleet against the colonists gathered on the islands of Clew Bay drew a thunderous response from Jordan de Exeter, sheriff of Connacht. He with Robin Lawless and John Butler brought an avenging hosting deep into the heartland of Conchobhar Ruadh, killing him. Later in the year, the colonists scorched Connemara and inflicted considerable losses upon the O'Connor ally, O'Flatherty. The colonists led by Fitzgerald continued their counter offensive by driving Ruaidhrí O'Canannan from Donegal, replacing him with Gofraidh O'Donnell. O'Canannan fled to Brian O'Neill of Tyrone for help. Despite O'Neill assistance, he was soundly defeated and killed upon his return to Donegal by Gofraidh O'Donnell. Not surprisingly because of the rising threat to the colony from O'Neill, Justiciar John FitzGeoffrey and Fitzgerald resolved to campaign into his country. Their efforts proved successful, albeit briefly, and O'Neill submitted, giving hostages as proof of his good faith. But before long O'Neill was back on the prowl, campaigning against Gofraidh O'Donnell and his colonial backers in Donegal before demolishing a castle on Lough Erne. See *Ann Conn*, pp 94-5, 100-1; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 126-7. This entry also describes Conchobhar Ruadh as being greatly feared and hated by the Galls up to his death. Afterwards Conchobhar Ruadh's kinsman Domhnall O'Connor made a pact with MacHenry Butler against the Irish, see *ibid*; *AFM*, iii, pp 326-9; *AU*, ii, pp 308-9; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 126-9; *Ann Conn*, pp 94-5; *AU*, ii, pp 310-1.

midlands and the O'Connors, it would seem that this region was not unaffected by these disturbances. Whilst we have no evidence of disturbances in Leinster in 1247, it is unlikely that Donnchadh's troops kept the peace upon their return home. But what is curious about this passage of events in Connacht is the absence of Féilim. Traditionally Féilim has been viewed as an appeaser during these years. But there is no evidence in these years to support this view. Clearly the profile of an appeaser does not sit easily with Féilim's apparent inaction, as many of those who fought for Toirdhealbhaich had close links to Féilim. The only mention of Féilim's activities is a reference, recording that his son Aodh killed Muirheartach O'Dowd (Ó Dubha) in 1248.⁵³⁴ And there certainly seems to be a degree of co-ordination between wars in Connacht, the midlands and Desmond during 1249. As the evidence is examined, Féilim looks like the architect of the disturbances. Moreover, the possibility of Féilim orchestrating events behind a screen of dissidents becomes more plausible in 1249. Then he could not have picked a better time to exploit regional Norman weakness. In Leinster, the division of the Marshall inheritance was only beginning to take effect, while there was no Norman lord of Connacht in 1249.⁵³⁵ Ironically, the links between Norman Connacht and Norman Leinster hooped new bands of affiliation around these provinces.⁵³⁶ Because of this fusing effect of

⁵³⁴ *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 128-9. Despite the paucity of background detail to this incident, it is probable that Aodh was doing his father's bidding. In the past the O'Dowds had been among the bitterest enemies of Féilim and his brother - Aodh. Unsurprisingly they threw their support firmly behind the family of Ruaidhrí. See *Ann Conn*, pp 66-7, see also fn.1, p. 66; However, there is more to this than meets the eye. A secondary review of the evidence reveals more perceptives. At this time Cormac O'Connor, the last major leader of the family of Ruaidhrí, was fighting for Maurice Fitzgerald in neighbouring Sligo. Furthermore the obit of the Clan Muirheartach Muimhnech leader, Conchobhar Ruadh, mentions that he was engaged in fighting both colonists and their Irish supporters. An earlier reference dating from 1239 shows that enmity between Clan Muirheartach Muimhnech and the O'Dowds was long established. It is a realistic supposition that the remnants of the family of Ruaidhrí and their O'Dowd allies sided with the colonists in this latest struggle. If so, Aodh was up to more than fighting the traditional foes of his house. Does this incident suggest a decisive shift in Féilim's policy towards the colonists? If so, he had to have been in regular contact with his own dynastic dissidents and was complicit, although not openly, in the co-ordination of the war against the colonists. Was he waging a war by proxy? Having said that much centres around Aodh's personality. However, it is unlikely that he acted without his father's approval given the closeness of their relationship both before and after this incident. See *Ann Conn*, pp 94-5; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 116-7. Then Máelsechlainn mac Chonchobhair Ruadh O'Connor killed Maelruanaidh O'Dowd in a time of intense planting of colonist castles.

⁵³⁵ Walton, 'The English in Connacht', p. 210.

⁵³⁶ Orpen, *Normans*, iii, pp 211-24. A perusal of the names of Burke's grantees reveals that many families of Norman Connacht had their origins in Norman Leinster. Indeed many Normans of West Leinster after 1236 received lands west of the Shannon.

trans Shannon land owning upon these regions, it may have helped to weld the Irish into a coherent force.

Furthermore the terminology applied by the annalists to the Irish participants in these wars is significant, indicating a considerable change in their attitudes. Interestingly, the warring Irish princes in Connacht/Leinster and Munster of 1249 are described as sons of kings.⁵³⁷ The common usage of this term by the annalist in regard to both sets of princes suggests the possibility of a greater unity of purpose prevailing among the Irish. If we look at the train of events of 1249, a progression becomes clear. It is clear that the trouble began in West Leinster early in 1249 and spread to Connacht. In a rare reference to Leinster, *The Annals of Connacht* refer to a war between Justiciar John FitzGeoffrey and un-named Leinster princes.⁵³⁸ The usage of the term Leinster princes suggests that the Irish of Laois and Offaly were involved as the same term is later used to refer to the O'Connor Falys in 1289 and 1311.⁵³⁹ *The Annals of Connacht* provide further clues to the identities of the Irish midland leaders. The Connacht chronicler lists the Irish princes who later fell at Athenry in August 1249. They include Cormac mac Airt's son, Diarmait Ruadh.⁵⁴⁰ Another reference dating from 1248 shows the O'Farrells of Annaly attacking Norman Westmeath.⁵⁴¹ The references dealing with the colonist retribution upon the midland Irish are also revealing.⁵⁴² In his obit, Donnchadh MacGillpatrick is mentioned alongside two other great destroyers of Norman settlements, Conchobhar O'Melaghlin and Conchobhar 'na gcaisleán' MacCoghlan. From this evidence, these may have been the leaders of the midland revolt.⁵⁴³

⁵³⁷ *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 125-27, p. 129; *A.U.*, ii, pp 306-7; *Ann Conn*, pp 100-1; *Ann Inisf*, pp 352-3; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 338-9.

⁵³⁸ *Ann Conn*, pp 96-7.

⁵³⁹ *A.U.*, ii, pp 370-1; *Ann Conn*, pp 182-3, 224-5. This reference mentions the killing of two sons of William Liath Burke by the Leinster princes. This the only other time that this phrase is used in the annals. It is clear from the context that this phrase does not apply to the Leinster princes of the eastern Leinster mountains. According to Ó Cléirigh the Irish of Offaly were active around this date. The O'Connor Falys and the O'More dynasties are the most likely the Leinster princes of the annals. If so, it dovetails perfectly with the reference of 1249. See Ó Cléirigh, 'John fitzThomas', p. 176. See also *A.U.*, ii, p. 371.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 239-40.

⁵⁴¹ *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 128-9.

⁵⁴² *Ann Conn*, pp 98-9; *Ann Clon*, p. 240; *Ann Inisf*, pp 352-3; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 336-7.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*

The next phase of the war opened when the MacCarthys attacked Norman Desmond.⁵⁴⁴ Following the outbreak of war in Desmond Aodh ambushed Peter Bermingham who had custody of Richard Burke's lands.⁵⁴⁵ Fitzgerald's subsequent attack on Féilim's lands indicates that he had no doubt of Féilim's complicity in Aodh's attacks. The Irish sources are in unison as to Féilim's reaction to Fitzgerald's actions. Instead of fleeing to the Normans, Féilim sent his movable wealth into Bréifne and Ulster. Significantly, his choice of refuge was with Brian O'Neill of Tyrone who was connected with anti settler wars of recent years.⁵⁴⁶ FitzGeoffrey also concurred with Fitzgerald and together they devastated the O'Connor territory of Sil Murray, attacked Bréifne, deposed Féilim, and chose Toirdhealbhach as provincial king, ordering him to defend Connacht against Féilim.⁵⁴⁷ If Féilim was secretly encouraging Toirdhealbhach, this fractured their alliance. Thus satisfied Fitzgerald returned to Sligo, while FitzGeoffrey went to Meath. Then a remarkable turn about happened. Instead of consolidating his position, Toirdhealbhach reluctantly agreed to attack the Normans. Again the links between the O'Connors and the midland Irish appear. Support for Toirdhealbhach's decision came from the O'Melaghlin's and it is likely that Donnchadh MacGillpatrick was also involved. Despite some success, Toirdhealbhach's troops were routed outside Athenry in September 1249.⁵⁴⁸ But late in 1249, Toirdhealbhach made his peace with the government but there was no mercy for Donnchadh MacGillpatrick.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 97; *Ann. Inisf*, pp 352-3; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 100-1 and pp 128-9.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ann Conn*, pp 97-9; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 128-9; *AU*, ii, pp 310-1. Piers son of Henry Power was killed in Aodh's ambush. There is some confusion as to the identity of this Piers Power. This entry suggests that Piers Power was one and the same as MacHenry Butler whose castle was burnt by the Clan Muirheartach Muimhnech. If so, this further strengthens the thesis that Féilim and Aodh were lending support to their cousins. For the Butler lords of Umhall, see Orpen, *Normans*, iii, pp 221-222. For Bermingham see *ibid*, p. 231.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ann Conn*, pp 98-9; *Ann Clon*, p. 239; *AU*, ii, pp 310-1; *AFM*, ii, pp 334-5; Otway-Ruthven in her book says that Féilim fled to the colonists, disowning his son's activities. This interpretation is not supported by the evidence and nor does she supply a reference to buttress this claim. See Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 193.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ann Conn*, pp 98-9; *AFM*, ii, pp 336-7.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp 99-101; *AU*, ii, pp 310-1; *AFM*, iii, pp 336-7; This proved to be the decisive defeat for the Irish, but Connacht was far from pacified. The Irish then turned north and extracted retribution for their defeat upon Peter Bermingham's town of Dunmore. Late in the year, Gofraidh O'Donnell's plundering of Northwest Connacht threw the province into further turmoil. See *AFM*, iii, pp 338-9.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ann Conn*, pp 100-1; *AFM*, iii, pp 337-9; See also J.V.Kelleher, 'Mac Anmchaid Lebroir', in *Eriu*, vol. xlii, (Dublin, 1991), p. 56; *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 315. To the south it was the same story for Finghin mac Diarmait MacCarthy, the arch rebel of Desmond. He suffered the same fate at the hands of his rival Domhnall Got MacCarthy and

In 1250 Féilim finally returned from exile in Tyrone. Fear of Féilim drove Toirdhealbhadh to seek Norman protection, confirming their split, resulting eventually in Féilim's restoration.⁵⁵⁰ However, Féilim's restoration came at a cost. By Henry III's wish, FitzGeoffrey dispossessed Féilim of Omany cantred and made grants in O'Connor lands. Furthermore, Connacht's hostages were executed in Athlone - treatment reserved for those engaged in rebellion.⁵⁵¹ This is another example of the government's conclusion that Féilim and his son were implicated at least in the events of 1249. Despite the setbacks of 1249-50, low level fighting dragged on in Connacht and the midlands.⁵⁵² These years saw a hardening in Féilim's attitude towards the settlers. Féilim's seeming favourable disposition to Aodh's views sparked Connacht's resurgence. Of course much of their returning power was linked to their alliance with O'Neill. As a result these years witnessed a shift in the O'Connor political compass away from West Leinster and the midlands towards southern Ulster. This change in O'Connor policy is confirmed by the relative peace that descended upon West Leinster and the midlands throughout the 1250s. Even the O'Melaghlin and MacGillapatricks remained peaceful.⁵⁵³ As for the O'Connors, they spied opportunities for conquest in the lands of the O'Reillys (Ó Raghallaigh) who had the support of Walter Burke. The revived O'Connor expansion across the Shannon led to wars with the O'Rourkes of Bréifne. During this period Féilim through Aodh confirmed his alliance in 1255 with O'Neill.⁵⁵⁴ This paved the way for

the de Cogans in 1250. See *AFM*, iii, pp 340-1; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, p. 101; *Ann Inisf*, pp 354-5.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ann Conn*, pp 103-5, Féilim also expelled his nephew Cathal, Toirdhealbhadh's brother, from Connacht; *AFM*, iii, pp 340-1; *AU*, ii, pp 312-3 This entry says that Féilim came from Donegal to Connacht.

⁵⁵¹ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 193; Orpen, *Normans*, iii, p. 232; *Ann Conn*, p. 103; *AFM*, iii, pp 340-1.

⁵⁵² *Ann Conn*, pp 102-3. In 1250 Cairbre O'Melaghlin was killed by David Roche in Fearceall. During the same year Maurice Fitzgerald reestablished his grip in the Northwest by capturing Diarmait of Luighne and by campaigning into Tyrone for the hostages of Brian O'Neill. In Donegal he deposed Niall O'Canannan, killing him. See *AU*, ii, pp 312-3; *AFM*, iii, pp 340-1. In 1251 Tadhg mac Tuathal O'Connor of the Clan Muirheartach Muimhnech were killed by the colonists, see *ibid*, pp 342-3.

⁵⁵³ In Ossory the Archbishop David MacGillpatrick of Cashel and Donnchadh's successor Sefraidh steered their dynasty along a more peaceable course, see *Ann Conn*, pp 108-9, Archbishop David MacGillpatrick of Cashel died in 1253. see *ibid*, pp 150-1 Sefaid son of Domhnall Clannach MacGillpatrick died in 1269. The only mention of disturbance among the O'Melaghlin dynasty was in 1254. Then Murchadh O'Melaghlin before his own violent demise killed Piers Risturbard, lord of Sil Mailruain now Ballinlough in west Roscommon, see *AFM*, iii, pp 350-1.

⁵⁵⁴ For the wars against the O'Rourkes and the O'Reilly lords, see Orpen, *Normans*, iii, p. 236; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, pp 193-94. In 1255 Aodh went to settle an alliance with Brian O'Neill. At the time he was engaged in fighting the O'Reillys. After the

the recognition by the O'Connors along with their cousin Tadhg O'Brien of O'Neill's high-kingship at Cael Uisce during 1258.⁵⁵⁵

Generally speaking, West Leinster and the midlands seem unaffected by these events. The region's immunity has to do with the change in the 1250s of the geopolitical axis of the O'Connors. But following O'Neill's defeat at Down in 1260, the O'Connors again reviewed their strategies. And in the 1260s the trend of midland warfare was to be dominated by the political beats emanating from Connacht. Indeed, the really striking point about this latest O'Connor volte face was the rapidity with which the midlands descended into warfare. Again Westmeath proved to be the cockpit of the struggle. In response to Aodh's successes against the settlers of Athlone and Meath, they in 1262 deposed Giolla na Naomh O'Farrell of Annaly, replacing him with the son of Murchadh Carrach O'Farrell.⁵⁵⁶ But Giolla na Naomh returned, banished the usurper and ejected the Normans. Two years later Aodh's wars, and the feud between Earl Walter Burke of Ulster and Maurice fitzMaurice Fitzgerald possibly spurred Art O'Melaghlin into conflict. His successes were considerable, routing the Normans at the Brosna River, destroying their settlements throughout Westmeath. The politics of Connacht continued to set the trend here. The feud between Burke and the Fitzgeralds exploded on 6 December 1264. Then the Fitzgeralds swooped on Castledermot in Kildare, capturing Justiciar Richard de la Rochelle, confining him in their castles of Lea and Dunmase in Offaly and Laois.⁵⁵⁷ And after Féilim's death in 1265, Aodh's first raid as king of Connacht was his devastation of Offaly.⁵⁵⁸ Clearly Aodh's offensive had softened up the Norman grip on the region. In 1266 Art O'Melaghlin clashed with Burke at Ath Crocha ford.⁵⁵⁹ And Aodh's

conclusion of the alliance with Aodh, O'Neill unsuccessfully attacked the O'Reillys probably as part of the deal, see *Ann Conn*, pp 112-3. For the defeat of the O'Reillys by Aodh at the battle of Mag Slecht in Northwest Cavan in September 1256, see *ibid*, pp 116-7.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ann Conn*, pp 130-1; *Ann Clon*, p. 242; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 242-3; *A.U.*, ii, pp 328-9.

⁵⁵⁶ A further sign of O'Connor hostility to the government was Aodh's marriage in 1259 to the daughter of Dubhghall MacSorley at Derry, gaining him a dowry of galloglass. And in 1260 Aodh with O'Neill campaigned together in Ulster, meeting defeat at the battle of Down at hands of the colonists. See *Ann Conn*, pp 138-9; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 195; Orpen, *Normans*, iii, p. 239.

⁵⁵⁷ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 196.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ann Conn*, pp 144-5; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 396-7.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp 147-9.

continued attacks around Athlone must have contributed to uprisings by the O'Farrells, MacCoghlan and O'Molloys between 1268-9.⁵⁶⁰

From 1180 the influence of provincial kings in West Leinster and the midlands was exposed to sustained Norman expansion, enduring considerable erosion. While the O'Briens and MacCarthys sought compromise with the Normans, the O'Connors were slower to acknowledge change. But after the turbulence of 1200-3, Cathal Cróibhdhearg acknowledged that the Shannon was no longer a defensible frontier. Also the re-emergence of the O'Melaghlin after 1205, showed that Connacht's hold over them was weak. Indeed, the emergence of Cormac mac Airt combined with the frustration of the junior branches of the O'Briens and O'Connors at Norman inroads provided the genesis of the Irish resurgence, resulting in serious disturbances in West Leinster and the midlands between 1210-5. After Cathal Cróibhdhearg's death in 1224, Connacht and West Leinster were again shaken by the O'Connor feuds and Norman aggression over the next two decades. But the 1240s witnessed the intensification of Irish resistance in Connacht and West Leinster as well as in Munster and Ulster. Like in the early 1200s the Norman advance increased anti settler feeling among the Irish. Indeed, it may be argued that Féilim O'Connor's experience convinced many Irish nobles of the futility of appeasement. What is striking about this period is the increasing dominance of younger Irish leaders from 1241 in the prosecution of these anti settler wars, resulting in a dramatic explosion between 1247-50. Consequently, this led to the regeneration of links between the O'Connors and midland kings such as Donnchadh MacGillpatrick. Two of the direct results of this upheaval was the O'Connor alliance with Brian O'Neill of Tyrone in 1249, and their later recognition of his high-kingship in 1258, resulting in a shift in their compass away from the midlands towards Ulster from the 1250s. But after the death of O'Neill in 1261, the O'Connors again directed themselves towards the midlands, resulting in more warfare.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid, pp 150-1 Before Aodh's attack on the Faes of Athlone in 1268, Amlaib O'Farrell was killed by the English. While after it Máelsechlainn MacCoghlan and Ferghal O'Molloy were separately killed by the English, see *Ann Clon*, p. 246. *Ann Conn*, pp 152-3 Domhnall O'Farrell was killed by the English. However, the killings of the O'Farrell dynasts may be connected to a dynastic struggle. This Domhnall's son, Aodh, was also killed this year by his own kin and the English, see *AU*, ii, pp 342-3.

Chapter 3a

East Leinster, 1265-1320

Between 1265 and 1320, the Irish policy of King Edward I was severely challenged. At the start of this period, the long period of English rule in Ireland was still in its infancy. The two kingdoms, Ireland and England, were still in a state of mutual hostility. The English king, Edward I, was still in a state of mutual hostility with the Irish king, King Brian Boru. The English king, Edward I, was still in a state of mutual hostility with the Irish king, King Brian Boru. The English king, Edward I, was still in a state of mutual hostility with the Irish king, King Brian Boru.

Part III

Chapter 3a

East Leinster, 1265-1320

Chapter 3b

West Leinster, 1270-1320

Chapter 3a

East Leinster, 1265-1320

Between 1266-1320, the Irish polity of East Leinster was utterly transformed. At the start of this period, the long peace between the Irish nobility and the English still held. Indeed, the two communities continued to live cheek by jowl and their respective economies were seemingly interlocked. Tension may have increased between them after the partition of Marshall Leinster two decades earlier, but the outbreak of war could not have been predicted. However, within three years the Wicklow mountains echoed the clash of steel. The reasons for this explosion in violence are multi-layered. And it should be pointed out at this stage, that the war here was independent of other Irish wars in this period. This chapter will examine the seismic shift in Irish polity that led its leaders to reject the peace founded by Diarmait MacMurrough and Strongbow.

From the evidence, the war in East Leinster originated in the Wicklow mountains. There we have seen that the Butler expansion sharpened the ethnic edges, contributing to the explosive situation between Theobald Butler and the Fitzgerald barons of Wicklow in 1265. Much of the Butler designs were focused upon the lands of the Irish clients of the Fitzgeralds and the archbishopric of Dublin. Indeed, the fallout from this clash profoundly shook up the *pax Lageniae*. And after 1265, relations between the Wicklow Irish and the colonists were never the same. Even so, the fragile political situation was not allowed to settle because of Butler territorial ambition in the Wicklow mountains. Their aggression must be a contributing factor to the simmering tension. And despite the outbreak of widespread Irish hostility in 1269, Theobald Butler nevertheless continued to buy lands from the increasingly beleaguered settlers. By 1275-80 the church of DisirtKeyvn was included in the deanery of Arklow, and Theobald Butler significantly had custody of the march of Glendelory or Glenmalure in 1277.⁵⁶¹ The argument for Butler expansion is strengthened by the fact that these rural deaneries are

⁵⁶¹ *Crehe Mihi*, p. 144; *C.D.I.*, 1252-1284, no. 1496, p. 284; *C.O.D.*, i, nos 165-67, pp 71-72.

regarded as more reliable indicators of the correspondence of the territorial units of church and secular power than the modern baronies.⁵⁶² And later in 1294, Geoffrey fitzPhilip FitzRhyss of Imaal granted his holdings to the Butlers. In addition they also managed to hold the cantred of Wicklow of the Fitzgerald heirs from an unknown date in the late thirteenth century.⁵⁶³ But in the long term when war broke in 1269, it was to herald the eventual abortion of Butler and neighbouring colonist mountain lordships

But the spark that ignited Wicklow was famine. Moreover, this combined with worsening weather and poor colonist decisions resulting from the probable initial insensitivity of Archbishop Fulk de Sandford of Dublin towards the plight of the Irish shattered the long-lived regional co-existence of both races. The disturbance began among the Irish of the archbishopric, and spread to the O'Byrnes. The violence must have been considerable and widespread as evidenced by the response of the government. No less a figure than the king's nephew was dispatched to Glenmalure to end Irish resistance. Once there Henry of Almain, son of Duke Richard of Cornwall, also king of Germany quelled the disturbances.⁵⁶⁴ But this Plantagenet scion's campaign failed to put an end to Irish resistance to the archbishopric's officials. By July 1270 the war in the Leinster mountains had clearly reached crisis proportions, leading to a directive from England to Justiciar James de Audley to aid the archbishop against what was termed a 'malicious rebellion'.⁵⁶⁵

The slow emergence of this war coincided with a marked decline of the existing Irish dynastic elites, and the appearance of new leaders, particularly among the O'Tooles.⁵⁶⁶ Always neglected in the analysis of this war is the void created by the death of Muircheartach

⁵⁶² C.A.Empey, 'The Cantreds of the Medieval County of Kildare', in *R.S.A.I.Jn*, vol. 101, part 2, (1971), pp128-34.

⁵⁶³ *C.D.I.*, 1252-1284, no. 1496, p. 284; *C.O.D.*, i, nos 165-67, pp 71-72, no. 424, p. 167, no. 426, p. 168, nos 319-21, pp 130-31, no. 426, p. 168, nos 490-91, p. 196. In 1297 Hugh Lawless, a Butler client, was joint serjeant of the manor of Arklow and the Wicklow cantred. *Placenames*, p. lviii.

⁵⁶⁴ Frame, *The Dublin Government*, fn. 6, p.80. For Richard of Cornwall, see N.Davies, *Europe: A History* (London, 1997), pp 357, 377-78.

⁵⁶⁵ J.Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow - A Land of War', In K.Hannigan and Wm Nolan (eds) *Wicklow: History and Society* (Dublin, 1994), pp 158-59. (hereafter Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow').

⁵⁶⁶ *Alen's Reg*, p. 114; *C.D.I.*, 1252-1284, no. 1038, p. 178. Interestingly, the name of the O'Toole leader is not mention, a fact which may indicate that he was of a different lineage to Meyler/Muircheartach.

O'Toole. The new O'Toole leaders seem to belong to the more belligerent lineage of Imaal, who were linking up with Gerald - the O'Byrne overlord. However, this internal shift in the O'Toole equilibrium was only confirmed, decades later, by Fáelán O'Toole's submission of 1295. But clearly the absence of Muirheartach's restraint, influence and a strong heir combined with the above mentioned factors contributed to the swift spread of war amongst the Irish throughout the Leinster massif, pointing to a massive shift in Irish political thinking in East Leinster.⁵⁶⁷

Belatedly Archbishop Fulk realised his blunder and sent John de Sandford as his envoy among the Irish in 1270-71. To a large extent his diplomatic tacking succeeded, and peace was restored.⁵⁶⁸ But Archbishop Fulk's death in May 1271 further complicated matters in an already tense Wicklow. The death of his short-lived successor, John of Darlington, resulted in a prolonged archiepiscopal vacancy which led to the disastrous intrusion of royal officials and the extension of royal law into the Wicklow mountains. Their hard-edged attitudes towards the Irish destroyed any possibility of a return to the previous *modus vivendi*. Parallels can be drawn with a later vacancy within the archbishopric between 1307-10. On the second occasion the royal administration clearly interfered with lands held in freehold by Irish lords from the archbishopric. All that can be said with certainty was that during both vacancies, two large scale Irish rebellions erupted. If this was the case, this insensitivity brought the crisis to fever pitch in 1270. Then a disaster of biblical proportions struck the Irish when a combination of heavy snow, plague and rainstorms destroyed their remaining foodstuffs and livestock. Now with their economic base destroyed, the Irish burnt English settlements from the mountains to the sea. Clearly any influence the archbishopric exercised over the Irish had suffered a serious meltdown. The identities of the rebels are confirmed by the fact that three O'Tooles, one O'Byrne and one Harold were in custody by summer 1271. Furthermore, a campaign brought to Glendalough by de Audley

⁵⁶⁷ Though the ruling O'Toole dynasty clung tenaciously to their eastern possessions, the O'Toole equilibrium shifted considerably. They survived Murchadh mac Gerald O'Byrne's early fourteenth-century onslaught by perhaps withdrawing northwards to Glencapp. As late as 1340 they contributed to government hostings against their Irish rivals, but by the end of the fourteenth century they were obscure. After 1328 nothing further is known about Walter O'Toole's family.

⁵⁶⁸ *Placenames*, p. i.

before June 1272, and a probable expedition to Glenmalure between June 1272 and April 1273 by his successor Maurice fitzMaurice Fitzgerald failed to achieve their objective, leaving the war to rage on.⁵⁶⁹

However, there is a hitherto hidden side to the emergence of this war. It has been argued that the Irish of East Leinster were relatively insulated by several layers of settlement from the eastward march of Irish hostility, originating in Connacht and the the midlands, to the English. But it seems, however, that East Leinster was not so well protected from the drift of anti English sentiments across the Irish Sea from Wales. While not suggesting that the Leinster wars of the 1270s contain a germ of pan-Celticism, the Irish of East Leinster may have been more influenced by events in Wales than any other part of Ireland. And recent research has argued that there were some connections between the Leinster rebellions of the 1270s and those which erupted less than forty miles away in Wales in the same period. As shown the Irish of East Leinster had many links with Wales in pre Norman times. Without doubt in previous centuries the kingdoms scattered along the Leinster coast had political and commercial links with the Welsh. To demonstrate this point, MacShamhráin has shown the occurrence of British names within the early genealogies of the Uí Máil and the Uí Dúnlainge princes. Furthermore, the cult of Coemgen was also exported successfully to the Isle of Man, while Welsh and Cornish saints figure prominently in the hagiography of Glendalough.⁵⁷⁰ Moreover, a cadet line of the Welsh ruling dynasty of Gwynedd held lands at Balrothery in North Dublin from the eleventh century to the seventeenth.⁵⁷¹ And earlier the Welsh annals describe the eleventh-century Leinster king, Diarmait mac Máel na mBó, as king of the British.⁵⁷² Indeed, from the 1270s, the Irish annals clearly gave events in Wales more prominence than previously ascribed.⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁹ Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 159.

⁵⁷⁰ MacShamhráin, p. 68 and p. 124.

⁵⁷¹ E.Curtis, 'The FitzRerys, Welsh lords of Cloghran, Co.Dublin', in *Louth. Arch.Soc. Jn* (1921), pp 13-15; M.T.Flanagan, 'Historia Gruffud vab Kenan and the Origins of Balrothery Co.Dublin', in *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, no. 28, (1994), pp 71-94.

⁵⁷² Duffy, *A History of Medieval Ireland*, pp 2-3.

⁵⁷³ *Ann. Inisf*, pp 358-9, 384- 5, and 388-9.

On the other hand, many of Norman Leinster's lords such the Bigods, de Valences, de Bohuns, de Clares and the Mortimers also had connections with Wales, holding lands there.⁵⁷⁴ Smaller marcher lords such as the Blends, Roches, FitzRhysses, Lawlesses, de Valles and Pencoits were all Cambro-Norman in origin. On the Leinster coast there seem to have been Welsh merchants at Arklow and Wicklow.⁵⁷⁵ It is easy to see how news of Welsh victories could have filtered into the Irish hinterland surrounding these ports. Interestingly Welsh forenames do occur roughly about this time among the O'Byrnes. A father and son of the Gabhal Siomóin branch of the O'Byrnes bear the Welsh forenames, Ailgeoid (Elias) and Cuug.⁵⁷⁶ This Cuug's descendants became known as Gabhal Cuug and modern townland of Ballycooge in the Avoca valley to the north of Arklow seems to contain their eponym's imprint. While it is idle to speculate how these names came to appear within the O'Byrnes, it is clear there was a knowledge of events happening in Wales among the Leinstermen close to the coast.

While the seismic changes in the political climate were acknowledged by the MacMurroughs, their initial response to these disturbances was both hesitant and pragmatic. Between 1269-73 Muirheartach MacMurrough, traditional overlord of the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles, remained aloof from the war. At the crux of the MacMurrough indecision was their duality. The MacMurrough leaders were fully incorporated within the feudal settlement, but yet they retained their leadership of the Irish of East Leinster. And in comparison to their Fitzdermot cousins, they had largely perserved their Irish identity despite their affiliation to the English. But worryingly they must have noticed the steady erosion of the power of other Normanised Irish leaders by more militant kinsmen.

⁵⁷⁴ Duffy, 'Ireland and the Irish Sea Region', p. 135; H.Luard (ed.), *Annales Monastici*, iv, (London, 1869), p. 311. This chronicle shows that a Welsh rebel, Rhyss ap Maredudd, fled Wales to perhaps the de Clare lands in Kilkenny in 1287. *Calendar of Various Chancery Rolls* (London, 1912), p. 2323. Edward I ordered the justiciar of North Wales to prevent Rhyss's escape. Another contact between Wales and Kilkenny comes in 1282. *C.D.I., 1252-1284*, no. 912, p. 425. A William son of Llewellyn sat on a jury examining the lands of John FitzThomas in Kilkenny during August 1282.

⁵⁷⁵ Becker, 'An Analysis of the Dublin Merchant Guild Roll, c. 1190-1265', p. 125.

⁵⁷⁶ O'Clery, para 1751, p. 130.

Indeed, the reluctance of Muirheartach MacMurrough to enter the war can be compared with the reticence of King Féilim O'Connor of Connacht to join the O'Connor rebels between 1247-49. Thus Muirheartach's entry on the side of the Irish in 1274, was not because of a deteriorating relationship with his cousin, Roger Bigod, lord of the liberty of Carlow. Rather, Muirheartach seemingly feared growing O'Byrne power more than the colonists. His decision to assume the leadership of the war against the English probably represents a move to safeguard his traditional position and short-circuit O'Byrne ambition. Significantly only when he moved to war did East Leinster become widely disturbed. But his entry into the war on the side of the Irish in 1274, and his victory over a colonial army at Glenmalure that year confirmed his political leadership of East Leinster.⁵⁷⁷ Such was the dramatic rise in the tempo of the war in East Leinster that a second, but inconclusive, expedition was led by Justiciar Geoffrey de Joinville to Glenmalure that year. Again in 1275 de Joinville failed to overcome the Irish.⁵⁷⁸ But despite Muirheartach's capture at Norragh by Walter Lenfant in 1275, the Leinstermen continued to prosper under Art, his brother, who routed de Joinville in Glenmalure in 1276.⁵⁷⁹ *The Annals of Clonmacnoise*, a translation of what is arguably the oldest version of the Connacht annals, records his defeat, hailing Art as king of Leinster.⁵⁸⁰ This suggests that the MacMurroughs were compelled to lead this rebellion because of their heritage of provincial overlordship dating from the time of Diarmait mac Máel na mBó. However, de Joinville's successor, Robert de Ufford successfully ended the war in 1277-8.

But clearly a residue of discontent remained. As has been mentioned already, Muirheartach and Art MacMurrough occupied a double mandate in Leinster as Earl Roger Bigod's officers and as the leaders of the Irish of East Leinster. And to his credit, Roger Bigod visited the brothers and tried to allay their grievances by giving them gifts, and reinstalled them as officers of his liberty of Carlow in 1280. On 24 July 1280 Bigod's request that they be given safe conduct to

⁵⁷⁷ R. Flower, 'The Kilkenny Chronicle in Cotton MS', in *Anal.Hib*, vol. 2., (Dublin, 1932), p. 332. (hereafter R. Flower, 'The Kilkenny Chronicle in Cotton MS').

⁵⁷⁸ Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 160.

⁵⁷⁹ *Grace*, p. 39; *Ann Clon*, p. 251.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ann Clon*, p. 251.

