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Chapter 5a

The Butlers and the Leinstermen, 1420-70

An actual marriage, the Leinstermen during the reign of Art MacMurrough reached their political, military and territorial apex. But towards the end of Art's life there were signs of decline, indicating that the Anglo-Irish power had over-extended MacMurrough resources. Indeed, Art and his heirs, Donnell and Donnchadh, were compelled to regularly fight their own wars with numerous local Irish lords and were forced to back up the MacMurrough position in London 1407. The biggest blow to the MacMurrough was Art's

Part V

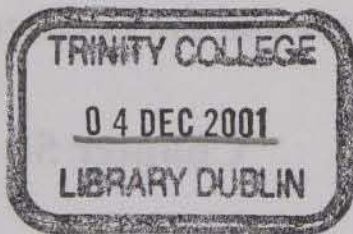
The Growth of Anglo-Irish Influence in Leinster, 1420-1520

Chapter 5a

The Butlers and the Leinstermen, 1420-70

Chapter 5b

The Kildares and the Leinstermen, 1470-1520



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Chapter 5a

The Butlers and the Leinstermen, 1420-70

As argued previously, the Leinstermen during the reign of Art MacMurrough reached their political, military and territorial apex. But towards the end of Art's life there were signs of decline, indicating that his career possibly had over-extended MacMurrough resources. Indeed, Art and later his son, Donnchadh, were compelled to regularly inject their own forces with infusions of mercenaries from North Munster and West Leinster to beef up the MacMurrough position in Leinster.¹⁰⁶⁹ But the biggest blow to the MacMurroughs was Art's mysterious death in 1416/7.¹⁰⁷⁰ After the death of this, the greatest medieval king of Leinster, MacMurrough decline was rapid. The reasons for this are complex. One was Donnchadh. Clearly, Donnchadh did not enjoy his father's relationships with the Leinster nobility. Symptomatic of this decline was the MacMurrough/Butler alliance of about 1416/7. The effects and importance of this new axis cannot be underestimated. Here was a union that utterly transformed the political complexion of Leinster, resulting in the beginning of the greater integration of Irish and Anglo-Irish interests in Leinster. Equally, the Butlers needed MacMurrough support to fend off Talbot. In any case the MacMurrough decline was accelerated when Talbot in May 1419 captured Donnchadh, resulting in his imprisonment until 1427.¹⁰⁷¹ Donnchadh's capture had three major long lasting effects. Firstly, it split the MacMurroughs until 1447 into two rival camps. Secondly, it damaged their relationships with the O'Connor Faly's and the O'Byrnes. And finally it allowed Ormond to ultimately deconstruct Art's diplomatic nexus through his winning over of former MacMurrough allies. This chapter will trace the rise

¹⁰⁶⁹ *Ann Conn*, pp 370-1; *MacFirbis's' Annals*, p. 209; *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 886-7

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 432-3; *A.U.*, iii, pp 72-3.

¹⁰⁷¹ *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 830-1; *Ann. Conn*, pp 130-1; *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council*, ii, p. 301. This source preserves a letter from Donnchadh to Henry V, petitioning for his release from the Tower during 1421; *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 840-1; *Ann. Conn.*, pp 442-3. Significantly An Calbhach O'Connor Faly was captured by the de la Freynes who attempted to sell him to Talbot. However, O'Connor Faly escaped before the deed could be concluded; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, pp 349-58. Margaret O'Carroll, wife of An Calbhach O'Connor Faly, seems to have received the blackrents of Oughterany in Kildare by arrangement with the Butlers; *Holinshed's Irish Chronicle*, p. 242. Talbot also razed the O'Toole fortress of Castlekevin in 1419.

and fall of the Butlers in Leinster, their feud with the Fitzgeralds of Kildare and how these events affected the Leinster nobility.

In 1420 MacMurrough weakness was evident. This became clearer when Ormond returned from France as justiciar in April that year.¹⁰⁷² Ormond realised that Art's nexus of alliances was rapidly breaking down. This spelt danger for both the earl's government of Ireland and his earldom. Also the MacMurrough decline presented opportunities for Ormond and his government. Another consequence of the MacMurrough weakness was the emergence of Art's stronger allies - particularly An Calbhach O'Connor Faly in West Leinster and the O'Byrnes who nursed aspirations to the provincial kingship. As a result Ormond maintained good relations with both these dynasties. However, Ormond launched a new initiative in Leinster. Obviously, conflict with the MacMurroughs was inevitable. By confronting them, Ormond demonstrated his ability to govern but also a desire to utilise them under his suzerainty. Significantly, Ormond concentrated his efforts in the strategic Barrow conduit where the Irish polities of East and West Leinster met. As Art had built his success upon the control of this region, Ormond clearly attempted to do likewise. Indeed, *Holinshed's Chronicle* records that Ormond defeated MacMurrough that year.¹⁰⁷³ This reference, however, does not pertain to Ormond's imprisoned brother-in-law - Donnchadh. Instead it must refer to Gerald MacMurrough, Donnchadh's brother and deputy. Ormond's later campaigns in this region confirm his intent to reopen the Barrow highway, seizing the strategically important Lea Castle located on the bend in the Barrow from the O'Dempseys before returning it to Kildare.¹⁰⁷⁴

Ormond's successful campaign of 7-11 June 1421 against the O'Mores bears similar hallmarks.¹⁰⁷⁵ In fact, the earl's victory was a result of good timing, campaigning against O'Mores at a time when their succession is unclear. Giollapádraig mac Fachtna seemingly died in the late 1410s but the precise identity of his successor is unsure.

¹⁰⁷² *Holinshed's Irish Chronicle*, p. 243

¹⁰⁷³ *Ibid.* In this text MacMurrough is called Art, but it is a mistake; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 246; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 29; *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, i., pp 31-2; Matthew, p. 136-8.

There are two possible candidates - a Fachtna (viv 1449)¹⁰⁷⁶ and a Cétach (d.1464)¹⁰⁷⁷. On the whole, Fachtna may be the more likely candidate. To the north of Laois, the O'Connor Faly dynasty, allies of the Butlers, was also in crisis. In summer 1421 Murchadh O'Connor Faly died after successfully defending the weak O'More lordship from a joint Freyne/MacGillpatrick expedition. Before his death Murchadh alienated his son, An Calbhach, appointing his own brother - Diarmait - king of Offaly.¹⁰⁷⁸ The declaration of *The Annals of Connacht* in 1422 of An Calbhach's kingship of Offaly indicates tension with Diarmait.¹⁰⁷⁹ This strife was short-lived as both parties seemingly came to an understanding, leaving Diarmait as king in name and An Calbhach as the most powerful of his name. And this situation was shown when An Calbhach defied Desmond's invasion of the midlands, challenging the earl to attack Offaly.¹⁰⁸⁰ If so, Ormond's success in the Barrow was due to his ability to capitalise upon the dynastic troubles besetting these three dynasties. And testifying to the revival of government power there was Ormond's inspection in June 1421 of the Barrow's defences.¹⁰⁸¹

Ormond's affinity building amongst the Leinster Irish was a continuation of the strategy of Prior Thomas Butler of Kilmainham. Ormond's pursuit of this strategy transformed his dynasty's role in both parts of Leinster, securing his position greatly against his enemy - Talbot. Moreover, Ormond's alliances with the Irish of West Leinster released pressure upon the northern and western borders of his earldom, solidifying his midland frontiers. Ormond's fear of Talbot was well justified. On 10 April 1422 Ormond's lieutenancy expired¹⁰⁸² and the earl was replaced in November as justiciar by Talbot's brother, Archbishop Richard of Dublin. In addition Ormond was ordered to England to answer Talbot's charges of misgovernance,

¹⁰⁷⁶ E.Curtis, 'Richard, Duke of York, as Viceroy of Ireland, 1447-1460; With Unpublished Materials for his Relations with the Native Chiefs', in *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, vol. 62, (1932), pp 166-68 (hereafter Curtis, 'Richard, Duke of York, as Viceroy of Ireland, 1447-1460'); Gilbert, *Viceroy*, p. 353.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 252; *Ann Conn*, pp 518-9.

¹⁰⁷⁸ *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 850-1; *Ann Conn*, pp 454-5; Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513', p. 94; Matthew, p. 162.

¹⁰⁷⁹ *Ann Conn*, pp 462-3

¹⁰⁸⁰ A.Cosgrove, 'Ireland beyond the Pale, 1399-1460', in *N.H.I.*, ii, ed A.Cosgrove, (Oxford, 1993), p. 571. (hereafter Cosgrove, 'Ireland beyond the Pale, 1399-1460').

¹⁰⁸¹ Matthew, p. 138.

¹⁰⁸² *Ibid*, p. 140.

arriving there in early summer 1423.¹⁰⁸³ Significantly, Ormond's departure from office was met by an unprecedented avalanche of Irish violence directed at the interim justiciar, William fitzThomas, and Talbots.¹⁰⁸⁴ Playing a prominent role in these events was Gerald MacMurrough who plundered Talbot's liberty of Wexford, destroying Wexford town.¹⁰⁸⁵ The Wicklow Irish also seem to have been involved. Moreover, the O'Tooles raided the Dublin and Kildare marches throughout summer.¹⁰⁸⁶ In June Gerald MacMurrough, Donnchadh mac Braen O'Byrne and the O'Connor Falys, evinced a desire to submit.¹⁰⁸⁷ In fact, Gerald MacMurrough was the only one who did so.¹⁰⁸⁸

The violence after Ormond's departure for England was not confined to East Leinster as evidenced by the parallel raiding in 1422-3 of the O'Mores and An Calbhach in West Leinster. Indeed, An Calbhach's power during Ormond's sojourn in England grew rapidly in the midlands, raiding Meath with O'Reillys and Berminghams in 1423.¹⁰⁸⁹ Furthermore, An Calbhach's position is affirmed by his connections with both Irish and Anglo-Irish lords of Connacht/Ulster. Examples of his alliance building are the prestigious marriage before 1424 of his daughter, Fionnuála, to Niall Garbh O'Donnell of Donegal, while another daughter, Mór, married MacWilliam Burke of Clanrickard.¹⁰⁹⁰ Talbot recognised the potency of the O'Connor Falys, concluding on 27 March 1425 an indenture with An Calbhach. By its terms An Calbhach promised to restore lands to Anglo-Irish, cease levying blackrent upon Meath and pay a 1,000 mark fine.¹⁰⁹¹ This arrangement was soon disregarded. And in 1426 An Calbhach was back raiding Meath¹⁰⁹² before burning Mullingar in September 1427.¹⁰⁹³ An Calbhach's connections with Niall Garbh also drew

¹⁰⁸³ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 362.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Matthew, p. 154; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 362.

¹⁰⁸⁵ A. Cosgrove, 'The Emergence of the Pale, 1399-1447', in *NHI*, ii, ed A. Cosgrove, (Oxford, 1993), p. 543. (hereafter, Cosgrove, 'The Emergence of the Pale, 1399-1447'). After this raid Gerald gained a fee of 40 marks.

¹⁰⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 545; *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 25, p. 225.

¹⁰⁸⁷ *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 22, p. 225; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 362.

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 24, p. 225.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Cosgrove, 'Ireland beyond the Pale, 1399-1460', p. 571.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Empey, pp 589-90; *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 980-1.

¹⁰⁹¹ *Rot. pat. Hib.*, p. 238b; Cosgrove, 'Ireland beyond the Pale, 1399-1460', p. 571; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 364.

¹⁰⁹² *Ann Conn.*, pp 424-5; Cosgrove, 'Ireland beyond the Pale, 1399-1460', p. 571.

¹⁰⁹³ *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 32, p. 246.

him into alliance with the Clondeboy O'Neills.¹⁰⁹⁴ Inevitably these northern alliances placed him at odds with the Great O'Neill dynasty as after 1427 Niall Garbh allied with the Clondeboy O'Neills against them.¹⁰⁹⁵ The ramifications of An Calbhach's Ulster nexus only became clear in 1430 when he submitted with other midland lords to Eóghan O'Neill of Tyrone during the latter's circuit of the region.¹⁰⁹⁶

But in East Leinster after 1424 Ormond's position was threatened by dynastic rivalries existent within that polity. Indeed, Donnchadh mac Braen O'Byrne began to see MacMurrough weakness as his opportunity, clashing during the late 1410s and early 1420s with the O'Connor Faly's in Kildare. That said, the combatants seem to have concluded a shaky peace through the marriage before 1421 of Donnchadh mac Braen's son, Murchadh, to Joan O'Connor Faly.¹⁰⁹⁷ Donnchadh mac Braen's ambition contributed to the deterioration of relations between him and his son-in-law, Gerald MacMurrough.¹⁰⁹⁸ Furthermore, on 10 April 1425 Donnchadh mac Braen confirmed his indenture of 1424 with Earl Edmund Mortimer of March, lord lieutenant of Ireland, entering into an agreement with Talbot, now lord lieutenant, recognising the jurisdiction of Archbishop Talbot within his domains and, importantly, agreeing to protect the tenants of the Talbot liberty of Wexford - a clear challenge to the MacMurroughs.¹⁰⁹⁹ When Ormond replaced Talbot as lord lieutenant, three weeks later on 28 April 1425, he endeavoured to reverse Talbot's inroads. Because of governmental commitments elsewhere on the island, Ormond was not to turn to the affairs of the Leinster Irish until the last third of the year, taking the submissions of Diarmait O'Toole and Donnchadh mac Braen on 8 August and 6 December respectively.¹¹⁰⁰ More importantly, Matthew, in her study of Ormond, notes that seemingly no military pressure was brought to bear upon the O'Byrnes. And she also detected '*a special*

¹⁰⁹⁴ *AFM*, iv, pp 870-1, 952-3. For Fionnuala's dispensation to marry Aodh Buidhe See *Cal. papal letters*, ix, p. 97.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Ibid*; Empey, p. 760.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Ibid*, pp 878-9; Cosgrove, 'Ireland beyond the Pale, 1399-1460', p. 573; Empey, p. 592.

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Cal papal letters*, vii, p. 221.

¹⁰⁹⁸ O'Byrne, *The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill* p. 84; *Cal papal letters*, viii, p. 78; See also K.W.Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs 1400-1700', In *Ir Geneal.*, vol. 5, no. 4, (Nov, 1977), p. 436. (hereafter Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov, 1977).).

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Rot. Pat. Hib*, no. 133, p. 238; O'Byrne, *The Ui Bhroin of Co. Wicklow*, pp 84-5; Lydon, *Lordship*, p. 241; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 364.

¹¹⁰⁰ Matthew, pp 181, 191-2.

degree of trust and cordiality' in Donnchadh mac Braen's submission to Ormond. Not only did Donnchadh mac Braen declare himself a liege subject of Henry V but he acknowledged himself as Ormond's man, promising to protect merchants entering his lordship.¹¹⁰¹ In return Ormond promised that as long as the O'Byrnes observed the peace, they were entitled to his protection.

Ormond's favouring of the O'Byrnes possibly contributed to MacMurrough insecurity. And as part of his dual policy of good government and self interest, Ormond took the field in autumn 1426 against Gerald MacMurrough.¹¹⁰² It seems unlikely that Ormond directly confronted Gerald, seemingly preferring negotiations whereby both parties became reconciled. If so, Ormond's policy had visible results in East Leinster, resulting in the lodgement in August of O'Toole hostages in Dublin Castle without a campaign.¹¹⁰³ Thus, it would appear that the O'Byrne/Butler alliance and Ormond's probable arrangement with Gerald not only strengthened the earl's position in East Leinster but improved the relations among the Irish of the region, thawing out the frosty relations between Donnchadh mac Braen and his MacMurrough son-in-law. Indeed, this renewal of the old MacMurrough/O'Byrne alliance may have been sealed with the marriage of Murchadh, Donnchadh mac Braen's son, to Uná Kavanagh - possibly Gerald's sister.¹¹⁰⁴

And in 1427 both Gerald and Donnchadh mac Braen confirmed their membership of Ormond's affinity after the arrival on 31 July of John, lord Grey. Grey's landfall resulted in the termination of Ormond's justiciarship and his embarkation for England. Ormond did not take his loss of power easily. Resultantly Gerald MacMurrough, Donnchadh mac Braen and Diarmait O'Toole began raiding again.¹¹⁰⁵ Late in the year the Archbishop of Armagh wrote to the English government, informing them that this triumvirate with 3,000 troops burnt throughout Talbot's liberty of Wexford, Carlow, Kildare, and

¹¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 191. See also *ibid.*, appendix III, no. i, pp 574-6.

¹¹⁰² Cosgrove, 'The Emergence of the Pale, 1399-1447', p. 544; Matthew, p. 201; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 365

¹¹⁰³ *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 119, p. 239; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 365.

¹¹⁰⁴ *Cal papal letters*, vii, p. 519.

¹¹⁰⁵ *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 30, p. 246.

Meath, taking the towns of Conall and Castledermot.¹¹⁰⁶ After the fall of Castledermot, Grey made peace with them. Among Grey's entourage was Donnchadh MacMurrough - Ormond's brother-in-law.¹¹⁰⁷ Although *The Annals of Ulster* mention that Donnchadh was ransomed in 1427 from his imprisonment by his province¹¹⁰⁸, many of the Leinster nobility were not glad to see him. Indeed, Donnchadh's return changed Ormond's policy in Leinster. Now Ormond became anxious that Donnchadh regain his position, ignoring Gerald. And to aid Donnchadh's bid to regain his kingdom, the English granted him a fee in July 1427 of 80 marks in the hope that he, Cosgrove argues, would be strong enough to curb his brother and Donnchadh mac Braen.¹¹⁰⁹ The change in Ormond's policy becomes evident after his return in summer 1428 to Ireland. By Autumn 1428 Donnchadh and Justiciar John Sutton, an ally of Ormond, were campaigning against the O'Byrnes.¹¹¹⁰ And any remaining doubts of Donnchadh's attachment to Ormond are dispelled by his attack upon the earldom of Kildare, burning Naas on 26 September 1429.¹¹¹¹ This devastation of Kildare tallys with two important facts. At the time Ormond and his ally Sutton were under sustained attack from the Talbot faction within the government who sent charges to England, concerning the earl's behaviour.¹¹¹² And Elizabeth Fitzgerald, the daughter of the 5th earl of Kildare was then married to Grey - a supporter of Talbot. Soon afterwards in the winter of 1429-30, Ormond left for England.

In Ormond's absence, there was an upsurge in Irish violence - probably in sympathy with him.¹¹¹³ As for Donnchadh, he established himself to some degree within the MacMurrough heartland

¹¹⁰⁶ *Reg Swayne*, pp 109-110. As a result Gerald earned 213 marks in blackrent from the Talbot liberty of Wexford. See also *Rot. pat. Hib*, no. 34, p. 246.

¹¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*; Cosgrove, 'The Emergence of the Pale, 1399-1447', p. 544.

¹¹⁰⁸ *A.U.*, iii, pp 102-3; *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 872-3.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Rot. pat. Hib*, no. 31, p. 246; Cosgrove, 'The Emergence of the Pale, 1399-1447', p. 544.

¹¹¹⁰ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, pp 37-9; *Placenames*, p. lxxviii. The army which advanced into O'Byrnes' Country comprised of 1,100 men and had machines for hurling stones. This expedition seems to have been unsuccessful; For Ormond's alliance with Sutton see Griffith, *The Council in Ireland, 1399-1452*, p. 134.

¹¹¹¹ *Placenames*, p. lxxviii; Grace, p. 157; See O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 56-8.

¹¹¹² Matthew, pp 241-6

¹¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 253.

but needed Butler support.¹¹¹⁴ Because of Donnchadh's sack of Naas and the absence from Ireland of both Sutton and Ormond, the royal service proclaimed in 1430 at Mullaghmast was probably directed against him.¹¹¹⁵ It is unlikely to have been against Gerald or the O'Byrnes as they were similarly disaffected with him. Indeed, Donnchadh was only to regain his kingdom when Gerald died in 1431.¹¹¹⁶ Upon Gerald's death, rifts opened sharply between the O'Byrnes and the MacMurroughs.¹¹¹⁷ Predictably, Donnchadh's reign was characterised by wars with the O'Byrnes and an unhealthy dependence on Ormond.¹¹¹⁸ Furthermore Donnchadh mac Braen's alienation from Ormond and Donnchadh is supported by his non-attendance on the latter's raid with Diarmait O'Toole into the Dublin marches in 1431, and his absence from the MacMurrough victory of 1432.¹¹¹⁹

During 1432 Ormond returned from England and set about immediately repairing his position. During his absence between 1429-32, it seems his position within the midlands and West Leinster had become frayed because of continual Irish attack. *The Four Masters* record that he defeated Máelruanaidh mac Taidhg O'Carroll of Ely in 1432, breaking down his two castles. Seemingly Donnchadh supported his brother-in-law's reassertion of his power. That year Donnchadh is mentioned capturing Walter Tobin, a leading Anglo-Irish figure in the southern Tipperary cantred of Comsey.¹¹²⁰ After forcing the submission of the O'Carrolls and the reestablishment of his writ in Tipperary, Ormond took a longer view in the midlands. While the Ormond earldom was strong enough to weather Irish assaults, it was clear that the neighbouring earldom of Kildare was verging on disintegration. Ormond realised that the prospect of the Kildare

¹¹¹⁴ Cosgrove, "The Emergence of the Pale 1339-1447", p. 544; *AFM*, iv, pp 886-7; K.W.Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals: Two Fragments', in *Peritia*, vol. 2., (1983), p. 99. (hereafter Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals'). This source dates Gerald's death to 1430.

¹¹¹⁵ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 368; Frame, 'The Defence of the English Lordship, 1250-1450', fig. 4.3.

¹¹¹⁶ Cosgrove, "The Emergence of the Pale 1339-1447", p. 544; *AFM*, iv, pp 883, 887; Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 99.

¹¹¹⁷ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 207.

¹¹¹⁸ *AFM*, iv, pp 886-7; Cosgrove, 'The Emergence of the Pale, 1399-1447', p. 544; O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 57-61.

¹¹¹⁹ *Ibid*; O'Toole was actually taken prisoner. See also *AFM*, iv, pp 892-3.

¹¹²⁰ See *MacFirbis's Annals*, pp 205, 220. This Walter was to prove troublesome in the 1440s to Ormond's deputy, Edmund MacRichard Butler; Cosgrove, 'Ireland beyond the Pale, 1399-1460', p. 582.

earldom fracturing under Irish pressure would threaten the stability of his own earldom.¹¹²¹ While the government in 1430 attempted to allocate funds for the refortification of the Kildare marches, the Irish pressure upon Kildare was becoming irresistible.¹¹²² A case in point are Margaret O'Carroll's feasts at Killeigh and Rathdangan during 1433. The fact that these actually occurred succinctly encapsulate the crisis besetting the Kildare earldom. On one hand it demonstrates the Kildare decline, as Rathdangan belonged to the earl. While on the other hand that Margaret could be so bountiful with such security during a year of famine demonstrates O'Connor Faly access to considerable resources, indicating that the wider Irish midland world enjoyed a considerable degree of stability.¹¹²³ And testifying to the pressure upon the Fitzgerald earldom was Cathaoir O'Connor Faly's attempts to extract blackrents from Kildare town.¹¹²⁴ Also Tullow and Lea Castles fell after 1435 to the O'Byrnes and O'Dempseys respectively¹¹²⁵, while Castledermot was destroyed about 1443.¹¹²⁶ While Ormond was on friendly enough terms with An Calbhach, his success at the expense of Kildare was unpalatable.

As a result in autumn 1432 Ormond married Elizabeth Fitzgerald, daughter and heiress of Gerald Fitzgerald - 5th earl of Kildare.¹¹²⁷ Ironically Elizabeth was the widow of Lord Grey - Ormond's former enemy. Through his wife, Ormond became the protector of the Kildare earldom upon the death of Kildare on 13 October 1432, acquiring two thirds of it while one third went to the widowed countess of Kildare.¹¹²⁸ This was seemingly achieved with the blessing of Kildare who realised his earldom's perilous condition. The reasons for this concord seem to have been Kildare's realisation

¹¹²¹ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 106.

¹¹²² *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, pp. 33-5.

¹¹²³ *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 896-7; *Ann Conn.*, pp 472-3.

¹¹²⁴ *Rot. pat. Hib.*, p. 258b.

¹¹²⁵ S.Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power* (Oxford, 1995), p. 111. (hereafter Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*); This confirmed in 1531 by the letter of Piers Butler, earl of Ossory, stating that Tullow had been in the hands of the Irish for the previous 200 years, see *S.P. Hen VIII, 1515-38*, pp 153-4

¹¹²⁶ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 111; *Cal. papal letters*, ix, pp 241, 330. In 1441 An Calbhach and Margaret were granted an indulgence, while An Calbhach had the right to appoint the priests of Rathdangan in 1443. Also in 1445 a Eugenius O'Connor Faly was a canon of Kildare Cathedral, see *ibid.*, p. 508. This Eugenius was still a canon of Kildare in 1461-2, see *Cal. papal letters*, xii, p. 137; Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513', pp 92-3.

¹¹²⁷ *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 980-1. Elizabeth's death is dated to 6 August 1452.

¹¹²⁸ *Cal. papal letters*, xi p. 442. *C.O.D.*, iii, p. 82. On 8 July 1432 Henry VI licensed Elizabeth to marry Ormond.

that his brother and successor, John, would die soon after him.¹¹²⁹ Also the next in line, Thomas fitzMaurice, Kildare's grandnephew, was still a minor. As part of the deal Ormond seems to have undertaken to foster and educate Thomas and marry him to his second daughter, Elizabeth.¹¹³⁰ But in the process of acquiring these Kildare lands, Ormond ignored Kildare's entail of 1397 listing his earldom's lands. This entail was an attempt by Kildare to assign various lands amongst his brothers and nephews.¹¹³¹ Understandably, Ormond's actions outraged many of the Fitzgeralds.¹¹³²

While Ormond profited from his marriage, it did improve the defence of the English lordship. Significantly, Ormond's deputy, the prior of Kilmainham, with the Anglo-Irish of Meath inflicted a defeat upon An Calbhach in 1436.¹¹³³ Importantly, An Calbhach's defeat may have prompted a struggle in 1437 with his brother - Cathaoir who had Anglo-Irish support.¹¹³⁴ Also Ormond's resurgence in the midlands, his Kildare marriage and the MacMurrough alliance checked his opponents in East Leinster. In effect, Donnchadh mac Braen was now surrounded by either Butler allies or Butler-held territory. In response, Donnchadh mac Braen prudently avoided trouble, nursing his lordship to his death in 1434. Edmund, his brother and successor, was similarly isolated in East Leinster.¹¹³⁵ Edmund's alienation from Ormond and Donnchadh remained in spite of the facts that he bore a traditional Butler name and was probably a brother-in-law of the provincial king.¹¹³⁶ That said Edmund was never in the Talbot camp either. However, Edmund from the 1430s actively supported Butler enemies such as Thomas fitzMaurice - the Kildare heir.¹¹³⁷ Initially, though, Ormond and Thomas were friendly enough towards each other. Over time relations between the pair declined considerably.

¹¹²⁹ *C.O.D.*, iii, p. 86.

¹¹³⁰ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 107

¹¹³¹ *Red Bk Kildare*, no. 158, pp146-7. See Frame, *Eng Lordship*, p. 24.

¹¹³² *C.O.D.*, iii, pp 83-85.

¹¹³³ *Ann Conn*, pp 478-9 This mentions that Murchadh Óg O'Loughlin and the mercenaries of Munster were killed.

¹¹³⁴ *AFM.*, iv, pp 908-9; Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513', p. 93.

¹¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 900-1; O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 56-60.

¹¹³⁶ R.I.A. MSS 1233 (23/Q/10) *An Leabhar Donn*, f. 11. A Poem on Edmund O'Byrne and his wife Gormflaith. It is a later insertion in a genealogical manuscript dating to 1432-1441. This poem names her as a daughter of Art.

¹¹³⁷ *C.O.D.*, iii, p. 119; *CPR, 1441-6*, iv, p. 97. *A Roll of the Proceedings of the King's Council in Ireland, 1392-93*, pp 303-4.

Indeed, the O'Clery genealogies state that Ormond banished Thomas at an unknown date from Kildare.¹¹³⁸

The emergence of trouble with the Fitzgeralds of Kildare was a separate development from the Ormond/Talbot struggle. While Thomas and his cousin, Prior Thomas Fitzgerald of Kilmainham, had some connections with the Talbots - their feud with Ormond remained largely separate.¹¹³⁹ Thomas's expulsion from Kildare may have occurred before Ormond's departure in winter 1434-5 for England. The source of the Kildare heir's discontent was Ormond's appropriation of the Kildare lands. Thomas's dispute with Ormond is of critical importance to the development of provincial politics during this period. It would appear after his banishment from Kildare, Thomas found safety among those Leinster nobles disaffected with Ormond. These disaffected included the O'Byrnes, O'Mores, O'Tooles and Cathair O'Connor Faly - the disgruntled brother of An Calbhach. In aligning himself with these lords, Thomas found a ready-made support base to challenge Ormond. Thomas appears to have bound himself to the O'Mores, marrying firstly Dorothea - daughter of Uaithne mac Giollapádraig O'More.¹¹⁴⁰ Although this Uaithne was not the lord of Laois, he was probably a brother of Fachtna - the dynastic overlord. In a sense Thomas modelled his later affinity upon Ormond's creation. Indeed, it might be suggested that herein lies the genesis of the later Kildare affinity in Leinster. The first public sign of Fitzgerald dissatisfaction came in 1439. Then at Kilcock in Kildare the brothers of Prior Thomas Fitzgerald of Kilmainham and Cathair O'Connor Faly captured William Welles, deputy of Justiciar Lord Welles - Ormond's ally.¹¹⁴¹ Furthermore Thomas's O'More marriage connected him to another anti-Ormondist force - the O'Byrnes. Indeed, the most active young warlord of this dynasty at

¹¹³⁸ O'Clery, para. 2221, p. 183. John Cam, Thomas fitz Maurice's father, may have died already. Thomas fitz Maurice was not recognised as earl until 1455.

¹¹³⁹ Matthew, p. 471. This is confirmed as the conclusion in 1444 of the Talbot/Ormond feud did not end the Butler/Fitzgerald struggle.

¹¹⁴⁰ Walter Fitzgerald, 'Historical Notes on the O'Mores and their territory of Leix to the end of the Sixteenth Century', *Kildare. Arch Soc.*, vol. vi (1909-11) Appendice X (hereafter Fitzgerald, 'Historical Notes on the O'Mores and their territory of Leix'). Although in later years he was to repudiate her. Interestingly the compilers of *The Four Masters* referred to the 8th earl of Kildare as Gearoid mac Tomais Uí Morda, see *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 1202-3.

¹¹⁴¹ Matthew, p. 284, see also pp 274-275, 347. Welles was a grandson of Ormond's maternal uncle, John, lord Welles; *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 912-3; *Rot. pat. Hib.*, no. 11, p. 262; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 370

this time was Donnchadh mac Braen's son, Braen of Newrath. Not insignificantly this Braen was married to Elizabeth O'More.¹¹⁴² While Elizabeth's parentage remains obscure, she and Dorothea in all probability were at least cousins if not sisters. Therefore Thomas and Braen were possibly brothers-in-law. One thing is certain, though, before September 1440 they were both terrorising the Pale, burning the Kilgobbin lands of the Walshes. Accordingly they were both outlawed on 6 September for these activities.¹¹⁴³ One of the reasons for Thomas's alliance with the O'Byrnes was their impressive military strength evidenced by their destruction in 1442 of a large Anglo-Irish hosting.¹¹⁴⁴ Thomas was pardoned by Henry VI for his offences in March 1442.¹¹⁴⁵

The activities of Thomas and his allies seem to have forced Ormond to shore up his position yet again in West Leinster and the midlands. His new midland policy was directed at the O'Carroll dynasty of Ely and was similar to those adopted with the O'Connor Falys and the MacMurroughs. As usual marriage lay at the heart of this latest realignment. Ormond ensured the future O'Carroll attachment to the Butlers, contracting a double marriage alliance with the family of Máelruanaidh mac Taidhg O'Carroll of Ely.¹¹⁴⁶ Playing an important role in Ormond's latest scheme was the Butler family of Polestown. The significance of the Butlers of Polestown was the location of their manor astride the strategic junction from Gowran and Kilkenny to Carlow. The Butlers of Polestown were very much a frontier family, living upon the pressurised northern frontiers of the Ormond earldom, facing the O'Carroll, MacGillpatrick, and the O'More lordships.

In 1440 the head of the Polestown family was Edmund MacRichard Butler - a lieutenant of Ormond who was later entrusted with the earldom's defences during the earl's absences from

¹¹⁴² *Genealogia Joannis Byrne Armigeri apud Burdigalam in Galliarum Regna* Microfilm of Ms 162, reel; no. 971, Pos 8301. (hereafter *Genealogia Joannis Byrne*). Conn O'Connor Faly, lord of Offaly 1458-1471, was also married to a daughter of O'More - probably Cétach. See *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 249; *Ann Conn*, pp.512-3.

¹¹⁴³ *C.O.D.*, iii, p. 119.

¹¹⁴⁴ *AFM.*, iv, pp 926-7.

¹¹⁴⁵ *CPR, 1441-6*, iv, p. 97.

¹¹⁴⁶ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 119

Ireland.¹¹⁴⁷ For Ormond, it was therefore imperative that Edmund MacRichard's family conclude marriage alliances to stabilise the northern borders. About 1440 Edmund MacRichard and his sister Mary, respectively married Gylys (Catherine) and Seaán - the children of Máelruanaidh.¹¹⁴⁸ The drawing of Seaán O'Carroll into the Butler nexus reveals long-range planning as Seaán succeeded his father as O'Carroll overlord in 1443 upon the latter's death.¹¹⁴⁹ Also marriage into the Irish nobility was a natural progression for Edmund MacRichard as his own mother was an O'Reilly.¹¹⁵⁰ There was another level to this Butler alliance building. The O'Carroll alliance not only bound that dynasty closer to the Butlers but it also drew the O'Connor Falys, O'Kennedys and the McGeoghegans closer. As noted already Máelruanaidh's sister, Margaret, was married to An Calbhach O'Connor Faly, while another sister, Isabella, was married firstly to James O'Kennedy and then to the McGeoghegan ally of the O'Connor Falys.¹¹⁵¹ This Butler policy cannot but have immeasurably strengthened their position in West Leinster, allowing them to adopt a much harder line against their enemies within the region - particularly the MacGillapatricks, O'Mores and Fitzgeralds of Kildare.

Another reason for this Butler tacking was the re-emergence of Desmond influence in north Munster and the midlands. The first mention of Desmond reassertion comes in 1440, coinciding roughly with the Butler/O'Carroll alliance. Then James Fitzgerald, 7th earl of Desmond with MacGillapatrick successfully defended the O'Mores from an O'Connor Faly onslaught.¹¹⁵² The fact that Desmond allied with two prominent Butler enemies may indicate the emergence of hostility to Ormond. Whether Desmond's actions were connected to the struggle between Ormond and the Fitzgeralds of Kildare is

¹¹⁴⁷ Empey, p. 321.

¹¹⁴⁸ *C.O.D.*, iii, p. 175; This Seaán is probably the John O'Carroll who was receiving sums of money from the exiled earl of Ormond, see *ibid*, iii, p. 212; This Seaán is the Seaán mac Maelruanaidh O'Carroll recorded in O'Clery, para 2045, p. 158; Empey, p. 387 John O'Carroll was still allied to Ormond in 1487.

¹¹⁴⁹ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 200.

¹¹⁵⁰ Lodge, *Peerage*, ii, pp 13-4.

¹¹⁵¹ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 211. In 1445 McGeoghegan went with Margaret O'Carroll on pilgrimage to Santiago. For Isabella's obit of 1454, see *Ibid* p. 236.

¹¹⁵² *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 920-1; Cosgrove, 'Ireland beyond the Pale, 1399-1460', p. 582. The MacGillapatrick succession is uncertain at this time. The last mention of a MacGillapatrick obit was in 1431. This was Domhnall who was described as son of the lord of Ossory. See *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 884-5.

uncertain. More likely, the reason may be the gradual breakdown of Ormond's alliance with Desmond. Earlier in an indenture dated 10 May 1429 the earls proposed a marriage alliance between Ormond's daughter, Anne, and Thomas - Desmond's son.¹¹⁵³ Empey suggests that this alliance was fuelled by their mutual fear of Talbot.¹¹⁵⁴ The first cracks may have appeared after Anne's death in 1434, but Ormond substituted another daughter, Elizabeth.¹¹⁵⁵ While outright hostility between Ormond and Desmond did not break out until 1444, the pressure for conflict was building.

Edmund MacRichard as Ormond's deputy played a crucial part in the gathering political maelstrom enveloping West Leinster and the midlands. A study of his career during the 1440s reveals him as a ruthless enforcer for Ormond. And it was his actions in 1443 that drew the separate anti-Butler parties together. Indeed, the security of the O'Carroll alliance probably encouraged him to prosecute a more aggressive approach towards the MacGillapatricks. Thus, he in 1443 summoned Fionnán and Diarmait MacGillpatrick to Kilkenny. Once there he had them beaten to death before sacking Ossory, sparking tremendous upheaval.¹¹⁵⁶ Shortly afterwards Edmund MacRichard reaped the whirlwind, having to defeat a confederation of MacGillapatricks, O'Mores, some O'Carrolls, Fitzgeralds of Kildare as well as Cathaoir and Conn O'Connor Faly at Slieveardagh in east Tipperary.¹¹⁵⁷ The surprising involvement of Conn O'Connor Faly, An Calbhach's son, may be explained by his father's inability to control him. Indeed, the O'Connor Faly/Butler friendship still held firm as evidenced by Ormond's patronage that year of the Berminghams - An Calbhach's allies in his attack on Meath that year.¹¹⁵⁸ However, Edmund MacRichard's victory was somewhat pyrrhic as the O'Mores later that year routed the Butlers in Kilkenny.¹¹⁵⁹

¹¹⁵³ *C.O.D.*, iii, pp 38-9; Cosgrove, 'Ireland beyond the Pale, 1399-1460', p. 582.

¹¹⁵⁴ Empey, p. 273.

¹¹⁵⁵ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 120.

¹¹⁵⁶ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 200.

¹¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 201 Two Fitzgeralds, Cathaoir O'Connor Faly's son, Máelsechlainn Ruadh MacGillpatrick, and some sons of John O'Carroll killed; Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 113. For Edmund's raid into Ossory, see M.Dillon, 'Laud Mss 610' In *Celticia*, vi, no. xxxv, p. 141. (hereafter M.Dillon, 'Laud Mss 610'); This Conn was married to the daughter of the O'More see *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 249; *Ann Conn*, p.513.

¹¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

¹¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

The steady destabilisation of the midlands also affected the Irish polity of East Leinster. There it is clear that the provincial kingship of Ormond's brother-in-law, Donnchadh MacMurrough, was weakening. Indeed, Donnchadh's leadership of his own dynasty was also slipping. Undoubtedly this process was speeded in 1442 when Muircheartach, Donnchadh's son and heir, was killed by the English of Talbot's liberty of Wexford.¹¹⁶⁰ Even worse Edmund O'Byrne also seemingly fanned the ambitions of the sons of Gerald MacMurrough. The confirmation of the Wicklow Irish at the centre of opposition to Ormond in Leinster comes in 1443. Then Prior Thomas Fitzgerald of Kilmainham sought O'Toole and O'Byrne aid to kidnap his Ormond-sponsored rivals.¹¹⁶¹ Probably as result of Prior Thomas's activities and because of Fitzgerald involvement in the 1443 assault upon the Ormond earldom, the earl in 1443-4 imprisoned Prior Thomas at Dublin. Dramatically, Thomas fitzMaurice and his allies humiliated Ormond's administration, attacking Dublin Castle and helping Prior Thomas to escape to England to present charges against Ormond's governance of Ireland.¹¹⁶² Ormond's position in East Leinster was to worsen. In 1444 the apple of discord ripened within the MacMurrough dynasty. Against a background of considerable violence in the midlands, Gerald's sons revolted against Donnchadh. This upsurge in violence against Donnchadh may be connected to the recall of Ormond in 1444 by Henry VI to face charges of Prior Thomas and Treasurer Thorndon.¹¹⁶³ Again Donnchadh was forced to rely on mercenaries to maintain his position. But the sons of Gerald defeated these troops under Féilim O'Connor Faly.¹¹⁶⁴ Significantly, that year Donnchadh's Gabhal Siomóin O'Byrne clients were also defeated by Conn O'Connor Faly - a participator in the 1443 assault upon the Ormond earldom.¹¹⁶⁵

¹¹⁶⁰ *AFM*, iv, pp 928-9. According to this source Donnchadh forced the English to pay him 800 marks in compensation as well as forcing them to liberate seven prisoners. See also K.W.Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs 1400-1700', In *Ir Geneal.*, vol. 6, no. 2, (Nov, 1981), p. 189. (hereafter Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov 1981).)

¹¹⁶¹ *A Roll of the Proceeding of the King's Council in Ireland, 1392-1393*, pp 303-304.

¹¹⁶² *C.O.D.*, iii, pp 142-143.

¹¹⁶³ *Matthew*, pp 356-57.

¹¹⁶⁴ *MacFirbis's' Annals*, p. 209; See also Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 99. This records the death in 1443 of one of Gerald's sons - Diarmait. Another prominent MacMurrough Kavanagh nobleman named Muircheartach died in 1443 in Leighlin, see *ibid*, p. 99.

¹¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 208. See Conn's participation in the assault upon the Ormond earldom, see *ibid*, p. 201

As argued above the political conditions in West Leinster during 1444 ignited the turmoil in East Leinster. At the centre of this turbulence was the war in Slieveardagh between Desmond and Ormond.¹¹⁶⁶ In preparation for this struggle Desmond cultivated support among the Leinster nobility.¹¹⁶⁷ Furthermore Ormond's position was further weakened by the complicity in Desmond's offensive of Walter Tobin of Comsey and the Butlers of Cahir.¹¹⁶⁸ The main result of this conflict was Ormond's conclusion before his departure for England after September¹¹⁶⁹ of a one year truce with Desmond. In fact, Desmond turned this truce to his advantage, using it to ally with MacGillpatrick, O'More and Domhnall Riabhach - one of the leaders of the sons of Gerald.¹¹⁷⁰ The emergence of Domhnall Riabhach was a most significant event in the politics of this period. Indeed, his ability to form an alliance with Desmond indicates that the pattern of warfare throughout the province was flexible, indicating considerable government weakness. Furthermore, An Calbhach's errant sons probably led by Conn joined the O'Mores to attack Kildare, suffering considerable losses in the process.¹¹⁷¹ Also the killing in Wicklow of Diarmait O'Toole in 1445 by O'Dempsey raiders from Offaly is another such indication.¹¹⁷² Moreover, Domhnall Riabhach exploited O'Toole discomfort, hiring Connacht mercenaries to attack them, capturing Theobald - the son of Diarmait O'Toole.¹¹⁷³

Donnchadh's kingship was further hobbled when Ormond's deputy, Justiciar Lord Delvin, was replaced in January 1445 by Archbishop Richard Talbot.¹¹⁷⁴ This was not part of the Ormond/Talbot feud as it had been ended by both parties the previous year, resulting in the marriage of Ormond's daughter, Elizabeth, to John Talbot's son.¹¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless Donnchadh's difficulties

¹¹⁶⁶ Empey, p. 273; . MacFirbis's *Annals*, p. 203.

¹¹⁶⁷ Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 87.

¹¹⁶⁸ *MacFirbis's Annals*, pp 205, 220; Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 125.

¹¹⁶⁹ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 125.

¹¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 123.

¹¹⁷¹ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 207.

¹¹⁷² *Ibid*, p. 209.

¹¹⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 210.

¹¹⁷⁴ Matthew, p. 489.

¹¹⁷⁵ Cosgrove, 'The Emergence of the Pale, 1399-1447', p. 551; Matthew, p. 380.

increased when Talbot, now earl of Shrewsbury, was appointed lord lieutenant in 1446.¹¹⁷⁶ Talbot's appointment probably encouraged the enemies of Ormond and Donnchadh to attack them before Talbot arrived. In fact, Talbot was determined to stamp out the last embers of his feud with Ormond. Ormond's enemies, though, were determined to damage the Butler affinity. Predictably war broke out in East Leinster between the O'Byrnes and Donnchadh in 1446, the O'Byrnes had the best of it, killing a prominent MacMurrough noble and raiding Uí Cheinnselaig by sea.¹¹⁷⁷ But the problems for Donnchadh continued as the sons of Gerald expanded their power with relative impunity in Leinster in alliance with Desmond.¹¹⁷⁸ The first signs of Domhnall Riabhach's concord with Desmond had become clear in 1445. Then his forces attacked Anglo-Irish lords in Leinster and Munster - probably Butler clients.¹¹⁷⁹ And in 1446 Domhnall Riabhach joined with Desmond to exploit Ormond's absence from Ireland, launching two devastating attacks upon the Butler lands in Tipperary and Kilkenny. Together with the O'Mores and the MacGillapatricks, they scorched the Butler earldom from Freghans in Offa to Buolick in Slieveardagh.¹¹⁸⁰ Such was the power of this combination that Edmund MacRichard could not stop them.¹¹⁸¹ The plight of Ormond's deputy was not helped by the fact, Empey argues, that the junior Butlers and the Tobins aided Desmond.¹¹⁸²

Upon Talbot's arrival in Ireland during summer 1446, he campaigned widely in Ulster and Leinster during winter 1446-47 to pacify the situation. But it appears from the petitions of the communities of Kilkenny and Tipperary in January 1447 that one of the attacks upon the Butler earldom occurred before his arrival.¹¹⁸³ The submissions secured by Talbot in winter 1446-7, illustrate that he behaved even-handedly towards the allies and enemies of Ormond. In

¹¹⁷⁶ Matthew, p. 489.

¹¹⁷⁷ *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 946-7; R.I.A. MSS 1233 (23/Q/10): An Leabhar Donn, f. 11.

¹¹⁷⁸ P.R.O. E101/248/15; R.A.Griffith, *The Reign of Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority 1422-1461* (London, 1981), p. 418. (hereafter Griffith, *The Reign of Henry VI*).

¹¹⁷⁹ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p 210. Turlough mac Dubhghaill was the leader of the Connacht troops in Domhnall Riabhach's service at this time.

¹¹⁸⁰ P.R.O. E101/248/15; Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 123; Empey, p. 275.

¹¹⁸¹ Empey, 321.

¹¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp 273-4. Also the people of Carrick on Suir in 1450 stated that their town had been attacked by English rebels twice in the previous fifteen years. See *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, pp 243-4; Empey, p. 278.

Leinster Donnchadh, An Calbhach O'Connor Faly¹¹⁸⁴, Fachtna O'More¹¹⁸⁵, O'Dempsey and O'Nolan submitted, while oddly no submission was asked of Edmund O'Byrne or Theobald O'Toole.¹¹⁸⁶ Another sign of Talbot's desire to publicly proclaim the end of his feud with Ormond was the ordinances of his parliament of January 1447. Then he outlawed Thomas fitzMaurice.¹¹⁸⁷ No doubt Talbot's outlawing of the Kildare heir strengthened the Ormond claim to the vacant earldom. But the experiences of 1446 convinced the Butlers to change their policy in Leinster. Sometime early in 1447 Donnchadh - perhaps encouraged by Edmund MacRichard - came to terms with his nephews, seemingly recognising Domhnall Riabhach as his successor. This had the effect of detaching him from the anti-Butler host. Domhnall Riabhach's realignment effectively ended the budding O'Byrne ascendancy in East Leinster. In any case the O'Byrne cause was weakened by the death in 1446 of their leader - Edmund.¹¹⁸⁸ Because of the reconciliation of Donnchadh and Domhnall Riabhach, Edmund's successor, Dúnlaing mac Gerald, was unable to exploit his advantage.¹¹⁸⁹ This change of direction is evident when Domhnall Riabhach's brother, Art, was captured in 1447 with Edmund MacRichard by Walter Tobin of Comsey and Butlers of Cahir.¹¹⁹⁰

After his release from captivity, Edmund MacRichard changed his attitude to the MacGillapatricks. Indeed, this shift was probably speeded by Ormond's return from England in early 1449. This latest U turn saw Fionnán MacGillpatrick marry a daughter of Edmund MacRichard about 1448/9.¹¹⁹¹ However, Edmund MacRichard's diplomatic acrobatics probably would not have been possible without MacMurrough assistance. For, this Fionnán was probably the

¹¹⁸⁴ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 216.

¹¹⁸⁵ This Fachtna probably built the Franciscan abbey of Abbeyleix in 1447. See *AFM*, iv, pp 954-5.

¹¹⁸⁶ *Matthew*, p. 383.

¹¹⁸⁷ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, pp 94-5; See note. 2, p. 94.

¹¹⁸⁸ *AFM*, iv, pp 946-7; *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 214.

¹¹⁸⁹ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 60; *N.H.I.*, ix, (eds) Moody, Martin and Byrne, (Oxford, 1984), p. 148. (hereafter, *N.H.I.*, ix); Curtis, 'Richard, Duke of York, As Viceroy of Ireland', pp 166-8; Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 99; *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, p. 97 Describes the Wexford marches in 1447 as being volatile.

¹¹⁹⁰ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 217. Art died in captivity, while Edmund MacRichard was ransomed. See also Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 123.

¹¹⁹¹ *Cal. papal letters*, x, p. 497; See Lawlor, 'Calendar of the Liber Ruber of the Diocese of Ossory', p. 170.; Edwards, 'The MacGiollapádraigs (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory', p. 329; For Fionnán see O'Clery, para 1785. He is described as Finghin na cul choilledh. For the discussion of the marriage of Fionnán snr and Sadhbh MacMurrough, see previous chapter.

offspring of Fionnán MacGillpatrick and Sadhbh MacMurrough - Art Mór's daughter. In fact, this made him a nephew of Donnchadh and first cousin to Domhnall Riabhach. Indeed, this change in MacGillpatrick/Butler dynamics was confirmed in 1450. In a letter to the bishop of Ossory, the abbot of Graiguenamanagh complained of the plundering of Ormond, Donnchadh, Domhnall Riabhach, Domhnall O'Ryan and a Tadhg MacGillpatrick.¹¹⁹² Moreover, it is likely that this shift in the regional balance isolated the Tobins of Comsey and the Butlers of Cahir, contributing to the relative ease of Edmund MacRichard's victory in 1448 over them.¹¹⁹³ The equal nature of the MacMurrough/Butler partnership was affirmed about 1449. Then Donnchadh's daughter, Gormflaith, Ormond's niece, was married to Henry O'Neill of Tyrone, illustrating the central role of her dynasty in the development of countrywide Butler policy.¹¹⁹⁴

On 9 December 1447 Duke Richard of York replaced Talbot as lord lieutenant of Ireland. However, he was not to take up his post in Ireland until July 1449. During August of that year York devastated Wicklow, forcing the submission of Dúnlaing mac Gerald's successor - Braen O'Byrne of Newrath. In an elaborate indenture Braen agreed that his family would adopt English custom and tongue, and promised to disgorge loot garnered from cargoes of shipwreck, demonstrating that O'Byrnes were in control of the coastline between Delgany and Arklow. In a flourish Braen gallantly presented two choice ponies to York's wife.¹¹⁹⁵ As time was to prove his gallantry was pragmatic and deceptive. Significantly, though, at the time of Braen's submission several Leinster nobles anxious to avoid similar attacks travelled to Kiltimon to submit before York. These included Theobald O'Toole, Fachtna O'More, Cathaoir O'Dempsey, Féilim O'Nolan, O'Murphy and Domhnall Riabhach who came as Donnchadh's representative.¹¹⁹⁶

¹¹⁹² *Cal. papal letters*, x, p. 497; See Lawlor, 'Calendar of the Liber Ruber of the Diocese of Ossory', p. 170.

