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Vign, Politis and the Irish of Leinster
1156-1606

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

By

James O'Neill

 Trinity College, Dublin
Department of Historical Studies
April 1974
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

I, Emmett O’Byrne, declare that none of the material contained in this thesis has been submitted for another degree at any other institution, and that the research contained herein is entirely my own.

I hereby agree that the Library of Trinity College Dublin may lend or copy this thesis upon request.

Emmett O’Byrne
Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations


Anal.Hib. Analecta Hibernica, including the reports of the Irish Manuscripts Commission. Dublin 1930-.

Ann. Clon. The annals of Clonmacnoise, being annals of Ireland from the earliest period A.D. 1408. Trans. Connell


Archaeologia Archaeologia; or miscellaneous tracts relating to antiquity. London, 1804-.


Bryan, Great earl of Kildare Donough Bryan, Gerald FitzGerald, the great earl of Kildare. Dublin and Cork, 1933.


<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cal. papal letters</td>
<td>Calendar of entries in the papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland. London, 1893-.</td>
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</table>
Chron. Scot.  
*Chronicum Scotorum: a chronicle of Irish affairs...to 1135, and supplement... 1141-1150.* Ed. J.T. Gilbert. 2 vols. 1884-6.

CJR  

Clyn, Annals  
*The annals of Ireland by Friar John Clyn and Thady Dowling, together with the annals of Ross.* Ed. Richard Butler. Dublin, 1849.

Civil Survey  

Conway, Henry VII, Scot. & Ire.  

Cosgrove, Late med. Ire.  
Art Cosgrove. *Late Medieval Ireland, 1370 - 1541.* Dublin, 1981.

C.S.P.I., 1509-73 (etc)  
*Calendar of the state papers relating to Ireland, 1509-73 (etc).* (24 vols, London, 1860-1911).

Curtis, Rich. II in Ire.  

Curtis, Med. Ire.  
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<td><em>Dinnseanchas: journal of An Cumann Logainmneacha</em>. Dublin, 1964-</td>
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<td><em>The Deputy Keepers' Rolls</em></td>
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<td>E.H.R.</td>
<td><em>English Historical Review</em>. London, 1886-</td>
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<td>Ir. Geography</td>
<td>Irish Geography (bulletin of the Geographical Society of Ireland)</td>
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(vols i-iv, Dublin, 1944-63); continued as *The Geographical Society of Ireland, Irish Geography* (vol. v-, Dublin, 1964-)

**Ir. Jurist**

*The Irish Jurist, new series.* Dublin, 1966-.

**Ir. Sword**


**Kildare Arch. Soc. Jn.**

*Journal of the County Kildare Archaeological Society.* Dublin, 1891-.

**L. & P. Rich III & Hen VII**


**L. & P. Hen VIII**


**Louth Arch. Soc. Jn.**

*Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society.* Dundalk, 1904-.

**Lydon, Lordship**


**Lydon, English in med. Ire.**


N.H.I.  *A new history of Ireland*. Oxford, 1976-.

N.L.I.  National Library of Ireland


Nicholls, O Doyne MS  K.W.Nicholls (ed.) The O Doyne manuscript (I.M.C., Dublin, 1983).


Peritia  *Peritia: journal of the Medieval Academy of Ireland*. Cork, 1982-.
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<td><em>Pipe roll Ire., 1211-12</em></td>
<td>‘The Irish pipe roll of 14 John, 1211-12’ Ed Oliver Davies and David Quinn. In <em>U.J.A.</em>, 3rd ser., iv, supp. (July, 1941.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Proc. king’s council, Ire., 1392-3</em></td>
<td><em>A roll of the proceedings of the king’s council in Ireland for a portion of the sixteenth year of the reign of Richard II, 1392 - 93.</em> Ed James Graves. London, 1877.</td>
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<td><em>R.I.A.</em></td>
<td>Royal Irish Academy</td>
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<td><em>R.I.A. Proc</em></td>
<td><em>Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy.</em> Dublin, 1836-.</td>
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<td><em>R.S.A.I.</em></td>
<td>Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland</td>
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<td><em>R.S.A.I. Jn</em></td>
<td><em>Journal of Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland.</em> Dublin, 1892-.</td>
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*Song of Dermot* The *Song of Dermot and the Earl.* (ed) G.H. Orpen. Oxford, 1892

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<td>T.C.D.</td>
<td>Trinity College Dublin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.C.D.</td>
<td>University College Dublin</td>
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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 MacGillapatrick (MacGiollapádraig) enemies after a battle in Ossory.² It is a pertinent point to note that Gerald relied upon second hand experiences of

¹ A.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'.

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 Costerec - a probable O'Byrne warlord. 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.

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5 Brin is usually a corruption of Braen - the traditional O'Byrne forename. Costerec seems to be a corruption of 'the victorious'.
6 J. 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, gosspirid and fosterage. And if followed

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\(^7\)Nicholls, *Gae Ire*, pp 170-75.

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


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'. 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). 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

11 Smyth, Celtic Leinster, pp 3, 17.
12 Byrne, 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

15 Smyth, Celtic Leinster (Dublin, 1981), pp 69, 70, 75, 86.
16 Ibid, p.76.
17 Ibid, p. 86.
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 Muircheartach O'Loughlin (Ó Lochlainn) and Ruaidhri O'Connor. It will chart how Ruaidhri 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 Flanagan how the incorporation into the new order of the dynasties of O'Toole (Ó Tuathail), MacGillamocholóc, 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 show 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

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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. 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. 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.

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. Moreover, the work of Dr Steven Ellis was most helpful for my examination of the Fitzgerald dynasty between 1450 and 1534. 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 much

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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. The advance of the O'Briens into Leinster resulted from the weakness of the Ui Dúnlainge and Ui Cheinnsealga - 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. 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 1050s 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. 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...
continuation of this theme, focusing on the momentous events between 1156 to 1180. It will show, chiefly, how Toirdhealbhach’s son, Ruaidhri, 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.

Toirdhealbhach’s demise confirmed that conflict was unavoidable between Connacht and Muircheartach O’Loughlin. And one of the first effects of the falling out was conflict in West Leinster and the midlands. When news of Toirdhealbhach’s death reached O’Loughlin, he seized the initiative and marched into Leinster, taking hostages from MacMurrough. From there O’Loughlin subdued the MacGillapatrick 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 Ruaire) of Bréifne surfaced with the Leinsterman emerging victorious. 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 Ruaidhri 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. 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.

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

31 Ó Corrain, *Ireland before the Normans*, pp 163-64.
division. In 1157 O'Loughlin was back in the midlands, deposing and raising kings throughout Meath, Leinster, and Munster. It was Ruaidhri’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. On the other hand, Ruaidhri was not inactive during this period. Indeed, he proved himself a skilful intriguer, seeking to undermine O'Loughlin's gains. In 1158 Ruaidhri briefly reimposed his midland suzerainty by marching as far west as Leighlin in Úi Cheinnselaig, extracting hostages from Ossory and carried Macraith O'More of Laois over the Shannon to captivity. 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.

The year 1158 saw Ruaidhri attempt to follow up his success. Drawing support from Thomond and O'Rourke, Ruaidhri 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. The consequences of Ruaidhri’s reverse quickly clarified. With MacMurrough, O'Loughlin wreaked vengeance on supporters of Ruaidhri in West Leinster, deposing several O'Connor clients - including the king of Úi Fáelain. The aforementioned king of Úi Fáelain seems to have been Fáelán, a half-brother of Domhnall MacFháelain who had been Toirdhealbhach’s puppet king of Leinster in the late 1120s. As a reward for MacMurrough’s service, O'Loughlin invested him with Úi Fáelain and confirmed his provincial kingship. For O'Loughlin this was not punishment enough for the ambitious Ruaidhri. Faced by this onslaught, Ruaidhri proved how formidable he could be fighting on home ground. Despite the burning

36 *Ann. Clon*, p. 202. There he appointed his half-brother Muircheartach O'Brien and Diarmait of Desmond as its rulers
of several fortresses, Ruaidhri forced O'Loughlin to retire disappointed.43

In Ruaidhri’s attempts to master the midlands and West Leinster, two purposes stand out. Ruaidhri was concerned by the effect of midland turmoil linked to O'Loughlin’s manoeuvring on Connacht’s troubled eastern frontier. A study of Ruaidhri’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, Ruaidhri 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 Ruaidhri crossed again into the midlands to detach the Úi 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 Úi Fáeláin and Máelsechlainn O’Connor Faly. After a successful campaign through Meath, Ruaidhri took hostages of Offaly and Úi Fáeláin, leaving Máelsechlainn and Fáelán as kings over their respective territories.46 In spite of this, O'Loughlin’s armies forced Ruaidhri to do him homage in Tethbae.47 Despite Ruaidhri’s obeisance, his dynamism paid off as both Máelsechlainn and Fáelán were left as rulers of their kingdoms, suggesting that Ruaidhri 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 Úi Fáeláin king.48 In Offaly evidence suggests that

43 Ann.Tig, ii, 403.
44 A.U, ii, pp 124-5.
47 A.U, ii, pp 139-41.
MacMurrough set to curb Ruaidhri’s advance by maintaining the O'Dempseys (Ó Diomsaig) against Máelsechlainn O'Connor Faly, Ruaidhri’s client. Also to the south of Offaly he maintained the Ó Chremthannain of Dunamase against their O'More overlords and replaced the neighbouring rulers of Ó Buidhe with his own supporters. Similar patterns can be detected in Ossory where MacMurrough tried to intrude his foster family, the O'Keallys (Ó Cellaide), 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, Ruaidhri 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 Ruaidhri forcibly reinstalled him two years later.52 From annalistic evidence of these years, Ruaidhri 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, Ruaidhri'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 (MacDunshléibe) of

49 Ó Cleirigh, '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-
kings. See A.FM, ii, pp 1144-5.
51 Ibid.
52 Ann Tig, ii, pp 409-11.
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 Ruaidhri—speeding the crumbling of O'Loughlin. Realising his time had come, Ruaidhri marched on Dublin and was acknowledged as high-king. Deep within O'Loughlin's sphere at Drogheda, Ruaidhri took O'Carroll's submission. Instead of attacking O'Loughlin, Ruaidhri first dealt with MacMurrough—drumming up support among the Ui 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. Caught by the sheer momentum of events, MacMurrough set Ferns aflame and resolved to fight. In the face of overwhelming odds, he submitted to Ruaidhri. Now having removed the possibility of MacMurrough coming to O'Loughlin's aid, Ruaidhri marched to Donegal, while his allies closed on O'Loughlin, killing him in Tyrone.

In Ruaidhri's absence, MacMurrough attempted to reassert himself by procuring O'Brennan (Ó Braenain) to kill Domhnall MacGiollamocholmóc, the rebel lord of the Wicklow/Dublin territory of Uí Briúin Chualann. This act combined with O'Loughlin's demise again exposed MacMurrough's already precarious position, sparking a second Ui Dúnlainge revolt. The O'Connor Falys and Fáelán, perhaps nervous of MacMurrough's revival, gave pledges to Ruaidhri'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. At this critical point MacMurrough's brother, Murchadh, along with the second Ui Fáeláin lord, Murchadh O'Byrne, deserted him collapsing his resistance. "The Song", recounts how a

54 Ibid, p. 45.
56 Ibid, p. 413.
57 A.F.M, ii, pp 1161-3.
58 Ann. Inisf, pp 300-1.
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. Abandoned and betrayed, MacMurrough fled in search of Henry II of England. The Ui Dúnlainge gamble appeared to have paid off when Ui Cheinnselaig was divided between Murchadh MacMurrough and Domhnall MacGillapatrick of Ossory. Before the close of the year Ruaidhri 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 MacGillapatrick rulers of Ossory.