England was approved, but it is uncertain whether they went.⁵⁸¹ However, it is clear that the bitter taste of defeat still rankled as supported by the apprehension of a Dermotus McMorkada in 1280.⁵⁸² By 1281, trouble was brewing and perhaps as a precautionary measure Muirheartach was arrested by the government. Later in the year he was brought to Dunamase in Laois to negotiate with the Irish, suggesting that his kinsmen were already intriguing with the midland Irish. It also highlights the possibility that some Irish lords in the midlands acknowledged the MacMurrough provincial kingship. After the breakdown of negotiations he was returned to Dublin, but was released by early 1282. Events after Muirheartach's release suggest heavy implication in the fomentation of discontent in Leinster. This is supported by Art's raids upon the Vale of Dublin.⁵⁸³

Clearly the government suspected that Muirheartach was orchestrating the disturbances. Again parallels again can be drawn with Wales. Rebellion had broken out in Wales in March 1282, and three months later Gilbert de Clare, earl of Gloucester and lord of Kilkenny, was routed by the Welsh at Llandeilo fawr.⁵⁸⁴ Significantly, the son of William de Valence, lord of Wexford, fell there. That year it was noted that the Welsh successes encouraged the Irish to be more daring. While it is unlikely that news of the Welsh war sparked a revolt in Leinster, it must have encouraged the Irish already in the field. Perhaps fearful of the effect of the news of the Welsh victory upon the Leinster Irish, Justiciar Stephen de Fulbourne decided to murder the MacMurroughs.⁵⁸⁵ Five weeks after Llandeilo fawr in July 1282, they arrived, under a safe conduct, at Arklow to embark for England. But before they could board ship, they were murdered by de Fulbourne's assassins.⁵⁸⁶

This delayed the war for years. Between the murders and Muiris mac Muirheartaigh MacMurrough's appearance on the political scene in 1295, the MacMurroughs were passive. In this

⁵⁸¹ Frame, 'Murder of the MacMurroughs', pp 223-31.

⁵⁸² *Clyn, Annals*, p. 9.

⁵⁸³ Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 163.

⁵⁸⁴ Duffy, *Ireland and the Irish Sea Region*, p.142.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.142.

⁵⁸⁶ Frame, 'The murder of the MacMurroughs', pp 223-31.

interim period they were led by Alexander and Diarmait MacMurrough along with another Art MacMurrough.⁵⁸⁷ Indeed, this generally pacific attitude is reflected amongst the Irish of East Leinster in 1289. Then Archbishop John de Sandford, also justiciar, summoned them to a conference and accepted their promises to join him on campaign in Offaly.⁵⁸⁸ Others, however, were not so inactive. Gerald O'Byrne continued to slowly build up his regional power, beginning his consolidation of southeast Wicklow. And increasingly during this period, O'Byrne acceptance of MacMurrough hegemony became far from certain. On at least one occasion between 1282-94, they combined with the O'Nolans of Forth to wreak havoc in south Wicklow and north Carlow. The MacMurrough response was instructive, they with Bigod's forces crushed O'Byrne and his allies.⁵⁸⁹ Swift action such as this preserved their provincial kingship, which was evidenced by the attendance of the vassals upon Muiris MacMurrough in 1295.

Only in 1295 when Muiris's dissatisfaction manifested itself did MacMurrough leadership in East Leinster become strongly expressed. Consequently the region again became volatile. The 1295 offensive by Muiris was seemingly brought about by a combination of deteriorating weather, the Fitzgerald/de Valance feud and the linked successes of An Calbhach O'Connor Faly of Offaly, but it also significantly coincides with the latest Welsh rebellion. These reasons conspired to spread the war into East Leinster during the spring that year. And by 19 July 1295, the war had been quelled and Muiris knelt before Justiciar Thomas Fitzgerald at Castlekevin high in the Wicklow mountains. The occasion was Muiris's submission to the Justiciar and as the subsequent terms of the peace reveal, Muiris was the undisputed head of his lineage and the acknowledged leader of the Irish of the Leinster mountains. By its terms he gave hostages for Murchadh mac Gerald O'Byrne and Fáelán O'Toole, promising to campaign against them if they broke the peace. Thus the agreement clearly shows that the English recognised Muiris as the overlord of

⁵⁸⁷ *C.D.I.*, 1285-1292, no. 270, p. 124, and no. 287, p. 130; *C.D.I.*, 1293-1301, no. 41, p. 27, no. 329, p. 139, and no. 550, p. 250.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 559, p. 272.

⁵⁸⁹ Mills, 'Accounts of the Earl of Norfolk's Estates in Ireland', 1279-1294', pp 55-56.

O'Byrne and O'Toole, a fact which was also recognised by the pair of vassal-lords.⁵⁹⁰

However, this increased militarism of the Irish has been labelled as the beginning of the armed revival of the Irish nation. This label is misleading, dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a result the labelling of this phenomena often whitewashes its detail. In Leinster this was not a uniform expansion. Irish lords did not exclusively expand against the settlers. Several inter-dynastic wars were fought as the respective frontiers expanded and contracted. And throughout many discarded scions of Irish dynasties enlisted government help against their overlords.⁵⁹¹ An example of this misinterpretation follows. By 1300, Muiris MacMurrough was well established as the overlord of the Leinster mountains. On the surface the future augured well, but as time proved appearances were deceptive. To say that Muiris enjoyed an easy suzerainty over his vassals would be a mistake. Indeed, he inherited many of the problems that confronted his father Muirheartach between c.1270-82. These problems were compounded in the uneasy chemistry that dominated the MacMurrough/O'Byrne relationship. If the historical background to the MacMurrough/O'Byrne alliance is scrutinised, it reveals a very fraught relationship. Some of these tensions can be possibly dated to expulsion of Diarmait MacMurrough from Leinster in 1166. On that occasion O'Byrne deserted Diarmait in his hour of direst need. More recently, however, a rift apparently emerged as a result of the ambitions of Gerald O'Byrne and his sons.

But as the early years of the fourteenth century progressed, events were shifting against the MacMurroughs. Gradually the political balance among the Irish of East Leinster moved in favour of the O'Byrnes, resulting from seismic upheavals in the Irish politics of wider Leinster. Although East Leinster remained largely geographically isolated from the rest of Gaelic Ireland, the ambitions of the Irish of West Leinster began to meet with those of East Leinster in the strategic Barrow valley in the last decades of the thirteenth

⁵⁹⁰ *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 61.

⁵⁹¹ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', p. 175.

century. One of the reasons for the emergence of the seriousness of the O'Byrnes' challenge was the dramatic change in the political dynamics of the midlands as a result of the decline of the O'Melaghlin of Westmeath from 1290, and the massacre of the O'Connor Faly leadership in 1305.⁵⁹² These acts had the effect of switching the direction of the theatre of warfare in the midlands from the northwest region southwards to Laois and Munster as shown through the rise of the O'Mores of Laois.⁵⁹³ In turn this pushed the fragile political equilibrium of East Leinster in favour of Murchadh O'Byrne and to the detriment of Muiris MacMurrough.

In the analysis of this challenge to Muiris, the ambitious personality of Murchadh is a crucial factor to consider. Like Muiris, Murchadh probably became leader of his dynasty in the years before 1295. At first Murchadh seemingly initially accepted his role as Muiris's vassal. Muiris's rule extended fitfully over the rump of the old kingdom of Leinster stretching from central and north Wexford through Wicklow to the emerging Dublin Pale straddled along the mountains of northeast Wicklow. To the northwest his ambition was determined by the county of Kildare, now in the hands of the king, while Roger Bigod's liberty of Carlow with the eastern Butler and the Mortimer lands formed an increasingly porous western frontier with the Irish of the midlands. To the south the liberty of Wexford checked any MacMurrough advance. This was the political and military landscape which Murchadh had to tread. Indeed, he seemingly took encouragement from the example of his father's attempts to break free of MacMurrough dominance. Yet there were other reasons for Murchadh's desire to be rid of Muiris's overlordship.

Essentially what drove the O'Byrnes forward was the geographical location of their lordship. For the most part the O'Byrne territories were blanketed by mountain, forest, and bog and consequently one of the most pressing problems of the lordship was that much of its cultivable soil was poor or marginal. So poor that its inhabitants were exposed to harvest failures, animal plagues and

⁵⁹² *Ann Conn*, pp.182-3; *Ann Clon*, p. 260.

⁵⁹³ In 1306 the O'Mores burnt Ballymore, see *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, p. 333; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 17. See also Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', pp 174-75.

ultimately famine. Furthermore, the O'Byrnes were surrounded by potential enemies both English and Irish. And if his lordship was to survive, Murchadh had to break this virtual siege and expand to gain the necessary living space required to secure his power. One of the secrets of Murchadh's success was a tight rein upon his kinsmen. In contrast to the MacMurroughs and the O'Tooles, the O'Byrnes proved a more homogeneous force. This relative unity of purpose forcibly maintained by the O'Byrne ruling family, the Gabhal Dúnlaing, allowed Murchadh several advantages against his enemies. This dynastic unity allowed Murchadh to harness the military potency of his lordship through force and diplomacy to exploit the gradual meeting of the ambitions of the Irish of the two halves of Leinster along the Barrow. Thus, Murchadh was able to extend an alliance to the O'Mores, and by exploiting divisions among the colonists and creating new alliances with the O'Tooles of Imaal and some of the Ostmen of north Wicklow, O'Byrne's rise was assured.⁵⁹⁴

Before detailing Murchadh's challenge to his overlord, his rise must be examined. Despite the movement of the wider politics in his favour, this may not have been immediately obvious to Murchadh. This is supported by the fact that he did not break with Muiris MacMurrough until at least 1308. Indeed, the concord of 1295 with the government held for about six years, but the movement of Muiris and Murchadh to war during the winter of 1301-2, signalled its breakdown. That winter, they burnt the settlements bordering the length of the Leinster mountains and ravaged east Wicklow.⁵⁹⁵ Primarily Murchadh's consolidation of eastern Wicklow, particularly the vital Glenealy valley, was at the expense of the Fitzdermots, O'Tooles and the marcher family of Lawless.

But in 1305, a train of events was set in motion that inflamed the Leinster nobility. As has been noted above Piers Bermingham and John fitzThomas organised the murders of the O'Connor Falys in

⁵⁹⁴ *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, p. 348; *CJR, 1308-1314*, pp 285 and 485; *C.D.I., 1252-84*, p. 313; *N.A., R.C. 7/13 (iv)*, pp 22-24.

⁵⁹⁵ *The Book of Howth*, p. 126; Mentions Irish disturbances in Leinster and their defeat by Lord William Power in this year. *Grace*, p. 47; *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, p. 330.

June, plunging the midlands into chaos. These murders were paralleled by the treacherous slaughter of four MacMurroughs by colonists at Ferns during the same year. According to the inquiry held in Duiske County Kilkenny on 15 November 1305, it emerged that the four had come to Ferns under a promise of safe conduct from Justiciar John Wogan. The inquiry presided over by Wogan revealed that individual colonists had taken the law in their own hands to settle old scores. To abate Irish fury, Wogan ordered Gilbert Sutton, seneschal of Wexford, to arrest the murderers.⁵⁹⁶ When he dithered, Muiris MacMurrough was convinced that his sympathies lay with the murderers and Irish forces killed him near the town of Hamond Grace before the close of 1305.⁵⁹⁷

These killings promoted greater co-operation between the Irish of both parts of the province.⁵⁹⁸ This co-operation was possibly further facilitated by the transfer of the liberty of Carlow into royal hands upon the death of Roger Bigod in 1306. Indeed, the point is further borne out in May 1306 by the O'More burning of Ballymore in the western slopes of the Wicklow mountains.⁵⁹⁹ In addition several sources point to the fact that Justiciar Wogan punished Murchadh O'Byrne for the devastation of Ballymore. And testament to growing co-ordination of the Irish of both parts of Leinster was the Irish victory over Wogan's army at Glenealy in the O'Byrne lordship later in 1306. *The Book of Howth* mentions this victory, recording that Irish came from other parts of Ireland to aid the Irish of Leinster.⁶⁰⁰ By early 1307, the government was in crisis in Leinster. Drastic action was needed. But by early summer 1307, the Irish effort had faltered. One of the blows that deflated the MacMurroughs was the killing of Murchadh Ballach MacMurrough, described as princeps Lagenie, by

⁵⁹⁶ *CJR, 1305-07*, pp 466-67. The MacMurrough leaders were Henry, Muirheartach Mór, Murchadh and Domhnall Óg MacMurrough.

⁵⁹⁷ *Grace*, p. 49.

⁵⁹⁸ *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 333. In 1306 Thomas de Suerterby, constable of Castlekevin, executed Macnochi, two of his sons and a strong thief called Lorcán Oboni. This Macnochi seems a son of Eochaidh O'Toole, otherwise known as Richard or Yoghy O'Toole; see *CJR, 1305-07*, p. 336. In 1307 this Thomas Snyterby was given 25 marks for his keepership of Castlekevin; *Grace*, p. 51. *Alen's Reg*, p. 128. Richard O'Toole was called Yhowy.

⁵⁹⁹ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 17; *Grace*, p. 51. In May 1306 Ballymore was burned by the Irish and Henry Calf was killed, defending it. Seemingly in response the English brought an army against the Leinstermen and fought a battle against them. During the course of which Sir Thomas de Manderville fought valiantly. *CJR, 1304-1307*, pp 270, 354; O'Byrne, 'The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow', p. 59

⁶⁰⁰ *The Book of Howth*, p. 127; *Grace*, p. 51; *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, p. 333.

Lord Edmund Butler and David de Cauntetoun on 1 April 1307.⁶⁰¹ However, another hosting against the O'Tooles met little success later in the month.⁶⁰² Probably the most decisive move in defusing the crisis in East Leinster was Wogan's offers to Murchadh O'Byrne.

Murchadh was prepared to treat with the government in order to pursue his ambitions. In 1307 his importance on the political landscape was confirmed when he was among several Irish kings, including his close ally David O'Toole of Imaal, asked to join a campaign to Scotland.⁶⁰³ His pragmatism became increasingly evident in his dealings with Lord Edmund Butler and Justiciar Wogan. Both men wished to secure their hold upon their eastern Wicklow lands, and prevent Murchadh's growing consolidation of the region.⁶⁰⁴ In doing so they attempted to sow dissension between Murchadh and the O'Tooles by offering the former the confiscated Glenealy lands of the outlawed Richard O'Toole during 1307, while Hugh Lawless, Lord Edmund Butler's client received a grant of David McGilnecowil O'Toole's lands at Kilfee.⁶⁰⁵ These Murchadh happily accepted⁶⁰⁶, a grant which probably drove some of the O'Tooles into rebellion in the early summer 1308.⁶⁰⁷ And in June 1308 Murchadh, typically, coolly changed sides, joined the O'Tooles and annihilated Wogan's force at Glenmalure.⁶⁰⁸

Despite Wogan's reserves, his luck was in. During this period a bitter feud erupted between Muiris MacMurrough and Murchadh. It was to dominate the Irish polity of East Leinster for years to come, destroying their joint attempts to promote alliances with the Irish of the midlands. Indeed, the 1308-10 rebellion of the de Cauntetouns

⁶⁰¹ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 18. The description of this Murchadh Ballach as princeps Lagenie may infer that he was a brother of Muiris, king of Leinster. See also *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 335; *Grace's Annals*, p. 51, see also p. 55 fn.g It seems de Cantetoun was hung for the murder of Murchadh Ballach at Dublin in 1308; *CJR, 1308-1314*, pp 32, 55. These sources are explicit that Edmund Butler killed Murchadh Ballach. It seems most unlikely that David de Cantetoun was hung for the murder of Murchadh Ballach, also described as a felon. Rather it must have been for his rebellion.

⁶⁰² Frame. *The Dublin Government*, pp 165-69, 171-73; *CJR, 1308-1314*, p. 355. Nigel le Brun received wages for 33 hobelars and 106 foot campaigned the O'Tooles in April 1307. The constable of Castlekevin was provisioned with food as well as 1000 quarrels for crossbows, suggesting an attack was expected.

⁶⁰³ *Grace*, fn. g, p. 50.

⁶⁰⁴ *CJR, 1305-1307*, p. 354; O'Byrne, 'The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow', p. 59.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁷ *Grace*, p. 53; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 18.

⁶⁰⁸ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 18.

against the government again disturbed the region as the O'Byrnes and MacMurroughs rushed to support the opponents.⁶⁰⁹ Simultaneously Murchadh brutally eradicated the weakening grip of the Fitzgeralds upon the barony of Wicklow.⁶¹⁰ In 1308 during a suit before the Dublin Bench, Murchadh was among those charged with the seizure of rents at Wicklow, which had been extracted by George de la Roche, one of the coheirs of the barony.⁶¹¹ However, Piers Gaveston with the aid of Henry O'Toole brought Murchadh's activities to a temporary halt by defeating him in 1309.⁶¹²

A second southward expansionary direction can be deciphered from O'Byrne raids. Evidence points to a sustained period of O'Byrne expansion southwards into Carlow and Wexford between 1295-1314. The Glenmalure lands of the O'Tooles were Murchadh's target. He must have enjoyed considerable success in this enterprise by 1311, as in that year Murchadh with David O'Toole fought Wogan to a standstill in that mountainous defile, but Murchadh was forced to submit there by Edmund Butler a year later.⁶¹³ It would seem that David O'Toole formed a faustian pact with Murchadh, indicating he may have been struggling to impose his lordship over his O'Toole rivals. It is significant, though, that no mention is made again of the O'Tooles of Glenmalure, indicating they may have finally been absorbed into David O'Toole's Imaal lordship. What is clear is that O'Toole lands, in general, had contracted substantially in east and central Wicklow during this period of Murchadh's reign. And by 1320 the O'Toole heartland found itself now centred in Imaal with a discontinuous territorial arc stretching to the north of Glendalough.

But increasingly after 1309, it was the MacMurrough territories in the northern Carlow and Wexford suffered growing O'Byrne aggression.⁶¹⁴ It was Murchadh's brothers who drove his southward expansion. Broadly speaking, circumstance favoured the O'Byrnes. English feuding played a large part in facilitating their drive. The O'Byrnes by adeptly exploiting the chaos caused by Maurice de

⁶⁰⁹ *CJR, 1308-1314*, pp 200, 237.

⁶¹⁰ *N.A., R.C. 7/13 (iv)*, pp 122-24.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶¹² *The Book of Howth*, p. 127.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁶¹⁴ *CJR, 1308-1314*, pp 200, 232-33 and 237.

Cauntetoun's rebellion of 1308-10, advanced deeper into the MacMurrough sphere. Clearly the support of Murchadh's brothers for Maurice, a sworn enemy of the MacMurroughs, was a direct challenge to Muiris MacMurrough.⁶¹⁵ And during January 1310 Carlow was wasted by the war between Arnold le Poer and John de Boneville, the two competitors for the seneschalcy of Kildare and Carlow. On 26 January 1310 Le Poer, the former seneschal, with the help of the Irish of the Leinster mountains, perhaps the O'Byrnes, even laid siege to Carlow Castle where de Boneville had taken refuge. Furthermore, the struggle climaxed later in le Poer's successful assassination of his rival seven days later.⁶¹⁶

When faced by the rise of the O'Byrnes on his northern frontier, Muiris considered his options carefully. His first response was to fight and a seesaw pattern of warfare emerged between him and Murchadh. Muiris's fears were well founded and had their roots in the wars of the 1270s. Muiris's worst fears were confirmed when Murchadh successfully wooed the O'Nolans to his side, an act which reflected his father's actions.⁶¹⁷ This decided the issue for Muiris, who turned to the government for support and entered their service in 1311, mirroring Henry O'Toole's earlier service against Murchadh during 1309.⁶¹⁸ The government ensured that there was a lucrative side to Muiris's service, rewarding him generously with Courtown manor, a reward for his capture of an O'Byrne plus a fee of 40 marks. His determination to maintain his kingship was evident by his participation in planning strategy, and his endorsement of the establishment in his ambit of government garrisons at Clonmore,

⁶¹⁵ *CJR, 1308-1314*, pp 32, 55. David Cauntetoun was hung for murdering Murchadh Ballach MacMurrough in 1308; Nicholls, 'Crioich Branach', p. 15; *CJR, 1308-14*, p. 237. The tenants of the prior of Glascarrig was charged with receiving the de Cantetons and Dúnlaing O'Byrne in 1312; The MacMurroughs were not in service all of 1311. See *CJR, 1308-14*, p. 174. In 1311 an Ellok Ynymcmurghut (MacMurrough) raided the Raymond de Valle, while Muiris MacMurrough, king of Leinster, stole 27 cows from the abbot of Duiske.

⁶¹⁶ *Grace*, fn. j, p. 56. Le Poer was later pardoned see *ibid*, p. 59.

⁶¹⁷ T.Blake-Butler, 'The Barony of Dunboyne', in *Ir. Geneal.*, vol.2., no.3, (October, 1945), p. 68. (hereafter, T.Blake-Butler, 'The Barony of Dunboyne'); *CJR, 1308-14*, p. 172. Richard mac Philip O'Nolan of Fotherd was at war against the settlers in 1311, while a David McEthe was charged with robbing the cattle of John Talon, Richard Boscher and the wife of Maurice le Clerk and bringing them to the Onolans and Obyrnns of Kynalo.

⁶¹⁸ Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 170; *CJR, 1308-14*, p. 222. Henry son of Robert son of Pagan and his brother, Pagan, served against the O'Byrnes in Wicklow during 1311; *CJR, 1308-1314*, p. 174. In 1311 The O'Tooles were pursuing a feud with the de Valle family of the Barrow valley; *CJR, 1308-14*, pp 159-60.

Arklow, Ferns and at Wicklow.⁶¹⁹ The struggle for the support of the lesser Irish lords was to be a continual feature of the struggle between the O'Byrnes and the MacMurroughs. Murchadh was also able to draw considerable support from the Ostman families of Harold, Archbold and MacTurkills.⁶²⁰ However, Murchadh suffered a considerable setback in 1313, when he was routed by Lord Edmund Butler in Glenmalure.⁶²¹ Shortly after 1313, it seems Muiris died and was succeeded by the shadowy Domhnall Riabhach MacMurrough of whom virtually nothing is known. What seems clear is that the O'Byrnes quickly recovered to temporarily become the most powerful Irish family in East Leinster by 1314.

In 1315 Murchadh's influence was now felt on the western bank of the Barrow, where he cobbled together an alliance with David O'Toole and Laoiseach O'More to burn Athy and Wicklow.⁶²² However, his ambition was dented by Edmund Butler's defeat of O'More in 1315.⁶²³ But the disturbance caused by the campaigns of Edward Bruce between 1315-8, greatly aided his expansion. This chance he seized, directing hammer blows at the crumbling Fitzgerald barony of Wicklow. With his Ostmen allies and David O'Toole, Murchadh burnt English settlements from Bray to Arklow, destroying the Fitzgerald town of Wicklow in 1315 and 1316.⁶²⁴ Unsurprisingly for 1316, no rents could be collected from the sergeanty of Wicklow because of the war. Hugh Lawless in 1316 painted the grim reality for English settlers at the height of Murchadh's power.⁶²⁵

⁶¹⁹Frame, 'Two Kings', p. 281; See idem, *The Dublin Government*, pp 183-9.

⁶²⁰ N.A., R.C. 7/13 (iv), pp 122-24. In 1308 a branch of Harolds were involved in the forcible retaking of rents by freeholders at Wicklow. Further Ostmen discontent is evinced in 1313. Then John MacTurkill was caught escaping from Dublin castle with Walter mac Richard O'Byrne and sentenced to be hanged. In the same year Fynogle wife of Walter MacTurkill was charged with attempting to aid her husband's intended escape from Dublin castle. She was committed to jail but later pardoned. Not surprisingly Murchadh found them willing allies.

⁶²¹ *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 341; O'Byrne, *The Uí Bhroin of Wicklow*, p. 60.

⁶²² See also Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', pp 177-178. Laoiseach O'More seems to have been leader of his dynasty from the 1290s to 1342.

⁶²³ *Grace*, p. 71.

⁶²⁴ *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, p. 348-49; *The Book of Howth*, p. 134.

⁶²⁵ '...in a confined and narrow part of the country, namely between Newcastle McKynegan and Wicklow, where they have the sea between Wales and Ireland for a wall on one side, and the mountains of Leinster and divers other wooded and desert places on the other' See R.Frame, 'War and Peace in the Medieval Lordship of Ireland', in *The English in Medieval Ireland*, (ed.) J.F.Lydon, (Dublin, 1984), pp 126-7.

The year 1316, however, proved to be Murchadh's high water mark as after mid-year his support was eroded by the defeats of his allies.⁶²⁶ Early that year David O'Toole's assault on Tullow, in north Carlow, was annihilated by the English with probable MacMurrough connivance. Soon afterwards Lord Edmund Butler routed another Irish force at Castledermot before destroying Laoiseach's army. Worse was to come, Murchadh's brother, Dúnlaing, was killed near Dublin on 22 May 1316, while David O'Toole avoided the same fate in September. These reverses shattered Murchadh's alliance building. And as Bruce's threat began to recede in 1316-17, the English took the offensive in Leinster. In Lent 1317 Lord Lieutenant Roger Mortimer waged a successful campaign throughout David O'Toole's Imaal before routing the Archbalds and Murchadh in Glenealy, forcing their surrender.⁶²⁷

Murchadh's defeat failed to bring peace to the region. The MacMurroughs and the O'Byrnes remained deadly enemies. However, there is some uncertainty as to who was the MacMurrough leader after 1317. For that year the annals mention the death of Domhnall Riabhach, describing him as an 'illustrious king of Leinster'.⁶²⁸ Moreover, the 2nd earl of Kildare attempted to recover the lost Fitzgerald influence in Wicklow at the expense of a weakened Murchadh. During the submission of Murchadh, Kildare gave security for the Archbalds. Later in September 1318, he drove a wedge between Murchadh's O'Toole allies by giving Aodh Óg O'Toole land in return for service against his Imaal kinsmen.⁶²⁹ But clearly the region remained unsettled, as the O'Tooles and the O'Nolans raided the Barrow valley that year, killing John de Lyvet. This situation was further complicated by the return of the MacMurroughs to raiding the liberty of Carlow and County Kildare, now that their leadership of East Leinster was secure.⁶³⁰

Between 1265-1320 the political landscape of East Leinster underwent an irreversible transformation from relative peace to continual war. Gone was the peaceful coexistence of both nations.

⁶²⁶ *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, pp 297 and 348.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid*, ii, p. 356; Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 172; *The Book of Howth*, pp 141-42.

⁶²⁸ *A.L.C*, i, p. 593.

⁶²⁹ *Red Book Kildare*, no. 139, p. 129.

⁶³⁰ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 20.

Indeed, the confidence of the Irish had been boosted by their many victories over the colonists. And the successful Irish carving of kingdoms from the corpse of Marshall Leinster ensured their determination to preserve their new freedom of political and military choices. This determination effectively bisected East Leinster into two zones, English and Irish. As has been shown co-operation did increase between both parts of Leinster, indicating the weakening of the Barrow frontier. In this period the old MacMurrough kingdom of Leinster steadily re-emerged with its kings grimly determined to maintain their traditional overlordship over their Irish clients. Unsurprisingly the forceful emergence of the MacMurroughs led to the surfacing of ancient feuds. Indeed, much of the MacMurrough actions were inspired by their fear of the O'Byrnes. This struggle dominated the Irish polity of the region. But despite this struggle, Norman Leinster was clearly on the backfoot. And Edward Bruce's Irish intervention merely confirmed this fact and ensured the destruction of the old hybrid society that had survived for so long.

Chapter 3b

West Leinster, 1270-1320

Apart from the occasional large scale raids of Aodh O'Connor, king of Connacht, the Irish of West Leinster were mostly at peace in 1270. Indeed, the colonists had encountered little resistance from the Irish kings of this region since the 1240s, the O'Melaghlin being the only major exception. By 1272, however, the region was engulfed by warfare between the Irish and the settlers. However, the familiar suspects of agitation, the O'Connors of Connacht, cannot be blamed for the discord. Following the death of Aodh O'Connor in 1274, his dynasty's remaining influence here dissolved in dynastic unrest. This chapter will trace the progression of the violence between 1270-1320, examining reasons for its outbreak and the reactions of the Irish, particularly their alliances against the colonists. Secondly, it will also chart the spread of war. And thirdly, it will display the increasing contacts between the Irish there and those of East Leinster.

The exact spark which caused the birth of warfare in the midlands in the 1270s remains elusive. Theories propounded by historians to explain the upsurge in Irish violence in West Leinster and the province as a whole have ranged from the considerable deterioration in meteorological conditions in the 1270s to the perceived 'crisis of lordship' caused by the extinction of the Marshall lords of Leinster in 1245.⁶³¹ Under the auspices of the Marshalls, Leinster enjoyed a long-lasting economic boom. But on the death of the last Marshall, the lordship of Leinster was painstakingly portioned out amongst their surviving female heirs. The result was emergence of the four liberties of Carlow, Wexford, Kilkenny, and Kildare. In turn these subdivisions were again divided, diluting further the centrality of grip once exercised by the Marshalls.⁶³² However, from the evidence to hand the partition of Marshall Leinster does not seem to have adversely affected the colonists of West Leinster. If anything the colony continued to boom, indicating generally good

⁶³¹ Lyons, 'Manorial Administration', p. 14; Ó Cléirigh, 'John fitzThomas', p. 12; Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 158; *N.H.I.*, ii, pp 256-7, 264; *Ann Inisf.*, pp 370- 1.

⁶³² Ó Cléirigh, *The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois*, pp 169-70.

relations with the Leinster Irish despite the turbulence of the period. But in the longer term, the breakup of Marshall Leinster did create problems. One important effect of the Marshall partition which was to prove detrimental in the long term was the large scale introduction of absentee landowners following 1247.⁶³³ In absence of the landowners, their lands were administered by seneschals. According to Ó Cléirigh, the smooth governance of these lands was affected by the conflicts of interests which arose because of the dual nature of the office of seneschal. Primarily the seneschal was an officer of the crown entrusted with the defence of the liberty. However, the seneschal was also the steward of the absentee liberty-holders and had a duty to collect and maximise rents due to them. When these interests clashed, the seneschals tended to favour the crown.⁶³⁴ As ever where the crown was involved this resulted in high-handedness particularly with the Irish, ending often with disastrous ramifications for the colony.⁶³⁵

Added to the mix were the disastrous meteorological conditions of the 1270s. While both parts of Leinster suffered heavy snow and famine in the opening years of the 1270s, the reasons why the Irish of both regions revolted are separate. Without doubt the effects of these harsh conditions played a decisive role in East Leinster. There they created the conditions which bred the rebellion of the formerly peaceful Irish living on the lands of the archbishop of Dublin in 1269. However, it is unlikely that this war in the Wicklow mountains had any repercussions in West Leinster.

As has been demonstrated West Leinster had remained continuously restless because of the ongoing conflict between the colonists and the kings of Connacht. In regard to the effect of the bad weather, we can not say with any certainty how it influenced the region. Although it is clear that the anti-colonist wars stretching from Thomond and Tyrone were reverberating throughout the region.⁶³⁶ In Connacht Aodh O'Connor's activities whittled away colonist settlements dotted along the western front of the strategic Shannon

⁶³³ Ibid, p. 169.

⁶³⁴ Ibid, p. 170.

⁶³⁵ O'Byrne, 'The Uí Bhroin of Wicklow', p. 53.

⁶³⁶ Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, pp 151-52

frontier. During the course of 1270, he destroyed castles throughout Connacht before routing Walter Burke, earl of Ulster, at Athankip.⁶³⁷ Over the next two years, Aodh conducted a reign of terror against the settlers, devastating their fortresses along the Shannon and lent his support to Brian Ruadh O'Brien of Thomond. Clearly the barriers built by the colonists to pen the O'Connors west of the Shannon were crumbling. In 1272 Aodh's forces burst into the northern midlands, burning Athlone and plundered into Meath as far as Granard.⁶³⁸

_____ But Aodh's death on 3 May 1274 brought Connacht's resurgence to a close. Thenceforth his dynasty was plunged into a series of long lasting internecine feuds. As a result the kings of Connacht played a much reduced role in determining the course of politics in the midlands. Effectively O'Connor interests were sidelined within the region until the Bruce invasion forty years later. So what caused the explosion in the midlands? As outlined above O'Connor activities and bad weather may supply two of the reasons. Again obits of Irish kings provide clues. For example in 1274, Aodh O'Connor was described as:

*'...a king which inflicted great defeats on the Galls and pulled down their palaces and castles....'*⁶³⁹

This political undertone is continued amongst the O'Melaglin obits of Conchobhar mac Domhnaill Bregach and Art mac Cormaic. Both are lauded for their destruction of castles and general belligerence towards the Normans. In Art's later obit of 1283, great emphasis is placed upon his destruction of twenty-seven castles.⁶⁴⁰ And later in 1295

⁶³⁷ *Ann Conn*, pp 155-57; *Ann.Clon*, pp 247-48; *Ann. Inisf*, pp 368- 9; *A.U.* ii, pp 342- 3; *A.F.M.* iii, pp 411-3.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 159-61 ; *Ann.Clon*, p. 249 The O'Farrells were also disturbed as Sefraidh O'Farrell killed a de Verdon, one of his colonial masters; *Ann Inisf*, pp 370-1; *A.U.* ii, pp 344-5. Interestingly this entry records that the son of John de Verdon was killed by Walter Burke. This indicates that Burke had considerable influence among the Irish of the northern midlands. Indeed, this was not to be the last time the Burkes would show their influence over the O'Farrells, see below; See also Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 200 Otway-Ruthven also connected Aodh's devastation of Athlone and Meath with the O'Farrell outbreak.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid*, pp 161-63; *Ann Clon*, p. 250.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ann.Clon*, p. 251. For Conchobhar mac Domhnaill Bregach O'Melaglin's obit, see 1277; for Art mac Cormaic's, see *ibid*, p. 254.

similar praise is heaped upon O'Melaghlin's neighbour and contemporary, Sefraidh O'Farrell of Annaly.⁶⁴¹

While the wars in the two parts of Leinster began for separate reasons, they in the longer term heralded the reemergence of the military potency of the MacMurrough provincial kings. Ironically they returned to prominence as Connacht's almost two-century grip upon West Leinster finally receded. Connacht's slippage is further supported by the increasing references to the Irish midland dynasts, indicating their growing power. Indeed, it could be argued that for the first time in two centuries, warfare in Leinster was undergoing a profound change. From the 1270s it began to be dictated by trends originating within the province rather than from outside.

In West Leinster, however, the increasing prominence of the Irish in both the annals and colonial records suggests that momentum for war came from within Irish midland society. Clearly the trouble began amongst the Irish dwelling in the mountainous borderlands of the liberties of Kildare, Carlow and Kilkenny. Surprisingly the probable spark came from an unexpected quarter. Having said that, all the above factors undoubtedly contributed to the destabilisation. But Lydon has suggested that an attack by the MacGillapatriks of Ossory upon their O'Dempsey neighbours of Offaly plunged the whole region into chaos in about 1271.⁶⁴² This renewed MacGillpatrick activity coincides with the emergence of a new but unknown leader. In comparison to his predecessor Sefraidh, this new leader seems to have possessed the same ideology as Donnchadh MacGillpatrick of the 1240s.⁶⁴³ This unknown seems to have been determined to prosecute a war at every opportunity against the settlers and their allies.