¹¹⁹³ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 220; Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 125..

¹¹⁹⁴ Empey, p. 760. A peace had been concluded between the O'Neills and Ormond in 1444; Matthew, p. 413. Elizabeth Matthew suggests that 1449 was the date of the marriage; *AFM*, iv, pp 980-1.

¹¹⁹⁵ Curtis, 'Richard, Duke of York, as Viceroy of Ireland', pp 166-68; Gilbert, *Viceroy*, p. 353.

¹¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Because of his concord with Donnchadh, Domhnall Riabhach now regarded his O'Byrne cousins as enemies. The struggle between the MacMurroughs and the O'Byrnes continued into the 1450s. Ormond's death in August 1452 did improve the position of the O'Byrnes but not that of the MacMurroughs, revealing the former as the more aggressive. O'Byrne aggression is detected in the papal appointment in 1451 of Tadhg O'Byrne, the Benedictine prior of Glascarraig, as bishop of Ferns.¹¹⁹⁷ Tadhg's office was objected to by the diocese's *grave and noble men* - most probably the MacMurroughs. It transpired that Bishop Robert of Ferns was still alive and Tadhg had obtained his appointment through fraud, resulting in its reversal in 1453.¹¹⁹⁸ It seems also that York realised that the O'Byrnes would pursue their own independent ambitions in East Leinster. As a result he determined to brake their drive, outlining his intentions to curb the Wicklow Irish during his parliament of April 1450. To his loyal retainer Sir Edmund Mulso, seneschal of his liberty of Meath, York granted permission to found a town in the O'Toole mountainous heartland of Fercullen.¹¹⁹⁹ Also Mulso leased a castle near Bray close to the uplands, intending to embark upon the conquest of Fercullen. Even though he obtained local marcher support in the person of John Walsh¹²⁰⁰, Mulso was more often than not absent fighting Henry VI's wars.¹²⁰¹ In spite of this, attempts - albeit unsuccessful ones - were made throughout the 1450s to conquer Fercullen.¹²⁰²

Government activities in West Leinster and the midlands reveal a similar desire to contain the Irish threat to Anglo-Irish centres. And even before Ormond's death, the Irish polities of West Leinster were displaying signs of decline. Clearly, An Calbhach was not the force he had been ten years earlier. After the death of Margaret O'Carroll, his wife in 1451, An Calbhach married Catherine O'Kelly of Uí Maine after his return from Santiago, revealing a growing reliance

¹¹⁹⁷ *N.H.I.*, ix, p. 312

¹¹⁹⁸ *Cal. papal letters*, x, pp 244-245; This Tadhg was prior of Glascarraig in 1448, see *ibid.*, pp 413-414.

¹¹⁹⁹ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI.* pp 215-219.

¹²⁰⁰ *Stat. Ire., 1-12 Edw IV.* p. 229.

¹²⁰¹ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI.* pp 219-222.

¹²⁰² *Stat. Ire., 1-12 Edw IV.* pp 229-231. But the deaths of both Walsh and Mulso by 1463 resulted in their scheme being declared defunct by the parliament of that year. For the claims of the citizens of Dublin to lands within the lands of the O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles, see *Ancient Records of Dublin*, i, p. 252.

upon allies west of the Shannon.¹²⁰³ Indeed, a new ring of castles was under construction to pen in the Irish. For instance, the parliament of 1450 granted subsidies to aid the erection of Usk Castle in Kildare.¹²⁰⁴ Upon York's departure from Ireland in late 1450, he left Ormond as his deputy. In 1452 Ormond embarked upon the pacification of the midlands, raising two castles close to Thurles, while Edmund MacRichard built one at Buolick in Slieveardagh.¹²⁰⁵ The second phase of Ormond's shoring up came during that summer. On a circuit of the midlands Ormond took Lea Castle from O'Dempsey, burnt Irry in Offaly, parleyed with An Calbhach before taking the submissions of the O'Farrells and O'Reillys.¹²⁰⁶ Finally he travelled into Tyrone to chastise Henry O'Neill. O'Neill had abandoned his wife, Gormflaith MacMurrough, the earl's niece. In an effective demonstration of his power, Ormond forced O'Neill to take her back and put away the widow of O'Donnell.¹²⁰⁷ However, Ormond's death on 23 August 1452 dramatically changed the political climate.¹²⁰⁸

It is not without significance that Thomas fitzMaurice gained his pardon sometime in 1452, bolstering his claims to his rightful inheritance.¹²⁰⁹ In effect, this pardon and Ormond's death transformed him from a outlaw living in the twilight worlds of both Irish and Anglo-Irish society into a major player within the English lordship. In spite of his pardon, Thomas was denied his inheritance. The reason for this was the continuing dominance of the Butlers within the Anglo-Irish government. Although on 11 February 1451 York's appointment as lord lieutenant was repeated, his tenure of that office was challenged in 1453. On 12 May 1453 Ormond's son, James Butler, earl of Wiltshire and Ormond, a Lancastrian, was appointed lieutenant of Ireland for ten years, while York remained protector of the lordship.¹²¹⁰ Crucial to Wiltshire's appointment was his favour in the eyes of Henry VI.¹²¹¹ Apparently Wiltshire had no intention

¹²⁰³ *AFM*, iv, pp 972-3; *Ann Conn*, pp 492-3; *MacFirbis's Annals*, pp 227, 230..

¹²⁰⁴ *Stat. Ire. Hen VI*, pp 285-7.

¹²⁰⁵ M.Dillon, 'Laud Mss 610', no. lxx, p. 147.

¹²⁰⁶ *AFM*, iv, pp 978-9; *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 232.

¹²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pp 980-1; *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 233; Matthew, p. 413.

¹²⁰⁸ Griffith, *The Reign of Henry VI*, p. 422; M.Dillon, 'Laud Mss 610', no. lxx, p. 147.

¹²⁰⁹ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, p. 94. See note 2.

¹²¹⁰ *CPR, 1452-61*, p. 88.

¹²¹¹ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 142.

of relinquishing his grip upon the Kildare lands, frustrating Thomas. Unsurprisingly, Thomas in 1453-4 fought him for them, centring the dispute on the manors of Maynooth and Rathmore.¹²¹² Both the Butlers and Fitzgerald were aided by their respective Irish allies in this struggle for the Kildare earldom.¹²¹³ In the ensuing melee Thomas with the aid of a mixture of Anglo-Irish and probably O'Byrne allies successfully wrested back the Kildare manors from Edmund MacRichard, William Butler of Dunboyne and their Irish allies - probably the MacMurroughs.¹²¹⁴ Fitzgerald fortunes improved when York was restored as lieutenant of Ireland in 1454, forcing Wiltshire on 15 April to surrender all claims to the lieutenancy.¹²¹⁵ Thomas responded to York's rise, supporting his cause.¹²¹⁶ And the Fitzgerald victory over the Butlers is confirmed by the fact that Thomas was both 7th earl of Kildare and York's deputy by October 1454.¹²¹⁷

However, the struggle between the Fitzgerald and Butler affinities was far from over. Indeed, that year the seneschal of the Wexford liberty appealed to Kildare as York's deputy for protection. The seneschal wrote that he with the O'Byrne aid had repelled Domhnall Riabhach, Thomas Fitzgerald, later 8th earl of Desmond, O'Meagher and MacGillpatrick. Undeterred by this Domhnall Riabhach with Donnchadh and the Butlers of Polestown, Cahir and Dunboyne returned to raze Wexford before 18 October 1454.¹²¹⁸ It would seem Domhnall Riabhach instigated these attacks. This sequence of events show Domhnall Riabhach to be politically skilled, utilising his full complement of allies - some of whom were deadly enemies to each other. Before Christmas Edmund MacRichard seemingly campaigned with the MacMurroughs against some unnamed Leinstermen, probably O'Byrne raiders, in Uí Feilme - the

¹²¹² Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 111.

¹²¹³ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, p. 293; H.Ellis (ed.), *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, 2nd series, (London, 1969), i, pp 117-21; Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 135; Empey, p. 301.

¹²¹⁴ Empey, p. 303 In 1475 Sir John Butler renounced the Butler claims to the manors of Rathmore and Maynooth.

¹²¹⁵ *Proceedings and ordinances of the privy council*, vi, p. 172; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 386.

¹²¹⁶ Empey, p. 303.

¹²¹⁷ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, p. 301; *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 990-1; *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 238; Curtis, *Med Ire*, p. 321; Matthew, p. 490; Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 112.

¹²¹⁸ *C.O.D.*, iii, pp 173-75; *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, pp 361-65; Curtis, 'Richard, Duke of York', pp 178-9.

northern Wexford barony of Ballaghkeen.¹²¹⁹ All this violence almost certainly arose from the Butler failure to defeat Kildare.¹²²⁰ Indeed, Kildare presided over the attainder of the Butlers on 20 April 1455.¹²²¹ This period of intense turbulence also brought about changes in the internal politics of the MacMurroughs and the O'Byrnes. The pressure showed among Kildare's O'Byrne allies when Braen was assassinated at Wicklow by his nephew during 1454.¹²²² Furthermore shortly after 1455, Donnchadh abdicated in Domhnall Riabhach's favour, dying in 1478.¹²²³ Domhnall Riabhach continued the alliance with the Butlers, marrying two of his children to those of Edmund MacRichard.¹²²⁴

Now York's deputy, Kildare's attitude to the Irish changed, distancing himself from his past and embracing a future of service to the English crown. Griffith notes that Kildare's policy of good government, self interest, and affinity building was similar to the old Butler policies.¹²²⁵ Kildare knew that the vulnerability of the Pale and the government were linked to the decline of his own earldom. The strategic value of the Kildare estates was their proximity to the royal highway through Carlow and Kildare.¹²²⁶ As a result Kildare decided that a revived Kildare earldom would act as the Pale's shield.¹²²⁷ The first step came in 1454-5, then the Dublin Assembly legislated for the introduction of a series of anti-Irish laws.¹²²⁸ Another important event was the suspension in Easter 1455 of the timber trade between the Wicklow Irish and Dublin¹²²⁹ as well as

¹²¹⁹ M.Dillon, 'Laud Mss 610', no. lii, p. 145.

¹²²⁰ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 136.

¹²²¹ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, pp 523-31, 739. Kildare also presided over the repeal of the Butler attainder on 26 January 1458.

¹²²² *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 238.

¹²²³ Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 99.

¹²²⁴ *Cal. papal letters*, xii, p. 699. This refers to the dispensation of James MacEdmund Butler and Sadhbh Kavanagh of Ossory in 1468-9; See also K.Simms, 'The Legal position of Irishwomen in the Later Middle Ages', In *Ir. Jurist* vol. x., (1975), p. 104; Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov, 1977), p. 437. Domhnall's son, Gerald, married a Katherine Butler - probably a daughter of Edmund mac Richard. Before Sadhbh was married to James MacEdmund, she was the wife of O'Nolan, see *ibid*, p. 438. See also Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov, 1981), p. 190. This mentions that Domhnall's successor and son, Murchadh Ballach, was married to Joan - daughter of Edmund MacRichard This Joan died in 1489, while James MacEdmund died two years earlier and Sadhbh in 1508, see Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals: Two Fragments', pp. 99-100; Curtis, *Med Ire*, p. 319.

¹²²⁵ Griffith, *The Council in Ireland, 1391-1452*, p. 149.

¹²²⁶ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 113. Sir Edward FitzEustace started this policy see *ibid*, p. 113; *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, p. 299.

¹²²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 113.

¹²²⁸ *Ancient Records of Dublin*, i, pp 286-289.

¹²²⁹ *Ibid*, i, pp 284.

the cessation in September of the supplying of Wicklow Castle. These actions were presumably because of O'Byrne hostilities. However, these actions must be taken as the end of their alliance with Kildare.¹²³⁰ Further efforts followed. In December 1457 the Dublin Assembly prohibited Irish horsemen from staying within the walls of the city.¹²³¹ More signs of Kildare's hardline attitude to his former allies was his energetic programme of encastellation in the Dublin and Kildare marches.¹²³²

Another factor that reinforced Kildare's presence within his own earldom and the wider sphere of West Leinster was the decline of the O'Connor Faly's. Supporting this thesis of growing Irish weakness was Sir Edward FitzEustace's capture and release of An Calbhach in 1452¹²³³, while an internal power struggle produced a dynastic civil war three years later.¹²³⁴ The question of An Calbhach's successor was solved in 1458 when he passed the baton to his son, Conn O'Connor Faly.¹²³⁵ As has been shown, Conn before this date had a chequered career. But perhaps due to the deaths of two of his sons¹²³⁶, An Calbhach paved the way for Conn's succession during the early 1450s. Like his father during his later reign, Conn was faced by one major problem - that of the ringing of Offaly by fortifications.¹²³⁷ This reversal of fortune was shown in Kildare's victory and capture of Conn in 1459, signalling the commencement of the earl's recovery of his north-western frontier.¹²³⁸ Although Conn later recouped his losses, this defeat braked the O'Connor Faly renaissance, speeding decline. Also Kildare improved his earldom's eastern fortifications such as Kilcullen and Ballymore, while Naas was later enclosed.¹²³⁹ In the longer term the resurgence of the Kildare earldom would effectively isolate the Irish of East Leinster from those of West Leinster, increasing the Pale's security .

¹²³⁰ *Ibid*, i, p. 287-8.

¹²³¹ *Ibid*, i, p. 298.

¹²³² Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 114-116.

¹²³³ *MacFirbis's Annals*, pp 233-4; Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513', p. 95.

¹²³⁴ *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 992-3.

¹²³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 1000-1; *Ann Conn*, p. 498-9; *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 240.

¹²³⁶ *Ibid*, pp 973, 983.

¹²³⁷ Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513', p. 96.

¹²³⁸ *A.F.M.*, iv, p. 1002-3. This mentions that a grandson of William O'Kelly of Uí Maine was killed, fighting for Conn against Kildare.

¹²³⁹ *Stat. Ire., 1-12 Edw IV*, p. 607. (Dated to 1469-70), see *Ibid*, pp 583-585, 609; *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, p. 229; Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 114.

Gradually, though, the lordship of Ireland was being drawn into the English civil war between the houses of Lancaster and York. While York had been victorious at St Albans in 1455, his fortunes were reversed by his defeat at Ludford bridge on 12 October 1459. After York's attainder by the English parliament, Wiltshire was reappointed as lord lieutenant of Ireland. However, his appointment proved ineffective as York attended by Kildare held a parliament at Drogheda on 8 February 1460 - which confirmed his appointment as lord lieutenant dating from 1457.¹²⁴⁰ On hearing of the Yorkist victory at Northampton on 10 July 1461, York created Kildare his deputy and sailed for England.¹²⁴¹ By October he had forced Henry VI to recognise him and his heirs as next in line to the throne. Henry VI's supporters would have none of it, killing him on 30 December at Wakefield. But in March 1461 London acclaimed Earl Edward of March, York's son, as Edward IV. And 29 March 1461 Edward IV defeated the Lancastrians at Towton. Yorkist forces found Wiltshire among the prisoners, resulting in his execution on 1 May 1461.¹²⁴²

The war between the Yorkists and the Lancastrians was reflected in the struggle between Kildare and the Butlers. Therefore Edmund MacRichard's position as Wiltshire's deputy was a considerable obstacle to the governance of Kildare - a prominent Yorkist.¹²⁴³ Indeed, Kildare profited from Wiltshire's destruction when Edward IV divided the Ormond lands, acquiring by 1468 the Butler lands of Oughterard, Oughterany, Castlewarden and Clintonscourt.¹²⁴⁴ More importantly, the Butlers now allied themselves with another prominent enemy of Kildare - Conn O'Connor Faly. The most significant indication of the Butler/O'Connor Faly determination to check Kildare's government was their joint devastation of Meath during summer 1461.¹²⁴⁵ However, Kildare proved effective in combating the threat of the

¹²⁴⁰ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, pp 386-7.

¹²⁴¹ Curtis, *Med Ire*, p. 323.

¹²⁴² Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 172.

¹²⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 141.

¹²⁴⁴ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, pp 586-7. Wiltshire and his brothers were attainted on 4 November 1461 by parliament, stripping all their lands and titles. See *CPR*, 1461-7, p. 178.

¹²⁴⁵ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 140; Then Conn was quickly released and was soon back prowling the borders of the Pale, killing the baron of Galtrim in 1460, see *AFM*, iv, p. 1006-7

Butlers and the O'Connor Faly, advising the Anglo-Irish gentry of Meath to purchase the O'Connor Faly hostages in Bermingham hands - an act which swiftly brought Conn to peace and saw him serve against Edmund MacRichard that year.¹²⁴⁶ This good service earned him respite but he was soon back raiding the Anglo-Irish of Meath.¹²⁴⁷ The Lancastrian challenge did not end there. In winter 1461-2, Wiltshire's brother, John Butler, the 6th earl of Ormond, arrived in Ireland to gauge the support of a pro Lancastrian revolt in Ireland.¹²⁴⁸ As for Kildare, he was replaced as justiciar in March 1462 by his brother-in-law, Earl Thomas of Desmond - deputy of Duke George of Clarence. In spite of considerable initial success, Earl John failed to reestablish his grip upon the Ormond earldom. His efforts were ended by Desmond's defeat of the Lancastrian forces under Edmund MacRichard at the Pilltown during summer 1462.¹²⁴⁹ This defeat resulted in the Butler attainder by the Anglo-Irish parliament and confiscation of their earldom on 15 October 1462.¹²⁵⁰ And although Ormond did not leave Ireland until after 17 August 1464, the Butler cause was lost.¹²⁵¹ This is confirmed by the subjugation of the Butlers of Polestown in 1463,¹²⁵² the death of Edmund MacRichard in 1464¹²⁵³, and Edmund fitzJames Butler of Dunboyne's acceptance by 1465 of Kildare's patronage.¹²⁵⁴

In Desmond's parliament late in 1463, Kildare, now chancellor, was rewarded for service against Ormond with grants of the lordships of Carlow and Ross.¹²⁵⁵ Indeed, Kildare used the grant of the Carlow lordship to further fortify the southern frontiers of his earldom.¹²⁵⁶ Also 10 marks were granted in 1465 to Baron Edmund Wellesley of Norragh to build a castle there against the Irish.¹²⁵⁷ However, the tables were turned in 1466.¹²⁵⁸ Then Kildare and

¹²⁴⁶ *AFM*, iv, p. 1015-7; Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513', p. 97.

¹²⁴⁷ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 250; *Ann Conn*, p. 515. Cúilen O'Dempsey killed by the English.

¹²⁴⁸ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 174.

¹²⁴⁹ Empey, p. 304; G. Butler, 'The battle of Pilltown', *Ir. Sword*, vi (1963-4), pp 206-8.

¹²⁵⁰ *Stat. Ire., 1-12 Edw IV*, p. 27.

¹²⁵¹ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 191.

¹²⁵² Empey, p. 304.

¹²⁵³ *MacFirbis's Annals*, P. 253.

¹²⁵⁴ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 225.

¹²⁵⁵ Curtis, *Med Ire*, p. 327.

¹²⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 328.

¹²⁵⁷ *Stat. Ire., 1-12 Edw IV*, p. 369.

¹²⁵⁸ *AFM*, iv, p. 1041-3; *Ann Conn*, p.530-1; *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 258.

Desmond led an army into Offaly in pursuit of Conn O'Connor Faly only to be completely destroyed. However, Conn's victory was soured by the behaviour of his brother Tadhg, also Kildare's brother-in-law, who allowed the earl to be rescued by the Dublin citizens.¹²⁵⁹ That Tadhg was Kildare's brother-in-law further highlights how Kildare had modelled his affinity in the midlands upon Ormond's prototype. As mentioned already Kildare had earlier created similar links with O'Mores, marrying Dorothea O'More. By the late 1450s it appears that Kildare had taken a new wife, Joan, the sister of Desmond.¹²⁶⁰ However, it seems he used a daughter from his O'More marriage to cement an alliance with Tadhg O'Dunne - presumably as check upon Conn.¹²⁶¹ Furthermore Kildare's regional position in the midlands improved yet again when his former father-in-law, Uaithne O'More, became after 1468 a leading figure in the lordship of Laois.¹²⁶²

Meanwhile in East Leinster O'Byrne expansion after 1454 continued. Their raids were often co-ordinated with the Harolds. Kildare also took firm action in his 1456 parliament against Dublin's rebellious marchers, outlawing Henry Walsh of Carrickmines and Geoffrey Harold.¹²⁶³ As in West Leinster the government took action to curb Irish inroads into the Pale, ordering the building of Bray Castle in 1459.¹²⁶⁴ And at the commons' request in 1460, Archbishop Tregury of Dublin with Henry Walsh erected fortifications to protect Rathdown and Newcastle Lyons.¹²⁶⁵ Also orders were issued for the erection of towers on Kilmainham and Lucan bridges, while a tower was constructed alongside the walls of St Mary's Abbey to protect Fingal from raiders.¹²⁶⁶ In spite of these considerable efforts, the crisis on the Dublin marches was to peak in

¹²⁵⁹ *Ibid*; *Ann Conn*, p.530-1; *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 258; Desmond became justiciar in April 1463 see Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 389; See also Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly Lordship of Offaly, 1395-1513', p. 97.

¹²⁶⁰ *A.F.M.*, iv, p. 1034-5.

¹²⁶¹ Nicholls, *O'Doyne MS*, p. 126.

¹²⁶² In 1464 Cétach O'More died after contracting plague, see *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 252; *Ann Conn*, pp 518-9. Similarly, Domhnall O'More died of plague in 1468, see *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 1054-5; *Ann Conn*, p. 542-3 See also Brian Ó Cuiv, 'A Fragment of the Irish Annals', in *Celticia*, xiv (1981), p. 97. (hereafter Ó Cuiv, 'A Fragment of the Irish Annals'). For plague in general in Leinster see *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 260; *Ann Conn*, pp 534-5.

¹²⁶³ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, pp 441-7.

¹²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 633.

¹²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 757-9.

¹²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 403-5.

the 1460s. Since his arrival in Ireland in 1450, Archbishop Tregury was intent upon the revival of his diocesan rights within the lands of the Wicklow Irish and the marchers, complaining to the pope in 1451 of the desolation of his archbishopric.¹²⁶⁷ Thus, in 1460 he obtained a grant for recovery of archiepiscopal lands.¹²⁶⁸ The archbishop apparently began to revive his rights in Harold's Country and O'Byrne's Country.¹²⁶⁹ His plans badly backfired, ending in kidnap, an alleged beating and a dismal imprisonment at the hands of Patrick O'Byrne and Geoffrey Harold who were later excommunicated for their actions.¹²⁷⁰ The events of Tregury's kidnap may be connected to the Dublin Assembly's prohibition in 1461 of communication between citizens and the Harolds.¹²⁷¹ Testifying to ability of the Wicklow Irish to penetrate the Pale was their attack in 1462 upon Holy Trinity (Christchurch Cathedral).¹²⁷² However, the northward march of the O'Byrnes received a setback in 1462-3. Despite having routed the Walshes and other Anglo-Irish forces, the unnamed O'Byrne overlord was killed at the moment of victory.¹²⁷³ Bray was taken by the Irish and then retaken by Desmond before August 1464.¹²⁷⁴ It is clear also that Kildare was pushing Walshes against the O'Byrnes and Harolds as a list of the Walshes of Kilgobbin in 1467-8 refers to a Maurice Walsh as the servant of Kildare.¹²⁷⁵

However, Kildare's ability to lessen the O'Byrne pressure upon the Pale may have been hindered by resolution of the O'Byrne/MacMurrough rivalry either in the late 1450s or early 1460s. Then it seems the successor of the fallen O'Byrne overlord of 1463 was Tadhg mac Braen of Newrath. It would appear that Domhnall

¹²⁶⁷ *Cal. papal letters*, x, p. 99. See also J.H. Bernard, 'Richard Talbot Archbishop & Chancellor 1418-1449', in *P.R.I.A.*, vol. xxxv (1919-20), pp 223-4.

¹²⁶⁸ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI*, pp 769-773.

¹²⁶⁹ H.F. Berry, (ed.), *Registers of Wills and Inventories of the Diocese of Dublin in the time of Archbishops Tregurry and Walton, 1457-1483*, (Dublin, 1898), pp xx-xxi.

¹²⁷⁰ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 63; *Alen's Reg*, p. 242.

¹²⁷¹ *Ancient Records of Dublin*, i, p. 309.

¹²⁷² The Christchurch Deeds, in 20th *D.K.R.* (Dublin, 1888). no.297, p.90. The damage was so extensive, that Dublin's citizens petitioned Edward IV for a grant of safe conduct for all pilgrims. This was to avail of all prospective pilgrims' alms, regardless of ethnic origin. It was duly granted.

¹²⁷³ *Ann Conn*, pp 512-3. This battle is dated to 1462; *MacFirbis's' Annals*, p. 249. In this entry this battle is dated to 1463. It seems the unknown O'Byrne overlord was succeeded by Tadhg Mór - son of Braen O'Byrne of Newrath. *McFirbis's Genealogies*, Microfilm no.473, (U.C.D), p. 475. However, William Harold and Robert Harold's burnings throughout 1463 ensured that the Dublin marches remained disturbed see *Stat. Ire., 1-12 Edw IV*, pp 67-69 and pp 215-217.

¹²⁷⁴ *Ancient Records of Dublin*, i, pp 141-3.

¹²⁷⁵ *Stat Ire., 1-12 Edw IV*, p. 445.

Riabhach, an adroit diplomat, contracted a marriage alliance with Tadhg, giving his probable daughter Maria as a wife.¹²⁷⁶ Domhnall Riabhach remained at peace throughout much of the 1460s and was conspicuously absent from the Butler defeat in summer 1462 at Pilltown. Indeed, Domhnall Riabhach breathed new life into the MacMurroughs and the provincial kingship, establishing himself in Enniscorthy Castle.¹²⁷⁷ And despite all turmoil, Domhnall Riabhach maintained good relations with the Butlers, the Fitzgeralds of Desmond and the O'Byrnes. In contrast to Domhnall Riabhach's quiet diplomacy, the O'Byrnes remained turbulent, conducting a lucrative business of extortion and ransom along the marches. The recurring theme of the parliament of 1465 was the need to defend the Pale from them. The legislation of this parliament highlights that the Irish were actually financially profiting from the misery of the Dublin citizens. The case of the unfortunate Piers Cruys of Crumlin is representative of Irish activities. He was kidnapped by the O'Byrnes and forced to pay a large ransom, bankrupting him.¹²⁷⁸ Because of the insistency of the Irish danger, fresh fortifications were commissioned at Ballinateer against them.¹²⁷⁹ More interesting was parliament's listing of requests of the people of County Dublin. In particular, they requested that the government prevent foreign fishing fleets from exploiting waters under Irish control, without a licence. Clearly the Irish had developed naval abilities, enabling them to enforce financial impositions upon these continental fishermen exploiting their coastal waters, leading to great improvements in their armour and weaponry.¹²⁸⁰ No doubt the O'Byrnes were also benefiting from the blackrents levied upon Wicklow town¹²⁸¹, while their trade in timber and cereals must have also proved equally lucrative.¹²⁸² No

¹²⁷⁶ *Genealogia Joannis Byrne*. Maria's is probably Domhnall Riabhach's daughter because of the fact that he managed to marry her to Tadhg mac Braen. A point to note is the continuing estrangment of the senior O'Byrne lords from the family of Donnchadh MacMurrough. In fact, the marriage of Donnchadh's great grand daughter, Ónora, Murchadh Ballach's daughter, to Réamainn Garbh O'Byrne of Glenmalure - a junior O'Byrne noble - may interpreted as a calculated snub to the senior O'Byrne dynasty. For Ónora and Réamainn Garbh's marriage, see Nicholls, 'The Genealogy of the Byrnes of Ranelagh', p. 108.

¹²⁷⁷ Curtis, *Med. Ire*, p. 311.

¹²⁷⁸ *Stat. Ire., 1-12 Edw IV*, pp 321-3.

¹²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 321.

¹²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, pp 321-3 & 353-5.

¹²⁸¹ *Cal.Carew MSS, 1515-74*, pp 193-4.

¹²⁸² M.V.Ronan, "The Ancient Churches of the Deanery of Wicklow", in *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, (vol 58-59), (1928), p. 142. For the timber trade see *Account Roll of the Priory of the Holy Trinity, Dublin, 1337-1346*, p. 36, and p. 167. In 1461 the Dublin Assembly banned the sale of corn to the Irish. See *Ancient Records of Dublin*, i, p. 309. Butter was also traded by

doubt these advantages helped the Wicklow Irish to see off Desmond's twin campaigns of 1466 following his disaster in Offaly that year.¹²⁸³ This strength also repelled Lord Deputy Worcester's offensive of September 1467¹²⁸⁴ and enabled them to briefly capture Bray two years later.¹²⁸⁵

The O'Connor Faly victory of 1466 elevated Conn to the status of number one Irish enemy in Leinster, encouraging Worcester to devote considerable efforts to his capture. However, dramatic splits within the Anglo-Irish government delayed him. During Worcester's parliament on 4 February 1468, he arrested and attainted Desmond, Kildare and Sir Edward Plunkett, accusing them of being in combination with the Irish. On 15 February Worcester ordered the execution of Desmond, beheading him.¹²⁸⁶ By the end of February he had further success as the baron of Dunboyne captured Conn O'Connor Faly, opening the door for Kildare's brother-in-law, Tadhg, to establish himself.¹²⁸⁷ However, this did not prevent Worcester from again campaigning during May in Offaly against Tadhg.¹²⁸⁸ In June Gerald, Desmond's brother, avenged his brother's death - burning Meath. Gerald's action panicked the government. Treasurer Roland FitzEustace released Kildare and both fled to Gerald. By the time Worcester mustered his forces to challenge Gerald, he faced a formidable confederation. Significantly, the Desmond and Kildare forces were reinforced by Domhnall Riabhach and Tadhg O'Connor Faly.¹²⁸⁹ After Gerald's return to Desmond, Worcester accepted the submissions of Kildare and FitzEustace. Importantly, Worcester's acceptance of Kildare's submission for the sake of peace clearly illustrates Kildare's affinity building among the Irish. Worcester wrote to Edward IV considering:

Wicklow's Irish with the people of Dublin, see *Ibid*, p. 193. An interesting incident in 1390s records that Gerald mac Taidhg O'Byrne paid a merchant of Dublin, Esmond Berle, with a sea going barge. Was this used for trade? See *A Roll of the Proceeding of the King's Council in Ireland, 1392-1393*, p. 181.

¹²⁸³ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 261.

¹²⁸⁴ *Ancient Records of Dublin*, i, p. 327-8.

¹²⁸⁵ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 64.

¹²⁸⁶ *AFM*, iv, pp 1051-4; A.Cosgrove, 'The Execution of the Earl of Desmond, 1468', *Kerry Arch Soc. Jn.*, vii (1975), pp 22-3.

¹²⁸⁷ *AFM*, iv, p. 1054-5; *Ann Conn*, p. 540-1.

¹²⁸⁸ *Ancient Records of Dublin*, i, p. 328.

¹²⁸⁹ Ó Cuiv, 'A Fragment of the Irish Annals', p. 97.

'...that your subiectes shoulde continue in the more tranquillitie and peas from the daiely sautes of your Irishe enemyes and English rebelx such as was bounden in affinitie to the saide Erle of Kildare'.¹²⁹⁰

Kildare then left for England and obtained the reversal of his attainder at the end of July.¹²⁹¹ Indeed, the terms of Kildare's pardon demonstrate that he had inherited the former Butler position among the Leinstermen. In return for his pardon, Kildare undertook to render loyal service and:

'...to make the Irishmen of Leinster to be at peace, according to his power'.¹²⁹²

The period between 1420-70 witnessed intense political turmoil in Leinster. During this period the hegemony of Art gave way to the dominance of the 4th earl of Ormond. However, the MacMurroughs were to renegotiate their position in Leinster after the emergence of the talented Domhnall Riabhach in the middle of the 1440s. After 1447 Domhnall Riabhach began the MacMurrough resurgence, allying with his uncle, Donnchadh, and the Butlers. Effectively their agreement stabilised the positions of both the MacMurroughs and the Butlers in Leinster, strengthening them immeasurably against their enemies. In effect, this alliance short circuited the efforts of their enemies - most notably the O'Byrnes and the Fitzgeralds. However, the death of Ormond in August 1452 was a decisive point - signalling the reemergence of Thomas fitzMaurice. Taking advantage of the weakness caused by Ormond's death and the absence of his son and successor, Wiltshire, Thomas wrested the Kildare earldom from the clutches of the Butlers in 1453-4. His victory ultimately propelled him to the Kildare title and into York's government, marking the beginning of his career as a major Anglo-Irish figure. In the years that followed, Kildare turned on his former friends, promoting the fortification of the Pale and County Kildare. With the implosion of the Butlers in 1461-2, Kildare had positioned himself to

¹²⁹⁰ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 393; Also there was a general movement among the Pale nobility for Kildare's pardon, see I.D.Thornley (ed.) *England under the Yorkists* (London, 1920), p. 257, citing *Lords of Ireland to Edward IV*, 28 June 1468 (PRO, 'Ancient correspondence', LVIII, no. 50).

¹²⁹¹ Curtis, *Med. Ire.*, p. 332.

¹²⁹² *Stat. Ire.*, 1-12 *Edw IV*, p. 587.

Chapter 5b

The Kildares and the Leinstermen, 1470-1520

In the midst of a renewed English civil war, Worcester was recalled to England - leaving Sir Edward Dudley in Ireland as his deputy. By the end of that summer Dudley too had embarked for England, paving the way for Kildare's election to the justiciarship. Indeed, Kildare's election has as much to do with the paucity of suitable candidates: Ormond was in disgraced exile, while the Desmonds increasingly pursued an isolationist policy following the execution of the 7th earl. Even though Kildare was the only remaining great Anglo-Irish magnate involved in the affairs of state, his election was nonetheless an affirmation of the belief that he could protect the Pale and extend royal jurisdiction. That Edward IV left Kildare as justiciar between 1470-5, reappointing him in 1477 indicated the earl had his king's confidence. Thus, Kildare's election in 1470 marked a decisive point in his up to now turbulent career, enabling him and his successors to create a stable English heartland to strike at the Irish of East Leinster.¹²⁹³ Also Kildare's fortification of the Pale was copied throughout his own earldom, threatening the independence of the Irish of West Leinster and the midlands. Under Kildare and his better known son and grandson, Fitzgerald power would become persuasive throughout Leinster, forming a great territorial wedge that slowly wrenched apart the overlapping polities of the east and west parts of the province, allowing the earls to exert their overlordship through a combination of violence and marriage. While Kildare power was meant to advance hand in hand with royal power, the earls outside the Dublin Council were the real power in the English lordship of Ireland - playing successive kings with a potent mix of charm, connections and controlled violence. Throughout this period, 1470-1520, the Leinster nobility played crucial roles in the development of Kildare power. The next chapter will outline and discuss these roles.

As in 1456 the major problem facing Kildare's government was the continued advance of the Irish of East Leinster into the Pale.

¹²⁹³ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 113.

And at times during the 1470s, the Wicklow Irish and their allies threatened to eradicate any government control over the Dublin marches. But with the support of Edward IV, Kildare and the Dublin Council continued the existing construction of a defensive system around the Pale that would be less of a drain upon English coffers.¹²⁹⁴ In 1470 the government's weakness was so pronounced that Edmund mac Theobald O'Toole compelled Saggart to pay him a blackrent for his 'protection'.¹²⁹⁵ Furthermore, collectors of parliamentary subsidies could not operate safely in Harold's Country, lying between Saggart and Kilmashogue - for fear that the Harolds would deliver them to the Irish.¹²⁹⁶ No doubt this situation contributed to the decree of Kildare's parliament of November/December 1470, commanding the townsfolk of Saggart to abandon their agreement with the O'Tooles.¹²⁹⁷ Indeed, Saggart paid the ultimate price for its compliance, as the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles in 1471-2 destroyed the town - forcing many to abandon it.¹²⁹⁸ The sack of Saggart spurred frantic Anglo-Irish activity to enclose the town with defensive ditches, while a fortified dyke was dug from Tallaght to Saggart.¹²⁹⁹ Indicative of the confidence of the Irish of East Leinster and their alienation from the English archbishopric of Dublin and the government was their attempt to resurrect the dormant bishopric of Glendalough, which was granted papal approval in 1481.¹³⁰⁰ Clearly the main movers behind this attempt were Domhnall Riabhach and the O'Byrnes - indicating improving relations

¹²⁹⁴ M.A.Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, (Dundalk, 1998), p. 11. (hereafter Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*)

¹²⁹⁵ *Stat. Ire., 1-12 Edw IV*, p. 665. See also O'Clery, para.1744, p. 129. This is not the first time that O'Tooles had extended their protection to Anglo-Irish towns. In 1326 Malmorth O'Toole was appointed constable of the archbishopric's castle. Fynok O'Toole in 1338 was part of ward at Newcastle McKynegan maintained against the O'Byrnes. Later in 1355, Aodh O'Toole gave his protection to the people of Tallaght. In the same year, Seain (Sir John Ruadh)O'Toole, Hugh's brother, protected the English settlers of Imaal from O'Byrne. See O'Byrne, 'The Uí Bhroin of Co.Wicklow', pp 63, 65 and 68.

¹²⁹⁶ *Ibid*, pp 667-9.

¹²⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 665.

¹²⁹⁸ *Stat. Ire., 1-12 Edw IV*, p. 809. This coincides with Dublin Assembly's suspension in 1471 of the cereal trade with the Irish of Glendalough, see *Ancient Records of Dublin*, i, p. 347.

¹²⁹⁹ *Stat. Ire., 12-22 Edw IV*, pp 443-5. Much of the Irish ire was directed at the Walsh family. Most Walsh lands lay within the modern Dublin barony of Rathdown. During 1476-7 Maurice Walsh of Kilgobbin, complained that O'Byrne with Edmund mac Theobald ravaged his lands and demolished his castle of Jamestown, see *Stat. Ire., 12-22 Edw IV*, pp 517-9.

¹³⁰⁰ *Alen's Reg*, p. 245; *Cal. papal letters*, xiii, part 2, p. 744; O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 66-7.

between the O'Byrne and MacMurrough dynasties.¹³⁰¹ Yet in the face of such provocation, Kildare stuck to his task. One of his most innovative actions to combat Irish pressure was his creation of an embryonic standing force to punish their incursions. Thus, his parliament of 1471-2 granted him eighty archers for his retinue.¹³⁰² Indeed, Kildare displayed his own personal commitment, undertaking to maintain forty of the archers.¹³⁰³ Three years later Kildare's parliament went further, authorising the establishment of a permanent fighting force 'The Fraternity of St George', comprising of one hundred and sixty archers and sixty-three spearmen. And among its captains was Kildare's son - the young Gerald Fitzgerald.¹³⁰⁴ Kildare's fortification of the Pale must have limited the freedom of the Irish to raid the Pale. However, when they did penetrate the Pale defences, they were devastating. And most notably, it was Kildare's clients that suffered when they did. For example, the O'Byrnes and Edmund O'Toole in 1476 destroyed Jamestown Castle belonging to Maurice Walsh of Kilgobbin - described as Kildare's servant in 1467-8.¹³⁰⁵

In West Leinster, Kildare's task was no less daunting. As shown in the last chapter, Kildare after his 1458 defeat of Conn O'Connor Faly was slowly reestablishing Fitzgerald power over the west of his earldom. However, this was a dangerous process as evidenced by the earl's capture during Conn's 1466 victory. Then Kildare's alliance building came into play, as Conn's brother, Tadhg, Kildare's brother-in-law, freed him. And ironically at the time of Kildare and Desmond's arrest by Worcester in February 1468, Kildare's midland position improved. Then the Dunboyne Butlers delivered Conn to gaol, leaving Tadhg to establish himself. Also during Gerald of Desmond's devastation of Leinster for the execution of Desmond, Tadhg's actions showed him to be a dedicated Kildare

¹³⁰¹ The MacMurrough commitment to Glendalough is evident. It is mentioned in Alen's Reg that Diarmait MacMurrough was baptised in Glendalough See *Alen's Reg*, p. 38.; *Alen's Reg*, p. 245. On 11 December 1473 Archbishop John attempted to suppress Glendalough. A note on this document records '...This in favour of the King, when the see is vacant, and against McMorow altogether'. Domhnall Riabhach was the MacMurrough and Leinster king in 1473.

¹³⁰² *Stat. Ire., 1-12 Edw IV*, pp 715-7; Curtis, *Med Ire*, p. 334.

¹³⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 131-5.

¹³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xlv, pp 517-9, see also p. 445.

supporter. He joined the offensive upon Worcester's government that produced Kildare's release and eventual pardon.¹³⁰⁶ Doubtless Tadhg's alliance with Kildare was productive, increasing the rare stability on the earldom's western borders. But in 1471 Kildare somewhat surprisingly released Conn who determined to reclaim his place as ruler of Offaly. Because of his intention, civil war erupted in Offaly with Tadhg invoking the support of Kildare.¹³⁰⁷ However, Tadhg's death of plague late that year¹³⁰⁸ - probably resulted in a truce between Kildare and Conn.

In autumn 1474 Conn died, clearing the path for the succession of his son - Cathaoir O'Connor Faly.¹³⁰⁹ Cathaoir inherited a lordship in decline within a region whose balance had been lost with the Butler collapse of the early 1460s. Although in 1475 Cathaoir joined his cousin Aodh O'Donnell of Donegal to burn throughout Westmeath and Longford¹³¹⁰, his dynasty was fragmenting. Increasingly this O'Connor Faly division was personified in Cathaoir's brother - Art who cut out a fiefdom for himself. Such were Art's activities that Cathaoir imprisoned him briefly in 1476 because of his alliance with the Butlers of Dunboyne.¹³¹¹ But the absence of the stabilising influence of Ormond over the Irish and Anglo-Irish politics of the midlands, combined with the dawn of Kildare hegemony had profound effects upon this region. Furthermore, the three junior Butler branches were exposed to Kildare aggression under the guise of Yorkist government.¹³¹² In short, the absence of Ormond promoted infighting among his kinsmen that only further destabilised the region.¹³¹³ Also the differing attitudes of these Butler houses towards Kildare were illustrative of the inner confusion within their ranks. The Butlers of Dunboyne and Cahir alternated between being anti-Kildare to being neutral, while those of Polestown allied with the Kildares.¹³¹⁴ Although Earl John of Ormond

¹³⁰⁶ See previous chapter.

¹³⁰⁷ *AFM.*, iv, pp 1074-5.

¹³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 1070-1; *Ann Conn.*, pp 558-9.

¹³⁰⁹ *AFM.*, iv, pp 1086-7; Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly lordship of Offaly', p. 97.

¹³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 1094-5; Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly lordship of Offaly', p. 98.

¹³¹¹ Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly lordship of Offaly', p. 98; *Ann Conn.*, pp 278-9.

¹³¹² Empey, p. 308.

¹³¹³ *A.U.*, iii, pp 344-5. In 1489 Thomas fitzRichard Butler of Buolick killed by John fitzEdmund Butler; See also Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, pp 230-2.

¹³¹⁴ Empey, p. 334.

renounced all claims to the Kildare estates in 1475¹³¹⁵, and on 21 June that year was restored to his own¹³¹⁶ - the Kildares remained aggressive towards his brother and successor - Earl Thomas, 7th earl of Ormond.

After the death of Kildare on 25 March 1478¹³¹⁷, his son - Gerald - was elected to take his place as justiciar. This seamless passage of government office from father to son raised the eyebrows of Edward IV. That year he reversed Kildare's election - dispatching Lord Henry Grey to Ireland in July 1478 as lord deputy, arriving there in August.¹³¹⁸ Kildare was in no mood to relinquish his office, holding a parliament between May and September that extended government control over the Ormond earldom through an act of resumption as well as passing a similar bill in his 1479/80 parliament.¹³¹⁹ In any case, Grey's appointment was vigorously opposed by Kildare, but Grey managed to hold a parliament in November 1478 at Trim. Exasperated by Kildare's resistance, Grey embarked for England early in the new year - forcing Lord Gormanston to assume his office. Later Kildare travelled to London to see the king, resulting in his triumphant return as lord deputy later that year. About this time James fitzEdmund Butler of Polestown - Ormond's deputy - made a personal alliance with Kildare, fostering his son Piers then aged about eleven in the earl's household.¹³²⁰ Kildare's eagerness to foster the young Butler scion indicates clearly that he believed Piers would succeed to the Irish lands of Ormond.¹³²¹ However, Edward VI dismissed the acts of the rival parliaments of 1478, but allowed through those of the 1479/80 parliament, enabling Ormond to petition for the restoration of his Irish lands.¹³²² While it is unlikely that the return of the Ormond lands was Kildare's true ambition in guiding the acts of resumption through parliament, he recognised their potential value and was slow to restore Ormond's lands. Indeed, it took a letter from Edward IV, dated 6

¹³¹⁵ *C.O.D.*, iii, no. 213.

¹³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 242, pp 216-7; *Stat. Ire, 12-22 Edw IV*, pp 271-5.

¹³¹⁷ *AFM*, iv, pp 1104-5; *Ann Conn*, pp 578-9; *Grace*, p. 157.

¹³¹⁸ Lydon, *The Making of Ireland*, p. 112; S.Ellis, *Tudor Ireland* (Longman, 1985), p. 62. (hereafter Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*).

¹³¹⁹ *Stat. Ire, 12-22 Edw IV*, pp 673, 675, 685-95.

¹³²⁰ *C.O.D.*, iv, appendix, no. 53, pp 344-5.

¹³²¹ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, pp 241.

¹³²² *C.O.D.*, iii, no. 249, pp 234-5.

April 1481, ordering Kildare to restore Ormond's lands forthwith before he complied.¹³²³

Like his father, the most pressing problem for Kildare was the ability of the Irish of East Leinster to obstruct his governance of the English lordship. But the Kildare/Polestown alliance provided the earl with the key to unlock these difficulties. It could be argued that the alliance of the Kildare and the Polestown Butlers was as politically important as the formation of the earlier Butler/MacMurrough alliance. By hitching his family's fortunes to the Kildare star, James fitzEdmund of Polestown effectively sidelined his family's alliances with the O'Carrolls, O'Mores, O'Connor Falys and MacMurroughs. In effect, his action exposed them to growing Kildare aggression. In doing so, he may have exacted a measure of revenge for the studied neutrality in 1461-2 of his father-in-law - Domhnall Riabhach.¹³²⁴ Significantly, though, James fitzEdmund's alliance with the Kildares occurred after Domhnall Riabhach's death in 1476.¹³²⁵ Domhnall Riabhach's successor was James fitzEdmund's brother-in-law - Murchadh Ballach.¹³²⁶ His accession to the Leinster kingship coincided with the realignment of the Polestown Butlers. While Murchadh Ballach's marriage to Joan Butler of Polestown could have cushioned him from the worst of the impending Fitzgerald offensive, he was determined to oppose Kildare's power in East Leinster. As a result, Murchadh Ballach may have constructed a defensive league to combat Kildare, allying with Uaithne O'More and Cathaoir O'Connor Faly.¹³²⁷ Also he married his daughter, Onora, to the increasingly powerful lord of the Gabhal Raghnaill O'Byrnes - Réamain Garbh O'Byrne of Glenmalure.¹³²⁸ The reason why Murchadh Ballach drew Réamain Garbh into his camp is probably because the latter was at odds with the O'Byrnes of Knockrath - allies of the Kildares since the 1440s.¹³²⁹ Equally, this marriage may also indicate the beginning

¹³²³ *Ibid.*, no. 252, pp 243-4.

¹³²⁴ See previous chapter.

¹³²⁵ *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 1098-9; Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 99; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 31; For Domhnall Riabhach's seal, see J.Graves, 'Original Documents of the MacMurroughs', *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, vi (1883/4), p. 23.

¹³²⁶ *A.U.*, iii, pp 338-9; Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 99.

¹³²⁷ *Stat. Ire., 12-22 Edw IV*, p. 709

¹³²⁸ L.Price, 'Armed Forces of the Irish Chiefs in the early Sixteenth Century', *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, lxii (1932), pp 201-2. (hereafter Price, 'Armed Forces of the Irish Chiefs in the early Sixteenth Century'); Nicholls, 'The Genealogy of the Byrnes of Ranelagh', p. 108.

¹³²⁹ *Stat. Ire., Hen VI.*, p. 95. In 1447/8, a Shoane Glas Obyrn is mentioned in a list of the outlawed followers of Thomas fitzMaurice. He may be the father of *Donyll mcShanglays of*

of the gradual fragmentation of the O'Byrne lordship - suggesting that the more eastern-based O'Byrne overlords were losing control of their southern lands to the competing influence of the MacMurroughs and the Fitzgeralds.

Uaithne O'More¹³³⁰ and Cathaoir O'Connor Faly had good reason to ally with Murchadh Ballach. The late 1470s saw a dramatic increase in Kildare's presence along their respective borders. In Kildare during 1477 a tower was erected at Galmorestown¹³³¹, while Kildare's parliament of 1478 granted his father-in-law, Sir Roland Fitzeustace, a subsidy for the walling of Kilcullen and Calverstown.¹³³² Two years later Kildare's parliament gave 10 to Prior Nicholas of Connell to build a castle against the Irish at Bolablught.¹³³³ And later the parliament of 1480-1 authorised the sheriff of Kildare to empower the sergeants of each Kildare barony except Kilcullen, Naas, and half Norragh to take men for two days to block the O'Connor Faly routeway into the earldom.¹³³⁴ No doubt the O'More and O'Connor Faly lords were also deeply concerned by the Polestown/Kildare alliance. War between these competing interests was inevitable. And in 1479 Murchadh Ballach and these allies warred in southwestern Kildare against Sir Roland Fitzeustace.¹³³⁵ This conflict was a prelude to Kildare's offensive of 1480. Then a royal service was proclaimed in Kildare against the Irish.¹³³⁶ That September Kildare rode into the Leinster mountains, burning the O'Byrne lordship as well as seizing Leighlinbridge from Murchadh Ballach.¹³³⁷ While little is known about Kildare's offensive, it seems to have had been devastating. The parliament of 1481 casts some light upon the extent of Kildare's success, empowering the earl to take possession of vacant lands in Kildare and

Knocragh, who made a covenant on 1 August 1526 with the 9th earl of Kildare, see *Crown Surveys, 1540-1*, p. 266 This Donyll was the father of Aodh Dubh O'Byrne - the mortal enemy of Fiachaidh mac Aodha O'Byrne.

¹³³⁰ *Ann Conn*, pp 562-3. In 1473 O'More (probably Uaithne) was captured by MacGillpatrick. *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 1104-5; *Ann Conn*, pp 578-9.

¹³³¹ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 114.

¹³³² *Stat. Ire, 12-22 Edw IV*, pp 163-5; Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 114.

¹³³³ *Ibid*, 711; Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 114.

¹³³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 764-7.

¹³³⁵ *Ibid*, 709

¹³³⁶ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 400.