Like every high-king before him, Ruaidhri had to contend with the centrifugal ambitions of the provincial kings, particularly the O'Loughlins. Ruaidhri resolved to rule these disparate kingdoms, campaigning throughout Ireland. That year Ruaidhri 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 MacFháelain and 2000 followers. Later that year with a bevy of sub-kings, Ruaidhri 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 Ui Dúnlainge princes again displayed their loyalty to Ruaidhri through their attendance upon this campaign. But Ruaidhri’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 Ui Cheinnselaig, deposing his estranged brother-Murchadh. Concerned by Diarmait’s success, Ruaidhri and O'Melaghlin, probably with the aid of the Ui Dúnlainge, again forced his submission. Broadly speaking, Ruaidhri seemed confident that he could contain MacMurrough. In fact, this becomes clear in 1168. The sense of security enveloping Ruaidhri 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.
66 Ibid.
island.\textsuperscript{68} The same apparent lack of concern is inscribed in the pages of the virtual O'Connor court chronicle, \textit{The Annals of Tigernach}.\textsuperscript{69}

However, 1168 saw events pick up speed. Among the kingdoms lying on the fringes of Connacht a rash of succession disputes broke. Consequently, Ruaidhri's attention was deflected away from Leinster while MacMurrough prepared. In Thomond, Muircheartach O'Brien, the Connacht sponsored ruler and Ruaidhri'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.\textsuperscript{70} Even more alarming for Ruaidhri was Meath. There his ally Diarmait O'Melaghlin publicly disobeyed him, executing a dissident under the protection of Connacht. Even though Diarmait gave Ruaidhri 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 Ruaidhri's troops sent to restore Diarmait were routed by Art O'Melaghlin.\textsuperscript{71} At the close of 1168, Ruaidhri still dominated the country as evidenced by the attendance at his convention at Athlone. There he soothed the worries of MacGillapatrick, 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.\textsuperscript{72}

In May 1169 MacMurrough's long awaited Norman troops landed, beginning his challenge to Ruaidhri's high-kingship, taking Ostman Wexford. MacMurrough acknowledged the strategic importance of West Leinster. Unsurprisingly, MacMurrough's first targets were Ruaidhri's clients. MacMurrough tore into Ossory.\textsuperscript{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

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ann. Tig}, ii, p. 421.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Ibid. p. 422. '...wealth and abundance of every good thing bestowed by God on the kingship of Ruaidhri O'Connor'.
\item \textsuperscript{70} \textit{Ann. Insf}, pp 302-3.
\item \textsuperscript{71} \textit{A.FM}, ii, pp 1168-9.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Ibid; \textit{A.U}, ii, pp 1158-61.
\item \textsuperscript{73} \textit{Ann. Tig}, ii, p. 423.
\end{itemize}
hills by Domhnall MacGillapatrick, the Normans feigned flight and
drew the Irish into the plains, slaughtering them. In that instance
warfare changed forever in Ireland. MacMurrough then turned north
and began his revenge upon the Ui Dúnlainge, utilising the full force of
this new military technology on Fáelán MacFháeláin of Ui Fáeláin.
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. After this, Dublin meekly submitted. Not content,
MacMurrough ministered an another dose to Domhnall
MacGillapatrick. Now MacMurrough had Ruaidhri’s attention,
forcing the high-king to deal with him in Ui Cheinnsealga. And after
some sparring amidst its forests, Ruaidhri’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 Ruaidhri’s high-kingship. The
Normans were to be sent home. Lest the Leinsterman again rebel,
Ruaidhri took the precaution of taking hostage MacMurrough’s last
legitimate son, Conchobhar. Lastly Conchobhar was to be betrothed
to one of Ruaidhri’s daughters. Thus satisfied, Ruaidhri departed.

MacMurrough had no intention of keeping his word. With a
new supply of Norman troops, he again rattled Ruaidhri’s supporters
within the midlands. Ossory was ravaged and upheavals in Meath also
suggest MacMurrough’s involvement. There Ruaidhri’s lieutenant,
Diarmait O’Melaghlin, was cut down by his nephew - Domhnall of
Bregia. To prevent the further deterioration of his midland
equilibrium, Ruaidhri expelled Domhnall of Bregia, kept Westmeath
for himself and gave the east to O’Rourke. But as Ruaidhri plugged
one leak, others appeared. Early in 1170, MacMurrough magnified
Ruaidhri’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 MacCarthy’s Book, p. 49; Ann Tig, ii p. 423.
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 Ceinnsealach, who was fostered in Ui Cheinnsealga.
80 A.F.M. ii, pp 1172-3.
O'Brien of Thomond. This again drew Ruaidhri’s attention away from Leinster. Aided by these Normans, O’Brien forced Ruaidhri’s withdrawal from Thomond. Undetered Ruaidhri wasted Ormond and split the O’Brien kingdom by knocking down Killaloe bridge. Despite expending this considerable effort, he failed to subdue O’Brien.

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 Ruaidhri. Ruaidhri swept to Dublin, conferred with MacTurkill and awaited MacMurrough. Through his spies, MacMurrough learned of Ruaidhri’s plans. Moreover, he had a plan of his own. He led his army into the Wicklow wilderness, bypassing Ruaidhri by knifing through the mountains to reach Dublin. MacMurrough had psychologically bested Ruaidhri, as the high-king left Dublin to its fate. It fell within days, but MacTurkill escaped.

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

82 Ann. Tig. ii, p. 426.
85 Ann. Tig. ii, p. 424.
87 Ibid; Dobbs, ‘Banshenchas’, p. 191 Ailbhi 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 Ruaidhri was all too well aware of. Now with MacMurrough rampant and Ruaidhri’s high-kingship in crisis, this fact was graphically illustrated when Ruaidhri was forced to execute MacMurrough’s relatives to stave off the revolt of O’Rourke, his father-in-law.\(^8\) Despite the scale of MacMurrough’s inroads, Ruaidhri 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.\(^9\) Ruaidhri, 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.\(^{10}\)

In May 1171 Ruaidhri’s luck seemed in when MacMurrough suddenly died.\(^{11}\) Sometime during summer 1171, MacTurkill returned from the Western Isles, bringing a fleet. After a brave fight MacTurkill was routed and executed.\(^{12}\) More seriously MacMurrough’s successors were confronted by a Leinster rebellion led by his disgruntled brother, Murchadh, Archbishop Lorcán O’Toole, and the Ui Dunlainge, 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.\(^{13}\) Domhnall’s succession to the Ui 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, Ruaidhri struck at Strongbow. Through August and September 1171, Dublin was ringed by Ruaidhri’s armies and their siege reduced the city to desperate straits. Ruaidhri, 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.\(^{14}\)

\(^{8}\) Ibid.
\(^{9}\) MacCarthaigh’s Book, pp 52-3.
\(^{10}\) Ann. Tig. ii, p. 427.
\(^{11}\) Expugnatio, pp 173, 294, n. 32, p. 306, n. 115; The Song of Dermot, pp 129, 133, and 141.
\(^{12}\) Ann. Tig. ii, p. 428; Expugnatio, p. 77.
\(^{13}\) Expugnatio, p. 79.
\(^{14}\) Ibid, p. 83.
As the challenge of the Ui 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 Úi Cheinnselaig, while Domhnall was appointed seneschal of the Irish of Leinster.98 Bereft of Ruaidhri's protection, many of the Ui 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 Ui 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.
useless. 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. Another incident from 1171-2 also depicts the Leinster Irish attempting unsuccessfully to trap Strongbow in the pass of Idrone. 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 Breifne. 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. By comparison Muircheartach MacMurrough expressed his satisfaction with the

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 Guicsefordiam tendente, Lagensium exercitum in passu Odrone, quamquam 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 indemis evasit, Meilerio per alius ibidem solita strenuitate micante...’. See Expugnatio, pp 86-7.
104 Ann. Tig, ii, pp 432-34.
peace concluded with Strongbow, visiting Winchester with the burgesses of Wexford at Henry II’s expense between 1172-73.\textsuperscript{106} However, Domhnall Kavanagh and his sons seemingly were also discontent with Strongbow’s recognition of their cousin as king of Ui Cheinnsealaig. In 1173 this tension exploded, threatening the colony in East Leinster. Early in the year both Domhnall Kavanagh and Muircheartach campaigned with Strongbow in Meath in 1173.\textsuperscript{107} For although the MacMurroughs seemed reconciled, they were significantly labelled the earl’s ‘enemies of Leinster’, indicating that tension still brooded.\textsuperscript{108} It may coincidental, but roughly at the same time the neighbouring territories of Ormond and Ossory were aflame. On the approach of Domhnall O’Brien and Ruaidhri, the townsmen of Kilkenny and their ally Domhnall MacGillapatrick fled to Waterford.\textsuperscript{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).\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 prefect example of frustration. Despite his submissions and service, Fáelán’s discontent because of the subinfeudation of Úi Fáeláin was palpable.\textsuperscript{112} In summer 1174, his opportunity came to reverse Strongbow’s division.

\textsuperscript{106} C.D.I., 1171-1251., no. 39, p. 7.  
\textsuperscript{107} The Song of Dermot, pp 233-5.  
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, p. 233.  
\textsuperscript{109} Ann. Tig, ii, p. 434. Indeed, O’Brien’s campaign may have picked up considerable support from the relatives of his MacGillapatrick mother within Ossory, increasing the colonist terror on their flight to Waterford. See Dobbs, ‘The Banshenchas., p. 233.  
\textsuperscript{110} Ann. Tig, ii, p. 434; MacCarthaigh’s Book, p. 59.  
\textsuperscript{111} The Song of Dermot, p. 235.  
\textsuperscript{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 Maenmaighe, Ruaidhri's most able son.\footnote{Ann. Tig, ii p. 435.} Flushed with success, Ruaidhri crossed the Shannon into Meath.\footnote{Ibid; Ann. Inisf, pp 306-7; A.U, ii, p. 179; MacCarthaigh's Book, pp 59-61; The Song of Dermot, p. 235.} 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 Úi Dúnlainge, the allure of their old master was too much and they rode to meet Ruaidhri. Much of Meath, including Trim Castle was burnt, and Ruaidhri even penetrated to Dublin but failed to deliver a fatal blow.\footnote{Expugnatio, pp 140-1.} Ruaidhri 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.\footnote{Ibid, p. 137.} The repercussions continued into 1175. Meath was wasted from Drogheda to Athlone and Maghnus O'Melaghlin was hanged by the Normans at Trim.\footnote{Ann. Tig' ii, pp 437-38; A.U, ii, pp 182-3.} The scale of the Norman onslaught forced many of Ruaidhri'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.\footnote{Expugnatio, n. 32, p. 294; A.F.M, iii, pp 20-1; Ann.Tig, ii, p. 437.} 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 Ruaidhri. After 1174, Ruaidhri clearly lost confidence in his ability either to drive them out or subdue the Normans.\footnote{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').} Instead of prolonging hostilities, Ruaidhri gradually came to accept them as part of an evolving political landscape. This realisation had immediate consequences. In 1176 Ruaidhri used them to check O'Brien's rebellion, replacing him temporarily as king of Thomond with his own nephew.\footnote{Ann.Tig, ii, p. 439.} But the defining moment in Ruaidhri's career had come. On 6 October 1175 Ruaidhri submitted, through his emissaries, to Henry II, acknowledging him as his lord.\footnote{R.Frame, Ireland and Britain , 1170-1450 (London, 1998), p. 16. (hereafter Frame, Ireland and Britain , 1170-1450).} By the terms of the treaty of
Windsor, Ruaidhri promised not to interfere in Leinster.\textsuperscript{122} He was also to compel the refugees from Meath and Leinster in Connacht to return home.\textsuperscript{123} In effect Ruaidhri ceded his overlordship over Leinster, and abandoned his claims to islandwide dominance. In return Henry II promised not to dispute Ruaidhri’s overlordship over Connacht as long as he fulfilled his obligations as liegeman.\textsuperscript{124}

As events transpired, neither placed much faith in the Windsor agreement. But Ruaidhri’s acknowledgement of reality in Leinster was profound. In effect, the treaty bisected Leinster between Ruaidhri and the Angevins. Having been unable to militarily defeat the Normans, Ruaidhri 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 Ruaidhri’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.\textsuperscript{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 Ruaidhri’s political expediency were the Ui Dúnlainge. With Ruaidhri pinned back on the Shannon, the second phase began of the feudal colonisation of Leinster. Deprived of Ruaidhri’s protection, lords like Faelán MacFhaéláin sought to adapt to these circumstances. It opened with the expulsion of the more troublesome indigenous ruling classes often from fertile lands to more

\textsuperscript{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 Maiethachlín 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’. \textsuperscript{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’. \textsuperscript{124} Perros, ‘Crossing the Shannon Frontier’, p. 119. \textsuperscript{125} Ibid, p. 117.
economically marginalized territories. In eastern Ireland, mottes, manors and peasant settlers came to take the places of the depossessed. The Ui 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 Ui Muiredaig, Ui Fáeláín as well as parts of Offaly, while the cantred of Wicklow lying against the Leinster coast formed the final piece of the Kildare jigsaw. In 1177 Máelmorda MacFháeláin, perhaps Fáelán’s son, was killed by the O'Tooles of Ui Muiredaig. 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 Ui Muiredaig to Walter de Riddlesford, it suggests that the MacFháeláins were either forced southward into Ui Muiredaig by colonist pressure or that they were auxiliaries in Norman service.

The defeat of the O'Tooles in 1177-8 brought the active colonisation of Kildare. 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. 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. 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. In Ui Fáeláín, the colonisation followed a similar path. Norman mottes and villages were grafted onto both secular and ecclesiastical centres at Naas, Clane and Cloncurry. The density of the Norman settlement in Kildare is evident by the fact that the majority of smaller moated sites, perhaps farmsteads, are in

127 *Ann. Tig.* ii, p. 298.
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.
132 *Alen’s Reg.*, p. 8; *Placenames*, p. xl.
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.
\(^{135}\) \textit{CJR}, 1295-1303, p. 191; \textit{CJR}, 1303-1307, p. 29.
\(^{138}\) \textit{D.N.B}, xv, p. 852.
\(^{139}\) Gwynn & Haddock, \textit{Med. relig. houses}, p. 142.
\(^{140}\) \textit{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 Niallain, 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. 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. Significantly Domhnall MacGillapatrick of Ossory, the enemy of MacMurrough and Domhnall Kavanagh, also joined this hosting. This may suggest that Muircheartach and Domhnall MacGillapatrick allied themselves with the colonists to protect themselves from Domhnall Kavanagh. If Domhnall Kavanagh was killed in the midlands by the Uí Niallain, 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. 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 Lacy's with Art O'Melaghlin and some of the O'Rourkes, plundered Carbury and Meath. Meath did not only provide the launch pad for advances into Connacht. The southern Irish kingdoms

143 Bk. Leinster, i, p. 186; The Song of Dermot, p. 161.
144 Ibid, p. 195; Chartul. St Mary's, i, p. 13.
of Ulster also were exposed. Faced by the same problem as Ruaidhri, Máelsechlainn O'Loughlin razed much of northern Meath including Slane Castle. Although the Norman advance contravened the terms of Windsor, it secured the royal nod in 1177. Thereafter Connacht was under siege. It began with the rout of a Norman probe into Westmeath. More serious, though, was the aborted invasion of Connacht by Miles de Cogan in 1177.