The O'Dempseys who were usually allied with the colonists seemingly appealed for protection from the government. Mindful of MacGillpatrick potential for wreaking havoc upon the colonists from their Slieve Bloom heartland, the government's reaction was

⁶⁴¹ *Ann Conn*, pp 194-5; *AU*, ii, pp 37- 8 The castle of Magh Duma, Newtown, and Magh Breccaidhe levelled by Sefraidh O'Farrell.

⁶⁴² J.Lydon, 'A Land of War', in *NHI*, ii, (ed) A.Cosgrove, (Dublin, 1993), p. 264. (hereafter Lydon, 'A Land of War').

⁶⁴³ *Ann Conn*, pp 150-1

immediate and decisive. A force under Sir William Cadel was dispatched to protect the O'Dempseys. Their swiftness in dispatching Cadel underlined the seriousness of the developing crisis. No doubt they were mindful of the strategic centrality of this region, having learned from their predecessors's painful earlier experiences at the hands of Cormac mac Airt O'Melaghlin and Donnchadh MacGillpatrick. Clearly the government's policy was to ensure the pacification of Leinster and the midlands and to limit the Irish disturbances to Connacht, Ulster and the western extremes of Munster. Now the Irish were warring on their doorsteps. For the government, the outbreak of this midland war combined with conflict raging in the mountains above Dublin raised serious strategic considerations.

Firstly if this war should spread, the Shannon defensive line was exposed to attack from both sides of the river. And spread it did. But not west, but east. If the Shannon formed Leinster's western frontier, it was the Barrow that shaped the province's internal border between West Leinster and East Leinster. As the Shannon and its adjacent passes were communications portals to the colony in Thomond and Desmond, the Barrow river valley performed the same function linking Dublin with the southeast as well as Munster.⁶⁴⁴ Thus, the emergence of war in this pass-laced region located between the Shannon and the Barrow was potentially disastrous for the colonists. Indeed, the danger of Irish expansion along the western bank of the Barrow was even more honed by the eventual spread of the war in the Wicklow mountains to the MacMurrough territories located close to the Barrow's eastern bank in 1274.⁶⁴⁵ If the Leinster Irish were to co-ordinate their efforts, there was a strong probability that this portal would fall under Irish control with dire ramifications for the colony. In any event this Irish coming together was still some way off. But from the outset of the Leinster wars, the government had flagged its dangers and acted quickly to restore the peace. However, Cadel's intervention against the MacGillpatricks only served to intensify the conflict and exposed the vulnerabilities of the colonists of Offaly to Irish attack. Some of the Irish successes there may also

⁶⁴⁴ Frame, 'Two Kings in Leinster', p. 165; Lydon, *Lordship*, p. 169.

⁶⁴⁵ Flower, 'The Kilkenny Chronicle in Cotton MS', p. 332.

be explained by the vacancy within the Fitzgerald lordship of Offaly since 1268.⁶⁴⁶ By 1272, the war in Offaly necessitated government intervention led by Justiciar Maurice fitzMaurice Fitzgerald.⁶⁴⁷ Thus, 1272 marked the beginning of retreat from western Offaly and the beginnings of the Pale.

However, the gradual colonist withdrawal from Offaly revealed a familiar theme. As the colonists pulled back, the Irish warred amongst themselves for the spoils.⁶⁴⁸ But by 1275-6, the situation for the colonists in the midlands was worsening. There the MacGillapatricks of Ossory and perhaps the O'Carrolls of Ely confederated to resist the advance of Thomas de Clare into the Slieve Blooms.⁶⁴⁹ To the east of these mountains Laois was disturbed, suggesting that the O'Mores of Laois were riding with the O'Connor Falys and the MacGillapatricks.⁶⁵⁰ Only O'Dempsey, for his own reasons, sided with the government and was duly rewarded with the gift of a horse from the justiciar in 1277.⁶⁵¹ The spread of the war into Laois was confirmed in January 1278. Then the situation in Laois was so serious that Roger Mortimer, lord of Dunamase, and his tenants were excused from contribution to a royal subsidy for the war because of huge costs incurred fighting the Irish.⁶⁵² The sources point to co-ordinated campaigns being waged by a confederation of the MacGillapatricks, O'Connor Falys and the O'Mores. Nonetheless the situation remained perilous, forcing Justiciar Robert de Ufford to twice campaign into Laois as far as the outpost of the Newtown of Leys between 1279-80.⁶⁵³ De Ufford's campaigns combined with strenuous efforts of the seneschals of Kildare apparently forced a general peace upon the midland Irish. The records show An Calbhach O'Connor Faly and O'Dempsey agreeing to hand over 100 cattle in addition to 100 marks for a grant of peace at a date after 1280.⁶⁵⁴

646 *C.D.I.*, 1252-1284, no. 1389, p. 258.

647 *D.K.R.*, xxxiii, p. 24.

648 *Ann Clon.*, p. 250. Art mac Cormac O'Melaghlin was wounded by the MacGeoghegans and the O'Molloys of Fearceall.

649 Lydon, 'A Land of War', p. 264.

650 *D.K.R.*, xxxvi, p. 35. There seems to have been a campaign into Slieve Bloom in 1277.

651 *C.D.I.*, 1252-84, no. 1389, p. 258.

652 Lydon, 'A Land of War', p. 264.

653 Ó Cléirigh, *The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois*, p. 172.

654 *D.K.R.*, xxxvi, p. 73.

For the first time in a decade, Leinster was at peace. But this peace did not last and there is evidence to suggest the colonial nightmare of growing co-operation between the Irish of both parts of Leinster was beginning to manifest itself. Those Irish dynasties pushing for greater co-operation were the MacGillapatricks of Ossory and the MacMurroughs. By 1280 the MacMurroughs had observed a uneasy peace for three years, but their discontent with the status quo still rankled as evidenced by the apprehension of a Dermotus McMorkada in 1280.⁶⁵⁵ By 1281, trouble was brewing in Leinster. In the midlands the MacGillapatricks were again in arms, but their leader Hogeekyn was killed before the close of the year.⁶⁵⁶ In East Leinster Muirheartach MacMurrough, the provincial king, was arrested by the colonists perhaps as a precautionary measure against an outbreak of trouble in the region. Later in the year he was brought to Dunamase in Laois to negotiate with the Irish, hinting strongly that his kinsmen were intriguing with the Irish of the midlands. It also highlights the possibility that some midland lords still acknowledged the legitimacy of his provincial kingship. After the breakdown of negotiations he was returned to Dublin, but was released by early 1282. Events after Muirheartach's release suggest heavy implication in the fomentation of discontent in Leinster. This is supported by his brother Art's attacks upon the colonists in the Vale of Dublin.⁶⁵⁷

These disturbances in Leinster as a whole were set against the background of the outbreak of a serious Welsh rebellion against Edward I in March 1282. It is unlikely this rebellion in Wales sparked a revolt in Leinster, but it seems to have been common knowledge amongst the Leinster Irish and may have encouraged those determined to go to war. Duffy has noted that the effect of the Welsh successes profoundly moved the Munster Irish, but in Ossory it was earth-shaking.⁶⁵⁸ In June 1282 Gilbert de Clare, earl of Gloucester and

⁶⁵⁵ *Clyn, Annals*, p. 9.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid*; *D.K.R.*, xxxvi, p. 64; There seems to have been trouble in Leys and Slieve Bloom in 1281. That year Maurice fitzMaurice was lent 100 livres for bringing a force from Connacht to campaign in Slieve Bloom.

⁶⁵⁷ Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 163.

⁶⁵⁸ Duffy, *Ireland and the Irish Sea Region*, pp 135-42. There is further evidence linking Ossory and Wales, see H.Luard (ed.), *Annales Monastici*, vol. iv, (London, 1869), p. 311; This chronicle shows a Welsh rebel, Rhyss ap Maredudd, fled Wales to perhaps the de Clare lands in Kilkenny in 1287; *Calendar of Various Chancery Rolls*, (London, 1912), p. 2323. Edward I ordered the Justiciar of North Wales to prevent Rhyss' escape. Another contact between Wales and Kilkenny comes in 1282, *C.D.I.*, 1252-84, no. 912, p. 425. A William

lord of Kilkenny, was routed by the Welsh at the battle of Llandeilo fawr.⁶⁵⁹ Significantly, the son of William de Valence, lord of Wexford, fell in the slaughter. Perhaps fearful of the effect of the news of the Welsh victory upon the Leinster Irish, Justiciar Stephen de Fulbourne decided to murder the MacMurrough brothers.⁶⁶⁰ Five weeks after Llandeilo fawr in July 1282, they arrived, under a safe conduct, at Arklow to embark for England, but were murdered by assassins.⁶⁶¹

Perhaps one of the effects of the strangulation of the probable MacGillpatrick/MacMurrough alliance was the reorientation of the political axis from southern Leinster to its northern region. This shift seems to be confirmed by the emergence of an alliance between the O'Connor Faly's and the O'Melaghlin's by 1282. One of the moving forces behind this alliance was Cairbre mac Airt O'Melaghlin, king of Meath (1283-90). His reign witnessed an intensification of co-ordination between the Irish of the midlands. This alliance also coincided with the emergence of two brothers, Muirheartach and An Calbhach O'Connor Faly. While Muirheartach was head of their dynasty, An Calbhach was a leader of tremendous military ability. Under this triumvirate the conflict in the midlands dramatically escalated.⁶⁶² Consequently, this Irish warring on the marches steadily began to erode the revenues accruing to the colonists from their Offaly lands. In July 1283 a Kildare jury observed that the Offaly territory of Oregan which belonged to the O'Dunnes (Uí Dhuinn) had annually rendered £90 13s 4d during peace, but was now worth less than half of that sum because of the war.⁶⁶³

Such was the military strength of this Irish axis that all campaigns to curb the lords of Offaly and Westmeath failed. The impending sense of doom descended upon the settlers of Offaly when the Fitzgerald manorial hub of Lea fell to the O'Connor

son of Llewellyn sat on a jury examining the lands of John fitzThomas in Kilkenny during August 1282.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid, p.142.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁶¹ Frame, 'The Justiciar and the murder of the MacMurroughs in 1282', pp 223-31; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 16; *Grace*, p. 39; *Clyn, Annals*, p. 9; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 436-7.

⁶⁶² Ó Cléirigh, *The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois*, p. 172; *Dowling, Annals*, p. 16. Theobald Butler was defeated in Offaly in 1283.

⁶⁶³ *Cal. inq. post. mort.*, II, no. 437

Faly/O'Melaghlin alliance in June 1284.⁶⁶⁴ Lea's fall forced the magnates to act more dynamically to bring the Irish under control. This resolve coincided with the coming of age of Gerald fitzMaurice III, the Fitzgerald heir to Offaly lordship, in 1285. The new 4th lord of Offaly's marriage to the daughter of his neighbour Geoffrey de Joinville, lord of the liberty of Meath, probably reflects the rising concern at the Irish inroads.⁶⁶⁵ From the evidence it is clear the conflict had reignited the Irish of Laois who were now threatening the Dunamase lands of Edmund Mortimer.⁶⁶⁶ However, it was the fall of Lea that prompted a co-ordinated counteroffensive into Offaly in 1285. But in a series of clashes the Irish under Cairbre O'Melaghlin proved victorious, routing the incursions of Theobald Butler, Geoffrey de Joinville and Piers Bermingham.⁶⁶⁷ Worse was to follow. Somewhere in Offaly, Gerald's expedition was ravaged by a highly mobile enemy. To crown colonist misery, Gerald was held prisoner for an unspecified period, confirming the decline.⁶⁶⁸ While to the south MacGillpatrick paid 6 to have the king's peace in 1285-6 before unrepentantly burning Norman Callan in 1286.⁶⁶⁹

However, the military situation improved for the colonists with the capture of An Calbhach O'Connor Faly by Sir Walter L'Enfaunt in 1286.⁶⁷⁰ His capture seemingly forced the O'Connor Falys to come to the peace. Moreover, a further improvement in colonist fortunes was the succession of John fitzThomas Fitzgerald as 5th lord of Offaly upon the death of the hapless Gerald about July 1287. The region was again disturbed by the raids of Toirdealbhach O'Brien of Thomond upon Limerick and the Butler lands in Ormond.⁶⁷¹ But as noted by Ó Cléirigh, fitzThomas's inheritance soon fell foul of the endemic political instability and had slid back to warfare by summer 1288.⁶⁷² Such was the enormity of the threat

⁶⁶⁴ *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 384- 5. In this reference the taking of Lea was dated to 1283; *Chartul. St Marys'*, ii, p. 319.

⁶⁶⁵ Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 13.

⁶⁶⁶ *Ibid*; *Chartul. St Marys'*, ii, p. 319.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ann Clon.*, pp 255-6.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid*; *Clyn. Annals*, p. 16; *Chartul. St Marys'*, ii, p. 319.

⁶⁶⁹ *C.D.I.* 1285-92, no. 180, p. 87.

⁶⁷⁰ *Grace*, p. 41. This source mentions that the towns of Norragh and Ardscoil were burnt on 16 November 1286.

⁶⁷¹ Lydon, 'A Land of War', p. 254.

⁶⁷² Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 18; *Idem*, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans on Laois', p. 172.

posed by the midland Irish to the colonists that Justiciar John de Sandford, also archbishop of Dublin, caused the royal service due from Leinster to be proclaimed and attacked the Irish of Laois and Offaly. What he began was an operation of considerable scale, lasting a year and involving the co-ordinated efforts of fitzThomas, de Joinville and Bermingham.⁶⁷³

Despite these expeditions the threat remained. In 1289 the potency of the threat demanded the dispatch of two armies into Westmeath and Offaly. In April 1289 de Sandford invaded Westmeath from Connacht, bringing a large force including Maghnus O'Connor of Connacht and O'Kelly (Ó Ceallaigh) of Uí Maine. They were confronted by Cairbre O'Melaghlin with the O'Molloys, the MacGeoghegans and the Fox and were heavily defeated.⁶⁷⁴ Further south Bermingham and fitzThomas clashed with An Calbhach O'Connor Faly and 'the rest of the princes of Leinster' after May 1289.⁶⁷⁵ It seems the O'Connor Falys, the O'Mores and the O'Melaghlin's pounced on fitzThomas's force deep in Offaly. Again the Irish proved too strong for the settlers who were soundly routed. Embarrassingly John fitzThomas seemingly was captured, forcing de Sandford to organise a rescue mission.⁶⁷⁶

In response to this latest setback, de Sandford temporised with the O'Connor Falys. By autumn 1289 he had had enough, deciding instead to prepare another expedition against them. Among those who accompanied de Sandford on his latest foray into Offaly was a large contingent of Irish troops from the Wicklow region.⁶⁷⁷ While the army assembled, de Sandford still pursued the diplomatic tack. However, this approach failed at a parley at Aghaboe with the O'Connor Falys and seemingly MacGillpatrick of Ossory.⁶⁷⁸ In September 1289 de Sandford attacked the Irish of Laois and Offaly, bringing the war to a successful close by 4 October. From de Sandford's own correspondence, we are given the firm impression that

⁶⁷³ Ibid, p. 22; *C.D.I.*, 1285-92, no. 559, p. 265.

⁶⁷⁴ *Ann Conn*, pp 182-3 ; *Ann Clon*, p. 257 ; *A.U.*, ii, pp 370- 1; *C.D.I.*, 1285-92, no. 559, pp 269-70; Walton, *The English of Connacht*, pp 282-84.

⁶⁷⁵ *A.U.*, ii, pp 370-1; *Ann Conn*, pp 182-3. Meyler de Exeter was killed in this latest clash.

⁶⁷⁶ *C.D.I.*, 1285-92, no. 559, p. 273.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 272.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid. The trouble had definitively spread to Tipperary as its sheriff Roger de Penebrok rendered £38 3s 4d for the defence of the land, see *ibid*, p. 276.

the Irish capitulation was complete.⁶⁷⁹ However, as Ó Cléirigh points out while this campaign did succeed in forcing the submission of the Irish, it was to be temporary.⁶⁸⁰

By the terms of the peace, the Irish of Offaly paid a series of fines through the abbot of Rosglas in late 1289.⁶⁸¹ Later evidence dating from January 1292 showed that An Calbhach O'Connor Faly gave hostages and promised the payment of 1000 marks for his release from jail. This probably resulted from his capture in 1286.⁶⁸² Despite his promises of goodwill, An Calbhach had other ideas. In June 1290 he negotiated the lifting of his fine as well as the release of his hostages from Dublin Castle. In return the government secured the release of Sir John de Fulbourne who was taken prisoner by the Irish during de Sandford's last campaign into Offaly. An Calbhach's successful manipulation of this delicate situation reveals that much of Offaly lay beyond the land of peace. If he wished, he could at will throw the region again into chaos.

However, it was the killing of Cairbre O'Melaghlin by his MacCoghlan client that proved the major event in Irish midland politics during 1290.⁶⁸³ O'Melaghlin's demise marked a decisive turning point in his dynasty's fortunes. His young son and successor, Murchadh, was a short-lived king of Meath, dying of natural causes in 1293.⁶⁸⁴ This left the door ajar for the O'Connor Falys to become the great Irish regional power. As has been noted, the Irish of Laois and Offaly returned to war on their own initiative between 1291-2 685, expanding into Carlow, Kildare and Meath. The return of the Irish to war also coincides with the acrimonious dispute between John fitzThomas and Sir William de Vescy, justiciar of Ireland and also lord of the liberty of Kildare. In November 1290, de Vescy arrived in Ireland to succeed de Sandford as justiciar. Once in Ireland, he mounted a determined campaign to reassert his rights as lord of

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 273. The text reads 'And be it known that by this expedition the Irish as well of Offaly as Leys came to the King's peace and were never hostile again'.

⁶⁸⁰ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Problems of Defence: A Regional Case-Study', p. 33.

⁶⁸¹ *C.D.I.*, 1285-92, no. 559, p. 277.

⁶⁸² Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 23.

⁶⁸³ *Ann Conn.*, pp 183-5; *Ann.Clon.*, p. 257; *Chartul. St Marys'*, ii, p. 320.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid, pp 189-91.

⁶⁸⁵ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo Normans in Laois', p. 173; Idem, John fitzThomas, p. 23

Kildare. This of course directly impinged on fitzThomas whose lordship of Offaly was questioned by de Vescy in 1291.⁶⁸⁶ To strengthen his position against de Vescy's threat, fitzThomas seems to have buried his differences with the O'Connor Falys. This seeming rapprochement between fitzThomas and the Irish was confirmed when Edward I granted him permission to negotiate with them both within and outside his own lands in May 1292.⁶⁸⁷

For his part de Vescy brought hostings into Offaly, harassing the Irish followers of fitzThomas, leading to the latter's vigorous complaints to the king. In response de Vescy defended his actions, alleging that they had raided the liberty of Kildare and it was his duty as its lord to prosecute them for their misdemeanours. Moreover, de Vescy took the feud a step further by ordering a royal service at Kildare on 24 July 1293. Ostensibly this campaign was to be against the Irish of Offaly. But in reality, fitzThomas was the target. Bloodshed was averted by Edward I's countermanding of de Vescy's decree on 1 July 1293.⁶⁸⁸ The king's diffusion of the crisis merely served to postpone it.

During Michaelmas 1293 fitzThomas and others made a series of complaints against de Vescy before the English parliament. On 1 April 1294 in the presence of the Dublin Council, de Vescy accused fitzThomas of slandering him to the king. Dramatically a challenge of arms was made and both men were summoned before the king. In the meantime de Vescy was removed from his justiciarship by the king on 4 June 1294. On 24 July 1294 de Vescy appeared for the duel at Westminster, but fitzThomas failed to show. Consequently de Vescy won his case by default.⁶⁸⁹ Meanwhile in Ireland, the feud had exploded. It is from evidence given at a general eyre in the newly constituted county of Kildare between July 1297 and April 1298, that we are able to piece together what happened. However, it is impossible to obtain a general picture of Kildare as the proceedings relating to Offelan, Kildare's richest cantred, have not survived.

⁶⁸⁶ Idem, John fitzThomas, pp 35-37.

⁶⁸⁷ *C.D.I. 1285-1292*, no. 1103; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 16. This mentions hostility between fitz Thomas and de Vescy in 1292.

⁶⁸⁸ J.Lydon, 'The years of crisis, 1254-1315', in *N.H.I.*, ii, (ed.) A.Cosgrove (Oxford, 1993), p. 186. (hereafter Lydon, 'The years of crisis, 1254-1315'); *C.D.I. 1293-1301*, nos 62-63.

⁶⁸⁹ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, pp 210-11.

Whereupon the surviving evidence focuses upon the western cantred of Offaly and its neighbour of Leys. The eyre records show a land torn by warfare, revealing multiple homicides and a considerable degree of fraternisation between the Irish and fitzThomas. Broadly speaking, fitzThomas's activities can be dated between late 1294 and early 1295.⁶⁹⁰ What the evidence does reveal is a spree of violence by fitzThomas through Clane in Offelan, Reban in Leys and the barony of Dunlost in the cantred of Omurthy.⁶⁹¹ Ultimately this crisis would result in de Vescy's surrender of the Kildare liberty to the crown in 1297.

However, the situation was further complicated by fitzThomas's power struggle with Earl Richard Burke of Ulster for supremacy in Connacht. In December 1294, the earl was taken prisoner by fitzThomas who imprisoned him in Lea Castle and only released him after prolonged negotiations on 11 March 1295. Another inescapable conclusion is the exploitation by Irish of the chaos arising from the great feud between fitzThomas and de Vescy. While there are difficulties in dating the events recorded in the proceedings of the eyre, it is clear that the O'Mores and O'Dempseys were independently preying on the beleaguered colonists living on the edges of their territories.⁶⁹² More serious was the close collaboration between fitzThomas and An Calbhach O'Connor Faly. Whilst fitzThomas may have been glad of O'Connor Faly aid, the Irish were pursuing their own agenda. Most notoriously, fitzThomas and An Calbhach seem to have separately attacked de Vescy's castle of Kildare in roughly the same time frame during late 1294.⁶⁹³ Interestingly, the Irish agenda and their priorities become clearer when An Calbhach burnt the tallies and rolls of the Kildare liberty.⁶⁹⁴

This renewed O'Connor Faly activity set the scene for a further four years of continuous violence. Again these disturbances roughly coincided with the emergence of Muiris MacMurrough's war of 1295, the Welsh rebellion of 1294-5 and a period of prolonged

⁶⁹⁰ Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, pp 53-54.

⁶⁹¹ *CJR*, 1295-1303, pp 193, 202.

⁶⁹² *Ibid*, pp 168, 176.

⁶⁹³ Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, pp 56-57; See also Dowling, *Annals*, p. 17.

⁶⁹⁴ *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, p. 323; *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 118; *Grace*, p. 43.

famine between 1294-6.⁶⁹⁵ Indeed, the hiatus of the O'Connor Faly dynasty at the close of the century exposes patterns of eastward raids from Offaly into the southern Kildare cantreds of Omurethy and Leys.⁶⁹⁶ By 1297 the extent of the Norman collapse in West Leinster was clear. That year nobody was appointed to succeed Walter Sweyn as coroner of Offaly, while Simon Swedeual was to be serjeant of a much diminished serjeantcy of Offelan.⁶⁹⁷ Furthermore, the pleas of the Crown of Kildare reveal endemic feuding amongst the settlers of Leys, upheavals which could cause as much unrest as Irish raids. Even more worrying for the government were the increasing reports of fraternisation between the Irish and some of the English colonists. One instance records the campaign of Nigel le Brun against the Irish of Irry in Offaly.⁶⁹⁸ Upon le Brun's return to the Newtown of Leys, he was brought to battle by the Irish with their English allies. Indeed, Robert Braynock, then serjeant of Offelan, only escaped with his life by killing a William Balaunce, an Englishman.⁶⁹⁹ Depressingly, more reports told of the colonists of Dunmase in Leys receiving the Irish and of Englishmen taking oaths with the Irish to disturb the peace.⁷⁰⁰

In reaction to such threats posed by Irish, marcher lords such as Piers Bermingham sought to pacify them through diplomacy. Indeed, Bermingham's serjeant was accused of being in league with them.⁷⁰¹ It is quite likely the serjeant acted with his master's approval. In 1297 Bermingham was prosecuted for accepting as rent a horse stolen from Walram de Wellesley by Donnchadh O'Connor Faly.⁷⁰² John fitzThomas and Bermingham even stood as god-fathers to An Calbhach's sons, John and Maisir.⁷⁰³ Whenever conditions were favourable as they were in 1299, Piers campaigned against the

⁶⁹⁵ Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 92; Duffy, *Ireland and the Irish Sea region 1014-1318*, pp 147-50; *CJR, 1295-1303*, p. 61.

⁶⁹⁶ *CJR, 1295-1303*, p. 194. In January 1298, twelve jurors of the cantred of Omurthy said that Calough Oconughor and other felons destroyed the coutry of Kilkolyn and made off with a huge herd of cattle.

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 118. Walter Sweyn, serjeant of the king, was killed in the house of Neux hyn Oconoyl, see *ibid*, p. 187.

⁶⁹⁸ *CJR, 1295-1303*, p. 167.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 168.

⁷⁰⁰ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', p. 174.

⁷⁰¹ *CJR, 1295-1303*, p. 189. The serjeant's name was Roger.

⁷⁰² *Ibid*, p. 174; see also Ó Cléirigh, 'The Problems of Defence: A Regional Case-study', p. 38.

⁷⁰³ *Ann. Inisf*, pp 394-5; *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 130-1; *Ann Clon*, p. 260; *Ann Conn*, pp 206-7; see Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, pp 126-27, 147-57.

Irish.⁷⁰⁴ This elaborate game of chess between the O'Connor Falys and the marchers continued into the early fourteenth century.

Significantly, though, the drive of Irish expansion was turning southward, focusing particularly on the western side of the Barrow valley. Because of Irish successes, huge stretches of the midland landscape were now outside the land of peace. From the evidence it seems these lands were centred around Irry in Offaly, and Clonboyne in Laois.⁷⁰⁵ But it was the O'Mores who were making the most dramatic progress, conquering the highland region of Slemargy overhanging the Barrow valley.⁷⁰⁶ This southward expansion of the O'Mores clearly was forcing the settlers back over the Barrow. There Kenagh Óg (Cétach Óg) and Leyssagh (Laoiseach) O'More were extracting blackrents and foodrents from the settlers in parts of Leys.⁷⁰⁷ Even worse for the colonists was the desertion of their allies, the O'Dempseys. They under the leadership of Diarmait O'Dempsey were now regularly preying upon travellers and merchants on the highway outside Castledermot.⁷⁰⁸

Ominously Irish attacks were now concentrating on the settlements along the highway in the strategic Barrow valley, connecting Munster with the rest of the country. The most dramatic statement of their power came in 1297. That year the Irish of Slemargy, probably the O'Mores, broke across the Barrow and destroyed Leighlinbridge.⁷⁰⁹ Leighlin's destruction marked the beginnings of increasing Irish pressure on the settlers of the Barrow. Even more disturbing was the brief alliance of the MacMurrroughs

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid, pp 286-87.

⁷⁰⁵ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', p. 174.

⁷⁰⁶ Nicholls notes that Slemargy had formed no part of the pre-invasion territory of the O'Mores, see Nicholls, *Gaelic Ire*, p. 174.

⁷⁰⁷ *CJR*, 1295-1303, pp 167-69. Also Aueryn Omorth, Folan Omorth and Robert Ohothe took Geoffrey Tael of Melleton from his house and killed him in a wood near Reban castle.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid, see pp 69, 186, 188-89.

⁷⁰⁹ For evidence of further O'More incursions into the Barrow valley, see *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 178. The O'Mores in particular directed their efforts against the the de Lyuet family. Then McCraych Omorthe targeted the town of Lyuetiston in the Barrow valley, killing Henry and John de Seintflores and seven others before plundering the town. Curiously McCraych deposited his spoils along with the bodies of William de Lyuet and five others at the castle of Carlow. Other evidence shows John le Chaun receiving Lowy Omorthe, Aueryn Omorthe and his son Henry McAueryn, the killers of Nicholas de Lyuet. Later Henry McAueryn and his kinsman Folan killed Gilbert de la Lounde and Robert son of William. For the burning of Leighlin see, *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, p. 327; *Grace*, p. 45.

with the O'Connor Falys in 1297.⁷¹⁰ The widespread disturbance of the region is confirmed when war reared up again in Ossory. In October 1297 Justiciar John Wogan was compelled to campaign against MacGillapattrick near Castlecomer in Ossory.⁷¹¹ Importantly, that year among the crown pleas of Offaly the outlawry of Sefraidh O'Carroll is recorded, indicating that some of the O'Carrolls were also dragged into the war. The location of both the participants, the attacks and their timing tends to suggest premeditation on the part of the Irish involved. In the northern midland region, Sefraidh O'Farrell destroyed the settlers of Annaly in the same period.⁷¹² From this date onwards, the colonists would effectively have to thoroughly reconquer Leinster if the midland settlements were to survive.

Still, it would be a mistake to view the ongoing Irish warring as being solely racially motivated. Indeed, the anti-settler sentiment that fuelled earlier wars in Connacht and elsewhere does not seem have been so omnipresent in the wars of the Leinster Irish. A pertinent point to remember is the long-lived co-operation that had previously existed in Leinster. Rather, it seems the Irish expansion here had more to do with their ability to do so. Even so, amidst the present turbulence, there was much social interaction between the Irish and colonial nobles of this frontier world. For instance in 1290, Earl Richard Burke of Ulster, according to the annals, devastated the Delvin lands of the MacCoghlan slayer of Cairbre O'Melaghlin.⁷¹³ The annals also later record that the earl encouraged the killing of MacCoghlan by the Berminghams in 1293.⁷¹⁴ Favour was also shown by the earl in the fourteenth century through the granting of lands and tenements to Sefraidh O'Farrell of Annaly. Burke's influence within this region and particularly with the O'Farrells of

⁷¹⁰ *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 189. This records that Molathlin Oconewor and Caluath Oconughur (An Calbhach O'Connor Faly ?) received the obrenans, incendiaries, and the McMurchythes. See also p. 69. This records that Douenald McMurchot, Donechud son of Colin Oconeghor, William son of Maurice oConeghur, and Lucas son of Joseph the chaplin killed Walter le Wylde outside the town of Athy before returning to the town of Iryth outside the land of peace. See p. 394, by 1302 Douenald McArt McMurchuth was stealing horses from the liberty of Kilkenny. The O'Brennans had been troublesome for some time, see *CJR*, 1295-1303, pp 63, 72 and 179. Aulef Obrenan got peace by the wish of John fitzThomas.

⁷¹¹ *CJR*, 1305-7, p. viii.

⁷¹² *AU*, ii, pp 37-8.

⁷¹³ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 16. This text mentions William de Burgh.

⁷¹⁴ *Ann Conn*, pp 182-3, 189; *Ann Clon*, p. 257.

Annaly would surface again. Also the sight of An Calbhach O'Connor Faly in 1298, prosecuting a case against Robert Typer for theft of cattle during peacetime seems paradoxical given his record.⁷¹⁵ Other social contact between the Irish and the Normans included marriage and spying. In 1297 Nicholas Toan was hanged for spying on Kildare for the Irish and for his participation in ensuing raids. Marriage between the marcher and Irish nobles was a feature in the marchlands. For example, during 1302 Isabella de Cadel and her maid were charged with having part in the robberies of the Irish of the Leinster mountains and for spying out the land of peace. As it transpired Isabella was married to Diarmait O'Dempsey whom she called her lord. From her own account, she had gone at his command to visit and give gifts to his allies of the Leinster mountains. Luckily for her, the court took into account the good service rendered by her father, Sir William de Cadel, the former royal seneschal of Kildare and Carlow. Indeed, links between the de Cadels and the O'Dempseys dated back as far as 1272, when Sir William was sent to protect them from the MacGillapatricks of Slieve Bloom.⁷¹⁶ Another case shows a less merciful face of the law. A member of the de Valle family of the Barrow valley married an Isabella Octouthy, who was accused of receiving her brothers, the killers of Geoffrey de Langs. In 1312 after delivering her child, she followed her mother to the gallows. Because of the lack of royal government within these marches many settlers were forced to treat, without licence, with the Irish for the return of goods and livestock. This practice often landed them in trouble with the royal justices.⁷¹⁷ Nonetheless, this phenomena shows how bound up at times Irish and colonial society could be. Indeed, discarded branches of Irish dynasties eagerly served in government armies against their kinsmen. Several O'Mores appear performing military service and a Nigellus was entrusted with Moreth Castle in Laois by John fitzThomas in 1303.⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁵ *CJR, 1295-1303*, p. 196.

⁷¹⁶ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Problems of Defence: A Regional Case-Study', p. 40.

⁷¹⁷ *CJR, 1295-1303*, pp 368-69. See the case of John de Lyuet, he was taken prisoner by the Irish of the Wicklow mountains and John Talon in 1301-02. To obtain his release, he had to negotiate terms with them and give hostages.

⁷¹⁸ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', p. 174; *CJR, 1308-14*, p. 237. Simon son of Domhnall O'More was rewarded in 1312 for service against the Irish of the Leinster mountains. For other examples of interaction between the Irish and the English. *CJR, 1308-14*, pp 315-6. In 1314 Stephen Offlen (MacFháeláin) served with Maurice Howell against the Irish of Leinster mountains and Offaly in 1314. *CJR, 1308-14*, p. 318. In 1314 William Swyft was charged with riding with the O'Tooles against the settlers. See *CJR, 1295-1303*, p. 368.

The opening years of the fourteenth century marked the commencement of the second epoch of Irish expansion in West Leinster and the province as a whole. In East Leinster this was moving in favour of the O'Byrnes of the Wicklow mountains, resulting from dramatic upheavals in the Irish politics of West Leinster. In turn, this rise in O'Byrne fortunes conspired to further pressurise Muiris MacMurrough, king of Leinster. But how did events in the West Leinster cause such shift in the political equilibrium of the Irish of East Leinster? We have already observed that the ambitions of the Irish dynasties of West Leinster had begun to make contact with the MacMurroughs along the strategic Barrow valley during the last decades of the thirteenth century. In particular, we have noted the growing closeness between the MacMurroughs and the O'Connor Faly of Offaly.⁷¹⁹ Indeed, the primacy of the O'Connor Faly dynasty in the midlands was further confirmed by the continued decline of the O'Melaghlin of Meath.⁷²⁰ And they only seemed to thrive on the endemic warfare sweeping from Slieve Bloom to Westmeath.⁷²¹ But on Trinity Sunday, 13 June 1305, Bermingham sanctioned the murders of An Calbhach and Muirheartach O'Connor Faly, reshaping dramatically the region's political dynamics.⁷²²

⁷¹⁹ *CJR*, 1295-1303 pp 69, 189, 394.