¹³³⁷ *Ancient Records of Dublin*, i, p. 357; O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 68-71; *The Annals of Ross*, p. 46; In 1481 Cathaoir MacMurrough killed by Anglo-Irish of the liberty of Wexford, see *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 1116-7; *A.U.*, iii, pp 276-7;

Carlow ‘...namely from Calverston to Carlow Castle and thence to Leighlin bridge which the Earl had recovered from the Irish’.¹³³⁸ From the evidence it seems that Kildare in the 1480s was also pushing down the east bank of the Slaney, establishing control before 1483 over Rathvilly and Clonmore Castles.¹³³⁹ Moreover, a document entitled ‘A description of the power of Irishmen’ dated to the 1480s/90s also mentions that Kildare recently conquered Carlow.¹³⁴⁰

In addition ‘A description of the power of Irishmen’ gives further indications of a substantial change in the military balance in Leinster. As has been shown in the previous two chapters, the military strength of the Leinster Irish was reliant upon large infusions of mercenaries drawn from Munster or Connacht. This source shows a massive influx of galloglass into Leinster during the 1480s/90 - giving one battle of galloglass each to the MacMurroughs, O’Byrnes, O’Connor Faly MacGillapatricks and O’Mores.¹³⁴¹ While the arrival of galloglass into the service of the Leinster lords coincided with the gradual break-up of the MacDonnell lordship of the Isles¹³⁴², the Kildares employed MacDonnell galloglass from 1466 at least¹³⁴³ - indicating that they were the first to import these forces into Leinster.¹³⁴⁴ This possibly tilted the balance decisively in Kildare’s favour, forcing the Leinster Irish to do likewise. It also suggests that Kildare’s growing power in West Leinster was cutting the mercenary trails into Leinster from Munster and Connacht. Or perhaps the populations of these old mercenary heartlands had fallen dramatically. But Kildare’s hammer blows of the early 1480s were not conclusive. Indeed, the continuing existence of the bishopric of Glendalough suggests that the Wicklow Irish had drawn the fire out of Kildare’s offensive. Equally, Kildare was probably prudent enough to

¹³³⁸ Curtis, *Med Ire*, p. 342; See *Alen's Reg*, p. 276. This preserves an act dating from Kildare's parliament of 1483, dealing with Kildare's conquest of Carlow. In this Kildare obtained a grant of the lands '...from the town of Calveston to the castle of Carlow, and so on to the bridge of Lechlyn'. Bryan, *Great Earl of Kildare*, pp 60-1. This also empowered the earl to appoint receivers over two thirds of all manors and rents of persistent absentees.

¹³³⁹ Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 65; *Idem*, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 120; Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 13.

¹³⁴⁰ Price, ‘Armed Forces of the Irish Chiefs in the early Sixteenth Century’, p. 203.

¹³⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 202;

¹³⁴² M.Lynch, *Scotland A New History* (London, 1992), p. 168; R.Nicholson, *Scotland The Later Middle Ages* (Edinburgh, 1974), p. 542.

¹³⁴³ *MacFirbis's Annals*, p. 258. During Kildare’s defeat in 1466 at the hands of Con O’Connor Faly, ‘John son to Mac-donell’ was killed.

¹³⁴⁴ Curtis, *Med Ire*, p. 341; *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1352-3.

take time to consolidate his gains, underpinning them with castles. In Kildare during 1484 he built Lackagh Tower and strengthened Kildare Castle.¹³⁴⁵ And perhaps as a reaction to Murchadh Ballach's recruiting of galloglass, Kildare checked his recovery by constructing a castle at Castledermot - reinforcing the budding Kildare suzerainty over north Carlow.¹³⁴⁶ While in West Leinster, Ó Cléirigh argues, the earl had achieved supremacy over the O'Connor Faly's - pointing to that fact that Cathaoir for his service accepted a blackrent of 40d a ploughland for Meath from Kildare's parliament of March 1485.¹³⁴⁷

A study of Kildare's activities to strengthen his earldom also shows that they were not all military in nature. Illustrating this point was Kildare's care to clearly establish legal title to lands lying on the fringes of his earldom as well as gaining title to lands in Irish possession. For instance, Kildare's first marriage to Alice Fitzeustace, daughter of Sir Roland Fitzeustace, achieved a jointure of estates in east Kildare, bordering the O'Toole upland territory of Imaal. Moreover, Kildare's union with Alice afforded him opportunity to extend his authority into their lands.¹³⁴⁸ In 1483, Kildare's parliament formally legalised his claims to absentee lands in the Irish lordships of Kildare, Carlow and west Wicklow. Although he encouraged absentees to return - few came. While the 1483 legislation may have been also originally designed to protect churchlands in the region, Kildare benefited from it. As a pretext to his advance into Wicklow, Kildare bought from the Dunboyne Butlers the mesne tenures of lands deep in O'Toole territory at Castlekevin, Coillache and Ballymore.¹³⁴⁹ Kildare's purchases within this region were to legally underpin his impending conquest there. And after the death of Archbishop Walton of Dublin in June 1484, Kildare flexed his muscle

¹³⁴⁵ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, pp 114, 119.

¹³⁴⁶ NAI, PRO 7/1 c.15 '... Gerot count de Kildare depute lieutenant Dirland est edifiant une chastell en Tresteldermote quele chastell edifie et perfourme voudra este la vray readepcion de toutz lez terrez gastez del counte de Cathirlagh de estre enhabitez ove lez subgittes le roy..' See also NLI, MS 8008 (ii); Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 119.

¹³⁴⁷ NAI, PRO 7/1 c.18; See S.Ellis, 'Parliament and great councils, 1483-99: addenda et corrigenda', *Anal. Hib* 29 (1980), p. 102; Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly lordship of Offaly', p. 98. In 1485 Art O'Connor Faly killed by Cathaoir, see *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 1136-7; *Ann Conn*, pp 588-9; In 1483 Kildare defeated by Aodh O'Donnell and Aodh Óg O'Neill of Clondeboy - Cathaoir O'Connor Faly's cousins - who burn Dundalk. See *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 1124-5.

¹³⁴⁸ C. Lennon, *Sixteenth Century Ireland: The Incomplete Conquest* (Dublin, 1994), p. 71 (hereafter Lennon, *Sixteenth Century Ire*).

¹³⁴⁹ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 121. Ellis mistakenly describes the Butlers of Dunboyne as those of Polestown. Kenneth Nicholls to Emmett O'Byrne (Letter November 1998).

- seizing twenty-four townlands belonging to the lordships of Ballymore and Castlekevin.¹³⁵⁰

The death of Edward IV in 1483 reinforced Kildare's government. However, Duke Richard of Gloucester, Edward IV's brother, deposed the new king - Edward V. Gloucester then imprisoned the king with his brother, Duke Richard of York, and took the crown as Richard III. He was eager to conclude an agreement with Kildare who dispatched John Estrete with proposals, including a request for the constablership of Wicklow Castle.¹³⁵¹ Richard III agreed to these terms but Kildare had to appear before him in August 1484. Kildare kept his word to appear but their agreement does not survive. Kildare used this approval to consolidate his power. Although Kildare incurred Edward IV's censure about his meddling within the Butler earldom in 1481, this did not prevent him from attempting to obtain two thirds of the profits accruing to Ormond from his earldom in 1484.¹³⁵² Moreover, Kildare in 1485 confirmed his alliance with the Polestown Butlers through the marriage of his daughter, Margaret, to Piers - the son of James fitzEdmund.¹³⁵³ This sealing of the Polestown/Kildare alliance was vitally important for the extension of the earl's power into West Leinster and the midlands. Indeed, Kildare's later expansion into this region went hand in glove with the approval of the Polestown Butlers. Indeed, the Kildares' later success in establishing their hegemony here was conditional upon the maintenance of this alliance. This marriage also suggests that Kildare was supporting the Polestown Butlers as an alternative within the Ormond earldom to the absent earl.¹³⁵⁴

¹³⁵⁰ *Alen's Reg.*, p. 262. See Bryan, *Great Earl of Kildare*, p. 31. Walton died 14 June 1484, see *N.H.I.*, ix, p. 311.

¹³⁵¹ Clarke, "The Black Castle, Wicklow", *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, vol.lxxiv, (1944), p. 7. See D.B.Quinn, "Aristocratic Autonomy, 1460-94", *N.H.I.*, ii, (ed.) A.Cosgrove (Oxford, 1993) p. 609 (hereafter Quinn, 'Aristocratic Autonomy, 1460-94'); Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 401.

¹³⁵² *C.O.D.*, iii, no. 261, pp 253-5.

¹³⁵³ Empey, p. 334; Curtis, *Med Ire*, p. 344; E.McKenna, 'A Political Role for Women in Medieval Ireland', in *The Fragility of Her Sex*, C.Meek and K.Simms (eds), (Dublin, 1996), pp 167-168. For the best account of the life of Piers Butler, read C.A.Empey, 'From rags to riches: Piers Butler, earl of Ormond, 1515-39', *Butler Soc Jn*, ii, no. 3 (1984).

¹³⁵⁴ *C.O.D.*, iii, no. 191, pp 175-6; In 1478 Richard Butler of Buolick killed by Fionnán MacGillpatrick at St Canice's Cathedral, see *Ann Conn*, pp 580-1; James fitzEdmund's brother, Walter, the sometime sheriff of Kilkenny, was married to Grainne - daughter of Uaithne O'More. See Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, pp 239, 241, 272.

However, Kildare's plans received a jolt when Richard III was swept from the throne in August 1485 by Henry Tudor. And in November 1485, Tudor, now Henry VII, passed an act of parliament - restoring Ormond to all his estates.¹³⁵⁵ Yet an open dispute between Ormond and his deputies was some way off. In 1486-7, it came. Then Lambert Simnel, a Yorkist pretender to the English throne, landed in Ireland and declared himself to be Edward VI's nephew - Earl Edward of Warwick. The real Earl Edward was a prisoner in the Tower of London. At this time Henry VII publicly exhibited Earl Edward in London to disprove Simnel's claims. As it was believed that Edward V and Duke Richard of York had been murdered in the Tower of London, Warwick was the leading Yorkist claimant to the English throne. And in an act of open defiance, Kildare and his fellow Yorkists accepted Simnel as Edward VI at Christchurch on 24 May 1487.¹³⁵⁶ On 4 June a force comprised of Yorkists and Irish troops sailed for England from Dublin. Among the pretender's army was Sir Thomas Fitzgerald - Kildare's brother - who was later killed fighting for Simnel's cause at Stoke on 16 June. Throughout the Simnel Crisis, the Polestown Butlers were unshakeable in their loyalty to Kildare - which must have proved embarrassing for Ormond. However, Mayor John Butler of Waterford, and many of the other Butlers and the O'Byrnes declared for Henry VII.¹³⁵⁷ Although James fitzEdmund died in April 1487, he left his commission as Ormond's deputy to his son - Piers.¹³⁵⁸ Significantly, Piers and his uncle - Sheriff Walter of Kilkenny - upheld the Kildare alliance. Most notably, Piers was appointed sheriff of Kilkenny by Edward VI (Simnel) on 13 August 1487 two months after the defeat of Stoke.¹³⁵⁹ But despite Henry VII's victory at Stoke, and Kildare's stubborn resistance until the end of the year, the king did not intervene in Ireland.¹³⁶⁰ Kildare eventually recognised the king's authority, confirming Piers's office as sheriff of Kilkenny on 20 March 1489 in Henry VII's name.¹³⁶¹

¹³⁵⁵ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, pp 241. The Butlers of Polestown over the previous decades had developed their position, increasing their landholdings in Kilkenny and thus their control over the county

¹³⁵⁶ Quinn, "Aristocratic Autonomy, 1460-94", pp 612-613.

¹³⁵⁷ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 403. See also *C.S.P.I, 1601-1603*, p. 669; *Cal. Carew MSS*, p. 473. Thanks to David Beresford; See also Empey, p. 335.

¹³⁵⁸ Curtis, *Med Ire*, p. 339; *C.O.D*, iii, nos 228, 298 nos 329; *AFM*, iv, pp 1142-3.

¹³⁵⁹ *C.O.D*, iii, no. 272, pp 261-2; Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 235.

¹³⁶⁰ Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, p. 403.

¹³⁶¹ *C.O.D*, iii, no. 274, pp 265-6.

Henry VII chose to bide his time and left Kildare as justiciar, but Ormond was anxious for change in his earldom.

However, Kildare's request in 1484 for Wicklow's constableness is significant, regarding his plans for the Irish of East Leinster. In asking for this, Kildare stated his intentions to conquer the O'Byrnes. Henry VII's acceptance of Kildare's submission and hence the status quo encouraged the earl to war in East Leinster. Indeed, increasing Fitzgerald pressure in East Leinster may have encouraged greater co-operation between the O'Byrnes and the MacMurroughs. And the O'Byrnes under Tadhg and later Gerald mac Dúnlaing proved durable. Instead of a direct attack upon the Irish of East Leinster, Kildare interfered within their political dynamics to further the extension of his overlordship. In Wicklow, he seemingly pushed the O'Tooles against the O'Byrnes. The O'Tooles for their part were in an unenviable position, lying directly in Kildare's path. As a result the O'Toole lord, Edmund, may have agreed to co-operate with Kildare. If so, his sometime alliance with the O'Byrnes ended - resulting in his death in 1488 at the hands of Tadhg's sons.¹³⁶² In spite of this, the O'Tooles /Fitzgerald alliance endured. Significantly, for the first time in the fifteenth century, an O'Toole was appointed archdeacon of Glendalough in 1491.¹³⁶³ More importantly, the O'Tooles during the Warbeck crisis of 1491-7 contributed no troops to government armies, while the O'Byrnes actively did. These incidents display that Kildare changed the political climate among the Wicklow Irish.

In the late 1480s opposition was mounting to Kildare's government and his alliance with the Polestown Butlers. After the death of his father in April 1487, Piers hoped to assume control of the Butler inheritance in Ireland. However, Ormond and his clients had other ideas. Clearly, Ormond was in contact with the Irish allies of his house. Indeed, Empey labels this confederation of Kildare's enemies

¹³⁶² *A.U.*, iii, pp 328-9.

¹³⁶³ *Cal. papal letters*, xv, p. 363. This archdeacon, Theobald O'Toole had noble parents, he plainly belonged to the O'Toole senior dynasty. Theobald O'Toole's predecessor Geoffrey was the last O'Byrne archdeacon of Glendalough. Still O'Byrnes dominated the majority of the offices and churches of the Glendalough diocese. This Theobald O'Toole does not appear in the list of the archdeacons of Glendalough in H.J.Lawlor, *The Fasti of St Patrick's Dublin* (Dublin, 1930), pp 83-91. (hereafter *The Fasti of St Patrick's*).

as the 'Anti Geraldine League'.¹³⁶⁴ During the Simnel Crisis of 1497, Seaán O'Carroll of Ely, the old Butler ally, wrote to Ormond, stating that he was opposed to Kildare and had recruited 200 galloglass. In addition he allied with the O'Briens, the MacWilliam Burkes, the MacDermots, the O'Kennedys, O'Dwyers, MacBrien of Coonagh, and Cormac MacCarthy Mór to resist Kildare. In his letter, O'Carroll told Ormond that he would also encourage O'More¹³⁶⁵ to war against '...your grette empney therle of kyldare and his maynteners'.¹³⁶⁶ The emergence of this Irish confederation in opposition to Kildare seems to have been a reaction to Kildare's encroachments into the midlands. In 1488 Kildare stamped his authority on the northern midlands, using artillery to force Muirheartach MacGeoghegan to surrender his castle.¹³⁶⁷ In the following year Desmond attacked the O'Carrolls, killing Seaán and routing his MacSweeney galloglass.¹³⁶⁸ Empey argues that Desmond's offensive was probably an attempt to destroy the 'Anti-Geraldine League'.¹³⁶⁹ Furthermore, the death of Joan Butler in 1489¹³⁷⁰ - the wife of Murchadh Ballach - effectively suspended ties between the provincial king and his nephew - Piers. However, this did not end the Ormond/MacMurrough alliance.¹³⁷¹ This growing opposition to Kildare was reflected among Murchadh Ballach's neighbours - the O'Byrnes. In 1490 Gerald mac Dúnlaing died, and was succeeded by his brother, Cathaoir, who proved bitterly opposed to Kildare.¹³⁷²

While Henry VII thought it fit to retain Kildare in office, he viewed him with intense suspicion. But fears of Kildare's involvement in the landing of another Yorkist pretender, Perkin Warbeck, on the

¹³⁶⁴ Empey, p. 336.

¹³⁶⁵ The O'More lord still seems to be Uaithne. In 1489 Uaithne's son, Ross, was killed by Cathaoir mac Laoiseach O'Dempsey see *AFM*, iv, pp 1166-7; *AU*, iii, pp 338-9. While Ruaidhri son of David O'More, described as Tanaiste of Laois, died naturally in the same year. See *AFM*, iv, pp 1166-7; *AU*, iii, pp 340-1. In 1489 Geoffrey mac Fionnán MacGillpatrick, king of Ossory, also died. See *AU*, iii, pp 338-9.

¹³⁶⁶ *C.O.D.*, iv, appendix no. 9, pp 315-6; Empey, p. 336.

¹³⁶⁷ *AFM*, iv, p. 1165.

¹³⁶⁸ Empey, p. 337; *AFM*, iv, pp 1166-7 see p. 1171 Murchadh and Maelmuire MacSweeney, clearly galloglass, were killed by Desmond that year.

¹³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷⁰ *AU*, iii, pp 338-9; Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 99.

¹³⁷¹ *AU*, iii, pp 329-31. There were signs of turmoil within the MacMurrough overlordship in 1488. Then Mahon son of O'Murphy, lord of Uí Féilime, was killed by Donnchadh Kinsella.

¹³⁷² *Ibid.*

Cork coast in November 1491, goaded the king to action.¹³⁷³ Warbeck claimed to be Duke Richard of York, Richard III's prisoner. Henry VII suspicious of Kildare's involvement, acted. On 6 December 1491, the king appointed Sir James Ormond and Captain Thomas Garth as commanders of a royal army to crush the rebels in the counties of Kilkenny and Tipperary, allowing them to act without reference to Kildare.¹³⁷⁴ In effect, the king's decree removed the Ormond earldom from his governor's jurisdiction. Henry VII's action now encouraged Ormond to begin the reform of his earldom. Without doubt Piers's support of Simnel during 1487 angered the earl.¹³⁷⁵ And accordingly he reinforced the position of Sir James, appointing him on 7 December by the king's licence as his deputy and attorney in Kilkenny and Tipperary.¹³⁷⁶ Earl Thomas's choice of deputy enraged Piers, threatening the position he and his family had built. Sir James was the illegitimate son of Earl John of Ormond and Ragnailt O'Brien and therefore a nephew of the 7th earl. He was fostered in the house of Morgan (Máelruanaidh?) O'Carroll,¹³⁷⁷ and upon his arrival in Ireland he found a ready made support base in the O'Briens, MacWilliam Burkes, and O'Carrolls.¹³⁷⁸ With them Sir James campaigned throughout the Ormond earldom and Leinster, subduing the Butlers and taking hostages from the Leinster Irish.¹³⁷⁹ His actions infuriated Piers as he regarded himself as the earl's rightful deputy.¹³⁸⁰ These campaigns isolated the Poletown Butlers, as those of Dunboyne and Cahir recognised Sir James as Ormond's deputy. It was probably at this time that Sir James captured and imprisoned Piers.¹³⁸¹ In June 1492 Kildare and Sir Roland Fitzeustace were removed by Garth from their positions as lord deputy and treasurer.¹³⁸² *The Four Masters* illustrate a familiar reaction, stating that '... as soon as the Earl abandoned them, they were universally plundered and burned from every quarter'.¹³⁸³ In their place

¹³⁷³ Quinn, 'Aristocratic Autonomy, 1460-94', p. 616.

¹³⁷⁴ *CPR, 1485-94*, p. 367.

¹³⁷⁵ Beresford, *The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405-1515*, p. 243.

¹³⁷⁶ *CCR, 1485-1500*, no. 580.

¹³⁷⁷ *C.O.D.*, iv, appendix no. 15, pp 319-20.

¹³⁷⁸ Empey, p. 340.

¹³⁷⁹ *AFM.*, iv, pp 1196-7.

¹³⁸⁰ Empey, p. 341.

¹³⁸¹ *C.O.D.*, iv, appendix, no. 31, p. 332.

¹³⁸² Quinn, 'Aristocratic Autonomy, 1460-94', p. 616; *AFM.*, iv, pp 1197-9.

¹³⁸³ *AFM.*, iv, p. 1199.

Archbishop Fitzsimons became lord deputy, while Sir James became treasurer and governor.

Relations between Kildare and Sir James worsened because of the earl's support of Piers.¹³⁸⁴ The arrival of Sir James threatened the Kildare hegemony in Leinster. And significantly, it was in the vital midland theatre that their struggle was centred. Ormond and Garth's campaigns undermined Kildare's position as head of his affinity. In winter 1492 Ormond and Garth successfully attacked Cathaoir O'Connor Faly and hanged his son - An Calbhach.¹³⁸⁵ Kildare's response was quick and brutally effective. Indeed, Ó Cléirigh argues that Kildare's capture of Garth and his hanging of his son was completely in line with the obligations owed by an overlord to a vassal.¹³⁸⁶ Kildare's edginess is further revealed in 1492, when his followers killed the unfortunate Conn O'Connor Faly after he had thrown a pole in jest at the earl.¹³⁸⁷ More traces of Sir James's struggle with Kildare can be also detected in neighbouring Ely. In 1492/3 Morgan (Máelruanaidh) O'Carroll wrote to Henry VII, complaining that Kildare and perhaps the O'Byrnes or the O'Brennans had devastated his lordship because he supported Sir James as the king directed.¹³⁸⁸ However, Kildare's exclusion from government by the king's wish remained. In 1493 Kildare's ruthless extension of his power in Leinster continued. That year he directly interfered among the O'Mores of Laois, who given their past were probably allied to Ormond's deputy. Then the earl's troops killed their lord - Conall mac David - at Kilberry Castle in Kildare before making Niall mac Domhnaill lord of Laois.¹³⁸⁹ Also that year Kildare directed an attack upon the MacMurroughs, but Murchadh Ballach

¹³⁸⁴ Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 10.

¹³⁸⁵ *AFM.*, iv, pp 1194-5.

¹³⁸⁶ Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly lordship of Offaly', p. 99; *Ann Conn*, pp 594-5; Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 73.

¹³⁸⁷ *AFM.*, iv, pp 1190-1.

¹³⁸⁸ *C.O.D.*, iv, appendix no. 15, p. 320. In this text Kildare's allies are known as the 'Brenenses' Maelruanaidh O'Carroll later married Kildare's sister - Joan. See Curtis, *Med Ire*, p. 338; For Maelruanaidh's pedigree see O'Clery, para 2045, p. 158; T.Vennings, 'The O'Carrolls of Offaly: Their Relations with the Dublin Authorities in the Sixteenth Century', In Wm Nolan and P.O'Neill (eds), *Offaly: History and Society* (Dublin, 1998), p. 182. (hereafter Vennings, 'The O'Carrolls of Offaly').

¹³⁸⁹ *AFM.*, iv, pp 1201-3; *A.U.*, iii, pp 370-1. This Niall mac Domhnaill O'More may be the son of the king that died in 1467, see *AFM.*, iv, pp 1054-5; *Ann Conn*, pp 542-3 and Ó Cuiv, 'A Fragment of the Irish Annals', *Celticia*, xiv, p. 97.

beat him off.¹³⁹⁰ As a consequence of earl's behaviour, Sir James launched a devastating attack upon his earldom, burning Kildare town itself.¹³⁹¹

The king could not allow this anarchy to continue. When Archbishop Fitzsimons resigned his lord deputyship to Lord Gormanston in September 1493, Henry VII appointed his son, Duke Henry of York, lord lieutenant. And on 13 October 1495, Sir Edward Poynings, Duke Henry's deputy, landed in Ireland with a expeditionary force - enjoying successes against the O'Hanlons. Yet strong suspicions lingered of Kildare's incitement of his clients and of covert collusion with O'Hanlon. In late February 1495 Poynings arrested him, sending him to England in March.¹³⁹² Sir James Fitzgerald, Kildare's brother, then seized Carlow Castle, displaying Kildare's banner.¹³⁹³ In response, Poynings's parliament (1 December 1494 - February 1495) attainted both Fitzgerald brothers.¹³⁹⁴ In November, Kildare was charged with encouraging O'Hanlon's resistance as well as of prompting his brother's rebellion.¹³⁹⁵ Kildare's transportation to England completely changed the dynamics between the Irish and the Kildares. Earlier in June, Warbeck besieged Waterford but Poynings broke the siege in August, forcing the pretender to flee into Desmond. He was later captured in 1498 and executed the next year.¹³⁹⁶

Against this disturbed background the government sought friends among the Leinster nobility. A Franciscan friar was dispatched to spy on the O'Byrnes and to ascertain the views of Cathaoir mac

¹³⁹⁰ *AU*, iii, pp 370-1. Murchadh Ballach killed Gerald the lame who was of the Fitzgerald branch of MacThomas. For this family, see D. B. Quinn, 'Irish Ireland and English Ireland', *NHI*, ii, (ed.) A. Cosgrove, (Oxford, 1993), p. 634. Gerald the lame's father was the John MacThomas killed by Con O'Connor Faly in 1466. See *AFM*, iv, pp 1042-3. Their descendants became the Fitzgeralds of Ballysonan - a family that regularly served in the sixteenth century as sheriffs of County Kildare. For their feud with Fiachaidh mac Aodha O'Byrne and his sons between 1570s-1600s, see Chapter 6b.

¹³⁹¹ *AFM*, iv, pp 1206-7.

¹³⁹² D.B. Quinn, 'The hegemony of the earls of Kildare, 1494-1520', in *NHI*, ii, (ed.) A. Cosgrove, (Oxford, 1993), p. 641. (hereafter, Quinn, 'The Kildare hegemony, 1494-1520').

¹³⁹³ Gilbert, *Viceroy*, p. 454; *AFM*, iv, pp 1210-1. Sir James Fitzgerald is mentioned burning Meath in 1494. This reference must pertain to 1495.

¹³⁹⁴ D.B. Quinn, 'The Bills and Statutes of the Irish Parliaments of Henry VII and Henry VIII', *Anal. Hib*, x, (1941), p. 94. See also Idem, 'The Early Interpretation of Poynings' Law, 1494-1534', *I.H.S.*, ii, no. 7, (March, 1941), pp 241-55.

¹³⁹⁵ Gilbert, *Viceroy*, p. 454.

¹³⁹⁶ J. Ridley, *Henry VIII*, (London, 1984), p. 20.

Dúnlaing. The friar's report must have been favourable as the Dublin Council sent messengers to him, asking him to campaign against the Fitzgeralds.¹³⁹⁷ Instead of joining Kildare's supporters, Cathaoir O'Connor Faly like Murchadh Ballach aligned himself with Sir James. And for their persecution of the Kildares throughout the latter half of 1495, they jointly earned £43 6s 8d and a further £4 13s 3d by March 1496.¹³⁹⁸ Also at some point during 1495 with the help of Cathaoir and Edmund Butler of Dunboyne, Sir James retook Carlow but Sir James Fitzgerald escaped.¹³⁹⁹ Moreover in the Dublin marches, Theobald Walsh and the Harolds organised forces to resist the rebels, while Edmund Butler of Dunboyne led a campaign into Wicklow, capturing Art mac Edmund O'Toole - a Kildare client.¹⁴⁰⁰ Even Murchadh Ballach's brother - Gerald MacMurrough - who was married to Kildare's natural sister¹⁴⁰¹, sided with Sir James and was given the custody of Carlow Castle.¹⁴⁰²

But after the death of Gerald MacMurrough in early 1496, Poynings entrusted Carlow Castle to Murchadh Ballach and Cathaoir O'Connor Faly. But the service of the MacMurroughs, O'Connor Falys and O'Byrnes fell victim to high politics. By summer 1496, Kildare was back in favour as nothing was proved against him. Moreover, Henry VII came round to the realisation that Kildare was the only Anglo-Irish magnate capable of governing Ireland in his name, and was a considerably cheaper option than direct intervention. Thus, a new concord was sealed between Kildare and Henry VII. Kildare was restored to the deputyship, and granted any crown lands he could

¹³⁹⁷ Conway, *Henry VII, Scot & Ire.*, p. 84. citing accounts of William Hattecliffe, under treasurer of Ireland, 1495-6 (BL, Royal MS C XIV, ff 133-44). Cathaoir mac Dúnlaing may have been in government service in 1494. To influence his decision, a length of velvet was presented to his wife. A common problem is the mistaken labelling of O'Byrnes as O'Briens; Gilbert, *Viceroy*s, pp 457-8.

¹³⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 173.

¹³⁹⁹ Gilbert, *Viceroy*s, p. 458. Carlow Castle was entrusted to Gerald Cavanach by the government. See Quinn, 'The Kildare hegemony, 1494-1520', pp 641-2; Conway, *Henry VII, Scot & Ire.*, pp 75, 156.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 73. See also Gilbert, *Viceroy*s, pp 610-1. This is an account of Garth's Leinster command in 1496, see Conway, *Henry VII, Scot & Ire.*, pp 196-7; Poyning's Parliament declared that Wicklow castle should have a English born constable, see Quinn, 'The Kildare hegemony, 1494-1520', pp 640-1.

¹⁴⁰¹ Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov, 1981), fn. 9, p. 190; For Gerald and his Kildare's wife's parentage of the later Cathaoir MacInnycross MacMurrough See Kenneth Nicholls to Emmett O'Byrne (Letter, November 1998); Also Cathaoir MacInnycross is described as Cahir McGerald upon his accession to the Leinster kingship in 1531, see Dowling, *Annals*, p. 35.

¹⁴⁰² James Gairdner (ed.), *Letters and Papers of Richard III and Henry VII* (2 vols, London, 1861-3), ii, pp 303-6; Conway, *Henry VII, Scot & Ire.*, pp 230-2.

reconquer from the Irish.¹⁴⁰³ A fresh mark of the king's favour was Kildare's new wife Elizabeth St John, the king's cousin. These new conditions ended the war of Sir James Fitzgerald, who submitted in July 1496. Kildare landed in Ireland in mid-September 1496. Characteristically he was quickly in the saddle, taking pledges from both Anglo-Irish and northern Irish lords at Drogheda and Dundalk. In Leinster there was resistance. Kildare retook Carlow from Murchadh Ballach and Cathaoir after two attempts before embarking on a circuit throughout Leinster.¹⁴⁰⁴ Bereft of protection and without an option, Murchadh Ballach, Cathaoir mac Dúnlaing, Cathaoir, O'More, and O'Dempsey dispatched their envoys to make submissions on their behalf at Dublin during October 1496.¹⁴⁰⁵

However, their submissions signalled the beginning of the restoration of the Kildare hegemony in West Leinster and the midlands. Two incidents set the seal upon the resurrection of Kildare's power in the midlands. First was the murderous removal of the threat of Sir James by Piers on 17 July 1497.¹⁴⁰⁶ Secondly, Kildare on 28 January 1498 successfully petitioned Ormond to reappoint Piers as his deputy, restoring the Polestown/Kildare pact to full health.¹⁴⁰⁷ Now Kildare was free to pursue the establishment of an effective overlordship in Leinster, attacking the O'Mores who were now probably led by Máelsechlainn mac Uaithne.¹⁴⁰⁸ But before the end of the fifteenth century, Kildare enforced his suzerainty over them, recovering the castles of Lea, Morett and Dunamase.¹⁴⁰⁹ The only major problem on the midland horizon was the emergence of the powerful Toirdhealbhadh Donn O'Brien of Thomond, Sir James's cousin. In 1499 he revenged his cousin - defeating Piers.¹⁴¹⁰ In East Leinster, though, Kildare, supported by Henry VII's approval and royal resources, systematically conquered the O'Tooles and O'Byrnes,

¹⁴⁰³ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 119.

¹⁴⁰⁴ Conway, *Henry VII, Scot & Ire.*, p. 232-4.

¹⁴⁰⁵ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 72-3; Conway, *Henry VII, Scot & Ire.*, pp 232-5; Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 86; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 33; Curtis, *Med Ire*, p. 356.

¹⁴⁰⁷ *C.O.D.*, iv, appendix, no. 35, p. 335; Conway, *Henry VII, Scot & Ire.*, p. 240.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Fitzgerald, 'Historical Notes on the O'Mores', Appendice x. His date of death is given as 1502. There is a picture of his tomb in K. Jefferies and T. Bartlett (eds) *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 113.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 120; Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Order', p. 213; Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 65.

¹⁴¹⁰ *AU*, iii, p. 438-9; For the death of Edmund Butler of Dunboyne, see *AU*, iii, pp 440-1; Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 88; Empey, p. 352.

expelling them from the territories of Fercullen and Ferter that adjoined the southern Pale. Kildare's first major incursion into Wicklow was probably in 1497. That year, *The Four Masters* records that the O'Byrnes killed O'Hanlon's son - Kildare's ally. This suggests that Kildare used his Irish clients to attack the Wicklow Irish.¹⁴¹¹ It also seems hardly a coincidence that the bishopric of Glendalough ceased to exist that year. Bishop Denis White of Glendalough in May resigned his office before Kildare's chancellor, Archbishop Fitzsimons¹⁴¹², while Geoffrey Fyche, a high ranking official of the archbishopric, was appointed archdeacon of Glendalough.¹⁴¹³ White's resignation may indicate that Kildare's offensive had greatly weakened the bishop's patrons - the O'Byrnes and the MacMurroughs. Glendalough's bishopric could have provided a focus for resistance. It is likely that Kildare influenced Bishop White's decision.¹⁴¹⁴

By 1500 Kildare's conquest of the Wicklow Irish was well under way. Indeed, Toirdhealbhach mac Airt O'Toole in a petition of 1540 to Henry VIII confirmed that Kildare had conquered Wicklow forty years earlier.¹⁴¹⁵ And in order to establish a stable buffer zone between the Irish heartlands and southern Pale, Kildare recovered and garrisoned Fassaroe and Castlekevin castles.¹⁴¹⁶ Testifying to his determination to enforce his conquest, Kildare built Powerscourt Castle by 1500 at the expense of 4,000 or 5,000 marks.¹⁴¹⁷ In addition before 1513 he enforced his hegemony over the O'Tooles, settling his MacDonnell galloglass and their commander, James Boyce, near Baltyboys in West Wicklow.¹⁴¹⁸ Furthermore he regularly

1411 *AFM.*, iv, pp 1236-7.

1412 *Alen's Reg.* pp 253-4.

1413 *The Fasti of St Patrick's*, p. 88. Fyche was still archdeacon in 1508. See Christchurch Deeds, in 20th *D.K.R.* (1888), no.386, p. 108.

1414 *N.H.J.*, ix, p. 313. See *Cal papal letters*, xvii, part 1, no. 579, pp 372-373. The pope continued to appoint Italians as bishops of Glendalough. It is unlikely they ever arrived in Ireland. Notably Archbishop Fitzsimons never raised any objections to Kildare's occupation of church lands. After both men died, significant discord emerged between their successors concerning these lands; *Alen's Reg.* p. 262. See Price, *Placenames*, p. lxxxii.

1415 J. Morrin (ed.), *Cal.Pat.Rolls Ire.*, i, (Dublin, 1861), no. 109, pp 80-81 (hereafter *Cal.Pat.Rolls Ire.*); Landsdowne MSS 159, f.13. Thanks to Fiona Fitzsimons.

1416 Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 13.

1417 *S. P., Hen VIII, 1515-38*, no. xviii, p. 264; L.Price, 'Powerscourt and the Territory of Fercullen', *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, lxxxiii (1953), pp 117-20.

1418 L.Price, 'Placename Study as Applied to History', *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, lxxiv (1949), pp 26-9.

levied impositions and military service upon the Irish.¹⁴¹⁹ Kildare's conquest possibly forced the O'Tooles to retreat to their old Imaal heartland - a retreat that probably contributed to later O'Toole feuding.¹⁴²⁰ During Kildare's conquest, the cohesiveness of the O'Byrne dynasty began to shatter. In 1500 Cathaoir mac Dúnlaing was assassinated by some of his kinsmen who may have been anxious to come to terms with Kildare.¹⁴²¹ The killing of Cathaoir mac Dúnlaing marked the effective extension of Kildare's overlordship over the entire Wicklow region, representing the fatal weakening of the military integrity of the senior O'Byrne dynasty. A case in point is the confusion surrounding the identities of the O'Byrne overlords until Tadhg mac Gerald O'Byrne of Kiltimon's indenture of January 1536 with Lord Deputy Leonard Grey.¹⁴²² Illustrating the extent of the O'Byrne decline is the ease with which Kildare punished the O'Byrnes for their looting of Robert Suttrell's shipwrecked cargo off Wicklow between 1510-3. Indeed, the O'Byrnes had the active assistance of John Dryman, Kildare's constable of Wicklow, in relieving Suttrell of his goods. However, Kildare, after hearing Suttrell's complaints, marched into O'Byrne territory and arrested the unknown O'Byrne overlord's son for his part in the larceny.¹⁴²³ The unknown O'Byrne overlord died shortly afterwards and was succeeded by a unidentified kinsman, indicating the extent of Kildare's dominance.

On the other hand, Murchadh Ballach managed with difficulty to maintain himself. Indeed, he was strong enough to secure the abbacy of Duiske for his son - Cathaoir.¹⁴²⁴ In 1503 Kildare after his return from England, he demonstrated his power over the Leinster Irish, compelling them to join him on campaign in Antrim.¹⁴²⁵ It is unknown whether Murchadh Ballach was part of this campaign but it angered him that Kildare's power undermined his provincial kingship. In fact, Murchadh Ballach in August 1504 travelled to Galway to join a confederation of Kildare's enemies. The constitution of this anti Kildare confederation was decidedly midland in character, including

1419 G. MacNiocaill (ed.), *Crown Survey of Lands 1540-1: with the Kildare Rental* (Dublin, 1992), pp 266, 325-6, 335, & 339. (hereafter *Crown Surveys of Lands 1540-1*).

1420 *AFM.*, v, pp 1338-9.

1421 *A.U.*, iii, pp 448-9.

1422 *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, no. 72, pp 88-9.

1423 *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, i, no. 297, pp 84-5.

1424 Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 100.

1425 *AFM.*, v, pp 1270-1. On this expedition they demolished the castle of Belfast.

Máelruanaidh O'Carroll, the O'Brien and O'Kennedy lords of Arra and Ormond. However, these forces along with Murchadh Ballach, Toirdhealbhach Donn O'Brien and Ulick Burke were defeated on 19 August by Kildare at Knockdoe.¹⁴²⁶ Indeed, Kildare brought large contingents of Leinster Irish to this battle - most notably Cathaoir O'Connor Faly.¹⁴²⁷ After this reverse Murchadh Ballach seemingly accepted Kildare's suzerainty to his death in 1511/2, as did his successor - Art Buidhe - Domhnall Riabhach's son.¹⁴²⁸ The Kildares took full advantage of Murchadh Ballach's part in the Knockdoe defeat, buying lands between 1508-26 in the Wexford manors of Fasaghbentry, Deeps and Old Ross.¹⁴²⁹ In addition, Kildare also held Clonogan Castle (Wogan's Castle) on east bank of the Slaney. Other purchases included Drumroe Castle at Mount Loftus County Kilkenny and Kildare even settled a sympathetic MacMurrough branch there.¹⁴³⁰ Moreover, Kildare's dominance over East Leinster effectively ended the great rivalry of the O'Byrnes and the MacMurroughs.

It was always the inherent instability of the critical midland theatre that threatened to unravel Kildare's overlordship. Throughout much of the first decade of the century, the earl's position was unassailable as evidenced by his encouragement of the O'Connor Falys to batter the MacGeoghegans into submission.¹⁴³¹ Kildare was at the height of his powers in 1510, bringing the Leinster Irish on campaign in Munster. In spite of successes against the MacCarthys, the O'Briens inflicted a significant reverse on Kildare's forces in Limerick.¹⁴³² There can be no doubt this was a decisive moment in earl's career, sending shockwaves through his Irish clients. And

¹⁴²⁶ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 33; *A.L.C.*, ii, pp 208-9; *Grace*, p. 157; Empey, p. 337; *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1276-7. In 1503 Theobald Burke son of Walter Burke of Clanwilliam was killed by Donnchadh O'Carroll and Conchobhar O'Dwyer, see *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1268-9.

¹⁴²⁷ *Ann Conn*, pp 608-9; Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly lordship of Offaly', p. 100.

¹⁴²⁸ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 33; *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1310-1; K.W.Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 100; H.F.Hore, 'The Rental Book of Gerald Fitzgerald Began in 1518', *Journal of the Kilkenny and Southeast of Ireland Archaeological Society*, iv (Dublin, 1864), p. 118. Murchadh Ballach may be the Morogh Ballagh who paid dues to the Kildares for lands in north Wexford and Carlow. Indeed, Hore also suggests this possibility see fn. 2, p. 119; See *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1342-3 for the obit of Art Buidhe.

¹⁴²⁹ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 120.

¹⁴³⁰ Quinn, 'Irish Ireland and English Ireland', p. 635; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 35; Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov, 1981), p. 193, see also fn. 35.

¹⁴³¹ Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly lordship of Offaly', p. 100; *Crown Surveys, 1540-1*, p. 119.

¹⁴³² *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1304-7; *A.L.C.*, ii, p. 208-9; *Ann Conn*, p. 614-5.

unsurprisingly it was in West Leinster and the midlands that cracks first began to appear in Kildare's pedestal. By 1511 trouble was rife there. Indeed, Kildare's response to the threat to his midland hegemony underlines his concern, mirroring his actions of 1492-4. As Fitzsimons points out: '*...control of the midlands secured control of the direct routes from the Pale to Connacht and Munster. The ability to move a hosting rapidly from one end of the country to another was essential to Kildare's authority as deputy and his political influence as a magnate*'.¹⁴³³ In 1511 he supported the assassination of Cathaoir O'Connor Faly by his cousins - An Calbhach and Brian O'Connor Faly.¹⁴³⁴ Two years later Kildare faced trouble from a combination of the O'Mores and O'Carrolls. In August that year Kildare's artillery failed to reduce Maelruanaidh O'Carroll's castle of Leap, forcing the earl to return to Kildare for reinforcements.¹⁴³⁵ But on his return journey, Kildare was shot by the O'Mores.¹⁴³⁶ His wound proved fatal, causing his death on 3 September 1513. Kildare's shaky dominance over the Leinster Irish was passed to his son Gerald - 9th earl of Kildare.¹⁴³⁷ And on 4 September Gerald was elected justiciar by the Dublin Council - an appointment confirmed by Henry VIII on 26 November.¹⁴³⁸

The new Kildare earl's first priority was reestablish his dynasty's position in West Leinster and the midlands.¹⁴³⁹ This restoration of the Kildare overlordship began during September 1513. In the traditional Irish manner, Kildare then distributed gifts of *tuarastal* in the form of armour and horses amongst the midland lords such as the MacGillapatricks, O'Dempseys, O'Connor Falys and Giollapádraig O'More.¹⁴⁴⁰ Also sometime that year Piers with the MacMurroughs and O'Carrolls, burnt Desmond's lands in the Limerick territory of Connelloe.¹⁴⁴¹ This would indicate that Piers

¹⁴³³ Fitzsimons, 'The Lordship of O'Connor Faly, 1520-70', p. 208

¹⁴³⁴ *AFM.*, v, pp 1308-9; *AU.*, iii, pp 494-5; Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 100; Fitzsimons, 'The Lordship of O'Connor Faly, 1520-70', p. 208; Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly lordship of Offaly', p. 100.

¹⁴³⁵ *AFM.*, v, pp 1326-7.

¹⁴³⁶ Lydon, *The Making of Ireland*, p. 124; Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 9.

¹⁴³⁷ *N.H.I.*, viii, (Oxford, 1982), p. 185; *Grace*, p. 157;

¹⁴³⁸ Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 21.

¹⁴³⁹ Fitzsimons, 'The Lordship of O'Connor Faly, 1520-70', p. 208.

¹⁴⁴⁰ *Crown Surveys of Lands 1540-1*, p. 319. In September 1515 Domhnall O'More accepted a horse from Kildare, see *ibid.*, p. 332. In September 1517 Laoiseach O'More accepted a horse from the earl, see *ibid.*, p. 327.

¹⁴⁴¹ *AU.*, iii, pp 506-7.

used the death of the elder Kildare to strengthen his position with the traditional Irish allies of his house. However, Kildare in 1514 made his first substantive effort to shore up his midland affinity, attacking the O'Mores - capturing Cullentragh Castle and Abbeyleix. While Kildare suffered some losses, it is clear that he subdued the O'Mores as Giollapádraig O'More accepted the earl's *tuarastal* that September.¹⁴⁴² Kildare also lent his support to Piers to drive off Desmond and the O'Carrolls.¹⁴⁴³ In spite of Kildare and Piers's success¹⁴⁴⁴, the O'Carrolls still extracted a blackrent from the Anglo-Irish of Tipperary and Kilkenny in 1515.¹⁴⁴⁵

Trouble, however, loomed on the horizon for Kildare. Indeed, the events of 1515 concerned Kildare. From that year Kildare's stewardship of Tudor Ireland increasingly fell under closer official scrutiny. Indeed, Henry VIII and his advisers gradually began to see Kildare as an obstacle to reform.¹⁴⁴⁶ That year a serious body of criticism emerged from within the Dublin government.¹⁴⁴⁷ The most prominent of these dissidents was Sir Thomas Darcy of Platten. Darcy had been a loyal supporter of Kildare's father and served as deputy treasurer between 1504-13. However, Darcy did not enjoy the same intimacy with the new earl. Indeed, Kildare shortly after his election to the justiciarship in September 1513 removed Darcy from office and from the council.¹⁴⁴⁸ Another of Kildare's sharpest critics was Robert Cowley - a Kilkenny lawyer. In May Kildare arrived at the court of Henry VIII. There a consortium of his enemies led by Darcy blamed the decline of the English lordship on Kildare and the king's neglect.¹⁴⁴⁹ More seriously, Darcy before the English Council on 24 June accused Kildare of making war and peace against the Irish without the Dublin Council's consent, as well as extracting coign and livery upon the Pale.¹⁴⁵⁰ Kildare's enemies created the impression

¹⁴⁴² Ibid, pp 512-3; The son of Toirdhealbhach Óg MacDonnell, Kildare's constable of galloglass was killed in 1514 by the O'Mores. *Ann Conn*, pp 624-5; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 33; *Crown Surveys of Lands 1540-1*, p. 331. This Giollapádraig may have succeeded Máelsechlainn, who died in 1502.

¹⁴⁴³ Ibid; *A.L.C.*, ii, pp 220-1.

¹⁴⁴⁴ Ibid; *A.L.C.*, ii, p. 218-9.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Nicholls, *Gae Ire.*, p. 167.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p.102.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 29.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 30.

¹⁴⁵⁰ *Carew MSS 1515-74*, no. 2, p. 6.

that he was subverting royal government to further his own ends.¹⁴⁵¹ It was also alleged that the earl had tried to usurp the crown's judicial, military, and fiscal powers within his own earldom.¹⁴⁵² While the king listened, he dismissed their charges and affirmed his confidence in Kildare, confirming him as deputy.¹⁴⁵³

The death in August of Ormond, presented Kildare with a potentially poisonous chalice. In December the king gave the Ormond lands in Ireland, Wales, and England to Ormond's daughters, Anne St Leger and Margaret Boleyn. However, Kildare and the Dublin Council on 6 April 1516 gave Ormond's Irish estates to Piers.¹⁴⁵⁴ In July, however, Henry VIII instructed Kildare to support the daughters's claims against Piers.¹⁴⁵⁵ Although there was considerable advantages for Kildare in Piers's succession, he was compelled to support Margaret Boleyn's son - Thomas.¹⁴⁵⁶ If he did not - Kildare risked losing the support of Henry who became successively involved with Thomas's daughters - Mary and Anne Boleyn. The case was again heard by the Dublin Council during the Michaelmas term of 1516, but was suspended until the king issued further instructions - leaving Piers in possession of the Irish lands.¹⁴⁵⁷ At first, the controversy did not harm the Kildare/Polestown axis. This was because their mutual interests were rooted in each other's success. Kildare needed Piers's goodwill if he was to reassert his father's midland overlordship. Equally, Piers required his brother-in-law's aid, if he was to enforce his claims to the Ormond earldom. During 1516 Kildare defeated their mutual enemy - Máelruanaidh O'Carroll - taking Leap Castle.¹⁴⁵⁸ Indeed, Piers's predicament was highlighted when Edmond Butler of Cahir that year successfully defied him.¹⁴⁵⁹ In 1517, the Kildare /Polestown alliance proved too strong for their opponents. Then Kildare quashed Máelruanaidh O'Carroll after he attacked his

¹⁴⁵¹ Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 102.

¹⁴⁵² Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 30.

¹⁴⁵³ D.B.Quinn, 'Henry VIII and Ireland', *I.H.S.*, xii, no. 48, (Sept, 1961), pp 322-30; Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, pp 102-3.

¹⁴⁵⁴ R.I.A., MS 24. H.17.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 103.

¹⁴⁵⁶ Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 31.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 104; Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 32

¹⁴⁵⁸ *A.F.M.*, v, pp1336-7; *A.L.C.*, ii, p. 225; *Ann Conn*, p. 631; Vennings, 'The O'Carrolls of Offaly', p. 183; *Ancient Irish Histories*, p. 159.

¹⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*.

O'Melaghlin clients¹⁴⁶⁰, while Piers forced the submission of the Cahir Butlers in August.¹⁴⁶¹ The seal on Kildare's dominance in the midlands was set when he seems have been influential in the election of An Calbhach O'Connor Faly as lord of Offaly.¹⁴⁶²

In the corresponding period, East Leinster was peaceful - indicating the effectiveness of Kildare's overlordship. In fact, the reform treatise penned in 1515 by Patrick Finglas supports the quiescence of the Irish nobility there. In his paper, Finglas proposed that king reconquer the province, stating that the Irish: '*...but feeble in regard of the strength they have been of in former times*'.¹⁴⁶³ Finglas's comments illustrate the strength of Kildare's hegemony. In Wicklow, Kildare settled his brothers to ensure Irish obedience. To James, he granted the western manors of Hollywood and Three Castles and gave Oliver lands nearby. To Richard, he granted manors of Fassaroe, Powerscourt, Crevaghe as well as lands in Fercullen. Also an internal family agreement mentioned that if Richard died without heir, his lands would pass to Walter. Furthermore, Thomas held lands at Dunboyke and Tulfarris in the manor of Ballymore Eustace.¹⁴⁶⁴ Throughout this region, Fitzgerald stewards were also collecting rents from the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles.¹⁴⁶⁵ However, in 1516 they may have caused tension in the O'Toole lands of Imaal and Glencapp.¹⁴⁶⁶ The earl's distraction with his midland campaigns possibly provided some of the impetus for O'Toole restlessness. But it was the killing of Shane O'Toole of Imaal by Kildare's troops that primed the region for rebellion.¹⁴⁶⁷ The following year Shane Óg O'Toole revenged this attack, killing some of Kildare's men after they attacked Imaal.¹⁴⁶⁸ Worse was to follow when Kildare's client, Art O'Toole, was probably killed by his Imaal kinsmen.¹⁴⁶⁹ The warfare continued into 1517/8. Then Art's son, Toirdhealbhadh, defeated an

¹⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, pp 1340-1.

¹⁴⁶¹ *C.O.D.*, iv, no. 40, pp 43-51, no. 119, pp 106-7; Empey, p. 293.

¹⁴⁶² Fitzsimons, 'The Lordship of O'Connor Faly, 1520-70', p. 208; *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1338-9.

¹⁴⁶³ *Carew MSS 1515-74*, no. 1, pp 4-5.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers*, p. 132-4; O'Byrne, 'Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 74.

¹⁴⁶⁵ *Crown Surveys, 1540-1*, pp 235, 265-7.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Ibid, pp 264, 267, 322, 328. In 1516 Murgan O'Toole accepted a horse from Kildare, see *ibid*, p. 326.

¹⁴⁶⁷ P.L.O'Toole, *A History of the Clan O'Toole and other Leinster Septs* (Dublin, 1890), p. 223; *Holinshed's Irish Chronicle*, p. 253; Hore, 'The Rental Book of Gerald Fitzgerald', p. 278-9. See also *Ancient Irish Histories*, p. 159.

¹⁴⁶⁸ O'Toole, *A History of the Clan O'Toole*, p. 223.