Despite de Cogan’s failure, the pressure on Connacht grew in 1178. Within this context Ruaidhri’s cherished Clonmacnoise and his satellite of Fearceall were attacked by Hugh de Lacy, lord of Meath. While Ruaidhri 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, Ruaidhri’s clients. This gradual loosening of Ruaidhri’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 Ruaidhri 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.

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.
149 Ibid, p. 446. This proved harder than most expected. Aided by Ruaidhri’s renegade son, Murchadh, de Cogan penetrated the Connacht heartland to Ruaidhri’s capital of Tuam, tearing at the fabric of the O'Connor kingdom. At the time, Ruaidhri 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 Ruaidhri 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, Ruaidhri’s subjects pursued a fabian policy, denying the Normans food and rest. On hearing of Ruaidhri’s rapid advance, the Norman army fled for the Shannon ford of Athleague. There Ruaidhri caught them fording the river, slaughtering their panic stricken rearguard. Ruaidhri’s revenge on his renegade son was swift and terrible, blinding him personally. See also Expugnation, 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. Ruaidhri 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. 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 Ruaidhri'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. 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 Ruaidhri. Thus, perhaps to redress the midland equilibrium, Ruaidhri shifted for himself by giving the hand of Rose, his daughter, to Hugh de Lacy shortly after 1180.

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

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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.


Leinster, MacMurrough’s enemies and Ruaidhri’s allies, lived now under Norman overlordship. For the most part, Ruaidhri’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.
Part II

The Leinster Nobility and the Arrival of the Normans 1180-1270

Chapter 2a

The Reaction of the Irish nobility of East Leinster, 1180-1265

Chapter 2b

The Reaction of Connacht and West Leinster, 1180-1270
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 Fitzgerallds.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

159 Ibid, para 1767, pp 131-32, para 1768, p. 132.
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 MeicGiollamocholmoc dynasty of the Wicklow territory of Úi Briúin Chualann. Domhnall MacGiollamocholmoc, lord of that territory, was married to Diarmait MacMurrough’s daughter, Derbforgaill, 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 Ruaidhri 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

162 Ibid, p. 95.
164 Expugnatio, p. 85.
165 Chartul. St Mary’s, i, p. 32.
century and a half. His lands, however, at Santry, Raheny and Clontarf in North Dublin were granted to the newcomers.

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. The cultural leap of Domhnall’s dynasty may not have been such a drastic change. For centuries the MeicGiollamocholmoc 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. 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 Ráin), lord of Idrone, with MacMurrough assent collaborated in the foundation of Killeney. 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 Fáeláin to check its restless lords. 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. A

166 Flanagan, Irish Society, p. 223.
168 Byrne, Ir. kings, p. 151.
169 Chartul. St Mary’s, i, p. xv.
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 turfery 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 MacGiollamocholmoc 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 MacGiollamocholmoc to Fitzdermot further bound them culturally to the Normans.176 Diarmait mac Domhnaill the Fitzdermot eponym described himself as Dermod 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

174 Chartul. St Mary’s, i, pp 31-4.
177 C.D.I., 1171-1257, 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., 1171-1257, no.569, p. 88. There is a John Deremot called nephew and heir of Gillemolmoc. The lands associated with him are within the Newcastle Lyons region. Does this indicate an east/west division of the MeicGiollamocholmoc 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.
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 MacGiollamocholmóc slew Roger fitzGilbert, a Englishman.186

The family’s traditional overlordship in Ui Briuin Chualann was to stabilise the feudal settlement just south of Dublin. For example, land tenure among the thirteenth-century tenantry of Ui Briuin Chualann, the O’Kelly (Ó Ceallaigh) and O’Tire families displays a strong strand of continuity from pre-Norman times.187 In Ui Briuin Chualann itself the Fitzdermots held at least eight carucates. And Diarmait MacGiollamocholmóc 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

183 Byrne, Ir kings, p. 151. Byrne confirms that the family did actually change their name.
184 C.O.D, i, p. 35.
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 Ui 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 Ui Briuin 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 Úi Briúin Chualann and the former O'Farrell (Ó Fearghaile) rulers of Úi Garrchon. In Úi Garrchon the Fitzdermots held lands at Newcastle and those of Ballinagran into the fourteenth century. Thus the O'Farrells and probably the Úi Fiachrach of Úi Enechgláss (southeast Wicklow) were seemingly largely dispossessed by the Normans, but that is not to say they were not still living upon ancestral lands. This is strengthened if Klymanach mentioned in 1301 with Rathdown is Kilnanamanagh near Glenealy. Significantly included within the modern townland of Ballinagran is Ballyderborgeyle. This Derbforghaill was possibly the MacMurrough wife of Domhnall MacGillaolmóc, 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.

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 Íenna MacMurrough, witnessed an undated charter of Derbforghaill MacMurrough, wife of Domhnall MacGillaolmóc, to St Mary’s Abbey at Dublin. 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

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192 Grace, p. 53.
193 DKR, xxxviii, p. 78. The possibility of the FitzDerrmot holding lands further down the coast is strong. The pedigree of Domhnall records a victory of an ancestor over the Úi Enechgláss, 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. 25, 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
death, 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 Ui 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 Shilgy, 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
Kilmamanagh 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

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197 Nicholls, ‘Anglo-French Ireland’, p. 382. For another example of Irish accommodation
198 C.D.I., 1285-1292, no. 309, p. 137.
201 Ibid, no. 1122, p. 493.
203 Dowling, Annals, p. 47; Chartul. St Mary’s, ii, p. 330.
204 Simpson, p. 218.
205 CJR, 1305-1307, p. 480.
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 Dermod 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

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; *CDI*, 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.
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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{219} Other prominent Ostman families in Ui Briúin Chualann and the barony of Wicklow were the Harolds and perhaps the Archbolds.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{221} Perhaps Elias Drolde, seneschal of the archbishopric’s lands during Archbishop Henry’s reign (1213-1228), was the same man.\textsuperscript{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 MeicGiolamacholmoc the O’Tooles of Ui 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.\textsuperscript{223} As mentioned above, there Archbishop Lorcan O’Toole of Dublin possibly granted lands around Glenmalure to the priory of the Desert of St. Coemgen to protect them.\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{218} Simpson, p. 203.
\textsuperscript{219} \textit{Alen’s Reg}, p. 113, and pp 158-9.
\textsuperscript{221} \textit{Alen’s Reg}, p. 31. This Elias witnessed the grant of the tithes of the land of the Mackineghanus to the church of Grace Dieu. See p. 32, he witnessed a grant to the burghers of Swords. See pp 49-50.
\textsuperscript{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 \textit{CJR}, 1295-1303, p. 306; \textit{CJR}, 1305-1307, p. 476 and p. 515; \textit{CJR}, 1308-1314, p. 285; N.A., R.C. 7/13 (iv), pp 22-24; \textit{C.D.I}, 1252-84, p. 313; \textit{Chartul. St Mary’s}, ii, p. 330 and p. 349; Nicholls, ‘Crioch Branach’, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{223} \textit{The Song of Dermot}, pp 67-69; \textit{Ann. Tig}, ii, p. 441.
\textsuperscript{224} \textit{Alen’s Reg}, p. 8; \textit{Placenames}, p. xl.
Although the O'Tooles lost most of Ui 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 MacGiollamocholmóc, 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 Félim O'Toole describes him as lord of Ui 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.
O'Toole of Lmaal, 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 Otothill 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 Faelán 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 an 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

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235 CJR, 1305-1307, p. 497.
236 CJR, 1295-1303, p. 271. In 1299 Corbaly was referred to as Corbaly Otothill; 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 Allen's Reg, p. 76; MacShamhráin, p. 164.
In 1214 a Lorcan O'Toole was killed on campaign against Máel Sechnaill Óg O'Melaghlin and O'Connor Faly in modern Westmeath.\textsuperscript{241} It seems this Lorcan was part of the archbishop's contribution to the expedition. Meyler O'Toole, probably Lorcan's son, did homage to Archbishop Luke of Dublin for his father's lands between 1228-55.\textsuperscript{242} The Archbishop's grant may have been meant to seal over an illegitimacy, rather than the confirmation of a doubtful inheritance.\textsuperscript{243} Meyler's family were not the only O'Toole family to enjoy this favour. Other O'Toole families held lands in the archbishop's western manor of Ballymore.\textsuperscript{244} In 1264 eight Irishmen, including two O'Toole families, held lands in the archbishop's manor of Kilfeather; an Elias O'Toole was sergeant of Archbishop Fulk's lands.\textsuperscript{245} Later O'Toole families held church lands in freehold from the archbishops at Glenealy and Kilfeather 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.\textsuperscript{246}

An exchange of lands between 1256-71 saw Archbishop Fulk de Sandford grant the lands of Glandeluri to 'Moriertagh' or Murcheartach O'Toole. In return Moriertagh transferred his lands within Imaal to the archbishop.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{249} A strong possibility exists that Moriertagh was otherwise known as Meyler O'Toole when disguised by a Norman forename. By February 1264

\textsuperscript{241} Ann. Clon, p. 228. This Lorcan may be the Laurentio filo Alexandri who witnesses the grants of Domhnall MacGiollamochmole 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.

\textsuperscript{242} Allen's Reg, pp 181; MacShamhráin, 'The Uí Muiredaig and the Abbacy of Glendalough', p. 73.

\textsuperscript{243} Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland', p. 382.

\textsuperscript{244} Allen's Reg, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{245} Ibid, pp 110-11.

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

\textsuperscript{247} Ibid, p. 136 and p. 141; See also J. Gilbert (ed.), Crede Mishi, (Dublin, 1897), pp 93-94. (hereafter Crede Mishi).

\textsuperscript{248} Placenames, p. xlix.

\textsuperscript{249} Allen'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 Muircheartach 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 Monedeledeu. In 1297 his lands included all of Mondeleu, Balhauly 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 Ui 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 McKyogh 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,

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 C JR, 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 Aten’s Reg, p. 141.
255 C.D.I., 1293-1301., no. 329, p. 153. He was allied to David McGilnecowil.
256 C JR, 1295-1303, p. 254.
257 C JR, 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'Cnigon 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, McKenabbyth, McNabuthth 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.  
261 Alien’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 Benevt 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.\textsuperscript{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 Ui Cheinnsealaig 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.\textsuperscript{268} Indeed, these marriages and the fact that Strongbow and the settlers did not encroach too forcefully upon Ui Cheinnsealaig made Muircheartach MacMurrough’s co-operation much easier.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{270} And later upon Muircheartach’s death in 1193, he was recorded as king of Ui Cheinnsealaig and seemingly he used Ferns as an official residence.\textsuperscript{271} Furthermore, an unnamed MacMurrough, described as the son of MacMurrough, grandson of Mael na mBó, fell alongside an O’Connor Faly and O’Phelan (Ó Faélain) of the Déise during Ruaidhri MacDunleavy’s unsuccessful Norman aided campaign against the Irish of Tyrone in 1196.\textsuperscript{272}

\textsuperscript{267} D.KR., xxxv, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{268} A.FM. iii, n.f, p. 96; O’Clery, para 1739, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{270} A.FM. iii, n.f, p. 96; O’Clery, para 1739, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{271} Orpen, Normans, ii, p. 390.
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.\textsuperscript{273} Aoife MacMurrough's children by Strongbow held vast estates either side of the Irish sea through the legacies of Strongbow and MacMurrough.\textsuperscript{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 Marshall, the earl Marshal of England in 1189. And probably in the following year Isabella set about building the town of Ross.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 Marshall II, her son.\textsuperscript{277} This smooth transition in Ui Cheinnseilch is evident on another level. Until 1223 there was a 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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


\textsuperscript{276} Hore, \textit{Wexford Town}, i, pp 50-56.

\textsuperscript{277} Leask, 'A Cenotaph of Strongbow's daughter', pp 65-67; \textit{Ann. Conn}, p. 12-3.

\textsuperscript{278} Orpen, \textit{Normans}, iii, pp 29-31.

Dungarvan in 1297. 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.

The brothers Muircheartach 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. 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. 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 Muircheartach received money. 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. 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. Again the smooth flow of the earl’s power is evident when Thomas MacMurrough was escorted to Dublin without incident to face trial. 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.

282 Nicholls, Gaelic Ire, p.170.
283 Hore, Wexford Town, i, pp 14-5, 143, 146, 148.
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 Ui Domhnaill) and their offshoot, the MeicDalbaig, were accepted within the feudal system. Density of Norman settlement in the Ui Cheinnsealaig 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 Ui 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 11290 and was later among Strongbow's army in Meath in 1173.291

Like the O'Toole kingdom of Ui 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 Ui 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

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 Aten's Reg, p. 141; C.O.D. 1, p. 35, see also no. 136, p. 65. John Fitz John FitzDermot was mentioned as a witness to Avice de la Comere'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'Neill clients 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 Oq~olan 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 Ui 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 Galledonesagh 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.
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 Tg, ii, p. 416.
Normanisation. 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. 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. 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. 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.

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 Ui Fáeláin in 1173-4. The Fitzgerealds were granted Naas, Ui 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.

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. 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 betagh, meaning tenants. This Richard’s sons also held lands within the Fitzgerald barony of Wicklow. Indeed during the early fourteenth century...