⁷²⁰ *AU*, ii, pp 396-7. In 1301 Cairbre mac Cormac O'Melaghlin was killed by his cousin, the son of Art O'Melaghlin; *Ann Clon*, p. 258.

⁷²¹ See Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, pp 148-49; In the early fourteenth-century trouble steadily emerged between the Anglo-Normans and the Irish of the cantred of Ely, which is evidenced by increasing reference to the march of Ely. The advance of the march was in no doubt facilitated by a feud between the Anglo-Norman families of de Barry and de Milbourne, which embroiled much of Ely. In 1304 the widespread destruction and splintering of the land of peace by this feud raised genuine fears among the Anglo-Normans that the O'Carrolls would expel them. See *CJR*, 1305-07, p. 85. This records that the community of Tipperary should pay the price of horses lost in the defence of the marches of Slieve Bloom; The self-destructive conflict among the colonists was to show how tenuous the power of the Anglo-Normans was within the cantred for within a generation Ely was lost. Other ominous portents were signalled when no payment for the profit of the country was recorded between 1305-9. See also C.A.Empey, 'The Cantreds of Medieval Tipperary' in *N.Munster Antiq. Jn*, xiii (1970), pp 22-9; Idem, 'Tipperary in the Medieval Period, 1185-1500', in *Tipperary History and Society*, (ed.) Wm Nolan (Geography Publications, 1985), p. 87; Idem 'County Kilkenny in the Medieval Period', in *Kilkenny History and Society*, (eds) Wm Nolan and K.Whelan, (Geography Publications, 1990), pp 79-95; John Wogan campaigned against the Irish of Slieve Bloom between November 1303 and January 1304, see *CJR*, 1305-07, p. xii. Furthermore a castle was also being built at Geashill in Offaly to defend John fitzThomas's lands, *ibid*, p. 8. During his campaign against the Irish of the mountains of Slieve Bloom in 1303-4, Wogan voiced his fears concerning the potency of their three cornered alliance with the O'Connors Faly and the O'Carrolls by giving Sheriff Albert de Kenley of Kildare a mounted force to protect the land of peace in case of raids by the Irish of Offaly during absence, see *ibid*, p. 242.

⁷²² *Ann Conn*, pp 205-7; *Ann Clon*, p. 260. For an excellent discussion of the murders of the O'Connor Faly leaders, see Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, pp 149-57; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 17; *Grace*, p. 49; *Clyn, Annals*, pp 11, 42; *Ann. Inisf*, pp 394-5.

If fitzThomas and Bermingham thought that the decapitation of the O'Connor Faly leadership would pacify the region, they were mistaken. However, the removal of the brothers profoundly upset the balance of regional Irish polity. Consequently, Diarmait O'Connor Faly, their successor, faced a series of intertwined threats from his colonial rivals and their Irish allies. Such was the chaotic warfare after the murders that Justiciar John Wogan toured the western marches of Kildare in September 1305, basing himself at the Newtown of Leys.⁷²³ Even so, Wogan's hefty presence could not restore order to the frontier. Wogan's effort to quell the disturbances was not the only colonial attempt to bring the Irish to order.

In spite of the strength of the Irish at this time, much of their success was facilitated by deep divisions existent with settler society. In particular a vicious feud emerged about 1300 between the English of Tipperary and Kilkenny, increasing the volatility of the marches.⁷²⁴ In October 1305, the earl of Gloucester, also lord of Kilkenny, led a hosting to confront the Irish of the Slieve Blooms.⁷²⁵ Again it proved fruitless and the midlands continued to burn.

Of all the attempts to defeat the O'Connor Falys, John fitzThomas's efforts prove the most important.⁷²⁶ In order to embark upon the reconquest of Offaly, fitzThomas recruited the O'Dempseys. For their part, the O'Dempseys had long resented the regional O'Connor Faly supremacy and welcomed fitzThomas's aid.⁷²⁷ Together the O'Dempsey/fitzThomas alliance threatened to

⁷²³ *CJR*, 1305-7, pp 84, 124.

⁷²⁴ *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 350. This marks the emergence of serious warfare between the English of Tipperary and Kilkenny in 1300. See *CJR*, 1305-7, p. xii. Between November 1303 and January 1304, there was a government campaign against the MacGillapatricks; *CJR*, 1305-7, p. 85. In 1305 the English community of Tipperary had to pay for horses lost guarding the Slieve Bloom marches. *CJR*, 1305-7, p. 194. In 1306 no serjeant could do his duty in the march of Ely, on account of the Irish of Slieve Bloom; *CJR*, 1305-7, pp 190-1. In 1306 the English were fighting themselves again; *CJR*, 1305-7, p. 468.

⁷²⁵ *CJR*, 1305-7, pp 135, 467-68. On p. 468 The prior of Athmarkt was charged with having received Doneghuth son of Fym McGilpatrik in 1305. (Donnchadh son of Fionnán MacGillpatrick). It would seem that he and others were menacing the land of peace in Tipperary. This Donnchadh was probably the son of Fynyn and nephew to Maollachhlyn McGylpatrick (Máelsechlainn MacGillpatrick), see *C.D.I.*, 1285-92, no. 180, p. 87.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 77-78.

⁷²⁷ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', p. 175; Interestingly Diarmait O'Dempsey had been at odds with the colonists in the 1290s. See *idem*, 'The Problems of Defence: A Regional Case-study', pp 40-41. Indeed, this Diarmait was married to Isobel de Cadel, the daughter of fitzThomas's ally, Sir William de Cadel.

ignite the already tense midlands. In response Diarmait O'Connor Faly cobbled together a rival affinity, including O'Dunnes, MacGillapatricks, MacGeoghegan⁷²⁸, and the O'Molloys to oppose them. Indeed, he may have cemented his support by marrying his daughter to the rising Muirheartach Mór MacGeoghegan.⁷²⁹

Diarmait's efforts had their desired response and soon he was able to pressurise the O'Dempseys. Late in 1305 Fyn O'Dempsey (Fionnán O'Dempsey) petitioned the government for assistance against Diarmait's confederation.⁷³⁰ In January 1306 the Dublin Council responded to the O'Dempsey difficulties by sending troops and sanctioning fitzThomas to aid them.⁷³¹ Thus fortified, the O'Dempseys launched an assault against the O'Connor Falys. This new offensive drew the O'Connor Falys out of the safety of Offaly. And in early April 1306, the O'Dempseys and their government allies routed them at John fitzThomas's castle of Geashill in Laois, killing their O'Dunne ally.⁷³² However, it is plain that this war was widespread as Muirheartach Mór MacGeoghegan held Diarmait O'Dempsey hostage, forcing Fionnán O'Dempsey to negotiate. But the prospect of Fionnán allying with MacGeoghegan in order to effect the release of Diarmait led fitzThomas and Bermingham to compel him to deliver three hostages into their hands⁷³³, displaying the inherently fluid nature of regional politics.⁷³⁴

Despite the defeat at Geashill, the O'Connor Faly allies cosseted the dynasty from the worst of the colonist assault. And in June 1306, the O'Melaghlin and Muirheartach Mór MacGeoghegan defeated Bermingham.⁷³⁵ Further south the MacGillapatricks widened the breadth of their attacks into Tipperary and Laois. And the first mention of a strong march in Ely seems directly linked to

⁷²⁸ *CJR*, 1305-07, p. 151. MacGeoghegan's expansion was already noted by the colonial government in 1305.

⁷²⁹ *Ann Clon*, p. 266. Her name was Joan and she died in 1310; *Ann Conn*, pp 224-5. She is described as Sibán in this entry.

⁷³⁰ *CJR*, 1305-07, p. 215; Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 158.

⁷³¹ *Ibid*, p. 215.

⁷³² Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 158; *CJR*, 1305-07, p. 270, this records that Fionnán and John fitzThomas received a sum of £40 for the beheading of O'Dunne; *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, p. 333; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 17; *Grace*, p. 49.

⁷³³ *CJR*, 1305-07, p. 271.

⁷³⁴ Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 159.

⁷³⁵ *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 104-5.

these attacks.⁷³⁶ Because of the proximity of Laois and Offaly to the strategic Barrow valley this boded ill for a government already under pressure from the Irish of East Leinster. On a general level, co-operation was plainly rising between the Irish of both parts of Leinster. Indeed, this state of affairs is borne out by the evidence. *The Annals of Inisfallen* record that the colonists of both Munster and Leinster were coming under severe Irish pressure as the year closed.⁷³⁷

But in East Leinster, the situation had become particularly violent. According to the pleas of the eyre held in Duiske County Kilkenny on 15 November 1305, colonists murdered four MacMurrough leaders at Ferns resembling the O'Connor Faly murders. Like their predecessors of July 1282, the four had come under a promise of safe conduct. From the inquiry ordered by an enraged Justiciar John Wogan, we learn that individual colonists had taken the law in their own hands and killed the Irishmen. At this Wogan ordered the seneschal of the liberty of Wexford to bring the perpetrators to justice.⁷³⁸ When he failed to do so, the Irish led by Muiris MacMurrough exploded. Their retribution was swift as the seneschal, Gilbert Sutton, was killed by them before the end of the year.⁷³⁹

These disturbances in East Leinster continued to match those of West Leinster.⁷⁴⁰ But what is most interesting is the linking up of the Irish of these troubled regions. Indeed, their cause may have been helped by transfer of the liberty of Carlow into royal hands upon the death of Roger Bigod in 1306. In any case Irish envoys from both parts of Leinster were crisscrossing the Barrow frontier, promoting war. And to illustrate this point further, the O'Mores in May 1306

⁷³⁶ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', p.176; See *CJR*, 1305-07, p. 194. This mentions that the sergeant of Elycarewil could not do his duty because of the danger of the Irish of Slieve Bloom.

⁷³⁷ *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 396-7.

⁷³⁸ *CJR*, 1305-07, pp 466-67. The MacMurrough leaders were Henry, Muircheartach Mór, Murchadh and Domhnall Óg MacMurrough.

⁷³⁹ *Grace*, p. 49.

⁷⁴⁰ *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 333. In this year Thomas de Suerterby, constable of Castlekevin, executed Macnochi, two of his sons and a strong thief called Lorcán Oboni. This Macnochi seems a son of Eochaidh O'Toole, otherwise known as Richard or Yoghy O'Toole; see *CJR*, 1305-07, p. 336. In 1307 this Thomas Snyterby was given 25 marks for his keepership of Castlekevin; *Grace*, p. 51. The region was already troubled as Thomas Sneterby took Richard mcCiochi (mac Eochaidh), two of his sons, and Lorcán O'Bone, described as a very famous robber, at Newcastle on 17 March 1306, beheading them later.

burned Ballymore in the western Wicklow mountains.⁷⁴¹ In addition several sources point to the fact that Justiciar Wogan brought a large army to punish Murchadh O'Byrne's lordship for the devastation of Ballymore. Most remarkably, *The Book of Howth* records that Irish came from other parts of Ireland to aid O'Byrne. And in an encounter at Glenfell, probably Glenealy in east Wicklow, the Irish rebuffed Wogan's army.⁷⁴²

By the opening of 1307, the government was flailing amid a crisis of lordship in Leinster. From their first hand observations, the Barrow frontier was in a state of collapse. And the bloody encounter at Glenealy confirmed the colonist nightmare of Irish confederation and co-operation. Drastic action was needed in Leinster. In response Wogan with his deputy, Lord Edmund Butler, adopted a policy of steel and stealth to meet the Irish challenge. And by early summer 1307, they had broken the Irish gallop in East Leinster. The blow that took the wind out of the MacMurrough sails seems to have been the killing of Murchadh Ballach MacMurrough, described as *princeps Lagenie*, by Butler and David de Cauntetoun on 1 April 1307.⁷⁴³ And during the same month another hosting marched against the O'Tooles of Wicklow, meeting little success.⁷⁴⁴ Having failed militarily, Wogan switched to diplomacy. His success was considerable. In 1307 during the vacancy in the archbishopric of Dublin, he exploited Murchadh O'Byrne's greed for ecclesiastical lands in O'Toole possession. His grant to O'Byrne turned the Irish against each other.⁷⁴⁵ In effect Wogan had disarmed the potency of the Irish danger in the southeast. Still, Wogan suffered reverses in the

⁷⁴¹ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 17; *Grace*, p. 51. In May 1306 Ballymore was burned by the Irish and Henry Calf was killed, defending it. Seemingly in response the English brought an army against the Leinstermen and fought a battle against them. During the course of which Sir Thomas de Manderville fought valiantly. *CJR, 1304-1307*, pp 270, 354; O'Byrne, 'The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow', p. 59

⁷⁴² *The Book of Howth*, p. 127; *Grace*, p. 51; *Chartul, St Marys*, ii, p. 333.

⁷⁴³ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 18. The description of this Murchadh Ballach as princeps Lagenie may infer that he was a brother of Muiris, king of Leinster. See also *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 335; *Grace*, p. 51, see also p. 55 fn.g It seems de Cantetoun was hung for the murder of Murchadh Ballach at Dublin in 1308; *CJR, 1308-1314*, pp 32, 55. These sources are explicit that Edmund Butler killed Murchadh Ballach. It seems most unlikely that David de Cantetoun was hung for the murder of Murchadh Ballach, also described as a felon. Rather it must have been for his rebellion.

⁷⁴⁴ Frame. *The Dublin Government*, pp 165-69, 171-73; *CJR, 1308-1314*, p. 355. Nigel le Brun received wages for 33 hobelars and 106 foot campaigned the O'Tooles in April 1307. The constable of Castlekevin was provisioned with food as well as 1000 quarrels for crossbows, suggesting an attack was expected.

⁷⁴⁵ O'Byrne, *The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow*, p. 59; *CJR, 1308-1314*, p. 354.

next year, but the emerging struggle between Muiris MacMurrough and Murchadh O'Byrne dominated the Irish polity of East Leinster for some years to come, shelving their attempts to promote closer relations with the Irish of the midlands. Indeed, the 1308-10 rebellion of the de Cauntetouns against the Edwardian crown further inflamed the region as the O'Byrnes and MacMurroughs rushed to support the opposing protagonists.⁷⁴⁶

Thus with the Irish of East Leinster fighting each other, Wogan was free to concentrate on the midlands. Although in early 1307, Edward II asked the Leinster lords to serve against the Scots, the Irish were in no mood to listen.⁷⁴⁷ Indeed, Wogan had not reckoned with Diarmait O'Connor Faly's next move. Perhaps mindful of the faltering Irish effort in the east, he launched a devastating offensive upon the colony. With probable O'More support, he extracted revenge for fitzThomas's support of the O'Dempseys by burning Geashill before ravaging Leys in July 1307.⁷⁴⁸ His siege of the Newtown of Leys forced Wogan to dispatch Butler and his father-in-law, John fitzThomas. Their approach signalled the lifting of the siege, forcing the O'Connor Faly retreat.⁷⁴⁹ Despite the success of fitzThomas and Butler in pushing the Irish back, the fighting continued for another year.⁷⁵⁰ While Diarmait O'Connor Faly's superhuman efforts inflicted a crushing defeat upon the midland colony. But the effects of his efforts exhausted his dynasty. And it was the earl of Ulster's 1308 campaign against the O'Connor Faly ally, MacGeoghegan that finally forced a truce.⁷⁵¹ Overall, however, the situation for the Offaly colonists was terminal.

With much of Westmeath, Offaly, Laois, and the north of Ossory and Ely lost to the colonists, the Irish attempted to turn the screw. However, Diarmait O'Dempsey's anabasis came to end at the hands of soldiers of Piers Gaveston in November 1308. His death at Tullow and the burning of Athy by the Irish further highlight the

⁷⁴⁶ *CJR*, 1308-1314, pp 200, 237.

⁷⁴⁷ *Grace*, fn.g, p. 50. In the midlands these included Diarmait O'Connor Faly of Offaly, O'Melaghlin of Meath, Sonethuth MacGillpatrick of Ossory and Laoiseach O'More of Laois.

⁷⁴⁸ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 18.

⁷⁴⁹ *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, pp 335-6; *Grace*, p. 51.

⁷⁵⁰ Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 160.

⁷⁵¹ *CJR*, 1308-14, p. 26.

Barrow/Kildare region as the concentration point for Irish expansion from the midlands.⁷⁵² Without doubt Bermingham's murders of An Calbhach and Muirheartach O'Connor Faly signed the death warrant of the colonists of western Kildare.⁷⁵³ Thus, it can be confidently argued that these murders and the subsequent unrest greatly speeded the interlocking of both parts of Leinster.

However, the decline of the O'Connor Falys and the O'Melaghlin resulted in the brief emergence of two new powers in the northern midlands, Muirheartach Mór MacGeoghegan of Kineleagh and Sefraidh O'Farrell of Annaly.⁷⁵⁴ Inevitably a power struggle developed between them. And in 1310 Muirheartach Mór with probable O'Connor Faly encouragement attempted to install himself as new regional overlord. His ambitions, however, were thwarted by the O'Farrell killing of his son Ferghal.⁷⁵⁵ Despite O'Farrell raids on his heartland, Muirheartach Mór attempted to pressurise O'Molloy of Fearceall to accept his lordship. Success was not forthcoming as O'Molloy killed Seaán MacGeoghegan in 1311.⁷⁵⁶ Also it seems that MacGeoghegan's expansion was causing serious worries for the colonists. From the evidence the colonists seem to have directed a two pronged assault against him, killing him before the end of the year.⁷⁵⁷ Even more importantly, an entry for this year preserved amongst the leaves of *The Annals of Connacht* records the killing of two sons of William Liath Burke by the Leinster princes in 1311. Usage of the term, Leinster princes suggests the involvement of the O'Connor Falys. Because of their close alliance with the MacGeoghegans, it is likely that this incident formed part of an offensive directed against Muirheartach Mór.⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵² *Chartul St Mary's*, ii, p. 338; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 18; *Grace*, p. 55; *Ann Clon*, p. 262.

⁷⁵³ Ó Cléirigh, John FitzThomas, p. 161.

⁷⁵⁴ *CJR*, 1305-07, pp 64-65. This entry mentions the maritime activities of the O'Farrells on the Shannon.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ann Clon*, pp 265-66; *AFM*, iii, pp 494-5; *Ann Conn*, pp 224-5.

⁷⁵⁶ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 19; *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, p. 340.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ann Clon*, p. 266.

⁷⁵⁸ *MacCarthaigh's Book*, pp 138-9; *Ann Conn*, pp 224-5. These princes are described as macaib/rig Laignechna. For earlier usage of this term see *AU*, ii, pp 370-1; *Ann Conn*, pp 96-7, 182-3. See chapter focusing on Connacht and West Leinster, 1224-1270; Ó Cléirigh, John FitzThomas, pp 176-77. From about 1312 the O'Connors Falys were gradually becoming more active along the marches of western Kildare. See also K. Simms, 'Gaelic Warfare in the Middle Ages', in T. Barlett and K. Jeffrey (ed.) *Military History of Ireland*. (Cambridge, 1996), p. 108.

In the longer term, the tumultuous events of the first decade of the fourteenth century had the effect of overturning the established political patterns in both parts of Leinster, switching the direction of the engine of warfare in the midlands from its northwest southwards to Laois and Munster as shown through the rise of the O'Mores of Laois.⁷⁵⁹ In turn this pushed the fragile political equilibrium of East Leinster in favour of the O'Byrnes to the detriment of the MacMurroughs. Indeed, Laoiseach O'More's emergence as lord of Laois in the last years of the thirteenth century laid the foundations of their medieval power. He greatly enlarged his lordship through his conquest of the Slemargy highlands.⁷⁶⁰ Even more troubling for the colonists was his ability to penetrate the Barrow frontier, destroying Leighlin and Ballymore in 1297 and 1306 respectively. Another focus of their raids was directed upon the Kilkenny and Carlow liberties. In 1308 Sir John de Boneville, the king's seneschal of these liberties, delivered the body of Donaghuch O'More, presumably a raider to Kilkenny Castle. But it was not only colonists of the Barrow and those of Kilkenny who were exposed to the thrust of Laoiseach's expansion. Later his Irish neighbours, the MacGillapatricks of Ossory and the O'Ryans of Idrone also suffered. Such was the steep gradient of his ascent that Friar Clyn later described Laoiseach as having risen from servility to the level of a prince.⁷⁶¹

In a sense Laoiseach was fortunate as his rise coincided with the O'Connor Faly demise, leaving him as the most powerful Irish midland lord. Noticeably as he grew stronger, he assiduously avoided conflict with them by fostering amicable relations. Moreover, it seems Laoiseach increasingly realised the strategic value of his lordship as a link between Leinster and the Irish of north Munster. Indeed, his conquests were greatly assisted through his successful exploitation of the junction-like location of Laois through the fusing of alliances and his extensive usage of mercenary troops from Leinster and Munster. While Laoiseach was establishing himself as the premier Irish midland lord, Murchadh O'Byrne was engaged in a struggle in East Leinster against Muiris MacMurrough and his successor - Domhnall Riabhach.

⁷⁵⁹ In May 1306 the O'Mores penetrated as far east as Ballymore Eustace, burning the town and killing Henry Calf. *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, p. 333; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 17. See also Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', pp 174-75.

⁷⁶⁰ *CJR*, 1305-7, pp 26-27; *Clyn, Annals*, p. 25; pp 167-68; *Grace*, p. 45.

⁷⁶¹ *Clyn, Annals*, p. 30.

Thus Laoiseach and Murchadh emerged as the real Irish beneficiaries of the turmoil, while the O'Connor Falys and MacMurroughs slipped into partial decline.

These two rising stars of Leinster politics may have met for the first time in summer 1306. On that occasion Murchadh's lordship was invaded by Justiciar Wogan in reprisal for Laoiseach's burning of Ballymore in May that year. About 1314-5 they formed an alliance. But it was the landing of Edward Bruce's army at Larne on 26 May 1315, that seemingly prompted their explosion in Leinster. Undoubtedly the Irish must have been greatly encouraged by Bruce's rout of Earl Richard Burke of Ulster at Connor during September 1315. Indeed, the defeat of Burke and the boldness of Féilim O'Connor of Connacht triggered an uprising of the Irish of Meath, Offaly, Thomond and Connacht after March 1316. This resulted in wide-ranging attacks upon English settlements throughout Connacht, including the sack of the royal castles of Roscommon, Rinndown, and Athlone.⁷⁶² However, the return of Sir William Liath Burke to Connacht stiffened settler resistance. And outside Athenry on 10 August 1316, Burke routed Féilim's army, killing him and ending O'Connor influence east of the Shannon.

In Leinster Murchadh and Laoiseach probably took the field as a response to the overthrow of Burke and the advance of the Scots in 1315. However, there were other more local reasons to why they now attacked the settlers. This independent nature of the emerging Leinster war is also confirmed by Frame's examination of the period.⁷⁶³ Also between 1315-17 Ireland and Europe were in the grip of a great famine, breeding conditions for warfare. Indeed, Murchadh and Laoiseach exploited this situation to expand. And with David mac Fáelán O'Toole, they burnt Athy and Wicklow in autumn 1315.⁷⁶⁴ But their ambitions were dented by Justiciar Edmund Butler's victory over Laoiseach in late 1315, costing them some 800 men.⁷⁶⁵ However, Bruce's midland campaign of winter 1315-6, threw the

⁷⁶² *A.L.C.*, i, p. 580-1.

⁷⁶³ Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 215.

⁷⁶⁴ See also Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', pp 177-178. Laoiseach O'More seems to have been leader of his dynasty from the 1290s to 1342; *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 348.

⁷⁶⁵ *Grace*, pp 69-71.

whole region into chaos. Indeed, the midland colony was mortally wounded by the aftershocks of Bruce's victory over Roger Mortimer, Laoiseach's feudal overlord, at Kells in December 1315. Also on 26 January 1316, Bruce defeated Justiciar Edmund Butler and John fitzThomas at Ardscull, near Castledermot in southern Kildare, worsened the condition of the colonists.⁷⁶⁶ After this Bruce pushed as far as Reban in western Kildare before sheltering in Laoiseach's lordship. However, Bruce was not universally welcome in the midlands. The treacherous leading of the Scots into a swamp by the O'Dempseys indicates that they had resumed their pro-government stance. But the colonist cause was lost in the midlands and Bruce destroyed the centre of John fitzThomas's Offaly lordship at Lea.⁷⁶⁷ When Bruce pulled back to Ulster, the Irish devastated what remained of the midland colony. Although Laoiseach and his allies' zeal earned them heavy defeats at Castledermot and Baclethan in 1316, the colonists were effectively finished in Laois and Offaly. This situation was confirmed in neighbouring Ely, when the O'Carrolls in 1318 routed Adam Mares and the Butlers.⁷⁶⁸ And these Irish conquests in Tipperary and the midlands was further exploited after 1318 by Brian Bán O'Brien. Indeed, Roger Mortimer recognised that the writing was on the wall for the midland colony and appointed Laoiseach as custodian of the Mortimer lands in Laois.⁷⁶⁹

Between 1270-1320, many of the midland Irish recovered much of their ancestral lands at the expense of the colonists. Indeed, the Irish had successfully exploited the always vulnerable position of the colonists in this region. The gradual collapse of the midland colony had far reaching consequences for the settlers of East Leinster. Clearly Irish pressure was now mounting upon the Barrow frontier because of Irish success and the co-operation it promoted between the Irish of both parts of Leinster. Examples of this are the co-operation between the MacMurroughs and the O'Connor Falys in 1297, and that of the O'Mores and the O'Byrnes in the early fourteenth century. And as both parts of Leinster began to re-interlock, the

⁷⁶⁶ Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, p. 186; Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, pp 181-183.

⁷⁶⁷ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', p. 175.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ann Clon*, p. 280; *Ann Conn*, pp 250-1. The O'Carrolls were already restless in 1313. Then the sons of Philip O'Carroll attacked the Tobins of Cumsy who were well to the south of Ely.

⁷⁶⁹ Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', pp 177-178; Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 112.

Dublin government gradually became increasingly isolated from the rest of the country. In short the emergence of this large Irish ruled territorial bloc in West Leinster and the midlands, linked the Irish kings of East Leinster to the rest of Gaelic Ireland, beginning the strangulation of Plantagenet Ireland.⁷⁷⁰

Part IV

The Leinster Wars, 1326-1426

Chapter 4a

The Leinster Wars, 1326-70

Chapter 4b

The Kingship of Art 20th MacCarthy, 1374-1426

⁷⁷⁰ See also Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, pp 104-5.

Chapter 4a

The Leinster Wars, 1320-1420

For the purposes of this operation and other matters...

Part IV

The Leinster Wars, 1320-1420

Chapter 4a

The Leinster Wars, 1320-70

Chapter 4b

The Kingship of Art Mór MacMurrough, 1370-1420

Chapter 4a

The Leinster Wars, 1320-1370

For the government, Irish co-operation and collusion resulting from the meeting of the ambitions of both parts of Leinster in the Barrow basin was an established fact by 1320. The restoration of communication between both parts of Irish Leinster had been a long-drawn out affair, starting probably in the early 1280s. But it gathered speed as the 1290s progressed and had become a reality by the early years of the fourteenth century. However, the devastation of the Bruce Wars between 1315-18, had accelerated the process. Still, this series of Irish reconquests was yet to peak. Indeed, all the major Irish dynasties of Leinster stood on the threshold of a dramatic advance in 1320. This chapter will chart, examine and explain that dramatic advance between 1320-70.

Without doubt, it was the political landscape of West Leinster and the midlands that was most profoundly disturbed by the Bruce Wars. As noted above growth of Irish power here was greatly facilitated by Edward Bruce's expeditions. In the aftermath of Bruce's death at Faughart in Louth during October 1318, Roger Mortimer acknowledged reality in Laois by his appointment of Laoiseach O'More as protector of his lands.⁷⁷¹ Despite his oath to uphold Mortimer interest in Laois, Laoiseach consolidated his position and raided the Carlow liberty. The weakness of the midland colony is further confirmed by Donnchadh O'Carroll of Ely's victory that year over Lord Edmund Butler.⁷⁷² And the neighbouring MacGillapatricks of Ossory exploited the division of the de Clare lordship of Kilkenny caused by the death of the earl of Gloucester at Bannockburn on 24 June 1314.⁷⁷³ But it was the dramatic reemergence of O'Brien interests in Ormond after 1320 that caused major problems for the Butlers and the Burkes.

⁷⁷¹ Clyn, *Annals*, p. 30; Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', pp 177-78.

⁷⁷² *Ann Conn*, pp 250-1; *AFM*, iii, pp 516-7; *Ann Clon*, p. 280.

⁷⁷³ Curtis, *Med. Ire*, p. 203

The leader of the O'Brien resurgence in Ormond was not King Muirheartach of Thomond, but a rebel cousin. This malcontent was Brian Bán, who survived Richard de Clare's defeat by Muirheartach on 10 May 1318.⁷⁷⁴ After this Brian Bán began to conquer lands in Ormond from the Burkes and the Butlers. By the early 1320s, Brian Bán had allied with Maurice fitzThomas Fitzgerald of Desmond. Brian Bán's emergence undoubtedly frightened the Burkes and the Butlers. By 1323 the Butlers were fighting a losing battle to hold onto territory in northern Tipperary and Kilkenny. Indeed, Empey estimated that the Butlers would lose the territories of Owey, Arra and other large parts of Ormond to the Irish in the fourteenth century. However, Brian Bán was not the only Irish warlord on the march in the region. In nearby Ely and Ossory a simultaneous and co-ordinated offensive by the O'Carrolls and the MacGillapatricks was under way.⁷⁷⁵ And from Empey's work, it becomes possible to discern the concentration points of this conflict such as the manor of Aghaboe lying on the borders of Laois and Ossory. Because of the contraction of the land of peace, Aghaboe now lay along an increasingly vulnerable marchland close to the MacGillpatrick Slieve Bloom heartland.⁷⁷⁶ Moreover, the contemporary records kept by the Kilkenny-based Friar John Clyn graphically illustrate the growing colonist consciousness of the threat of these synchronised Irish raids to the northern Kilkenny marches. In 1323, Clyn tells of the wasting by O'Carroll and MacGillpatrick of the lands surrounding Aghaboe.⁷⁷⁷ With regard to the Irish devastation of Ely during 1325, Clyn leaves no illusions as to the thoroughness of O'Carroll's ethnic cleansing, saying that he '*..in this year scarcely left a house, castle, or town in Ely O'Carroll among the English and the lovers of peace which he did not destroy by fire*'. Worse was to follow. The crisis intensified in depth when Brian Bán with a retinue of mixed race, some even drawn from the Irishized English families of Ely, burnt the settlers of Ossory in the same year. Action was needed and John Bermingham and Thomas Butler led an army against O'Carroll before the end of the year.

⁷⁷⁴ K.Simms, 'The Battle of Dysert O'Dea', *Dál gCais* no.5, (1979)pp 59-65.

⁷⁷⁵ C.A.Empey, *The Butler Lordship in Ireland 1185-1515*, Ph.D thesis, University of Dublin, 1970, pp 200, 207 (hereafter, Empey).

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp 160-87, p. 207.

⁷⁷⁷ Clyn, *Annals*, p. 22.

Indeed, the death of Domhnall Dubh MacGillpatrick was probably related to this counteroffensive.⁷⁷⁸

Similarly to the north of Ely and Ossory, the Irish politics of Offaly and Laois remained fractious. After the defeat of the O'Connor Faly by Andrew Bermingham on 9 May 1321⁷⁷⁹ and the dynastic feuding that followed, the O'Dempseys steadily rebuilt their power. In Laois despite his reverses during the Bruce Wars, Laoiseach O'More emerged as the most powerful Irish king within the region. Predictably when the first opportunity arose, Laoiseach turned on his Mortimer overlords and drove the remaining settlers from Laois, slashing out a greatly enlarged O'More lordship.⁷⁸⁰ And after the consolidation of Laois, Laoiseach returned to his old policy of southward expansion, killing eighty men of Carlow in 1326.⁷⁸¹ Further examination of his activities also depicts a concerted drive into the MacGillpatrick ambit, leading to fighting with them for regional dominance.⁷⁸² Indeed Laoiseach's advance into Ossory may in turn have pushed the MacGillpatricks to increase their attacks upon the settlers.

So from the evidence everywhere in the southern midlands, the colony was in retreat. Most symptomatic of the decline of royal government was the growing complexity of the political relationships between individual Irish kings and colonist magnates. The most notorious and best example of this fraternisation is that of Brian Bán and Maurice fitzThomas of Desmond. Clearly their relationship worked two ways. In return for fitzThomas's considerable protection, Brian Bán loyally supported his endless ambitions. Even more shocking was his attendance at a meeting in Kilkenny in July 1326. There it was alleged that he with the earls of Kildare and Louth as well as the future earl of Ormond and the bishop of Ossory agreed to rebel against the king. They would assume control of the land and elect and

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 17; Curtis, *Med Ire*, pp 204-5.

⁷⁷⁹ *AFM*, iii, pp 526-7; *Ann Conn*, pp. 256-7; *Ann Clon*, p. 283; *AU*, ii, pp 436-7; *Grace*, p. 99; Clyn, *Annals*, p. 14. This Andrew Bermingham and Nicholas de la Launde were later killed by O'Nolan (Henry?) on 22 September 1322, see *ibid*. It seems that Diarmait O'Connor Faly was expelled from Offaly by his brother Máelsechlainn, who was later killed by Diarmait's son Maelmorda in 1329. See Clyn, *Annals*, p. 20. Thanks to Dr M.K. Simms.

⁷⁸⁰ Clyn, *Annals*, p. 17; Curtis, *Med Ire.*, pp 26-27.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid, p. 18; Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', p. 177.

⁷⁸² Ibid, p. 27.

crown Maurice king of Ireland. However, nothing came of this, but the pair continued their extensive extortion racket throughout much of Munster. Even more worrying for the colonists of Ossory was the outbreak of endemic violence among their own in 1327, which must have undoubtedly facilitated the Irish advance from the north.⁷⁸³

If events were going against the midland settlers, life was equally rough for those of East Leinster. The gradual emergence of an Irish portal to the Shannon and beyond, magnified the pressure building on the Barrow frontier. Again from English actions, they were clearly aware of the wider implications of an Irish conquest of the Barrow valley. And to combat this mounting pressure, the earl of Norfolk in 1320 appointed the capable Henry Traherne as seneschal of his Carlow liberty. Fragments of Traherne's career reveal that he pursued a forward policy against the MacMurroughs, who were keen to annex the arable farmland of the liberty. However, there is considerable confusion as to who exactly was the MacMurrough king of Leinster at this point. After the death of Domhnall Riabhach in 1317, the annals make no mention as to the identity of his successor. But whoever the MacMurrough overlord was, he was clearly intent on the forcible annexation of the Barrow region to his growing kingdom. And from the evidence, he certainly kept Traherne busy. In 1321 Traherne delivered a Domhnall MacMurrough to imprisonment and enjoyed a greater success two years later. Then he with the de Valles killed Henry O'Nolan and the un-named MacMurrough overlord, leading to a deepening of the conflict.⁷⁸⁴ The new MacMurrough leader was Domhnall mac Airt. He was the son of the Art murdered at Arklow in July 1282. While his exact relationship with the two previous MacMurrough incumbents of the Leinster kingship is undetermined, he was the first cousin of Muiris MacMurrough who reigned as king of Leinster between c.1293-1313. An examination of his early career is instructive to his future policy as king of Leinster. Significantly, the earliest references show him in 1302 crossing the Barrow frontier to raid the liberty of Kilkenny.⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸³ Ibid, p. 19.