¹⁴⁶⁹ *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1338-9.

expedition of Mayor Christopher Ussher of Dublin - a Kildare client.¹⁴⁷⁰ In part, political uncertainty within the MacMurroughs possibly contributed to the instability in Wicklow. On 25 November 1517 Art Buidhe, king of Leinster, died leaving a disputed succession.¹⁴⁷¹ The two candidates were Art Buidhe's brother - Gerald - and Murchadh Ballach's son - Muirheartach.¹⁴⁷² It would seem the sons of Domhnall Riabhach rejected the revolving kingship. As a consequence they pressed Gerald's claims, producing a short-lived struggle between both branches - which Gerald won.¹⁴⁷³

This violence in East Leinster was set against the steadily deteriorating relationship of Kildare and Piers. Although Piers was in possession of the Ormond earldom and was styled earl, Henry VIII refused to recognise his title.¹⁴⁷⁴ Apparently, Piers nursed grievances arising from Kildare's diplomacy in 1515-6 during the aborted resolution of Ormond's estates. Piers clearly felt hard done by, having expected his brother-in-law's total support. Ultimately the falling out of Piers and Kildare began a deadly power struggle. In effect, the collapse of Polestown/Kildare partnership marked time upon the Kildare's monopoly of the highest government office and consequently the earl's hegemony in Leinster. Piers raised the stakes, refusing to compensate Kildare's government for two thirds of the income from the Ormond estates which the Polestown Butlers had received while Earl John and Earl Thomas were absentees. The ill feeling increased when Piers took Robert Cowley into his service. He then used Cowley's legal skills to undermine Kildare's government. This was probably in the hope that the king might formally recognise Piers's disputed title of earl of Ormond as a reward for his loyalty.¹⁴⁷⁵ By late 1518, Cardinal Wolsey convinced Henry VIII of

¹⁴⁷⁰ O'Toole, *A History of the Clan O'Toole*, p. 223; O'Toole names the mayor as a John Ussher. However, this seems incorrect, as Christopher Usher acted as mayor of Dublin between 1516-7, see *NHI*, ix, p. 554; He also accepted a hackney from Kildare in 1514. See *Crown Surveys, 1540-41*, p. 331; See also O'Byrne 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 75.

¹⁴⁷¹ B.L. Egerton MS 1782, p. 3; *AFM*, v, pp 1342-3. This dates his death to 1518.

¹⁴⁷² This Muirheartach died in 1521, '*Obiit Mauricus Iuvenis Kaemanac princeps Laginiae*'. See Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 101; In 1519 Donnchadh Kavanagh, Muirheartach's brother, died, see *AFM*, v, pp 1344-5; He would also seem to be the person in entry '*Obit Donatus Kaemanac Mauri membroci filius*' for 1514, see Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Annals', p. 101.

¹⁴⁷³ *S.P.Hen.VIII*, iii, p. 36, fn. 35; Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (November, 1980) p. 190; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 34.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 104; Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 32

¹⁴⁷⁵ Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 32.

the necessity of the reform in Ireland. Accordingly, Kildare was ordered to appoint a deputy and come to England to answer charges of misgovernance.¹⁴⁷⁶ Before he left for England, Kildare appointed Maurice Fitzgerald as his deputy - arriving there in late 1519 or early 1520.¹⁴⁷⁷

Between 1470-1520, three successive earls of Kildares transformed the condition of the English lordship of Ireland. Their model of government had its origins in the career of the 4th earl of Ormond. Clearly, the Kildares benefitted directly from the implosion of the Butlers in the 1460s and the isolation of the Desmonds. These events left the Kildares as the only comital family involved in the affairs of state. However, this reality only contributed to the later Kildare power. In fact, the secret of Kildare success lay in the tremendous energy and ruthless application of the earls to their task of governing Ireland. And such was the determination of the Kildare dynasty to retain their grip on the lord deputyship, that they even defied Edward IV and Henry VII in 1478/9, 1487 and 1495/6. But the bare facts of the stabilization of the English lordship in this period speak for themselves. In 1470 the Dublin Council had difficulty in enforcing its writ only a few miles from the capital of the lordship. But under the Kildares, their government was forcibly extended into Leinster and much of Ireland between 1470-1520. Without doubt the 8th earl was the most successful English governor of Ireland to this date. Indeed, this reality convinced both Edward IV and Henry VII to keep him as their deputy. The actual extension of Tudor power into Leinster and beyond was less clear. In reality it was Kildare power supported by Tudor resources that advanced throughout Ireland. That said, the transformation of Ireland was nonetheless astounding. In East Leinster, the Irish were gradually ground down by the Tudor/Kildare partnership between 1480-1505. But the Kildare overlordship in West Leinster and the midlands while strong was vulnerable as evidenced by the shooting by the Irish of three lord deputies there in 1513, 1520 and 1532.¹⁴⁷⁸ The establishment of a

¹⁴⁷⁶ *Red Bk Kildare*, pp 188-9; Lennon, *Sixteenth Century Ireland*, pp 85-7; Quinn, 'The Kildare hegemony, 1494-1520', p. 660

¹⁴⁷⁷ *C.O.D.*, iv, no. 61, p. 60; L. McCorry, *The Revolt of Silken Thomas* (Dublin, 1987), p. 37 (hereafter McCorry).

¹⁴⁷⁸ *Ancient Irish Histories*, pp 160, 173; Lydon, *The Making of Ireland*, p. 124; Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 9. *AFM.*, v. pp 1326-7;

Kildare overlordship here was only made possible by the absence of the 6th and 7th earls of Ormond. More particularly, Kildare power in the midlands was reinforced by the 8th earl's alliance with the Butlers of Polestown. Indeed, this alliance checked the Irish of the midlands, underpinning the Kildare hegemony throughout Leinster. Significantly, once Piers and the 9th earl of Kildare fell out - the Kildare overlordship in the midlands began to shake, affecting the Irish of East Leinster and Kildare's government of Ireland.

Part VI

Chapter 64

Chapter 65

The reign of Tudor King over the Leinstermen, 1570-74

Chapter 66

The English and Jacobean Conquest, 1574-1603

Chapter 6a

The Advance of Tudor Rule over the Leinstermen, 1520-70

1520-70

In 1520 the Kildare stood at the height of their power both in Leinster and throughout the country. But within fifteen years their achievements had been summarily overturned, into their place stepped unknown quantities - Henry VIII and his children. The fall of the Kildare and one of the Tudor's had almost completely changed the course of history in Ireland and also in Ireland. Ireland, the Leinstermen were in some ways the place of a centralized controlling administration based at Dublin. Thus, Leinster is the perfect area

Part VI

Conquest, 1520-1606

Chapter 6a

The Advance of Tudor Rule over the Leinstermen, 1520-70

Chapter 6b

The Elizabethan and Jacobean Conquest, 1570-1606

Chapter 6a

The Advance of Tudor Rule over the Leinstermen, 1520-70

In 1520 the Kildares stood at the height of their power both in Leinster and throughout the country. But within fifteen years their achievements had been irreversibly overthrown. Into their shoes stepped unknown quantities - Henry VIII and his children. The fall of the Kildares and rise of the Tudors fundamentally changed the course of history in Leinster and also in Ireland. Indeed, the Leinstermen were to come under the glare of a determined centralising administration based at Dublin. Thus, Leinster is the perfect case study for Irish reactions to the extension of English law and power throughout Ireland. This chapter will chart the slow fall of Kildares, charting its effects upon the Leinster nobility. And it will show the differing reactions of the government and the Irish nobility to these changed circumstances. In particular, it shows how government policies of 'Surrender and Regrant' and then plantation attempted to fill the political void in West Leinster and the midlands. The failure of 'Surrender and Regrant' by 1546 signalled a more hardline Tudor approach. The resulting plantations in Laois and Offaly profoundly disturbed the Irish lordships of West Leinster and midlands, creating an unprecedented and explosive situation throughout the province. One of the most unexpected results of these impositions was the eastward shift in the centre of provincial gravity to the Wicklow mountains of East Leinster. There the change in provincial temperature was exploited by Aodh mac Seaáin O'Byrne, leader of the junior O'Byrne branch of Gabhal Raghnaill. He with his son, Fiach, produced some of the most extreme reactions to the advance of English government in Leinster. This chapter will examine these dramatic changes in Leinster between 1520-70.

Before the council of the Star Chamber in early 1520, Kildare was accused of creating a personal power base in spite of his oath to the king. As a result he was removed from office. And on 10 March 1520 Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, was appointed lord lieutenant as part of a plan to reform the Irish government. After his arrival in Dublin on 23 May, Surrey embarked upon a series of campaigns

against Irish lords throughout the country. In East Leinster some lords such as the O'Byrnes and Toirdhealbhach mac Airt O'Toole welcomed Surrey when he invaded their territory in October, hoping to curry favour with him in Kildare's absence.¹⁴⁷⁹ However, Surrey was faced by an entirely different set of circumstances in West Leinster and the midlands. There Surrey encountered a systematic and organised campaign of opposition. In addition, Surrey was hindered in his attempts to combat this opposition because of financial problems. During the course of Surrey's campaign, it transpired that Kildare had orchestrated these outbursts of endemic violence. Among Kildare's clients opposing Surrey's army were Máelruanaidh O'Carroll of Ely¹⁴⁸⁰, Conall O'More¹⁴⁸¹, a noble of Laois, and Brian O'Connor Faly of Offaly.¹⁴⁸² Surrey's suspicions of Kildare's involvement were confirmed when Máelruanaidh O'Carroll affirmed them at a July parley.¹⁴⁸³ Temporarily, Surrey detached O'Connor Faly from Kildare's affinity and it was probably during this period that Surrey invested him as lord of Offaly.¹⁴⁸⁴ These amicable relations were brief. In July 1521 the three midland lords again raided County Kildare, forcing Surrey to lead an inconclusive campaign against them. The only notable success enjoyed by Surrey was the wounding of Conall of Laois in July by Sir Edward Plunkett, baron of Dunsany.¹⁴⁸⁵ By mid October, however, the three again submitted and O'Connor Faly again pledged his loyalty to Surrey before the end of the year.¹⁴⁸⁶ And after Surrey's departure from Ireland in March 1522, O'Connor Faly cultivated relations with his successor Piers - the disputed earl of Ormond.¹⁴⁸⁷

¹⁴⁷⁹ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, no. 9, p. 16. See also *L. & P. Hen VIII*, xvi, no. 272, p. 116. Toirdhealbhach mac Airt later described himself as Norfolk's old servant..

¹⁴⁸⁰ Vennings, 'The O'Carrolls of Offaly', pp 181-90.

¹⁴⁸¹ Conall was married to Gormflaith O'Carroll. See poem 'Tnuth Laighean re laimh gConaill' RIA 2 (23/F/16), p. 113. Thanks to Dr M.K.Simms for this reference.

¹⁴⁸² *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, no.5, p. 9. O'Carroll and his brethren implicated Gerald Óg as being behind their violence. Although Conall's sons were foster brothers to Kildare's son Thomas, Lord Offaly, Conall was anxious to exert his independence. In 1520 Conall's brother Con killed Sir Maurice Fitzgerald, Kildare's brother, see *AFM*, v, pp 1348-9. *Ancient Irish Histories 1520*, p. 160 Surrey was shot by the O'Mores on these campaigns.

¹⁴⁸³ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, no.5, p. 9.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Fitzsimons, p. 209. This Brian O'Connor Faly was the son of Cathaoir, lord of Offaly (d. 1511), and Siobhan O'Connor Faly see poem 'Failghigh chosnas clu Laighean' NLI G 992, sff. 256-266; RIA 1 (23D/14), p. 62. Thanks to Dr M.K.Simms for this reference.

¹⁴⁸⁵ *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1515-38*, no. xii, pp 78-80.

¹⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid*, no. xxv, p. 80.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Fitzsimons, p. 210

On 26 March 1522 Piers was appointed lord deputy. Between 1520-2 Piers assisted Surrey, earning the enmity of Kildare.¹⁴⁸⁸ Like Surrey before him, Butler concluded during 1522 that he could not govern effectively because of the activities of the earl's clients and requested that Kildare be allowed to return to Ireland.¹⁴⁸⁹ Kildare was granted permission to embark for Ireland, arriving there on 1 January 1523. Once on Irish soil, Kildare wasted no time in reasserting his suzerainty over his Leinster clients. This was quickly achieved in East Leinster as evidenced by the acceptance that month of the earl's gifts of horses by leading O'Byrne and O'Toole nobles.¹⁴⁹⁰ However, a residual threat remained from Butler. Indeed, the Kildares exacerbated the situation when James Fitzgerald, the earl's brother, murdered Butler's partisan, Robert Talbot, on his way to spend Christmas 1523 in Kilkenny. This act exploded the feud between Kildare and Butler countrywide. Indeed, Talbot's murder brought Piers's army into the Wicklow highlands in pursuit of James. The success of the Butler forces expelled James from the region, marking the destabilisation of Kildare's eastern frontier and the loosening of his grip upon the O'Tooles and the O'Byrnes.¹⁴⁹¹ And as the struggle spread, the O'Byrnes were sucked into the vortex with different dynastic factions supporting both protagonists. Notably from this point onwards, many of the leading figures of the senior O'Byrne dynasty began to forge an alliance with Piers against Kildare. However, Kildare's restoration was made complete by his reappointment as lord deputy in May 1524.¹⁴⁹² Yet he maintained considerable control over the O'Byrnes as confirmed by the death of An Calbhach O'Byrne of Cronroe on the earl's expedition of that year against the O'Donnells of Donegal.¹⁴⁹³

Kildare also faced growing problems with the MacMurrough kings of Leinster. Most notably Kildare's problems coincided with the growing rapprochement between Piers and his MacMurrough uncles -

¹⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 209-10.

¹⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹⁰ *Crown Surveys of Lands, 1540-1*, pp 335 & 339.

¹⁴⁹¹ D.B.Quinn, 'The Re-emergence of English Policy as the major factor in Irish Affairs, 1520-34', In A.Cosgrove (ed.) *N.H.I.*, ii (Oxford, 1993), p. 671. (hereafter Quinn, 'The Re-emergence of English Policy as a major factor in Irish Affairs, 1520-34'); *L. & P. Hen VIII*, iv, part 3, no. 5795, p. 2590; O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 79.

¹⁴⁹² O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 76; *Crown Surveys of Lands, 1540-1*, p. 326.

¹⁴⁹³ *AFM*, v, pp 1370-1.

the sons of Domhnall Riabhach. In January 1522, Piers's uncle, Gerald MacMurrough, king of Leinster and husband to Katharine Butler, died at Leighlin and was succeeded by his brother - Muiris.¹⁴⁹⁴ Instructive to Kildare's desire to stamp his overlordship on the MacMurroughs were the events surrounding the murder of Bishop Maurice Doran of Leighlin in 1525. Then Abbot Cathaoir MacMurrough of Duiske, Murchadh Ballach's son, allegedly encouraged his own son, Murchadh, to murder the bishop in order to procure the see for himself.¹⁴⁹⁵ Kildare's reaction to the murder was ferocious, invading Carlow and forcing Abbot Cathaoir to flee to his cousin - Piers.¹⁴⁹⁶ Kildare then subjected Murchadh to a horrific death, disembowelling and flaying him alive.¹⁴⁹⁷ The making of such an example seems to have rocked the wider MacMurrough dynasty and must have proved humiliating for Muiris as overlord. Indeed, it is not coincidental that Muiris was to completely align himself with Piers, symbolically returning Arklow to the latter in August 1525.¹⁴⁹⁸ In response, Kildare began to cultivate MacMurroughs sympathetic to him - most particularly his cousin Cathaoir MacInnycross.¹⁴⁹⁹ By 1526 Kildare was clearly hostile to Muiris and was also focusing his charm upon another leader - Cathaoir mac Airt MacMurrough of Sliocht Diarmada Láimhdeirg, giving him the hand of his daughter.¹⁵⁰⁰ That year Cathaoir mac Airt first appears in the written record, burning Drumore Castle in Kilkenny and killing its occupants.¹⁵⁰¹ Although this was Kildare property, it housed Abbot Cathaoir's nephew - Cathaoir. Perhaps Cathaoir mac Airt was delegated by Kildare to eject the tenant who may have shifted into the Butler camp.

¹⁴⁹⁴Dowling, *Annals*, p. 34. This dates his death to January 1522. Gerald MacMurrough; Nicholls, *Late Medieval Irish Annals*, p. 101. This dates his death to January 1523. '*Hoc anno obiit Geraldus Kaemhanac rex Hibernicorum Lageniae mensis Januariæ*'. For Gerald's marriage to Katharine Butler, see *C.O.D.*, iv, p. 158.

¹⁴⁹⁵*A.L.C.*, ii, pp 250-1; Nicholls, *Late Medieval Irish Annals*, p. 101; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 34; *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1376-79; *Ann Conn*, p. 656-7.

¹⁴⁹⁶*A.F.M.*, v, pp 1376-79; Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov 1981), p. 190.

¹⁴⁹⁷*Ibid*; *A.L.C.*, ii, pp 252-3; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 34; Nicholls, *Late Medieval Irish Annals*, p. 101.

¹⁴⁹⁸*C.O.D.*, iv, no. 118, pp 102-3.

¹⁴⁹⁹*S.P. Hen VIII.*, 1515-38, lix, p. 157; Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov 1981), p. 192.

¹⁵⁰⁰Lansdown Ms 159, f. 13; Hughes, 'The Fall of The Clan Kavanagh', p. 295.

¹⁵⁰¹Nicholls, *Late Medieval Annals*, p. 101; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 35.

But Kildare's position in West Leinster and the midlands was damaged between 1519-23. One of the disaffected Irish lords was Conall of Laois. He seemingly succeeded to the lordship of Laois upon the death of his cousin Cétach mac Laoighseach in 1523.¹⁵⁰² Like O'Connor Faly, he had allied after 1521 with Piers. Indeed, Conall devastated much of southern Kildare in March 1522 after hearing rumours of Kildare's return.¹⁵⁰³ And after his return to Ireland on 1 January 1523, Kildare realised that he had to forcibly reestablish his presence in the midlands or face the continued erosion of his dynasty's hegemony. Consequently, he led his army into the midlands against Conall of Laois and O'Connor Faly. After a short struggle and the negotiation of Conn Bacach O'Neill of Tyrone, both nobles accepted Kildare's overlordship. Despite having recognised Kildare's overlordship by accepting his horses on 21 and 26 January 1524¹⁵⁰⁴, Conall of Laois wrestled with Fitzgerald dominance. On the other hand, O'Connor Faly adopted a different policy. In fact, Kildare drew O'Connor Faly firmly into his camp, giving him the hand of his daughter, Lady Mary Fitzgerald, between 1523-6.¹⁵⁰⁵ Moreover, the O'Connor Faly/Kildare midland axis did much to repair the damaged Kildare hegemony in Leinster.

However, Kildare's tacking could not prevent West Leinster and the midlands becoming the vital arena for his struggle with Piers in 1525. All in all Kildare and O'Connor Faly had the best of it, forcing the O'Carrolls to renew their alliance with the earl.¹⁵⁰⁶ This effectively reestablished the Kildare midland suzerainty which had been under considerable pressure from Butler. The battle, however, between Kildare and Butler was far from over. Unlike O'Connor Faly, Conall of Laois played an unknown part in the earl's reconquest of 1525. It is clear that the friendship between Conall of Laois and O'Connor Faly also had cooled and a considerable mistrust evolved between them. During this period Conall of Laois realigned again with Butler. His discontent with Kildare manifested itself in sporadic

¹⁵⁰² *AU*, iii, pp 550-1.

¹⁵⁰³ *L & P, Hen VIII*, iii, part 2, no. 2197, p. 934.

¹⁵⁰⁴ *Crown Surveys of Lands, 1540-1*, pp 338 & 340

¹⁵⁰⁵ Fitzsimons, p. 210.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Vennings, 'The O'Carrolls of Offaly', p. 184.

raiding into Kildare between 1525-6.¹⁵⁰⁷ Realising Kildare had the upper hand, Piers submitted complaints to court about Kildare's behaviour - forcing Kildare to do likewise in summer 1526.¹⁵⁰⁸ But by August Henry VIII had enough of the anarchic state in Ireland, summoning both Kildare and Piers to account for their actions. Kildare left for England in November, Piers had been there since September. Henry VIII planned Kildare's power. He also sought to resolve the Kildare/Butler rivalry, as it was affecting the peace of the lordship. Also the disputed succession to the Ormond earldom between Piers and Sir Thomas Boleyn demanded resolution.¹⁵⁰⁹ Finally, Henry VIII wished to discuss with them how to prevent Desmond's French intrigues.¹⁵¹⁰ While Kildare was in England during autumn 1527, Sir Thomas Fitzgerald, his brother and deputy, was replaced by Richard Nugent, lord Delvin - a prominent Kildare opponent. In response, Kildare encouraged his supporters and Irish clients to wreak havoc throughout Leinster to force Henry VIII to send him home.¹⁵¹¹

This struggle culminated in O'Connor Faly's capture of the acting lord deputy, Lord Delvin, in May 1528.¹⁵¹² But this only further steeled Henry VIII's resolve to reduce Kildare's power. As part of this policy, Surrey, now duke of Norfolk and Henry VIII's principal adviser on Irish affairs, weakened Kildare's position in Leinster. This was achieved by his leasing in February 1528 of lands in Carlow and Wexford to Piers, the newly created earl of Ossory.¹⁵¹³ The effect of Norfolk's action was to allow Ossory the chance to penetrate the underbelly of Kildare's earldom. It was also an attempt by the English government to create an effective opposition to Kildare in the strategic midland region. Exasperated by the widespread disobedience of Kildare's clients, Henry VIII, against the counsel of Norfolk and Wolsey, reappointed Ossory lord deputy in

¹⁵⁰⁷ *Crown Surveys of Lands, 1540-1*, pp 344-5. On 22 February 1526 Conall accepted horses from Kildare. For Conall's attacks on the liberty of Kildare, see Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 40.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Fitzsimons, pp 210-11; Lennon, *Sixteenth Century Ire*, p. 96.

¹⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹⁰ Lennon, *Sixteenth Century Ire*, p. 97.

¹⁵¹¹ His later attainder of 1536 is dated to 1528. Clearly he was judged to have committed treasonable acts in 1528. See *Cal. Inquisitions, Hen VIII 107/8*, p. 58. *S. P., Hen VIII, 1515-1538*, no. lvi, p. 145-147.

¹⁵¹² Fitzsimons, p. 211.

¹⁵¹³ *C.O.D.*, iv, no. 140, pp 128-9; Quinn, 'The Re-emergence of English Policy as a major factor in Irish Affairs, 1520-34', p. 675.

August 1528.¹⁵¹⁴ Once in Ireland, Ossory exploited his gains to Kildare's detriment. Again the struggle was aimed to wrest the hegemony of the strategic midlands region away from Kildare. Ossory made overtures to the disgruntled clients of Kildare, drawing Conall of Laois and O'Connor Faly's brother, Cathaoir, into his camp. Indeed, Ossory's new-found strength in the midlands theatre was evidenced by the attendance of Cathaoir and Conall of Laois at his investiture as deputy in October.¹⁵¹⁵ In East Leinster Ossory's intrigues also drove wedges between Kildare and his brothers who governed Wicklow's western highlands on the eastern flank of the Fitzgerald earldom. The crisis facing Kildare here is succinctly captured by the defection of Sir Thomas Fitzgerald to Ossory in January 1529.¹⁵¹⁶ In turn the weakening of Kildare's grip roused the O'Tooles to raid Kildare's earldom for the first time in decades.¹⁵¹⁷ Sir Thomas's acceptance of a government pardon early in 1529 underlined the difficulties faced by the Kildare clients. Shortly after this O'Connor Faly released Delvin and the government agreed to resume payment of blackrent to him.¹⁵¹⁸

By June, Henry VIII again changed tack, appointing his natural son, Duke Henry of Richmond, lord lieutenant. Ossory was discharged in August. He was replaced by a secret council consisting of the Lord Chancellor Archbishop Alen of Dublin, Chief Justice Patrick Bermingham and Treasurer John Rawson. Later in November Ossory's position as a Tudor agent in the midlands was significantly bolstered by his appointment as a justice of the peace in Tipperary and Kilkenny.¹⁵¹⁹ And to gain a deeper insight into the Irish problem, Henry VIII dispatched Sir William Skeffington in late summer to assess the Irish situation militarily.¹⁵²⁰ Skeffington after a campaign against the O'Mores in March/April 1530 returned to England to report to his royal master. Upon his return, Skeffington was appointed lord deputy on 22 June 1530. A deal was also struck with Kildare whereby the earl received a pardon for his nefarious

¹⁵¹⁴ Fitzsimons, p. 212.

¹⁵¹⁵ *L. & P. Hen VIII*, v, no. 398, p. 198.

¹⁵¹⁶ *C.O.D.*, iv, no. 144, pp 131-2

¹⁵¹⁷ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 80-1; Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 47.

¹⁵¹⁸ Fitzsimons, p. 212.

¹⁵¹⁹ *N.H.I.*, viii, (eds) Martin, Moody and Byrne, (Oxford, 1982), p. 192.

¹⁵²⁰ McCorristine, p. 43.

activities of 1527-8 and was licensed to return home.¹⁵²¹ In return Kildare promised his utmost co-operation with Skeffington, landing with him on Irish soil on 24 August. Kildare's first action signalled his intentions in East Leinster, launching a successful attack upon the O'Tooles.¹⁵²² In West Leinster and the midlands, he quickly assessed the danger of Ossory's midland affinity. There he was determined to recover his position through a course of diplomacy and military aggression. He also rewarded O'Connor Faly and the other loyal midland lords.¹⁵²³ With Skeffington's approval, Kildare launched several campaigns against his former clients under the pretext of protecting the Pale, forcing Conall of Laois to accept Kildare's overlordship in November. This time Kildare, perhaps mindful of the danger of Ossory, was more long sighted in his approach to the midlands, soothing Conall of Laois's grievances by 1532. Also between 1530/2 Kildare buttressed his position in East Leinster against Ossory, securing his candidate's succession to the Leinster kingship after the death of Muiris MacMurrough.¹⁵²⁴ This candidate described by Ossory as '*thErl of Kildares servaunt and norishe*' was Cathaoir MacInnycross, Kildare's cousin.¹⁵²⁵

In spite of Kildare's military reassertion, he now faced a new threat in the legal proceedings of Archbishop Alen of Dublin. Alen challenged Kildare's rights to former archiepiscopal and secular lands lying within the Wicklow mountain range. His challenge was the culmination of earlier campaigns waged by his predecessors,

¹⁵²¹ *L. & P. Hen VIII*, v, no. 398, p. 198; *Ibid*, iv, part 3, no. 6490, (22), p. 2919; *Ibid*, iv, part 3, no. 6363, p. 2856; *S.P.Hen. VIII. 1515-38*, no. lvii, p. 150; Quinn, 'The Re-emergence of English Policy as a major factor in Irish Affairs, 1520-34', p. 679.

¹⁵²² J.Hooker, 'The description of the conquest and inhabitation of Ireland', In *Holinshed's Chronicles* (1587), ii, p. 87. (hereafter *Holinshed's Chronicles*); Lennon, *Sixteenth Century Ire*, p. 102.

¹⁵²³ *Crown Surveys of Lands, 1540-1*, pp 346-50.

¹⁵²⁴ Nicholls, *Late Medieval Irish Annals*, p. 101 '*Obiit Mauricus Rex Lagainiae et duo filii ejus Dermicus et Donatus*'; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 35 Dated to 1530; Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov 1981), p. 192.

¹⁵²⁵ *S.P.Hen. VIII. 1515-38*, lix, p. 157; Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov 1981), p. 192. He was also known as Cathaoir Glas, and was the son of Gerald MacMurrough, Murchadh Ballach's brother. It seems Cathaoir MacInnycross was the issue of Gerald and an illegitimate sister of the 8th earl of Kildare Nicholls to O'Byrne (Letter. November 1998). For this marriage also also see Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs' (Nov, 1981), fn.9, p. 190; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 35. This is dated to 1530 '*Cahir McGerald Cavenagh communiter vocatus McNehenyne crostey, the son of the ill-begotten daughter, that is a bastard, fuit factus McMurchadus qui Mauritio Nemoroso Lagenie successit*'; Nicholls, *Late Medieval Irish Annals*, p. 101; This is dated to 1532 '*Receptus erat Karolus mcinniacrosa in regem Laginae*'. Naturally, he from early in his career actively espoused the cause of Kildare as testified through his acceptance of several equestrian gifts. See *Crown Surveys, 1540-1*, pp 319, 335.

Archbishops Rokeby and Inge in 1514 and 1521 respectively. During the parliamentary sessions of September and October 1531, Alen successfully sought the repeal of the 1483 statute legalising Kildare's claims to absentee lands throughout Kildare, west Wicklow and Carlow.¹⁵²⁶ Rather hopefully, Alen encouraged absentee owners to reoccupy these lands but also attempted to establish his rights where title had fallen vacant. This was a tremendous blow to Kildare who was convinced of Skeffington's collusion. Also the blow was compounded when Norfolk then leased all his lands within the region to Ossory, allowing the latter to interfere within the Fitzgerald liberty of Kildare.¹⁵²⁷

The actions of Norfolk and Alen as agents of Tudor reform deeply concerned Kildare. However, he struck back by mobilising his clients, an act which reduced Skeffington to impotence. Perhaps through Kildare's connivance, Alen was burdened with a huge praemunire fine in spring 1531.¹⁵²⁸ Only the rise of Henry VIII's new favourite, Thomas Cromwell, prevented the archbishop's ruin. Ironically, it was Alen's hobbling that had the effect of releasing Kildare's already slipping hold on north Wicklow. To pay his debts, Alen sought to claw back rents due to the archiepiscopal coffers from the marcher families there. Many of these marchers were also Kildare's clients. In response Kildare unleashed them with some of the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles upon Alen's estates, burning and pillaging them.¹⁵²⁹ Then Kildare turned on Ossory, lending encouragement to Sir Edmund Butler of Cahir to oppose him in Tipperary.¹⁵³⁰ Furthermore Kildare sought to weaken Ossory's position among the Irish of East Leinster by seeking a lease of Tullow from Ossory's overlord, Thomas Boleyn, earl of Ormond and Wiltshire.¹⁵³¹ Kildare's actions may have been in response to Ossory's growing influence within the O'Byrne leadership who wanted to be rid of Kildare. And probably because of Kildare's active interference among

¹⁵²⁶ *Alen's Reg.*, p. 83; Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, pp 61-3.

¹⁵²⁷ Quinn, 'The Re-emergence of English Policy as a major factor in Irish Affairs, 1520-34', p. 680.

¹⁵²⁸ J. Murray, 'Archbishop Alen, Tudor Reform and the Kildare Rebellion', *P.R.I.A.*, 89 (1989), pp 14-5. (hereafter Murray, 'Archbishop Alen, Tudor Reform and the Kildare Rebellion').

¹⁵²⁹ *Alen's Reg.*, pp 172 & 242; O'Byrne, 'The Rise of Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 83.

¹⁵³⁰ Lyons, *Gearoid Óg Fitzgerald*, p. 49.

¹⁵³¹ *S.P.Hen. VIII. 1515-38*, lix, p. 153.

the O'Byrnes living close to Tullow, Seaán mac Lorcán O'Byrne of Clonmore burnt much of southern Kildare in early 1532.¹⁵³² Kildare's response was effective and brutal, hanging two of Seaán mac Lorcán's sons for their involvement in the attacks. Instead of subduing the O'Byrnes, this action only served to increase the determination of the O'Tooles and O'Byrnes to gain revenge on Kildare. Accordingly in May 1532, Edmund O'Byrne of the Downes subjected many of Kildare's clients in the Dublin marches to a regime of nightly terror of burnings and killings. While in west Wicklow Art Óg O'Toole publicly mocked Kildare's faltering overlordship by burning the town of Donard in the same year.¹⁵³³

On 5 July 1532 Henry VIII reappointed Kildare as lord deputy to succeed the now discredited Skeffington. Incapable of sharing power, Kildare set out, under the pretext of good government, to re-establish his suzerainty over the midlands. It was in the strategic midland theatre that the struggle between Ossory and Kildare reached a deadly climax.¹⁵³⁴ Their midland struggle became focused upon the race to succeed the deceased Máelruanaidh O'Carroll of Ely during 1532.¹⁵³⁵ For his part, Ossory actively encouraged the O'Carrolls opposed to Máelruanaidh's son, Fearganainm.¹⁵³⁶ Fearganainm was also Kildare's son-in-law and succeeded his father as lord of Ely but required Kildare's support in 1532-3 to maintain his position. Two factors proved decisive to propel Kildare and Ossory into outright war: the killing of Ossory's son, Thomas Butler, by Diarmait MacGillpatrick, Kildare's ally, in late 1532; and secondly the shooting of Kildare by Ossory's O'Carroll supporters in late 1533.¹⁵³⁷ News of Kildare's wound cannot be underestimated in its effect upon the Leinster nobility. In Upper Ossory Brian

¹⁵³² *L. & P. Hen VIII*, v, no. 1061, p. 480; *Crown Surveys, 1540-1*, p. 325. Seaán mac Lorcán earlier accepted a horse from Kildare on 4 September 1515.

¹⁵³³ *L. & P., Hen VIII*, v, no. 1061, p. 480; N.White (ed.), *Extents of Irish Monastic Possessions 1540-1* (Dublin, 1943), p. 63. (hereafter *Extents of Irish Monastic Possessions 1540-1*).

¹⁵³⁴ Fitzsimons, p. 213.

¹⁵³⁵ *A.L.C.*, ii, p. 279; Nicholls, *Late Medieval Irish Annals*, p. 101.

¹⁵³⁶ Fitzsimons, p. 213; Vennings, 'The O'Carrolls of Offaly', pp 185-6.

¹⁵³⁷ *Ancient Irish Histories* 1532, p. 173 Kildare shot by the O'Carrolls. Edwards, 'The MacGiollapádraigs (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory', pp 327-9. *A.L.C.*, ii, p. 279. Thomas Butler killed by the MacGillpatricks; Nicholls, *Late Medieval Irish Annals*, p. 101. See *S.P.Hen VIII, 1538-46*, no. ccxxxii, pp 24-5. Conall O'More's third son Giollapádraig was party to the murder of Thomas by Kildare clients in 1532

MacGillpatrick, the dynastic overlord, promptly realigned himself with Ossory, handing over Diarmait, his brother, to Ossory before the end of the year. In addition this new alliance was also sealed by Brian's marriage to Margaret Butler, Ossory's daughter.¹⁵³⁸ The effect of the realignment of Ossory further turned the midland war in favour of the Butlers. The fallout of this and Kildare's wound was soon felt in East Leinster. There the O'Tooles routed Kildare's brothers, while Edmund O'Byrne exposed Kildare's inability to defend the Pale by audaciously attacking Dublin Castle, releasing prisoners and generally terrifying the citizens during his rampage through the city.¹⁵³⁹ Henry VIII infuriated by the chaos, and suspicious of Kildare, demanded the presence of Kildare and Ossory at court in September 1533. Kildare delayed his departure for England until spring of the next year, appointing his son, Thomas, lord Offaly, as vice deputy. Both Kildare and Ossory had to accept reforms which would eventually considerably limit their personal power. By May 1534 Kildare realised that his dismissal was imminent. Later that month Henry VIII finally dismissed him as lord deputy, and Skeffington was provisionally reappointed. Kildare also had to surrender his recent palatine liberty of Kildare and accept Skeffington's appointment without reservation.¹⁵⁴⁰ However, the earl was not allowed to return home, and Offaly was summoned to court. In spite of close surveillance Kildare advised Offaly create a stand-off between Fitzgerald and Tudor forces in Ireland. On 11 June 1534, Offaly denounced Henry VIII before the Dublin Council, unleashing rebellion.¹⁵⁴¹

At first Offaly enjoyed considerable support from his clients among the Leinster Irish. Indeed, the O'Mores prominently figured in Offaly's victories over Ossory at Thomastown and Tullow during the summer, forcing the Butlers to flee to Waterford.¹⁵⁴² During September Offaly ordered his Irish clients including Conall of Laois, Cathair MacInnycross, the O'Byrnes and O'Connor Falys to

¹⁵³⁸ *AFM*, v, pp 1406-7; Edwards, 'The MacGiollapádraigs (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory', p. 328.

¹⁵³⁹ *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1515-38*, no. lxiv, p. 169; *L. & P. Hen VIII*, v, no. 1061, p. 480.

¹⁵⁴⁰ C.Brady, *The Chief Governors*, (Cambridge, 1994), p. 4. (hereafter Brady, *The Chief Governors*).

¹⁵⁴¹ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 84-6.

¹⁵⁴² At Thomastown Cétach Ruadh, Conall O'More's son, wounded Lord James Butler - the son of Ossory. *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1515-38*, no. xcii, pp 251-3.

protect County Kildare, while he laid siege to Dublin.¹⁵⁴³ In December Offaly and the O'Mores burnt Trim and Dunboyne to the ground.¹⁵⁴⁴ But Offaly's failure to take Dublin and the landing of Skeffington caused many Leinster nobles to realign themselves with the government. Because of these failures, Offaly was subsequently dependant upon the military support of the reconciled O'Connor Faly brothers. However, the fractures were evident amongst Offaly's forces when Conall of Laois and Cathaoir O'Connor Faly formed an alliance early in 1535. But the Kildare position became increasingly untenable when Skeffington captured Maynooth in late March 1535. The fall of Maynooth opened up the midlands to the armies of Skeffington. Ossory quickly followed up this victory to strike at the wavering Irish allies of Offaly, detaching two brothers of Conall of Laois from the Kildare cause and with them made war upon their overlord. Consequently, Conall of Laois was forced to withdraw his support from Offaly in April and give hostages to Ossory.¹⁵⁴⁵ Also Skeffington praised the O'Tooles and O'Byrnes for their persecution of the weakening Kildare forces in March 1535.¹⁵⁴⁶ In spite of the fact that Offaly was on the run, Conall of Laois seemingly retained considerable sympathy for Offaly - his fosterson.¹⁵⁴⁷ Indeed, O'More forces early in August captured but released Sir John Burnell and Féilim Buidhe O'Connor Faly, Offaly's principal supporters.¹⁵⁴⁸ It was also reported that in the same battle his troops allowed Offaly, now 10th earl of Kildare, to escape. This prompted Lord Leonard Grey to complain to Cromwell on 15 August.¹⁵⁴⁹ However, the end was nigh. And within days, Cathaoir O'Connor Faly surrendered to Ossory. On 24 August Kildare and O'Connor Faly finally surrendered to Grey.

The fall of the Kildares created a countrywide political vacuum. The execution of Kildare with five uncles at Tyburn during February 1537 completed their implosion. With the destruction of the

¹⁵⁴³ *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1515-38*, no. xciii, pp.251-3.

¹⁵⁴⁴ *L & P, Hen VIII*, viii, no. 1573, p. 586.

¹⁵⁴⁵ *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1515-38*, pp 251-4.

¹⁵⁴⁶ *The Book of Howth*, pp 193-4; *L. & P. Hen VIII*, viii, no. 382, p. 152; *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1515-38*, no. lxxxvi, p. 234.

¹⁵⁴⁷ This relationship is mentioned in *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1538-46*, pp 258-9.

¹⁵⁴⁸ *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1515-38*, no. xcvi, p. 261.

¹⁵⁴⁹ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, , no. 57, p. 71; *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1515-38*, no. xcvi, p. 265; *L & P, Hen VIII*, ix, no. 98, p. 28.

earldom, the political balance of the previous six decades in East Leinster and West Leinster and the midlands was obliterated. As a result the Tudor government's first priority following the Kildare defeat was to shore up the frontiers of the Pale. Consequently, in the two decades after 1536, the policies pursued by successive lord deputies were dictated by the need to secure stability. Practically, the Tudors had to slip into the shoes of the Kildares to fill the political void. At one time the Kildares would have checked and punished unwarranted Irish incursions into the Pale; now the task fell to a financially-strapped government.¹⁵⁵⁰

In particular the turmoil was most acutely felt in West Leinster and the midlands. This instability was caused by the chronic political upheaval there of recent years. Instead of a Kildare hegemony in the region, three powers now struggled with each other. These were the leaderless Kildare affinity, Ossory's faction and the government party. But under the steerage of Grey, Skeffington's successor as lord deputy, reform was attempted. As has been argued if the reform of the Irish lordship was to be ultimately successful, the Irish polities of West Leinster and the midlands had to be stabilised. More importantly, this stability had to be favourable to the government. Thus, a government hegemony in the midlands was deemed of the utmost importance. Accordingly, the midland lords had to be encouraged to be amenable to the cause of reform or they would have to be convinced by coercion. The study of Grey's governorship and his relations with the Irish of West Leinster is crucial to a clear understanding of the progress of Henrican reform. Deserving especial consideration are the government's dealings with the O'Connor Falys and the O'Mores. Here the effects of the implementation of reform were to reverberate throughout Leinster. As a result the government was to considerably reduce the power of local elites. In short the government signalled that the days of the warlords were coming to an end.

Grey also knew that over-reliance on Ossory could not advance the independent cause of reform in Henrican Ireland. To Ossory's disgust, Brady argues, Grey developed the now leaderless

¹⁵⁵⁰ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 87.

Kildare affinity as a counterweight to Butler power.¹⁵⁵¹ The Butlers viewed Grey's policy as tantamount to a rejection of their efforts.¹⁵⁵² Indeed, they actively sought to impede him as well as seeking his downfall. However, Grey showed himself to be an able and active governor, proving his ability to advance the acceptance of royal authority in a series of military campaigns countrywide. But he faced his most difficult task in the midlands. After his release, O'Connor Faly exploited the political instability for his own ends, banishing his brother, Cathaoir, from Offaly between 1535-7. In May 1537, Grey's armies overturned O'Connor Faly's restoration, exiling him in neighbouring Ely between June and November.¹⁵⁵³ In O'Connor Faly's absence, Grey gave the lordship to the grateful Cathaoir as part of his policy to stabilise the wider region. Indeed, Grey's victory reduced O'Connor Faly to desperate straits but he found safety with other former Kildare adherents such as Feargananim O'Carroll, lord of Ely, and O'Meagher.¹⁵⁵⁴ Following hard upon Grey's success, the Dublin Council forwarded plans to London for the settlement of the O'Connor Faly lordship. They outlined two propositions: that Cathaoir be created a baron and given the lordship of Offaly or that he be settled outside his lordship and it planted.¹⁵⁵⁵ All these proposals came to nought, when O'Connor Faly regained his lordship by force in November.¹⁵⁵⁶ This and the threat of an O'Connor Faly/Ossory alliance forced Grey to treat with the Offaly lord before allowing him to submit in March 1538. As part of this policy Grey concluded a indenture with Brian MacGillpatrick of Upper Ossory in November 1537, detaching him from the Butler affinity by granting him government protection. To bolster the government's position in the midlands, Grey formally recognised Brian MacGillpatrick's lands and importantly declared them to be not be part of the Butler dominated County Kilkenny.¹⁵⁵⁷ The government also further cultivated their budding midland influence,

¹⁵⁵¹ Brady, *The Chief Governors*, pp 19-20. See also Fitzsimons, pp 214-5.

¹⁵⁵² *Ibid*, pp 18-22.

¹⁵⁵³ *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1515-38*, p. 353.

¹⁵⁵⁴ Vennings, 'The O'Carrolls of Offaly', pp 186-7; Fitzsimons, p. 214.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Fitzsimons, pp 214-5.

¹⁵⁵⁶ *AU*, iii, pp 616-7.

¹⁵⁵⁷ *S. P., Hen VIII, 1515-38*, pp 514-5; Edwards, 'The MacGiollapádraigs (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory', p. 335.

lending military assistance to reestablish Feargananim O'Carroll against Ossory's clients in Ely in June/July 1538.¹⁵⁵⁸

In comparison to O'Connor Faly, Conall of Laois, his enemy, adopted a different approach, flitting between Ossory and the government. Both Ossory and Grey realised that the geographical location of O'More lordship west of the Barrow conduit was one of the keys to the wider region. Thus, the Kildare collapse exaggerated the strategic importance of Laois. Tellingly, both sought to court the O'More overlord. Because of this attention Conall of Laois was elevated beyond his normal position, playing an important role in midland politics. On 21 March 1536 it was reported that Conall of Laois and many of the Leinster nobility were deeply disturbed by the arrest of Sir James Fitzgerald, Kildare's uncle.¹⁵⁵⁹ However, the presence of government troops in the midlands and Grey's parley at Kilkea with Conall of Laois and Cathaoir MacInnycross prevented trouble.¹⁵⁶⁰ This did not prevent Conall of Laois from taking the field against Brian MacGillpatrick of Upper Ossory in June/July, compelling Grey to intervene to stop the conflict and negotiate a peace between the pair.¹⁵⁶¹ Despite this Ossory remained the only noble in Ireland able to control the Irish of the midlands. Testifying to this state of play was Conall of Laois and Ossory's presence as sureties to the submission on 14 July of Cathaoir MacInnycross and the earl's role in the negotiations with Brian MacGillpatrick to end his feud with Conall of Laois.¹⁵⁶² The Laois lord, however, placated Grey by campaigning against Conchobhar O'Brien of Thomond, and the Munster Geraldines in July/August 1536 before fighting O'Connor Faly in June 1537.¹⁵⁶³ Yet it would be wrong to say that Conall of Laois's service realigned his lordship with the government. In fact, Conall of Laois's death, shortly after June 1537, speeded the O'Mores into the Butler camp. Lest there be any doubt about the growth of Butler's affinity among the O'Mores, Conall of Laois's

¹⁵⁵⁸ Fitzsimons, pp 215-6; Vennings, 'The O'Carrolls of Offaly', pp 187-8.

¹⁵⁵⁹ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, no. 74, p. 90.

¹⁵⁶⁰ *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1515-38*, no. cxx, p. 307. *Crown Surveys, 1540-1*, pp 319, 335. This Cathaoir MacInnycross who was also known as Cathaoir Glais received horses from Kildare on 4 September 1513 and on January 16 1523 respectively. See note 41 above.

¹⁵⁶¹ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, no. 83, p. 97.

¹⁵⁶² *Ibid*; In 1546 Walter Cowley, a Butler ally, stressed the adherence of the O'Mores to Ormond, see *L & P, Hen VIII*, xxi, part I, p. 450.

¹⁵⁶³ *S.P.Hen VIII, 1515-38*, no. cxlii, p. 354; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, no.86, p. 106.

successor is proof enough. He was succeeded by his brother, Piers, a client of Ossory. Piers insured his succession to the O'More lordship through a combination of Ossory's support and by bribing Grey.¹⁵⁶⁴ It is instructive to note that once Piers became lord of Laois, he also tacked before prevailing political winds. To appease and gain the support of Grey, Piers also agreed to maintain government galloglass in Laois. Piers's decision was probably taken because of the opposition of his predecessor's sons. In spite of the killing before the close of 1537 of Laoiseach, Conall of Laois's eldest son and also lord of Slemargy, the O'More civil war continued.¹⁵⁶⁵

On balance, the shifting policies of the O'More lords are an accurate reflection of the turbulence shaking the midlands. The discord in Laois also created opportunities for the government to gain a foothold there. On 14 January 1538 Grey negotiated a peace between Piers and his nephews - Ruaidhrí Caoch and Cétach Ruadh O'More.¹⁵⁶⁶ In these brothers, Grey found willing accomplices to combat the Butlers in the midlands. Unsurprisingly, peace amongst the O'Mores proved short-lived. That year Grey sent a series of complaints to court, accusing Ossory of attacking the sons of Conall of Laois.¹⁵⁶⁷ In reality, Grey was also encouraging his new friends and other former Fitzgerald clients to attack Piers and the Butler lands in Carlow.¹⁵⁶⁸ In June Piers complained of the activities of his nephews to the local army commander at Athy County Kildare. Ruaidhrí Caoch suddenly arrived and attempted to kill his uncle, forcing the army to arrest Piers for his own safety.¹⁵⁶⁹ Grey then arranged a conference for the warring parties in Dublin. Piers accompanied by Ossory arrived in Dublin to attend the conference in early June. Once there Grey arrested Piers, placing him in handcuffs

¹⁵⁶⁴ *L & P, Hen VIII*, xiii, part I, no. 1271, p. 522.

¹⁵⁶⁵ In October 1537 Ruaidhrí Caoch O'More was served with a subpoena to give evidence in a murder case in the king's court at Kilkenny. To the horror of the official who served the subpoena, Ruaidhrí irreverently threw the writ in the mud and stood upon it. See *L & P, Hen VIII*, xii, part II, no. 859 (2), p. 303; *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1515-38*, no. ccxxxii, pp 26-7.

¹⁵⁶⁶ *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 3, p. 36; *S.P.Hen VIII, 1515-38*, no. cxcviii, p. 353.

¹⁵⁶⁷ *S.P.Hen VIII, 1515-38*, p. 74.

¹⁵⁶⁸ *Cal. Fiants Hen VIII*, no. 171. See the pardon dated 21 March 1540/1 of Edmund Assholde of Maynooth for encouraging Cétach Ruadh to attack the Butlers. See *S.P.Hen VIII, 1538-46*, no. ccxxxii, p. 25. In 1538 Ossory also described this Edmund Asbolde as a servant of Grey. Also he alleged that Edmund had joined the O'More attack on Tullow. See *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no.55, p. 40. On May 13 1538 Peter Fitzgerald of Great Grange was charged with instigating Cétach Ruadh to attack Ossory.

¹⁵⁶⁹ *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1538-46*, no. ccxxxii, pp 26-7

and confining him in Maynooth.¹⁵⁷⁰ This allowed Cétach Ruadh and Ruaidhrí Caoch a free hand to attack the Butlers and their uncle's tenants upon their return to Laois.¹⁵⁷¹ On 22 August Piers was released and renewed his submission two days later.¹⁵⁷² In consequence the king's commissioners confirmed his lordship of Laois but Conall of Laois's sons expelled him from Laois. Shortly afterwards Cétach Ruadh was inaugurated as lord of Laois in place of Piers. But it is clear substantial divisions quickly emerged amongst the brothers. Ruaidhrí Caoch remained closely allied to Cétach Ruadh, while Giollapádraig entered into an alliance with O'Connor Faly, marrying his daughter.¹⁵⁷³

In East Leinster Grey also pursued the cause of reform with similar zeal. As in West Leinster this meant the introduction of English common law into the Irish lordships. To aid the furtherance of reform Grey adopted a policy of divide and rule, patronising relatively minor dynastic figures in an attempt to undermine their overlords. A prime example of the development of this policy is the government's attitude to Cathaoir mac Airt MacMurrough.¹⁵⁷⁴ By 1534 Cathaoir mac Airt was already a major power among the MacMurroughs and was the son-in-law of the 9th earl of Kildare.¹⁵⁷⁵ His Kildare client status was confirmed by his imprisonment in Dublin Castle for his role in their rebellion. Significantly, he allegedly later escaped with the aid of Grey.¹⁵⁷⁶ After the failure of the Kildare rebellion, the English recognised the potency of his position and regularly pressed him to reform his country and abolish Irish legal custom and dress. With government encouragement, Cathaoir mac Airt exploited internal MacMurrough dissension, eclipsing the ailing Cathaoir MacInnycross. On 12 May 1536 Cathaoir MacInnycross entered into an indenture

¹⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid*, nos ccxxix & cccxxii, p. 24.

¹⁵⁷¹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1509-73, no. 8, p. 41; *Cal. Carew MSS*, 1515-74, no. 121, p. 140. In particular Cétach Ruadh attacked Ossory's lands of Oteryn and Tullowphelim; *S.P.Hen. VIII*, 1538-46, no. ccxx, p. 23. On 20 June 1538 Ossory's son, Lord James Butler, mentioned that Grey's troops actually joined with Cétach Ruadh to attack Oughter Inn. See also *ibid*, no. ccxl, pp 48-9.

¹⁵⁷² *C.S.P.I.*, 1509-73, no. 38, p. 45; *S.P.Hen. VIII*, 1538-46, pp 88-9.