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303 C JR, 1295-1303, p. 69. In 1298 Maurice de Rupeforti in an attempt to divide Muiris mac Muircheartaigh MacMurrough’s followers urged the swift pardon of Simon Omurech’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.
307 Hore, Wexford Town, i, pp 11-12 and p. 15.
308 Expugnation, p. 143; Gormanston Reg, pp 145-46.
309 O’Clery, para. 1750, p. 130, para. 1760, p. 131
311 C JR, 1295-1303, p. 254.
century, Murchadh mac Gerald O'Byrne seemingly was the leading feudal tenant there.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{314} As throughout Europe, the church gradually evolved into an arena fraught by fierce ethnic competition.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{317} By 1228 there were thirty-four Irish Cistercian houses in Ireland, only ten of which had been founded by the Normans.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{312} N.A., R.C. 7/13 (iv), pp 22-24.
\textsuperscript{314} Meredith Hanmer, Ancient Irish Histories: The Chronicle of Ireland (Dublin, 1809), p. 370.
\textsuperscript{315} R. Bartlett, \textit{The Making of Europe} (Penguin, 1993), p. 221. (hereafter Bartlett)
\textsuperscript{316} \textit{Alien's Reg.}, p. 161.
\textsuperscript{317} \textit{N.H.I.}, ix, p. 311 and p. 314.
\textsuperscript{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

323 C.D.I., 1171-1251, no. 2255, p. 335.
325 Ibid, no. 2186, p. 324.
England and Ireland were noted by the royal government. 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. 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. In September 1246 Henry III reaffirmed his declaration by ordering that the common law of England be the observed writ without exception in Ireland. 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. Increasingly ethnicity was defined by the law as well as custom and language. 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.
328 C.D.I., 1252-1284, no. 2836, p. 424, see also no. 2849, p. 426.
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 Moriertagh 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


\(^{333}\) \textit{Crehe Mihi}, p. 144.

\(^{334}\) \textit{Athen'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

336 Otway-Ruthven, Medieval Ireland, p. 196.
337 Lydon, 'The years of crisis, 1254-1315', fn.6, 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 Ruaidhri O'Connor gave his daughter, Rose, in marriage to Hugh de Lacy, lord of Meath. For the best part of a decade, Ruaidhri 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 Ruaidhri’s earlier plans, he annexed its western part to Connacht in 1169. Moreover, the dangers to Connacht of de Lacy’s colonisation of Meath led to Ruaidhri’s campaign of 1174. So by marrying his daughter to de Lacy, Ruaidhri hoped to remain protector of Clanmacnoise and of the nearby Irish kingdoms. This option allowed Ruaidhri to foster a regional modus vivendi with his former enemy. For a while it worked, dimming de Lacy’s expansion, allowing Ruaidhri to hold Connacht together. While this alliance may have briefly stabilised the region, Henry II viewed it with suspicion.

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. This improvement may also have signalled Ruaidhrí's resumption of the payment of the tribute of Connacht. 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. Some O'Melaghlins bore traces of de Lacy's favour. In fact, Art O'Melaghlin, Ruaidhrí's enemy, seemed allied to de Lacy throughout the 1170s. 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.

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 Úi 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. But after 1173, Henry reversed his decision, ceding the Úi 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.

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344 Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon Frontier', p. 122.
345 A.F.M, 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.
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 Úi Fáeláin', p. 232.
At first Fáelán appears to have grudgingly accepted the incorporation of Ui Fáeláin into Norman Kildare. Kildare as constituted by Strongbow was stitched together from shreds of another three kingdoms, including pieces of O'Toole's Ui 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.

The double grant to the FitzGeralds of Naas, the royal Ui Fáeláin cantred, along with the Wicklow cantred where the O'Byrnes lived is significant for any study of Ui Fáeláin. That the Wicklow cantred was linked with the royal cantred implies that Ui 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. Thus in this context of a shared political heritage, Strongbow's association of the royal cantred of Ui Fáeláin and the Wicklow cantred is understandable.

After Fáelán's desertion of the Normans to join Ruaidhri's unsuccessful campaign of 1174, a Norman backlash was inevitable. Ui Fáeláin was devastated, forcing Fáelán to modify his attitude. 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. Furthermore the O'Melaghlins of Meath and O' Kearys of Carbury were long associated with Clonard. Possibly Fáelán was compensated for losses in Ui Fáeláin with lands in Meath and Offaly, and acted as a guardian of the marches against the O'Connor Falys, O'Kearys and O'Melaghlins. Grants also reveal that the MacFháeláins enjoyed good relations with the de Herefords.
who held the Ui Fáeláin cantred of Cloncurry. It has been suggested that the motte and manor near Cloncurry church was a later MacFháeláin residence. Indeed, Fáelán died a monk at Meyler Fitzhenry’s newly founded abbey of Connell in 1203, 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. While another, Dowenild OHelyn, held church lands at Kill and was recorded as trading in clay for earthware pots in 1343. However, the MacFháeláins were the biggest losers in the Norman settlement of Leinster.

To the south of Ui 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. 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. Domhnall’s service served as an example to his dynasty, who adopted forenames such as Henry, Simon and Nigel. As in Ui 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. To illustrate the point, the Pipe Roll of

357 Reg St Thomas, p. 78 and p. 82; Flanagan, ‘Henry II and the kingdom of Ui Fáeláin’, pp 235-36.
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.
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'Rourke 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 MacGillapartick 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 Fogartaigh) 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 MacGillapartick 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

lie in the Norman advance to the Shannon. And it was to De Lacy that the task of incastellation had fallen. The provincial kings and Ruaidhri 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, Ruaidhri was unable to push the Normans back because of the emergence of rebellion in Connacht during the early 1180s. And in 1185 Ruaidhri resigned in favour of his son - Conchobhar Maenmhaighe. Conchobhar Maenmhaighe was a confident figure, believing that he could restore the O'Connor high-kingship. 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. This led Conchobhar Maenmhaighe to exploit their fears, linking up with Maelsechlainn Beag O'Melaghlin to raze a castle belt in Westmeath during 1185. What favoured Connacht's kings in this struggle was the partial Norman failure to comprehend the strategic importance of the middle Shannon basin.

371 The 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; A.U, ii, pp 198-9: The major threat to Connacht was Flaithbertach O'Muldory (O Maeldoraidh), king of Donegal. He was married to Ruaidhri's daughter, see DNB, 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 (O Canannain). They drowned when their ship was wrecked in 1153; A.U, ii, pp 198-9, 213; A.L.C, i, pp 160-1; MacCarthaigh's Book, pp 70-1; A.C, i, pp 162-5.

373 MacCarthaigh's Book, pp 72-3.


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; A.U, ii, pp 202-3.

376 A.U, ii, pp 202-3. Earlier in 1178 Hugh de Lacy with Art attacked Maelsechlainn Beag and the people of Teithbæ. See Ann. Tig, ii, pp 447-8. In this attack Muircheartach 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 Maelsechlainn 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 Ruaidhri 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 O Clérigh, John FitzThomas, p. 11.
378 Orpen, Normans, ii, p. 93-95.
379 Expugnatio, p. 234-35.
381 Expugnatio, p. 235. In Desmond, the Irish fared worst as Diarmait MacCarthy (MacCarthy) was killed at a parley with Theobald Walter and the Ostmen of Cork in August 1185.
382 Ibid.
384 Ibid, p. 231.
in terrain, which rendered heavy cavalry useless.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{389} De Lacy’s death opened up opportunities for Conchobhar Maenmhaighe. Having seen off Ruaidhri’s challenge, Conchobhar Maenmhaighe capitalised upon the mounting anti settler feeling. Significantly after 1185 Domhnall O’Brien of Thomond, Domhnall MacCarthu of Desmond, Ruaidhri MacDunleavy of Ulaid, Aodh O'Rourke of Bréifne, and Maelsechlainn Beag O'Melaghlin of Meath pledged their vassalage to him.\textsuperscript{390} And in 1187 Conchobhar Maenmhaighe destroyed Killare Castle in Westmeath with Maelsechlainn Beag O'Melaghlin.\textsuperscript{391} In spite of unrest in Connacht, Conchobhar Maenmhaighe partly restored Connacht's fortunes in West Leinster.\textsuperscript{392} Also he tried to establish

\textsuperscript{385} O’Conor, The Archaeology of Medieval Rural Settlement in Ireland, pp 98-104.
\textsuperscript{386} Expugnatio, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{388} Expugnatio, p. 251.
\textsuperscript{389} A.L.C., i, pp 174-5; Expugnatio, p. 235.
\textsuperscript{390} A.F.M, iii, pp 85-7.
\textsuperscript{391} Ibid, pp 78-9; Perros, ‘Crossing the Shannon Frontier’, p. 124.
\textsuperscript{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. 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 1189 and subsequent O'Connor civil wars deflected Connacht's attentions from the midlands. Conchobhar Maenmhaighe's hitherto obscure uncle, Cathal Croibhdhearg O'Connor was his eventual successor. Cathal Croibhdhearg was aware of the dangers of settlement to Connacht and was determined to preserve his kingdom. If the Norman penetration of the midlands made him nervous, it also had a similar effect upon Domhnall O'Brien and Domhnall MacCarthy. In 1189 MacCarthy displayed a 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. These victories display the determined but often individualistic attempts of the Irish provincial kings to maintain their midland ambits. Also Domhnall O'Brien in 1192 defeated the Normans at Thurles before burning Norman Ossory. O'Brien, though, was a pragmatist. And in an act reminiscent of Ruaidhri, he married a daughter to William Burke - his

northern Connacht, Donegal and the midlands. It was from northern Connacht and Donegal that Ruaidhri 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 Ruaidhri O'Canannan in 1188 before helping Conchobhar Maenmhaighe and Domhnall O'Brien to trap de Courcy and the sons of Ruaidhri 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 Eignechan 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 Ruaidhri 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 Ruaidhri's return in 1189, O'Muldory invaded Connacht. Since Ruaidhri was king presumably it was he who opposed the invader. In 1190 Cathal Croibhdhearg and Cathal Carra, the eldest son of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe formed an alliance at Clonferi. This peace seems to have given Cathal Croibhdhearg the kingship as he is referred to as O'Connor in the next entry.


396 Ibid, p. 128.

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


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. 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. The forging of their alliance was possibly motivated by John’s probable grant of Connacht to Burke in 1194. 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. 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. 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. All in all Cathal Cróibhdhearg’s hostility served him well until 1199. Then serious divisions emerged between him and the sons of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe.

By 1199, however, Connacht was under siege. Symbolically, a Norman motte stood at Connacht’s doorstep, Athlone. Now with invasion looming, Cathal Cróibhdhearg again stirred up the midland Irish through the exchange of mutual military assistance. 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...
forces to attack the Normans in Limerick in 1199. 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. 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 Maenmaigh’s sons. Cathal Carrach enlisted the support of Burke and the O’Briens and burnt Clonmacnoise before expelling Cathal Cróibhdhearg to Ulster. In his absence Cathal Carrach installed himself as king of Connacht. By February 1200 Cathal Cróibhdhearg returned to Connacht, establishing his influence in Annaly and raided Limerick in May. In addition to these attacks, he also assaulted the O’Connor Falys of Offaly and burnt Norman settlements in Westmeath. In 1201 Cathal Cróibhdhearg tried again to reclaim his kingship but Cathal Carrach was too strong. 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.

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. 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

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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.  
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.  
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.  
Cróibhdhearg's interest in the midlands is evidenced by Raghnait O'Farrell of Annaly - the wife of Aodh - his son. Moreover, the axis between the kings of Meath and Connacht was affirmed by Maelsechlainn Beag O'Melaghlin's erection of an altar at Clonmacnoise in 1205. While both Maelsechlainn 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'Melaghlinns, 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. The sons of Art first come to notice

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422 Earlier in 1169 Art and his half-brother Domhnall Bregach killed King Diarmait O'Melaghlin of Meath, Ruaidhri O'Conor's lieutenant. This forced Ruaidhri 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, Maelsechlainn Beag, Art's younger half-brother and successor, ended the enmity with the O'Connors by concluding a firm alliance with Conchobhar Macnhaughe. Maelsechlainn 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 423-6. 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{425} Also there was considerable unrest in the Meath territory of Kineleagh between the Mageoghegans (MacEochagáin) and O'Laeghaghans.\textsuperscript{426} But it is impossible to say whether this encouraged Cormac mac Airt to attack settlements.\textsuperscript{427} All that can be said with certainty was that he and his brothers in 1206 attacked the town of Balleloghroe in Westmeath, defeating Máelsechlainn Beag and the Normans.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{423} \textit{A.F.M.}, 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 Croibhdearg's son Tadhg at Clonmacnoise in 1205. See \textit{A.F.M.}, iii, pp 146-7.

\textsuperscript{424} Meenan, 'Deserted Medieval Villages of Co.Westmeath', p. 21; \textit{Ann. Clon}, p. 221.

\textsuperscript{425} \textit{A.F.M.}, iii pp 146-7

\textsuperscript{426} \textit{Ann Clon}, p. 221.

\textsuperscript{427} \textit{A.F.M.}, iii pp 146-7. The son of Guill Bhealach O'Carroll was killed by the Normans.

\textsuperscript{428} \textit{Ann. Clon}, p. 221. Another sign of this trans Shannon world is the capture of Murchadh O'Kelly in this encounter.