⁷⁸⁴ Grace, p. 21; Clyn, *Annals*, pp 15-16.

⁷⁸⁵ *CJR*, 1295-1303, p. 394.

From the outset of his reign, Domhnall mac Airt was determined to abandon the isolationist policy of his recent predecessors. One of his first actions to repair his dynasty's damaged relationship with Murchadh O'Byrne. By 1324 he had succeeded and both dynasties began fresh attacks on the Barrow settlers, resulting in two expeditions into Uí Cheinnselaig in 1324.⁷⁸⁶ Nonetheless the situation in the region remained volatile as evidenced by government maintenance of wards at Dunlavin and Baltinglass in 1325.⁷⁸⁷ However, there were also times when relations between Traherne and the MacMurroughs could be amicable, even friendly. For instance, Traherne and an Art MacMurrough were captured by the Butlers in 1326.⁷⁸⁸ But by and large relations were generally hostile. Broadly speaking, it seems that the campaigns of 1324-5 may have been decisive in forcing Domhnall mac Airt shake off his isolation from the rest of the Leinster Irish. Insofar as was possible, Domhnall mac Airt continued to mend relations with Murchadh O'Byrne and David O'Toole between 1324-27. Yet the exact nature of MacMurrough relations with the Irish dynasties of West Leinster remains unclear. As has been shown, links between the MacMurroughs and the Irish of this region had plainly increased since 1280. Indeed, the election of Domhnall mac Airt by the Leinster Irish may represent the culmination of this rapprochement. Their election of him as king of Leinster at an assembly in early 1328⁷⁸⁹ is not recorded in any Irish annal and the absence of a set of Leinster annals forever limits our perception of what was exactly happening. However, Nic Ghiollamhaith's work on the relationship between the O'Brien kings of Thomond during the fourteenth century and their MacNamara vassals also shows the rise of vassal power. She argues that the assumption of control of an inauguration ceremony, the development of an independent power base and the nurturing of a network of alliances by a leading vassal allowed him to place his appointee in the

⁷⁸⁶ *Rot. pat. Hib*, no. 80, pp 31 and 32.

⁷⁸⁷ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 242; Price, *Placenames*, p. lxii; Frame, *The Dublin Government*, pp 248-249. The Lawless family were figuring prominently in the fight against the O'Byrnes in 1325. For the effect of Irish raids upon the settlements in the western foothills in the Wicklow mountains during 1326, see *Alen's Reg*, pp 189-92. Later the Lawlesses captured Murchadh's nephews, Gerald and Thomas mac Dúnlaing in 1327, see *Rot. pat. Hib*, no. 93, p. 36. Furthermore Henry de Badouwe, constable of Dublin castle, was paid £ 8 7s 4d for the heads of several O'Tooles and a Fynnock O Coneghor in 1327. The inclusion of this O'Connor suggests links between the Irish of Imaal and those of Offaly, see *ibid*, no. 99, p. 36.

⁷⁸⁸ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 22.

⁷⁸⁹ *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, pp 365-66; *Grace*, p. 107.

kingship and that seems to be the case in Thomond and Connacht.⁷⁹⁰ Previously, Domhnall mac Airt's election has been viewed as a symbol of the Irish Resurgence.⁷⁹¹

What happened in Leinster firstly may actually represent the renegotiation of terms between Domhnall mac Airt and his vassals. And secondly it may represent the acceptance by the Leinster Irish of the reconstitution of the old MacMurrough provincial kingdom.⁷⁹² From Gerald O'Byrne's later behaviour at his and Art MacMurrough's joint submission to Richard II in January 1395, he was MacMurrough's leading vassal. This interpretation is further bolstered by Fiach O'Byrne's much later role as kingmaker to the MacMurroughs in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.⁷⁹³ Thus, Domhnall mac Airt's election may represent the political reality brought about by Irish reconquests in Leinster rather than simply reflecting the inauguration of Féilim O'Connor as king of Connacht in 1310.⁷⁹⁴

From the reaction of the English this was an enormous development within the polity of Leinster. That Domhnall mac Airt embarked upon a circuit through O'Byrne and O'Toole lands before planting his banner less than two leagues from Dublin adds weight to the reconstitution of the Leinster kingship. Traherne grasped the potency of the position of Domhnall mac Airt and quickly apprehended him.⁷⁹⁵ Furthermore David O'Toole was also captured and ultimately executed in 1328.⁷⁹⁶ For his efforts, Domhnall mac Airt was conveyed to Dublin Castle, remaining there until his escape in January 1331.⁷⁹⁷ However, his long confinement cost him part of his dynastic supremacy and probably thereafter divisions emerged

⁷⁹⁰ A. Nic Ghiollamhaith, 'Kings and Vassals in Later Medieval Ireland: The Ui Bhriain and the MicConmara in the Fourteenth Century', in *Colony and Frontier in Medieval Ireland*, eds T. Barry, R. Frame and K. Simms (London, 1995), p. 210. (hereafter Nic Ghiollamhaith, 'Kings and Vassals in Later Medieval Ireland').

⁷⁹¹ Lydon, *Lordship*, pp 177-78.

⁷⁹² K. Simms, *From Kings to Warlords*, (Boydell Press, 1987), p. 16. (hereafter, Simms, *Kings to Warlords*); *Ann Conn*, p. 223.

⁷⁹³ Curtis, *Rich. II in Ire*, pp 167, 172; B. Donovan, 'Tudor Rule in Gaelic Leinster and the rise of Feagh McHugh O'Byrne', In C. O'Brien (ed.) *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne: The Wicklow Firebrand*, (Dublin, 1998) pp 138-140. (hereafter Donovan, 'Tudor Rule').

⁷⁹⁴ Simms, *From Kings to Warlords*, p. 16; *Ann Conn*, pp 222-3.

⁷⁹⁵ *Grace*, p. 107.

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid*, pp 107-9; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 246; *The Book of Howth*, p. 149-50.

⁷⁹⁷ *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, pp 365-66, and 372.

within the ruling MacMurrough family. In the meantime it left Murchadh O'Byrne as the most powerful individual Irish king in East Leinster, if not in Leinster.

If the Leinster Irish had reconstituted the old provincial kingdom with Domhnall mac Airt as its titular head, it is plausible to suggest that the government's actions against Domhnall mac Airt and David O'Toole sparked endemic warfare throughout the province during 1329. While the roles of the Irish of West Leinster in the new Leinster kingdom remain unclear, they clearly exploited the disturbance to increase the difficulties of the Butlers, the Mortimers and Kildare. Furthermore the Irish may have been encouraged by events in Ormond and Ossory. In Ossory Brian Bán's ally, Donnchadh MacGillpatrick, burnt the Butler cantred of Odogh as far south as Moyarfe in April 1329.⁷⁹⁸ And by early 1329 the Brown Earl of Ulster, William Burke, and Muirheartach O'Brien of Thomond decided to rid themselves of Brian Bán. But at the beginning of August 1329 Brian Bán hit first, burning Athassel and Tipperary before destroying his enemies at Thurles on 14 August 1329.⁷⁹⁹

Even without Brian Bán's activities, West Leinster was already politically unstable. In Offaly during early 1329, Máelsechlainn O'Connor Faly, king of Offaly, was murdered by his nephew - Máelmorda O'Connor Faly. In response to the chaos in Offaly, the O'Dempseys proceeded to exploit the weakness of the O'Connors Falys. However, this latest O'Dempsey bid for hegemony in Offaly ended in a heavy defeat for them and their O'Dunne allies, confirming ironically the O'Connor Faly decline.⁸⁰⁰ Despite this defeat, the O'Dempseys now emerged as the principal threat to the Fitzgeralds of Kildare, concentrating their pressure upon Lea Castle beside the Barrow. And together with their O'Dunne allies, they briefly captured Lea in February 1330.⁸⁰¹ But there is more to this than meets the eye as the O'Dempsey action seems linked to the outbreak of war in East Leinster in 1329.

⁷⁹⁸ Clyn, *Annals*, p. 20; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 246.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21; *Annals of Ross*, p. 44; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 247.

⁸⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 20-21. The most recent O'Dempsey leader of note was Cúilen O'Dempsey who died in 1327. See *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 534-5.

⁸⁰¹ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 247 see also p. 252 On the death of Thomas Fitzgerald earl of Kildare in 1328, an Inquisition said that Geashill was beyond the land of peace and no rents were accruing from its lands.

There throughout 1329 the O'Nolans stalked the Butler lands, capturing Laurence Butler and Henry Traherne and killing David Butler in November.⁸⁰² In retaliation James Butler, 1st earl of Ormond, pillaged Richard mac Philip O'Nolan's lordship of Forth.⁸⁰³ The trouble with the O'Nolans was only the tip of the iceberg. Indeed, Justiciar John Darcy deemed the developing crisis in East Leinster sufficiently serious for direct intervention. Interestingly he directed his main assault on Murchadh O'Byrne. The sudden reemergence of Murchadh's power in Leinster may have frightened many of his enemies. Among these was Murghut mac Nicholas O'Toole whose particular lineage had always opposed Murchadh.⁸⁰⁴ Arising from his continual service with government forces, Murghut on 11 June 1333 was assassinated in Dublin during the parliamentary sessions.⁸⁰⁵ In any case both he and Darcy brought O'Byrne to heel after a violent confrontation on 15 August 1329. That Darcy was supplied by sea indicates that Murchadh had cut the overland route.⁸⁰⁶ In any event Murchadh surrendered himself to prevent the pursuit of his defeated forces and was imprisoned in Dublin Castle. His confinement was brief as he was released in return for other hostages.⁸⁰⁷ Within four months Murchadh was back terrorising the settlers in early 1330.⁸⁰⁸ In the absence of Domhnall mac Airt, Murchadh rebuilt his position in Leinster by steadily pushing the colonists out of east Wicklow. And instead of attacking the MacMurroughs, he opted for the subtler option of a marriage alliance. It is at this point that he may have married a daughter of his eldest son, Philip, to Art the son of Domhnall mac Airt's cousinly rival for

⁸⁰² Clyn, *Annals*, pp 20-1; *Grace*, p. 115. Henry Traherne was taken through a trick at his house of Kilbeg by Richard mac Philip O'Nolan in 1329; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 247.

⁸⁰³ *Grace*, p. 115.

⁸⁰⁴ Price, *Placenames*, p. lxiii; Clyn, *Annals*, p. 25; see also Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 251. This also mentions a Maelmorth O'Toole as constable of the Archbishop of Dublin's castle at Tallaght in 1326. He had undertaken to defend the Archbishop's lands from his relatives.

⁸⁰⁵ Clyn, *Annals*, p. 25. *Grace*, p. 129; *The Book of Howth*, p. 160.

⁸⁰⁶ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 247

⁸⁰⁷ *The Book of Howth*, p. 155; Again the Lawlesses were suffering the heaviest from Murchadh's aggression in east Wicklow. In 1329 John Lawless held the cantred from the earl of Kildare, see *The Red Bk Kildare*, p. 107. This John seems to have served in Darcy's armies in the campaigns against Murchadh of 1329-30. See Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 255.

⁸⁰⁸ *Grace*, p. 115; Price, *Placenames*, p. lxiii; see also Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 257.

the Leinster kingship, Muirheartach mac Muiris MacMurrough.⁸⁰⁹ This represents a considerable change of policy on the part of Murchadh. In effect, he was realigning his dynasty with the family of his bitter rival Muiris MacMurrough, the king of Leinster between 1290-1313.

In West Leinster, the situation was equally turbulent. There the seriousness of the warfare in 1329-30 led to unusual roles for both Maurice fitzThomas, now earl of Desmond, and Brian Bán. In January 1330 Darcy asked them to restore the king's peace in the Leinster marches.⁸¹⁰ Although finding themselves in this surprising position, the pair did not disappoint. With an army of 10,000, they brought the war to a close, retaking Lea and forcing O'Nolan, O'More⁸¹¹ and O'Dempsey to submit.⁸¹² But by May 1330 Brian Bán returned to his usual fare, killing James de Beaufo, sheriff of Limerick. And in July he fought the army of Roger Outlaw to a standstill. These latest O'Brien victories convinced the Brown earl of

⁸⁰⁹ *Cal. papal letters*, viii, p. 78. According to this source Gerald mac Airt Mór Kavanagh (d.1431) married his second cousin Sadbh, daughter of Donnchadh O'Byrne (d.1434). Their union was legitimised by papal dispensation on 12 August 1421. If Gerald and Sadbh were second cousins the wife of the above Art mac Muirheartach (d. 1362) was the daughter of Philip son of Murchadh O'Byrne (exec c. 1334) and was the sister of Braen mac Philip (d. 1378), or vice versa. The third conclusion is that Bran and Art married sisters from a third family. But this is unlikely given the closeness of the alliance that existed between Art Mór (d. 1416/7) and the O'Byrnes. So it is very probable that Art (d. 1362) was the husband of a daughter of Philip O'Byrne, who in turn was the mother of Art Mór. As regarding the dating of the marriage, the early 1330s is highly probable. Art (d.1362) seems to have been active since 1326 and his year of his birth has been postulated at 1310. This is based upon the assumption that Art's great grandfather Muirheartach may have been at least 30-2 years old at his death in 1282. And that Art's grandfather Muiris must have been aged at least 20, when he became MacMurroughs leader in 1293-94, making him at least 40 by his death about 1313. Therefore Art's father Muirheartach was probably in his late 30s or early 40s by 1330, making about him 64 at his death in 1354. If Art was born about 1310, Muirheartach was probably in his early 20s. Therefore Art was about 16 in 1326 and was in his early 20s by the time of marriage in the 1330s. On the bride's side, her great grandfather Gerald became the O'Byrnes' king about 1268. See Nicholls, 'O'Byrne Genealogical Charts', In C.O'Brien (ed.) *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne : The Wicklow Firebrand*, (Dublin, 1998), p. 290. At the time he must have been aged between 20-5 years old, making his birth probably in the early 1240s. His son Murchadh succeeded him about 1293 and died about 1337, suggesting that he was born about 1270 and died aged about 67 years old. The bride's father Philip was probably executed in 1334 for his part in the attack on the settlers of Freynestown two years earlier. Given that he seems to be Murchadh's eldest son, he may have been aged between 40-45 years old at the time of his death. Therefore it is likely that his daughter was aged about 20, when she married Art (d. 1362) who may have been slightly older at 22 years. Thanks to Dr M.K. Simms for her help here.

⁸¹⁰ For Darcy's campaigns of 1329 against the O'Connors Falys, O'Dempsey, the O'Tooles and the O'Byrnes, see *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no.17, p. 20. For Earl James of Ormond's campaigns into the lordships of the O'Mores, O'Nolans, O'Byrnes and the MacMurroughs during 1329, see *ibid*, no. 22, p. 20. Again for Darcy's expeditions in 1329, see the account of John de Fynchedene preserved in *D.K.R.*, 43, pp 28-9.

⁸¹¹ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 247. There had been a campaign against the O'Mores in October 1329.

⁸¹² *Grace*, p. 44; Orpen, *Normans*, iv, p.231.

Ulster to raise another army against them. Others such as Ormond were equally convinced of the necessity of a campaign against Brian Bán. Their approach seems to have been two pronged. Firstly, they seem to have invited Brian Bán's ally Donnchadh MacGillpatrick to come to Kilkenny. There MacGillpatrick was murdered by the Brown earl.⁸¹³ And after a parliament held at Kilkenny in 1330, Justiciar Darcy, the Brown earl and Ormond attacked Brian Bán at Cashel, resulting in the widespread devastation of the region. From the evidence Maurice fitzThomas lent considerable aid to Brian Bán's defence of his conquests, resulting in attacks upon his earldom of Desmond by the Burkes.⁸¹⁴

Between 1330 and 1350, East Leinster continued to be an arena of ever changing alliances among the Irish interspersed with wars against the government. In January 1331 Domhnall mac Airt escaped from Dublin castle. His escape muddied Murchadh O'Byrne's plans, but he recognised Domhnall mac Airt's suzerainty and aided in unleashing the Leinster war of 1331-2. In 1331 the castles of Newcastle Lyons, Arklow, Ferns and Cowlaugh fell to the Irish.⁸¹⁵ The allies also attacked the Wexford liberty only to meet with a heavy defeat before being routed again by the settlers in Uí Cheinnselaig on 14 April 1331.⁸¹⁶ But this series of English victories and the death of Richard mac Philip O'Nolan may have convinced Domhnall mac Airt to consider his options. He was not the only Irishman pondering the wisdom of this war. By winter 1331, Murchadh and his new MacMurrough-in-laws had tired of him. Realising that his long confinement had cost him much of his overlordship, Domhnall mac Airt entered English service in return for a annual exchequer fee of 40 marks.⁸¹⁷ In summer 1332, Justiciar Lucy with Domhnall mac Airt's assent retook Arklow and erected Clonmore Castle where the O'Byrnes' and MacMurroughs' spheres met.⁸¹⁸ But there seems to be

⁸¹³ Clyn, *Annals*, p. 22; *The Annals of Ross*, p. 44; *AFM*, iii, p. 545; This Donnchadh mac Giollapádraig MacGillpatrick seems to have succeeded the Donnchadh MacGillpatrick, who died in 1324. See *AFM*, iii, pp 530-1

⁸¹⁴ *Grace*, p. 119.

⁸¹⁵ Clyn, *Annals*, pp 23-24, 30; *Grace*, p. 121-125; *The Book of Howth*, p. 157. Arklow fell on 21 April 1331.

⁸¹⁶ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 22; Clyn, *Annals*, p. 22. This incident is dated to 1331 in this source; *Grace*, p. 121. It is also dated to 1331 here. *The Book of Howth*, p. 158.

⁸¹⁷ Frame, *Two Kings*, p. 163.

⁸¹⁸ *The Book of Howth*, p. 159. Arklow was retaken by Lucy on 8 August 1332. *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 45, p. 41. Richard de Newend was paid for serving on Lucy's campaigns against the O'Byrnes and their MacMurrough allies.

more to this as the justiciar's castle building also served as checks upon Domhnall mac Airt's rivals among the O'Byrnes, O'Tooles and those of his own dynasty. And in order to bring Murchadh and his MacMurrough allies under control, the government also dramatically acknowledged reality. Then they recruited Laoiseach O'More to fight his old O'Byrne ally. The financial records of this campaign reveal that Laoiseach was able to put an impressive contingent into the field, including 4 men at arms, 217 light horsemen and 284 footmen between June and August, gaining a reward of £91, 11s and the price of half a roll of cloth.⁸¹⁹ By enrolling Laoiseach against O'Byrne, Lucy accepted the existence of an independent O'More territory along the western flanks of the Barrow conduit. Indeed, the encircling pressure on Murchadh proved too much and the now aging O'Byrne leader was captured by the Lawlesses.⁸²⁰ Laoiseach's rapprochement with the government was to be brief.

Throughout the 1330s Domhnall mac Airt tacked before ever changing political winds. In 1334 he campaigned against the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles, receiving a reward of £40 for his capture of Murchadh's son - Philip.⁸²¹ On 1 March 1335 the O'Byrnes agreed to a negotiated peace with Justiciar Darcy whereby the now aged Murchadh agreed to live under English protection.⁸²² The retirement of Murchadh and the slow emergence of his son Tadhg allowed Domhnall mac Airt some breathing space. That year he earned the title of banneret for service in Scotland and was in receipt of a fee of 80 marks.⁸²³ However, fissures opened sharply between Domhnall mac Airt and Muirheartach mac Muiris MacMurrough. It seems Muirheartach invited the Gabhal Siomóin sept of the O'Byrne dynasty to settle in north Carlow after a defeat by his rival. This infusion of strength allowed Muirheartach to force a more favourable territorial division of Uí Cheinnselaig between 1335-47.⁸²⁴ However,

⁸¹⁹ *D.K.R.*, 43, pp 54-5; Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', p. 177.

⁸²⁰ P.R.O. E. 101/239/24. Murchadh's capture is dated to 1332.

⁸²¹ Philip was captured for his probable part in the burning of eighty colonists in the church of Freynestown in west Wicklow during 1332, see Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 175; *Grace*, p. 123.

⁸²² N.L.I., G.O. MS 191, pp 57-58.

⁸²³ R. Nicholson, 'An Irish Expedition to Scotland in 1335', in *I.H.S.*, xiii, no. 51, (March, 1963), pp 197-211; Frame, *Two Kings*, p. 164.

⁸²⁴ After the assassination of Domhnall mac Airt's son Domhnall by his kinsmen in July 1347, it was the sons of Muiris who were to generally monopolise the Leinster kingship. See Clyn, *Annals*, p. 35. Therefore the Gabhal Siomoin arrival in the MacMurrough lands in Idrone was before 1347. Regards the dating of their arrival in Carlow between 1335-47, see

this renewed O'Byrne meddling within MacMurrough affairs was more complex. In 1336 they were back warring against the colonists, enjoying a victory with Domhnall mac Airt over the English of Wexford.⁸²⁵ Frame points out that this latest outbreak of war in East Leinster was directly linked to Laoiseach O'More's rousing of the Irish of Leinster and Munster to war upon the Ossory settlers. Indeed, Frame goes further, suggesting conspiracy and collusion.⁸²⁶ This latest O'Byrne/MacMurrough rapprochement continued, forcing Ormond to concentrate his forces against them in an indecisive campaign near Arklow in 1337.⁸²⁷ However, it was not to last as Murchadh's son, Tadhg, entered government service, fighting Domhnall mac Airt throughout 1338-9.⁸²⁸

The reason for the renewal of hostility between the O'Byrnes and MacMurroughs coincides with the reactivation of O'Byrne plans to supersede the MacMurroughs as the principal kings of Leinster. At some point between June 1335 and October 1337, Prior Roger Outlaw, deputy to Justiciar Darcy, personally treated for the

The Civil Survey of 1654-56, p. 9. This source tells how the Gabhal Siomoin originated in Wicklow. And it tells how the MacMurroughs of Carlow after a defeat at the hands of their cousins of Wexford, invited these O'Byrnes to settle on some of their lands in this region. In return these O'Byrnes were to fight for their cause. Consequently this influx of military muscle was enough to force the MacMurroughs of Carlow to extract a better settlement from their rivals. This agreement saw the MacMurroughs of Wexford accept that their rivals of Carlow held 70 martlands west of Mount Leinster, while they held 70 martlands south and east of Mount Leinster. As for the Gabhal Siomoin O'Byrnes, they were granted lands in Idrone and Carlow by their patrons of Carlow. As dating the Gabhal Siomoin arrival in Idrone, Murchadh O'Byrne seems to have conquered the Glenmalure region from the O'Tooles between 1310-12. He was forced by Lord Edmund Butler to submit there in Lent 1312/3. The following sources place the O'Byrnes in Glenmalure by 1312/3. See *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 341; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 19. It would seem that Murchadh settled the Gabhal Siomoin there as marchers to guard his southern and western frontier. Clearly the Gabhal Siomoin were the first O'Byrnes lords of Glenmalure as the later Gabhal Raghnaill branch of the O'Byrnes held Glenmalure in mortgage from them. See *Inquisitionum Cancellariae Hiberniae Repertorium*, i, (1828), Co.Dublin Inquisitions James I, no. 8. (hereafter *Inquisitionum*). See also O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 50-1. Furthermore the first attested record for the Gabhal Raghnaill occupation of Glenmalure is 1356. See *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 33, p. 59. Indeed in 1396, Mortagh mcLoaghlen (Muircheartach mac Lochlainn) the Gabhal Siomoin lord was captain of kerne to the descendant of MacMurroughs of Carlow (the sons of Muiris), Art Mór MacMurrough. See Dowling, *Annals*, p. 25. And later this Muircheartach mac Lochlainn's sons were followers of Art Mór's son- Donnchadh MacMurrough, in 1444. See J.O'Donovan (ed.) 'The Annals of Ireland, from 1443 to 1468..' In *The Miscellany of the Irish Archaeological Society*, I (1846), p. 208. (hereafter *MacFirbis's Annals*) All these sources tend to point to the arrival of this O'Byrnes sept between 1335-47.

⁸²⁵ Clyn, *Annals*, p. 27.

⁸²⁶ Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 293.

⁸²⁷ *The Annals of Ross*, p. 45; Clyn, *Annals*, pp 26-28.

⁸²⁸ Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 301. Tadhg was in service with the justiciar and Bishop Thomas of Hereford against Domhnall mac Airt between 1338-9. Interestingly Fynok O'Toole was also in government service against the O'Byrnes. He was part of a small expedition against the O'Byrnes in 1338, and was stationed at the ward of Newcastle MacKynegan.

restoration of peace with Murchadh O'Byrne who was acting on behalf of many of the Leinster Irish in the O'Nolan heartland of Fotherd.⁸²⁹ By this stage Domhnall mac Airt may have been already dead. His son, Domhnall Óg, resumed his aggression against the English of the Barrow to rebuild his dynasty's position amongst the Leinstermen. Pointedly the MacMurrough allies, the O'Nolans killed Ormond's brother - Laurence Butler- in 1338.⁸³⁰ The MacMurrough return to war also coincides with renewed O'Dempsey pressure along the western Barrow. There in 1339, they and seemingly some of Domhnall Óg's followers were routed by the settlers after trying to force their way into Kildare. As for the MacMurroughs themselves, Justiciar Bishop Thomas of Hereford added insult to injury by plundering Idrone.⁸³¹ In 1340 Domhnall Óg attacked Gowran located in the strategic pass of the same name that accessed Ossory and north Tipperary.⁸³² Mindful of growing O'Byrne power, Domhnall Óg adopted his father's shifting policy of war and reconciliation towards the government. Between August and October 1341 he engaged the expedition of Justiciar John Morice⁸³³ before being rewarded with O'Tooles for service against the O'Byrnes in July 1342.⁸³⁴ But Domhnall Óg returned to the more profitable enterprise of raiding English settlements dotted along the Barrow corridor, attacking Gowran between August and October 1342.⁸³⁵ His plan came to nought amid the devastation wreaked by Justiciar Ralph de Ufford upon Uí Cheinnselaig in autumn 1344.⁸³⁶ Then it appears that the MacMurroughs, O'Nolans, O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles had mended their fences to hatch another war in Leinster.⁸³⁷ Typically, Domhnall

⁸²⁹ *D.K.R.*, 45, p. 32. For Outlaw's numerous justiciarships see *N.H.I.* ix, p. 473.

⁸³⁰ Clyn, *Annals*, pp 28-9. Grace, p. 133. This source also place the dead of O'Dempseys and their allies at 300; *The Book of Howth*, p. 160.

⁸³¹ *Grace*, p. 133.

⁸³² Clyn, *Annals*, pp 26-8; *D.K.R.*, 47, p. 68; Henry de Valle had earlier served on Ormond's campaign against the Leinster Irish near Arklow in 1337, see Clyn, *Annals*, pp 28-9.

⁸³³ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 258.

⁸³⁴ Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 306. Cathal O'Toole brought 7 light horsemen to this campaign, while Muirheartach MacMurrough contributed 23 light horse and 33 foot. Earlier in 1340 Fynok O'Toole received 66s 8d for 10 horsemen and 12 kerne for campaign against the O'Byrnes. See *Account Roll of the Holy Trinity, Dublin, 1337-1346*, p. 157.

⁸³⁵ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 258; Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 306; *Account Roll of the Holy Trinity, Dublin, 1337-1346*, p. 157; *D.K.R.*, 47, p. 68.

⁸³⁶ Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 336; Clyn, *Annals*, p. 30.

⁸³⁷ *Stat. Ire., John-Henry V*, p. 365; Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 335; See *Account Roll of the Holy Trinity, Dublin, 1337-1346*, p. 91; Clyn also mentions the fall of Castlekevin to the Irish in 1343, see Clyn, *Annals*, p. 30; *The Annals of Ross*, p. 45. *Rot.*

Óg embarked upon repentance through service against Desmond in Munster during 1345.⁸³⁸ But de Ufford's victory, Frame argues⁸³⁹, fatally undermined Domhnall Óg's position within his dynasty, fanning the ambitions of Muirheartach mac Muiris O'Byrne - the O'Byrne ally. Although Muirheartach and his wife were captured by the men of Ross in 1345⁸⁴⁰, he was quickly free and probably engineered the assassination on 5 July 1347 of Domhnall and his possible Tanaiste, Murchadh MacMurrough.⁸⁴¹

In the same period between 1330-50, the Irish kingdoms of West Leinster evolved as the portal between the Irish of East Leinster and those of North Munster. As ever Laoiseach O'More and Brian Bán fanned the flames of war. After his brief sojourn in government service in summer 1332 against O'Byrne, Laoiseach returned to his usual preoccupation of expanding O'More power. And from Laois and Slemargy Laoiseach orchestrated a series of anti-settler wars, confirming the co-operation that had emerged among the Leinster Irish and those of North Munster. His war of 1336 against the settlers of Ossory is a perfect example of the fluidity of regional politics.⁸⁴² He was helped in his endeavour by the collapse of Brian Bán's alliance with Earl Maurice fitzThomas of Desmond in 1333. Despite his involvement in yet another conspiracy to claim the Irish crown in 1332, fitzThomas tired of his royal ambitions and now sought to become respectable.⁸⁴³ Unsurprisingly this led to a rift with Brian Bán. And such was the bitterness that fitzThomas led an expedition against his old friend late in 1333 and in 1335.⁸⁴⁴ Yet Brian Bán was in no mood to temporise, burning Tipperary in June 1336.⁸⁴⁵ Brian Bán's attack seems to be directly linked to Laoiseach's contemporary war against Fulk de la Freyne, lord of Listerling and seneschal of

pat. Hib., no. 136, p. 47. This records the fighting of against the O'Byrnes, MacMurroughs, O'Nolans and the O'Tooles in 1344-5.

⁸³⁸ Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 336; Clyn, *Annals*, p. 30; Frame, *Two Kings*, p. 164.

⁸³⁹ *Idem*, *Two Kings*, p. 164.

⁸⁴⁰ *The Annals of Ross*, pp 45-6.

⁸⁴¹ *Grace*, p. 143; *The Book of Howth*, p. 165. This dates his killing to 5 June 1347.

⁸⁴² Clyn, *Annals*, pp 25-7.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 24. A campaign had also been led against Brian Bán in 1332.

⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 27; *The Annals of Ross*, p. 45.

⁸⁴⁵ *Ibid*; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 255.

Kilkenny⁸⁴⁶, and the attacks of Domhnall mac Airt and the O'Byrnes upon the Wexford liberty that year. Indeed, Laoiseach's actions succinctly demonstrate the Irish advances, hiring Irish mercenaries from both Leinster and Munster to fight de la Freyne and the English of Ossory. Only Henry O'Ryan and Scanlán MacGillpatrick stood with de la Freyne's forces against O'More and his allies.⁸⁴⁷ However, the settlers were still able to formulate effective responses to Irish pressure. For example in 1333, they adroitly exploited the continuing weakness of the O'Connor Falys, carrying off 2000 cattle and cutting a pass through the forests of Etergouel. By cutting these passes, the settlers were trying to reassert themselves to some degree in Offaly. These lines of communication provided avenues for the settlers and royal armies to co-ordinate attacks designed at preventing Irish aggression.

But a wider magnate consensus of accommodation with the Irish was emerging. This was a policy which had always existed and worked two ways. In return for the recognition by the magnate of the territorial gains of an Irish leader, the Irishman acknowledged that his dynasty recognised the magnate's nominal overlordship. These arrangements increased after the Bruce wars of 1315-8. Then Roger Mortimer, lord of Laois, and Thomas Fitzgerald, 2nd earl of Kildare, respectively acknowledged the power of Laoiseach O'More and Aodh O'Toole as the price of their vassalage.⁸⁴⁸ Furthermore the ever-varying relationship that existed between the MacMurroughs and the government is another example of these arrangements. But in the 1330s it was the Butlers who embraced this policy as a means of releasing the incessant pressure on their lands. Geographically and politically, the Butlers were fighting a two-front war against the O'Mores, Brian Bán, the MacGillpatricks, the O'Carrolls and the O'Kennedys from the north and the MacMurroughs, O'Byrnes and the O'Nolans from the east. Clearly Ormond decided to come to

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 25. Earlier in 1333 Galfridus de la Frene had been killed by the O'Mores of Slemargy. Again in 1335 Leyath O'Morthe (Laoiseach O'More) attacked Lord Raymond le Ercedekne and his followers.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 27. This Scanlán may have already been on thin ice with his own dynasty by 1336. In June 1333 he killed two of his first cousins and blinded and castrated a third. These were the sons of his uncle, Fionnán MacGillpatrick, see *ibid*, p. 24. Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 255. Thanks to Dr Simms for her help here.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 30; Ó Cléirigh, 'The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois', pp 177-78; *Red Bk Kildare*, no. 139.

terms with some of the midland Irish and those of North Munster to concentrate against Irish pressure building along the eastern banks of the Barrow.⁸⁴⁹ Thus, in 1336 Ormond came to terms with Ruaidhrí O'Kennedy (Ó Ceinneide), recognising his gains in return for his vassalage.⁸⁵⁰ An inquisition on the death of the 1st earl of Ormond in 1337, reveals dramatic losses of territory in north Tipperary to the O'Kennedys and the O'Meaghers (Ó Meachair).⁸⁵¹ In Ossory the situation was worse. There the Butlers had lost the western Aghadoe manors of Skirk and Rathdowney to MacGillpatrick by 1338.⁸⁵² Separately, the shift in the political landscape also forced Brian Bán to review his position. Since the break-up of his alliance with Maurice fitzThomas, he had become increasingly isolated. Realising this, he buried his feud with his old rival Muirheartach in late 1336. This diplomatic tacking bore fruit as Muirheartach seemingly recognised him as his designated successor. But Brian Bán's new found diplomacy did not end there. Quite clearly the Burkes like the Butlers had become resigned to the reality of independent Irish territories close to their heartlands.⁸⁵³ This combination of factors allowed room for compromise between themselves and Brian Bán. And in 1337, he finally acknowledged nominal Burke overlordship in return for their recognition of his conquests.⁸⁵⁴

However, it is a germane point to note that Irish expansion in Tipperary and the midlands was not uniformly successful. As Empey's work shows the Irish made little headway within the more heavily settled central and southern Butler lands in Tipperary.⁸⁵⁵ Despite a major rupture with the Butlers in 1347, the O'Kennedys made little further ground at their expense. And in 1356 they made a fresh concord with the 2nd earl of Ormond, establishing a durable alliance.⁸⁵⁶ Indeed, while the earl was in England that year, Edmund O'Kennedy undertook to keep the peace and served with the earl

⁸⁴⁹ For the Butler lands in Tipperary and Ossory, see D. Beresford, 'The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515', Ph.D thesis, University of Dublin, 1998, pp 25-31. (hereafter Beresford, 'The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515').