¹⁵⁷³ *S.P.Hen. VIII*, 1538-46, no. cccxxiii, p. 242.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Cathaoir, a son of Art MacMurrough, a principal captain of the Sliocht Diarmada Láimhdeirg, was the most politically astute Irish lord of East Leinster from the late 1530s to his death. In 1526 Cathaoir first appears in the written record, burning the castle of Drumore in Kilkenny. Dowling, *Annals*, pp 37-8.

¹⁵⁷⁵ Lansdownd Ms 159, f. 13; Hughes, 'The Fall of the Clan Kavanagh', p.295.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Hughes, 'The Fall of the Clan Kavanagh', p.295.

with Grey that substantially curbed his power, allowing Domhnall mac Cathaoir Kavanagh of Garryhill and Cathaoir mac Airt to become more powerful.¹⁵⁷⁷

To the north of MacMurrough country, the O'Byrnes also faced the advance of Tudor power into their lands. In January 1536, Tadhg mac Gerald O'Byrne of Kiltimon, the O'Byrne overlord and Butler client, drew up a series of indentures with Grey and proved his loyalty by campaigning in Munster during August.¹⁵⁷⁸ Ossory, however, was not content to let friendly relations blossom between Grey and his O'Byrne supporters. He now encouraged Tadhg to attack his O'Byrne cousins of Newrath who were firmly allied to Grey, leading to bitter fighting there. Consequently, this feud produced a series of charge and counter charge. In June 1538, Ossory complained to the king of Grey's attacks upon the lands of Tadhg.¹⁵⁷⁹ Also two years later, James Butler, 10th earl of Ormond, Ossory's son and successor, bitterly attacked Grey because of his patronage of the O'Byrnes of Newrath.¹⁵⁸⁰ Clearly much of the O'Byrne lordship was in chaos resulting from this deadly feud, indicating the increasing fragmentation of the ruling elite.

One completely unexpected result of the collapse of the Kildares in Leinster was the rise of the mercurial Toirdhealbhadh mac Airt O'Toole and his protégés, the Gabhal Raghnaill O'Byrne lords of Glenmalure. Their sudden appearance further complicated this increasingly chaotic situation in a region still reeling from the Kildare demolition. Little is known of Toirdhealbhadh's ambitions, although he was eager to establish his dominance over all the O'Tooles and sought to create alliances with the neighbouring O'Byrne lords of Glenmalure, the Kavanaghs of Garryhill and the Art Boy Kavanaghs. This latter observation is significant in view of the fact that the whole period after 1535 was characterised by the dramatic rise of traditionally weaker Irish families in East Leinster. For instance Toirdhealbhadh himself was married to a daughter of Muirheartach mac Airt Buidhe MacMurrough, leader of the Art Boy Kavanaghs and

¹⁵⁷⁷ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, no. 77, p. 93.

¹⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid*, no. 72, p. 89; *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1538-46*, iii, p. 74.

¹⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid*, *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1538-46*, p. 75.

¹⁵⁸⁰ *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1538-46*, no. ccxxxvii, p. 41; *L. & P. Hen VIII*, xvi, no. 304, p. 131.

the titular dynastic overlord between 1544-7.¹⁵⁸¹ As we have seen this was probably because government attention was focused upon the reduction of their traditional overlords. However, part of the explanation may also lie in the nexus of interfamilial alliances forged by Toirdhealbhadh and later by the O'Byrnes of Glenmalur. Also during this period Toirdhealbhadh and his allies maintained diplomatic links with both the Butler and Fitzgerald camps, flirting with both. But for the most part this alliance of junior Irish lords operated as an independent body in East Leinster in these years. The creation, success and contragovernmental potency of these allegiances, however, were conditional on the presence of a protagonist leader with the necessary charisma and initiative. In this sense, therefore, it is possible to view Toirdhealbhadh as a precursor of sorts to the later more powerful Gabhal Raghnaill warlords.

Thus, from the middle of 1530s to Toirdhealbhadh's submission in November 1540¹⁵⁸², this nexus was in intermittent conflict with the Tudor government. In the aftermath of the Kildare rebellion, the O'Tooles waxed strong because of the absence of the powerful restraint of the Kildares. Toirdhealbhadh openly espoused the Kildare cause but in reality he exploited the power vacuum to expand his power. In 1536 Toirdhealbhadh's brother Art Óg along with Edmund Óg O'Byrne was still in the service of the government.¹⁵⁸³ The first clue to their true intentions was earlier revealed during the Kildare death throes. Then it was noted that O'Tooles treacherously captured the former Kildare castle of Powerscourt, destroying it before it could be recaptured.¹⁵⁸⁴ It would seem Toirdhealbhadh and his confederates were determined to eradicate any form of restraint or check already existent within the Leinster mountains, unravelling first the Kildare conquest of O'Tooles' Country. Even though a member of the Geraldine League, Toirdhealbhadh steadfastly sought permanent confirmation of his gains throughout his protracted negotiations with Fitzgerald rebels and

¹⁵⁸¹ K.W.Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs, 1400-1700', *In Ir Geneal*, 5, no. 6 (Nov. 1979), p. 732; (hereafter Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs' (Nov. 1979). *S.P. Hen. VIII*, 1538-46, no. cccxxvi, p. 256. In 1538-9 a son of Muircheartach had sought help from Toirdhealbhadh mac Airt to burn the Pale.

¹⁵⁸² *S.P. Hen. VIII*, 1538-46, no. cccxxix, p. 266.

¹⁵⁸³ *L. & P. Hen VIII*, xi, no. 934, p. 373.

¹⁵⁸⁴ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, 1515-1538, no. xcvi, p. 264.

the government. An example of these changed circumstances can be seen in May 1538. Then Toirdhealbhadh defeated John Kelway, constable of Rathmore, and a large force of County Kildare gentlemen at Three Castles near Blessington. Kelway following his surrender perished by Toirdhealbhadh's own hand.¹⁵⁸⁵ During Grey's lord deputyship (1536-40), he led several expeditions against Toirdhealbhadh. Earlier in December 1537 Toirdhealbhadh agreed to peace for three years and promised to contribute to government hostings. In return he was to enjoy the lands his father held before the Kildare conquest.¹⁵⁸⁶ Furthermore, he was not to aid any Fitzgerald rebels, notably Peter Fitzgerald. Again Ossory's influence can be detected as he and his son, Lord James Butler, acted as sureties to the agreement. Peace did not last, probably because of Kelway's indiscretion. This had the effect of pushing the O'Tooles back into the Fitzgerald camp. During 1538 the English learned that the Kildare heir, Gerald Fitzgerald, accepted from Art Óg O'Toole gifts of a saffron shirt, an English cloak edged with silk as well as money at Maghnus O'Donnell's castle in Donegal.¹⁵⁸⁷ Also the confession of Conchobhar Mór O'Connor, Grey's servant, reveals that the O'Toole brothers had obtained a promise of Powerscourt and Fassaroe from Gerald.¹⁵⁸⁸ Thomas Lynch, a Galway merchant, also later confirmed that he had seen the messenger of the O'Tooles in O'Donnell's castle.¹⁵⁸⁹ Consequently, Grey led a campaign into the mountains against them and the Gabhal Raghnaill O'Byrnes of Glenmalure during May 1539.¹⁵⁹⁰

Toirdhealbhadh also made common cause with some Irish leaders of the midlands and West Leinster. For the first time in decades, these dynasties were able to extend helping hands across the Barrow frontier to each other. In Kildare days the power of the earls was amply sufficient to prevent such co-ordination. The combination

¹⁵⁸⁵ *L. & P., Hen VIII*, xiii, part 2, no. 1136, p. 425. Piers Ruadh sent messengers to Glendalough to negotiate for release of prisoners in June; *Ibid*, no. 1138, p. 426. Toirdhealbhadh killed Kelway for his treachery and his earlier hanging of two O'Tooles. For the hanging of these O'Tooles by Kelway, see *ibid*, no. 1160, p. 433. Over sixty Kildare gentlemen were slain. See also *A.U.*, iii, pp 620-1. After Kelway's defeat a hosting - limited to supplies for fourteen days - was proclaimed against them.

¹⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid*, xii, part 2, no. 1232, p. 433.

¹⁵⁸⁷ *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1538-1546*, 'The Confession of Connor More O'chonnour', p. 139.

¹⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁸⁹ *L. & P., Hen VIII*, xiv, part 1, no. 1245, p. 553.

¹⁵⁹⁰ *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1538-1546*, no. cclxxi, p. 135.

of Irish of both parts of Leinster represented a most dangerous development for the government, harking back to the days of Art Mór MacMurrough. And despite Grey's attempts to strangle this confederation at birth, they now posed a substantial obstacle to the military subjugation of Leinster.¹⁵⁹¹ However, in late 1539 Grey's enemies led by Ormond accused him of favouring former Fitzgerald clients and of being under the influence of O'Connor Faly. In April 1540 Grey was recalled to England after the fall of Cromwell, his patron.¹⁵⁹² In response to Grey's departure O'Connor Faly with Giollapádraig O'More and Toirdhealbhadh burnt part of the Pale. Government concern was evident and found expression in a letter from the Dublin Council to Cromwell in April 1540.¹⁵⁹³ However, the government's reaction was sharp and effective. Lord Justice Sir William Brereton brought an expedition into Offaly, forcing O'Connor Faly to submit.¹⁵⁹⁴ On 1 May Ormond also wrote that his earldom and the Pale had suffered attacks from a co-ordinated Irish offensive, mentioning the O'Tooles and O'Connor Falys in particular.¹⁵⁹⁵ Indeed, the government's concerns increased as O'Connor Faly continued burning in Kildare throughout early May, while Tadhg O'Byrne foiled a huge O'Toole raid on the Pale by warning the Palesmen.¹⁵⁹⁶ Significantly, a government army was dispatched during the middle of June to O'Toole's Country. There it was confronted by the combined forces of Toirdhealbhadh, Domhnall mac Cathaoir Kavanagh of Garryhill and probably Seaán mac Rhéamain O'Byrne of Glenmalure.¹⁵⁹⁷ Because of the strength of the Irish as well as a lack of supplies, the government made a peace of six weeks with Toirdhealbhadh.¹⁵⁹⁸ Indeed, a more instructive and illustrative example of the extent of Irish co-ordination came in July. Then Ormond's invasion of Idrone forced Toirdhealbhadh to hasten to the aid of Domhnall mac Cathaoir Kavanagh of Garryhill. However, the

¹⁵⁹¹ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 89-92.

¹⁵⁹² *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1538-1546*, no. cccxxvi, p. 258; *Ibid.*, no. cccxxvi, p. 256; *L. & P., Hen VIII*, xv, no. 915, p. 453.

¹⁵⁹³ 'Yestyrday Oconor burnyd certayne townes of the Kinges subjectes, and now instantly the Tolys and Kevanes be burnynge in the marches of Dublin'. See *S.P.Hen VIII.*, *Ibid.*, no. ccc, p. 202.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Fitzsimons, p. 216.

¹⁵⁹⁵ *S.P. Hen VIII, 1538-154*, no. ccxcviii, p. 199; *L. & P., Hen VIII*, xiv, no. 620, p. 301; *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 21, p. 53.

¹⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, no. cci, p. 203.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Domhnall mac Cathaoir fired Athy, burning the house of the Dominicans there in June 1540, see *Extents of Irish Monastic Possessions 1540-41*, p. 172.

¹⁵⁹⁸ *L. & P., Hen VIII*, xv, no. 815, p. 386; *Ibid.*, no. 849, p. 420.

size of Ormond's army convinced Toirdhealbhadh that a truce was a better option.¹⁵⁹⁹

In August Sir Anthony St Leger was appointed as Grey's successor. He adopted a different countrywide policy towards the Irish lords. Importantly, he recognised that the major concern of the Irish lords was secure tenure of their respective lordships. Use of military force alone could not produce any long term stability. St Leger determined to steer a new course through an adept combination of diplomacy and force. It became known as Surrender and Regrant and involved the submission of the lord, his rejection of the pope, and his acknowledgement of Henry VIII as head of the church. In return the Irish lord was granted back his lands, often with a title. St Leger hoped that through accommodation of Irish fears, stability would be achieved. It was hoped this would increase stability. And eager to foster personal relations with them, St Leger supported primogeniture amongst the ruling families.

After subduing the MacMurrough-Kavanaghs in early September, St Leger and Ormond crossed the Barrow into the midlands. There they concentrated their attention on Laois and Offaly, campaigning against both the Butler affinity and the former Kildare clients. By 22 September St Leger had secured the submissions of all the principal midland lords. In Laois Cétach Ruadh and all his brothers came to the deputy and made their peace on the 12th of that month.¹⁶⁰⁰ In effect, St Leger's reassertion of government power in Laois forced the local elite to be conciliatory. As a result they later served on government campaigns in Ulster and Munster.¹⁶⁰¹ In June 1541 Cétach Ruadh attended parliament, and with his family was pardoned and given a grant of English liberty.¹⁶⁰² O'Connor Faly and his clients of O'Dunne and O'Connor Irry were also forced to make peace in September.¹⁶⁰³ Following O'Connor Faly's submission, Henry VIII ordered St Leger

¹⁵⁹⁹ *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1538-1546*, no. cccxv, p. 226.

¹⁶⁰⁰ *L. & P., Hen VIII*, xvi, no. 70, p. 20; *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 52, p. 55.

¹⁶⁰¹ *Ibid*, xx, part 2, p. 382.

¹⁶⁰² *Cal. Fiants Hen VIII*, nos 205-6. Also a Dorothy O'More was granted English liberty during 1542 in order that she may marry the son of Thomas Eustace. See *Cal. Fiants Hen VIII*, no. 305.

¹⁶⁰³ *L. & P., Hen VIII*, xvi, no. 70, p. 20.

to banish him and restore Cathaoir to the lordship of Offaly. St Leger balked at this request, arguing that O'Connor Faly's exile would greatly undermine the new peace treaties and thus destabilise the whole midlands region.¹⁶⁰⁴ In November O'Connor Faly proffered his own solution to the impasse, offering to hold Offaly of the king with the title of baron of Offaly.¹⁶⁰⁵ Furthermore he submitted his feud with Cathaoir to St Leger's judgement. The lord deputy then recommended that Offaly be divided between the two O'Connor Faly brothers. So on St Leger's recommendation, Henry VIII pardoned O'Connor Faly in 1541, but did not issue him a grant of Offaly.

An example of the strengths and frailties of St Leger's policy is the case of Toirdhealbhach O'Toole.¹⁶⁰⁶ After securing the adherence of the Irish of the midlands, St Leger brought his army into the Leinster mountains to confront Toirdhealbhach.¹⁶⁰⁷ That September the O'Toole truce with the government expired. St Leger's army was able to secure the submissions of most O'Byrnes and MacMurrough-Kavanaghs but the O'Tooles remained elusive, making St Leger move determined to subdue them. To that end he sought money from England to rebuild two castles facing the mountains of the O'Tooles.¹⁶⁰⁸ After a four week campaign in November St Leger and Ormond finally cornered Toirdhealbhach and his O'Byrne allies in the Wicklow highlands. Then Ormond exercised his influence to induce the tired O'Toole leader to come to terms.¹⁶⁰⁹ As usual Toirdhealbhach set the formal recognition of his claims as the price of his obedience. Therefore he formally asked that the ancestral lands of the O'Tooles be granted to him and his brother, Art Óg. At the same time the O'Byrnes renewed their submission.¹⁶¹⁰ After Toirdhealbhach's submission, St Leger dispatched him to court where

¹⁶⁰⁴ *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1538-1546*, pp 264-5.

¹⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp 265, 316.

¹⁶⁰⁶ *L. & P., Hen VIII*, xvi, no. 272, p. 116. St Leger estimated Toirdhealbhach the elder levied black rents of four or five hundred marks yearly. Archbishop Brown of Dublin lamented that Toirdhealbhach the elder with two hundred men continually devastated his Tallaght lands and killed his tenants, see *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1538-1546*, no. cclxiv, p. 123. St Leger pointed out the necessity of O'Tooles to raid: '*Your Grace knowith well, that the contre, wher the Tooles enhabitte, is all wants and ther lyving is only upon the Kinges subjectes by stelthis, bodragges, and tributes*'. see *Ibid*, p. 267.

¹⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid*, xvi, no. 70, p. 20.

¹⁶⁰⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁰⁹ *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1538-1546*, no. cccxxix, p. 266.

¹⁶¹⁰ *Ibid*.

he made a formal submission to Henry VIII in April 1542.¹⁶¹¹ In return Henry VIII confirmed Toirdhealbhadh's tenurial rights and those of his brother. Thus, O'Toole claims to the castles of Castlekevin and Powerscourt and to ancestral lands lying in north and central Wicklow were legitimised under English law.¹⁶¹² Henry VIII's confirmation of the articles of the St Leger/O'Toole agreement greatly ameliorated the grievances of the Irish of the central Wicklow highlands. Now with O'Toole grievances addressed, St Leger turned to the O'Byrnes. On 4 July 1542, Tadhg O'Byrne and his leading nobles agreed to the gradual introduction of English rule into their lordship as part of Surrender and Regrant. The agreement allowed the O'Byrnes a great deal of autonomy over their own affairs. But as time was to prove the reality was to be otherwise. And as has been noted, the change in English policies combined with the political fragmentation of the O'Byrne lordship paved the way for its abolition and replacement by an English seneschalcy.¹⁶¹³ However, the peace was to prove short-lived as divisions within the O'Toole dynasty were again to destabilise the Irish polity of East Leinster.

In November 1542 Toirdhealbhadh forcibly attempted to exert his rights within the territory of his cousin, Toirdhealbhadh mac Seaáin O'Toole of Imaal.¹⁶¹⁴ But he was killed by his rival in a surprise morning attack upon his encampment. Toirdhealbhadh's death destroyed the equilibrium he had been building for the best part of a decade among the Irish of the mountains. While it cannot be said for definite how Toirdhealbhadh's death affected the politics of the Irish of the Leinster mountains, it is notable that the Gabhal Raghnaill O'Byrne lords of Glenmalur began to emerge shortly after 1542. It does seem clear that the fall of Toirdhealbhadh and the later killing of his heir, Toirdhealbhadh Óg, by Toirdhealbhadh mac Seaáin in May 1543¹⁶¹⁵ opened up considerable opportunities for Seaán mac Rhéamain O'Byrne of Glenmalur. He with his young but able son, Aodh, positioned themselves to fill Toirdhealbhadh's leadership role

¹⁶¹¹ Ibid, no. cccxxix, pp 266-8; H.Nicholas (ed.), *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, vii (London, 1837), pp 92-3. (hereafter *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, vii).

¹⁶¹² *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, vii, pp 92-3.

¹⁶¹³ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, pp 193-4; Nicholls, 'Cricoch Branach', pp 8 & 16.

¹⁶¹⁴ *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1538-46*, no. ccclxxxiii, pp 438-9.

¹⁶¹⁵ *L. &P. Hen VIII*, xviii, part 1, no. 533, pp 321-2.

among the Irish of the Leinster mountains. This ambition was to lead father and son into direct conflict with the Butlers of Ormond and later the administration. The lord of Glenmalure's first significant public appearance was at the sealing of Tadhg O'Byrne's treaty with St Leger on 24 July 1542. In the indenture recording the agreement, he is listed fifth as John son of Remund.¹⁶¹⁶ From one of the bardic poems of the *Leabhar Branach*, we learn that Seaán was the 6th lord of Crioich Raghnuill (the land of Raghnaill).¹⁶¹⁷ This was a discontinuous territory, anchored by the chief residence of its lords at Ballinacor lying at the mouth of Glenmalure, ranging from Glendalough southwards to Shillelagh and westwards into Carlow.¹⁶¹⁸

Conflict between the Gabhal Raghnaill O'Byrnes and the Butlers was inevitable. After the collapse of Kildare regional power in 1535, the Butlers planned to extend their authority into the Wicklow district known as Cosha lying to the northeast of Shillelagh, a territory where the all the senior O'Byrne branches held lands.¹⁶¹⁹ By doing so the Butlers were resurrecting claims dating from the thirteenth century. However, the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure had also moved into Cosha, seemingly seizing a large slice of this territory centred in the parishes of Kilcommon and Preban adjacent to Aughrim and Tinahely. Doubtless they were now the major obstacle to the Butler advance here. Also the expansion of the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure irritated the senior O'Byrne families who were allied to the Butlers. Thus, in 1543 the Butlers decided to challenge their territorial gains, focusing particularly upon Preban and Kilcommon. In October 1543, Sir John Travers, a Palesman, was appointed as constable of Arklow and was instructed to forcibly resurrect old Butler claims to these lands.¹⁶²⁰

¹⁶¹⁶ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, no. 170, p. 193; However, he is sometimes better known in the documentary record as Seaán Óg O'Byrne. See *Leabhar Branach*, II 140, p. 6; *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 43, p. 81, no. 101, p. 89.

¹⁶¹⁷ *Leabhar Branach*, II 141-4, p. 6.

¹⁶¹⁸ Nicholls, 'Crioich Branach', p. 8; C.O'Brien, 'Feagh McHugh O'Byrne: Firebrand of the Wicklow Mountains', In *History Ireland*, vol.8, no. 1 (Spring 2000), p. 13. (hereafter O'Brien, 'Feagh McHugh'); See also Idem, 'The Byrnes of Ballymanus' In W.Nolan and K.Hannigan (eds) *Wicklow: History and Society* (Dublin, 1994), pp 305-7; See also Father Richard Galvin's 1872 transcription of the 1631 will of Féilim mac Fiach O'Byrne's will in Archivium Parochiale de Rathdrum, Liber II. This records the gifts made by Féilim to his sons.

¹⁶¹⁹ B.O'Rourke, *English Policy: The Response of the Junior O'Byrnes of Gabhal Raghnaill 1530-1620s*, (Unpublished M.A thesis, Maynooth 1992), p. 9. (hereafter O'Rourke). See also Nicholls, 'Crioich Branach', p. 11.

¹⁶²⁰ *C.O.D.*, iv, no. 311, i, and ii, pp 256-7; Curtis, *Rich. II in Ire*, p. 220; *Inquisitionum, Wicklow Inquisitions*, no. 10. This notes the advance of Seaán mac Reamain's grip over these lands during the reign of Henry VIII.

Although Travers's assault failed in its objective to enforce Butler claims, his attacks upon the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure, combined with separate forays against some of the O'Tooles and the MacMurrrough-Kavanaghs seriously disrupted the equilibrium of the Irish.

Having said that, the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure had some links to the Butlers. Indeed, Seaán's grandmother was Joan, daughter of Edmund mac Richard Butler of Polestown, making him a cousin of the earls of Ormond.¹⁶²¹ Also these Butler links were reflected in Aodh's first marriage to Sadhbh, daughter of Féilim Buidhe O'Byrne of Clonmore, in the early 1540s. Notably Sadhbh was the niece of the prominent enemy of the 9th earl of Kildare, Seaán mac Lorcán O'Byrne of Clonmore who burnt much of southern Kildare during 1532.¹⁶²² Both Seaán mac Lorcán and his brother Féilim Buidhe were clients of the Butlers, an alliance maintained by Sadhbh's brother Aodh Geangach O'Byrne. Sometime in the early 1540s, Aodh and Sadhbh were to become the parents of Fiach mac Aodha O'Byrne. Fiach's exact date of birth is unknown, but Robert Dunlop, writing in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, estimated that Fiach was born sometime in 1544.¹⁶²³ By August 1550, however, Aodh had married Sadhbh, daughter of Art Óg O'Toole of Castlekevin, while his ex-wife Sadhbh was to later marry Diarmait Dubh Kinsella.¹⁶²⁴ Many of the factors that forced the separation of Aodh and his wife may be connected to his increasingly fraught relations with the Butlers.¹⁶²⁵

In this ever-shifting political world of East Leinster, the ambitions of the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure began to grow. Having

¹⁶²¹ Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Irish Annals', p. 99; Idem, 'The Genealogy of the O'Byrnes of Ranelagh', p. 108.

¹⁶²² *L. & P. Hen VIII*, v, no. 1061, p. 480; Nicholls, 'The Genealogy of the O'Byrnes of Ranelagh', p. 110.

¹⁶²³ Robert Dunlop, 'Feagh McHugh O'Byrne', In S.Lee (ed.), *A Dictionary of National Biography*, xvi, (London, 1909), p. 786. (hereafter *D.N.B.*).

¹⁶²⁴ *Cal. Fiants Ire., Eliz I*, no. 6338; *Cal. Fiants Ire., Edw VI*, no. 537.

¹⁶²⁵ It may have been that the pro Butler O'Byrnes of Clonmore decided to end their alliance with Seaán mac Reamain about summer 1548 during the height of a Butler offensive, forcing the divorce of Sadhbh and Aodh. Or perhaps Aodh sent his wife back to her family, favouring a more stable alliance with the O'Tooles of Castlekevin. What effect his parents' divorce and the fracturing of family dynamics had on Fiach is impossible to discern as it seems he spent much of his childhood in fosterage amid the hilly region of Glenlorcan west of modern Aughrim; L.Price, 'Notes on Feagh McHugh O'Byrne', In *Kildare Arch. Soc. Jn.*, (January 1932), p. 141. (hereafter Price, 'Notes'). This mentions that Captain Wingfield killed Art mac Aodha and Robert mac Aodha, Fiach's foster brothers, along with many of their followers during an attack on their village at Glanlurkin near Aughrim in May 1595. See O'Brien, 'Feagh McHugh', pp 16-7. The placename of Glenlorcan is now obsolete.

withstood the Butler assault of 1543, they now saw themselves as a major emerging regional power. And instead of remaining content with their relatively minor position in East Leinster, they now sought to expand their influence southwards by interfering among the MacMurrough-Kavanaghs. During the 1540s, Cathaoir mac Airt Kavanagh with the encouragement of the Tudor government steadily undermined the position of his weakening overlord Cathaoir MacInnycross.¹⁶²⁶ On 3 September 1543 Cathaoir MacInnycross relinquished much of his own personal power by sealing another agreement with St Leger. After Cathaoir MacInnycross's death probably in 1544, Cathaoir mac Airt confirmed his supremacy over his dynastic rivals during the following year. Then he defeated Gerald mac Cathaoir Kavanagh of Garryhill and his allies, the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure, in a bloody pitched battle near Hacketstown.¹⁶²⁷ But the MacMurrough title still eluded Cathaoir mac Airt as he had to recognise the dynastic primacy of Muirheartach mac Airt Buidhe MacMurrough. However, the safety of the forested and hilly fastness of their homeland allowed the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure to recover and rethink their strategy. Despite their reverse at Hacketstown, they soon remerged from Glenmalure to begin a lucrative business in levying protection money from the English settlements located amid the foothills of the western and northern Leinster mountains. In late 1545 there was a dramatic increase in Irish attacks upon the Pale, compelling Archbishop Browne of Dublin to write to Henry VIII in February 1546.¹⁶²⁸ The upsurge in violence must have been considerable and is paralleled by the attacks of O'Connor Faly and Giollapádraig O'More upon the settlers in the midlands in late 1546, which is connected to the recall of St Leger to answer charges in England during spring 1546.¹⁶²⁹ Before his departure, St Leger appointed Lord Justice Sir William Brabazon to govern Ireland in his absence.¹⁶³⁰ Despite St Leger's declaration that the O'Byrnes and the

¹⁶²⁶ D.Moore, 'English Actions, Irish Reactions: The MacMurroughs Kavanaghs, 1530-1630', In *Maynooth Historical Studies*, no. 4, (1987), pp 7-8. (hereafter Moore, 'The MacMurrough Kavanaghs')

¹⁶²⁷ Dowling, *Annals*, pp 37-8; O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 99.

¹⁶²⁸ *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1538-46*, p. 539; *Ibid* no. cccxxxv, p. 557; O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 96.

¹⁶²⁹ Fitzsimons, pp 218-9.

¹⁶³⁰ *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1538-46*, p. 563.

O'Tooles were spent forces, clearly there had been a dramatic increase in the military strength of the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure.¹⁶³¹

This influx of military strength into Cricoch Raghnuill has its origins in the political turmoil sweeping West Leinster and the midlands. By 1542 this region was the great battlefield for the phoney war between Ormond and the reformers within the government. One of underlying reasons of the increase in this struggle was recent strengthening of the Ormond affinity within the wider region. This situation had been immeasurably strengthened in late spring or early summer 1541 by the assassination of Fearganainm O'Carroll of Ely by his rival, Tadhg O'Carroll, an Ormond client.¹⁶³² In Upper Ossory the situation was somewhat different. There St Leger endeavoured to keep Brian MacGillpatrick in the government camp. Thus, in June 1541, MacGillpatrick, through St Leger's patronage, was granted a peerage. This allowed him to take his place among his fellow barons in Irish house of lords at the opening sessions of the 1541 parliament.¹⁶³³ However, the struggle between Ormond and St Leger was becoming particularly concentrated in the lordships of Laois and Offaly. In Laois the O'More overlords were targeted by St Leger because of their usual loyalty to Ormond. In 1542 Ruaidhrí Caoch succeeded Cétach Ruadh as lord of Laois¹⁶³⁴, when the latter was killed in Carlow by the followers of Domhnall mac Cathaoir Kavanagh of Garryhill.¹⁶³⁵ After his inauguration, Ruaidhrí Caoch submitted before the council at Dublin on 13 May 1542. In an indenture, he promised military service to the government and concluded an agreement about the lordship of Slemargy with Robert St Leger, sub-constable of Carlow Castle.¹⁶³⁶ On 10 November Ruaidhrí Caoch again submitted before the Dublin council and confirmed his concord with Robert St Leger.¹⁶³⁷

¹⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, no. cccxlv, p. 569.

¹⁶³² Vennings, 'The O'Carrolls of Offaly', pp 188-9.

¹⁶³³ B. Bradshaw, *The Irish Constitutional Revolution of the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1979), pp 238-40.

¹⁶³⁴ *C.S.P.I.*, 1586-8, no. 35, p. 117.

¹⁶³⁵ *S.P.Hen. VIII*, 1538-46, no. cccliv, p. 348. The three O'More brothers, Cétach Ruadh, Giollapádraig and Ruaidhrí, were recorded as being at peace in November 1541. For Cétach Ruadh's killing see *L & P, Hen VIII*, xx, part 2, p. 382.

¹⁶³⁶ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, pp 185-6.

¹⁶³⁷ *L & P, Hen VIII*, xvii, no. 1057; *Ibid.*, no. 163, pp 185-6.

It seems, however, Ruaidhrí Caoch inherited his father's mistrust of O'Connor Faly. He became convinced that St Leger encouraged O'Connor Faly's raids into Laois.¹⁶³⁸ Ostensibly O'Connor Faly's attacks were in support of his son-in-law, Giollapádraig O'More. But they also masked a government offensive against Ormond's clients of whom Ruaidhrí Caoch was one. In June 1544 Ruaidhrí Caoch outlined his grievances in a letter to Henry VIII, accusing St Leger of complicity in O'Connor Faly's actions.¹⁶³⁹ This threat forced Ruaidhrí Caoch to ally himself more closely with Ormond, marrying Margaret Butler in 1543/4.¹⁶⁴⁰ This alliance greatly alarmed O'More's neighbour, Baron Brian MacGillpatrick of Upper Ossory. In 1544 Baron Brian allied himself with O'Connor Faly to prevent his encirclement by Ormond and his clients. At this stage St Leger and O'Connor Faly encouraged him to exploit Ruaidhrí Caoch's struggle with his brother, Giollapádraig, by attacking Laois, resulting his brief imprisonment in Dublin on the orders of Ormond's friends in the government.¹⁶⁴¹ This experience convinced Baron Brian to be more ambivalent in his dealings with St Leger, playing both sides for his own advantage.¹⁶⁴²

However, St Leger's success in achieving some stability in the midlands was conditional upon the continuance of good relations with O'Connor Faly. Indeed, he had been pardoned and received a regrant of the Offaly lordship in 1544. And St Leger in 1545 encouraged the English government to create O'Connor Faly a life peer. By June 1545 the London government had prepared letters patent for the grant of a viscounty to Brian.¹⁶⁴³ But St Leger's recall in 1546 radically changed the situation. In March St Leger returned to England to answer charges of misgovernment. The deputy asked O'Connor Faly to accompany him as a symbol of what could be achieved through tough but humane government. After considering Grey's fate, O'Connor Faly, seemingly assumed that St Leger was destined for the block and did not travel to London. Fearing the fall of his patron,

¹⁶³⁸ *Ibid*, xx, part 2, pp 382-3.

¹⁶³⁹ *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no.49, p. 70.

¹⁶⁴⁰ *L & P, Hen VIII*, xix, part 2, no. 531, ii, p. 357.

¹⁶⁴¹ Edwards, 'The MacGiollapádraigs (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory', p. 338.

¹⁶⁴² *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 1, iii, p. 71; Edwards, 'The MacGiollapádraigs (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory', p. 338.

¹⁶⁴³ Fitzsimons, pp 218-9.

O'Connor Faly and Giollapádraig attacked County Kildare for the first time in six years in late 1546. However, Lord Justice Brabazon with Ruaidhrí Caoch successfully crushed their rebellion. During the fighting, Ruaidhrí Caoch killed O'Connor Faly's eldest son and forced Giollapádraig to flee into Offaly and O'Connor Faly to Connacht. St Leger returned to Ireland in December 1546, and made Ruaidhrí Caoch, Giollapádraig and O'Connor Faly submit. Moreover, the O'More brothers were brought to Dublin to settle their dispute under St Leger's mediation.

During Ruaidhrí Caoch's detention in Dublin, O'Connor Faly again devastated Laois and constructed forts there. When Ruaidhrí Caoch attempted to return to Laois, St Leger forcibly detained him in Dublin. In a letter to Henry VIII, Ruaidhrí Caoch accused St Leger of encouraging O'Connor Faly and Robert St Leger to attack his lands. During 1547 Ruaidhrí Caoch faced another revolt led by Giollápadraig. Initially, Ruaidhrí Caoch was successful, forcing Giollapádraig to flee. Before summer 1547 Giollapádraig returned with his O'Connor Faly allies and killed Ruaidhrí Caoch, seizing the lordship.¹⁶⁴⁴ However, St Leger still viewed O'Connor Faly as crucial to the peaceful rule of the midlands. Although government garrisons were to be established within his lordship. In summer 1547 O'Connor Faly was received into the king's peace by the deputy and was granted lands in Dublin for his private usage.¹⁶⁴⁵ However, the government's policy in West Leinster and the midlands was becoming more hard-line. When O'Connor Faly rebelled again in October, the London government instructed St Leger not to accept his inevitable submission. On wider scale, St Leger's position, however, had been weakened by the death of Henry VIII in January 1547. Also during 1547 Protector Somerset, the guardian of the minor Edward VI, defeated the court faction that patronised St Leger. O'Connor Faly had made a serious error of judgement. In due course St Leger was replaced as lord deputy in May 1548 by Sir Edward Bellingham. Bellingham's appointment as lord deputy ushered in the new era of Tudor government. Throughout 1548, the O'Mores and O'Connor Falys waged a bloody but ultimately unsuccessful war with Bellingham's army, leading to the

¹⁶⁴⁴ *Cal. Pat. Rolls. Ire.*, i, p. 505.

¹⁶⁴⁵ *Cal. Fiants Edw VI*, nos 68, 78.

surrenders of O'Connor Faly and Giollapádraig in November 1548.¹⁶⁴⁶ Once the Irishmen had made their submissions, they were transported to imprisonment in Marshalsea prison near London, where Giollapádraig died in 1549.¹⁶⁴⁷ Cathaoir O'Connor Faly remained in rebellion but was captured and later executed at Dublin during 1549. Bellingham issued pardons to all the remaining O'Connor Faly and O'More leaders and embarked upon the plantation of Laois and Offaly in November 1550.¹⁶⁴⁸ Bellingham was a firm believer in plantation, determining that the intrusion of prototype plantations in the lordships of O'Mores and O'Connor Falys would in the long term stabilise the grip of the Tudor monarchy upon the island. In the face of tremendous military opposition from some of these Irish dynasties, the plantations were established in Laois and Offaly in 1556.¹⁶⁴⁹ The hostile imposition of these plantations not only profoundly disturbed regional Irish policy in West Leinster and the midlands, but also affected East Leinster and the rest of Ireland. Through the harsh application of martial law throughout Leinster combined with the dispossession and execution of various Irish lords, a seething hatred arose between the Tudor government and the Leinstermen.

The situation in West Leinster and the midlands was to irrevocably redefine Irish politics. The effect of the plantations on the Leinster chessboard caused a decisive eastward shift in the provincial centre of gravity to its edge, the Wicklow mountains.¹⁶⁵⁰ From there

¹⁶⁴⁶ P.R.O., S.P. 61/1/129; Lennon, *Sixteenth-Century Ire.*, pp 164-6.

¹⁶⁴⁷ *AFM*, v, pp 1506-7, pp 1512-3.

¹⁶⁴⁸ In 1551 Brian escaped from his confinement and made his way northwards to the English border with Scotland. Unfortunately, he was seemingly captured while in the company of women by the English and returned to jail. When St Leger was reappointed lord deputy of Ireland in September 1553, O'Connor Faly's fortunes briefly changed. St Leger granted a sum of money to Margaret, O'Connor Faly's daughter, to go to England and petition Mary for the release of her father. The queen acceded to Margaret's request and both father and daughter returned to Ireland in 1554. Brian's son Ruaidhri gave himself as a hostage to the Dublin government in exchange for his father. However, Gerald, eleventh earl of Kildare, interfered within the O'Connor Faly polity by his recognition and proclamation of Donnchadh, Brian's son, as lord of Offaly sometime in 1554. This upset St Leger's plans, Ruaidhri was released, and Brian was returned to imprisonment in Dublin castle in 1556. There he the last great Gaelic lord of Offaly remained until his death in 1560. Brian by his marriage to Lady Mary Fitzgerald left eight recorded sons and two daughters. See Fitzsimons, pp 221-30

¹⁶⁴⁹ Fitzsimons, pp 220-34. For the reaction of the O'Mores to the Laois plantation, read Carey, 'The end of the Gaelic Political Order', pp 213-57; C.Brady, 'Court, Castle and Country: the framework of Government in Tudor Ireland', In C.Brady & R.Gillespie (eds) *Natives and Newcomers* (Suffolk, 1986), p. 45. For a series of pardons of the early 1550s relating to the O'Mores, see *Cal. Fiants. Edw VI*, nos 458, 598, 678, 717, 894, 1041, 1163, 1188.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Emmett O'Byrne, 'The Trend in Warfare in Gaelic Leinster', (forthcoming in *The Irish Sword*).

Aodh O'Byrne offered refuge in his virtually impenetrable territory to the dispossessed. In doing so, he hoped to harness their military manpower for his own purposes. His aim was to become the leader of Leinster, and he advanced his own family's status through his patronage of poets and his military support of the O'More and O'Connor Faly opponents of the plantations. On a more local level, he also shrewdly used them to expand his growing income by enlisting them to enforce payments of protection money from Irish and English alike. His use of these fugitive warbands even earned Spenser's grudging admiration.¹⁶⁵¹

It was not merely events within the midlands and West Leinster that propelled Aodh to the forefront of provincial Irish polity.¹⁶⁵² Even before wars in West Leinster between 1546-50, the power of the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure was increasing. Arguably though they must have been in regular contact with the O'Mores and O'Connor Faly from the early 1540s. This seems borne out by the report that Ruaidhrí Caoch fostered his son Ruaidhrí Óg in the Ballinacor household of Seaán - Aodh's father.¹⁶⁵³ Also their rise was helped by the death of Art Óg O'Toole of Castlekevin before November 1546, leaving them alone to pose as the most powerful of the Irish mountain lords.¹⁶⁵⁴ And secondly, it seems their newfound incomes from extortion and timber enabled them to buy firearms forcing their military reorganisation. Reflecting the growth of his house's importance, Aodh, independently of his father, patronised poetic families, particularly the McKeoghs, to compose a corpus of bardic poetry celebrating his military prowess and that of his family from the middle of the 1540s. This dating can be confirmed as two poems dedicated to Aodh contain envois to his first wife Sadhbh from

¹⁶⁵¹ '...Hugh MacShane, the father of this Feagh, first began to lift up his head, and through the strength and great fastnes of Glan-malor, which adjoyneth unto his house of Ballinacor, drew unto him many theeves and out-lawes, which fled unto the succour of that glynne, as to a sanctuary, and brought unto to him part of the spoyle of all the countrey, through which he grew strong, and a short space got unto himselfe a great name thereby among the Irish...' See Hadfield and Maley (eds), E.Spenser, *A View of the State of Ireland* (Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p. 113. (hereafter, *A View of the State of Ireland*).

¹⁶⁵² *Cal.Fiants Ire., Edw VI*, no. 301, and nos 537-8. These record pardons for Aodh between 1549-50.

¹⁶⁵³ Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order', p. 237.

¹⁶⁵⁴ *L & P, Hen*, xxi, part 2, no. 476, p. 234. In November 1546 Brian mac Toirdhealbhadh O'Toole was granted his father's lands, and Fiach O'Toole of Castlekevin was to gain those belonging to his father.

whom he had separated by 1550.¹⁶⁵⁵ Thus, all these factors point to a dramatic growth in the scale of their power and threat to the English counties surrounding the Leinster mountains, a danger which demanded immediate action. Consequently between 1 April and December 1546 Lord Justice Brabazon led an expedition against them, which they seem to have successfully defied.¹⁶⁵⁶

Another reason that propelled the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure to provincial prominence was the resurrection of Butler claims to lands lying within the Irish lordships in East Leinster. Indeed, these Butler claims were one of the main obstacles to the success of 'Surrender and Regrant' and the biggest threat to regional stability as evidenced by Butler aggression in Upper Ossory during the late 1540s.¹⁶⁵⁷ Consequently, the government moved to curb the power of Ormond. In September 1546 it was proposed that his patent to lands reconquered from the Irish be withdrawn.¹⁶⁵⁸ In 1547 the crisis in East Leinster began to come to a head. It was to be a year of considerable violence within the Wicklow uplands. Much of this was sparked by the mysterious death of Ormond at a banquet in London during October 1546.¹⁶⁵⁹ Indeed, the death of Ormond and the minority of his son, Thomas, 11th earl of Ormond, allowed the government a free hand to implement its policies in the midlands. And secondly violence was fuelled and ignited by the resurgence of the activities of Fitzgerald dissidents amongst the O'Mores, O'Connor Faly, O'Tooles and O'Byrnes in 1546-7.¹⁶⁶⁰ In 1547 some Fitzgeralds with the probable help of the O'Tooles of Imaal burnt Rathvilly in Carlow as well as Rathdangan and Ballymore in Kildare.¹⁶⁶¹ Whether the activities of the Fitzgeralds and the O'Tooles of Imaal can be linked to the warring of O'Connor Faly and Giollapádraig or to Brabazon's 1546 campaign against the Gabhal

¹⁶⁵⁵ *Leabhar Branach*, no. 4, ll 477-80 p. 19, she is called d'inghin Fhéilim. See also no 11, ll 1109-116. She is referred to as hinghin Fhéilim Buidhe.

¹⁶⁵⁶ *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1538-46*, p. 563; H.M.C., Halliday MSS: *Irish Privy Council, 1556-71* (London, 1897), p. 278. (hereafter H.M.C *Ir. Privy Council Bk.*.)

¹⁶⁵⁷ Edwards, 'The MacGiollapádraigs (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory', p. 340.

¹⁶⁵⁸ Price, 'The Byrnes' Country and Arklow', p. 57.

¹⁶⁵⁹ D.Edwards, 'The death of the ninth earl of Ormond', In *Butler Soc. Jn*, 3, (1986-7), pp 30-9; *C.O.D.*, iv, no. 352, p. 292.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Brady, *The Chief Governors* p. 57.

¹⁶⁶¹ *AFM*, v, pp1494-5. *N.H.I.*, ix, (eds) Moody, Martin and Byrne, (Oxford, 1984), p. 167. O'Toole links Toirdhealbhach mac Seaain to the burning of Ballymore but he incorrectly assigns this act to 1548, see O'Toole, *A History of the Clan O'Toole*, pp 274, 275.

Raghnaill O'Byrnes is uncertain. All that can be said with certainty is that both parts of Leinster were extremely volatile throughout 1546-7.¹⁶⁶² In Wicklow there seems to have been at least two considerable outbursts of violence. Early in 1547 St Leger destroyed an O'Byrne force and killed their leader or their so called '*Ductor*', while Toirdhealbhadh mac Seaáin O'Toole of Imaal was routed and killed by the Talbots before May 1547.¹⁶⁶³ More seriously a Fitzgerald force led by Henry and James Fitzgerald was defeated at Three Castles near Blessington by Brian mac Toirdhealbhadh O'Toole of Powerscourt, sheriff of County Dublin.¹⁶⁶⁴

Significantly this violence was set against the backdrop of considerable upheaval in the midlands. Bellingham realised the strategic significance of the midlands and West Leinster. Thus, his tenure of the office was characterised by the violent extension of martial law into Leinster. As a result the southern and western borders of the Pale were fortified and seneschals were introduced into the Irish lordships of East Leinster.¹⁶⁶⁵ In reality these seneschals were policemen, but many possessed their own personal agendas. Against this background of endemic violence in West Leinster and the midlands, Seaán and Aodh O'Byrne embarked upon a two-pronged strategy. To the south they began to consolidate their hold upon their threatened lands of Kilpipe and Preban. Furthermore they exploited the collapse of the O'Tooles of Imaal to move into the political vacuum in west Wicklow and east Kildare caused by the fall of the Fitzgeralds. However, their activities did not go unnoticed by the Butlers. Unsurprisingly in 1548 the Butlers moved militarily to halt the development of an O'Byrne hegemony over the Leinster mountains. This Butler offensive against the O'Byrnes of Glenmalur was to prove a major factor in the growing destabilisation of the Irish of East Leinster. The Butlers justified their assault by pointing to

¹⁶⁶² Dowling, *Annals*, p. 38; St Leger, while in England, estimated the strength of Wicklow's Irish: '*And as to the strenght of Irisshemen, I ame suer they were never so weke; the Byrnes not half the horssemen they have byn; the Tooles of no strenght.*' see *S.P.Hen. VIII, 1538-1546*, no.cccxlv, p. 569.

¹⁶⁶³ Price, 'The Byrnes Country', p. 227; O'Toole, pp 274-5; *Cal. Inquisitions, Edw. VI*, 43/10, p. 135.

¹⁶⁶⁴ *AFM*, v, pp 1500-1; *Cal. Fiants Edw VI*, nos 64, 72 & 80. See no. 264 for the pardon of Brian mac Toirdhealbhadh on 2 April 1549. *Cal. Inquisitions J 1 11/18*, p. 326 Brian mac Toirdhealbhadh alias *Brian An Coggey* was curiously said to have died on 23 Mar 1549. He was succeeded by his younger brother Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh, who was killed on 14 May 1603; *S.P. Hen. VIII, 1538-46*, no. cccxlv, p. 570

¹⁶⁶⁵ C.Lennon, *Sixteenth Century Ire*, p. 165.

their claims to long-lost lands lying within Crioich Raghnuill. While the early details of this latest Butler offensive remain obscure, it is clear that the lords of Glenmalure were obdurate and vehemently resisted the intrusion into their lands, as Aodh and his brother Patrick were pardoned for unspecified activities on 12 May 1548.¹⁶⁶⁶

It seems that in the early stages of this struggle, Aodh enjoyed the support of his wife's family against the Butler threat, but this soon changed.¹⁶⁶⁷ In July 1548 the nascent tension exploded. Then the Butlers increased the tempo of the struggle by unleashing Tibbot Walsh, constable of Arklow, and the O'Byrnes of Newrath. Their invasion of Crioich Raghnuill proved successful as their troops were quartered throughout the territory. As for Seaán and Aodh, they avoided a decisive engagement and retreated, along with their cattle, higher into the Wicklow uplands. From this rocky outcrop and facing defeat from his encircling enemies, Seaán dispatched a letter begging protection from Bellingham.¹⁶⁶⁸ In response Bellingham seemingly intervened with the Butlers and their O'Byrne allies, depriving them of victory. By September 1548, Seaán's position had clearly strengthened, benefiting from this breathing space. Now recovered, he began a fresh assault upon the Pale determined to exploit the chaos.¹⁶⁶⁹ Seaán and Aodh had changed their tactics, beginning a double game with the English. While the son remained aloof from their overtures, the father played the diplomatic card, concluding a peace at Dublin during October 1548.¹⁶⁷⁰

The tension in East Leinster was also ratcheted up by the Butler enroachments into MacMurrough-Kavanagh lands. Spearheading this attempted reconquest was Richard Butler, later Viscount Mountgarret. In 1538 he had obtained a grant of the lands of the Duke of Norfolk within the MacMurrough-Kavanagh homeland. Standing directly in his way was Cathaoir mac Airt. On Muircheartach mac Airt Buidhe MacMurrough's death in 1547,

¹⁶⁶⁶ *Cal.Fiants Ire., Edw VI*, no. 301.

¹⁶⁶⁷ *Cal.Pat.Rolls.Ire.*, p. 184. This mentions the pardons of Aodh's brother in laws, Terence McFeolim, Charles McFeolim Bowy McLorcane and Hugh Geangaghe McPhilip Bwy, between 10-11 May 1548.

¹⁶⁶⁸ *P.R.O. S.P. 61/73/43; C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 43, p. 81; See *Cal.Fiants Ire., Edw VI*, no. 560, for Walsh's pardon of 150; O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 100.

¹⁶⁶⁹ *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 101, p. 89.

¹⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Cathaoir mac Airt finally was elected dynastic overlord.¹⁶⁷¹ Consequently a war exploded between Cathaoir mac Airt and Butler for regional suzerainty. Amid this widening regional war, Butler accused Cathaoir mac Airt of launching raids upon his lands in Kilkenny. Bellingham moved quickly to defuse this explosive situation by writing soothingly to Cathaoir mac Airt, affirming the government's faith in him.¹⁶⁷² Unsurprisingly Aodh launched a new initiative, patching up his differences with his old enemy Cathaoir mac Airt. Together they attacked a series of English settlements before going to spend their loot on silks and saffron in the markets of Kilkenny.¹⁶⁷³

In 1550 the government continued to make steady inroads into Leinster. In March Cathaoir mac Airt's feud with Butler exploded when he seized Ferns Castle, sparking widespread disturbance throughout the region. Later in October the government devastated Cathaoir mac Airt's lands. On 4 November after his defeat by Tudor forces Cathaoir mac Airt was forced to renounce his traditional title of MacMurrough in the presence of St Leger and the assembled lords of parliament in exchange for the title of Baron of Ballyanne.¹⁶⁷⁴ This allowed him to sit in the Irish house of lords but he was to never enjoy this privilege as his patent was only issued shortly before his death. A second title was that of captain of his country. He died at an uncertain date after February 1554, and was succeeded by Murchadh mac Muiris MacMurrough, baron of Cowellyn. However, the coercion of Cathaoir mac Airt was mild in comparison to the steady hardening of the government's position towards the Irish provincial nobility after 1556. In 1557, to the horror of the Leinster nobility, Murchadh mac Muiris was forced to endure the indignity of brutal public execution at Leighlinbridge, involving hanging, drawing and quartering because '*..he had begun to exult himself and forment disturbances against them.*'¹⁶⁷⁵ Also in Wicklow the position of the senior O'Byrnes and the O'Tooles had been undermined and reduced

¹⁶⁷¹ *AFM*, v, p. 1505.

¹⁶⁷² *C.S.P.I.*, 1509-73, no. 17, p. 101; Moore, 'The MacMurrough Kavanaghs', pp 8-9.

¹⁶⁷³ *Ibid*, no. 111, p. 90.