\textsuperscript{429} Meenan, 'Deserted Medieval Villages of Co Westmeath', p. 21; \textit{A.F.M.}, iii, pp 162-3; \textit{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.\textsuperscript{430} As mentioned earlier the Normans did not fully comprehend the necessity of colonising these vital valleys.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{430} Smyth, Celtic Leinster, pp 86-9.
\textsuperscript{431} Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{434} Ann.Clon, p. 222.
However, Marshall’s supporters with the de Lacy’s 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.\textsuperscript{435}

By 1210 the midlands were seriously disturbed by the king’s struggle with the de Lacy’s. 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 Ardracan 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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’Bien forced Cathal Cróibhdhearg to peace.\textsuperscript{438} By its terms Grey seemingly granted Connacht to him.\textsuperscript{439} This royal recognition pleased Cathal Cróibhdhearg who spent Christmas with Grey at Athlone.\textsuperscript{440} With Connacht pacified, and Meath and Ulster in the king’s hand, Grey attacked the Irish kings bordering Connacht and the midlands.\textsuperscript{441}

\textsuperscript{435} Orpen, Normans, ii, pp 210-217. See Martin, John, lord of Ireland, 1185-1216’, p. 137; Allen’s Reg. p. 31.
\textsuperscript{436} Lydon, Lordship, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{437} A.L.C, i, pp 242-3.
\textsuperscript{438} Ibid, pp 244-5; Curtis, Med. Ire, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{439} Curtis, Med. Ire, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{440} Ibid, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{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. 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. 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. But it was the construction of a castle at Clonmacnoise that ignited the midlands. 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 Bréifine in 1209. In 1212 Westmeath exploded, forcing Grey to order reinforcements from Munster. But at Kilnagcrann ford in Fearceall, Cormac mac Airt, the MacCognhans and the sons of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe defeated Grey before expelling the Normans from Delvin. These victories produced a reaction throughout the region. And the Irish Pipe Roll of

442 In 1211 the sons of Ruaidhri 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; A.F.M., 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 A.F.M., iii, pp 166-7.
446 A.F.M., iii, pp 162-3.
1211-12 further reveals that 'Murechot Offelan', Cormac mac Airt's neighbour, was now warring along the Ui Fáeláin marches.

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 Cuiilen O'Dempsey, Muircheartach O'Brien of Ormond and Domhnall Chlannaig MacGillapatrick of Ossory. 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. In spite of this defeat, Cormac mac Airt and the junior O'Connors defeated the Normans again at Kilnagcrann. Then Muircheartach 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 Maenmhaghe. Drastic action was needed. In autumn 1213, Justiciar Archbishop Henry of London proclaimed a royal service at Roscrea. From Roscrea he marched into Offaly and defeated Muircheartach O'Brien and Máelsechlainn O'Connor at Killeigh.

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. Among the fallen was Ruaidhri O'Keary and the later hanging of two O'Dempsey

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448 The Irish Pipe Roll of 14 John, 1211-1212, p. 18.
452 Otway-Ruthven, Medieval Ireland, p. 83
453 A.F.M. iii, pp 175-7. This Máelsechlainn was a son of Cathal Carrach.
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 Airt access to the natural routeways to Norman settlement. For example, in 1214, a chain of castles including Clonmacnoise, Birr, Durrow and Kinnitty, were erected within the midland corridor to guard against him.\(^ {456} \)

Throughout 1215, he concentrated upon the eradication of castles\(^ {457} \), burning Kinclare, Athboy, Smerhie castles, damaging Birr and forcing Māelschlainn Beag Ó'Melaghlin to flee from Delvin.\(^ {458} \) In his place then Cormac mac Airt assumed the lordship of Delvin. At that point Muircheartach Ó'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 Ó'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 Ó'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 Ó'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 Ó'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 Máelsechlain Óg O'Melaghlin - Cormac mac Airt's rival. Alongside Máelsechlan Óg was the unknown O'Connor Faly lord. In 1215, the resurgent O'Connor Faly killed his traditional client, O'Molloy of Fearceall. The Normans sought to regain control of the region by hanging Gilkeoewgyn O'Kelly at Trim that year, while Meyler Fitzhenry aided by the O'Molloys reasserted Fitzgerald overlordship in Offaly, killing Máelsechlainn O'Dempsey in 1216. This probably restored order to the midlands.

Despite Cathal Croibhdhearg's incorporation into the feudal system, he remained apprehensive. On 13 September 1215, John granted him Connacht but made a similar grant that day to Richard - William Burke's son. Faced by such double-dealing, Cathal Croibhdhearg obtained papal protection for himself, Aodh, and their kingdom during 1220-1. Indeed, de Lacy activities in the midlands caused Cathal Croibhdearg concern from 1218. Then the Normans and the O'Farrells of Annaly raided Connacht, resulting in O'Connor retaliation. From 1220 Cathal Croibhdhearg's problems magnified, resulting from de Lacy expansion into Bréifne, Cavan and Leitrim. In 1221 they, accompanied by Aodh Meith O'Neill, attacked Meath and burnt West Leinster - which probably spurred Cathal Croibhdhearg to ask Henry III for armed protection. In 1222 Cathal Croibhdhearg'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. And later that year de Lacy castle building in Bréifne brought another Connacht army over the Shannon.
After Cathal Croibhdhearg's death on 27 May 1224, Aodh faced a struggle to preserve his inheritance. 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. 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. Trouble flared in late 1224 but the intervention of Justiciar William Marshall II soothed Aodh's anger. About this time Aodh confiscated the lands of Donn Óg MacGeraghty (MacOireachtaigh). Encouraged by MacGeraghty, the Connacht nobility invited the sons of Ruaidhri to challenge Aodh. 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.

474 During 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 Clan, p. 223; A.L.C, i, pp 244-5 Aodh drove the raiding Toirdhealbhach mac Ruaidhri O'Connor in the north in 1211; A.F.M., iii, pp 166-9 This records the same incident, but including Diarmait mac Ruaidhri along with Toirdhealbhach. The sons of Ruaidhri and Tadhg mac Conchobhar Maenmhaighe and people of Annaly preyed Roscommon, Aodh drove them east of the Shannon. Later Aodh blinded Donnchadh O'Heyne (O 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 Raghnaíth O'Farrell of Annaly See Ann Conn, pp 76-7.

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

477 The 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 Cairebrech 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 Marshal who now sought to restore calm by seemingly employing Rose O'Connor, Ruaidhri's daughter and Hugh de Lacy'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 Ruaidhri and his son Conchobhar Maenmhaighe. By the 1220s the sons of Conchobhar Maenmhaighe had
crumbled - culminating in Toirdhealbhach mac Ruaidhri’s inauguration
by Aodh Meith O’Neill. Aodh fled to Marshall at Athlone.\[^{479}\] There
Aodh gathered together an expedition to drive Toirdhealbhach mac
Ruaidhri 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 Ruaidhri’s

faded. See A.FM, iii, pp 196-7. In 1219 Maelsechlainn son of Conchobar Maenmaighhe
was killed by a rival; A.L.C, i, pp 270-1. Aodh son of Conchobar Maenmaighhe who
fought at Kilmagarann in 1213, died on his way home from Jerusalem in 1224. For
growing anger of the sons of Ruaidhri, see A.L.C, i, pp 264-5. Most recently the annals
mention that Diarmait mac Ruaidhri had hired a Scottish fleet to overthrow Cathal
Croibhdhearg 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 sheds light upon the composition of the opposition. This setback was to delay the
struggle for the Connacht kingship by four years.

\[^{480}\]Ibid, pp 11-9, the brother of Cuilen O’Dempsey and the four sons of MacMurrough
were killed during these campaigns; A.FM, 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,
Marshal 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,
sons, while O'More killed O'Molloy of Fearceall in 1227. 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. Prominent among the attackers was the son of Domhnall Bregach O'Melaghlin, the ally of Ruaidhri's sons, ravaging Clonmacnoise three times that year. Significantly Cormac mac Airt, Aodh's ally, was captured at Clonmacnoise by the Normans that year. These incidents appear to fit into a campaign by the Norman supporters of the sons of Ruaidhri to weaken Aodh's allies in Meath and Leinster. On Aodh's return to Connacht, he was defeated but escaped into Leinster. There he was murdered in 1228.

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

But before Burke could secure Connacht, Hubert Burke - his uncle - was dismissed as English justiciar on 29 July 1232.  

A month later Burke was ordered to release Féilim and was succeeded as Irish justiciar on 2 September by Maurice Fitzgerald. Furthermore, Burke was commanded to surrender Connacht but refused, angering Henry III. He ordered Fitzgerald and then Féilim to take Meelick. They declined.  

This sea change proved disastrous for Burke’s settlement of Connacht. Féilim went on the rampage, levelling Burke’s castles before defeating Aodh mac Ruaidhri.  

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’. 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. That year Féilim may have tried to exploit this unrest, burning Ardnurcher and Baleloghoe in Westmeath.  

It was probably during this attack that Féilim allied himself with Cormac mac Airt. 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. Shortly afterwards Féilim

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495 *Ann Conn*, pp 43-5.  
501 *Clyn, Annals* p. 7.  
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 Trálee 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 Cairebrech submitted while Féilim again fled to Donegal to the refuge of his brother in law, Domhnall Mor 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.\footnote{505} As a result Justiciar Maurice Fitzgerald depossessed him of the cantreds and drove him again into exile in Donegal.\footnote{506} With Féilim out of the way, Fitzgerald gave the kingship back to the family of Ruaidhri. 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.\footnote{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.\footnote{508}

In 1236 Féilim returned from Donegal, burning Rinndown in Roscommon before defeating his cousins.\footnote{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.\footnote{510} Féilim established himself in Connacht in late 1236 or early 1237\footnote{511}, 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 (MacDraimait) island fortress of Loch Ce was taken. See Ann Conn, pp 54-5; Ann Clon, p. 235; A.U, ii, pp 292-3.

\footnote{505} Orpen, Normans, iii, pp 184-86.

\footnote{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.

\footnote{507} A.F.M, iii, pp 286-7.


\footnote{509} Ann. Conn, pp 61-3

\footnote{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 Clann 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 Clann 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 Ruaidhri. 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.

\footnote{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 Clann Muircheartach Muimhnech to the line of Cathal Crobdhearg is borne out in
of the king’s cantreds. Essentially, though, Connacht belonged to Burke, who induced settlers over the Shannon. However, Duffy has pointed out that Connacht was destined not to become a little England. Félim turned to diplomacy. In 1240 he went to England to petition Henry III to confirm his tenure of his reduced inheritance. By 1241, however, Félim found it hard to control his nephews - the sons of Aodh. And his task was magnified by the rapid

1210. Then Muircheartach Muimhnech, tanaiste of Connacht and brother of Cathal Crobbhdhearg, 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 also, pp 53-55. In 1234 the son of Maghnus O'Connor, lord of the Clann Muircheartach Muimhnech, engaged the colonists at sea during Félim’s outbreak in 1234. Conchobhar Ruadh the son of Muircheartach Muimhnech also fought for Félim before going into exile with Félim in Donegal. In 1237 we find the son of this Maghnus killing Muircheartach son of Diarmait mac Ruaidhri O'Connor, see A.F.M, iii, pp 292-3. Later Muircheartach son of Maghnus O'Connor died while campaigning for Félim 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 Félim between 1247-49, the Clann Muircheartach Muimhnech prominently figure, see Ann Conn, pp 93-5. Bolstered by his allies, Félim 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 A.F.M, 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.
516 In this period the sons of Aodh, Félim’s nephews, became increasingly powerful. Led by the eldest Tadhg, also Félim’s foster son, 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 Owney) O'Connor who was the son of Aodh mac Ruaidhri (d. 1231). See MacCarthargh’s Book, p. 117. He also captured Donnchadh O'Flear (O'Eaghrag), see Ann Conn, pp 68-9. For proof of Tadhg’s fosterage, see Ann Conn, pp 80-1. Félim’s other principal supporters the Clan Muircheartach Muimhnech also continued to eradicated the support base of the family of Ruaidhri. In 1238 Máel-secchlann the son of Conchobhar Ruadh O'Connor killed Maelruanaidh O'Dowd (O Dubha), see MacCarthargh’s Book, p. 117. For the O'Dowd attachment to the house of Cathal Crobbhdhearg, 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 Félim, see Ann Conn, pp 74-5; A.F.M, iii, pp 302-3. Apart from colonist advances in Connacht, Félim 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, Máelsecchlann 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; A.F.M, iii, pp 304-5. Félim, 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, Máelsecchlann O'Donnell refused to surrender Tadhg and allowed him to escape into Bréifne before submitting. Yet Tadhg’s activities still worried Félim. 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
done, Feilim 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 Breifne. See A.F.M., 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. Eilain MacCarthy. His plan seems to have been to marry his mother to his former captor, Cú Connacht O'Reilly. On his return to Breifne, 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 Feilim's personal intervention in the crisis by leading his forces into Breifne during 1244. In Feilim'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 Feilim to remind his O'Reilly and vassals of their traditional ad陳ence. Thus by revenging Tadhg, Feilim may have sought to reassert himself over his fractured dynasty as Burke expired. See Ann Conn, pp 77-9; MacCarthy's Book, p. 121. Two of Tadhg's brothers died in 1243-4. Ruaidhri drowned in the Shannon at Ath Liag and Conchobhair died in the spring; MacCarthy's Book, pp 120-3; Ann Conn, pp 78-9; A.F.M. iii, pp 312-3. The presence of Muircheartach son of Maghnus O'Connor of the Clan Muircheartach Muimnech on Feilim'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 A.U, ii, pp 302-3 Although this is dated to 1243, it may actually have happened in 1244. This entry records the killing of Glioppadraig O'Hanlon (O h-Anluain), king of Orghialla, 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 Cairebre, Luighne, Sliabh Luga and Tir naAilill, threatening Norman expansion into Donegal. See Red Bk Killadare, 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 Breifne at Lough Oughter in Cavan, taking his wife hostage, see Ann Conn, pp 40-1, A.U, 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 Feilim in his struggle against Burke by harbouiring him and suffered an Norman raid for his pains, see Ann. Conn, pp 54-5. Because of O'Donnell strength and the closeness of the alliance, Fethlimidh perhaps allowed him lordship over Cairebre? 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 Carnetel, while the O'Donnells faced the prospect of further invasion by Fitzgerald. See Ann Conn, p. 69-71; Ann Clon, pp 236; MacCarthy's Book, pp 116-7. 519 Parallels 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 Feilim 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. 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 died 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. But the loss of belief in appeasement is evidenced when Maelsechlainn O'Donnell of Donegal devastated northwest Connacht at end of the year. Fitzgerald then attacked Donegal, taking the hostages of O'Donnell. 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. By autumn Toirdhealbhach O'Connor, their principal leader, escaped. Soon afterwards he was retaken and confined in Athlone reflecting the mounting tension. By early 1247 their establishment of settlements at Bunratty and Clare conspired to place Conchobar 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, Maelsechlainn. This Maelsechlainn 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; MacCarthy'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 A.F.M, iii, pp 316-7.
525 Ibid; A.F.M, 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 A.F.M, 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. This proved be the spark that engulfed the region.