⁸⁵⁰ Curtis, *Med. Ire*, p. 214.

⁸⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 213. According to Curtis Longford, most of Westmeath, all Laois and Offaly and the northern parts of Tipperary and Kilkenny were all lost.

⁸⁵² Empey, pp 208-9.

⁸⁵³ Nic Giollamhaith, 'Kings and Vassals in Later Medieval Ireland' pp 201-16.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 211-12; *Ann Conn*, pp 277-8.

⁸⁵⁵ Empey, p. 200.

⁸⁵⁶ E.Curtis, 'Some Medieval Seals out of the Ormond Archives', *R.S.A.I. Jn*, lxxvi, part 1, (1936), pp 6-7; *C.O.D.* ii, nos. 46, 48 pp 28-30.

against Art MacMurrough and the O'Mores in Laois during 1357. For his loyalty, Bernard O'Kennedy was granted two carucates of land near Nenagh in December 1358. Similarly the O'Brennans of eastern Odogh remained under the Butler thumb, binding themselves to the Butlers in 1359 and 1400.⁸⁵⁷ A similar trend reflects in the initial O'Carroll successes and their later deals with the Butlers. In 1383, their complex relationship is displayed by the marriage between Tadhg O'Carroll and Johanna, daughter of James, 2nd earl of Ormond.⁸⁵⁸ However, others like Laoiseach O'More had successfully removed all traces of the settlers from Laois by his assassination in 1342.⁸⁵⁹

Indeed, Friar Clyn's commentary further noted the growing co-ordination among the Leinstermen and the Irish of North Munster in the middle of the 1340s.⁸⁶⁰ In February 1345 Desmond summoned an assembly of magnates to discuss his intentions to take the Irish crown. And in June he attacked Edward III's supporters and the Butler lands in Ely and Ormond⁸⁶¹, gaining widespread support from O'Carroll, O'Kennedy, Diarmait MacGillpatrick and Conall O'More, Laoiseach's successor. However, Desmond and his erstwhile allies failed to take Nenagh, and was put back on the defensive by Justiciar Ralph de Ufford's offensive between September and October 1345. Again the fragility of the English position was laid bare and matters worsened, when O'Carroll and Diarmait MacGillpatrick again made common cause to torch Bordwell in the cantred of Aghaboe in December 1345.⁸⁶² De Ufford took drastic action to curtail the erosion of the land of peace by briefly taking the liberty of Kildare into the king's hands in December at Naas.⁸⁶³ This state of continuous war continued into 1346. More seriously, Conall O'More turned his attention north-east, focusing on the possessions of the earl of Kildare and appealed to the rest of the Leinster Irish to aid him. By forging an alliance with O'Connor Falys⁸⁶⁴ and O'Dempsey, he

⁸⁵⁷ Empey, p. 211.

⁸⁵⁸ *Ann Clon*, p. 309. Joan Butler wife of Tadhg O'Carroll died of plague in 1383; Empey, p. 210; *AFM*, iv, pp.690-1.

⁸⁵⁹ Clyn, *Annals*, pp 29-30.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp 32, 34.

⁸⁶¹ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 262.

⁸⁶² Clyn, *Annals*, p. 32.

⁸⁶³ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, pp 262-3.

⁸⁶⁴ In the years since the 1329 murder of Máelsechlainn O'Connor Faly by his nephew Maelmorda, references to the O'Connors Falys point towards their weakness in comparison

captured Lea and destroyed several other castles in Easter 1346.⁸⁶⁵ From the evidence it is plausible to postulate that their actions were also linked to the burning of the manor of Aghaboe by Diarmait MacGillpatrick and O'Carroll in summer 1346.⁸⁶⁶ In response the sheriff of Kilkenny took a great prey of livestock from Cearbhall MacGillpatrick in July 1346.⁸⁶⁷ In Ely, the O'Carrolls under their leader - Tadhg son of Ruaidhrí - then exploded on the settlers. And even though Tadhg was killed in battle against the English of Ossory, he succeeded in expelling the Brets, Milbournes, and other English from Ely and occupying their lands.⁸⁶⁸ Furthermore Fulk de Freyne captured Ruaidhrí son of Conall O'More in battle during September 1346.⁸⁶⁹ But the relief was to be temporary.

Irish power at this point in the region enabled Conall O'More to successfully occupy Lea after its fall in Easter for the following six months. This forced Kildare with William Bermingham to wage a winter war against him and O'Dempsey, forcing the former to submit at Athy in early 1347.⁸⁷⁰ Conall O'More's new regional importance is evinced by the scale of his submission. By its terms he agreed to surrender 1000 cattle and attend upon the justiciar's hostings.⁸⁷¹ Conversely, Conall's submission may have undermined his position among his own vassals. In 1348 he was killed by his brothers, leading to a struggle between his son Ruaidhrí and the killers. This climaxed in a pitched battle between Ruaidhrí and his allies drawn from the English of Ossory with his uncle David and the English of Kildare and Carlow. Although Ruaidhrí was victorious and his rivals were exiled, his position was terminally weakened.⁸⁷² Arguably this feud was the

to their heyday in the last decades of the thirteenth century. In 1337-8 there was fighting between this dynasty and their Macgeoghegan neighbours. See *AFM*, iii, p. 563, and *Ann Conn*, p. 281. After 1346 they still remained minor players in the region. However, Murchadh O'Connor Faly was to marry Gormflaith MacMurrough, daughter of Art MacMurrough of Leinster (d. 1362). See *Cal.papal. letters*, 1362-1404, iv, p. 341. A daughter of Muircheartach O'Connor Faly, Dowcouley, was the wife of Domhnall mac Theobald O'Molloy of Fearceall and died in 1381, see *Ibid*, p. 308. Muircheartach himself died of old age in 1384 and was succeeded by Murchadh O'Connor Faly, see *ibid*, p. 310.

⁸⁶⁵ Clyn, *Annals*, p. 32; *Grace*, p. 141 *The Annals of Ross*, p. 44; Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, pp 218-9; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 264.

⁸⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 33.

⁸⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid. The Annals of Ross*, p. 46; *Ann Conn*, p. 298-9; Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, p. 213.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁸⁷⁰ *Grace*, p. 141.

⁸⁷¹ R.Frame, The defence of the English lordship, 1250-1450, in *A Military History of Ireland*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 89.

⁸⁷² Clyn, *Annals*, p. 36.

root cause of Ruaidhri's own assassination by his brother in 1354-58⁷³, and may have contributed in the evolution of two separate O'More lordships in Laois and Slemargy.⁸⁷⁴ But in any case Conall O'More's submission didn't bring the violence to an end. In 1347 the Butler lands in Ormond became a palatine liberty for the 2nd earl of Ormond, with Nenagh as its capital.⁸⁷⁵ This seems to have prompted the outburst of Domhnall O'Kennedy who expelled the Berminghams, Cantwells and Cogans, burned Nenagh town but failed to take its castle in December 1347.⁸⁷⁶ According to Clyn, O'Kennedy had made pacts with Irish leaders throughout the country to gain support.⁸⁷⁷ In spring 1348 he was captured by the Purcells, who hanged him at Thurles.⁸⁷⁸ Campaigns continued against his allies, the O'Carrolls and Brian Bán, until 26 July 1348.⁸⁷⁹ However, the O'Carrolls and MacGillapatricks fuelled the warfare in the region into 1349, capturing Aghaboe Castle.⁸⁸⁰ And despite Justiciar Thomas Rokeby's campaign to Aghadoe to 1351, the cantred was lost.⁸⁸¹ By the 1360s the MacGillapatricks had further cemented their gains by conquering Clandonagh and Clarmallagh baronies lying in the north of the cantred of Odogh.⁸⁸² As for Brian Bán, his remarkable career ended at the hands of the sons of Lorcán MacKeogh (MacEochadha)

⁸⁷³ *AU*, ii, pp 496-7. This reports that Ruaidhri O'More, king of Laois, was killed by his own kinsmen and by the folk of his house; *Ann Clon*, p. 298. This dates O'More's death to 1353; *Ann Conn*, pp 308-9; *AFM*, iii, pp 604-5; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 276. In 1355 Ruaidhri sent his hostages taken from his brother to Dublin for safe keeping, when he was deposed the hostages were restored to his brother, the new captain. The new king of Laois may have been a David O'More, but this is uncertain. The Annals of Clonmacnoise mention the deaths of a Lysagh (Laoiseach) mac David O'More in 1368, and his probable brother Fachtna mac David O'More in 1377. Significantly the latter is described as prince of Laois, see *Ann Clon*, pp 304, and 306.

⁸⁷⁴ *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 53, p. 78. This records that Adam de Gratham, constable of Dublin castle, was paid 57 s 9 d for the hostages of MacMurrough, O'More of Laois and Maurice Boy (Muircheartach Buidhe O'More) on 28 May 1360. The inclusion of separate hostages for Muircheartach Buidhe is significant for the O'Mores, suggesting that their territory had now evolved into two distinct lordships, that of Laois and Slemargy. All in all it suggests that those of Slemargy were rapidly evolving into independent brokers, a position they did not occupy before the death of Laoiseach some 18 years before. *The Book of Howth*, pp 378 and 380. This records the separate submissions of Tadhg O'More of Leinster and the sons of Muircheartach Buidhe O'More of Slemargy to Richard II in 1395, suggesting the probability of this mentioned possibility.

⁸⁷⁵ Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, p. 202.

⁸⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁸⁷⁷ Clyn, *Annals*, p. 34.

⁸⁷⁸ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, pp 266-7.

⁸⁷⁹ Clyn, *Annals*, p. 34. A son of Brian Bán was hanged with Domhnall O'Kennedy in Thurles.

⁸⁸⁰ Empey, p. 207.

⁸⁸¹ J. Otway-Ruthven, 'Ireland in the 1350s: Sir Thomas de Rokeby and his successors', *R.S.A.I. Jn.* 97., part 1, (1967), p. 49 (hereafter Otway-Ruthven, Ireland in the 1350s).

⁸⁸² Empey, p. 210.

in 1350. He was succeeded by his son, Murchadh na Raithnighe O'Brien.

In response to the endemic violence, English policy was increasingly directed towards the establishment of friendly Irish in the lordships bordering Dublin. This policy may have been an action to prevent the co-ordinated attacks of the Leinster Irish upon the colonist outposts. And as part of this policy, Justiciar Thomas Rokeby presided over the election of his protege, John mac Taidhg O'Byrne in 1350 after a campaign into O'Byrne territory in July 1350.⁸⁸³ This John stayed in English service until summer 1353⁸⁸⁴, but determined to assert himself. John's warring revealed the insecurity of Muircheartach MacMurrough who entered service in 1353. Perhaps Muircheartach's reluctance to condone the actions of John reveals that his hold on the kingships of Uí Cheinnselaig and Leinster was far from secure. Indeed, he may have relied on government support to maintain his position from the ambitions of his vengeful cousins, the sons of Domhnall (d.1347). This probability is buttressed by his service in Munster during 1352.⁸⁸⁵ And in 1353-4, he, Ruaidhrí O'More and Aodh O'Toole all supported the government and contributed large forces to a major expedition into John's country.⁸⁸⁶ These efforts proved successful as John came to peace on 22 March 1354, surrendering 92 cows.⁸⁸⁷ But by summer Muircheartach and John realigned themselves. Their rebellion provided ample opportunity for their respective dynastic rivals to prove their loyalty to the English in the campaigns that followed. John's rivals included his cousin Murchadh mac Maghnusa O'Byrne while Domhnall Riabhach and Diarmait Láimhdhearg MacMurrough - the sons of Domhnall (d.1347) - eagerly grasped their chance to

⁸⁸³ E.Curtis, 'The Clan System among English Settlers in Ireland', *E.H.R.*, vol. xxv, (1910), pp 116-120; For the identity of this John see O'Clery, para. 1763, p. 131. For the campaign against O'Byrnes, see Frame, *The Dublin Government*, pp 339-40.

⁸⁸⁴ Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 342. Giollapádraig O'Byrne, the probable O'Byrne Tanaiste, was paid 5 marks for service in 1351, he had been in service since January of that year. See also p. 350. Then John was paid 5 marks for certain business.

⁸⁸⁵ Idem, 'Military Service in the Lordship of Ireland', In Robert Bartlett and Angus McKay (eds), *Medieval frontier societies* (Oxford, 1989), p. 121.

⁸⁸⁶ Idem, *The Dublin Government*, pp 350-52. O'More brought 68 light horsemen and 108 footmen, while O'Toole contributed 15 hobelars and 4 kerne and gained a fee of £8 13s 4d. And Muircheartach was drawing a fee at Michaelmas 1353.

⁸⁸⁷ *Ibid*, pp 350-52.

attack their father's successor.⁸⁸⁸ This war betrays signs of extensive co-ordination with other Leinster dynasties. However, Muirheartach was quickly captured but John defeated Rokeby, besieging him in Wicklow Castle during October 1354. It seems John wished to gain Muirheartach's release, requesting this to be granted during the negotiations. Rokeby then brought Muirheartach by sea to Wicklow and executed him as a warning to John, an act which not only shocked the Leinstermen but Irish kings countrywide.⁸⁸⁹

Rokeby's execution of Muirheartach only served to fuel the war in Leinster. And such was John's success in undermining Rokeby's alliances among the Leinster Irish, that Aodh O'Toole and his brother John deserted the English and joined him in August 1355.⁸⁹⁰ By the close of 1355, Muirheartach's son Art had submitted but John continued fighting.⁸⁹¹ This Art was to reconcile himself and his followers with Domhnall's sons and the government by fighting the Leinster Irish between 1355-7. But John remained belligerent, destroying Rokeby's network of alliances and prolonging the disturbances throughout East Leinster in 1356.⁸⁹² For Art's military service against the Leinster Irish between February and April 1357, he was recognised by Edward III as head of his lineage and granted a fee.⁸⁹³ Indeed, Art's injection of support for the government may have contributed to the submission of the O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles in 1357. The pair were found meekly serving on a government hosting against the troublesome O'Byrnes of Duffry in Wexford later that year.⁸⁹⁴

Just as Leinster began to settle down, the calm was torn asunder by the outbreak of a fresh MacMurrough war in May

⁸⁸⁸ Nicholls, 'Crioich Branach', p. 15; Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 357. Diarmait MacMurrough was in service again in 1355, fighting Muirheartach mac Muiris's supporters and O'Byrne. See also O'Byrne, *The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow*, pp 67-68.

⁸⁸⁹ *Ann Conn*, pp 310-1; *AFM*, iii, pp 604-5; *Ann Clon*, p. 298; *AU*, ii, pp 496-7; Frame, *The Dublin Government*, pp 355-58.

⁸⁹⁰ *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 11, p. 59 and no. 129, p. 63. See also Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 358. These brothers had defended Tallaght and the settlers of Imaal from O'Byrne in June 1355.

⁸⁹¹ For the genealogy of this Art see O'Clery, p. 128. *NHI*, ix, p. 149; He may be the man captured with Henry Trahene by the Butlers in 1326. See Dowling, *Annals*, p. 22.

⁸⁹² O'Byrne, *The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow*, p. 68; *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 33, p. 59. This records the the attack of Adam Dodyng of Ballymore's attack on the Gabhail Raghnaill O'Byrnes in 1356.

⁸⁹³ Frame, *Ireland and Britain, 1170-1450*, p. 275.

⁸⁹⁴ *Idem*, *The Dublin Government*, p. 367.

1358.⁸⁹⁵ This time it was led by Art.⁸⁹⁶ Clearly Art was planning a major war as evidenced by his realignment with John O'Byrne, his alliance with the new O'More leader and by the undated marriage of his daughter, Gormflaith, to Murchadh O'Connor Faly of Offaly.⁸⁹⁷ The government moved quickly to reduce the effectiveness of this dangerous confederation by sending envoys to treat with O'More for peace, but their efforts failed.⁸⁹⁸ Then Art and the O'Mores of Laois and Slemargy openly defied the English by raiding throughout the Barrow valley, resulting in a major O'More victory in July 1358.⁸⁹⁹ Soon afterwards in September English attempts to placate the allies failed at a parley near Athy. Through shrewd diplomacy, Art welded the Leinster Irish into a confederation under his leadership and from the safety of the Leinster mountains raided English outposts. There were, however, setbacks. In August 1358 John was captured by Ormond, and promised fealty and repentance. But war was too alluring for the energetic John, who cut northward into the Dublin marches and aided Art and the O'Mores to sever the royal highway through the Barrow artery.⁹⁰⁰ More ominous for the English lordship was Art's campaign in aid of O'More in Laois. This axis threatened Ormond's lands around Leighlinbridge, particularly the Gowran pass which accessed Ossory and North Munster. An Irish hegemony there opened up possibilities of expansion up the Barrow and into Kildare.⁹⁰¹ In 1359 amid a fierce offensive by Art and the O'Mores upon Ormond's earldom, the earl, now justiciar, claimed that the assaults were co-ordinated.⁹⁰² But in 1359, Ormond stopped their gallop, routing these confederates in a pitched battle in Laois, leading to a general peace on 12 August 1359.⁹⁰³ This convinced

⁸⁹⁵ *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 5, p. 66.

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, nos 29-30, p. 77.

⁸⁹⁷ For the marriage of Gormflaith to Murchadh O'Connor Faly, a later king of Offaly, see *Cal. papal letters*, iv, p. 341. This records the papal legitimization of their marriage in 1390. For the alliances with the O'Byrnes and the O'Mores see Frame, *Two Kings*, p. 165. Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 176.

⁸⁹⁸ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 282.

⁸⁹⁹ *Ann Conn.*, pp 316-7. *Ann Clon.*, p. 300; *AU*, ii, pp 506-7.

⁹⁰⁰ *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 33, p. 59; Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 375.

⁹⁰¹ Frame, *Two Kings*, p. 166.

⁹⁰² 'Confederations made between the Irish of Leinster and elsewhere, that each Irish captain should move to war at a certain time.' Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 372; *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 57, p. 69. This records a campaign against the O'Mores of Slemargy in 1359.

⁹⁰³ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 283.

John to voluntarily submit at Carlow, where he seems to have been paradoxically knighted.⁹⁰⁴

This defeat merely abated the developing crisis surrounding the Butler lands exposed to Irish settlers originating from the eastern bank of the Barrow.⁹⁰⁵ Art's reverse did not remedy the acuteness of the crisis faced by English within the Barrow valley. By 1360, traffic on the royal highway through the Barrow needed armed escorts because of the omnipresent dangers posed by the MacMurroughs. This crisis is best illustrated when Ormond granted Rower to the Roches on condition that they would forcibly eject any encroaching Irish settlers.⁹⁰⁶ The pressure on the settlers of the Barrow brought Lionel of Clarence to Ireland on 15 September 1361. Despite an initial reverse by Sir John in Wicklow, Clarence shored up the English position along the Barrow by Carlow's refortification and his defeat of Art.⁹⁰⁷ Later at a parley, he treacherously captured Art and his tanaiste, Domhnall Riabhach, confining them in Trim where they either were murdered or died naturally in July 1362.⁹⁰⁸ To seal the English commitment to the strategic value of the region, Lionel relocated the exchequer and the common bench in Carlow town and campaigned separately against the O'Mores and the O'Byrnes.⁹⁰⁹ But the MacMurrough threat was continued by Art's successor - Diarmait Laimhdhearg. His persistence was exploited by Sir John to curry further favour with the English. For Sir John's services against Diarmait Láimhdhearg in 1365-66, he received a fee while his son Tadhg, and John O'Toole were knighted.⁹¹⁰ By 1367 relations had

⁹⁰⁴ Frame, *The Dublin Government*, p. 372; *Idem*, *Two Kings*, p.166; Otway-Ruthven, *Ireland in the 1350s*, p.56; For the probable dating of John O'Byrne's knighting, see Nicholls, 'Crioich Branach', p. 16. See also *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 7, p. 66; P.Connelly, *Lionel of Clarence, 1361-1366*, unpublished Ph.D thesis (T.C.D., 1977), p. 114. (hereafter, Connelly, *Lionel of Clarence*) See Frame, *Eng Lordship*, pp 312-4.

⁹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 357. This mentions 10 O'Byrnes hostages housed in Dublin castle between February and July 1360. *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 53, p. 78. This records that Adam de Gratham, constable of Dublin castle, was paid 57 s 9 d for the hostages of MacMurrough, O'More of Laois and Maurice Boy (Muircheartach Buidhe O'More) on 28 May 1360.

⁹⁰⁶ *C.O.D.*, ii, no.64, p. 58.

⁹⁰⁷ Connelly, *Lionel of Clarence*, p. 135; Gilbert, *Viceroy*, p. 218. For Art's defeat and the story of Henry Crystede see Geoffrey Brereton, *Froissart Chronicles* (Penguin Books, 1967), pp 409-16.

⁹⁰⁸ Richardson & Sayles, *Parl. & councils med Ire.*, i, p. 99; O'Byrne, *The Ui Bhroin of Co. Wicklow*, p. 69; *Ann. Inisf.*, pp 381-2; *Ann. Conn.*, pp 320-1, 345; *Ann Clon.*, p. 301; *A.U.*, ii, pp 512-3.

⁹⁰⁹ Frame, *Two Kings*, p. 165; Connelly, *Lionel of Clarence*, p. 135; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 289

⁹¹⁰ Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 175; Connelly, *Lionel of Clarence*, p. 114; Nicholls, 'Crioich Branach', p. 16. For the knighting of John O'Toole see Connelly, *Lionel of Clarence*, p. 144.

improved as evidenced by Edward III's recognition of Diarmait Láimhdhearg as leader of the Leinster Irish.⁹¹¹ Peace was short-lived as the threat to the Barrow corridor re-emerged. And separate campaigns were launched against the O'Tooles and the MacGillapatricks throughout 1367-8.⁹¹² But the potency of the MacMurrough threat to the Barrow region required drastic action. After his arrival in Ireland on 20 June 1369, Justiciar William of Windsor captured Diarmait Láimhdhearg, executing him later that year.⁹¹³

Despite the surgical actions of both Lionel of Clarence and Sir William of Windsor, it was clear that English lordship of Ireland was in serious danger of being cut in two by Irish pressure. This pressure originated in North Munster, West Leinster and East Leinster. To the west of the Barrow, this process can be charted through the re-emergence of the power of the O'Briens, O'Kennedys and O'Carrolls in North Munster. This was compounded by the dramatic rise of the O'Mores and MacGillapatricks in Ossory and Laois respectively. While in East Leinster the MacMurroughs, O'Nolans, O'Tooles and O'Byrnes threatened to clog the Barrow artery from the east. The government's actions to counter the coalescing of these Irish powers along the Barrow were sporadic and limited by lack of finance. Very often the settlers were left to combat the Irish on their own as shown by the efforts of Henry Traherne and Fulk de la Freyne. This often led to individual colonists making deals with their enemies to preserve their positions. Consequently, this led to incidents such as Brian Bán and the English of Ely attacking the English of Ossory in 1325, and the direct intervention of the English of Ossory, Kildare and Carlow in internal O'Mores politics in 1348. One of the most notable government tactics to alleviate the incessant Irish pressure was to exploit the existent fissures within certain Irish dynasties. They also enlisted Irish dynasties against each other. This policy generally worked to great effect, preventing wider co-operation among the Irish.

⁹¹¹ Rymer, *Fodera* (1816-20 ed) III, 2, p. 830; Simms, *Kings to Warlords*, p. 38.

⁹¹² In 1367 Máelsechlainn mac Sefraidh MacGillpatrick was killed by the English. See *Ann Clon*, p. 303; *Ann Conn*, pp 330-1; See Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 296; *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 640-1. David O'Toole was killed by the English of Dublin in 1367. A campaign was also led against the O'Tooles in summer 1368. See Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 296.

⁹¹³ *A.F.M.*, iii, pp 645-7; *A.U.*, ii, pp 536-7; *Ann. Conn.*, pp 320-1 and 337; *A.U.*, ii, pp 536-7.

Chapter 4b

The Kingship of Art MacMurrough, 1370-1420

During the last three decades of the fourteenth century the Leinstermen were finally gaining the upper hand over the government. This period saw them finally conquer the strategic Barrow valley before launching offensives upon the vulnerable earldom of Kildare. Much of this success was due to their alliances with the Irish of Munster - particularly those living in the north of that province. Indeed, the MacMurroughs, O'Byrnes, O'Briens of Arra and the O'Carrolls of Ely combined for major offensives directed at the Anglo-Irish of Kildare, Carlow and those of the Dublin borders.⁹¹⁴ Testifying to this greater flexibility in Irish politics, King Brian Sreamach O'Brien of Thomond in 1371 and 1384 was able to conspire with the Irish dynasties of Connacht and Leinster against the government. Also the collusion of the Irish of Munster and Leinster is displayed in the service of MacGillpatrick and O'Meagher mercenaries with the MacMurroughs and O'Byrnes of East Leinster.⁹¹⁵ Furthermore, there was an increase in marriage between the Leinster nobility and those of North Munster, speeding this coordination. For example, Donnchadh O'Byrne's second wife was of the O'Meagher dynasty of the north Tipperary territory of

⁹¹⁴ Frame, 'Two Kings', p. 170

⁹¹⁵ *PKCI*, p. 262; For Brian Sreamach See *AFM*, iii, pp 610-1, 616-7, 622-3, 626-7, 646-7; *AFM*, iv, pp 664-5, 668-9, 676-7, 688-9, 690-1, 762-3, 764-5, 784-5, 800-1, 802-3, 850-1, 868-9; *A.L.C.*, ii, 4-5, 42-3, 64-5, 82-3, 86-7; Curtis, *Med Ire*, pp 221, 228, 234, 237, 242, 268, 270, 273, 306; John O'Hart, *Irish Pedigrees*, i, (Genealogical Publishing Company, 1989), 159-60; *N.H.I.*, ix, 358, 578, 581-2; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, pp 291, 298, 303-5, 308, 311, 316-7, 324, 329, 331; Nicholls, *Gaelic Ire*, 156-7; Lydon, *Lordship*, pp 228, 237.

Art's links with Brian Sreamach are very interesting and cast further light upon the nature of his diplomacy in North Tipperary, wider Munster, and the midlands. If we examine the marriages of Brian's daughters, we find that one was married to O'Kennedy of Ormond. See *AFM*, iv, 691. Another was the second wife of Tadhg O'Carroll, Art's ally. She was later married to Walter Burke of Clanwilliam, ally of Tadhg and later her brother Tadhg son of Brian Sreamach. Walter had been already married to Brian Sreamach's brother Conchobhar's daughter, Sadhbh. See *Ibid*, pp 803-851. Furthermore Tadhg O'Carroll's daughter Margaret O'Carroll was the wife of An Calbhach son of Murchadh O'Connor Faly of Offaly. An Calbhach's own mother seems to have been Art's sister, Gormflaith. Indeed another child (d.1404) of the union between Murchadh and Gormflaith was married to Giollapádraig O'More, king of Laois. See *AFM*, iv, p. 781-783. See also Curtis, *Med. Ire*, p. 242. Then the Council of Ireland reported to Edward III in 1371 that O'Brien, MacNamara and nearly all the Irish of Munster and Leinster were plotting to conquer Ireland. In summer 1384 Brian Sreamach had made alliances with the Irish of Connacht, Thomond and Leinster, see Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 317

Ikerrin.⁹¹⁶ Symptomatic of this process was the career of Art MacMurrough. During his kingship of Leinster, the Irish effectively corralled the government's authority into a slender enclave surrounding Dublin. Indeed, it can be argued that the resultant crisis in Leinster brought the house of Plantagenet crashing down, ensuring the accession of Henry Bolingbroke as Henry IV in September 1399. This chapter will explain how Art's career as king of Leinster contributed to the growth in communication between the Leinster Irish and those of Munster. Also it will show how these alliances effectively strangled government power in southern Ireland, leading to Richard II's campaigns of 1395 and 1399. Furthermore it will show how Irish power developed in the aftermath of the Richardian interventions to 1420.

Art was the son of Art MacMurrough (d.1362), king of Leinster, and a daughter of Philip O'Byrne.⁹¹⁷ According to D'Arcy Magee, a nineteenth-century antiquarian, Art was born about 1357.⁹¹⁸ Seemingly he had an elder brother and a sister, Gormflaith, who was married to Murchadh O'Connor Faly of Offaly. Jean Creton who witnessed Art's parley with Gloucester in summer 1399, admiringly described him as being a tall handsome man with a stern countenance but wondrously active.⁹¹⁹ In fact, the perception of Art remains frozen in a stereotypical snapshot of the meeting of Latin Europe and the face of the barbarian. Art is thus immortalised and transformed into a symbol of die-hard Irish resistance, brandishing a spear at the ordered rows of English knights. However, the figure of Art is more complex than this. In the context of the English monarchy he has been described as the self-styled king of Leinster and a piratical outsider.⁹²⁰ Nothing could be further from the truth among the Leinster Irish. It is clear, though, Art like Janus had two faces. Indeed, Curtis has pointed out that he was not an implacable foe of the English.⁹²¹ At various times throughout his career he willingly

⁹¹⁶ *Ann Conn*, pp 380-1. Donnchadh mac Braen's second wife was Siobhan O'Meagher of Ikerrin. See *Cal. papal letters, 1417-1431*, vii, p. 343; *Holinshed's Chronicle*, p. 235.

⁹¹⁷ See previous chapter.

⁹¹⁸ T.D'Arcy McGee, *A Memoir of the Life and Conquests of Art MacMurrough* (Dublin, 1847), p. 18.

⁹¹⁹ J.Webb, 'Translation of a French Metrical History of the Deposition of King Richard II', in *Archaeologia*, vol.xx, (1824), p. 40. (hereafter Webb, 'Translation of a French Metrical History of the Deposition of King Richard II').

⁹²⁰ Frame, 'Two Kings', p. 173.

⁹²¹ Curtis, *Med Ire*, pp 246-7, 262-5.

accepted English kings as his overlords. And Elizabeth de Veel, probably Art's second wife, was of an Anglo-Irish family and his heir, Donnchadh, married Aveline Butler, daughter of the 3rd earl of Ormond.⁹²²

However, Art was not predestined for the Leinster kingship. From early in his career, it is clear that he was close to the O'Byrnes, his mother's people. This was a reciprocal relationship as his O'Byrne cousins unflinchingly supported him throughout his career.⁹²³ Indeed, the extensive intermarrying of Art's children with the O'Byrnes demonstrates the importance of the Wicklow dynasty. Gerald, Art's third son, married Sadhbh, daughter of Donnchadh mac Braen O'Byrne of Newrath.⁹²⁴ Uná, a probable daughter of Art, married Donnchadh mac Braen's heir, Murchadh.⁹²⁵ And Gormflaith MacMurrough married Edmund O'Byrne, Donnchadh mac Braen's

⁹²² Idem, 'The Barons of Norragh, Co.Kildare, 1171-1660', *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, lxxv (1935), pp 88-91; *C.O.D.*, iii, p. 70.

⁹²³ O'Clery, para 1763, p. 131. The Gerald of this genealogy was a son of Tadhg son of Murchadh O'Byrne, a brother of Sir John O'Byrne and therefore a first cousin of Braen mac Philip (d.1378). During this Gerald's reign O'Byrne power was to significantly increase. This may be due in part to the devastation of the Black Death among the settler communities. See Lyons, *Manorial Administration*, p. 38 and Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 175. The Irish themselves were not immune from the plague either. In 1406 3 princes of the Leinstermen died of plague, including Braen O'Byrne - tanaiste of the O'Byrnes. See *Ann Conn*, pp 396-7, *Ann. Clon*, p. 325. However, to return to the facts of the O'Byrne advance northward. In 1386 the people of Fingal were granted a subsidy against the raids of the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles, see Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 320. Furthermore in 1393 the O'Byrne control of the coast is evident when Gerald offered a barge as payment for debts owed to Esmond Berle, a former mayor of Dublin. See J.Mills (ed.) *A Roll of the Proceeding of the King's Council in Ireland for a Portion of the 16th year of the reign of Richard II, 1392-93* (London, 1877), p. 181. (hereafter *A Roll of the Proceeding of the King's Council in Ireland*). Domhnall O'Byrne seems to have been very much an interim leader. He seems to have succeeded Gerald mac Taidhg as O'Byrne overlord in 1398. His first name Domhnall is drawn from traditional MacMurrough nomenclature, suggesting close links with them. It is significant that no O'Byrne leader before or after held this name. But this man concluded a peace with Thomas of Lancaster on 8 November 1401. See *Cal. Carew MSS, Miscellaneous*, pp 480-1. It is likely that he died shortly afterwards and was succeeded by Donnchadh mac Braen O'Byrne. Nicholls has suggested the possibility that he was Domhnall Glas the contemporary leader of the Gabhal Raghnaill branch of the O'Byrnes, see Nicholls, 'Crioich Branach', p. 20. However, he agrees that this is unlikely given the relative political insignificance of that family. Having said that they were have very close relations with the MacMurroughs towards the close of the fifteenth century and throughout the sixteenth century. See O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 53, 99, 103-4. For Domhnall Glas's genealogy, see O'Clery, para 1748, p. 130, para 1764, p. 131 and *Leabhar Donn*, leaf 44. See also *An Leabhar Branach*, no. 1, ll 125-148, pp 5-6; Donnchadh mac Braen first comes to notice in February 1395, when he accepted, in Dublin Castle, the deal hammered out by Art and Gerald mac Taidhg on 7 January 1395. See Curtis, *Rich. II in Ire*, p. 234. Donnchadh was the son of Braen mac Philip O'Byrne (d. 1378) and a first cousin once removed of Gerald mac Taidhg, see O'Clery, para 1749, p. 130. And his heartland was centred on An Iubhrach, now Newrath in the barony of Newcastle in County of Wicklow. See Price, *Placenames*, p. 419. See also O'Byrne, 'The Ui Bhroin of Co.Wicklow', pp 71-90.

⁹²⁴ *Cal. papal Reg*, viii, p. 78.