¹⁶⁷⁴ Hughes, 'The Fall of the Clan Kavanagh', p. 39. Earlier in March 1550 he seized the castle of Ferns from Richard Butler, see *C.S.P.I.*, 1509-73, no. 17, p. 101. Cathaoir mac Airt died in 1554, see *AFM*, v, p. 1535.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Moore, 'The MacMurrough Kavanaghs', p. 9; *AFM*, v, p. 1545.

by the imposition of the English seneschalcy. They were also compelled to regularly maintain government troops and forced to render a military tax known as the cess.¹⁶⁷⁶ In 1557 Aodh's allies, Fiach mac Airt Óig O'Toole of Castlekevin and his cousin Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh O'Toole of Powerscourt were ordered by the English to desist from levying traditional dues from the freeholders of the Glencapp uplands of north Wicklow.¹⁶⁷⁷ Even more shocking was the crucifixion of Conall Óg O'More, lord of Laois, as well as the hanging of Domhnall mac Laoiseach O'More, lord of Slemargy, at the same location in March of the same year.¹⁶⁷⁸ The grisly fates of these Irish leaders polarised the situation in Leinster, facilitating Aodh's rise and steeling his resolve to preserve his power at all costs.

On the other hand, there were often good relations between the Leinster Irish and the government. In 1544-5 Dúnlaing O'Byrne of Newrath and An Calbhach O'Byrne, probably with Ormond's encouragement, served Henry VIII against the Scots.¹⁶⁷⁹ And as has been already mentioned, Brian O'Toole of Powerscourt acted as sheriff of County Dublin in 1548, earning deserved praise from St Leger.¹⁶⁸⁰ Moreover Braen mac Taidhg Óig of Newrath was

¹⁶⁷⁶ *Cal. Carew MSS*, 1515-74, no. 170, pp 193-4; H.M.C., Halliday MSS: *Ir. Privy Council Bk*, pp 67, 74, 109, 124, 126, and 149.

¹⁶⁷⁷ H.M.C., Halliday MSS: *Ir. Privy Council Bk*, p. 39.

¹⁶⁷⁸ P.R.O. S.P. 61/1/28, 29; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 40; Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order', p. 222; See also Fitzsimons, pp 226-7. For the plantations read R. Dunlop, 'The plantations of Leix and Offaly', *EHR*, vi (1891), pp 61-96. This Conall Óg O'More with William Odhar O'Carroll killed An Calbhach O'Carroll, lord of Ely. See *AFM*, v, p. 1534-5. In 1556 he with Donnchadh O'Connor Faly were separately taken prisoner in 1556, but were released for guarantees of good behaviour, see *ibid*, p. 1543. For Conall Óg's execution in the Irish sources, see *AFM*, v, pp 1545-6.

¹⁶⁷⁹ T. Blake-Butler, 'Henry VIII's Irish Army List', *Ir. Geneal*, 1 (1937), pp 3-5.

¹⁶⁸⁰ *S.P. Hen. VIII*, 1538-46, no. ccccxlv, p. 570; *AFM*, v, pp 1500-1. *Cal. Fiants Edw VI*, nos 64, 72 & 80. See no. 264 for the pardon of Brian mac Toirdhealbhadh on 2 April 1549. *Cal. Inquisitions J 1 11/18*, p. 326 Brian mac Toirdhealbhadh alias *Brian An Coggey* was curiously said to have died on 23 Mar 1549. He was succeeded by his younger brother Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh who was killed on 14 May 1603. His son Garret mac Féilim was killed in Clancry (Glencree) on 1 Feb 1582.; Art Óg O'Toole of Castlekevin was dead by November 1546 as his lands were granted to his son, Fiach of Castlekevin. See *L & P. Hen VIII*, xxi, ii, no. 476, p. 234; seems See *Cal Fiants Edw VI*, no. 354 for Fiach of Castlekevin in his pardon of 10 July 1549. Significantly an O'More of Slemargy is included among his men. In February 1551 Fiach O'Toole was granted his livery see no. 718. Fiach's growing links with the Anglicans are shown in his pardon with Walter Harold of 11 August 1559. A James Greene was included see *Cal. Fiants Eliz* no. 117. For Fiach's service as sheriff Dublin see *ibid*, no. 3013. For Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh of Powerscourt's service as sheriff of Dublin, see *ibid* no. 3498; For O'Toole contributions to government hostings, see H.M.C., Halliday MSS: *Ir. Privy Council Bk*, pp 14, 67, 74, 109, 143. For more cases of Irish assimilation with the Tudor order, for the O'Dempseys see Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order', pp 235-6. For the MacGillapatricks of Ossory, see Edwards, 'The MacGiollapádraigs (Fitzpatricks) of Ossory', pp 327-77; *Cal. Pat. Rolls. Ire.*, i, p. 151. This mentions the confirming of the lands of Brian mac Toirdhealbhadh O'Toole of Powerscourt and Lucas (Fiach) mac Airt Óig O'Toole of Castlekevin in 1547.

appointed as sheriff of O'Byrnes's Country in 1558.¹⁶⁸¹ Indeed, there were also good relations between the Irish and individual English families. Testifying to this, Fiach mac Airt Óig O'Toole of Castlekevin married Rose Basnett, daughter of Dean Edward Basnett of St Patrick's Cathedral, sometime in the 1550s¹⁶⁸², while Tadhg Óg O'Byrne, the dynastic overlord between 1566-77 fathered a son '*John Falconer*' by an Englishwoman of Lancashire during a stay there.¹⁶⁸³ Even though Aodh was at odds with the English for most of his career, he did enjoy good relations with individual English. Often Tudor observers described him as having a likeable enough character. Most notable though was his friendship with Sir Francis Agarde, seneschal of the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles since May 1566¹⁶⁸⁴, and the *Leabhar Branach* boasts of the infatuation of a young Englishwoman with him.¹⁶⁸⁵

But these occasional good relations with the English did not distract Aodh from copper-fastening his dynasty's position among the Irish of Leinster. Previous precedents of O'Byrnes attempting to act as leaders of the Leinster nobility had been established and were personified in the careers of Murchadh O'Byrne during the fourteenth century and of his descendants, the O'Byrnes of Newrath during the fifteenth century.¹⁶⁸⁶ From the late 1550s, Aodh wished his eldest son Fiach to inherit his position as the most powerful Irish lord in Leinster. This he secured by building a network of marriages between his children and the important Irish dynasties in Leinster. Clearly links with the MacMurrough-Kavanaghs were high on Aodh's agenda. Thus, in the early 1560s Fiach married his cousin Sadhbh, daughter of Domhnall mac Cathaoir Kavanagh of Garryhill in Carlow.¹⁶⁸⁷ Their union proved fruitful, yielding at least four sons and two daughters by 1569. Sometime in the 1560s his sister Elizabeth was united with Cathaoir mac Airt's second son, Brian mac Cathaoir Kavanagh of St

¹⁶⁸¹ *Cal.Fiants Ire., Eliz I*, no. 203, p. 316.

¹⁶⁸² *Calendar of the Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery*, vol. 2, J.Morrin (ed.) (Dublin, 1862), p. 595. Rose Basnett was still alive in July 1601. Then she was included along with her son Féilim O'Toole of Fartry and his wife, Margery Byrne, in the pardon of that date. (hereafter *Cal.Pat.Rolls.Ire.*, ii).

¹⁶⁸³ Nicholls, *Crioch Branach*', p. 24.

¹⁶⁸⁴ Lennon, *Sixteenth-Century Ire*, p. 260.

¹⁶⁸⁵ *Leabhar Branach*, ll 1373-76, p. 53. ll 1337-40. refers to Aodh's forcible abduction of English wives including '...a woman with a gold-embroidered headdress' after burning their homes, see *ibid*, p. 353. My thanks to Dr M.K.Simms for her help here.

¹⁶⁸⁶ See Lydon, *Lordship*, p. 241.

¹⁶⁸⁷ *Leabhar Branach*, p. x.

Mullins in County Carlow, the MacMurrough-Kavanagh overlord from 1557.¹⁶⁸⁸ After Brian Kavanagh's death in 1578, Elizabeth married Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach O'Toole of Powerscourt.¹⁶⁸⁹ Indeed, Eleanor a daughter of Elizabeth and Brian Kavanagh was later to marry Fiach's ally Domhnall Spainneach Kavanagh.¹⁶⁹⁰ This O'Byrne nexus also stretched into the midlands. In November 1573 Fiach's favourite sister Margaret was escorted by her family to her marriage to Ruaidhrí Óg O'More of Laois, the great friend of Aodh and his son.¹⁶⁹¹ Another unnamed sister of Fiach became the wife of Cathaoir Dubh Kavanagh, a leader of the Art Boy Kavanaghs based at Clonmullen.¹⁶⁹² But after his death about 1581, she married Tadhg mac Giollapádraig O'Connor Faly of Offaly in June 1582.¹⁶⁹³ The hand of a fourth sister, Onora, was given to Robert Walsh of Leopardstown, a leading figure of the prominent marcher lineage of south Dublin.¹⁶⁹⁴ This marital nexus reinforced by diplomacy, persuasion, and military might spun a web of discontent, incorporating many of those in Leinster bitterly opposed to Tudor rule. Thus, Ballinacor became the virtual epicentre of intrigue and plots against the administration in Leinster.

To proclaim his new status, Aodh increased the production of poems in his honour. Significantly he expanded the scope of his employment. While he retained the McKeoghs as his principal apologists, he was now able to recruit such well established poets as Tadhg Dall O'Higgins to record his heroism, reflecting the rising military and social capital of the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure.¹⁶⁹⁵ In this collection, Aodh and the Gabhal Raghnaill are projected as protectors of the Leinstermen and of the Irish from English incursions and aggression. Thus, began the next stage in the transformation of his position from that of a relatively minor mountain lord to that of an

¹⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 373. See Brian's obit *AFM*, v, pp 1710-1.

¹⁶⁸⁹ *Cal. Fiants Eliz.*, no. 3713.

¹⁶⁹⁰ O'Brien, 'Feagh McHugh', p. 14.

¹⁶⁹¹ *D.N.B.*, p. 786.

¹⁶⁹² Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov, 1979), p.731.

¹⁶⁹³ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, nos 12 & 14, p. 376.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Nicholls, 'The Genealogy of the O'Byrnes of Ranelagh', p. 111; Lane Poole Papers, N.L.I. MS 5378. This describes the Byrnes and the Walshes as closely related.

¹⁶⁹⁵ *Leabhar Branach*, pp 54-6.

important regional leader.¹⁶⁹⁶ This was the atmosphere in which Fiach grew up. No doubt he must have been aware of the dramatic changes facing his world from the news of dispossessed warlords who sought his father's protection amid Crioich Raghnuill's great protecting belts of mountainous forest. But unlike Aodh, Fiach was to prove an even more dangerous enemy of the English. However, Fiach was to benefit immensely from the tutelage and experience of his father. But there were differences between father and son. While it is impossible to gauge the extent of Aodh's religious convictions, it would appear that Fiach was an extremely devout Catholic. The evolution of his Catholic political and religious ideology may have been shaped by an education by or an exposure to Counter Reformation priests. More practically though, his first hand experience of the rough justice meted out by the seneschals and his family's links with Irish and Catholic militants in Munster and Ulster may have also proved important contributory factors to the formation of his political outlook.¹⁶⁹⁷ Clearly the growth of O'Byrne influence in Leinster was leading them onto the larger stage of countrywide politics. In particular the lords of Glenmalur were to gradually immerse themselves in the struggle to preserve the Catholic identity of many of the Irish and Anglo-Irish nobility from the twin advances of Protestantism and Anglicisation. Much later in the seventeenth century, Philip O'Sullivan Beare wrote that Fiach was the '*...bitterest enemy of the Protestants.*'¹⁶⁹⁸ It would seem Fiach, unlike his father, began to link the struggle to maintain the power of the Irish nobility with that to preserve the Catholic faith. This identification of these twin struggles as one led him to increasingly view himself as a leader with countrywide status rather than just as a regional figure. In a sense Fiach's position may be viewed as a continuance of the posture adopted by Seaán O'Neill in 1561, when O'Neill took issue with Lord Deputy Sussex about the executions of several Irish leaders.¹⁶⁹⁹ The early impressions of Tudor officials of Fiach are significant, noting that Fiach inherited his

¹⁶⁹⁶ Ibid, pp 1-73, see also no. 32, p. 130-5; B. Bradshaw, 'Native Reaction to the Westward Enterprise: a case study in Gaelic Ideology', In Andrews, Canny, Hair (eds), *The Westward Enterprise* (Liverpool, 1979), n. 8, p. 72. (hereafter Bradshaw).

¹⁶⁹⁷ T. O'Laidhin (ed.), *The Sidney State Papers, 1565-70* (Dublin, 1962); p. 56; *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 57, p. 329; Donovan, 'Tudor Rule', pp 118-50.

¹⁶⁹⁸ Philip O'Sullivan Beare, *Ireland under Elizabeth*, M. Byrne (ed.) (Dublin, 1903), p. 63. (hereafter O'Sullivan Beare)

¹⁶⁹⁹ *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 22, p. 176; See also C. Brady, *Shane O'Neill*, (Dundalgon, 1996) pp 35-59.

father's charm. They even described him as loquacious, but they prophetically noted his facade masked a considerable hostility to them.¹⁷⁰⁰ These observations proved correct as the 1560s wore on. Unsurprisingly, Aodh's attacks also became more predatory, indicating Fiach's growing influence.

The young Fiach first caught the Elizabethan government's attention in January 1563, when he and Aodh received pardons for their involvement in Richard Keating's disturbances in Wexford in summer 1562.¹⁷⁰¹ Then in either December 1562 or January 1563 Aodh and his son successfully captured two junior garrison captains, George Harvey and Henry Davells. While these two men were released unharmed, the O'Byrnes clearly had bigger plans. These plans became a little clearer when they and the O'Tooles killed several of the Talbots on 22 September 1563.¹⁷⁰² On 16 August 1564 they and some Kavanaghs drove their old enemy Tibbot Walsh from his lands near Aughrim, an action that led to government concern in December.¹⁷⁰³ And in late 1565 Aodh's followers killed some men of Sir Francis Herbert. When called to account in February 1566, Aodh promised to surrender Fiach but defaulted on his pledge.¹⁷⁰⁴ Quite clearly they were removing threats lying close to their heartland. However, these attacks seem to be part of a plan devised by Aodh and his brother-in-law Fiach mac Airt Óig O'Toole of Castlekevin to gain control of extensive forestlands within the Wicklow mountains. Ostensibly this was a campaign was to facilitate the growth of their lucrative timber trade with Dublin and the towns of Wexford. With Aodh's encouragement, Fiach used this income to recruit, train and arm a private army. This development did not go unnoticed. In response the government appeased them by granting them pardons in May 1567 and April 1569.¹⁷⁰⁵ Only Agarde realised the danger that

¹⁷⁰⁰ P.R.O. S.P. 63/32/9. In a letter dated 12 April 1571, Lord Justice Fitzwilliam wrote to the English Privy Council about a meeting with the O'Byrnes, describing Aodh as '*that wyle and subtell feloe*' and Fiach as '*very dangerous and garlus*'.

¹⁷⁰¹ Price, 'Notes', p. 134.

¹⁷⁰² *Cal. Fiants Ire. Eliz I*, no. 579; *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 15 p. 195; P.R.O. S.P. 63/9/17; *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 17, p. 222; *Leabhar Branach*, p. 65.

¹⁷⁰³ P.R.O. S.P. 63/11/73; *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 73, p. 244.

¹⁷⁰⁴ H.M.C., Halliday MSS: *Ir. Privy Council Bk*, pp 150-4; *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 33, p. 289. Sir Nicholas Bagnall wrote to Earl of Leicester, complaining that the country of the Byrnes, Tooles and the Walshes was waste and full of robbers in February 1566. This trouble seems to have demanded the appointment of Sir Francis Agarde as seneschal of the Toole and Byrne countries in March 1566.

¹⁷⁰⁵ Price, 'Notes', pp 136-7

Fiach posed. However, his friendship with Aodh inhibited him from taking any punitive action.¹⁷⁰⁶

Crucial to a full comprehension of the continuing rise of Aodh and Fiach to the helm of Leinster are two factors. Firstly, in the midlands Ruaidhrí Óg O'More had begun to emerge as one of the principal leaders of the O'Mores, particularly of those disaffected with the plantations. Unlike his half-brothers An Calbhach and Cétach who had comfortable existences in Dublin, Ruaidhrí Óg returned to Laois from Glenmalure either in the late 1550s or the early 1560s.¹⁷⁰⁷ The young man quickly found a friend and a patron in the person of the planter holding the Stradbally lands of his father, Ruaidhrí Caoch.¹⁷⁰⁸ The planter in question was Sir Francis Cosby, sheriff of Laois since 1564 and seneschal from 1566. Together both of them combined to cultivate a substantial income from the extortion of black rents from both planters and Irish rivals. During the early 1560s, Ruaidhrí Óg's first cousins Niall mac Laoiseach and Cétach mac Conaill Óig O'More, encouraged by Seaán O'Neill, led a campaign of resistance to the planters, while other cousins like Muirheartach mac Laoiseach, now lord of Slemargy actually benefited from the plantation and lent it military support.¹⁷⁰⁹ What effect the plantation had on Ruaidhrí Óg cannot be discerned as his Cosby alliance protected him from the worst of the planters' excesses. Indeed, Ruaidhrí Óg, as did other O'More dissenters of the ruling dynasty, determined to secure a place for himself and his followers. Central to Ruaidhrí Óg's clutch of grievances was the exclusion of his particular O'More family, the mac Ruaidhrí branch, from the new order brought by the plantations to West Leinster and the midlands. Because of the previous opposition waged by Ruaidhrí's uncles and cousins to the advance of authority into Laois, they had been either

¹⁷⁰⁶ J. Gilbert (ed.), *A History of the Irish Confederation and the War in Ireland* (Dublin, 1882), i pp 202-5. (hereafter *A History of the Irish Confederation*, i); C.S.P.I., 1509-73, no. 86, p. 529; Donovan, 'Tudor Rule', p. 131.

¹⁷⁰⁷ C.S.P.I., 1509-73, nos 17-8, p. 414; This An Calbhach is described as being of Grey's Inn. In July 1569 he petitioned for the continuance of his pension of 40 livres. He also asked to be restored to the Laois lands of his father, Ruaidhrí Caoch O'More. Another brother Cétach is also mentioned. Later in April 1571 Ormond addressed An Calbhach as his cousin, confirming that these boys were half-Butlers. See *idem*, no. 4, p. 443; For the executions of several O'Byrnes and O'Mores including Laoiseach mac Cétach and Cathaoir mac Cétach in May 1570, see *idem*, no. 52, p. 430.

¹⁷⁰⁸ Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order', p. 238.

¹⁷⁰⁹ C.S.P.I., 1509-73, nos 16-7, p. 230, no. 31, p. 232, no. 4, p. 238, no. 52, p. 242; Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order', p. 227.

exiled or denied a shareholding with full tenurial rights under common law within the plantation of Laois. Effectively their lordship in 1563-4 had been dismantled and parcelled out to a combination of their former vassals and English settlers, turning the traditional order on its head.¹⁷¹⁰

This refusal to incorporate these O'Mores within the Laois plantation, combined with the exclusion of the mac Briain and mac Giollapádraig branches of the O'Connor Falys of Offaly set the scene for further warfare within the region.¹⁷¹¹ Clearly it was the policy of the government to exclude the natural O'More rulers of Laois from the plantation. In 1566 the turbulence of the wars waged by the excluded Laoiseach mac Cétach Ruadh and his brother Cathaoir caused Lord Deputy Sir Henry Sidney to offer new terms. In July 1566 he granted them some lands in the Gallen uplands of southwest Laois.¹⁷¹² As Carey has noted, this only left Ruaidhrí Óg excluded from the plantation. Ruaidhrí Óg's growing disillusion with the status quo in Laois is manifested by the earlier grant of a pardon on 17 February 1566 to him and his followers. This pardon coincided with the grant of a commission to Gerald Fitzgerald, 11th earl of Kildare, to make war upon O'More dissidents in March 1566.¹⁷¹³ Having said that, Ruaidhrí Óg seems to have been greatly encouraged by the incorporation of his two cousins into the new order. Consequently, he opened direct negotiations with the authorities to seek a similar accommodation. However, by late 1566 it was clear to the government that there were no lands left within the plantation of Laois to grant to Ruaidhrí Óg and his kinsmen.¹⁷¹⁴ During this period Ruaidhrí Óg still maintained close links with the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure. Perhaps symptomatic of Ruaidhrí Óg's growing discontent at his exclusion was the increasing prominence of Aodh and Fiach within midland politics.¹⁷¹⁵

¹⁷¹⁰ Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order', p. 235.

¹⁷¹¹ Ibid, p. 239 ; Fitzsimons, pp 230-1. There had been a serious war between the O'Connor Falys and the planters and the army in 1564

¹⁷¹² H.M.C., Halliday MSS: *Ir. Privy Council Bk.*, pp 156-7.

¹⁷¹³ Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order', pp 237-9; See also Fitzsimons, pp 232-3.

¹⁷¹⁴ Ibid, p. 237.

¹⁷¹⁵ *Leabhar Branach*, ll 1730, ll 1733, p. 66.

Thus, the anger of the young O'More leader made him the perfect receptacle for the ambitions and plans of the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure. However, Ruaidhrí Óg was to stay at peace for the remainder of the 1560s. But it is clear he was gradually realigning himself with the O'Byrnes. This was just as well as wider events were rapidly moving against Ruaidhrí Óg. The major event that really propelled the ascent of the O'Byrne alliance with Ruaidhrí Óg was Sidney's decision to award the Idrone lands of the MacMurrough-Kavanaghs along with those of Sir Edmund Butler of Cloghgrenan to Sir Peter Carew the elder in December 1568. This decision had serious ramifications for the polity of both parts of Leinster, sparking a serious war in East Leinster in June 1569.¹⁷¹⁶ On 1 September 1569, Sir Edmund submitted to his brother Thomas, 11th earl of Ormond, and was imprisoned in Dublin Castle but the war dragged into 1570.¹⁷¹⁷ In this war, the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure and many of the O'Mores, particularly Laoiseach mac Cétach Ruaidh, supported the Cloghgrenan Butlers.¹⁷¹⁸ But clearly the O'More dissidents were increasingly reliant upon the relieving effects of military expeditions launched by the lords of Glenmalure into the midlands. O'Byrne interference within this region is confirmed by the charge levelled at Aodh in February 1569, accusing him of supporting and supplying Muirheartach O'More's forces against the settlers.¹⁷¹⁹ The *Leabhar Branach* also throws further light upon Aodh's activities, mentioning raids in Laois and Ossory, his kidnap of the daughter of O'Connor Faly and his killing of An Calbhach O'Molloy of Fearceall as well as contemptuous references to the latter's dynasty and his neighbours, the O'Melaghlins of Westmeath.¹⁷²⁰

Leinster of 1569 was unrecognisable from that of 1520. Its political landscape was gradually altered by the slow Tudor demolition of the Kildares until they finally imploded in 1534-5. The Kildare collapse and the rise of the Tudors changed the political equilibrium of Ireland. Countrywide it was the Leinster nobility who

¹⁷¹⁶ D. Edwards, 'The Butler Revolt of 1569', *I.H.S.*, xxviii (1992-3) p. 245.

¹⁷¹⁷ *C.S.P.I.*, 1509-73, no. 12, p. 426.

¹⁷¹⁸ P.R.O. S.P. 63/30/52.

¹⁷¹⁹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1509-73, p. 403.

¹⁷²⁰ *Leabhar Branach*, no. 18, ll 1730, ll 1733, p. 66. See also ll 1749, p. 67, this mentions his plundering of the coarb of Ballyduff in the Laois parish of Kyle in the barony of Clandonagh. For the references to the O'Melaghlins and the O'Molloys, see no. 5, ll 541-4 p. 22.

were to be the most profoundly affected by this process. For them the Kildares were gentle in comparison to the Tudor government. This was for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Leinster nobility were fully exposed to Tudor reforms because of their proximity to the centre of reform. Clearly, the government, like the Kildares and the Ormonds, were intent upon achieving a hegemony in West Leinster and the midlands. To stabilise this region, several government policies were introduced. After the failure of the strategies of Grey and St Leger, the government became significantly more hardline towards the Irish notables there. The results were the plantations of Laois and Offaly and martial law. The implementation of this twin track approach led to conflict with many of the provincial nobility. Most importantly, the imposition of these plantations caused the provincial centre of gravity to shift to the Wicklow mountains. There refugees from the midlands and martial law were sheltered by Aodh O'Byrne. He then used them to increase his own power, projecting himself as their protector and natural leader. And as time wore on more lords came to view the O'Byrnes of Glenmalure as such. Consequently, the position of Aodh and Fiach, his son, were raised from that of minor nobles to the leadership of Leinster. Thus, the fall of Kildares and the rise of Tudor government birthed another force in Leinster. The full effects of this unnatural creation were as yet unclear.

Chapter 6b

The Elizabethan and Jacobean Conquest, 1570-1606

As the 1570s opened, Fiach began to adopt the mantle of leadership, taking his father's position as leader of Leinster Irish. More seriously for the government, he also began to adopt the posture of a militant Catholic zealot determined to launch a crusade against English and Protestant domination. This determination spawned intrigues with Catholic noblemen throughout Ireland and the continent, leading to three major wars with the government in 1580-1, 1594-5, and 1596-7. Even though Fiach himself was killed by English soldiers on 8 May 1597, he left a considerable legacy of resistance in Leinster. This ensured the war with the government dragged on until the early 1601. Then it was generally accepted by the Catholic commanders in Leinster that their cause was lost, forcing them to sue for peace. Thus, the final acceptance of the Leinstermen of Tudor hegemony ushered in an age of intense change. This age saw leading Leinster aristocrats, albeit reluctantly, forsake their traditional ways and embark upon the final transition from warlords to noblemen. The year 1606 nailed shut the coffin on old Leinster as evidenced by the shiring of the last Irish county - Wicklow, and the final rout of the O'Mores by the Cosbys. This chapter will trace this painful and traumatic progression.

In West Leinster and the midlands, Ruaidhrí Óg appeared before Sidney in early 1570 and put in his pledges, positioning himself for incorporation into the plantation.¹⁷²¹ However, there was to be no rapprochement as Sidney was determined to exact vengeance upon those O'Mores involved in the Butler Revolt of 1569.¹⁷²² Thus, Sidney embarked on a manhunt in Laois, capturing and executing Laoiseach mac Cétach Ruaidh and his brother, Cathaoir, at Leighlinbridge in May 1570. Ruaidhrí Óg survived because of his continued service with Cosby. These executions and Ruaidhrí Óg's survival ironically guaranteed the mushrooming of O'Byrne influence

¹⁷²¹ H.M.C., Halliday MSS: *Ir. Privy Council Bk*, p. 241.

¹⁷²² P.R.O. S.P. 63/30/52.

within the region. Effectively, the executions left Aodh's man, Ruaidhrí Óg, as the principal O'More leader with the exception of Muirheartach of Slemargy.¹⁷²³ But the actions of Sidney, a near kinsman of Cosby, greatly embittered Ruaidhrí Óg. And it was noted that revenge was high on the O'More leader's agenda. Consequently a vicious feud emerged between Ruaidhrí Óg and the planters, particularly those with familial connections with Sidney. In Laois Ruaidhrí Óg turned on his sometime friend Cosby, seneschal of Laois and representative of the Sidney faction.¹⁷²⁴ In late 1570 he was clearly obdurate, refusing to attend parleys with Cosby and established himself as the principal focus of opposition to the government in West Leinster and the midlands.¹⁷²⁵ By April 1571 Ruaidhrí Óg had become a serious threat to the Laois plantation, having recruited large bands of swordsmen. And his new status was confirmed by the declaration of martial law in Laois in March 1571, and by his election as lord of Laois in April, reflecting their approval of his attacks upon the planters.¹⁷²⁶

Significantly throughout April 1571, Fiach was at his side.¹⁷²⁷ But the emergence of Ruaidhrí Óg created opportunities for the O'Byrnes. Meantime they too had been active, taking part in the rebellion of Sir Edmund Butler of 1569. Indeed, Fiach exploited the disorder, joining Butler's attacks near Ferns and Arklow as well as threatening Newcastle McKynegan between July and August 1569.¹⁷²⁸ And after Butler's submission on 1 September 1569, Aodh's sons helped him escape to Glenmalure from Dublin Castle in November 1569.¹⁷²⁹ But Butler's escape was a mixed blessing for the O'Byrnes, particularly Fiach. There Fiach's wife Sadhbh became enamoured with Sir Edmund during winter of 1569-70. This inevitably ended in the divorce of Fiach and Sadhbh, resulting in considerable enmity between the men.¹⁷³⁰

¹⁷²³ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 41; For the relationship between the Cosbys and the Sidneys, see I. Cosby, 'The English Settlers in Queen's County', In W.Nolan & P.Lane (eds) *Laois : History and Society* (Dublin, 1999), p. 323. Dorcas Sidney was married to Alexander Cosby.

¹⁷²⁴ Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order', p. 238.

¹⁷²⁵ P.R.O. S.P. 63/31/33.

¹⁷²⁶ P.R.O. S.P. 63/32/2, 9.

¹⁷²⁷ *C.S.P.I.*, 1509-73, no. 9, p. 444.

¹⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 40, p. 416.

¹⁷²⁹ *Cal Carew MSS, 1575-88*, no. 501, p. 350; *C.S.P.I.*, 1509-73, no. 81, p. 423.

¹⁷³⁰ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 104; *Acts Privy Council*, xix, p. 410. *C.S.P.I.*, 1509-73, no. 9, p. 444.

In 1571 Ruaidhrí Óg joined Fiach in attacks upon the Pale, and later with his brother-in-law Brian Kavanagh, Fiach was implicated in the murder of a prominent government supporter, Robert Browne of Mulrankan, County Wexford, on 21 April 1572.¹⁷³¹ Significantly, Fiach's warring was paralleled by Ruaidhrí Óg's burnings in Laois combined with O'More's stoking of the O'Connor Falys in May. On hearing of Browne's death, Sir Nicholas White, Browne's father-in-law and seneschal of Wexford, went to Elizabeth. In early August 1572 White, armed with Elizabeth's support, returned to Ireland for revenge.¹⁷³² Earlier in July 1572 Agarde successfully attacked a party of Fiach's followers, killing his brother.¹⁷³³ Within days of his return, White attacked Crioich Raghnuill, but his assault failed to subdue Fiach. Meanwhile in Laois, the government adopted a different tack with the O'Mores. In August 1572 Ormond and Kildare held a conference with Ruaidhrí Óg in Kilkea Castle. At this conference Ruaidhrí Óg denounced the brutality of the settlers and the government. But in spite of his obvious anger, Ruaidhrí Óg's basic demand was remarkably moderate and consistent. Crucially he accepted the permanence of the Laois plantation and expressed his willingness to be accommodated within it. In particular he wished for a grant of the Gallen lands of his executed cousins.¹⁷³⁴ In return for consideration of his grievances, Ruaidhrí Óg submitted¹⁷³⁵ and accepted a pardon. However, Ruaidhrí Óg was to be disappointed. Meantime Fiach and Brian Kavanagh responded to White's assault by ravaging Wexford, defeating the Wexford freeholders in August and September 1572.¹⁷³⁶ However, Aodh, Brian Kavanagh and Fiach came to peace in December 1572.¹⁷³⁷ They were pardoned after withdrawing their support from the actual murderers, Matthew and Robert Furlong, who were later executed.¹⁷³⁸

By early January 1573 Ruaidhrí Óg knew that his claims were to be ignored yet again. Consequently, he returned to war, launching a

¹⁷³¹ *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 4, p. 443, no. 9, p. 444; P.R.O. S.P. 63/36/16.

¹⁷³² P.R.O. S.P. 63/37/59.

¹⁷³³ *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 13, p. 477.

¹⁷³⁴ P.R.O. S.P. 63/37/37.

¹⁷³⁵ *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 41, p. 481.

¹⁷³⁶ Donovan, 'Tudor Rule', pp 125-6.

¹⁷³⁷ *C.S.P.I., 1509-73*, no. 51, p. 490.

¹⁷³⁸ Price, 'Notes', p. 138.

offensive aimed at throwing the Laois plantation into disorder. His purpose was to force the authorities to incorporate him within the new order. These latest attacks only convinced them to adopt a much harsher policy towards him. They now proposed to plant Ruaidhrí Óg's loyalist enemy, Eóghan O'Dempsey, in his Gallen heartland. Doubtless this prospect fuelled the already enflamed region, ensuring the bitterest fighting yet between Ruaidhrí Óg and the planters.¹⁷³⁹ Throughout 1573 Aodh and Fiach renewed their diplomatic contacts with Gerald Fitzgerald, 15th earl of Desmond.¹⁷⁴⁰ Desmond hoped that Ruaidhrí Óg, who helped him to escape from Dublin in 1573, and the O'Byrnes would return to war in 1574.¹⁷⁴¹ In preparation for the forthcoming war, Aodh recruited mercenaries and made two marriage alliances to strengthen his position in East Leinster.¹⁷⁴² Sometime in about 1573, Fiach married Rose, daughter of Fiach mac Airt Óig O'Toole of Castlekevin and Rose Basnett.¹⁷⁴³ And in November 1573 the lords of Glenmalure gave the clearest sign yet of their approval of Ruaidhrí Óg's struggle against the planters. Then it appears Fiach in November 1573 escorted Margaret, his favourite sister, to Laois to marry Ruaidhrí Óg, a move displaying his contempt for the government. For Ruaidhrí Óg, marriage to Fiach's sister was further confirmation of his status among the Leinster Irish. To the government the O'More/O'Byrne union was profoundly disturbing. And as a result Sir Piers Fitzgerald, sheriff of Kildare, ambushed Fiach, on his return from Laois. However, it was the sheriff who was ensnared and carried to Glenmalure. Through Aodh's intercession, Agarde procured Fitzgerald's release from Fiach for a small ransom.¹⁷⁴⁴

In March 1574 Fiach revolted as planned. With his galloglass, he burnt to the gates of Dublin, while Ruaidhrí Óg and the O'Connor Falys terrorised the Pale's southern borders.¹⁷⁴⁵ The ease of their attacks raised serious reservations about the loyalty of Gerald Fitzgerald, 11th earl of Kildare and governor of the Pale's

¹⁷³⁹ Carey, 'The end of the Gaelic Political Order', p. 240.

¹⁷⁴⁰ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 42, p. 7.

¹⁷⁴¹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1509-73, no. 88, p. 529; *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 42, p. 7, no. 4, p. 11, no. 72, p. 18.

¹⁷⁴² Lane Poole Papers, N.L.I MS 5378. *D.N.B.*, p. 786; *C.S.P.I.*, 1509-73, no. 6, p. 530.

¹⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴⁴ *A History of the Irish Confederation*, i, pp 202 & 205;

¹⁷⁴⁵ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 4, p. 11, no. 36, p. 14.

southwestern borders. Because of the old Kildare overlordship of these families, Kildare was arrested on suspicion of conspiring with the O'Byrnes and Ruaidhrí Óg to force Elizabeth to make him lord deputy in February 1575. Kildare was imprisoned in England, but nothing was proved and he returned to Ireland in 1577.¹⁷⁴⁶ During Kildare's absence, Ruaidhrí Óg and Fiach burned throughout much of Kildare. Later during Lord Deputy Sidney's circuit through East Leinster in November and December 1575, Ruaidhrí Óg submitted before him at Kilkenny. Aodh also met him without protection, but Fiach remained aloof.¹⁷⁴⁷ This stratagem of the father going to plead the son's cause was used to great effect by Fiach and Aodh, a policy that reflects the tactics of their family thirty years earlier. But increasingly it is difficult to distinguish between Fiach's actions and those of his aging father in this period. Aodh seems to have gradually taken a less active part, adopting the role of an elder statesman. To the English administrators of the time there was little doubt that Aodh had become a figurehead and Fiach was the real power in Cricoch Raghnuill.¹⁷⁴⁸

It was clear that Fiach was on a collision course with the administration from 1575. Unfolding events in the midlands were to further alienate him. In December 1575 Sidney came to the conclusion that the Laois plantation would never stabilise unless Ruaidhrí Óg was given a stake. In doing so Sidney was prepared to give Gallen to Ruaidhrí Óg, but was not prepared to countenance his traditional rights as ruler of Laois. Instead Sidney played for time. In June 1576 he pardoned Ruaidhrí Óg, but delayed the settling of his estates. Also Sidney hoped to address Fiach's discontent and Agarde was dispatched in July 1576 to bring him by any means to Dublin. Agarde's hunt proved successful and soon Fiach was lodged in Dublin Castle.¹⁷⁴⁹ By January 1577 the political situation in the midlands had considerably worsened because of Sidney's delay of Ruaidhrí Óg's case and the frustration of the warlord. Moreover, the renewed intimidation by Cosby signalled the rejection of O'More claims,

¹⁷⁴⁶ Ibid, no. 38, p. 25, no. 59, p. 53, no. 63, p. 53; Price, 'Notes', p. 139.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Ibid, no. 24, p. 70; *Cal Carew MSS, 1575-88*, no. 33, p. 32.

¹⁷⁴⁸ Emmett O'Byrne, 'The Battle of Glenmalure 25 August 1580: Cause and Course', In C.O'Brien (ed.) *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne: The Wicklow Firebrand* (Dublin, 1999), p. 154. (Hereafter O'Byrne, 'Glenmalure').

¹⁷⁴⁹ P.R.O. S.P. 63/56/6.

forcing Ruaidhrí Óg again into revolt in February 1577. And thus on 3 March 1577, Ruaidhrí Óg sealed his fate by burning Naas in the Pale.¹⁷⁵⁰ A savage war ensued and Ruaidhrí Óg burnt Leighlinbridge and Carlow in autumn 1577. During the course of the fighting, Ruaidhrí Óg captured Alexander Cosby and Sir Henry Harrington, the nephew of Sidney and Agarde's son-in-law. Ruaidhrí Óg, realising who his captive was, insulted Sidney by parading Harrington and Cosby like slaves through his territory. His insult only made Sidney more determined to catch him. The decade almost long feud between the two men climaxed when Sidney finally cornered Ruaidhrí Óg during November 1577. And in a nighttime rescue attempt by Sidney, Ruaidhrí Óg's wife's Margaret was beheaded and two of their sons slaughtered. After seeing the deaths of his family, Ruaidhrí Óg, although seriously wounded, to escape but not before mutilating Harrington.¹⁷⁵¹ The killing of Fiach's brother John by English soldiers within three days of Margaret's death suggests that the O'Byrnes intervened to support Ruaidhrí Óg.¹⁷⁵² Shortly afterwards, either in late 1577 or early 1578, Muirheartach O'More of Slemargy, Ruaidhrí Óg's alleged ally, and his unarmed followers were massacred by Cosby and Robert Harpoole, sheriff of Carlow, enraging the Irish. This despicable act sparked fighting that consumed the midlands, spreading into Kildare and Carlow. And after his recovery from his wounds, Ruaidhrí Óg led revenge attacks from Crioich Raghnuill upon Carlow and Kildare until his death in a skirmish with the soldiers of Baron Barnaby MacGillpatrick of Upper Ossory in July 1578.¹⁷⁵³

The deaths of Ruaidhrí Óg and his wife deeply affected Fiach. He swore revenge and undertook to bring up their remaining children in Glenmalure. Another man whose life was profoundly affected by the deaths of Ruaidhrí Óg and his wife was Sir Henry Harrington.¹⁷⁵⁴

¹⁷⁵⁰ P.R.O. S.P.63/57/39.

¹⁷⁵¹ P.Walsh, *Gleanings from Irish Manuscripts* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1933), p. 167; *Carew MSS, 1575-1588*, no. 501, p. 356. For the Harringtons in general, see I. Grimble, *The Harrington Family* (London, 1957).

¹⁷⁵² *A.L.C.*, ii, pp 419-21; O'Byrne, 'Glenmalure', p. 155. For the reaction of the O'Byrnes to the deaths of Margaret and John, see *Leabhar Branach*, no. 68, pp 257-9. Interestingly the Wicklow based poet, Donnchadh McKeogh, criticises the lords of Glenmalure for making such a faraway match for Margaret. It also predicts that they will be avenged.

¹⁷⁵³ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, no. 101, p. 137; O'Byrne, 'Glenmalure', p. 155; *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1706-7; *C.S.P.I, 1574-85*, no. 41, p. 138

¹⁷⁵⁴ During November 1577 he had been captured and later viciously attacked by Ruaidhrí Óg during the rout of the O'Mores. Harrington's injuries consisted of several deep head wounds, a broken arm and the loss of a finger to Ruaidhrí's Óg sword. So severe were Harrington's wounds that Sidney feared that his nephew would not survive the journey

In April 1578 he became seneschal of the O'Tooles and the O'Byrnes, succeeding Agarde who died on 26 November 1577.¹⁷⁵⁵ And after long convalescence, Harrington travelled south to Newcastle McKynegan to take up his duties. In contrast to Agarde, Harrington adopted a more hardline policy towards the O'Byrnes. Through the rigorous enforcement of his commission of martial law, Harrington attempted to establish himself as the sole fulcrum of power in Wicklow by eradicating the traditional privileges of the Irish nobility.¹⁷⁵⁶ One of Harrington's first actions set the tone. In April 1578 he arrested Fiach's father-in-law, Fiach mac Airt Óig O'Toole of Castlekevin. And without the slightest semblance of a trial, he hanged Fiach mac Airt Óig from the nearest tree. Harrington's approach earned him the thanks of the government, who with sickeningly insensitivity to the O'Tooles, granted him the guardianship of Barnaby O'Toole, his victim's son and heir.¹⁷⁵⁷ During July 1578, Harrington was also granted a lease of the southern Wicklow barony of Shillelagh, infuriating Kildare and setting himself in direct opposition to Fiach.¹⁷⁵⁸ Furthermore, Harrington's behaviour in east Wicklow created a poisonous situation with the senior O'Byrnes and their leader, Dúnlaing mac Edmund O'Byrne of Cronroe.¹⁷⁵⁹ On Harrington's accession to the seneschalship, he appropriated the traditional rents due to Dúnlaing rendering him politically impotent. This act enflamed Dúnlaing's grievances and combined with Harrington's excessive brutality created a volatile political atmosphere among the formerly loyal senior O'Byrne leadership.¹⁷⁶⁰

But Ruaidhrí Óg's death combined with the natural death of Brian Kavanagh¹⁷⁶¹ and the execution of Fiach mac Airt Óig O'Toole during 1578, left Fiach as the only lord powerful enough to lead the Leinstermen. To counter the encroachments of the Elizabethan government, Fiach now sought to create a unified provincial

back to Dublin. But live he did. However, he was permanently scarred by the severity of Ruaidhrí Óg's attack. See *Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, no. 501, p. 356.

¹⁷⁵⁵ *Cal. Fiants, Eliz*, nos. 3266, 3612; *Cal. Inquisitions*, Eliz 100/75, p. 235.

¹⁷⁵⁶ Nicholls, *Gaelic. Ire.*, p. 173.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Donovan, 'Tudor Rule', p. 134; Brady, *Chief Governors*, p. 276.

¹⁷⁵⁸ J.Hogan & N.McNeill (eds), *The Walsingham Letter Book, May 1578-December 1579* (Dublin, 1959), pp 237 & 250. (hereafter *The Walsingham Letter Book*); *Cal. Fiants, Eliz I*, nos 3372, 3707; O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', pp 157-8.

¹⁷⁵⁹ *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1702-3.

¹⁷⁶⁰ O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 158.

¹⁷⁶¹ *A.F.M.*, v, p. 1709-11. Brian died sometime after October 1578.

opposition. Even though Fiach was the most powerful Leinster lord, he could not claim its kingship without losing support amongst the MacMurrough-Kavanaghs. Instead, he played kingmaker amongst them, advancing his clients in several dynastic struggles as well as compelling them to swear loyalty to him.¹⁷⁶² During summer 1578 Sir Thomas Masterson, seneschal of Wexford since 1573, with Sir Peter Carew the younger led raids upon Cricoch Raghnuill. This struggle spiralled out of control and much of Wexford was destroyed by Fiach's revenge attacks.¹⁷⁶³ On 21 September 1578 Fiach submitted in Christchurch. The text of his submission reveals his bitterness towards Masterson.¹⁷⁶⁴ Subsequently, Fiach was committed to the custody of Harrington. Within days he was freed, submitting alongside his father at Castledermot on 30 September 1578. A further sign of their elevated position among the Leinster nobility was that this latest submission signalled those of Brian Kavanagh, Conchobhar O'Connor Faly, Tadhg mac Giollapádraig O'Connor Faly and Ruaidhrí Óg's marshal.¹⁷⁶⁵ Masterson, however, arranged for Fiach to be assassinated at a proposed parley. Through his spies, Fiach learned of Masterson's intent and laid a snare of his own, ambushing Masterson's troops on their way to the site of the proposed meeting.¹⁷⁶⁶ As for Aodh, he outwardly co-operated with the government throughout 1578-9, entertaining lavishly Lord Justice Sir William Drury at Ballinacor in early February 1579. In addition he agreed to the inclusion of his lordship within the government's plans to shire the territories of Wicklow and Ferns. What Fiach thought of this is unknown. However, any moderating influence exercised by Aodh over Fiach was extinguished by his death in summer 1579.¹⁷⁶⁷

If Aodh or Ruaidhrí Óg had been reluctant to play the Catholic card, Fiach was not. Fiach, it seems, as the 1560s-70s wore on linked the struggles to preserve his and the Leinster nobility's traditional rights with the growing resentment of Catholics at the discrimination practised towards them by the government. Although several poems dedicated to Aodh contain many traditional motifs common in bardic

¹⁷⁶² Moore, 'MacMurrough Kavanaghs', pp 15-9; *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 14, p. 17.

¹⁷⁶³ P.R.O. S.P. 63/63/1.

¹⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶⁵ *Cal. Carew MSS*, 1575-88, pp 140-1. Ruaidhrí Óg's marshal was Seaán mac Ruaidhrí.

¹⁷⁶⁶ O'Byrne, 'Glenmalure', p. 155; *AFM*, v, p. 1702-3.

¹⁷⁶⁷ *AFM*, v, p. 1712-3.

poetry they reveal a growing hardening in the attitude of the lords of Glenmalure towards religion and the English. There is an increase in the use of religious imagery, suggesting that they held the Virgin Mary in particular devotion.¹⁷⁶⁸ Tellingly, there are bountiful references to their burning of English villages and to their suppression of the English language.¹⁷⁶⁹ It may be possible that the main corpus of the bardic material relating to Fiach may postdate 1587, continuing until summer 1597.¹⁷⁷⁰ In spite of these difficulties in dating, there is little reason to doubt Bradshaw's essential point that the O'Byrnes through their patronage of poets and by their actions were promoting a new nationalistic ideology fiercely opposed to the extension of English rule.¹⁷⁷¹ But the declaration of Fiach as leader of the Leinster nobility¹⁷⁷² to fight for the Catholic cause in 1580 was a new and most significant development in Irish history, signalling the gradual fusion of an embryonic Irish nationalism with Catholicism against a government mainly dominated by English Protestants.¹⁷⁷³ And in July 1580 Fiach and his twenty-eight year old Anglo-Irish ally, James Eustace, 3rd Viscount Baltinglass, went to war with the government in defence of Catholicism as well as to avenge the wrongs done to the Leinstermen since the 1550s. This alliance and crusade shocked the Dublin government. One observer prophetically noted that the alliance of Fiach and Baltinglass and their public beating of the Catholic drum heralded a new era in the Irish wars as it was fuelled by political, cultural and now religious grievances.¹⁷⁷⁴ Indeed, Fiach was later declared to Elizabethan officials in 1581, that he would not come to peace unless '*religion might be at liberty.*'¹⁷⁷⁵

¹⁷⁶⁸ *Leabhar Branach*, no. 10, ll 1013-6, p. 39; see all of no. 33.

¹⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 4, pp 15-9; no. 7, pp 25-32; no. 8, ll 797-800, p. 31; no. 14, pp 45-50; no. 15, p. 52 - ll 1353-6 & see p. 354 note.

¹⁷⁷⁰ There seems to be a significant gap in the O'Byrne patronage of poets dating from Aodh's death sometime in 1579 to at least the middle of the 1580s. Supporting this point is the significant omission of poetry commemorating Fiach's victory over Lord Grey de Wilton at Glenmalure on 25 August 1580. In his notes on the poems contained within the *Leabhar Branach*, MacAirt associates a lament by Ruaidhrí McGrath over Ballinacor with Stanley's burning of Fiach's home in April 1581. However, there is no firm evidence for this as it may also refer to the capture of Ballinacor from Fiach by Russell in January 1595. See MacAirt's notes on no. 29 in *Leabhar Branach*, pp 372-3. For Stanley's burning of Ballinacor, see Donovan, 'Tudor Rule', p. 140; For Russell's successful attack on Ballinacor, see *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 225.

¹⁷⁷¹ Bradshaw, pp 72-5.

¹⁷⁷² *Leabhar Branach*, no. 1, ll 53-60, p. 3. These stanzas describe Aodh as the defender of East Leinster, comparing him to Cú chulainn. See also no. 28, pp 118-9. This compares Fiach's leadership of Leinster to that of Cormac Conluingheas who was invited by the men of Ulster to succeed his father.

¹⁷⁷³ O'Byrne, 'Glenmalure,' pp 150-79.

¹⁷⁷⁴ *C.S.P.I., 1574-85*, no. 66, p. 237.

¹⁷⁷⁵ Price, 'Notes', p. 148.

In Fiach's decision to embark upon a major war with the government in summer 1580, the bloody events of 1577-8 played no little part in convincing him of its necessity. Likewise Baltinglass had become steadily disaffected with the administration's harsh policies towards his class, the Catholic Anglo-Irish nobility. Throughout the 1570s Baltinglass's father, Viscount Roland Eustace, had been a prominent opponent of the levying of the cess upon Catholic lands and towns by the Elizabethan army.¹⁷⁷⁶ More worryingly though for the Anglo-Irish Catholics was their growing exclusion from the government of the Irish kingdom in favour of English Protestants. Added to this was the popular perception amongst the new governing class that Anglo-Irish Catholics could not be trusted with positions of authority. Without doubt Pope Pius V's excommunication and declaration of Elizabeth as a heretic greatly increased the opinion that being Catholic and loyal were irreconcilable.¹⁷⁷⁷ Despite the protestations of loyalty to Elizabeth's throne by Anglo-Irish Catholics, the government refused to countenance them.

To Elizabeth's government the threat from Catholicism was real. In England, the Catholic Church had been in upheaval since Henry VIII's divorce from Katharine of Aragon and his declaration of supremacy over it. Elizabeth's very existence had been precarious, as Mary, her Catholic half-sister, had imprisoned her. And for a while her life was threatened due to Mary's intense suspicion of her. After Mary's death in 1558, Elizabeth became queen but was exposed to several assassination plots by her own Catholic countrymen.¹⁷⁷⁸ Moreover, in addition to the Catholic threat from within, Elizabeth was deeply involved in a battle of intrigue with her cousin, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots.¹⁷⁷⁹ As Elizabeth had remained single and therefore childless, the Scottish Queen was poised to claim the English throne upon Elizabeth's death.

¹⁷⁷⁶ C.Lennon, 'The Counter-Reformation in Ireland, 1542-1641', In C.Brady & R.Gillespie (eds) *Natives and Newcomers* (Dublin, 1986), pp 77-82. (hereafter Lennon, 'The Counter-Reformation in Ireland').

¹⁷⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 81.

¹⁷⁷⁸ D.Starkey, *Elizabeth* (London, 2000), pp 118-307.

¹⁷⁷⁹ For the best biography of Mary Stuart, read Antonia Fraser, *Mary, Queen of Scots* (London, 1970).