The level of support amongst the O'Connors for Toirdhealbhach indicates that Feilim lost control of his vassals. By early 1247 Toirdhealbhach welded together a Irish confederation stretching from Donegal to Ossory in the midlands. And with Donnchadh MacGillapatrick of Ossory, Toirdhealbhach scorched an arc of settlement stretching from Galway town to the Mayo barony of Carra. 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. Among his Irish contemporaries,
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. 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. Given the turbulence of 1247 and the long history of links between the dating from the days of Toirdhealbhach and Ruaidhri O’Connor. However, they cultivated good relations with the colonists in the aftermath of the initial invasion. But after the death of Maelsechlainn MacGillapatrick 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 MacGillapatricks were hostile to the Normans. Now the links between the junior O’Connors and the MacGillapatricks 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 Muircheartaigh Muinmheach exploited the gradual loosening of colonist control over the seaboard territories of Mayo by utilising his maritime and land forces to capture the Umhail 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 scorchèd Connemara and inflicted considerable losses upon the O’Connor ally, O’Flathery. The colonists led by Fitzgerald continued their counter offensive by driving Ruaídhri O’Cananann from Donegal, replacing him with Gofraidh O’Donnell. O’Cananann 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 MacHenrí Butler against the Irish, see ibid; A.F.M, iii, pp 326-9; A.U, ii, pp 308-9; MacCarthaigh’s Book, pp 126-9; Ann Conn, pp 94-5; A.U, ii, pp 310-1.
midlands and the O'Connors, it would seem that this region was not unaffected by these disturbances. Whilst we have 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 Toirdhealbhach had close links to Féilim. The only mention of Féilim's activities is a reference, recording that his son Aodh killed Muircheartach O'Dowd (Ó Dubhha) in 1248.534 And there certainly seems to be a degree of coordination 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 Ruaidhri. 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 perceptive. At this time Cormac O'Connor, the last major leader of the family of Ruaidhri, was fighting for Maurice Fitzgerald in neighbouring Sligo. Furthermore the obit of the Clan Muircheartach 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 Muircheartach Muimhnech and the O'Dowds was long established. It is a realistic supposition that the remnants of the family of Ruaidhri 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 Conchobhair Ruadh O'Connor killed Maelruanaidh O'Dowd in a time of intense planting of colonist castles.


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. 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. 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. 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. Another reference dating from 1248 shows the O'Farrells of Annaly attacking Norman Westmeath. The references dealing with the colonist retribution upon the midland Irish are also revealing. In his obit, Donnchadh MacGillapatrick is mentioned alongside two other great destroyers of Norman settlements, Conchobhar O'Melaghlin and Conchobhar 'na gcaisleán' MacCaghlan. From this evidence, these may have been the leaders of the midland revolt.
The next phase of the war opened when the MacCarthys attacked Norman Desmond. Following the outbreak of war in Desmond Aodh ambushed Peter Bermingham who had custody of Richard Burke’s lands. Fitzgerald’s subsequent attack on Félim’s lands indicates that he had no doubt of Félim’s complicity in Aodh’s attacks. The Irish sources are in unison as to Félim’s reaction to Fitzgerald’s actions. Instead of fleeing to the Normans, Félim 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. FitzGeoffrey also concurred with Fitzgerald and together they devastated the O’Connor territory of Sil Murray, attacked Bréifne, deposed Félim, and chose Toirdhealbhach as provincial king, ordering him to defend Connacht against Félim. If Félim 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’Melaghlins and it is likely that Donnchadh MacGillapatrick was also involved. Despite some success, Toirdhealbhach’s troops were routed outside Athenry in September 1249. But late in 1249, Toirdhealbhach made his peace with the government but there was no mercy for Donnchadh MacGillapatrick.
In 1250 Féilim finally returned from exile in Tyrone. Fear of Féilim drove Toirdhealbhach to seek Norman protection, confirming their split, resulting eventually in Féilim’s restoration. 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. 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. 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. 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’Rourke of Brefine. During this period Féilim through Aodh confirmed his alliance in 1255 with O’Neill. This paved the way for the de Cogans in 1250. See A.F.M, 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, Toirdhealbhach’s brother, from Connacht; A.F.M, iii, pp 340-1; A.U, ii, pp 312-3 This entry says that Féilim came from Donegal to Connacht.


552 Ann Conn, pp 102-3. In 1250 Cairbre O’Melaghlín 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 A.U, ii, pp 312-3; A.F.M, iii, pp 340-1. In 1251 Tadhg mac Tuathal O’Connor of the Clan Muircheartach Muimhnech were killed by the colonists, see ibid, pp 342-3.

553 In Ossory the Archbishop David MacGillapatrick of Cashel and Domnchadh’s successor Seafaidh steered their dynasty along a more peaceable course, see Ann Conn, pp 108-9, Archbishop David MacGillapatrick of Cashel died in 1253. see ibid, pp 150-1 Seafaid son of Domnhal Clannach MacGillapatrick died in 1269. The only mention of disturbance among the O’Melaghlin dynasty was in 1254. Then Murchadh O’Melaghlín before his own violent demise killed Piers Risturbard, lord of Sil Mailegrain now Ballinlough in west Roscommon, see A.F.M, iii, pp 350-1.

554 For the wars against the O’Rourke 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

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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.
continued attacks around Athlone must have contributed to uprisings by the O'Farrells, MacCoglans and O'Molloy 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 MacGillapatrick. 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 Maelsechlaarn 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 A.U, ii, pp 342-3.
Part III

Chapter 3a

East Leinster, 1265-1320

Chapter 3b

West Leinster, 1270-1320
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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

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

Lawless, a Butler client, was joint sergeant of the manor of Arklow and the Wicklow
564 Frame, *The Dublin Government*, fn. 6, p. 80. For Richard of Cornwall, see N.Davies,
565 J.Lydon, ‘Medieval Wicklow - A Land of War’, In K.Hannigan and Wm Nolan (eds)
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 Muircheartach'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 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, MacShamhrain has shown the occurrence of British names within the early genealogies of the Úi Mael and the Úi 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 MacShamhrain, p. 68 and p. 124.
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. Small 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. 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. 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 Muircheartach 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 preserved 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.

576 O'Clergy, para 1751, p. 130.
Indeed, the reluctance of Muircheartach 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 Muircheartach’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, Muircheartach 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 Muircheartach’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 Móel na Mó. 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, Muircheartach 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 reinstated them as officers of his liberty of Carlow in 1280. On 24 July 1280 Bigod’s request that they be given safe conduct to

England was approved, but it is uncertain whether they went.\textsuperscript{581} However, it is clear that the bitter taste of defeat still rankled as supported by the apprehension of a Dermitius McMorkada in 1280.\textsuperscript{582} By 1281, trouble was brewing and perhaps as a precautionary measure Muircheartach 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 Muircheartach’s release suggest heavy implication in the fomentation of discontent in Leinster. This is supported by Art’s raids upon the Vale of Dublin.\textsuperscript{583}

Clearly the government suspected that Muircheartach 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{586}

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

\textsuperscript{581} Frame, ‘Murder of the MacMurroughs’, pp 223-31.
\textsuperscript{582} Clyn, Annals, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{583} Lydon, ‘Medieval Wicklow’, p. 163.
\textsuperscript{584} Duffy, Ireland and the Irish Sea Region, p.142.
\textsuperscript{585} Ibid, p.142.
interim period they were led by Alexander and Diarmait MacMurrough along with another Art MacMurrough.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 became 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 Faelan 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

\textsuperscript{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. 125.
\textsuperscript{588} Ibid, no. 559, p. 272.
\textsuperscript{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 Muircheartach 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, theambits 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.
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'Melaghlins of Westmeath from 1290, and the massacre of the O'Connor Faly leadership in 1305. 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. 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 animal plagues and
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


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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{597}

These killings promoted greater co-operation between the Irish of both parts of the province.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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. \textit{The Book of Howth} mentions this victory, recording that Irish came from other parts of Ireland to aid the Irish of Leinster.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{596} \textit{CJR, 1305-07}, pp 466-67. The MacMurrough leaders were Henry, Muircheartach Mór, Murchad and Domhnall Óg MacMurrough.
\textsuperscript{597} \textit{Grace}, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{598} \textit{Chartul. St Mary's}, ii, p. 333, In 1306 Thomas de Sueterby, constable of Castlekevin, executed Macnochi, two of his sons and a strong thief called Lorcan Oboni. This Macnochi seems a son of Eochaidh O'Toole, otherwise known as Richard or Yoghv O'Toole; see \textit{CJR, 1305-07}, p. 336. In 1307 this Thomas Snyderby was given 25 marks for his keepership of Castlekevin; \textit{Grace}, p. 51. \textit{Alien's Reg}, p. 128. Richard O'Toole was called Yhowy.
\textsuperscript{599} Dowling, \textit{Annals}, p. 17; \textit{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. \textit{CJR, 1304-1307}, pp 270, 354; O'Byrne, "The Uí Bhronn of Co. Wicklow", p. 59.
\textsuperscript{600} \textit{The Book of Howth}, p. 127; \textit{Grace}, p. 51; \textit{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 Kilfey.605 These Murchadh happily accepted,606 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 53 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.
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.\textsuperscript{609} Simultaneously Murchadh brutally eradicated the weakening grip of the FitzGeralds upon the barony of Wicklow.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{611} However, Piers Gaveston with the aid of Henry O'Toole brought Murchadh's activities to a temporary halt by defeating him in 1309.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{609} CJR, 1308-1314, pp 200, 237.
\textsuperscript{611} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{612} The Book of Howth, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{613} Ibid, p. 128.
\textsuperscript{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. And during January 1310 Carlow was wasted by the war between Arnold le Poer and John de Boneville, the two competitors for the seneschacy 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.

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. 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. 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, ‘Crioche Branach’, p. 15; CJR, 1308-14, p. 237. The tenants of the prior of Glascarrig was charged with receiving the de Cantetons and Dünlaing 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 Duske.

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 being 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. 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. However, Murchadh suffered a considerable setback in 1313, when he was routed by Lord Edmund Butler in Glenmalure. 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. However, his ambition was dented by Edmund Butler’s defeat of O’More in 1315. 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. 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.

620 N.A., R.C. 7/13 (iv), pp 122-24. In 1308 a branch of Harold 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 Ui 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 Mary’s, ii, p. 348-49; The Book of Howth, p. 134.
625 ...in a confined and narrow part of the country, namely between Newcastle McKyemegan and Wicklow, where they have the sea between Wes 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. 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 Archbolds and Murchadh in Glenealy, forcing their surrender.

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'. 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 Archbolds. 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. But clearly the region remained unsettled, as the O'Toolels 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.

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 Mary's, ii, pp 297 and 348.
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, cooperation 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'Melaghlins 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

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-handness 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

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. 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.

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...."

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.

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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.
640 Ann Clon, p. 251. For Conchobhar mac Domhnaill Breagach O'Melaghlin'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 MacGillapatricks of Ossory upon their O'Dempsey neighbours of Offaly plunged the whole region into chaos in about 1271.642 This renewed MacGillapatrick 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 MacGillapatrick of the 1240s.643

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

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 MacGillapatrick. 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. 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. 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 MacGillapatricks 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

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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

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646 C.D.I, 1252-1284, no. 1389, p. 258.
648 Ann Clon, p. 250. Art mac Cormac O'Melaghlin was wounded by the MacGeoghegans and the O'Molloys of Fearceall.
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.
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 Dermitius McMorkada in 1280.655 By 1281, trouble was brewing in Leinster. In the midlands the MacGillapatricks were again in arms, but their leader Hogekyn was killed before the close of the year.656 In East Leinster Muircheartach 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 Muircheartach’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.KR, 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.
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 MacGillapatrick/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 Falys and the O'Melaghlins 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 coordination between the Irish of the midlands. This alliance also coincided with the emergence of two brothers, Muircheartach and An Calbhach O'Connor Faly. While Muircheartach 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 (Ui 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 fitz Thomas in Kilkenny during August 1282.
659 Ibid, p.142.
660 Ibid.
662 O 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. 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. From the evidence it is clear the conflict had reignited the Irish of Laois who were now threatening the Dunamase lands of Edmund Mortimer. 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. 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. While to the south MacGillapatrick paid 6 to have the king’s peace in 1285-6 before unrepentantly burning Norman Callan in 1286.