⁹²⁵ *Ibid*, vii, p. 519. She was his second wife. His first being Joan O'Connor Faly. See *ibid*, p. 221.

brother.⁹²⁶ After Art's father's mysterious death in Trim Castle in July 1362, the Leinster kingship passed to his sometime rivals, the sons of Domhnall MacMurrough (d.1347). The rapprochement hammered out about 1357 between the two MacMurrough branches held.⁹²⁷ In 1364 Diarmait Láimhdhearg, the eldest of Domhnall's sons, and Art the elder's brother, Donnchadh, received fees from Lionel of Clarence. However, it seems that Diarmait Láimhdhearg's provincial kingship was not well received by the O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles. Moreover, in 1365-66 Sir John O'Byrne was rewarded for service against the MacMurroughs, while his son Tadhg, and John O'Toole were also knighted.⁹²⁸ However, the MacMurrough concord was maintained by both claimant families. Diarmait Láimhdhearg's kingship, though, was still problematic, leading him to seek government approval. And in 1367, it came. Then Diarmait Láimhdhearg was recognised by Edward III as leader of the Leinster Irish.⁹²⁹ But peace was short-lived as the potency of the MacMurrough threat to the Barrow region re-emerged. And after his arrival in Ireland on 20 June 1369, Justiciar William of Windsor captured Diarmait Láimhdhearg and Gerald MacMurrough, brother of Art the elder, executing them later in the year.⁹³⁰

This latest MacMurrough disaster passed the Leinster kingship to another brother of Art the elder, Donnchadh. Indeed, the emergence of Donnchadh and his nephew Art as the principle MacMurrough leaders was generally welcomed by the Leinster Irish. In comparison to Diarmait Láimhdhearg, Donnchadh and Art were more inclined to look for support among the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles, ignoring the weakening power of the sons of Domhnall MacMurrough.⁹³¹ Thus, the Leinster kingship began to be confined within Donnchadh's family to the exclusion of their cousins. This was a considerable political evolution, steering the dynasty away from the

⁹²⁶ R.I.A. MS 1233 (23/Q/10): An Leabhar Donn, f. 11:

⁹²⁷ See previous chapter.

⁹²⁸ Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 175.

⁹²⁹ Simms, *Kings to Warlords*, p. 38.

⁹³⁰ *AFM*, iii, pp 645-7; *A.U.*, ii, p. 536-7; *Ann. Conn.*, pp 320-1 and 336-7.

⁹³¹ Curtis, *Med. Ire*, p. 242. The Council of Ireland reported to the King in 1371 that O'Brien, MacNamara, and nearly all the Irish of Munster and Leinster are confederated to make a universal conquest of all Ireland. Then the Earl of Kildare, the then justiciar, offered Donnchadh MacMurrough 20 marks, and an English cloak worth 71 shillings for the safe keeping of the roads between Carlow and Kilkenny. This Donnchadh's chief house was at Fynnor near Kellistown County Carlow; Lydon, 'Medieval Wicklow', p. 175.

creation of a multiplicity of power bases which would inevitably lead to dynastic weakness. This concentration of power in a single kingly line was to strengthen the MacMurroughs immeasurably, laying the groundwork for their advances into the fifteenth century. And Donnchadh demonstrated his new regional status in 1371, joining Brian Sreamach O'Brien of Thomond and the Munster Irish in a furtive plot to conquer Ireland.⁹³²

In comparison to the MacMurroughs, the O'Byrnes became victims of their success. Their dynastic unity began to break down in the 1330s.⁹³³ And after the death of their greatest king, Murchadh, about 1337, this infighting increased. Instead of succession through a single line, it alternated between the descendants of Murchadh's sons -Philip and Tadhg. The effect of this rotating succession subdivided power within the lordship, ensuring future dynastic weakness. However, the O'Byrne decline was delayed by the emergence of a series of talented leaders such as Sir John O'Byrne and his successors. Paradoxically, the later emergence of Art as king of Leinster also papered over the growing O'Byrne cracks. Indeed, his close relations with the O'Byrne leaders may have cowed many of their dissidents. However, the death of Sir John O'Byrne in the late 1360s, did lead to a dynastic civil war.⁹³⁴ However, this discord did not prevent the O'Byrnes from exploiting William of Windsor's preoccupation with the Munster wars of Brian Sreamach, taking the castles of Wicklow and Newcastle McKynegan in summer 1370.⁹³⁵ These fortresses were quickly retaken but not before the O'Byrnes razed Wicklow.⁹³⁶ The main offshoot of the war against the O'Byrnes was a resultant peace. It revealed that the next recorded O'Byrne was Art's brother, Braen mac Philip. Clearly, William of Windsor was eager to repeat his MacMurrough success of 1369 over the O'Byrnes. On 27 March 1371 Braen concluded an agreement with him, confirming that

⁹³² Ibid.

⁹³³ O'Byrne, *The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow*, pp 64-66.

⁹³⁴ A Máelsechlainn O'Byrne seems to have disputed Braen mac Philip's succession of Sir John O'Byrne. This Máelsechlainn may have been the Máelsechlainn son of Philip O'Byrne recorded in O'Clery, para 1762, p. 131, making him an uncle of Art. His son Dalbach died in 1376 and was noted for his generous nature, see *Ann Conn*, pp 346-7, *AFM*, iii, p. 664-5, *AU*, ii, p. 556-7. This would indicate that Máelsechlainn was fighting his brother Braen mac Philip for supremacy within the O'Byrne territories, a struggle which seems to have festered into the middle of the decade. Braen mac Philip was sometimes known as Braen Ruadh.

⁹³⁵ *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 397.

⁹³⁶ *Price Placenames*, p. lxxvii. The constable of Wicklow was ordered to rebuild the castle.

O'Byrnes were fighting each other. By its terms Braen promised never to obey any MacMurrough (this must refer to Donnchadh), to rebuild the church of Wicklow, and to acknowledge the rights of the archbishop of Dublin.⁹³⁷ Unsurprisingly, once Braen silenced his rivals and had renewed his alliance with Aodh O'Toole, the agreement was disregarded for the more attractive conquest of north Wicklow.⁹³⁸ In 1374 he captured and demolished Wicklow and Newcastle McKynegan. A prompt English campaign retook both castles by September. But Braen maintained his pressure, taking them again during 1376, and seized Kindlestown in 1377.⁹³⁹ Indeed, the only notable reverse suffered by the Wicklow Irish in these years was the killing of Aodh O'Toole by the colonists in 1376.⁹⁴⁰ Despite this reverse the seemingly smooth transition of the O'Toole leadership to Sir John O'Toole, Aodh's brother, further underlines the strength of the Irish ruling families of East Leinster.⁹⁴¹ And this point is again hammered home by the fact that at Braen's death in 1378, his power ran from Bray to Tullow.⁹⁴²

After the killing of Donnchadh MacMurrough on 6 October 1375 by Sheriff Geoffrey de Valle of Carlow, Art emerged as the leading figure of his dynasty.⁹⁴³ However, another Art, Diarmait Laimhdhearg's son, succeeded Donnchadh as overlord. In early 1377 this Art received government recognition as MacMurrough leader and was granted a fee of 40 marks.⁹⁴⁴ It is clear, though, that his leadership was disputed by Art, and with the help of the O'Byrnes

⁹³⁷ T.C.D., MS E.3.25 (588), ff 202v-204. From the names of the O'Byrnes branches supporting Braen mac Philip, it is clear that he drew his support from the southern lands of the O'Byrnes. He seems to have been predominately opposed by those branches living in the north of the lordship.

⁹³⁸ Gilbert, *Viceroy's*, p. 233. The Carrickmines ward suffered a prolonged attack from the O'Byrnes between 1371-73, John de Colton marched to Newcastle McKynegan's relief in 1373. For de Colton's role see *Rot. Pat. Hib*, pp 87, 88b. *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 283.

⁹³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 293; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 302. Price, *Placenames*, p. lxxviii. Frame, *English Lordship*, p. 314; *Rot. pat. Hib*, p. 100b. In February 1376 Wicklow castle could only be supplied by sea going barge. *Chartul. St Mary's*, ii, p. 284.

⁹⁴⁰ *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 664-5; *Ann Conn*, pp 346-7.

⁹⁴¹ *Ann Conn*, pp 358-9. This Sir John was assassinated in his own house by a person of his household in 1388.

⁹⁴² O'Byrne, *The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow*, pp 69-71. For Curtis's definition of the territorial extent of the O'Byrnes kingdom, read Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, p. 241.

⁹⁴³ Frame, 'Two Kings', pp 169-71; Richardson and Sayles, *Parl. and Councils Med Ire*, i, pp 99, 124-25. Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, pp 309-10; *Ann Conn*, p. 344-5.

⁹⁴⁴ *Rot. Pat. Hib*, no. 2, p. 99, nos 27, 30, p. 100, no. 35, p. 104. Curtis, *Med. Ire*, p. 246. This Art filius Dermici McMorgh de Kenseley was summoned to a parliament under Ormond in January 1377 and undertook in his people's name to uphold the King's name against the Irish of Leinster. He was taken into service for a year for 40 marks; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p.310.

and O'Tooles, he undermined his rival.⁹⁴⁵ He also capitalised on the weakness of the government in the late 1370s. In late 1377 Art ravaged much of Kildare, Wexford and Carlow, forcing the government to offer him a fee of 80 marks. And after his submission in January 1378, Art accepted this sum.⁹⁴⁶ However, in February he burnt Carlow before linking with Murchadh na Raithnighe O'Brien of Arra to ravage the region yet again. As a result the parliament convened at Castledermot paid Murchadh 100 marks to go back whence he came.⁹⁴⁷ This abject government defeat only served to increase Art's ambitions. Worse was to come when Murchadh na Raithnighe returned with Tadhg O'Carroll of Ely in June.⁹⁴⁸ With Art, they devastated much of Kilkenny, Carlow and Kildare. By late 1378 the English acknowledged Art's dominance of the Barrow valley, appointing him keeper of the roads between Carlow and Kilkenny with a fee of 80 marks.⁹⁴⁹ This marked the beginning of his emergence both as the undisputed king of Leinster and as a fixed point on the political landscape. And by 1381 he was acknowledged as head of his dynasty, outmanoeuvring his rivals through a mixture of execution and coercion.⁹⁵⁰

The foundation of Art's success was shaped by the previous sixty years of Irish expansion. As in East Leinster, his power in West Leinster and North Munster was founded on diplomacy, marriage and military success. Through the exploitation of previous MacMurrough

⁹⁴⁵ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, pp 309-10 At a parliament in January 1377 at Dublin, the war against the Irish of Leinster was the subject of much concern. Carlow was burned and that MacMurrough, Sir John Ruadh O'Toole, O'Nolan and Gerald mac Taidhg O'Byrne and the O'Mores were warring near Tullow. Ormond led an expedition against Art with the support of some of the Irish of Tipperary. Art was pacified by the payment of 80 marks.

⁹⁴⁶ *Rot. Pat. Hib.*, nos 31-2, p.100, nos 38-9, p. 104. Art also accepted £ 40 for the killing of his uncle, Donnchadh, in 1375. Richardson and Sayles, *Parl. and Councils Med Ire*, i, p. 99. In 1384 he extracted £ 10 for attacks on his tenants during a parley. *Rot. Pat. Hib.*, no. 22, p. 122. And in 1389 he charged the colonists of Carlow 10 marks for attacks, see *Ibid*, no. 177, p. 146. See also Frame, *Two Kings*, p. 169.

⁹⁴⁷ Curtis, *Med. Ire*, p. 243. *AFM*, iv, p. 691 Murchadh na Raithnighe O'Brien died of plague in 1384; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 311

⁹⁴⁸ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 312

⁹⁴⁹ Frame, *Two Kings*, p. 168. This grant was repeated in 1382 and 1386.

⁹⁵⁰ *AU*, iii, pp 4-5. Art son of Gerald mac Thomas the Fair MacMurrough was killed by Art in 1380. *AFM*, iv, pp 678-9. His granduncle Art son of Thomas the fair described as roydamna of Leinster was killed by the English of Wexford. See *AFM*, iv, pp 690-1. There still seems to have considerable discord within the MacMurrough overlordship. Earlier an Art mac Gerald Kavanagh was killed by the English of Wexford in 1380, and Domhnall O'Murphy, lord of the Uí Cheinnselaig sub-lordship of Uí Féilime, was killed by the Kinsellas in 1381. See *ibid*, pp 678-9, 684-5. An accommodation seems to have been reached with Art mac Diarmait in these years, who either was killed or died shortly afterwards.

advances into the Barrow and the midlands, Art consolidated a diplomatic and military web that stretched from the mountains of East Leinster to Arra in Tipperary. Like no other Leinster ruler before him, Art developed his position, recruiting mercenaries from West Leinster and midlands. Thus, Art was able to harness and exploit the coalescing of the Irish dynasties of East Leinster with those of West Leinster and North Munster.

But it was Art's diplomacy that underpinned his success. One of his favourite diplomatic methods was the traditional ploy of marriage, giving the hands of several of his siblings to Irish kings. Through these marriages as well as military aid against the Anglo-Irish, Art created a network of friendly Irish lordships, stretching from the Leinster coast to the Shannon. In North Munster, Art promoted close relations with the MacGillapatricks of Ossory, the O'Briens of Arra and the O'Carrolls of Ely. These relationships undoubtedly helped Art to take up where Donnchadh left off, forming an alliance in 1381 with Brian Sreamach.⁹⁵¹ However, it was the undated marriage of Art's daughter, Sadhbh, to Fionnán MacGillpatrick of Ossory that really solidified the link between North Munster and Leinster.⁹⁵² And Art used his considerable military muscle to shield the MacGillapatricks from the recurring Anglo-Irish threat as evidenced by his victory in 1386/7 over the settlers of Ossory.⁹⁵³ Furthermore, he also used the MacGillpatrick lordship as a recruiting ground for mercenaries.⁹⁵⁴ To the north of Ossory, he also actively promoted an alliance with the O'Mores of Laois. As has been shown in the previous chapter, the O'Mores had been in decline since the death of Laoiseach O'More in 1342. By 1360, Laoiseach's kingdom had subdivided into two lordship centred on

⁹⁵¹ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 317

⁹⁵² The precise date of Sadhbh MacMurrough's marriage to Fionnán MacGillpatrick of Ossory is unknown. See *Ann Conn*, pp 409-10. However, Art's defeat of the Anglo-Normans of Ossory in 1386-87, suggests there was an effective alliance by this date. In 1398 this is borne out. Then several of the MacGillpatrick mercenaries hired by Art were slaughtered in 1399. These were Uilliam mac Chearbhaill MacGillpatrick and a son of Diarmait Ruadh MacGillpatrick. See *Ann Conn*, p. 370-1.

⁹⁵³ For Art's victory over the colonists of Ossory, see *AU*, iii, p. 16-7; Curtis, *Richard II in Ire.*, p. 32. Fionnán MacGillpatrick was present at Balgory in Carlow on 16 February 1395, when the Irish of Leinster accepted the terms of Art's agreement with Richard. The marriage between Fionnán and Art's daughter may have been after 1388, as he was not lord of Ossory until after 1388. Two MacGillpatrick kings of Ossory are recorded in the 1380s. In 1383 the MacGillpatrick lord with his tanaiste, the son of Cellach MacGillpatrick, died of plague. And in 1388 the English of Leinster killed his successor. See *AFM*, iv, pp 690-1, 712-3.

⁹⁵⁴ *Ann Conn*, p. 370-1

Slemargy and Laois. The O'More decline is clear as the annals often record the deaths of individual notables, failing to make reference to an O'More overlord from 1358 to 1398.⁹⁵⁵ Their slippage is shown also in their defeat in 1381 by Lord Lieutenant Edmund Mortimer, lord of Laois and earl of March.⁹⁵⁶ This defeat possibly prompted them sometime in the 1380s to renew their old alliance with the MacMurroughs. Clearly, there was a residue of goodwill towards Art dating from his father's career. And this goodwill was shown through their attendance on his campaigns⁹⁵⁷, and by his good relations with both the lords of Laois and Slemargy.⁹⁵⁸

Parallels can also be detected in Art's relationship with the O'Connor Faly's. In comparison with the O'Mores, they were steadily reemerging as the major power brokers in West Leinster from mid century, pushing into western Kildare and Meath.⁹⁵⁹ Significantly, Murchadh, king of Offaly after 1384, was married to Art's sister, Gormflaith.⁹⁶⁰ Primarily, their alliance must have been designed to facilitate the inroads of both dynasties into Kildare. And secondly this O'Connor Faly/MacMurrough alliance bound the O'Carrolls of Ely and the O'Mores closer to Art.⁹⁶¹ As with the MacGillpatrick

⁹⁵⁵ See previous chapter.

⁹⁵⁶ Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, pp 253-4. Mortimer forced an unnamed O'More lord to recognise that he was his hereditary vassal.

⁹⁵⁷ *A Roll of the Proceedings of the King's Council in Ireland*, p. 41.

⁹⁵⁸ *AFM*, iv, p. 732-3. O'More of Laois was among the hostages taken for Art's adherence to the terms of his submission of 1394. This O'More was probably Máelsechlainn O'More who died in 1398, see *Ann Conn*, p. 370-1; Curtis, *Richard II in Ire.*, pp 32, 167. Malachy (Máelsechlainn) O'More of Laois and the two sons, Lughaidh Óg and Shane, of Maurice Boy O'More of Slemargy (Muircheartach Buidhe O'More) accepted the terms of Art's agreement with Richard on 16 February 1395 at Balgory near Carlow. Interestingly a later king of Laois, Giollapádraig O'More with Thomas Carrach Kavanagh, Art's younger brother, accepted the terms of the agreement either at Leighlinbridge or Carlow on 30 March 1395. See *ibid*, p. 43. This Giollapádraig seems to have become king of Laois after the death of Máelsechlainn in 1399. He was married to a daughter of Gormflaith MacMurrough and Murchadh O'Connor Faly of Offaly. After her death in 1404, Giollapádraig won a victory over the colonists at Blackford. See *Ann Conn*, pp 388-9. *AFM*, iv, p. 781.

⁹⁵⁹ *AFM*, iv, pp 700-1. In 1385 Murchadh O'Connor Faly defeated the colonists of Meath in 1385. See C.Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513', *P.R.I.A.*, vol. 96., Section C, No.4 (1996), pp 87-102. (hereafter Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513').

⁹⁶⁰ *A.U.*, iii, pp12-3 Muircheartach O'Connor Faly died in 1384. It seems that Murchadh was his probable successor. However, there was another quite powerful O'Connor Faly lord called Muiris Maol about. But he was killed by the O'Kellys of Laois in 1389. See *A.U.*, iii, pp 20-1. In 1395 Murchadh accepted Art's agreement with Richard II. The O'Connor Faly's were a considerable power in their own right. Their heartland formed an island surrounded by an near impregnable thicket of bogs and forest. From here they sallied outwards to maintain a continual threat to the settlers of Meath and Kildare.

⁹⁶¹ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 227. Futuremore Tadhg O'Carroll's daughter Margaret O'Carroll was the wife of An Calbhach son of Murchadh O'Connor Faly of Offaly. See also Liz Fitzpatrick, Margaret an-Einigh Ó Cearbhaill- The best of the Women of the Gaedhil, in

alliance, other reasons can be detected in this O'Connor Faly alliance as Art also fished for mercenaries among their O'Dunne vassals.⁹⁶² Interestingly, the O'Dunne overlord and Art O'Dempsey respectively accepted Art's agreement with Richard on 7 January 1395 and on 21 April 1395.⁹⁶³ From the evidence, it seems plausible to suggest that the MacMurroughs had thrown a protective umbrella over West Leinster and the midlands. If so, it greatly increased the stability among the Irish kingdoms there. This point is supported by the noticeable interchange of nomenclature among these dynasties, the growth of inter dynastic wars, and their allocation of scarce resources for the erection of churches and for the protection of shrines.⁹⁶⁴ Such stability was ominous for the Anglo-Irish earldoms of Ormond and Kildare.

A study of the above MacMurrough marriages reveals a pecking order among Art's allies. For instance, there were none with the O'Tooles and O'Mores, indicating that Art placed them in the same bracket as the O'Byrnes, the O'Nolans, the Kinsellas and the O'Murphys. However, the submissions of 1395 of the Leinster nobility to Richard demonstrate clearly that Art spoke for them all. Indeed, the hostages taken by Richard for Art's loyalty are a statement in point. They included Gerald mac Taidhg O'Byrne, Féilim O'Toole, John O'Nolan and Máelsechlainn O'More.⁹⁶⁵ Notably Murchadh O'Connor Faly and Fionnán MacGillpatrick, Art's allies in

Kildare Arch.Soc.Jn xviii, (1992-1993), 20-38. An Calbhach's own mother seems to have Art's sister, Gormflaith. Indeed another child (d.1404) of the union between Murchadh and Gormflaith was married to Giollapádraig O'More, king of Laois. See *AFM*, iv, pp 780-1.

⁹⁶² *Ann Conn*, pp 370-1. In 1399 Cearbhall and Eóghan, the sons of Donnchadh O'Dunne, were killed in MacMurrough's defeat. For Frame's observation on Art's recruiting of troops from wider Leinster and North Munster. However, he is quite mistaken as to Tadhg O'Meagher's service with MacMurrough, this Tadhg was in O'Byrne's pay. See Frame, 'Two Kings', p. 170 and this present chapter.

⁹⁶³ Curtis, *Richard II in Ire.*, pp 31, 43. An earlier O'Dunne overlord was killed by the O'Molloy of Fearceall in 1381. See *AFM*, iv, p. 683. Diarmait O'Dempsey, lord of the O'Dempseys (d. 1383) was married to Be Binn daughter of Domhnall O'Dunne. See *Ann Conn*, pp 346-7.

⁹⁶⁴ *AFM*, iv, pp 728-9. Murchadh O'Connor Faly erected a church at Killeigh for the Franciscans in 1394; Art MacMurrough himself sponsored a protective shrine for the ancient book of St Mullins. As regards private wars Muiris Maol O'Connor Faly was killed by his clients, the O'Kellys of Laois, in 1389 and O'Dunne was killed by the people of Fearceall in 1381. See *AFM*, iv, pp 682-3, 714-5. An O'Dempsey king bore the MacMurrough name of Art in 1395, see Curtis, *Richard II in Ire.*, p. 31. An O'Byrne leader was also called Domhnall O'Byrne in 1401. His first name Domhnall is drawn from traditional MacMurrough nomenclature, suggesting close links with them. It is significant that no O'Byrne leader before or after held this name. See *Cal. Carew MSS, Miscellaneous*, pp 480-1. An O'Nolan prince was called Laoiseach, an O'More name. *Ann Clon*, p. 325; *Ann Conn*, p. 396-7.

⁹⁶⁵ *AFM*, iv, pp 732-3.

West Leinster and the midlands, remained at large. This suggests that his influence there was considerably lighter than along the Barrow and East Leinster. However, in comparison to the other hostages, O'Byrne's relationship with Art was different. During ratification ceremony of the agreement with Richard on 7 January 1395, both Art and Gerald mac Taidhg agreed to forfeit 20,000 marks if the deal was broken. Both, significantly, affixed their seals to the parchment, suggesting that they considered each other as equals.⁹⁶⁶ There were other faces to Art's kingship. A key to Art's success was his insurance of the acquiescence of stronger allies through pragmatic good relations. If, however, he had sufficient power to enforce his lordship over a weaker lord, he did so. For example, Féilim O'Toole in 1395 complained to Richard of attacks upon his lands from Hy Kinsella, a lordship within Art's kingdom. Earlier he had accepted Art's agreement with Richard, but he now stated that he was subject to none but Richard.⁹⁶⁷ On the other hand, when it was to Art's advantage he supped with the government.⁹⁶⁸ However, his alliances held firm, ensuring his survival in 1399.

His military power was impressive as well. It enabled him to consolidate his power over the Anglo-Irish of central Wexford, extracting black rents from Ross. This incessant MacMurrough pressure on Wexford is evident by the fact that another Art, described as 'roydamna of Leinster', was killed there by the Anglo-Irish in 1383.⁹⁶⁹ His power over Carlow is demonstrated in 1389, receiving 10 marks from the Anglo-Irish there for the killing of some followers.⁹⁷⁰ However, it was Art's control of the Barrow region that ultimately made him the target for royal intervention. The Barrow valley performed an important function. Through it ran the royal highway that kept Dublin in contact with southern Ireland. As mentioned already Art was in control of this strategic artery by 1378. His dominance over the Barrow naturally led to expansion into Kildare. Indeed, the classic ingredient of his later expansion was the

⁹⁶⁶ Price, *Placenames*, p. ixix; Curtis, *Richard II in Ire.*, p. 167.

⁹⁶⁷ Curtis, *Richard II in Ire.*, pp 125-6.

⁹⁶⁸ Frame, 'Two Kings', pp 169, 171-72; D. Johnston, 'Richard II and the submissions of Gaelic Ireland', *I.H.S.*, vol. 22, No. 85 (1980), p. 7. This points that Art had lordship over such colonists as Henry Talon. (hereafter 'Richard II and the submissions of Gaelic Ireland')

⁹⁶⁹ See *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 690-1.

⁹⁷⁰ *Rot. Pat. Hib.*, no. 177, p. 146.

weakness of the Fitzgerald earldom of Kildare. Art's thrust into southern and central Kildare advanced simultaneously with those of the O'Connor Falys and O'Dempseys from the west and the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles from the east.⁹⁷¹ The MacMurrough threat to Kildare was not just military. About 1390 Art married Elizabeth de Veel, heiress to the Kildare barony of Norragh.⁹⁷² Through his wife Art claimed Norragh, which was held in chief from the earl of Kildare. According to the Statutes of Kilkenny of 1366, however, Elizabeth's claims were forfeit because of her marriage to Art. This arose because the provisions of the Statutes prohibited mixed race marriages, leading to Art's unsuccessful petition of 1391 to have this decision reversed.⁹⁷³ As a result Carlow was destroyed by Art, O'Ryan, O'Nolan and Tadhg O'Carroll in 1391-2.⁹⁷⁴ The fallout of the effects of rejection of Art's petition continued into 1392. Then Art with Gerald mac Taidhg O'Byrne, Féilim O'Toole⁹⁷⁵, and O'More again devastated the counties of Kildare and Carlow.⁹⁷⁶ On this occasion their burning extended deep into Kildare as far as Naas in the north of the country, while the fearful townsfolk of Castledermot paid him 84 marks to spare them and go away.⁹⁷⁷ Moreover, there is a strong degree of probability that Art's offensive was directly linked to Toirdhealbhach O'Brien of Arra's conflict in Tipperary with Ormond during summer 1392.⁹⁷⁸ The sharpness of these lessons convinced

⁹⁷¹ *AFM*, iv pp 690-1 Diarmait, lord of the O'Dempseys, was killed by the English of Leinster in 1383. Later in 1394 Aodh and Thomas O'Dempsey were killed while pursuing English raiders, see *ibid*, pp 730-1. Earlier in 1392, Donnchadh O'Dempsey died. See *A.L.C.*, ii, pp 74-5; The stability of the O'Connor Falys is evident as they erected a church at Killeigh for the Franciscans in 1394. See *ibid*, pp 728-9. An Calbhach O'Connor Faly captured the earl of Kildare in 1398, and held him hostage for a period, *ibid*, pp 760-1. Thomas fitzMaurice Fitzgerald's recognition as the 7th Kildare Earl in 1455 marked his earldom's subsequent resurgence. He began the sealing of this portal. Only after the Kildare earldom's collapse in 1535 did it reopen.

⁹⁷² Frame, 'Two Kings', p. 171; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 322 In 1389-90 John Stanley fought the Irish in the region around St Mullins Co.Carlow, while the earl of Kildare was fighting the O'Dempseys in early 1390.

⁹⁷³ *Ibid*, fn. 97, p. 172.

⁹⁷⁴ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 324.

⁹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp 314, 316, 318, 320. This Féilim O'Toole succeeded his uncle Sir John Ruadh O'Toole in 1388-9. This Sir John was closely allied to Art, warring continually with the colonists between 1381-8. But in 1388 Sir John Ruadh was assassinated in his own house, propelling his nephew Féilim to the O'Toole leadership. See *Ann Conn*, pp 358-9.

⁹⁷⁶ *A Roll of the Proceedings of the King's Council in Ireland*, p. 41. Robert Wadley, Archbishop of Dublin and Chancellor of Ireland, attempted to defend the county of Carlow by bringing 200 men at arms and archers. This encouraged the Irish to pull back. He was also compelled to resist a six day Irish siege of Naas in North Kildare, displaying the collapse of the power; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 324.

⁹⁷⁷ *PKCI*, no. 114.

⁹⁷⁸ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 324. Murchadh na Raithnighe O'Brien was the father of Toirdhealbhach of Arra.

the government shortly afterwards to return the revenues of Norragh to Elizabeth.⁹⁷⁹

But increasingly Art and his allies were directing their efforts against James Butler, 3rd earl of Ormond. Over the previous century, Butler supremacy had been forced out of a variety of territories stretching from the Wicklow coast, the Leinster mountains, the Barrow conduit, Ossory and, finally, from north Tipperary. In order to consolidate their borderlands, successive earls of Ormond and the Burkes from the 1330s entered into a series of agreements with individual Irish kings - particularly in north Tipperary.⁹⁸⁰ But the emergence of Art's father, Art the elder, in the 1350s had led to further conflict. What antagonised the Butlers were Art's activities in the Barrow region, West Leinster and north Tipperary, threatening the stability of Ormond's already contracting northern frontiers. Despite their best efforts, the Butlers were unable to roll back the MacMurrough tide flowing into the midlands through the strategic pass of Gowran. That Gowran town was also the residence of the earls of Ormond before 1391, added further insult to the injured Butler pride.⁹⁸¹ From the the middle of the 1380s, this MacMurrough/Butler struggle was coming to a climax. It was speeded on its way by two important events. Firstly, Ormond was appointed keeper or governor of the counties of Tipperary and Kilkenny in autumn 1389.⁹⁸² Secondly in 1391 Sir Hugh le Despenser sold to Ormond Kilkenny Castle and manor along with Callan as well as other lands scattered in the liberty. And in the same year Richard II, at the request of the earl of Strafford, granted the earl's portion of the liberty to Ormond.⁹⁸³ This firmly established Ormond as the Anglo-Irish counterpoise to the MacMurroughs. Consequently, Butler intentions were made clear when Ormond's brother in the parliament of January 1393 successfully petitioned for a grant to reconquer the river valleys of the Nore, Suir and the Barrow.⁹⁸⁴ From this date onwards the MacMurroughs and the Butlers were on a collision course.

⁹⁷⁹ *CPR*, 1388-92, p. 191; *PKCI*, p. 189.

⁹⁸⁰ See previous chapter.

⁹⁸¹ Frame, 'Two Kings', p. 165-6.

⁹⁸² Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 321.

⁹⁸³ Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, p. 256.

⁹⁸⁴ Lydon, *Lordship*, pp 173, 205-6.

On 2 October 1394, Art's kingship of Leinster received its first serious test.⁹⁸⁵ The occasion was the landing of Richard II at Waterford. Art greeted the king's landfall by burning Ross.⁹⁸⁶ But the combined strength of the king's army and Ormond proved too strong, forcing Art's submission by 30 October 1394. Significantly after Art submitted to the king, Ormond insisted on his incarceration.⁹⁸⁷ His imprisonment was brief as he was released in return for Gerald mac Taidhg O'Byrne, Féilim O'Toole, John O'Nolan and Máelsechlainn O'More.⁹⁸⁸ On 7 January 1395 Art and Gerald mac Taidhg promised to evacuate Leinster and conquer fresh lands as royal mercenaries, pledging to forfeit 20,000 marks if they defaulted.⁹⁸⁹ In return Richard returned Norragh to Elizabeth. Through Art's encouragement, many of Leinster nobility accepted the agreement between 16-17 February 1395. But even before February, peace was jeopardised by Ormond who sought to reclaim lands within Irish kingdoms. Indeed, Ormond's aggression in Wicklow caused Gerald mac Taidhg on 18 January 1395 to write to the king.⁹⁹⁰ Clearly, Ormond was maximising this opportunity to force many of his former Irish client lords of north Tipperary, now Art's allies, to acknowledge his temporary supremacy. This is evidenced by his role in the negotiation of their submissions to Richard. Accordingly, on 25 April 1395 Toirdhealbhadh O'Brien of Arra, Tadhg O'Carroll of Ely, two O'Dwyers (Ó Duibhir) and three O'Kennedy leaders submitted as Butler clients to Richard at Kilkenny.⁹⁹¹ Even though Art was knighted by Richard at Christchurch in March, the Irish interpretation of the concord substantially differed from that held by the English.

When Richard left for England in May 1395, his agreement came under pressure. In summer 1395 the Anglo-Irish instigated

⁹⁸⁵ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 326 In May 1394 there were great expeditions against the O'Byrnes.

⁹⁸⁶ *A.F.M.*, iv, p. 730-1.

⁹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 732-3.

⁹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* O'Byrne, *The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow*, p. 73. Ormond personally struck at the O'More allies of Art by burning their territory in Gallen, see *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 732-3. For Gallen portion of the O'More lordship in sixteenth century, see V.P. Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order: The O'More Lordship of Laois 1536-1603', In P.Lane and Wm. Nolan (eds) *Laois : History and Society* (Geography Publications, 1999), p. 233, 239-40. (hereafter Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order').

⁹⁸⁹ Curtis, *Richard II in Ire*, p. 31, pp 169-72.

⁹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 200; Johnston, 'Richard II and the submissions of Gaelic Ireland', p. 6.

⁹⁹¹ *Idem*, *Med. Ire.*, pp 270-71.

clashes with the O'Connor Falys and the O'Carrolls.⁹⁹² Tension was also increased by an unsuccessful kidnap attempt upon Art in Dublin.⁹⁹³ In spite of this provocation peace held until 1396. The commitment of Art and the O'Byrnes to the agreement is supported by Donnchadh mac Braen O'Byrne of Newrath's visit to the English court in February. There Richard granted him a fee of 80 marks.⁹⁹⁴ Donnchadh mac Braen's goodwill is further evidenced by his and Tadhg O'Carroll's service in August 1396 at Calais.⁹⁹⁵ However, the arrival in Ireland of Lord Lieutenant Roger Mortimer, earl of March and Richard's heir, was a decisive point. His actions as lord lieutenant intensified the growing crisis in Ireland. As Johnston has pointed out, Mortimer behaved more as a great magnate than Richard's representative⁹⁹⁶, campaigning against the Irish in a series of expeditions. All he managed to achieve was the complete alienation of the Irish from Richard's government. But in the headstrong Mortimer, the formerly besieged earls of Kildare and Ormond found the perfect ally who was determined to militarily press their claims to lands lying among the Leinster Irish.⁹⁹⁷ Incursions by Ormond and Mortimer into the Leinster mountains brought the crisis to the boil.⁹⁹⁸ Naturally these intrusions into Irish heartlands caused grave concern among the Leinster nobility, increasing the crisis that gripped Art's agreement with Richard. Testifying to the Irish disillusion Féilim O'Toole revolted in summer 1396, and was followed by the O'Byrnes in early 1397.⁹⁹⁹ For the early part of 1398, Art

⁹⁹² *AFM*, iv, p. 737.

⁹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 741.