However, much of the danger facing Elizabeth originated on the continent. There since Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg in October 1517, Europe had been in turmoil over the question of religious doctrine and reform.¹⁷⁸⁰ Inevitably the ensuing debate became confrontational as secular princes took the side of the established church or that of Luther, resulting in the wars of the Reformation.¹⁷⁸¹ Consequently, Elizabeth was acutely aware of the possibility of a successful invasion of England led by Philip II of Spain with the blessing of the papacy. For much of Elizabeth's early reign Spanish armies had been preoccupied in the Netherlands, fighting the Protestant forces of William of Nassau (1533-84). But a series of Spanish victories over Nassau's allies in summer/autumn 1568 saw the Spanish roll back his gains.¹⁷⁸² As always Elizabeth chose her moves carefully, avoiding direct conflict with Spain while allowing Dutch fleets shelter in English ports.¹⁷⁸³ Another event that profoundly traumatised the Protestant psyche was the massacre of the Huguenots on St Bartholomew's Day on 23/4 August 1572 by French Catholics, with the approval of Charles IX. Its effects upon the contemporary policies of the English government should not be underestimated. And while Elizabeth herself seems to have been largely unmoved by religious sentiment, she was not prepared to lose her kingdom to either real or perceived Catholic dangers. Ireland was to become another ring for the latest round of wars of the reformation. Thus, the strategic importance of Ireland was linked to its status as Protestant England's backdoor. In short, Elizabeth and her advisers were not prepared to allow Spanish or papal forces to use the '*Irish backdoor*' to attack England.

The English government had every right to be fearful about Catholic intrigues in Ireland. Fiach and Baltinglass were not alone in identifying religion as a unifying force in the struggle against the English. Albeit much later, Aodh O'Neill, 2nd earl of Tyrone, pragmatically used the struggle for religious liberty to fuel the Nine

¹⁷⁸⁰ G.R.Elton, *Reformation Europe, 1517-59* (Collins, 1971), p. 15.

¹⁷⁸¹ Ibid, pp 239-74.

¹⁷⁸² P.Limm, *The Dutch Revolt, 1559-1648* (Longman, 1997), p. 32. (hereafter Limm, *The Dutch Revolt*).

¹⁷⁸³ Ibid, pp 32, 36-7, 39, 50.

Years War.¹⁷⁸⁴ However, it has to be said Tyrone's personal religious devotion was questionable. In contrast both Fiach and Baltinglass were fully fledged Counter Reformation Catholics. Like many of his friends and contemporaries, Baltinglass was educated at Grey's Inn, one of the most prestigious Inns of Court in London. On finishing his education, he spent a period living in Rome during the 1570s. In a sense, he was very much representative of his class. From the 1560s, many Catholic Anglo-Irish families opted to send their sons to universities in Catholic Europe rather than enrolling them in English ones. The exposure of these young men to the ideology of the Catholic Counter Reformation made a profound effect, encouraging them to be more militant towards the policies of the government upon their return to Ireland. Baltinglass was the clearest exponent of this militancy and publicly proclaimed his views, landing himself in trouble with the government. For his proclamation, Baltinglass earned a night in jail, a fine, a sermon, and an enduring feud with the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin - Adam Loftus.¹⁷⁸⁵ While Fiach may have lacked the formal education of Baltinglass, he was fully conversant with the great issues of the day from the tutelage of his confessors. His fusion of Catholicism to his considerable anti-English feeling clearly shows him to have been fully aware of the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism on the continent. On 29 October 1580, Dr Nicholas Saunders, the papal legate, in a note to the cardinal of Comon, was to confirm that Fiach's religious principles were responsible for his joining with Baltinglass.¹⁷⁸⁶ And thirteen years later, Archbishop James O'Hely of Tuam wrote admiringly of Fiach's fervent support of Spain and the papacy.¹⁷⁸⁷ Clearly Baltinglass and Fiach had much in common. In life their fathers were rivals along the troubled borderlands of the western Wicklow mountains, a struggle which was preserved in the battle roll of Aodh's victories.¹⁷⁸⁸ Despite this clash, relations considerably mellowed between the Eustaces and the O'Byrnes. So much so that Viscount

¹⁷⁸⁴ M.Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster : A History* (Penguin Press, 2000), p. 59. (hereafter Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster*).

¹⁷⁸⁵ O'Byrne, 'Glenmalure,' p. 151.

¹⁷⁸⁶ J.Hagan (ed.) 'Miscellanea Vaticano-Hibernica', In *Archivium Hibernicum*, vii (1918-21), p. 246.

¹⁷⁸⁷ *Estado* 839, ff 56, 66; J.J.Silke, 'The Irish appeal of 1593 to Spain: some light on the genesis of the Nine Years Wars', In *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 5th Series, xcii (1959), pp 364 & 366. (hereafter Silke)

¹⁷⁸⁸ *Leabhar Branach*, no. 18, ll 1657, p. 64.

Roland complained to the government about the wrongful taking of Aodh's cattle in 1578.¹⁷⁸⁹ Both Aodh and Viscount Roland died during 1579, leaving Fiach and Baltinglass in full control of the resources of their respective dynasties.

Along with Baltinglass, Fiach was planning a war to unite both Irish and Anglo-Irish Catholics against an administration they perceived as unjust. It has been argued that Fiach simply used Baltinglass for his own ends, but this is manifestly not the case.¹⁷⁹⁰ It is clear that the movement of Baltinglass and Fiach to war began sometime after midyear of 1579. For much of that year Fiach proved co-operative with the government and Harrington.¹⁷⁹¹ Significantly though, a change in his attitude can be detected after the landing in Ireland of James Fitzmaurice, the swashbuckling cousin of Desmond. In July 1579, Fitzmaurice landed at Dingle with some Spaniards and Saunders with the sole intention of fomenting a Catholic crusade. To that end, they sought to draw Catholic lords, both Irish and Anglo-Irish, into a conspiracy. The deaths of Viscount Roland and Aodh ensured that nothing could rein-in their sons. Thus, both Fiach and Baltinglass were unrestrained by paternal censure, immersing themselves in the plot. However, Fiach's activities did not escape unnoticed, as Lord Justice Pelham commanded him to control his followers in early October 1579.¹⁷⁹² Pelham's suspicions were further aroused when a letter from Desmond was intercepted en route to Glenmalure a month later. Its contents were disturbing. In it Desmond urged Fiach to join him in a war for the defence of Catholicism.¹⁷⁹³

The interception of Desmond's letter alerted the government that something was happening in Fiach's lands. Their unease with these developments is reflected in Harrington's suit for the release of Fiach's pledge, Aodh Dubh O'Byrne of Knockrath, on 3 December 1579.¹⁷⁹⁴ That Aodh Dubh was released at this point is highly

¹⁷⁸⁹ Price, 'Notes', pp 144-5.

¹⁷⁹⁰ O'Byrne, 'Glenmalure'. p. 152.

¹⁷⁹¹ *C.S.P.I.* 1574-85, no. 60, p. 168.

¹⁷⁹² *Cal. Carew MSS.* 1575-88, no. 474, p. 304.

¹⁷⁹³ *The Walsingham Letter Book*, pp 245 & 260; *Cal. Carew MSS.* 1575-88, no. 187, p. 177; *C.S.P.I.* 1574-85, no. 21, p. 4. This mentions correspondence between Desmond and Aodh between 1573/4.

¹⁷⁹⁴ *Cal. Carew MSS.* 1575-88, no. 192, p. 178.

significant. All through the lordship of Aodh, Fiach's father, Aodh Dubh had been unswerving in his loyalty to his cousin. However, it is clear Aodh Dubh did not have the same relationship with Fiach. Indeed as early as before 1575, Kildare allegedly warned Fiach that Aodh Dubh was too friendly with Agarde, then seneschal of O'Byrnes's Country.¹⁷⁹⁵ Outwardly though, Fiach maintained a facade of loyalty, meeting Lord Justice Pelham in January 1580. Resulting from this meeting, a nervous Pelham decided to release Fiach's pledges to forestall a possible outbreak of violence. Not only did Pelham authorise these releases, but he also alerted Harrington, Masterson, Sir Peter Carew the younger and Robert Harpoole to be on their guard and to expect trouble.¹⁷⁹⁶ As for Fiach and Baltinglass, their first response to the overtures of the Catholic forces in Munster was a letter in February 1580, declaring their intention to fight '*in the defence of the pope's cause.*'¹⁷⁹⁷ In return for their assistance, they demanded the confirmation of their lands and titles, which was conceded by Sir John Fitzgerald of Desmond. Once this concession had been extracted, Fiach and Baltinglass set about honing their offensive.

Unforeseen events, however, were to force Fiach's hand earlier than he had planned. In January 1580 Dúnlaing, the O'Byrne overlord, attacked the settlers in reprisal for Harrington's brutal behaviour in east Wicklow. Primarily the reason behind the explosion of violence among these formerly loyalist gentlemen was the government's refusal to recognise their traditional rights over O'Byrnes's Country.¹⁷⁹⁸ This violence largely did not affect Fiach's lordship of Crioich Raghnuill, but it had spread to Wexford by late January 1580.¹⁷⁹⁹ Throughout this tremendous upheaval Fiach studiously avoided conflict. As conflict raged around him Fiach busied himself with the preparations, attending a marathon three-day meeting during Easter week 1580 at Baltinglass's Monkstown residence. There, under heavy guard, Fiach outlined his plan to an assembled group of clergy and

¹⁷⁹⁵ Price, 'Notes', n.15, p. 151.

¹⁷⁹⁶ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88* no. 262, p. 202, no. 274, p. 205.

¹⁷⁹⁷ P.R.O. S.P. 63/76/25.

¹⁷⁹⁸ Nicholls, *Gaelic Ire.*, p. 173.

¹⁷⁹⁹ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, no. 282, p. 207.

Anglo-Irish nobility.¹⁸⁰⁰ The apparent intention was to start a war in East Leinster focused upon the Pale and the adjoining English counties, tying up forces. Meantime his allies of the midlands would link up with some of Desmond's forces and overthrow the plantations of Offaly and Laois, while to the north of Offaly, the Nugents of Devlin would devastate Meath¹⁸⁰¹ as well as linking with Fiach's allies of southern Ulster.¹⁸⁰² In effect these synchronised attacks if successful would leave Dublin and its Pale isolated and vulnerable. What he planned for Dublin is unknown, but it is clear there was a substantial disaffected Catholic population there. Perhaps it was hoped that they drive the English out and surrender Dublin to the Catholic army under Baltinglass's leadership. It was later alleged during the course of these meetings, that Lord Delvin read out a letter from Kildare, a personal friend of Fiach, promising support for war once it began. According to a later statement made by Fiach's second wife Rose O'Toole, while under interrogation in prison in January 1581, Kildare's promise had a profound effect upon her husband.¹⁸⁰³ So, Fiach returned to Ballinacor from Monkstown steeled for war.¹⁸⁰⁴

Throughout April and May Fiach remained behind the scenes. He dispatched messengers to the Leinster Irish, canvassing support. Meantime large quantities of munitions were smuggled from Dublin into his heartland for storage.¹⁸⁰⁵ Harrington learned from his spies of a considerable military build up in the central Wicklow uplands. Mindful of his experience at the hands of Ruaidhrí Óg, Harrington took the initiative by instigating a assassination attempt upon Fiach's life. But it was Masterson's massacre on 10 April 1580 of fifty captured Art Boy Kavanaghs that exploded the East Leinster time bomb. These men and their leader Domhnall Spainneach Kavanagh, Fiach's kinsman, enjoyed the protection of Ormond. Predictably

¹⁸⁰⁰ Elizabeth O'Connor, *The Rebellion of James Eustace, Viscount Baltinglass III*, unpublished M.A. thesis (Maynooth, 1989), pp 80-3. (hereafter O'Connor, *The Baltinglass Rebellion*).

¹⁸⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 106.

¹⁸⁰² *C.S.P.I., 1574-85*, no. 77, p. 238. This source mentions that Baltinglass had the oaths of Toirdhealbhach Luineach O'Neill, Sir Aodh Dubh O'Donnell, the O'Connors of Sligo as well as the O'Rourkes of Leitrim.

¹⁸⁰³ O'Connor, *The Baltinglass Rebellion*, pp 82-3; Oliver Eustace also made similar allegations against Kildare, see P.R.O, S.P. 63/93/78, 80-1.

¹⁸⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁰⁵ Lennon, *Sixteenth-Century Ire*, p. 203; *Idem, The Lords of Dublin in the Age of Reformation* (Dublin, 1989), pp 152-3.

Ormond was outraged by Masterson's actions, demanding punitive action be taken against the seneschal. Shockingly the council demurred, protecting Masterson. Although Fiach swore revenge, he still held off until he was ready for war. Surprisingly the first backlash against Masterson came from an unexpected quarter, Dúnlaing O'Byrne. It seems by April Dúnlaing was dead, leaving Gerald Odhar O'Byrne of Clone as the most powerful lord of O'Byrne's Country. This Gerald Odhar belonged to the O'Byrnes of Newrath who had been vehemently opposed to Fiach's family since the late 1540s. Because of the rivalry, a considerable history of personal enmity built up between Gerald Odhar and Fiach.¹⁸⁰⁶ In late April Gerald Odhar looted Masterson's lands around Ferns. Gerald Odhar's ire didn't end there as he returned to link up with the surviving Art Boy Kavanaghs to plunder the seneschal's possessions in early May 1580. Significantly, on this occasion these allies returned with their spoils to the safety of the Butler lordship of Arklow, suggesting Ormond's approval and sanction of their actions.¹⁸⁰⁷ Harrington now intensified the growing crisis by bursting into Kildare's house in Dublin and dragging out the earl's protected man, Tibbot O'Toole. Once outside Harrington carried him off to Newcastle McKynegan where he hanged him without trial. Ostensibly Tibbot was the recipient of such summary justice because of his alleged involvement in the murder of a Seaán O'Toole - probably of Imaal.¹⁸⁰⁸ However, Tibbot's execution was clearly part of the poisonous feud between Kildare and Harrington, which dated from the latter's acquisition of a lease to the southern Wicklow territory of Shillelagh during 1578. So offended was Kildare by Harrington's treatment of Tibbot, that he went in pursuit of Harrington, intent on killing him. Luckily for Harrington, the council imprisoned him in Dublin Castle.¹⁸⁰⁹ However, the removal of Harrington seriously weakened the government's ability to combat Fiach's growing forces. Fiach clearly realised how exposed Masterson was now and determined to exploit it to the maximum. Thus, he and Gerald Odhar laid aside their differences, making what would have been a previously unprecedented

¹⁸⁰⁶ *C.S.P.I, 1574-85*, no. 1, p. 230.

¹⁸⁰⁷ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, pp 68 & 72.

¹⁸⁰⁸ *C.S.P.I, 1574-85*, no. 3, p. 221.

¹⁸⁰⁹ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 72; *C.S.P.I, 1574-85*, no.4, p. 221.

alliance.¹⁸¹⁰ This done, Leinster now teetered upon the greatest explosion of violence since the Kildare Rebellion forty-five years earlier.

In allying with the gentlemen of O'Byrnes's Country, Fiach gained two important advantages over the forces opposing him in Wicklow. Before this unlikely alliance, the senior O'Byrnes long considered Fiach's house usurpers. Now this alliance allowed him to pose as the great unifier of the extended O'Byrne dynasty, a dream he was known to have particularly cherished.¹⁸¹¹ Also it brought to him the not inconsiderable resources of manpower and firepower of the senior O'Byrnes. And as the subsequent confiscations prove, this was the case, as the vast majority of O'Byrnes's Country were now riding with him.¹⁸¹² The only notable exception was Murchadh mac Edmund of Kiltimon, a personal enemy of Fiach, who remained in service.¹⁸¹³ By his declared intention to revenge the massacre of the Art Boy Kavanaghs, Fiach as leader of Leinster now posed as the champion of Irish liberties. Thus, he had adroitly side-stepped the government, reaping the harvest of bitter disaffection caused by the ill-considered barbarities of Masterson and Harrington. And moving with great purpose, Fiach thundered into north Wexford in pursuit of Masterson, devastating the whole region in June 1580.

On 1 July 1580, Harrington, alarmed by Fiach's actions, wrote to the council from Dublin Castle, begging to be allowed to march against the gathering Catholic forces in the Wicklow uplands. From his informants, Harrington estimated that Fiach had about 700 men and 60 shot under his command. By some means, Harrington had established a form of direct communication with Fiach. To Harrington's overtures, Fiach duplicitously replied that he did not intend to harm Queen's loyal subjects and was not a danger to the Pale. Artfully he said if granted safe conduct to Dublin, he would present his case before the council.¹⁸¹⁴ Clearly Fiach was double-dealing as his actions spoke louder than his words. By 7 July 1580,

¹⁸¹⁰ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 1, p. 230.

¹⁸¹¹ O'Rourke, p. 16 & 38.

¹⁸¹² *C.P.R. Jas I*, pp 48, 59 & 60; These included the powerful Bran mac An Calbhach O'Byrne of Kilnamanagh. For Bran mac An Calbhach, see Nicholls, 'Cricoch Branach', p. 29.

¹⁸¹³ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, pp 300 & 344.

¹⁸¹⁴ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 72.

news of Baltinglass's plans were government knowledge. Baltinglass fled to Glenmalure on 14 July and told Fiach to begin operations. The government was clearly taken aback by Baltinglass's connivance in Fiach's plans, dispatching his cousin Sir Nicholas Eustace to Glenmalure to implore the viscount to reconsider his actions. From the safety of Glenmalure both Fiach and Baltinglass haughtily told Sir Nicholas of their intention to fight a war in defence of the Catholic faith, forcing him to return to Dublin empty-handed.¹⁸¹⁵ By 19 July 1580 their forces were attacking the Pale, causing Lord Chancellor Gerrarde to write despairingly to Elizabeth's chief spymaster Sir Francis Walsingham.¹⁸¹⁶ The government was clearly caught off guard. Another parley failed at Kilbolen bridge close to Ballymore-Eustace on 23 July 1580.¹⁸¹⁷ Although the Nugents delayed their offensive in Westmeath, both Fiach and Baltinglass were now intent upon their course.

Now Harrington's absence began to tell, allowing Fiach a virtually free hand to attack at will. In place of Harrington, Kildare was ordered to bring Fiach to order.¹⁸¹⁸ Instead he hesitated. Fiach did not. Firstly, he ravaged the Idrone lands of the Carews in Carlow before turning his attention to east Wicklow. His first attack was Harrington's town of Newcastle McKynegan. On 28 July 1580, Fiach's triumphant troops dramatically unfurled the papal colours after firing the town. These colours were then paraded throughout the wider region and in attacks on the Pale.¹⁸¹⁹ The Catholic army in East Leinster were further strengthened in early August by the defections of two of Kildare's captains with their companies of shot as well as the arrival in Glenmalure of Sir John Fitzgerald of Desmond and Dr Saunders, the papal legate, along with small forces from Munster and the midlands.¹⁸²⁰ The arrival of Saunders further cemented the crusading zeal of the Catholic commanders. And

¹⁸¹⁵ O'Byrne, 'Glenmalure', p. 159.

¹⁸¹⁶ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 49, p. 235.

¹⁸¹⁷ O'Connor, 'The Baltinglass Rebellion', p. 92. Pelham wrote to Ormond on July 20 1580, stating his utter disbelief and surprise caused by Baltinglass's actions, see *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 428, p. 279; Sir Nicholas White's letter to the earl of Leicester, conveyed the same disbelieving tone. See *Cal. Carew MSS*, 1575-88, no. 476, p. 280.

¹⁸¹⁸ *Cal. Carew MSS*, 1575-88, no. 483, p. 316.

¹⁸¹⁹ R. Berleth, *The Twilight Lords* (London, 1978), p. 147 (hereafter Berleth); *Cal. Carew MSS*, 1575-88, no. 483, p. 316.

¹⁸²⁰ *Cal. Carew MSS*, 1575-88, no. 176, p. 311; *Ibid.*, no. 474, pp 303-4; Edwards, 'The MacGiollapádraigs (Fitzpatrick's) of Upper Ossory, 1532-1641', p. 348.

throughout August, Fiach and Baltinglass received reinforcements from the O'Tooles, MacMurrough-Kavanaghs, O'Connor Falys, O'Mores, Keatings and Piers Grace in preparation for a major showdown with the government. While Fiach trained these forces for battle, Baltinglass used his considerable powers of persuasion to drum up support, armaments, and supplies for the war from his co-religionists in the coastal towns.¹⁸²¹ News of the outbreak of war between the government and the Catholic army quickly reached the ears of the Spanish ambassador to England, Bernardino de Mendoza. On 7 August 1580 de Mendoza informed Philip II.¹⁸²² Lorenzo Priuli, the Venetian ambassador to France, was also watching developments in Ireland. And in a July letter, he told his master, the Doge of Venice, that Elizabeth dispatched an army of 3,000 to Ireland to deal with Fiach and Baltinglass.¹⁸²³

They did not have long to wait as the Elizabethan army landed at Dublin on 12 August 1580. The arrival of this army was greeted with considerable relief by the beleaguered administration. Its commander and new lord deputy was Sir Arthur Grey de Wilton, a hard-line Calvinist who had never commanded an army in battle. Although Grey possessed great personal courage, both his religious beliefs and his cultural perceptions blinded him to the dangers of Fiach. Grey, like many of his faith, was deeply disturbed by the slaughter of the Huguenots on St Bartholomew's Day 1572.¹⁸²⁴ Like Fiach and Baltinglass, he was also a devout man who fervently believed in the righteousness of his religion. Ironically both Grey and the Catholic commanders facing him considered themselves to be part of separate crusades to suppress each other's faiths. Therefore in this latest war of the Reformation, there was no room for compromise. Grey's assumption of command injected steel into the struggle against the Catholic forces in the Leinster mountains above Dublin. With typical brusqueness, on 18 August Grey marched his largely inexperienced army out of Dublin to rendezvous with the militias

¹⁸²¹ Ibid, no. 443, pp 289-90, no. 444, p. 290, no. 483, p. 316; O'Byrne, 'Glenmalure', pp 163-5.

¹⁸²² *Cal. S.P. Spanish, 1580-6*, iii, p. 44.

¹⁸²³ *C.S.P.V., 1558-80*, p. 642.

¹⁸²⁴ R.McCabe, 'The Fate of Irena: Spenser, and Political Violence', In P.Coughlan (ed.) *Spenser and Ireland: an interdisciplinary perspective* (Cork, 1989), pp 113-4.

under Cosby and Kildare at Naas.¹⁸²⁵ Unfortunately for him, Fiach's intelligence service reported to their master every step Grey's army took towards Glenmalure. And instead of confronting Grey in the open field, Fiach pulled his forces back, luring Grey deeper into the mountains.

On the morning of 25 August 1580 Grey overruled the vehement protests of Cosby and other senior officers, committing his troops to entering Glenmalure. This was a major error of judgment, underestimating the Catholic forces there. For Fiach, the day of reckoning had come, particularly for the events of 1577-8. To ensure that this day had arrived, his agents obtained a promise of defection from Irish kerne serving with the English, once battle was joined. And in a well-executed ambush in Glenmalure, within half an hour Fiach wiped out about half of Grey's army, inflicting around 1,000 fatalities. If it had not been for the personal heroism of Grey many more of his troops would have met their end. The victory at Glenmalure, immortalised by Spenser in Book V of *The Faerie Queene*, proved intensely satisfying for Fiach, as many of his enemies lay scattered among the dead.¹⁸²⁶ In particular he took especial pleasure in the killing of Cosby, the scourge of Ruaidhrí Óg and his wife, Fiach's sister. According to local tradition he sought out Cosby's body and kept it as a prize of war, burying it in a secret location high in the hills above Glenmalure.¹⁸²⁷

However, his celebrations were brief. The bitter retreat to Dublin of Grey left the Catholic army virtually unopposed as it emerged from the mountains. It is clear that Fiach's next move was into Carlow. There with Muircheartach Óg Kavanagh of Garryhill he burnt Idrone, capturing Master Wood and Dean Roger Hooker of Leighlinbridge.¹⁸²⁸ Fiach then split his forces, sending Sir John of Desmond and Piers Grace across the Barrow into the midlands to raid Ormond's estates.¹⁸²⁹ They soon linked up with some of the O'Mores, O'Connor Falys, O'Carrolls, and MacGillapatricks to burn

¹⁸²⁵ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 40, p. 243.

¹⁸²⁶ E. Spenser, 'The Faerie Queene Book V' In *The Works of Edmund Spenser* (Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. 278..

¹⁸²⁷ O'Byrne, 'Glenmalure', pp 169-79.

¹⁸²⁸ Dowling, *Annals*, p. 43.

¹⁸²⁹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 73, p. 246 .

Abbeyleix before attacking the plantation towns of Philipstown and Maryborough.¹⁸³⁰ By early September 1580 the O'Connor Falys were raiding throughout Offaly, and the prominent local loyalist Ross McGeoghegan had been killed.¹⁸³¹ As for Fiach, he now sent forces to attack much of north Kildare and south Dublin, burning a small suburb of Dublin on 10 September as well as Rathmore and Saggart during 16-7 September. These victories though, were bought at a price, as two of Fiach's brothers and a son were reputedly killed in the fighting.¹⁸³² Encouraged by their success, Sir John of Desmond and Robert Fitzgerald burnt Saggart again on 20 September. Fiach and Baltinglass then agreed in late September to divide their forces yet again. On 7 October 1580 Baltinglass and Sir John of Desmond took a large force to Munster to lend support to Desmond and to the mixed force of 600 Spanish and papal troops who had landed at Smerwick Harbour in Kerry during September 1580, while Fiach directed operations in Leinster.

In early October Fiach defeated government troops defending Wicklow town before razing its castle. On 19 October 1580, Fiach descended from the Wicklow uplands with almost 700 men plundered the Pale towns of Coolmine and Rathcoole. His choice of Rathcoole was particularly significant as many of the families of Harrington's men lived there. Once the town was taken, he ordered all the English put to the sword.¹⁸³³ Inevitably, the counter-offensive began. In late October 1580 Grey marched his army into Munster to confront Desmond and his allies in Kerry, leaving Kildare to fight Fiach. Marching at breakneck speed, Grey and his army appeared before the fort of Del Oro at Smerwick on 6 November 1580. And having invested the fort from the landward and seaward sides, Grey's artillery bombarded the trapped garrison. It quickly became apparent to the fort's commander, Sebastiano di San Giuseppe, that no help was

¹⁸³⁰ Ibid, nos 74, 77, 79 p. 247; J. Bradley, 'Early Urban Development in County Laois', In P. Lane & Wm. Nolan (eds), *Laois : History and Society* (Dublin, 1999) p. 267 (hereafter Bradley, 'Early Urban Development in County Laois'); Edwards, 'The MacGiollapádraigs (Fitzpatrick's) of Upper Ossory, 1532-1641', pp 348-9; *AFM*, v, p. 1748-51. The O'Mores had been disturbed already in 1579, then Conall mac Giollapádraig O'More was killed at Birr. See *ibid*, pp 1722-3. This Conall was pardoned at unknown date in 1579, see *Cal. Fiants Eliz*, no. 3597.

¹⁸³¹ Ibid, no. 16, p. 249, no. 22, p. 250.

¹⁸³² Ibid, no. 25, p. 250, no. 45, p. 253; See Nicholls, 'The Genealogy of the Byrnes of Ranelagh', fn. 31, p. 110. Nicholls notes the possibility of the news of the killing of Fiach's kinsmen as being a false report.

¹⁸³³ Ibid, no. 22, p. 259, no. 56, p. 263, no. 4, p. 265.

forthcoming from Desmond and his fort could not resist a direct assault by Grey's army. Consequently, San Giuseppe unconditionally surrendered on 8 November 1580. It appears that during the negotiations, Grey came to the understanding that San Giuseppe's force was not authorised by either the pope or Philip II of Spain. Therefore as adventurers, they were outside the rules of war and entitled to no mercy. Grey, still smarting from the humiliation of Glenmalure, determined that an example be made of them. At the stroke of his pen, he ordered the execution of the entire garrison, bar San Giuseppe and his senior officers, an act that forever besmirched the reputation of Grey in Ireland.¹⁸³⁴

While Grey was in Munster, Kildare began his campaign against Fiach. But as in July 1580, Kildare's assault lacked Grey's cut. There are many reasons for Kildare's hesitancy to challenge the Catholics in open field. Clearly he possessed considerable sympathy for them. Indeed, strong suspicions were being voiced of Kildare's complicity with them.¹⁸³⁵ Another damaging allegation against Kildare was that he had secured Fiach's promise not to burn his lands.¹⁸³⁶ Nevertheless Kildare temporarily laid aside his differences with Harrington to plan a campaign against Fiach. As a matter of policy, they jointly agreed to avoid a direct confrontation and resolved to exploit the hardships of winter upon the Catholic army. Thus, in a co-ordinated pincer movement Kildare struck into Fiach's country from the west of the mountains, while Harrington raided from the east on 9 November 1580. Their purpose was clear, the economic base that sustained the Catholic forces ensconced in the mountains.¹⁸³⁷ The effect of these raids for livestock upon the Catholic army was profound. In January 1581 Grey confirmed the success of these raids, noting '*...Baltynglas and Feagh pinched with Winter.*'¹⁸³⁸ Despite Kildare's success against Fiach, Grey was displeased with the progress of the war and was disturbed by the rumours of the earl's encouragement of the Catholic leaders. Undoubtedly the combination

¹⁸³⁴ Berleth, pp 162-76.

¹⁸³⁵ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, no. 483, p. 316; O'Byrne, 'Glenmalure', pp 156 & 162-3.

¹⁸³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸³⁷ *C.S.P.I, 1574-85*, nos 18 & 23, p. 266.

¹⁸³⁸ *Ibid*, no. 32, p. 283.

of these rumours convinced Grey to relieve Kildare of his post and arrest him on charges of treason on 23 December 1580.¹⁸³⁹

The tide turned in spring 1581. The arrests of Kildare and Lord Delvin signalled a more aggressive approach by government against Fiach and Baltinglass. The reestablishment of the garrison at Wicklow drew an unsuccessful assault from Fiach and Baltinglass on 15 January 1581.¹⁸⁴⁰ Although Grey parleyed with Fiach at Baltinglass Abbey in early February, he was intent on trading punches with Fiach. Before he left for Munster, Grey delegated responsibility for this war of attrition to his lieutenants. Broadly speaking, this strategy produced results, as Catholic setbacks began to mount. Because of mounting pressure both Fiach and Baltinglass began to suffer personal losses. During January, Fiach's wife, Rose, was captured and another of his brothers was killed in the attack on Wicklow.¹⁸⁴¹ One of Baltinglass's brothers, Thomas, was captured, while another was killed in a skirmish in April 1581.¹⁸⁴² Tellingly, Sir William Stanley and Fiach's eventual nemesis, Captain William Russell, even penetrated into Glenmalure and burnt Ballinacor before plundering parts of Crioich Raghnuill. Across the Barrow, English forces steadily gained the upper hand. In April Captain Mackworth killed 100 O'Mores, while the resistance of the Nugents collapsed and William Nugent fled to Toirdhealbhadh Luineach O'Neill during the same month.¹⁸⁴³ Furthermore the establishment of English garrisons at the castles of Kilcommon near Rathdrum and Castlekevin close to Fiach's heartland effectively began the fencing in of the Catholic army.¹⁸⁴⁴ To the south of the Wicklow mountains, the army gained several successes over Fiach's MacMurrough-Kavanagh and O'Toole supporters in East Leinster between May and July 1581, particularly after Grey's return to East Leinster in June.¹⁸⁴⁵ The separate

¹⁸³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

¹⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 10, p. 280.

¹⁸⁴¹ *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, no. 10, p. 291.

¹⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, no. 46, p. 300, no. 51, p. 300.

¹⁸⁴³ *Ibid.*, no. 6, p. 296, no. 18, p. 297, no. 46, p. 300; Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 284; Venning, 'The O'Carrolls of Offaly', pp 196-7; *AFM*, v, pp 1754-5. These relate how the sons of O'Connor Faly, probably Fiach's allies, killed the loyalist Sir William Odhar O'Carroll on his return from Dublin.

¹⁸⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 307 & 309

¹⁸⁴⁵ P.R.O. S.P. 63/84/23; P.R.O. S.P. 63/83/45; P.R.O. S.P. 63/84/12; More, 'The MacMurrough Kavanaghs', p. 15; *Cal. Fiants Eliz.*, no. 3713. Pardon to Féilim mac Turlough O'Toole of Powerscourt and his wife Elizabeth and Arthur Dowsdon of Tallaght on 13 May 1581.

submissions of Crimthann MacMurrough of Coolnaleen, Fiach's choice for the kingship of Leinster, and Muirheartach Óg Kavanagh of Garryhill as well as the Kinsellas to Grey in early July 1581 were serious blows to Fiach's campaign.¹⁸⁴⁶ Even worse, Fiach's staunchest allies, the Art Boy Kavanaghs, were under heavy pressure from Grey's army even within their densely forested heartland of the Blackstairs mountains.¹⁸⁴⁷ Indeed, it took a long distance dash by Fiach that month to prevent their surrender to officials outside Enniscorthy.¹⁸⁴⁸

The near capitulation of the MacMurrough-Kavanaghs was deeply concerning for Fiach and Baltinglass. And while they remained militarily undefeated and continued to strike at outposts along the fringes of the Leinster mountains, Grey's fabian tactics were taking a heavy toll. At this point Fiach began to consider his options. Clearly a change of policy was looming when Fiach's brother-in-law, Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh O'Toole of Powerscourt, reapplied for a pardon on 17 July 1581.¹⁸⁴⁹ And perhaps initially unknown to Baltinglass, Fiach opened negotiations with Harrington about 20 July 1581, petitioning for a pardon.¹⁸⁵⁰ Fiach's pragmatism possibly initially shocked Baltinglass. And when Fiach delivered his pledges to the government in late August, it was reported that a disbelieving Baltinglass '*wandereth in great astonishment...*'¹⁸⁵¹ Seemingly the Catholic leadership had split under Grey's intense offensive. However, there seems to have been more to Fiach's sudden change of strategy.¹⁸⁵² While Fiach may have independently opened a communication with Harrington, it is clear that Baltinglass had some inkling of what he was about to do. During the protracted talks for his pardon in July 1581, Fiach refused to accept his pardon unless Baltinglass was included. Indeed, Baltinglass may have found it difficult to accept the military reality. Seemingly he reluctantly accepted the grim situation, allowing a dramatic change in their strategy.¹⁸⁵³ A plan was formulated

¹⁸⁴⁶ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 12, p. 310; More, 'The MacMurrough Kavanaghs', p. 16. In 1582 Crimthann was executed for his part in aiding Baltinglass to escape.

¹⁸⁴⁷ P.R.O. S.P. 63/84/12; *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 12, p. 310, no. 16 (iv), p. 310.

¹⁸⁴⁸ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 404.

¹⁸⁴⁹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, p. 311.

¹⁸⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 44, p. 313.

¹⁸⁵¹ *Ibid.*, no. 32, p. 317.

¹⁸⁵² Donovan, 'Tudor Rule', p. 140-1.

¹⁸⁵³ *Cal. S.P. Spanish, 1580-6*, iii, p. 167.

whereby Baltinglass would escape to seek help from Spain, while Fiach would open negotiations for a cessation with Grey. This plan was reported to Philip II of Spain. During his impending absence, Baltinglass agreed to appoint Fiach commander-in-chief of the Catholic forces in Leinster.¹⁸⁵⁴ To the consternation of many officials, Grey accepted Fiach's petition for a pardon on 31 July 1580.¹⁸⁵⁵ Compounding their misery, Fiach, it was reported, showed his contempt for Grey by making a mockery of his pardon.¹⁸⁵⁶ Fiach's pardon was not even a surrender, it simply protected Fiach's lands from further persecution by Grey's army. In reality it gained breathing space for the Catholic army and created a safe haven out of which it could operate.

Even though Grey accepted Fiach's submission, he was sceptical of his sincerity. On 23 August 1581, he authorised Harrington to receive Fiach into mercy on condition that he disband his forces.¹⁸⁵⁷ Five days later Fiach, by attorney, made a formal submission ending his official involvement in the war. However, Grey remained disturbed, suspecting it to be a ruse by Fiach to postpone an offensive until after the harvest.¹⁸⁵⁸ That said, Grey pressed ahead against Baltinglass, striking at him where he could. As a warning to those still in the field, Grey ordered Stanley to publicly execute prisoners at Arklow on 12 August 1581.¹⁸⁵⁹ Baltinglass was clearly protected by Fiach and still had access to the O'Byrne nexus of contacts in Leinster. Probably with Fiach's approval, Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh O'Toole of Powerscourt and the O'Connor Faly's joined him in attacks on the Pale in early October 1581. Generally speaking though, Fiach was co-ordinating the winding-down of the Catholic army as evidenced by the submissions of Domhnall Spainneach Kavanagh and James 'Meagh' mac Cétach O'More, Ruaidhrí Óg's first cousin.¹⁸⁶⁰ The petitions of Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh and Conchobhar O'Connor Faly, Ruaidhrí Óg's old

¹⁸⁵⁴ Donovan, 'Tudor Rule', p. 141.

¹⁸⁵⁵ P.R.O. S.P. 63/84/44.

¹⁸⁵⁶ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 53, p. 314.

¹⁸⁵⁷ *Calendar of Irish Council Book, 1581-6*, p. 92.

¹⁸⁵⁸ O'Connor, 'The Baltinglass Rebellion', p. 158.

¹⁸⁵⁹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, p. 314.

¹⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 322. For the O'Mores in this period, see Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order', pp 215 & 246-8. Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh had been involved in attacks on the Pale from about 15 July. Earlier in May he had been pardoned but had returned to war because of the arrest and execution of his brother on 28 August 1581.

ally, for pardons on 10 October 1581 further support this perception.¹⁸⁶¹ Beyond pardon, Baltinglass made his preparations to flee to Spain, which he did with Fiach's help in November.¹⁸⁶² Shortly afterwards, in December, Fiach enraged the government by hanging his defecting former subordinate Captain Gerald Fitzgerald who allegedly had evidence of Kildare's covert support for Fiach and Baltinglass.¹⁸⁶³ For hanging Fitzgerald, the government briefly considered executing Fiach's pledges. Doubtless Fiach did hang Fitzgerald to protect Kildare but the exact nature of the earl's relationship with the Catholic forces still remains obscure. Also on the night of 17 December, Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach burnt much of St Patrick's Street - a direct slight upon Archbishop Loftus who owned the destroyed property. However, one of his raiding party was captured. And under interrogation the man confessed to coming from Fiach's lordship, implicating his overlord in the actions of his O'Toole brother-in-law.¹⁸⁶⁴ The next day Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach paid dearly for his daring as Captain Edward Denny killed his son - Garret.¹⁸⁶⁵

Against the background of Grey's witch-hunt in the Pale for Baltinglass's conspirators, Fiach suspended operations and attending to the improvement of his estates.¹⁸⁶⁶ Briefly, Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach continued to fight but the executions of another of his sons along with two sons of Ruaidhrí Óg convinced him of peace in January 1582, gaining his pardon on 18 March.¹⁸⁶⁷ While many Catholic Palesmen lived in fear of the block during the reign of terror, a rare calm descended upon the Leinster mountains. There, despite the tranquil appearance, much was going on below the surface. Still among the hills were the remnants of the Catholic army, waiting for news from Baltinglass in Spain. By May 1582 something was clearly afoot as the O'Connor Falys murdered Captain Mackworth in Offaly as

¹⁸⁶¹ Ibid, pp 324-5 & 330.

¹⁸⁶² Ibid, nos 27, 29, 32, p. 317.

¹⁸⁶³ Ibid, p. 336; See John Hooker, 'The Description of the Conquest and Inhabitation of Ireland', In *Holinshed's Irish Chronicle* (1587 edn), ii, p. 177.

¹⁸⁶⁴ O'Connor, 'The Baltinglass Rebellion', pp 169-70; *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 51, p. 336.

¹⁸⁶⁵ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 52, p. 336; O'Connor, 'The Baltinglass Rebellion', p. 170.

¹⁸⁶⁶ O'Connor, 'The Baltinglass Rebellion', p. 180; *A.L.C.*, ii, pp 445-7. This mentions that eighteen heirs of the foreigners of Meath were executed by the justiciar; Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, p. 282.

¹⁸⁶⁷ *A.L.C.*, ii, pp 448-9; *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 22, p. 341; *Cal. Fiants Eliz.*, no. 3844.

retaliation for his raids, skinning him alive.¹⁸⁶⁸ Significantly, Fiach's troops were also seizing corn from the Pale and their master quit his plans for the development of agriculture on his estates. More seriously, he was active among the O'Connor Falys, marrying his sister, the widow of Cathaoir Dubh Kavanagh of Clonmullen, to Tadhg mac Giollapádraig O'Connor Faly early in June 1582. This caused concern in government circles, only to be magnified by reports of Fiach's successful patching up of strained relations between his MacMurrough-Kavanagh allies of Garryhill and St Mullins. More dangerous for the government were his alleged promises to them of Baltinglass's imminent landing with a Spanish army.¹⁸⁶⁹ Fiach and his cohorts were to be disappointed as the summer brought no foreign army to renew his Catholic crusade, and on 16 September 1582 he, Aodh Dubh O'Byrne and Tadhg mac Giollapádraig made their submissions in Dublin.¹⁸⁷⁰ On 5 November, he came to Dublin with his principal lieutenants Tadhg mac Giollapádraig and Muircheartach Óg Kavanagh of Garryhill, and they made formal submissions before the lord justices.¹⁸⁷¹ But nobody put any faith in the sincerity of his actions.

The government was clearly aware of the dangers posed by Fiach and his allies. Consequently, they set about weakening Fiach. Those of Fiach's allies who aided Baltinglass's escape to the continent were now hunted down. Among these was Crimthann MacMurrough of Coolnaleen, Fiach's candidate for the Leinster kingship. He had been pardoned in July 1581, but was clearly unrepentant and had planned the escape of Baltinglass. As a result he was arrested by Masterson, his bitter enemy, and dispatched to Dublin for trial and execution later in October 1582.¹⁸⁷² Also in the midlands, the authorities attempted to destroy Fiach's nexus. There they found fertile ground to sow discord among the rival branches of the

¹⁸⁶⁸ *C.S.P.I.* 1574-85, no. 89, p. 371; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 44. This source wrongly dates Mackworth's death to 1583; *A.L.C.* ii, pp 450-1. This mentions the killing of Domhnall O'Molloy by the O'Connor Falys in 1582.

¹⁸⁶⁹ P.R.O. S.P. 63/93/14; More, 'The MacMurrough Kavanaghs', p. 16.

¹⁸⁷⁰ P.R.O. S.P. 63/95/54; *C.S.P.I.* 1574-85, no. 12, p. 371, nos 12, 14, p. 376, no. 54, p. 399; *Cal. Fiants Eliz*, no. 3961. On 23 August 1582 Walter mac Edmund (Walter Boy mac Edmund MacDonell), captain of galloglass, and his family were pardoned at the suit of Fiach. See also *ibid.*, no. 3959, p. 171 James mac Cétach O'More alias James Meagh was also pardoned a day earlier.

¹⁸⁷¹ *C.S.P.I.* 1574-85, no. 15, p. 409.

¹⁸⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 451; O'Connor, 'The Baltinglass Rebellion', p. 168.

O'Connor Faly dynasty in 1583. The origin of this dynastic dispute lay in the succession struggle between Tadhg mac Giollapádraig and his cousin, Conchobhar. Although Tadhg had married Fiach's sister in June 1582, he became less receptive to Fiach after their submission of November that year. This estrangement was to subsequently mature into an open blood feud between the two as evidenced by Tadhg's connivance in plots against Fiach in 1587-8.¹⁸⁷³ Why Tadhg became estranged from Fiach remains unknown but this cooling may be explained by government overtures, concerning the O'Connor Faly succession. Consequently by mid 1583, Tadhg had assumed a previously unheard of loyalist position. In contrast Conchobhar remained close to his O'Byrne master, disputing his rival's claims. Their struggle dramatically climaxed on 12 September 1583. Then both men travelled to Dublin and laid their grievances for the arbitration of the lords justices. Both also accused the other of high treason, playing into the hands of the officials. The result was a tragic farce, trial by combat. And to packed galleries, the pair fought in the courtyard of Dublin Castle until Tadhg beheaded Conchobhar.¹⁸⁷⁴ For his pains, Tadhg was rewarded with a farm, becoming a state pensioner.¹⁸⁷⁵ Dublin Castle was the clear winner.

Fiach must have been concerned by the loss of these allies. However, he was protected from any backlash by his strict observance of his submission of November 1582. Effectively this submission heralded a long but uneasy truce with the government until 1594, although the latter took the precaution of authorising Harrington to maintain Kilcommon Castle within striking distance of Glenmalure.¹⁸⁷⁶ But the respite gained by this latest submission allowed Fiach some time to pause and reflect upon the eventual failure of the war of 1580-1. Clearly the war had taken its toll both on him and on his lordship. As result Fiach changed his policy towards the government, remaining outwardly loyal. With the benefit of peace, Fiach now embarked upon the repair of his dynasty's position within the Wicklow region. Possibly at this time he may have welded himself

¹⁸⁷³ H.Morgan, 'Perrot's Poison Plot', In C.O'Brien (ed.) *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne : The Wicklow Firebrand* (Dublin, 1998), p. 194. (hereafter Morgan, 'Perrot Poison Plot').

¹⁸⁷⁴ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 69, p. 468; *A.L.C.*, ii, p. 451-3.

¹⁸⁷⁵ *Ibid*, no. 20, p. 473; *C.S.P.I.*, 1586-8, no. 21, p. 41; *Cal Fiants Eliz*, no. 5174. This mentions a pardon to Tadhg mac Giollapádraig in 1588.

¹⁸⁷⁶ *Calendar of Irish Council Book, 1581-6*, pp 93 & 166.

even closer to the O'Tooles of Castlekevin by marrying his sons Féilim and Réamain to his wife Rose's sisters, Uná and Katharine. Furthermore he and Murchadh mac Edmund O'Byrne of Kiltimon also attempted to settle their differences, resulting in the marriage of Fiach's heir, Toirdhealbhadh to Murchadh's daughter - Dorothy.¹⁸⁷⁷ The long peace also allowed him to attend to some personal matters such as his education and appearance.¹⁸⁷⁸ Much of this personal improvement may have been conducted under the guidance of priests who had sought refuge in Glenmalure. Indeed, the power of these clerical advisers caused rifts among his retainers as evidenced by the poem of Fergal MacKeogh.¹⁸⁷⁹

With the exception of Captain John Parker, a veteran of Glenmalure,¹⁸⁸⁰ Fiach completely changed his policy towards officials.¹⁸⁸¹ Instead of intransigence he now presented an amicable face, establishing a strained rapport with Harrington. And upon the arrival of Sir John Perrot, the reputed half-brother of Elizabeth, as lord deputy in June 1584, Fiach promised his observance of the courts in July.¹⁸⁸² In addition, in August he delivered a son and an uncle as pledges.¹⁸⁸³ Fiach's seeming good intentions were displayed by the holding of the sessions of the southern assize court at Ballinacor in September¹⁸⁸⁴, and by his purchase of lands in east Wicklow. At the September sessions, Fiach presented vociferous complaints against the excesses of the seneschals, particularly Harrington.¹⁸⁸⁵ Nevertheless in November, he and Harrington arrested and executed some cattle raiders. To Harrington's surprise, Fiach surrendered a son for collusion with the recently deceased.¹⁸⁸⁶ Fiach's reformation seemed complete when he as an observer was the only Leinster lord to

¹⁸⁷⁷ Nicholls, 'The Genealogy of the O'Byrnes of Ranelagh', p. 113. Nicholls notes that Toirdhealbhadh mac Fiach was married to Dorothy before April 1590.

¹⁸⁷⁸ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, no. 140-1; Lambeth Palace Library Carew MSS 612; Also see the back cover of C.O'Brien (ed.), *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne: The Wicklow Firebrand*, (Dublin, 1999). *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 253; Morgan, 'Perrot's Poison Plot', pp 184-5.

¹⁸⁷⁹ *Leabhar Branach*, no. 26.

¹⁸⁸⁰ *C.S.P.I, 1574-85*, no. 3, p. 438.

¹⁸⁸¹ *Ibid*, no. 1, p. 517, no. 29, p. 519.

¹⁸⁸² *Ibid*, p. 519; P.R.O. S.P. 63/ 111/31.

¹⁸⁸³ *Ibid*, no. 43, p. 521; *Cal. Fiants Eliz*, no. 4510-1, These pardons included Fiach, Shawe ny Phelim, his mother, Rose, Edmund McShane Óg, his uncle, and his sons -Toirdhealbhadh and Phelim were pardoned on 17 August 1584.

¹⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid*, no. 26, p. 531; More, 'The MacMurrough Kavanaghs', p. 16. During this circuit 180 'masterless men' were arrested forty-eight of whom were later executed.

¹⁸⁸⁵ P.R.O. S.P. 63/112/261.

¹⁸⁸⁶ *C.S.P.I, 1574-85*, no. 90, p. 539, no. 9, p. 540; Price, 'Notes', p. 149.

attend Perrot's parliament in April 1585.¹⁸⁸⁷ To many Elizabethan observers, Fiach seemingly rejected conflict by embarking upon a transition from warlord to landowner.

Even more illustrative of Fiach's apparent change of heart were his links with the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, Lord Chancellor Adam Loftus. Although on paper Fiach and Loftus were complete opposites, both in political outlook and in religion, there had been precedents for individual agreements between previous O'Byrne lords and the archbishops of Dublin stretching from the thirteenth century.¹⁸⁸⁸ Primarily, these agreements centred upon the lost revenues of the former lands of the archbishopric lying within the lordships of the Wicklow Irish. In addition because Dublin's economy was heavily dependent upon raw materials such as foodstuffs and timber, there were always close trading links between its merchant and upper classes with the O'Byrne and O'Toole lords.¹⁸⁸⁹ Loftus, a Yorkshire man, had been Archbishop of Dublin since 1567, and throughout his tenure of this office and that of lord chancellor he had mainly used his power for the aggrandisement of himself and his family. What seems to have transpired between Loftus and Fiach was an unwritten agreement dating from about the mid 1580s, concerning the tithes of the archdeaconry of Glendalough. Before this date Loftus had no hope of collecting these monies due to Fiach's dominance over these lands. But by 1586-9, Fiach was allowing officials into these lands to assess the monies due.¹⁸⁹⁰ By August 1592, the archbishop's nephew, another Adam Loftus, was receiving the annual sum of 16 10s.¹⁸⁹¹ Without doubt this situation could not have come about without Fiach's consent. But relations between Fiach and Loftus went much deeper. In 1592 Loftus was forced to deny the accusation of fostering one of his children in Fiach's country¹⁸⁹², while in 1594 he was charged with sheltering Fiach's wife Rose in his

¹⁸⁸⁷ *A.F.M.*, v, pp 1826-7; P.R.O. S.P. 63/124/47.

¹⁸⁸⁸ T.C.D., MSS F.3.25 (588), ff 202v-204; *Rot. Pat. Hib.*, no. 113, p. 238.

¹⁸⁸⁹ *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, 1392-3*, p. 181; *Ancient Records of Dublin*, i, p. 347, p. 190 & pp 284-6. For the claims of the city of Dublin to lands in the Wicklow mountains see *ibid.*, p. 252; Matthew, pp 192-5.

¹⁸⁹⁰ *Ancient Records of Dublin*, xi, pp 203, 225, 228.

¹⁸⁹¹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1588-92, no. 54, p. 575; See also *C.S.P.I.*, 1603-6, no. 267, p. 169. In 1604, the archbishopric had 46 pounds from the lands of Glendalough.