However, the military situation improved for the colonists with the capture of An Calbhach O'Connor Faly by Sir Walter L'Enfant in 1286. 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. 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.

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.
669 C.D.I, 1285-92, no. 180, p. 87.
670 Grace, p. 41. This source mentions that the towns of Norragh and Ardscoll were burnt on 16 November 1286.
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 Ul 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’Melaghlins 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 MacGillapatrick 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

675 A.U, ii, pp 370-1; Ann Conn, pp 182-3. Meyler de Exeter was killed in this latest clash.
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. However, as Ó Cléirigh points out while this campaign did succeed in forcing the submission of the Irish, it was to be temporary.

By the terms of the peace, the Irish of Offaly paid a series of fines through the abbot of Rosglas in late 1289. 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. 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. 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. 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, 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

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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'.
682 Ó Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 23.
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 misdeamours. 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.

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

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696 CJR, 1295-1303, p. 194. In January 1298, twelve jurors of the cantred of Omurthy said that Calaugh Oconughor and other felons destroyed the coutry of Kilkolyn and made off with a huge herd of cattle.
697 Ibid, p. 118. Walter Sweyn, sergeant of the king, was killed in the house of Neux hyn Oconoyl, see ibid, p. 187.
698 CJR, 1295-1303, p. 167.
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.
Irish. 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 Iffy in Offaly, and Clonboyne in Laois. But it was the O'Mores who were making the most dramatic progress, conquering the highland region of Slemargy overhanging the Barrow valley. This southward expansion of the O'Mores clearly was forcing the settlers back over the Barrow. There Kenagh Óg (Cétaich Óg) and Leyssagh (Laoiseach) O'More were extracting blackrents and foodrents from the settlers in parts of Leys. 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.

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. 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 MacMurroughs

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 Taul of Mellet 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 Lyetston 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 Omonthe, 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 Mary's, 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 MacGillapatrick near Castlecomer in Ossory.711 Importantly, that year among the crown pleas of Offaly the outlawry of Seffaidh 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, Seffaidh 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 Seffaidh 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 Fally?) received the obrenans, incendiaries, and the McMurwythes. See also p. 69. This records that Douenald McMurchot, Donechud son of Colin Oconeaghur, 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 McMurghuth was stealing horses from the liberty of Kilkenny. The O'Brennans had been troublesome for some time, see CJR. 1295-1303, pp 65, 72 and 179. Aulef Obrenan got peace by the wish of John fitzThomas.
711 CJR. 1305-7, p. viii.
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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{718}

\textsuperscript{715} CJR, 1295-1303, p. 196.
\textsuperscript{716} O Cléirigh, ‘The Problems of Defence: A Regional Case-Study’, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{718} O 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 O'Ffenn (MacPhéiléain) served with Maurice Howell against the Irish of Leinster mountains and O'Faly 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 Falys 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'Melaghlins 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 Muircheartach O'Connor Faly, reshaping dramatically the region's political dynamics.722

719 C/R, 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 Antiqu. Jrn, 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 Falys 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; Clun. 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. 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. In October 1305, the earl of Gloucester, also lord of Kilkenny, led a hosting to confront the Irish of the Slieve Blooms. 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. 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. Together the O'Dempsey/fitzThomas alliance threatened to

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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 Athmark was charged with having received Doneghuth son of Fym McGilpatrik in 1305. (Donnchadh son of Fionnán MacGillapatrick). 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 Maolachllyn McGylpatrick (Mæcelchlaíth MacGillapatrick), 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 ide m, ‘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'Mollos to oppose them. Indeed, he may have cemented his support by marrying his daughter to the rising Muircheartach 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 Muircheartach 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'Melaghlins and Muircheartach 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 Siban in this entry.
730 CJR, 1305-07, p. 215; O Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 158.
732 O 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 Mary's, ii, p. 333; Dowling, Annals, p. 17, Grace, p. 49.
733 CJR, 1305-07, p. 271.
734 O Cléirigh, John fitzThomas, p. 159.
735 MacCarthaigh's Book, pp 104-5.
these attacks. 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, cooperation 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.

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. 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.

These disturbances in East Leinster continued to match those of West Leinster. 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.
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 Lorcan Oboni. This Macnochi seems a son of Eochaidh O'Toole, otherwise known as Richard or Yogh 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 Snyterby took Richard mcCiochi (mac Eochaidh), two of his sons, and Lorcan 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 Ui 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 Ui 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 Cauntertouns 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 MacGillapatriek 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.
Barrow/Kildare region as the concentration point for Irish expansion from the midlands. 752 Without doubt Bermingham’s murders of An Calbhach and Muircheartach 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’Melaghlins resulted in the brief emergence of two new powers in the northern midlands, Muircheartach Mór MacGeoghegan of Kineleagh and Sefraidh O’Farrell of Annaly. 754 Inevitably a power struggle developed between them. And in 1310 Muircheartach 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, Muircheartach Mór attempted to pressurise O’Molloy of Fearcall 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 Muircheartach 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.
756 Dowling, Annals, p. 19; Chartul. St Mary’s, 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/níng Laigneacha. For earlier usage of this term see A.U., 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
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 Feilim 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, Rindown, and Athlone. However, the return of Sir William Liath Burke to Connacht stiffened settler resistance. And outside Athenry on 10 August 1316, Burke routed Feilim’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. 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. But their ambitions were dented by Justiciar Edmund Butler’s victory over Laoiseach in late 1315, costing them some 800 men. However, Bruce’s midland campaign of winter 1315-6, threw the

764 See also O 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 Ardsall, 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 Bacalahan 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

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 Cumsay who were well to the south of Ely.
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

770 See also Smyth, *Celtic Leinster*, pp 104-5.
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.

772 *Ann Conn*, pp 250-1; *A.F.M*, iii, pp 516-7; *Ann Clon*, p. 280.
The leader of the O'Brien resurgence in Ormond was not King Muircheartach of Thomond, but a rebel cousin. This malcontent was Brian Bán, who survived Richard de Clare's defeat by Muircheartach on 10 May 1318. 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 Owney, 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. 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 MacGillapatrick Slieve Bloom heartland. 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 MacGillapatrick of the lands surrounding Aghaboe. 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.

Indeed, the death of Domhnall Dubh MacGillapatrick 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 Falys 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 MacGillapatrick ambit, leading to fighting with them for regional dominance.782 Indeed Laoiseach’s advance into Ossory may in turn have pushed the MacGillapatricks 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 A.F.M, iii, pp 526-7; Ann Conn, pp. 256-7; Ann Clon, p. 283; A.U, 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 Maelsechlainn, who was later killed by Dámaid'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.
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

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 Ui Cheinnselaig in 1324. Nonetheless the situation in the region remained volatile as evidenced by government maintenance of wards at Dunlavin and Baltinglass in 1325. 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. 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 1328 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 Alien’s Reg; pp 189-92. Later the Lawlesses captured Murchadh’s nephews, Gerald and Thomas mac Dunlaing 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.
kingship and that seems to be the case in Thomond and Connacht. Previously, Domhnall mac Airt’s election has been viewed as a symbol of the Irish Resurgence.

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. 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. 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.

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. Furthermore David O’Toole was also captured and ultimately executed in 1328. For his efforts, Domhnall mac Airt was conveyed to Dublin Castle, remaining there until his escape in January 1331. However, his long confinement cost him part of his dynastic supremacy and probably thereafter divisions emerged.
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 MacGillapatrick, burnt the Butler cantred of Odogh as far south as Moyarfe in April 1329. And by early 1329 the Brown Earl of Ulster, William Burke, and Muircheartach 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.

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 Faly. 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. 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. 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. In retaliation James Butler, 1st earl of Ormond, pillaged Richard mac Philip O'Nolan’s lordship of Forth. 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. Arising from his continual service with government forces, Murghut on 11 June 1333 was assassinated in Dublin during the parliamentary sessions. 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. 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. Within four months Murchadh was back terrorising the settlers in early 1330. 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

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.
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.
the Leinster kingship, Muircheartach 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 Muircheartach (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 Muircheartach 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 MacMurrough leader in 1293-94, making him at least 40 by his death about 1313. Therefore Art’s father Muircheartach was probably in his late 30s or early 40s by 1330, making about 64 years old at his death in 1354. If Art was born about 1310, Muircheartach 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’Toolees 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 MacGillapatrick to come to Kilkenny. There MacGillapatrick was murdered by the Brown earl. 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.

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. The allies also attacked the Wexford liberty only to meet with a heavy defeat before being routed again by the settlers in Ui Cheinnsealaig on 14 April 1331. 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. 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. But there seems to be

813 Clyn, Annals, p. 22; The Annals of Ross, p. 44; A.F.M, iii, p. 545; This Donnchadh mac Giollapádraig MacGillapatrick seems to have succeeded the Donnchadh MacGillapatrick, who died in 1324. See A.F.M, iii, pp 530-1
814 Grace, p. 119.
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 Muircheartach mac Muiris MacMurrough. It seems Muircheartach 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 Muircheartach to force a more favourable territorial division of Ui Cheinnselaig between 1335-47. 824 However,

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.
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 Siomóin 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. 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. This latest O'Byrne/MacMurrough rapprochement continued, forcing Ormond to concentrate his forces against them in an indecisive campaign near Arklow in 1337. However, it was not to last as Murchadh's son, Tadhg, entered government service, fighting Domhnall mac Airt throughout 1338-9.

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

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825 Clyn, Annals, p. 27.
826 Frame, The Dublin Government, p. 293.
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'Tooles 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. 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. 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. In 1340 Domhnall Óg attacked Gowran located in the strategic pass of the same name that accessed Ossory and north Tipperary. 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 Morice before being rewarded with O'Tooles for service against the O'Byrnes in July 1342. 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. His plan came to nought amid the devastation wreaked by Justiciar Ralph de Ufford upon Ui Cheinnselaig in autumn 1344. Then it appears that the MacMurroughs, O'Nolans, O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles had mended their fences to hatch another war in Leinster. Typically, Domhnall

829DKR., 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. 135.
832 Clyn, Annals, pp 26-8. D.KR., 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.
Óg embarked upon repentance through service against Desmond in Munster during 1345. But de Ufford's victory, Frame argues, fatally undermined Domhnall Óg's position within his dynasty, fanning the ambitions of Muircheartach mac Muiris O'Byrne - the O'Byrne ally. Although Muircheartach and his wife were captured by the men of Ross in 1345, he was quickly free and probably engineered the assassination on 5 July 1347 of Domhnall and his possible Tanaiste, Murchadh MacMurrough.

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 cooperation 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. 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. 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. Yet Brian Bán was in no mood to temporise, burning Tipperary in June 1336. 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.

839 Idem, Two Kings, p. 164.
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.
Kilkenny\textsuperscript{846}, 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 Scanlan MacGillapatrick stood with de la Freyne’s forces against O'More and his allies.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 MacGillapatricks, 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

\textsuperscript{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 Erecekeine and his followers.

\textsuperscript{847} Ibid, p. 27. This Scanlan 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 MacGillapatrick, see ibid, p. 24. Otway-Ruthven, \textit{Medieval Ireland}, p. 255. Thanks to Dr Simms for her help here.

\textsuperscript{848} Ibid, p. 30; O Cleirigh, ‘The Impact of the Anglo-Normans in Laois’, pp 177-78; \textit{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 Ruaidhri 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 MacGillapatrick 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 Muircheartach in late 1336. This diplomatic tacking bore fruit as Muircheartach 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

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.
853 Nic Giollamhais, 'Kings and Vassals in Later Medieval Ireland' pp 201-16.
855 Empey, p. 200.
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. 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. However, others like Laoiseach O'More had successfully removed all traces of the settlers from Laois by his assassination in 1342.