⁹⁹⁴ *CPR, Rich II*, v, p. 670. Donnchadh mac Braen was granted the fee on 17 February 1396, and he returned to Ireland in the company of James de Cottenham keeper of the Kindlestown ward. This James was keeper of the castles of Wicklow, Newcastle and Kindlestown between 1397-99, see *CPR, Rich II*, vi, pp 187, 480. Donnchadh mac Braen was probably negotiating with the king as Gerald mac Taidhg's representative.

⁹⁹⁵ D.Johnson, 'The Interim: Richard II and Ireland 1395-1399', in *England and Ireland* (Dublin, 1981), p. 178. (hereafter Johnson, 'The Interim: Richard II and Ireland 1395-1399'). Donnchadh mac Braen was accompanied by Thomas Carrach, Art's brother and envoy. In England they met Tadhg O'Carroll on his way home from a pilgrimage to Rome. From there all three accompanied Richard II to Calais.

⁹⁹⁶ Mortimer's Irish titles included the lordship of Laois and Trim and the earldom of Ulster.

⁹⁹⁷ Johnson, 'The Interim: Richard II and Ireland 1395-1399', p. 181.

⁹⁹⁸ Eadem, 'Richard II and the submissions of Gaelic Ireland', pp 9-11

⁹⁹⁹ *AFM*, iv, p. 745; *Ancient Irish Histories, The works of Spencer, Campion, Hanmer and Marleburrough*, ii, (Dublin, 1809), p. 15.; Johnson, 'The Interim Years: Richard II and Ireland, 1395-99', p. 177-78. From April 1395 there were wards established at Cork, Wexford, Carlow, Thomastown, Wicklow, Newcastle, Ballymore and Kindlestown. And a ward of 73 men was quartered at Dunlavin in the western Wicklow range in January 1397. Johnston notes that this action may have been a reaction to growing trouble among the Irish of these mountains. (hereafter *Ancient Irish Histories*).

outwardly remained loyal but approved of the attacks of the O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles. This conflict between colonist and Irish interests came to a dramatic climax in summer 1398. At Kellistown in Carlow on 20 July 1398, the O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles with Art's troops cornered Mortimer, killing him. And in West Leinster the crisis was further propelled by the capture in 1398 of Gerald Fitzgerald, 5th earl of Kildare, by An Calbhach O'Connor Faly - Art's nephew.¹⁰⁰⁰ The government struck back. They burnt Glendalough that summer and later killed Art's ally Domhnall O'Nolan, king of Forth.¹⁰⁰¹ In response, Art went to war - leading his allies and mercenaries against the Anglo-Irish of Leinster and Meath.¹⁰⁰²

On hearing of Mortimer's death, Richard decided upon another campaign to Ireland, revoking the agreement. Meantime Art's position in Leinster was weakening. Annalistic evidence shows that in 1398 many of Art's allies either naturally expired or were killed. Not only were the O'Nolans deprived of their leader, Gerald mac Taidhg O'Byrne died sometime in 1398, leaving a problematic succession between Donnchadh mac Braen O'Byrne and the relative unknown, Domhnall O'Byrne.¹⁰⁰³ Also west of the Barrow, the O'Mores lost both their leaders that year. Then both Máelsechlainn O'More of Laois¹⁰⁰⁴ and the son of Muirheartach Buidhe O'More of Slemargy seemingly died of natural causes.¹⁰⁰⁵ Ironically, though, their deaths strengthened the dynasty causing the reunification of the O'More lordships under Giollapádraig mac Fachtna O'More. Similarly, Art's influence in North Munster was affected by the deaths of MacGillpatrick of Ossory in 1398¹⁰⁰⁶ and Toirdhealbhadh O'Brien of Arra during the following year.¹⁰⁰⁷ So on paper, Art stood little chance of providing an effective resistance to Richard. However, what really unified these Irish dynasties behind Art was the danger of Ormond.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *AFM*, iv, pp 760-1.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ann Conn*, pp 370-1; *A.L.C.*, ii, pp 82-3; *AFM*, iv, pp 758-9.

¹⁰⁰² *A.L.C.*, ii, pp 84-5; *Ann Conn*, pp 370-1.

¹⁰⁰³ *Ann Clon*, p. 321; *Ann Conn*, p. 370-1; *AFM*, iii, p. 766-7.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *A.L.C.*, ii, p. 83; *Ann Conn*, p. 370-1.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp 86-7. *AFM*, iv 1398, pp 762-3 The son of Maurice Boy, lord of Slieve-Margy, fosterer of the learned and destitute of Ireland, died.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Ibid*, pp 84-5.

¹⁰⁰⁷ *AFM*, iv, pp 764-5

What also aided Art against Richard's army was his choice of battlegrounds. Clearly, he used the protection of the Leinster mountains and the Wicklow region as the staging point for those forces who came to his banner. By choosing this region as the arena to fight Richard, Art made up for deficiencies in men and material. Also his decision to fight here may have solidified any shaky members of his anti-Ormond coalition. So when Richard landed at Waterford on 2 June 1399, Art was well prepared. Despite having the better of the early exchanges, Richard took the disastrous decision to pursue Art into the Leinster mountains. Once in this intimidating landscape, the hunter became the hunted. From this naturally protecting environment Art inflicted considerable losses upon Richard's army. This ill-considered trek through this difficult terrain ended near Arklow with starving troops wading out to waiting supply ships in search of bread. And at a famous parley, Art and the O'Byrne leader denounced Richard and rejected any offer of peace, infuriating the king.¹⁰⁰⁸ However, the landing of Henry Bolingbroke at Ravenspur forced Richard to quit the manhunt and embark for England on 27 July 1399.

On his return, Richard was deposed and Bolingbroke took the crown as Henry IV. Despite Richard's departure, Art remained at war, promising Elizabeth never to rest until her barony was restored.¹⁰⁰⁹ After the humiliation of Richard, Art resolved to attack Ormond, travelling to Munster in August 1399 to aid Desmond against him.¹⁰¹⁰ Also it seems Art was able to unleash Tadhg O'Carroll upon the Butler lands. Ormond quickly neutralised O'Carroll, capturing and imprisoning him until his escape from Gowran in 1400.¹⁰¹¹ Ormond also allied with the Burkes of Clanwilliam to secure his earldom's north-western flank, marrying his daughter Elizabeth to Theobald Burke in 1401.¹⁰¹² But the infusion of mercenary forces from Munster fuelled the belligerence of Art and Domhnall O'Byrne, tipping the balance in East Leinster further in

¹⁰⁰⁸ For an account of this campaign, read Lydon, 'Richard II' s campaigns to Ireland', pp 147-9; *Ann Conn*, p. 370-1; *Ancient Irish Histories*, p. 16; Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, p. 109; Webb, 'Translation of a French Metrical History of the Deposition of King Richard II', pp 26-40.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *PKCI*, p. 262.

¹⁰¹⁰ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 339.

¹⁰¹¹ *A.L.C.*, ii, p. 92-3.

¹⁰¹² A.Cosgrove, 'Ireland beyond the Pale', *N.H.I.*, ii, (Oxford, (ed) A.Cosgrove (1993), p. 581.

their favour. Strengthened by the infusion of Munster troops, Domhnall O'Byrne set to the conquest of north Wicklow and took Newcastle McKynegan that year.¹⁰¹³ He supported his gains by settling the mercenaries just south of Bray. This O'Byrne advance into the southern Pale was paralleled by Art's assault upon Wexford in 1401. However, Domhnall O'Byrne's threat to the Pale evaporated when the mercenaries led by Tadhg O'Meagher were annihilated by the Dublin citizens in July/August 1401 at Bloody Bank (now Sunny Bank) near Bray.¹⁰¹⁴ Stung by this reverse, Domhnall O'Byrne submitted to Lord Lieutenant Prince Thomas of Lancaster on 8 November 1401.¹⁰¹⁵

In the following years, the Leinster wars reverted back to the trends which were emerging during the last thirty years of the fourteenth century. Because of the stabilization of the Irish lordships throughout the province, much of their pressure focused upon the contracting Kildare earldom. Indeed, Art resumed his routine of extracting blackrents from the towns of East Leinster.¹⁰¹⁶ At this stage his power and fame was such that there exists a strong possibility that the letter captured from the Welsh leader, Owain Glyndwr, at Waterford in November 1401, urging Irish kings to join him in a struggle against the English was meant for Art.¹⁰¹⁷ In spite of this grandiose scheme, the Leinster dynasties maintained an intense pressure upon Kildare. From the west Murchadh O'Connor Faly and the O'Dempseys maintained their push into Kildare. However, Anglo-Irish resistance was stubborn. For example in 1403 the Anglo-Irish attacked the O'Connor Falys of Offaly and killed three O'Dempsey leaders¹⁰¹⁸, while the 5th earl of Kildare cut down Eóghan O'Connor Faly during the following year.¹⁰¹⁹ To the south Murchadh

¹⁰¹³ *The Book of Howth*, pp 480-81; *Ann. Conn.*, pp 380-1.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Ann. Conn.*, p. 380-1. Donnchadh mac Braen's second wife was Siobhan O'Meagher of Ikerrin. See *Cal. papal letters, 1417-1431*, vii, p. 343; *Holinshed's Chronicle*, p. 235.

¹⁰¹⁵ *The Book of Howth*, pp 480-81.

¹⁰¹⁶ *Ann Conn.*, pp 380-1. See also Frame, 'Two Kings', p. 169.

¹⁰¹⁷ Lydon, *Lordship*, pp 235-36; Curtis, *Med. Ire.* fn. 3 p. 286 suggesting Glyndwr had been in Ireland with Richard. This seems possible given the history of previous connections between Wales and the MacMurroughs dating from the middle of the eleventh century.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513', p. 90; *Rot. pat. Hib.*, p. 165b; *Ann Conn.*, pp 384-5. For further information on the O'Dempseys, see *ibid.*, pp 400-1, 408-9 Maelmorda O'Dempsey king of Clann Mailugra, died in 1407 and a Muircheartach O'Dempsey died three years later.

¹⁰¹⁹ *Ann Conn.*, p. 391.

O'Connor Faly's son-in-law, Giollapádraig O'More of Laois, was also making inroads into the Anglo-Irish territory, defeating them in 1404 at Blackford as well as killing Richard 'Hardfoot' Butler during 1405.¹⁰²⁰

The year 1405 saw a most determined and co-ordinated Irish assault upon the Anglo-Irish of Kildare and Leinster. Again Art was to the fore, ravaging Castledermot, Wexford and Carlow until his fee of 80 marks was paid.¹⁰²¹ In addition that year it seems his O'Connor Faly cousins burnt the Kildare territory of Oghgard, while the new O'Byrne leader, Donnchadh mac Braen of Newrath, captured Newcastle McKynegan.¹⁰²² Indeed, as Ó Cléirigh notes, 1405 was a watershed year for the embattled Anglo-Irish settlements in the midlands. In response to the O'Connor Faly attacks on Kildare and Meath, Ormond, the serving justiciar, led in August/September an expedition into Offaly yet again. Shortly afterwards Ormond fell ill and died - which probably contributed to the growing O'Connor Faly hegemony over Offaly, western Kildare and Meath.¹⁰²³

In 1406 the Irish pressure again intensified upon the Anglo-Irish of Leinster. Indeed, the deaths from plague of four nobles of the O'Nolan, O'Toole, MacMurrough and O'Byrne dynasties succinctly demonstrate the intensity of Irish pressure.¹⁰²⁴ Thus, the consistency of the danger of Irish attacks forced the government to launch a series of campaigns to alleviate the pressure on the Pale. That year the Dublin citizens routed a large Irish force¹⁰²⁵, while the prior of Conall defeated 200 Irish on the Kildare plains.¹⁰²⁶ Furthermore, these successes laid the groundwork for an offensive upon Art. Then Lord Lieutenant Thomas of Lancaster, James Butler, the new 4th earl of Ormond, Desmond and Prior Thomas Butler of Kilmainham campaigned into the Barrow region to loosen Art's grip there. Indeed, their capture of O'Nolan and his son indicates that this campaign

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid, p. 389. *AFM*, iv, pp 780-5.

¹⁰²¹ *AFM*, iv, p. 785.

¹⁰²² *Holinshed's Chronicle*, p. 236; *Ann Conn*, pp 392-3.

¹⁰²³ Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513', p. 90

¹⁰²⁴ *Ann Clon*, p. 325; *Ann Conn*, p. 396-7. These were Laoisech O'Nolan, eligible prince of Forth. Aodh O'Toole, eligible prince of Uí Mail, Bran O'Byrne of Uí Fáeláin and Domhnall son of Thomas Carrach Kavanagh also died of the plague in this year; *Cal.Carew MSS, 1515-74*, p. 193; O'Byrne, *The Uí Bhroin of Co.Wicklow*, p.75.

¹⁰²⁵ *Holinshed's Chronicle*, p. 236.

¹⁰²⁶ Ibid, p. 236. *Dowling's Annals*, p. 27.

enjoyed some success.¹⁰²⁷ Generally speaking, though, it failed in its objective. Moreover, this reverse did not prevent them from trying again. And during an invasion in late August and early September 1407 of the MacMurrough heartland, Justiciar Stephen Scrope, Lancaster's deputy, Ormond, Desmond fought an inconclusive battle with Art.¹⁰²⁸ However, the government did achieve a notable victory during this campaign, defeating Tadhg O'Carroll and William Burke of Clanwilliam on 9 September 1407 at Gowran.¹⁰²⁹ From timing and location of these events, it can be suggested that the O'Carrolls and the Clanwilliam Burkes were either coming to Art's aid or were trying to divert government forces away from the MacMurrough campaign.

But the continuing perilous condition of the English lordship in Ireland was graphically captured in 1408. Then Thomas of Lancaster barely escaped death during a surprise Irish attack upon Kilmainham.¹⁰³⁰ All and all, though, it seems Art weathered this storm and had actually emerged stronger, levelling charges of bad faith against the Anglo-Irish of Wexford for non-payment of his fee in 1409.¹⁰³¹ Even more disturbing was the dramatic collapse of a campaign in 1410 against the O'Byrnes. Instead of bringing them to their knees, half of the troops of Prior Thomas Butler of Kilmainham, Lancaster's deputy, deserted to the Irish, forcing him to beat a hasty retreat to the Pale.¹⁰³² Again the power of the Leinster Irish was demonstrated in 1413, when Art destroyed Wexford and Donnchadh mac Braen O'Byrne defeated an Anglo-Irish hosting.¹⁰³³ As has been outlined, Art's kingship saw the Irish of Leinster reach their territorial and military apex. In East Leinster, though, these successes were heavily reliant upon the continuation of good relations between Art and the O'Byrnes.¹⁰³⁴ However, during Art's last years, the

¹⁰²⁷ *Ancient Irish Histories*, p. 20; *Dowling's Annals*, p. 27.

¹⁰²⁸ *Holinshed's Chronicle*, p. 237.

¹⁰²⁹ *AFM*, iv, pp 790-1. Just before his death, Tadhg defeated a branch of the O'Kennedys who were traditionally allied to the Butlers.

¹⁰³⁰ *Ibid*, iv, pp796-7. Thomas brought campaigns into Leinster against MacMurrough, see *Ann Conn*, pp 402-3.

¹⁰³¹ *Frame*, 'Two Kings', p. 174; The seneschal of Wexford was appointed to investigate this matter.

¹⁰³² *Dowling, Annals*, p. 27. This records that 800 out of 1500 hired Irish kerne deserted to the O'Byrnes. *Holinshed's Chronicle*, p. 240.

¹⁰³³ *AFM*, iv, pp 814-5; *Ann Conn*, p. 418-9.

¹⁰³⁴ O'Byrne, *The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow*, pp 77-85.

strength of his kingship declined through a series of dynastic deaths and the fact that his sons lacked his abilities.¹⁰³⁵ This was clear in 1414, when the English of Wexford burnt much of Idrone and captured Art's son, Gerald Kavanagh. Although Art's eldest son, Donnchadh, defeated the raiders to secure his brother's release, it was a sign of decline.¹⁰³⁶

Another factor is important to consider. Significantly during this period, Art and the Butlers became allies.¹⁰³⁷ As shown in the last chapter, this Butler policy has its origins in the 1330s in North Munster.¹⁰³⁸ A linguistic shift is also apparent within the Butlers. Indeed, the 3rd earl of Ormond acted as an interpreter in 1395 for the Irish during their submissions to Richard II. Also the Butler cadet branch of Dunboyne married increasingly into the ruling family of the O'Dwyers.¹⁰³⁹ Moreover, the brief marriage of Tadhg O'Carroll and Johanna Butler, daughter of the 2nd earl, displays their growing pragmatism.¹⁰⁴⁰ And as with the Irish of North Munster the Butlers changed their attitude to the MacMurroughs. They grudgingly made the pragmatic decision to accept the loss of territory in Leinster. And instead of waging a continual war with the Leinster nobility, the Butlers now sought allies among their ranks. But this Butler rapprochement with the MacMurroughs seems decidedly forced. The architect of this Leinster policy may have been Prior Thomas Butler of Kilmainham, half brother to the 4th earl of Ormond.¹⁰⁴¹ It is significant that this alliance happened at this stage, suggesting that Lord Lieutenant John Talbot's arrival in Ireland during 1414 had something to do with it. After his arrival Talbot was immediately faced by a financially strapped administration. In an attempt to

¹⁰³⁵ *AFM*, iv, pp 824-5. Art son of Art died in 1414. In 1417 Diarmait Láimhdhearg son of Art died, see *ibid*, pp 830-1.

¹⁰³⁶ *Ann Conn*, pp 420-1; *AU*, iii, pp 66-7.

¹⁰³⁷ *Ann. Clon*, p. 309; Blake-Butler, 'The Barony of Dunboyne', p. 80-81. These references record Butler marriages with the O'Dwyers, O'Carrolls, and O'Connor Falys.

¹⁰³⁸ See previous chapter.

¹⁰³⁹ Blake-Butler, 'The Barony of Dunboyne', p. 80-1.

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Ann Clon*, p. 309, Empey, p. 210; *AFM*, iv, pp 690-1. The marriage alliance with Tadhg O'Carroll was only somewhat successful. In 1407 Tadhg O'Carroll with his neighbouring ally Walter Burke of Clanwilliam were routed at Callan in Kilkenny by Sir Stephen Scrope. Tadhg O'Carroll was among the raiders' alleged eight hundred casualties. However, relations with the O'Carrolls dramatically improved towards mid-century. Edmund mac Richard Butler of Polestown married about 1440 Gyllys, the daughter of MacIruanaidh mac Taidhg O'Carroll. His sister Mary married John O'Carroll about the same time. This O'Carroll alliance proved durable. See C.O.D, iii, pp 175-6; O'Clery, para 2117, p. 167. See also D.Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁴¹ These links may have been fostered during the fourth earl's minority of 1405-11.

alleviate this pressure, he sought payment of long-standing debts by Ormond. In February 1415 Ormond was summoned before the exchequer to explain his arrears. Thus, Talbot engendered considerable bitterness and seemingly authorised in 1417 the seizure of the Butler earldom for non-payment of these arrears.¹⁰⁴²

Moreover, Talbot's actions probably speeded Ormond's quest for Irish allies. Significantly, MacMurrough/Butler relations dramatically improved about this time. And this improvement probably happened before Art's death in 1416/7. The first real substantive piece of evidence for this rapprochement was the union of Art's son, Donnchadh, and Aveline Butler, Ormond's half sister. The exact date of their marriage is unknown. However, Donnchadh's grant to his wife of 1429 places their marriage before 1419.¹⁰⁴³ This is further confirmed when Donnchadh, who was imprisoned by Talbot in London between 1419-27, offered his heir in exchange for his release in 1421.¹⁰⁴⁴ If this child was by Aveline Butler, this means that the marriage was before 1418 at least. A likely date, however, was 1416/7 when MacMurrough/Butler relations were rapidly defrosting. This union was to herald an alliance between the MacMurroughs and the Butlers lasting into the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁴⁵

The effects of this alliance reflected throughout Leinster. Notably, Talbot's Leinster campaigns of 1415-9 reveal a pattern of aggression against the allies of Art and the Butlers. In 1414 the government forces defeated the O'Mores near Kilkea in Kildare.¹⁰⁴⁶

¹⁰⁴² M.Griffith, 'The Talbot-Ormond Struggle for control of the Anglo-Irish Government', in *I.H.S.*, vol.2., (1941), pp 376-397. (hereafter, Griffith, 'The Talbot-Ormond Struggle')

¹⁰⁴³ *C.O.D.*, iii, p. 70.

¹⁰⁴⁴ H.Nicholas (ed.), *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council*, ii (London, 1834), p. 301. (hereafter *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council*, ii).

¹⁰⁴⁵ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 56-58. This alliance continued throughout the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth century. Five MacMurrough kings had prominent Butler connections. There were particularly close relations with the Butlers of Polestown. Art mac Gerald Kavanagh supported Edmund fitzRichard Butlers unsuccessful campaign in Tipperary during 1447. In 1452 Ormond campaigned in Ulster against Henry O'Neill. He compelled O'Neill to take his wife back, Gormlaith MacMurrough, Ormond's niece. Domhnall Riabhach, Donnchadh mac Airt's successor, married his daughter, Sadhbh, to Edmund fitzRichard's son, James. She was the mother of Sir Piers Ruadh Butler. Joan, sister of James, married Domhnall Riabhach's successor Murchadh Ballach, Donnchadh mac Airt's grandson. A third marriage surfaces between Gerald, Domhnall Riabhach's son and later a sixteenth-century king of Leinster, and Katharine Butler. When in 1525 Muiris MacMurrough Gerald's brother and successor, returned Arklow to the Butlers, it was to his nephew Piers Ruadh.

¹⁰⁴⁶ *Holinshed's Chronicle*, p. 241.

Indeed, it could be argued that Talbot's attacks of 1415 upon Giollapádraig O'More, the McKeoghs and the Walshes of the Welsh mountains in Kilkenny¹⁰⁴⁷ may have forced Art to dispatch his son, Gerald, to declare fealty to Henry V.¹⁰⁴⁸ Talbot's interventions into West Leinster caused major diplomatic readjustments as evidenced by Giollapádraig O'More's service later in 1415 on the lord lieutenant's campaign against the MacMahons of Oriel.¹⁰⁴⁹ In this context Art's 1416 devastation of the Wexford liberty belonging to Gilbert Talbot, the lord lieutenant's elder brother, can be understood.¹⁰⁵⁰ To the north Donnchadh mac Braen O'Byrne matched the MacMurrough offensive by capturing Wicklow with the aid of Ormond's governor of Arklow, killing Talbot's constable.¹⁰⁵¹ The action of the O'Byrnes indicates that they were tracking the shift in the king of Leinster's diplomatic equilibrium. Signs of closer relations between the O'Byrnes and the Butlers become clearer when Edward Perrers, a Butler client, was appointed constable of Wicklow in late 1416.¹⁰⁵² Furthermore, the appearance of traditional Butler names such as Theobald and Edmund among the O'Tooles and the O'Byrnes also points to friendly relations with the Butlers.¹⁰⁵³

¹⁰⁴⁷ *AFM*, iv, pp 820-1, see also note o. *Ann Conn*, pp 424-5. This speaks of Furnival's destruction of Laois and of the castle of Cullentragh.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *The Charters of the Abbey of Duiske*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Henry Ellis (ed.) *Original Letters illustrative of English History*, i (London, 1822), pp 56-7. (hereafter *Original Letters illustrative of English History*, i); Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 349.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *Ann. Conn*, p. 431. *AFM*, iv, p. 829; *AU*, iii, p. 73. See also E. Matthew, *The Governing of the Lancastrian Lordship of Ireland in the Time of James Butler, Fourth earl of Ormond c. 1420-1452* (Unpublished Ph.D., thesis University of Durham, 1994), pp 123-4. (hereafter Matthew, *The Governing of the Lancastrian Lordship*).

¹⁰⁵¹ O'Byrne, *The Uí Bhroin of Co. Wicklow*, fn. 487, p. 78; Idem, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 56.

¹⁰⁵² *CPR Hen V, 1416-1422*, ii, p. 42. This notes that Wicklow was situated among the O'Brynnes and far distant from any aid of the English. John Liverpool was reappointed as constable of Wicklow on 30 September 1414. There is no mention of him after 1415. M. Griffith 'The Council in Ireland 1399-1452, unpublished B.Litt thesis (Oxford, no date), p. 152. For the Perrers's appointment, see *CCR Hen V, 1413-19*, i, p. 317. In 1428 John Perrers was constable of Wicklow castle and was an Ormond supporter. *CPR Hen VI, 1422-29*, i, p. 478. See also Nicholls, 'Crioich Branach', p. 21.

¹⁰⁵³ See also Frame, 'Two Kings', p. 171. This idea is bolstered by Frame comments upon the appearance of Butler nomenclature such as Edmund and James in the genealogy of the O'Kennedys of Ormond. For evidence of Butler nomenclature borne by Irish rulers of the Wicklow region. For the O'Byrnes see Edmund mac Braen O'Byrne, king of the O'Byrnes, died in 1446. See *AFM*, iv, pp 946-7. The name of Edmund remained popular among his descendants, the O'Byrnes of Cronroe, and their cousins the O'Byrnes of the Downs. See Nicholls, 'O'Byrne Genealogical Charts', p. 280. For the O'Tooles, see O'Byrne, 'The Rise of Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 60-1. In 1449 it was probably Theobald mac Diarmait O'Toole who submitted at Kiltimon to Richard, duke of York. And later in 1488 Edmund mac Theobald O'Toole was treacherously killed by the sons of Tadhg O'Byrne, see *AU*, iii, pp 328-9. Also in 1491 a Theobald O'Toole was archdeacon of Glendalough, see *Cal. papal letters*, xv, p. 363. What is particularly curious about these Butler advances into O'Toole nomenclature is the parallel advance of MacMurrough names among the same dynasty. Theobald mac Diarmait's father, Diarmait mac Aodha O'Toole, was killed in 1445,

Indeed, Talbot's reaction to the fall of Wicklow confirmed the rise in Butler diplomatic influence in East Leinster. In response, he forced Donnchadh mac Braen O'Byrne and Diarmait mac Aodha O'Toole to submit at Castledermot.¹⁰⁵⁴ Shortly, after these events Art died in mysterious circumstances. The annals are divided on the date and manner of his death. One account tells that he died naturally during December 1416, while another records that he was poisoned in January 1417 along with his chief brehon by a woman at New Ross. Talbot's involvement is not recorded.¹⁰⁵⁵ But Art's death was a considerable windfall.

The improvement in MacMurrough/Butler relations is also evident in West Leinster and North Munster. Indeed, allegations made by the Talbots connect the O'Connor Falys to the Butlers. The Talbots claimed that Margaret O'Carroll, An Calbhach O'Connor Faly's wife had lordship over Ormond's manor of Ougterany.¹⁰⁵⁶ This is understandable as Margaret was probably a child of the union of Johanna Butler and Tadhg O'Carroll and therefore a cousin of Ormond.¹⁰⁵⁷ Also there was another marital link between the O'Connor Falys and the Butlers. John Butler of Dunboyne, seneschal of the liberty of Tipperary between 1429-33, was married to Ellen, An Calbhach's sister.¹⁰⁵⁸ Interestingly, MacGillpatrick of Ossory, the traditional enemy of the Butlers, offered his services in January 1418 to Talbot to fight the O'Connor Falys.¹⁰⁵⁹ Significantly, Prior

see *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 209. Edmund mac Theobald's son was named Art, see *AFM*, v, pp 1338-9.

¹⁰⁵⁴ T.C.D., MS E.3.18 (581), fol. 54; Nicholls, 'Crioich Branach', p. 21.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ann. Conn.*, pp 432-3; *A.U.*, iii, pp 72-3; *AFM*, iv, pp 830-1.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Gilbert, *Viceroy's*, p. 315.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Ann Clon.*, p. 309. Joan Butler wife of Tadhg O'Carroll died of plague in 1383; Empey, p. 210; *AFM*, iv, pp 690-1.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Blake-Butler, 'The Barony of Dunboyne', pp 80-81.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p.353; *Ann Conn.*, pp 434-5; The hostility of the MacGillpatricks to the Butlers is also confirmed by their killing of Piers fitzJames fitzEdmund Butler in their main residence in 1417. This source dubiously mentions that that Piers would have been earl of Ormond and dates his killing to Shrove Tuesday 1417. During festivities held in Donnchadh Oirech MacGillpatrick's house, Piers was killed while dancing by Donnchadh's blacksmith. The fact that MacGillpatrick is mentioned as Donnchadh Oirech points to a change in the MacGillpatrick leadership. Evidently Fionnán MacGillpatrick, Art MacMurrough's son-in-law, had died by 1417. David Edwards points to a period of reconciliation between the MacGillpatrick kings and the Butlers between the 1410s and 1420s. Given the evidence, this is unlikely. See D.Edwards, 'The MacGillpatricks (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory, 1532-1641', In P.Lane and Wm Nolan (eds) *Laois : History and Society* (Dublin, 1999), p. 333. (hereafter Edwards, 'The MacGillpatricks (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory, 1532-1641'). If anything an alliance between the MacGillpatrick kings and the Butlers lies beyond mid century. In 1443 Edmund fitzRichard Butler had Finghin and Diarmait MacGillpatrick beaten to death in Kilkenny. See *MacFirbis's Annals*, pp 200-1. See H.J.Lawlor, 'Calendar of the Liber Ruber

Thomas Butler was also accused of parleying with Murchadh O'Connor Faly in May 1418.¹⁰⁶⁰ As the Ormond's complaints of 1422 demonstrate Prior Thomas's parley with the O'Connor Falys was at a time when the Butlers were virtually at war with Talbot's government. Indeed, Ormond alleged that Talbot before 1419 instructed Prior Thomas, the earl's deputy, to disband the earldom's forces before allowing Tadhg O'Brien of Thomond and Walter Burke attack the defenceless Butler lands.¹⁰⁶¹ So it would seem that the prior was canvassing support amongst the O'Connor Falys who were openly at war with the king's government. Furthermore, in late 1416 Talbot had antagonised the O'Connor Falys, destroying their castles of Edenderry and Croaghan.¹⁰⁶² However, the first definite proof of an O'Connor Faly/Butler alliance was in May 1418. Then Prior Thomas was sheltered from Talbot by Murchadh O'Connor Faly before joining Murchadh's ally, O'Kelly of Uí Maine, to besiege the royal castle of Roscommon.¹⁰⁶³

This Butler/O'Connor Faly alliance was further confirmed by two pieces of evidence. In 1419 An Calbhach O'Connor Faly gave military assistance to the Butlers, while Talbot later accused Ormond of handing Thomas Talbot, the lieutenant's cousin, to the O'Connor Falys.¹⁰⁶⁴ Clearly in Leinster, Talbot identified both Donnchadh MacMurrough, the provincial king, and An Calbhach as the leading Irish allies of the Butlers. Therefore it is unsurprising to find that Talbot was intimately involved in the captures of both men.¹⁰⁶⁵ In May 1419 Donnchadh was captured by Talbot and dispatched to the Tower of London.¹⁰⁶⁶ Talbot also seems to have organised the kidnapping of An Calbhach. However, An Calbhach managed to

of the Diocese of Ossory', *P.R.I.A.*, xxvii, Section C, no. 5 (Dublin, 1908), p. 170. During the fixing of the bounds of the bishop's manor of Dorow, mention is made of a daughter of Edmund Butler (Edmund fitzRichard?) as the wife of the late MacGillapatrik overlord. (hereafter Lawlor, 'Calendar of the Liber Ruber of the Diocese of Ossory').

¹⁰⁶⁰ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 354.

¹⁰⁶¹ Griffith, 'The Talbot-Ormond Struggle', pp 393-4.

¹⁰⁶² *Ann. Conn.*, pp 432-3. This mentions that Furnival destroyed the castle of Edenderry at the beginning of winter 1416.

¹⁰⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 442-3. Thomas Bacach later went to France to aid Henry V's campaign against the French

¹⁰⁶⁴ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 358. While his father Murchadh became fatally ill in 1421, while campaigning against the MacGillapatriks, the Butler's traditional enemies.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Ann Conn.*, pp 434-5.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 442-3; *A.U.*, iii, pp 72-3. Diarmait Láimhdhearg a another son of Art died earlier in 1418, see *ibid.*, pp 434-5. Gerald Kavanagh ruled in Donnchadh's place.

escape.¹⁰⁶⁷ Also in 1419 Talbot led a large army against the O'Tooles after their raid on Ballymore, destroying Castlekevin.¹⁰⁶⁸ The pattern of warfare seems to display that Talbot was intent on neutralising Butler power and the legacy of Art .

The career of Art saw the Leinster nobility reach their political, military and territorial apogee. This period also saw large scale Irish gains throughout both parts of Leinster and the midlands, heralding the emergence of a belt of Irish territories stretching from North Munster to the Leinster coast. Effectively these Irish successes cut Anglo-Irish Ireland in two, separating Dublin from the south. Art played a significant role in this process, promoting alliances through marriage and military aid with Irish kings throughout these regions. However, it should be added that Art's concept of overkingship was predominately diplomatic not military. Indeed, Art was a catalyst in fuelling this dramatic period of Irish expansion and co-ordination. And such was the power of the Leinster Irish that they under Art's leadership successfully defied Richard's second Irish expedition in summer 1399, leading directly to his downfall upon his return. Indeed, for the first time events in Leinster dramatically affected the course of English history. Art and his allies continued to rise upon the tide of their success well into the fifteenth century as evidenced by the gains of the O'Connor Falys and O'Byrnes in particular. Between 1414-7, however, a remarkable turnaround happened, resulting in the emergence of the Butler/MacMurrough alliance. It seems the Butlers sought this alliance in order to protect themselves from the actions of the new lord lieutenant, Sir John Talbot. This alliance was affirmed through the marriage of Art's son, Donnchadh, to Aveline, the half-sister of the fourth earl of Ormond. Indeed, this marriage ushered in a long age of alliance between the Butlers and the MacMurroughs. Also the evidence also suggests that Art's decision to ally with the Butlers reflected throughout Leinster. This is shown by the actions of the O'Connor Falys and the O'Byrnes - two dynasties with close links to Art. However, through a series of misfortunes and bitter divisions

¹⁰⁶⁷ *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 840-1; *Ann Conn*, pp 432-3; *A.U.*, iii, pp 78-9. An Calbhach was captured by a son of Libind Freyne who sold him to Talbot.

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Ancient Irish Histories*, p. 27-8 Upon Cene Thursday, Othoill tooke 400 cows belonging to Ballye, breaking the peace contrary to his oath. On the 4th Ides of May MacMurrough was captured and Talbot raze Castlekevin on the last of May; *Holinshed's Chronicle*, p. 242. Another defeat of the Irish of Leinster was recorded at a place called Rodiston, see, *ibid*, p. 243.

Art's sons were unable to maintain the kingdom he had created. In the longer term Art ironically facilitated the rise of the Butlers. Indeed, it could be argued that Ormond not Donnchadh MacMurrough was about to fill Art's shoes in Leinster.