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. 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 Ormond, gaining widespread support from O'Carroll, O'Kennedy, Diarmait MacGillapatrick 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 MacGillapatrick again made common cause to torch Bordwell in the cantred of Aghaboe in December 1345. 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. 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 Falys and O'Dempsey, he

857 Empey, p. 211.
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 Maelsechlainn 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 MacGillapatrick and O'Carroll in summer 1346.866 In response the sheriff of Kilkenny took a great prey of livestock from Cearbhall MacGillapatrick in July 1346.867 In Ely, the O'Carrolls under their leader - Tadhg son of Ruaidhri - 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 Ruaidhri 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 Ruaidhri and the killers. This climaxed in a pitched battle between Ruaidhri and his allies drawn from the English of Ossory with his uncle David and the English of Kildare and Carlow. Although Ruaidhri was victorious and his rivals were exiled, his position was terminally weakened.872 Arguably this feud was the...
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 Rokey'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)
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 Úi 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, Ruaidhri 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 Diarmaid Láimhdearg MacMurrough - the sons of Domhnall (d.1347) - eagerly grasped their chance to

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.
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 15s 4d. And Muircheartach was drawing a fee at Michaelmas 1353.
attack their father's successor.888 This war betrays signs of extensive co-ordination with other Leinster dynasties. However, Muircheartach was quickly captured but John defeated Rokeby, besieging him in Wicklow Castle during October 1354. It seems John wished to gain Muircheartach's release, requesting this to be granted during the negotiations. Rokeby then brought Muircheartach 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 Muircheartach 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, Muircheartach'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, 'Crioch Branach', p. 15; Frame, The Dublin Government, p. 357. Diarmait MacMurrough was in service again in 1355, fighting Muircheartach mac Muiris's supporters and O'Byrne. See also O'Byrne, The Ui Bhroin of Co.Wicklow, pp 67-68.
890Rot. 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. N.H.I, ix, p. 149; He may be the man captured with Henry Trahene by the Butlers in 1326. See Dowling, Annaí, p. 22.
892O'Byrne, The Ui Bhroin of Co.Wicklow, p. 68; Rot. pat. Hib., no. 33, p. 59. This records 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.
This time it was led by Art. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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 legitimation 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.
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 Clare 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 Láimhdearg in 1365-66, he received a fee while his son Tadhg, and John O’Toole were knighted.910 By 1367 relations had

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.
909 Frame, Two Kings, p. 165; Connelly, Lionel of Clare, p. 135; Otway-Ruthven, Medieval Ireland, p. 289
910 Lydon, ‘Medieval Wicklow’, p. 175; Connelly, Lionel of Clare, p. 114; Nicholls, ‘Crioch Branach’, p. 16. For the knighting of John O’Toole see Connolly, Lionel of Clare, 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'Toole 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'Carrols 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'Toole 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 Maelseachlainn mac Sefraidh MacGillapatrick 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'Toole in summer 1368. See Otway-Ruthven, Medieval Ireland, p. 296.
The example of Laoiseach O'More’s involvement in Lucy’s campaign against Murchadh O'Byrne in 1332 being the most notable. But despite these clever and herculean efforts, the Leinster wars of 1329, 1336, 1344, and 1354-9 predicted a grim future for the settlers and the government.
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 MacGillapatrick 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

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 A.FM. 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 A.FM. 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
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. According to D'Arcy Magee, a nineteenth-century antiquarian, Art was born about 1357. 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. 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. 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. At various times throughout his career he willingly

917 See previous chapter.
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 Una, 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., lxv (1935), pp 88-91; C.O.P., 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'Toole, 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 Tadhg as O'Byrne overlord in 1398. His first name Domhnall is drawn form 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, 'Crioch 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, 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 Tadhg 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 Tadhg, 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.
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 Ui Bhroin of Co.Wicklow, pp 64-66.
934 A Maelsechlainn O'Byrne seems to have disputed Braen mac Philip's succession of Sir John O'Byrne. This Maelsechlainn may have been the Maelsechlainn son of Philip O'Byrne recorded in O'Clergy, 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, A.F.M, iii, p. 664-5, A.U, ii, p. 556-7. This would indicate that Maelsechlainn 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. lxvii. 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 Laimhdearg’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.


941 Ann Conn, pp 358-9. This Sir John was assassinated in his own house by a person of his household in 1388.


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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

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.


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. *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 678-9. His granduncle Art son of Thomas the fair described as roydanna of Leinster was killed by the English of Wexford. See *A.F.M.*, 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 Ui Cheinnselaig sub-lordship of Ui F6ilime, 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. However, it was the undated marriage of Art's daughter, Sadhbh, to Fionnán MacGillapatrick of Ossory that really solidified the link between North Munster and Leinster. 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. Furthermore, he also used the MacGillapatrick lordship as a recruiting ground for mercenaries. 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 MacGillapatrick 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 MacGillapatrick mercenaries hired by Art were slaughtered in 1399. These were Uilliam mac Chearbhaill MacGillapatrick and a son of Diarmait Ruadh MacGillapatrick. 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 MacGillapatrick 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 MacGillapatrick kings of Ossory are recorded in the 1380s. In 1383 the MacGillapatrick lord with his tanaiste, the son of Cellach MacGillapatrick, died of plague. And in 1388 the English of Leinster killed his successor. See A.F.M, 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. Their slippage is shown also in their defeat in 1381 by Lord Lieutenant Edmund Mortimer, lord of Laois and earl of March. 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 campaigns, and by his good relations with both the lords of Laois and Slemargy.

Parallels can also be detected in Art's relationship with the O'Connor Falys. 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. Significantly, Murchadh, king of Offaly after 1384, was married to Art's sister, Gormflaith. 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. As with the MacGillapatrick

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 A.F.M, 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 Maelsechlainn O'More who died in 1398, see Ann Conn, p. 370-1. Curtis, Richard II in Ire., pp 32, 167. Malachy (Maelsechlainn) O'More of Laois and the two sons, Uighaidh Og 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, Gioslapadraig 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 Gioslapadraig seems to have become king of Laois after the death of Maelsechlainn in 1399. He was married to a daughter of Gormflaith MacMurrough and Murchadh O'Connor Faly of Offaly. After her death in 1404, Gioslapadraig won a victory over the colonists at Blackford. See Ann Conn, pp 388-9. A.F.M, iv, p. 781.
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 Falys 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 O Cearbhaill- The best of the Women of the Gaedhil, in

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alliance, other reasons can be detected in this O'Connor Faly alliance as Art also fished for mercenaries among their O'Dunne vassals. 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. 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. 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'Ryans, 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. Notably Murchadh O'Connor Faly and Fionn MacGillapatrick, 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 Gilla Óg O'More, king of Laois. See A.F.M, iv, pp 780-1.

962 Ann Conn, pp 370-1. In 1399 Cearbhall and Eoghan, the sons of Domnchadh 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 A.F.M, 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 A.F.M, 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 Mac 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 A.F.M, 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 Laoisceach, an O'More name. Ann Clon, p. 325; Ann Conn, p. 596-7.

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.\footnote{Price, Placenames, p. ixix; Curtis, Richard II in Ire., p. 167.} 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.\footnote{Curtis, Richard II in Ire., pp 125-6.} On the other hand, when it was to Art's advantage he supped with the government.\footnote{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")} 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.\footnote{See A.F.M. iv, pp 690-1.} His power over Carlow is demonstrated in 1389, receiving 10 marks from the Anglo-Irish there for the killing of some followers.\footnote{Rot. Pat. Hib., no. 177, p. 146.} 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...
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. The MacMurrough threat to Kildare was not just military. About 1390 Art married Elizabeth de Veel, heiress to the Kildare barony of Norragh. 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. As a result Carlow was destroyed by Art, O'Ryan, O'Nolan and Tadhg O'Carroll in 1391-2. The fallout of the effects of rejection of Art's petition continued into 1392. Then Art with Gerald mac Taidhg O'Byrne, Feilim O'Toole, and O'More again devastated the counties of Kildare and Carlow. 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. 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. The sharpness of these lessons convinced

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971 *A.F.M.*, 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 Killegg 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.


975 Ibid, pp 314, 316, 318, 320. This Feilim 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 Feilim 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.
982 Otway-Ruthven, Medieval Ireland, p. 321.
983 Curtis, Med. Irc., p. 256.
984 Lydon, Lordship, pp 173, 205-6.
On 2 October 1394, Art's kingship of Leinster received its first serious test. The occasion was the landing of Richard II at Waterford. Art greeted the king's landfall by burning Ross. 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. His imprisonment was brief as he was released in return for Gerald mac Taidhg O'Byrne, Félílim O'Toole, John O'Nolan and Máelsechlainn O'More. 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. 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. 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 Toirdhealbhach O'Brien of Arra, Tadhg O'Carroll of Ely, two O'Dwyers (Ó Duibhgh) and three O'Kennedy leaders submitted as Butler clients to Richard at Kilkenny. 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.
clashes with the O'Connor Falys and the O'Carrolls. Tension was also increased by an unsuccessful kidnap attempt upon Art in Dublin. 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. Donnchadh mac Braen's goodwill is further evidenced by his and Tadhg O'Carroll’s service in August 1396 at Calais. 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 representative, 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. Incursions by Ormond and Mortimer into the Leinster mountains brought the crisis to the boil. 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 Ftilim O'Toole revolted in summer 1396, and was followed by the O'Byrnes in early 1397. For the early part of 1398, Art

992 A.F.M, iv, p. 737.
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 Kindletown ward. This James was keeper of the castles of Wicklow, Newcastle and Kindletown 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.
996 Mortimer's Irish titles included the lordship of Laois and Trim and the earldom of Ulster.
998 Eadem, ‘Richard II and the submissions of Gaelic Ireland’, pp 9-11
999 A.F.M, iv, p. 745; Ancient Irish Histories, The works of Spencer, Campion, Hammar and Marbleborough, 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 Kindletown. 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. The government struck back. They burnt Glendalough that summer and later killed Art's ally Domhnall O'Nolan, king of Forth. In response, Art went to war - leading his allies and mercenaries against the Anglo-Irish of Leinster and Meath.

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. Also west of the Barrow, the O'Mores lost both their leaders that year. Then both Máelsechlainn O'More of Laois and the son of Muircheartach Buidhe O'More of Slemargy seemingly died of natural causes. 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 MacGillapatrick of Ossory in 1398 and Toirdhealbhach O'Brien of Arra during the following year. 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 A.F.M, iv, pp 760-1.
1006 Ibid, pp 84-5
1007 A.F.M, 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

1009 PKCI, p. 262.
1010 Otway-Ruthven, Medieval Ireland, p. 339.
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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{1014} Stung by this reverse, Domhnall O’Byrne submitted to Lord Lieutenant Prince Thomas of Lancaster on 8 November 1401.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{1017} In spite of this grandiose scheme, the Leinster dynasties maintained a 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 leaders\textsuperscript{1018}, while the 5th earl of Kildare cut down Eóghan O’Connor Faly during the following year.\textsuperscript{1019} To the south Murchadh

\textsuperscript{1013} The Book of Howth, pp 480-81; Ann. Conn, pp 380-1.
\textsuperscript{1015} The Book of Howth, pp 480-81.
\textsuperscript{1016} Ann Conn, pp 380-1. See also Frame, Two Kings, p. 169.
\textsuperscript{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.
\textsuperscript{1018} Ó Cléirigh, ‘The O’Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513’, p. 90; Rot. pat. Hb., 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 Murcheartach O’Dempsey died three years later.
\textsuperscript{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

1021 A.F.M. iv, p. 785.
1023 Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513', p. 90
1024 Ann Conn, p. 325; Ann Conn, p. 396-7. These were Laoisech O'Nolan, eligible prince of Forth. Aodh O'Toole, eligible prince of Uí Mhaoilean 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 Bhrioin of Co.Wicklow, p.75.
1025 Holinshed's Chronicle, p. 236.
enjoyed some success. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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 A.F.M, iv, pp 790-1. Just before his death, Tadhg defeated a branch of the O'Kennedys who were traditionally allied to the Butlers.
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.
1034 O'Byrne, The Ui 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

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1035 A.F.M. 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.
1038 See previous chapter.
1040 Ann Clon, p. 309, Empey, p. 210, A.F.M. 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 Maelruanaidh mac Taidgh 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


1043 C.O.D. iii, p. 70.


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 Butler’s 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 Riabhadh, 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 Riabhadh’s successor Murchadh Ballach, Donnchadh mac Airt’s grandson. A third marriage surfaces between Gerald, Domhnall Riabhadh’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.

Indeed, it could be argued that Talbot's attacks of 1415 upon Giollapadraig O'More, the McKeoghs and the Walshes of the Welsh mountains in Kilkenny 1047 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 Giollapadraig 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 A.FM, 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.


1052 CPR Hen V, 1416-1422, ii, p 42. This notes that Wicklow was situated among the O'Byrnes 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' appointment, see CPR 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, 'Crioch 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 A.FM, iv, pp 946-7. The name of Edmund remained popular among his descendants, the O'Byrnes of Cronroe, an 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 Col. 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 Diarmaid's father, Diarmaid 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, MacGillapatrick 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

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1054 T.C.D., MS E.3.18 (581), fol. 54; Nicholls, 'Crioch Branach', p. 21.
1056 Gilbert, Viceroys, p. 315.
1059 Otway-Ruthven, Medieval Ireland, p.353; Ann Conm, pp 434-5; The hostility of the MacGillapatricks 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 MacGillapatrick's house, Piers was killed while dancing by Donnchadh's blacksmith. The fact that MacGillapatrick is mentioned as Donnchadh Oirech points to a change in the MacGillapatrick leadership. Evidently Fionnán MacGillapatrick, Art MacMurrough's son-in-law, had died by 1417. David Edwards points to a period of reconciliation between the MacGillapatrick kings and the Butlers between the 1410s and 1420s. Given the evidence, this is unlikely. See D.Edwards, 'The MacGillapatricks (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory, 1532-1641', In P.Lane and W. Nolan (eds) Laois: History and Society (Dublin, 1999), p. 333. (hereafter Edwards, 'The MacGillapatricks (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory, 1532-1641'). If anything an alliance between the MacGillapatrick kings and the Butlers lies beyond mid century. In 1443 Edmund fitzRichard Butler had Finghin and Diarmait MacGillapatrick 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 Ui 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

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1060 Otway-Ruthven, Medieval Ireland, p. 354.
1062 Ibid, 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 Otvay-Ruthven, Medieval Ireland, p. 358. While his father Murchadh became fatally ill in 1421, while campaigning against the MacGillapatricks, the Butler's traditional enemies.
1065 Ibid, pp 434-5.
1066 Ibid, pp 442-3; AU, iii, pp 72-3. Diarmait Laimhidhearg 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 razed Castlekevin on the last of May. Holinshied'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.