¹⁸⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 292.

own house in Dublin.¹⁸⁹³ Furthermore, the behaviour of the company of Captain Adam Loftus, the archbishop's own son, during Harrington's defeat on 29 May 1599 by Fiach's sons was criticised in the subsequent court martials. Indeed, it may be argued that Captain Loftus was fortunate to die of his wounds, considering the evidence given in the court transcripts. Further suspicion was again cast on the Loftus household when eight of the archbishop's servants defected to Fiach's sons within a month of Harrington's defeat.¹⁸⁹⁴ It seems in return for Fiach's permission to collect the tithes of Glendalough, Loftus may have acted as an advocate for the redress of some of Fiach's grievances as in November 1588.¹⁸⁹⁵

Others, however, were not convinced of Fiach's reported good intentions. Despite Fiach's loyalty, this scepticism lingered. But the evidence shows that there was more to this than just duplicity. In 1585 Butler ambitions and rapacity were again focused upon the southern half of his lordship. And just as his father and grandfather had been drawn into conflict with the Butlers, Fiach too had little choice but to oppose them. So it would seem Fiach's reformation was an attempt to obtain government protection. All this considerable effort was to little avail. In preparation for their drive into the south of Crioich Raghnuill, the Butlers now exploited the feud between the lord of Glenmalure and Aodh Dubh O'Byrne of Knockrath.¹⁸⁹⁶ The origin of the feud remains unclear. Family relations between the two men were close as Aodh Dubh's second wife was the niece of Fiach's

¹⁸⁹³ *C.S.P.I. 1599-1600*, no. 74, p. 52.

¹⁸⁹⁴ *Ibid*, no. 92, p. 67.

¹⁸⁹⁵ Price, 'Notes', p. 151.

¹⁸⁹⁶ Much of the bitterness that exploded between these families emanated from the fact that they both belonged to the Gabhal Raghnaill lineage. Within the Gabhal Raghnaill there seems to have been three major noble families located at Glenmalure, Knockrath and Clonmore with a minor branch living near Kilcommon See O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 105; C.O'Brien, 'The Byrnes of Ballymanus and the Gabhal Raghnaill Connection', In C.O'Brien (ed.), *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne : The Wicklow Firebrand* (Dublin, 1999), pp 269-73. It seems the lordship of Crioich Raghnuill had always resided with those of Glenmalure. However, this succession may have been disturbed by the Kildares between 1500-30. This possibility seems to be borne out by the 9th earl's contract with Domhnall O'Byrne of Knockrath in August 1526. See *Crown Surveys, 1540-1*, p. 266. Maybe Kildare's exploitation of the divisions within the Gabhal Raghnaill O'Byrnes was the root of the later rivalry between Glenmalure and Knockrath. However, the rise of Fiach's grandfather and father signalled the eclipse of autonomy of Knockrath. This may have been achieved through force or an alliance between the two families. The probability of the latter is more likely as Aodh Dubh O'Byrne of Knockrath was a committed supporter of Aodh from at least 1555. See *Cal. Fiants. Philip & Mary*, no. 80; *Cal. Fiants. Eliz*, nos 579 & 1036.

mother.¹⁸⁹⁷ Perhaps the dispute may have originated in the possible irritation of Aodh Dubh, an older man, at Fiach's succession to the lordship on Fiach's father's death. Furthermore, Fiach seemingly was intent on concentrating all power in Cricoch Raghnuill with trusted members of his own family as his tanaiste was Edmund O'Byrne his uncle.¹⁸⁹⁸ Nonetheless, Aodh Dubh remained loyal to Fiach, fighting for him throughout the campaigns of 1580-1. A personal reason may also lie at the root of their later conflict.¹⁸⁹⁹ By 1575 a rift had certainly emerged between Fiach and Aodh Dubh.¹⁹⁰⁰ In 1582/3 Aodh Dubh's disaffection boiled over, probably resulting from Fiach's rebuilding of his position in a region still shaking from the events of 1580-1. While Fiach offered marriage alliances to the O'Tooles of Castlekevin and the O'Byrnes of Kiltimon, he may have been over zealous towards his own vassals particularly Aodh Dubh. By 1583/4, Aodh Dubh was openly disaffected. One reason for Aodh Dubh's loathing of Fiach was perhaps the latter's outraged sense of personal and dynastic loyalty at Aodh Dubh's attempts to establish himself as an independent force.¹⁹⁰¹ If so, this rough wooing convinced Aodh Dubh to throw in his lot with the Butlers. And his grievances did not go unheard. On 25 April 1584 Ormond, Elizabeth's cousin, fired a broadside across Fiach's bows, by appointing Aodh Dubh as constable of his Arklow lordship.¹⁹⁰²

Spearheading the second prong of Ormond's assault on Fiach were the Butlers of Cloghgrenan. In addition to Ormond's intrigues with Aodh Dubh, he now encouraged his nephews James and Piers fitzEdmund Butler of Cloghgrenan to re-establish a land corridor between Arklow and Tullow. Dangerously for Fiach, it was to border

¹⁸⁹⁷ K.W.Nicholls, 'The O'Byrne Sept of Knockrath', In C.O'Brien (ed.) *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne : The Wicklow Firebrand* (Dublin, 1999), p. 275. (hereafter Nicholls, 'The O'Byrne Sept of Knockrath').

¹⁸⁹⁸ *C.S.P.I.*, 1598-9, no. 94, p. 102.

¹⁸⁹⁹ Possibly, this reason dates from 1570-2, the backdrop to Fiach's divorce from Sadhbh Kavanagh. It is accepted that Fiach fathered an illegitimate son by a daughter of Aodh Dubh. As Fiach was an intensely devout man, the child was probably conceived before his second marriage to Rose O'Toole about 1573. Aodh Dubh may have encouraged his daughter's relationship with Fiach in the hope that they would marry. Indeed, she was probably much closer in years to Fiach than Rose. In the event Fiach may have jilted her in favour of Rose, infuriating the O'Byrnes of Knockrath. Nicholls, 'The Genealogy of the O'Byrnes of Ranelagh', p. 112; This son is probably the 'base' son of Fiach executed on 16 November 1596, see *Cal.Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 252; Lane-Poole Papers, N.L.I. MS 5378; see also O'Byrne, 'The Rise of the Gabhal Raghnaill', p. 104.

¹⁹⁰⁰ Price, 'Notes', fn. 15, p. 151.

¹⁹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 151.

¹⁹⁰² *C.O.D.*, vi, no. 7, pp 7-8.

on his own estates in Shillelagh.¹⁹⁰³ The father of these Butlers was Fiach's former friend and now partner of his ex wife, Sir Edmund Butler of Cloghgrenan. This ensured a personal element in the developing struggle, intensifying its fury. An alarmed Fiach increased his co-operation with Perrot in the hope that he would stop the Butlers. Despite the outbreak of war between England and Spain in August 1585¹⁹⁰⁴, Fiach chose to remain loyal. But as an insurance policy, he resumed his negotiations with other Catholic leaders in Ireland. At a stroke, Fiach's links with the O'Neills were laid bare when his son escaped with Art O'Neill from Dublin Castle in February 1586.¹⁹⁰⁵ Although Fiach swiftly presented another son as a substitute pledge, his role in the escapes was exposed by the capture of his brother while escorting Art back to Ulster.¹⁹⁰⁶ But Fiach was concerned by the Butler threat along his southern border and obtained a safe conduct to present his case at Dublin.¹⁹⁰⁷ By April 1586 Perrot, anxious to keep the peace, ignored Fiach's role in the escapes and asked petitioned to present him at court. This scheme was to come to nothing.¹⁹⁰⁸ Yet Fiach continued to surprise, presenting himself clad in English attire before Perrot in May 1586. This latest protestation of good faith and loyalty earned his pardon.¹⁹⁰⁹ Throughout that summer Fiach was to continually delight Perrot, sending in heads of supposed outlaws. More accurately, though, they were the rivals of his nephew and protégé, Uaithne mac Ruaidhrí Óig O'More. A pleased Perrot sang Fiach's praises, believing that he was greatly encouraged by Elizabeth's declaration that the Protestants and Catholics of Ireland should be treated equally.¹⁹¹⁰ Others such as Sir Henry Wallop, were convinced Fiach was playing Perrot for a fool.¹⁹¹¹

By August 1586, the border war between Fiach and Ormond in Shillelagh was clearly beginning to hurt the former. Despite Fiach's request for aid, Perrot could not stop the Butlers, souring the

¹⁹⁰³ Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 219.

¹⁹⁰⁴ Limm, *The Dutch Revolt, 1559-1648*, pp 56-9.

¹⁹⁰⁵ Price, 'Notes', p. 150.

¹⁹⁰⁶ *C.S.P.I, 1586-8*, pp 3-4

¹⁹⁰⁷ Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 219.

¹⁹⁰⁸ Morgan, 'Perrot's Poison Plot', pp 184-5.

¹⁹⁰⁹ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-89*, pp 426-7; See also Morgan, 'Perrot's Poison Plot', p. 183.

¹⁹¹⁰ Morgan, 'Perrot's Poison Plot', pp 183 & 185.

¹⁹¹¹ *C.S.P.I, 1586-8*, p. 64; P.R.O., S.P. 63/139/7.

apparently promising relations. Disillusioned, Fiach took matters into his own hands and moved quickly to turn the tables on the over-confident-Butlers. His first move was decisive, marrying his daughter Margaret to Walter Riabhach Fitzgerald, probably during summer 1586.¹⁹¹² Walter Riabhach was the son of Maurice Fitzgerald of Glassealy, Kildare's constable of Shillelagh before 1578, and Onora O'Toole of Powerscourt. It is clear that Walter Riabhach's disaffection stemmed from Harrington's acquisition of a lease upon Fitzgerald lands in Shillelagh during 1578.¹⁹¹³ By 1585 Walter Riabhach's family found themselves on the coalface of Butler rapine in Shillelagh. Naturally, they needed protection and found it in Fiach. In Walter Riabhach and Conall mac Cétach O'More, Fiach discovered his most able lieutenants of the late 1580s. With Butler strength growing in Shillelagh, Fiach unleashed them in August 1586, while he turned on the MacMurrough-Kavanagh allies of the Butlers.¹⁹¹⁴ When asked to explain himself he declined, but officially remained at peace.

This tense climate in East Leinster was further heightened by the change in ownership of Idrone in 1585. Ironically this tension arose because of the death of Idrone's owner, Sir Peter Carew the younger, at Glenmalure on 25 August 1580. Resulting from Sir Peter's substantial debts, his brother Sir George Carew was compelled to sell Idrone for £2,200 to Dudley Bagenal, second son of Marshal Nicholas Bagenal. In addition Sir George made the ill-considered appointment of young Bagenal as assistant constable of Leighlinbridge, a decision with disastrous ramifications for relations with the MacMurrough-Kavanaghs.¹⁹¹⁵ Horrifically on 30 November 1586, Captain Henry Heron, Bagenal's agent and brother-in-law, murdered Muirheartach Óg Kavanagh of Garryhill, Fiach's cousin and ally. The source of this latest outrage lay in the recent theft of some of Bagenal's cattle. Naturally, the followers of Muirheartach Óg were suspects and accordingly a posse set off in pursuit. When Heron and his band

¹⁹¹² *Cal. Fiants Eliz.* no. 5111. They were certainly married before 18 December 1587 as Margaret is included as 'Margey O'Birne' the wife of Walter Riabhach.

¹⁹¹³ W. Fitzgerald, 'Walter Reagh Fitzgerald, A Noted Outlaw of the Sixteenth Century', In *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, (1898), pp 299-302. (hereafter Fitzgerald, 'Walter Reagh').

¹⁹¹⁴ *C.S.P.I.*, 1586-8, pp 137 & 139. Walter Reagh also captured one of Ormond's clients, Edmund Archdeacon, and held him captive for a period, see Fitzgerald, 'Walter Reagh', pp 300-1; This Conall mac Cétach O'More may be the brother of James 'Meagh' mac Cétach, the O'More leader who died in June/July 1584, see *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 1, p. 517.

¹⁹¹⁵ More, 'The MacMurrough Kavanaghs', p. 17.

thundered into Garryhill, the seventy year-old Muirheartach Óg, fearing for his life, hid in nearby forests. Regrettably for him, he was dragged before Heron who demanded the cattle. The old man protested, saying he knew nothing of the animals and even promised to pay for them anyway. This explanation doomed him as a clearly enraged Heron hacked him down, killing him, an act that even shocked the most hardened officials.¹⁹¹⁶ Indeed, Muirheartach Óg had seemingly resolved to live out his dotage peaceably with the colonists, having recently refused the Leinster kingship as being too dangerous.¹⁹¹⁷ Unwittingly Heron had now sealed Bagenal's fate as Fiach placed his own forces at the disposal of Muirheartach Óg's sons. Thus, on 21 March 1587, Walter Riabhach, with Muirheartach and Donnchadh Kavanagh, lured Bagenal out of Leighlinbridge. Somewhere in the surrounding countryside Bagenal was killed and horribly mutilated.¹⁹¹⁸ On Fiach's orders, Walter Riabhach fled in May to Ulster. Even more serious for the government than Fiach's private wars in East Leinster was the report of a Dublin sailor returned from Lisbon in April 1587. According to the mariner's evidence, English intelligence learned that Fiach was intriguing with the Spanish and had offered to take Spanish troops into his country to attack Dublin.¹⁹¹⁹ Perrot's illusions were shattered. As a result Perrot and Wallop requested that Elizabeth give them 100 troops for a three month campaign against Fiach. Once Fiach was removed, Wallop confidently asserted, the MacMurrough-Kavanaghs, O'Connor Falys and O'Mores would collapse.¹⁹²⁰

Throughout the remainder of 1587, Fiach resumed his role of arch-plotter. In December 1587, Walter Riabhach returned from Ulster, submitted to Perrot and was allowed to enter Dublin where he was nearly killed by the Bagenals.¹⁹²¹ Walter Riabhach returned at the request of Fiach who was now in regular contact with the Spanish. According to the later deposition of the double agent Father Denis

¹⁹¹⁶ Ibid; See also K.W.Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs, 1400-1700', In *Ir. Geneal.* vi, no. 2 (November 1982), p. 194.

¹⁹¹⁷ More, 'The MacMurrough Kavanaghs', p. 16; Hughes, 'The Fall of Clan Kavanagh', p. 285.

¹⁹¹⁸ *C.S.P.I. 1586-8*, p. 288-9; See also Morgan, 'Perrot's Poison Plot', p. 186; Hughes, 'The Fall of Clan Kavanagh', p. 296; *A.L.C.*, ii, p. 478.

¹⁹¹⁹ Ibid, pp 322 & 338-9.

¹⁹²⁰ Morgan's Poison Plot, p. 187.

¹⁹²¹ Fitzgerald, 'Walter Reagh', p. 301; For Walter Riabhach's pardon dated 18 December 1587, see *Cal. Fiants Eliz.* no. 5111.

O'Roughan, Fiach had dispatched him with a letter to Spain, promising assistance to any proposed Spanish invasion.¹⁹²² Years later, on 3 October 1590 Perrot, then, facing trial for treason, submitted a statement vigorously defending his deputyship between 1584-8. In it he portrayed Fiach as the greatest supporter of Spain in Ireland in an attempt to inflate his own service. According to Perrot, Fiach, advised by Catholic clergy, refused to answer any summons throughout 1587-8, because he was preparing for a Spanish landing. As a result of Fiach's alleged conspiracy, Perrot authorised operations to procure Fiach's death. In this ill-starred adventure he hired Tadhg O'Nolan to lure Fiach and his heir Toirdhealbhach into an ambush laid by Harrington and Sir William Collier. When this failed, O'Nolan offered to poison father and son - a plan that was also unsuccessful.¹⁹²³ Arising from Perrot's impending trial, in 1591/2 Lord Deputy Sir William Fitzwilliam granted safe passage to Fiach so he could attend an interview in Dublin, focusing on his dealings with Perrot between 1584-8. It is clear that Fiach came to Dublin and was forthcoming, but unfortunately his deposition has been lost or destroyed.¹⁹²⁴

Despite Perrot's strenuous defence in October 1590, there was truth in his words. In summer 1588 the government watched Fiach with increasing trepidation.¹⁹²⁵ And they had justifiable reason to do so, as throughout the Spanish Armada crisis that summer, Fiach refused to supply them with troops. Instead he positioned lookouts on the coast as well as raising men and buying arms. Orders were dispatched from Ballinacor to his bailiffs to requisition provisions throughout Cricoch Raghnuill and raid the Pale.¹⁹²⁶ In his deposition, Perrot went to considerable lengths to explain how he peeled away many of Fiach's confederates. In particular he mentioned how he exploited rifts between Fiach and his brothers-in-law, Tadhg O'Connor Faly and Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach O'Toole. Furthermore he stated that he also encouraged Ormond's constable Aodh Dubh to attack Fiach presumably during June 1588.¹⁹²⁷ More dangerously for

¹⁹²² Morgan, 'Perrot's Poison Plot', p. 188.

¹⁹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

¹⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

¹⁹²⁵ *C.S.P.I.* 1586-8, p. 526.

¹⁹²⁶ *C.S.P.I.* 1588-92, no. 1, p. 3.

¹⁹²⁷ P.R.O. S.P. 12/233 no. 85, inclosure i.

Fiach, Perrot's plotting coincided with the re-emergence of Fiach's feud with Harrington. In June Fiach shrewdly submitted to Perrot's successor Lord Deputy Sir William Fitzwilliam before retiring to his lordship to await the Spanish landing. By the end of August 1588, Fiach learned that the Armada was scattered.¹⁹²⁸ However, he faced a considerable battle to subdue his clients. Indeed, Perrot's version of 1587/8 is supported by evidence from the State Papers showing Fiach fighting for survival. By September 1588 Fiach had ridden the storm and went on the offensive. On 26 September 1588, it was reported that he and his son Toirdhealbhadh were gradually re-establishing their suzerainty.¹⁹²⁹ And during a venomous parley with Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh, Fiach violently clashed with him, forcing O'Toole to flee for his life. Even more worrying for the government were reports of Fiach's ongoing preparations for a Spanish landing. Significantly, there was only one dissenting voice within the government. That voice belonged to Lord Chancellor Archbishop Loftus who bizarrely wrote to Lord Burghley, stating that Fiach intended no harm.¹⁹³⁰ Loftus's words did not reflect the reality that Fiach was snuffing out all Irish opposition to him in Wicklow. On his orders, his son Toirdhealbhadh with Kavanagh help¹⁹³¹ ruthlessly stamped out Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh's rebellion, forcing his recognition of Fiach's overlordship about Christmas that year.¹⁹³²

With Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh's surrender, Fiach began the second phase of his cleanout. Doubtless his experiences of 1586-8 increased his confrontational attitude as shown by the prolonged presence of minor Irish lords from Longford at Ballinacor, particularly that of Hubert mac Fergus O'Farrell in late 1588 and early 1589.¹⁹³³ A further indication of Fiach's hostility was indicated by the escape of his pledges from Dublin Castle on 25 February 1589.¹⁹³⁴ By March 1589, he was strong enough to attack Aodh Dubh and his Butler patrons. In late March he burnt Knockrath, forcing Aodh Dubh to

¹⁹²⁸ *C.S.P.I.*, 1588-92, no. 18, p. 11.

¹⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 51, p. 44.

¹⁹³⁰ Price, 'Notes', p. 151.

¹⁹³¹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1588-92, no. 45, p. 66.

¹⁹³² *Ibid.*, no. 46, p. 113. Toirdhealbhadh killed two nephews of Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh during the winter 1588.

¹⁹³³ *Ibid.*, no. 25, p. 92, no. 46, p. 113.

¹⁹³⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 41, p. 126.

take up permanent residency in Arklow.¹⁹³⁵ And, to add insult to injury, Fiach kidnapped Aodh Dubh's wife Margaret, rubbing salt into the already wounded pride of his rival. In mid October 1589, before the walls of Arklow, he demanded that Aodh Dubh be handed over to him or his forces would storm the fortress. Aodh Dubh, safe behind Arklow's walls, defied him and forced Fiach to content be with the burning of Ormond's lordship.¹⁹³⁶ Throughout 1590 Fiach remained on the offensive, leading his forces and Walshes against the Cloghgrenan Butlers, wasting their lands. By August, Fiach had won this latest round.¹⁹³⁷ In fact, the experience of these years reinforced his position as leader of the Leinster nobility and of southern disaffected Catholics. During the 1590s Fiach became noticeably more belligerent towards the English and Protestantism. Notably, the courts of the southern assize were never held again in Ballinacor. Indeed, Ballinacor returned to its more recognisable role as a safe haven for priests and Spanish agents. They now nurtured Fiach's brooding discontent, reinvigorating him as the greatest threat to Anglicisation and Protestantism in the southern half of Ireland.¹⁹³⁸ From the Glenmalure pulpit, Fiach again preached the doctrine of Catholic nationalism and intrigued with sympathisers throughout the country. Inevitably this led to war. Thus, in 1595 Glenmalure reverted to the bloody bear pit that hosted so much of the Leinster War of 1580-1.

The acceptance that Fiach represented a new development on the Irish political landscape is crucial to understanding his career. In 1979 Bradshaw argued that Fiach's *duanaire* held a distinctly nationalistic perspective.¹⁹³⁹ Bradshaw's central thesis highlighted that Fiach's *duanaire* contained three dominant themes. First, the right of the Irish to Ireland. Secondly, the long struggle of the Irish nobility against the English. Thirdly and finally, the need for Irish unity.¹⁹⁴⁰ It should be noted that these poems cannot be viewed as the sole evidence of Fiach's advocacy of Irish Catholic nationalism. Importantly, they have, in the past, been interpreted without recourse to a biography. This present study has traced Fiach's evolution from

¹⁹³⁵ Ibid, no. 58, p. 140, no. 62, p. 140.

¹⁹³⁶ Ibid, no. 49, p. 255.

¹⁹³⁷ *Acts Privy Council*, xix, pp 410-1.

¹⁹³⁸ O'Sullivan Beare, p. 63.

¹⁹³⁹ Bradshaw, p. 73.

¹⁹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 75.

being the heir of a provincial leader to his later position as a Catholic leader of countrywide status. Central to his and his father's career is the fact that both of them disturbed the traditional order during their rise from obscurity to provincial prominence to countrywide importance. Even at a local level in Wicklow, Fiach presented himself as the great unifier of both his own Gabhal Raghnaill followers and of the O'Byrnes, although it has to be said that his ambitions among the O'Byrnes caused as much disunity as unity. From 1579 at least the twin themes of Fiach's career were Catholicism and Irish unity.¹⁹⁴¹ In Leinster his influence was widespread as shown through the election of his clients as provincial kings and by their oaths of loyalty to him. As a Catholic zealot, he was exemplary among his contemporaries. As the joint leader of a Catholic Crusade in Leinster between 1580-1, he earned the respect of committed Counter Reformation Catholics such as Baltinglass, Saunders and, albeit later, Archbishop James O'Hely of Tuam in 1593. Not only did he intrigue with Spanish and papal agents, but he was prepared to act forcefully. Symbolically and significantly, he led his troops under a papal banner against the English during the Leinster War of 1580-1.

After the end of the Leinster War, Fiach temporised with the English. Peace allowed him to improve his education. During this period Fiach's confessors also cemented his religious fervour by the fresh inculcation of Catholic Counter Reformation principles. This educational exposure may have further intellectualised the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism in Fiach's mind. Indeed, the Butler War, along with Perrot's intrigues, finally convinced Fiach to eschew compromise with those he regarded as heretics and returned to his old plan of destroying English and Protestant power. The extent of Fiach's reinforced militancy and commitment to Catholicism even shocked his poets. In a poem dedicated to Fiach of this period, Fergal McKeogh commented with alarm upon the increasing clerical grip upon his lord.¹⁹⁴² On the other hand, Fiach's militancy proved beneficial to the poets as he went on a propaganda offensive, portraying himself as the protector of the Irish.¹⁹⁴³ Even more importantly the poem '*Fuath gach fir fuighioll a thuaidhe*', echoed the

¹⁹⁴¹ O'Rourke, p. 38; Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 404.

¹⁹⁴² *Leabhar Branach*, no. 26, pp 108-115.

¹⁹⁴³ *Ibid*, no. 97, pp 97-102, no. 30, pp 122-8; Bradshaw, pp 72-7.

crowding tones emanating from Ballinacor during the early 1590s. According to the poet the Leinstermen were all finished but for Fiach.¹⁹⁴⁴ Most significantly of all, Fiach allowed Domhnall O'Higgins to present him as the messiah-like hero who would fulfil the prophecy and drive the English from Ireland.¹⁹⁴⁵

Before reembarking upon his Catholic Crusade, Fiach still had to shore up his position in Leinster. Between 1590-2 Fiach remained obdurate, fighting the Butlers as well as terrorising his Irish neighbours of north Wexford into obedience.¹⁹⁴⁶ As usual the government played right into his hands by meddling among the O'Tooles during 1590-1. Their interference effectively drove Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach of Powerscourt, Fiach's errant brother-in-law, back into his camp. Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach's discord was caused by the government's promotion of the claims of his nephew, Art mac Brian O'Toole.¹⁹⁴⁷ Initially Perrot had taken Art under his wing - probably to force Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach to do service against Fiach in 1587-8.¹⁹⁴⁸ After Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach's failure to curb Fiach, Art pressed his claim. At the heart of the matter was Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach's appropriation of the lands of his elder brother, Brian, Art's father, upon his death in April 1549. Then Art was dispatched to court for his education before making a career in the English army.¹⁹⁴⁹ Upon his return to Ireland in the mid-1580s, he resurrected his claims to Powerscourt - finding a receptive ear in Perrot. The ensuing trouble along the borders of Dublin Pale convinced Perrot that he had made a mistake. With his plan completely awry, Perrot tried to have Art assassinated in Dublin about 1587/8 - probably as an attempt to placate Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach.¹⁹⁵⁰ Undeterred, Art again petitioned Elizabeth for

¹⁹⁴⁴ Ibid, no. 39, pp 147-8.

¹⁹⁴⁵ Bradshaw, pp 72-7; *Leabhar Branach*, no. 32, pp 130-5; Gerald of Wales notes that according to St Brechan: (St Berchan) '... almost all the English of Ireland will be dislodged by a king who will come from the lonely mountains of Patrick (The Wicklow mountains), and on the night of Our Lord's day will overrun a castle in the wooded region of Ui Faelan.' See *Expugnatio*, p. 230. It is unknown whether Fiach's poets had access to Giraldus or the prophecies of Brechan.

¹⁹⁴⁶ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, nos 97 & 99, pp 44-5; Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 96.

¹⁹⁴⁷ *Acts Privy Council*, xvi, pp 106 & 125; The English Privy Council instructed Perrot to enforce Art's claims; For Art's earlier pension grants see *C.S.P.I, 1588-1592*, p. 77, no. 23, p. 105, no. 39, p. 126, no. 63, p. 144.

¹⁹⁴⁸ *C.S.P.I, 1588-1592*, nos 64-74, 401-3.

¹⁹⁴⁹ O'Toole, *The History of the Clan O'Toole*, pp 326-8.

¹⁹⁵⁰ *C.S.P.I, 1588-1592*, no. 65, p. 402.

redress of his claims in June 1591. Effectively, though, Art's claims were ignored by Fitzwilliam in favour of the appeasement of Féilim mac Toirdhealbhaich and his O'Byrne master.

Now strengthened, Fiach devoted himself to the Catholic cause. By 1591, because of his defeat of Grey and his subsequent career, Fiach had become a legend among Irish nobility. This status attracted many to Glenmalur to speak with him. The main reason for the visits of these lords is plain. Of all the major Irish leaders Fiach was the only one who remained openly defiant. More importantly, he was also seen to have been relatively successful in his recent efforts. Although Fiach was in contact with the Irish nobility of Connacht during the Leinster War of 1580-1¹⁹⁵¹, he may have fallen out of touch following the end of the war. However, the experiences of 1585-7 apparently prompted him to resume contact. By 1588, he was receiving minor Irish lords from Longford at Ballinacor - particularly Hubert mac Fergus O'Farrell in late 1588 and early 1589.¹⁹⁵² In April 1590 he allied with Fergiagh O'Kelly of Roscommon, while Fergus O'Farrell again dispatched his son Hubert to Glenmalur to negotiate an similar alliance that same month.¹⁹⁵³ That May Sir Roger Wilbraham, a client of Fitzwilliam, wrote to Burghley about Fiach's links to the O'Rourkes of West Bréifne, proposing that an attack be made upon him.¹⁹⁵⁴ It is not an insignificant point that Fiach should be linked with this region of Connacht/Ulster at this time. Clearly his interest was in response to what was happening there. From the middle of 1580s the reform of Connacht/Ulster had been high on the government's agenda. By reform the government meant the systematic abolition of the near autonomous power exercised by the Irish lords over their lordships. To facilitate the breaking of these suzerainties, common law and sheriffs were to be introduced. Indeed, the government's favourite lever was the promotion of the tenurial rights of lesser nobles. Part of this policy was the government's dramatic kidnapping of Aodh, son of Sir Aodh Dubh O'Donnell of Donegal, in September 1587. And after the death

¹⁹⁵¹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1574-85, no. 77, p. 238; *Cal. Carew MSS*, 1575-88, no. 437, p. 282, no. 481, p. 314, no. 483, p. 316.

¹⁹⁵² *C.S.P.I.*, 1588-1592, no. 25, p. 92, no. 46, p. 113.

¹⁹⁵³ *Ibid.*, no. 76, p. 332.

¹⁹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 76, p. 332, & no. 19, p. 341; For Wilbraham see H.Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion* (Boydell, 1993), p. 59. (hereafter Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*).

of Sir Ross MacMahon of Monaghan in summer 1589, Fitzwilliam refused to recognise his brother and successor, Aodh MacMahon. Fitzwilliam's rejection eventually led to the latter's trial and execution in late 1590. Following hard upon this was the survey of the MacMahon lordship and its division amongst the Monaghan freeholders. This was a devastating attack upon the social structure of an Irish lordship. Effectively the crown had replaced the lord as the power in his ancestral territory.¹⁹⁵⁵ Similarly, the O'Rourkes of the Leitrim lordship of West Bréifne were coming under pressure. There the Irish reaction was more forceful as Sir Brian O'Rourke and his Oxford-educated son, Brian Óg, attacked government forces in April 1589. By spring of the following year their lordship had been invaded and occupied, leading to the exile of the O'Rourkes in Donegal. After Sir Brian's later extradition from Scotland to execution at London in November 1591, Brian Óg attempted to come to terms with the government in April 1592.¹⁹⁵⁶ But beyond meeting, advising and allying with the O'Farrells, O'Kellys and O'Rourkes, there is no evidence that Fiach lent any significant military assistance to any of them. However, his interference was deeply worrying for the government. Indeed, Fiach's support of Irish dynasties in Connacht was duly noted by Sir Richard Bingham, the governor of the province, who complained of his attempts to foment discord there in July 1592.¹⁹⁵⁷

The origin of Fiach's labyrinthine relations with Aodh O'Neill, 2nd earl of Tyrone, remains obscure. Indeed, we cannot be sure whether the two leaders ever actually met, although if they did, the first time would probably have been during April and May 1585. Then it was recorded that both men attended the sessions of Parliament, beginning on 26 April.¹⁹⁵⁸ During these sessions O'Neill, then baron of Dungannon, was conferred with the title of earl of Tyrone. No account of their meeting survives or what impressions they formed of each other. Rather, Fiach's O'Neill connections were with Tyrone's rival - Toirdhealbhadh Luineach O'Neill. These bonds

¹⁹⁵⁵ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, p. 67.

¹⁹⁵⁶ Idem, 'Extradition and treason-trial of a Gaelic lord: the case of Brian O'Rourke', In *Ir. Jurist*, xxii (1987), pp 285-301; Ellis, *Tudor Ireland*, pp 298-9.

¹⁹⁵⁷ *C.S.P.I. 1588-1592*, no. 20, p. 544.

¹⁹⁵⁸ *AFM.*, v, pp1826-7 & pp 1840-1.

had been forged during the Leinster War of 1580-1.¹⁹⁵⁹ Also in February 1586 one of Fiach's sons along with Art O'Neill, the noted enemy of Tyrone, escaped together from Dublin Castle.¹⁹⁶⁰ Fiach's complicity in the escapes was uncovered when one of his brothers was captured while escorting Art back to Ulster.¹⁹⁶¹ If anything this information suggests that Fiach was hostile towards Tyrone whom he probably regarded as an outright loyalist. Indeed, their actions during the 1588 Armada crisis are an illustration of their differing world views. While Fiach busied himself to aid the Spanish, Tyrone's troops slaughtered 500-600 shipwrecked survivors of the Armada in Inishowen¹⁹⁶², though it should be noted that the earl also did shelter a number of high-ranking Spanish officers as well as some commoners. But as yet there was no evidence to suggest that Tyrone was in collusion with the Spanish to overthrow the English governance of Ireland.¹⁹⁶³

For centuries Tyrone has remained an enigmatic figure whose ambitions are sometimes as concealed in death as they were in life. The 1993 publication of Morgan's magisterial study *'Tyrone's Rebellion'* has done much to clarify the earl's career. Described as *'dissembling and meditative'*¹⁹⁶⁴, Tyrone was a uniquely calculating figure, possessing finely honed political skills in the art of masking intentions. For much of the first thirty years of his life, Tyrone played the loyalist, requiring government support to establish himself against Toirdhealbhach Luineach and the sons of Seán O'Neill. From 1587, however, Tyrone faced growing government interference within the traditional ambit of his ancestors in Connacht/Ulster - particularly Monaghan. Also he was fighting the renewed assault of Toirdhealbhach Luineach and the sons of Seán O'Neill who exploited his difficulties.¹⁹⁶⁵ These troubles combined with the government's behaviour in Monaghan, Donegal and West Bréifne gravely concerned him. A clear shift in his position can be detected in

¹⁹⁵⁹ *Cal. Carew MSS. 1575-88*, no. 437, p. 282, no. 481, p. 314, no. 483, p. 316; Berleth, *The Twilight Lords*, p. 111. This mentions that a daughter of O'Byrne was the first wife of Conn Bacach O'Neill, first earl of Tyrone. See *Carew MS 635*

¹⁹⁶⁰ Price, 'Notes', p. 150; Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, pp 92, 100-3.

¹⁹⁶¹ *C.S.P.I. 1586-8*, p. 32.

¹⁹⁶² Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', pp 220-1; Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, pp106 & 162.

¹⁹⁶³ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, p. 106.

¹⁹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 217.

¹⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp 103-7.

1589. Outwardly, he manipulated the government behind a manicured visage of loyalty. Behind the scenes, he moved with great skill - creating a network of support throughout Ireland and aboard. This date of 1589 is confirmed by Tyrone's letter of October 1596 to Philip II. Then Tyrone wrote that he had sought Spanish aid for the previous seven years.¹⁹⁶⁶ This was a complete volte-face considering the actions of his troops in 1588. Also Tyrone desired to remove the English presence building up in Donegal. Crucial to his strategy was the release of Aodh O'Donnell of Donegal imprisoned in Dublin Castle since autumn 1587. According to Conn mac Seaáin O'Neill's allegations of summer 1590, Tyrone conspired in a plot to obtain O'Donnell's escape - perhaps in late 1589 or early 1590.¹⁹⁶⁷ Given Fiach's involvement in O'Donnell's escapes of 1591 and 1592, Tyrone possibly cultivated an alliance with Fiach about 1589-90. Tyrone's reasons were obvious. By this date Fiach's pedigree as the leading Spanish sympathiser in Ireland was well proven. His defence of the Catholic faith earned him respect throughout Catholic Ireland and on the continent, allowing him access to networks which may have been denied to Tyrone. But what really brought both men together was government meddling in their ambitions. Thus, both men began to tailor their plans to obtain the release of O'Donnell - which was crucial to Tyrone's strategy.

According to O'Sullivan Beare, Fiach planned the escape of O'Donnell from Dublin Castle in January 1591.¹⁹⁶⁸ After breaking his bonds, O'Donnell fled into the snow-capped Wicklow mountains with the English in hot pursuit. O'Donnell managed to reach Castlekevin where Fiach's wife Rose convinced her brother Féilim of Castlekevin to pretend to hold the fugitive prisoner until Fiach arrived from Glenmalure. However, the heavy snows caused the Avonmore to break its banks and flood, preventing Fiach's troops from crossing at their usual fording points. While Fiach and his men desperately searched for a suitable crossing point, English troops arrived at Castlekevin and took possession of O'Donnell from Féilim.¹⁹⁶⁹

¹⁹⁶⁶ *Cal. S.P. Spanish*, iv, p. 642.

¹⁹⁶⁷ James Perrot, *The Chronicle of Ireland, 1584-1608*, Herbert Wood (ed.) (Dublin, 1990), p. 65.

¹⁹⁶⁸ O'Sullivan Beare, pp 52-53, 66-7.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Paul Walsh (ed.), *The Life of Aodh Ruadh O'Domhnaill, transcribed from the book of Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh* (part 1, I.T.S., 1948), p. 17; See also D.Mac Eiteagáin, 'Feagh

Despite the collapse of this plan, Fiach and Tyrone nevertheless orchestrated the second escape of O'Donnell with Henry and Art O'Neill on 6 January 1592. And at Tyrone's wish, Fiach may have authorised the murder of Art during the escape from Dublin to Glenmalur.¹⁹⁷⁰ According to the 1595 deposition of James Fitzgerald, Walter Riabhach's brother, O'Donnell swore religious oaths to seal his alliance with Fiach in January 1592. Moreover, O'Donnell also gave his word to Fiach that he would encourage Tyrone and Aodh Maguire of Fermanagh to swear the same oath.¹⁹⁷¹ Interestingly, it was reported that Walter Riabhach, presumably acting as Fiach's envoy, accompanied O'Donnell into Ulster, heightening government fears of conspiracy.¹⁹⁷² The return home of O'Donnell who was Tyrone's son-in-law, saw him quickly expel the English, resulting in his stage-managed acclamation as lord of Donegal.¹⁹⁷³ In spite of intense suspicion Tyrone remained in the shadows. But the expulsion of the English from Donegal hastened the slide to war.

Now O'Donnell behaved as Tyrone's frontman, engaging with leading Catholic churchmen such as Edmund MacGauran, primate of Ireland, and Archbishop James O'Hely of Tuam in 1592. Crucial to the success of the conspirators was the platform upon which they stood. Although Counter-Reformation Catholicism made little impact upon the ordinary people until the seventeenth century, their genuine devotion to Catholicism and the pope cannot be discounted.¹⁹⁷⁴ However, the Catholic Reformation had profound effects upon the elite of whom Fiach was a prime example. Also the Irish aristocracy stood to lose the most if their regional overlordships were dissolved by the English tide of common law and sheriffs. Therefore they used

McHugh and the Ulster Princes: His role in their Dublin Castle escapes', In C.O'Brien (ed.) *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne : The Wicklow Firebrand* (Dublin , 1998), pp 197-212.

¹⁹⁷⁰ *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland* , xi: 1593-5, p. 558; Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', pp 222-23.

¹⁹⁷¹ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, p. 132; P.R.O., SP. 63/178/53, inclosure vii; O'Brien, 'Feagh McHugh', p. 15.; Price, 'Notes', p. 154. After this ceremony O'Donnell was given into the care of Toirdhealbhach Buidhe O'Hagan and was escorted into Meath by a company of Fiach's horse under the command of Féilim of Castlekevin and perhaps his brother Barnaby See E.MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow' In *Duffy's Hibernian Magazine* (July, 1860), p. 34. (hereafter MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow'). This also mentions the connivance of certain Catholic Palesmen with O'Donnell and Fiach, namely the Warren family. See *AFM*, vi, pp 1901-21. These references mention that Féilim visited O'Donnell during his imprisonment and that he and his brother commanded O'Donnell's escort home.

¹⁹⁷² Price, 'Notes', p. 153.

¹⁹⁷³ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, p.133.

¹⁹⁷⁴ Elliot, *The Catholics of Ulster*, pp 61, 65 & 67.

their Catholicism as a weapon to win the support of the Catholic Anglo-Irish nobility, Spain and the papacy. In short, Tyrone deemed Catholicism as the unifying force.¹⁹⁷⁵ However, this was not the earl's idea. The placing of Catholicism as the central plank in the conspiratorial platform smacks of Fiach's influence. As Edwards notes, nobody had forgotten, how he utilised the struggle for religious freedom to such devastating effect during the Leinster War of 1580-1.¹⁹⁷⁶ Thus, MacGauran, acting as Philip II's eyes, presided over a conference attended by seven northern bishops in Donegal during December 1592. Three months later the primate dispatched a report to Spain, stating that the Irish would support a Spanish landing. Along with MacGauran's messages, there were two other letters. One was from O'Donnell and the other was from Aodh Maguire which also contained the pledges of Brian Óg O'Rourke, the Burkes and the seven bishops. Archbishop O'Hely was delegated as the conspirators' ambassador to the Spanish court and was instructed to present the case for Spanish intervention in Ireland to Philip II.¹⁹⁷⁷

O'Hely was now convinced of Tyrone's commitment to a war against the English. Another figure impressed him - Fiach. References to Fiach's Catholic zeal, importance to the conspiracy and interest in a new Catholic Crusade peppered the archbishop's own report of summer 1593 to Philip. Increasingly it looks as if Fiach formed the third part of a forgotten troika which also included Tyrone and O'Donnell. Any remaining doubts of Fiach's centrality to the conspiracy are dispelled by O'Donnell's letters to the exiled Viscount Edmund Eustace, brother of the now deceased Baltinglass. According to O'Donnell, if Viscount Edmund returned to Leinster, Fiach would exploit his strategic position upon the Pale's borders to maximum effect.¹⁹⁷⁸ Viscount Edmund, who had sailed with the doomed 1588 Armada, found the idea of returning to Ireland to lead a Catholic Crusade immensely attractive. In response Viscount Edmund dispatched a letter signalling his approval. However, his interest was

¹⁹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 59.

¹⁹⁷⁶ Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 225.

¹⁹⁷⁷ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, p. 141.

¹⁹⁷⁸ Estado 839, ff 56, 66; Silke, 'The Irish Appeal of 1593', p. 366. *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland*, xi: 1593-5, p. 558; Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', pp 222-23.

ended by his death in Lisbon during autumn 1594.¹⁹⁷⁹ Another piece of evidence highlights the depth of Fiach's involvement. In 1593 a John Slattery confirmed that Fiach was communicating with the exiled Irish Catholic Diaspora, including the Baltinglass and Desmond factions in Spain and Portugal as well as the Fitzgerald party in Munster. Significantly, Slattery informed his Spanish handlers of the near impregnability of Fiach's heartland of Glenmalure where he said fifteen well armed men could defend themselves '*against the world*'.¹⁹⁸⁰

Outright war with the government moved a step further because of the Fermanagh crisis of late April 1593. On this occasion Aodh Maguire was provoked into conflict by the invasion of his lordship by its would-be sheriff, Captain Humphrey Willis. After surviving the initial onslaught, Maguire was succoured by Tyrone and O'Donnell's covert dispatch of reinforcements. In May Maguire attacked Sligo as well as burning Bingham's Ballymote base. Morgan argues that from this point Tyrone was waging a war by proxy with the government.¹⁹⁸¹ With the whiff of the earl's Spanish conspiracy and his dubious dealings with Maguire on the wind, the government's attention became more sharply focused upon Tyrone. Despite investigation and talks discussing the breakup of the O'Neill overlordship, the earl temporised and avoided arrest. In mid September, Maguire was proclaimed a traitor.¹⁹⁸² To counter this Tyrone devised a most artful strategy. To the world he would be seen to accompany the English during the forthcoming invasion of Fermanagh. Behind the scenes his confederates supported Maguire both openly and secretly. Fiach's reaction confirms that he was privy to the earl's designs, sending troops under Feriagh O'Kelly to aid Maguire in September. After Maguire's defeat at an Erne ford near Belleek by the English and Tyrone, Maguire dispatched O'Kelly to cause trouble in Roscommon to divert English troops from the Fermanagh front.¹⁹⁸³ Despite causing considerable unrest, a badly

1979 Silke, 'The Irish Appeal of 1593', pp 290, 365-8; See also *C.S.P.I.* 1592-6, no. 62, p. 65. A Fernadino O'Toole was reported as being in the Spanish service at Antwerp.

1980 *Cal. S.P. Spanish*, iv, pp 611-2.

1981 Morgan *Tyrone's Rebellion*, pp 142-3, p. 144.

1982 *Ibid.*, pp 152-4.

1983 *C.S.P.I.* 1588-1592, pp 160, no. 15, 172 and nos 35, 38 190-91.

wounded O'Kelly was forced to limp back to the safety of Wicklow late in November.¹⁹⁸⁴

With Maguire on the run, the government considered how to implement a settlement of Fermanagh. Plainly, the Monaghan model was the preferred option.¹⁹⁸⁵ In response Tyrone withdrew his cooperation from the government in the months that followed. His decision was matched by a rise in the activities of Fiach's lieutenants in Leinster. While Fiach disclaimed any involvement, the government was not convinced. Significantly, Harrington was excused from military service in Meath so that he could check developments in Wicklow.¹⁹⁸⁶ The tension between Tyrone and the government intensified in the early months of 1594. Suspicions of O'Donnell's complicity with Maguire in the Fermanagh campaign were sent by the council to Elizabeth. She delegated Tyrone to deal with his son-in-law but he refused in February. Nor would he allow Sir Henry Bagenal to parley with O'Donnell, claiming that Maguire was active in western Tyrone. Through their spies the government also discovered that O'Donnell was prepared for war.¹⁹⁸⁷ Indeed, Tyrone himself was openly doubtful. Finally, he agreed to meet government commissioners for a series of conferences lasting from 8-15 March. During the course of these meetings, Tyrone slammed government actions in Ulster over the past decade. An agreement of sorts was concluded on 15 March. The earl promised to prevent his own followers from attacking the Pale, to check any influx of Scottish mercenaries into Ulster, forestall any disturbances against government forces and to await Elizabeth's decision concerning his grievances.¹⁹⁸⁸ Both sides thought they had prevented the outbreak of open hostilities. Within three days war was back on the horizon because of events in Leinster.

The events in question were the deaths of Sir Piers Fitzgerald, sheriff of Kildare, and his family during the early hours of 18 March. They had been burned to death during an attack by Fiach's sons and Walter Riabhach upon their Barrowside castle of Ardree near

¹⁹⁸⁴ Ibid, no. 15, p. 172, no. 35, p. 190, no. 38, p. 191.

¹⁹⁸⁵ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, p. 158.

¹⁹⁸⁶ Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 226.

¹⁹⁸⁷ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, p. 160.

¹⁹⁸⁸ Ibid, pp 163-4.

Athy.¹⁹⁸⁹ In subsequent correspondence with the government, Fiach denied any connection with the outrage and offered to banish Walter Riabhach. But it is difficult to see how he was not complicit in the attack. Why the Fitzgeralds were attacked is uncertain. Sir Piers had been a long term rival of Fiach, but relations between the pair had settled somewhat over the years. On the other hand, the attack upon the Fitzgeralds could possibly be linked to Tyrone's negotiations with the government. What Fiach thought of Tyrone's temporising is unknown. If he disapproved, the attack upon Sir Piers could be construed as an attempt to derail any emerging compromise, thus preempting the war. Also it will never be known whether Tyrone had some hand in the act. Although Fiach continued to publicly protest his innocence, Fitzwilliam did not believe him.¹⁹⁹⁰ Fitzwilliam was convinced that Fiach and Tyrone were preparing to pounce, and requested the dispatch of 1,500 troops to Ireland.¹⁹⁹¹ By March, however, Elizabeth decided Fitzwilliam's removal as lord deputy. She temporarily replaced him with Sir Robert Gardiner and Sir Richard Bingham, the lord justices, before naming Sir William Russell as his eventual successor in April. In Leinster the situation developed. On 3 May it was reported that Fiach's forces were on full alert and that he was fearful of retribution. More importantly, English intelligence discerned that he was considering embarking for Spain, leaving the Leinster leadership to his sons and Walter Riabhach.¹⁹⁹² On 11 May Fiach wrote again to Fitzwilliam, asking for the swift granting of his pardon. This cut little ice with Fitzwilliam who recommended to the English Privy Council that a attack be made on Fiach.¹⁹⁹³

However, Fiach's resolve was steeled by the arrival in Glenmalure in May of a Spanish military mission with a Jesuit from Brittany.¹⁹⁹⁴ The arrival of the Spanish caused consternation in the corridors of power. Their impact in Glenmalure was immediate, with Fiach ordering the manufacture of a large of quantity of pikes.¹⁹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁸⁹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1588-1592, no. 92 p. 227, no. pp 227-8; P.R.O., SP. 63/175/24.

¹⁹⁹⁰ P.R.O. S.P. 63/174/50; *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-96, nos 50, 53, p. 245. See also *idem*, no. 31, p. 329. On 13 June 1595 Lord Deputy Sir William Russell wrote to Burghley, stating that Fiach was not at the burning of Ardee.

¹⁹⁹¹ P.R.O. S.P. 63/173/91; *C.S.P.I.*, 1588-1592, p. 227.

¹⁹⁹² P.R.O. S.P. 63/174/53; *C.S.P.I.*, 1588-1592, no. 53, i, p. 245.

¹⁹⁹³ *C.S.P.I.*, 1588-1592, nos 50 & 53, p. 245.

¹⁹⁹⁴ P.R.O. 63/174/65; *C.S.P.I.*, 1588-1592, no. 65, p. 248.

¹⁹⁹⁵ *C.S.P.I.*, 1588-1592, no. 65, p. 248; *Idem*, no. 53, vi, p. 299. See also P.R.O. S.P. 63/178/53.

Like Tyrone, Fiach was determined to transform the face of battle in Ireland. In Ulster Tyrone had drilled his traditional levies into a well disciplined force clad in red coats, proficient with both musket and pike.¹⁹⁹⁶ Similarly, Fiach it appears already had instituted some form of muster system within his lordship as evidenced by his mobilisation of October.¹⁹⁹⁷ From his vast experience as a commander, Fiach realised that if he was to be successful his forces would have to be able to take on English armies in open country. This meant the transformation of his forces along the lines pursued by Tyrone. Clearly, Fiach was preparing for conflict with government units stationed close to Dublin and in wider Leinster.¹⁹⁹⁸ Dangerously for the government, the *Leabhar Branach* suggests that Fiach's Spanish cadre partook in a successful attack upon a castle in Leinster.¹⁹⁹⁹ Fiach now held the upper hand as his cash-strapped opponents had not enough troops to stop him, leaving them to ponder the merits of a timely assassination.²⁰⁰⁰

On 1 August Sir William Russell finally arrived in Ireland to replace Fitzwilliam.²⁰⁰¹ His task was formidable. Six days after his landing, Tyrone's brother, Cormac, and Maguire defeated an English force on its way to the relief of Enniskillen. The earl himself did not show his hand. He now gambled, declaring his loyalty and submitted before Russell at Dublin on 17 August. In Leinster the situation was becoming equally grim. The Leinster crisis was deemed so serious that Elizabeth took the drastic step of reintroducing martial law (suspended since October 1591) throughout the province. Mindful of its previous abuse, Elizabeth entrusted its execution to her seasoned cousin - Ormond. Thus, martial law was declared on 15 August. Ormond was instructed to use it only on Fiach's forces.²⁰⁰² Fiach's reaction was immediate. His nephew, Uaithne O'More, Ruaidhrí Óg's eldest surviving son, and Piers Grace were unleashed upon the

¹⁹⁹⁶ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, pp 179-88.

¹⁹⁹⁷ P.R.O. SP 63/177/5, inclosure iii; *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 59, p. 277.

¹⁹⁹⁸ From English reports, and later evidence, his preparations for war appear to have been meticulous. Passes and forests were plashed, while food, weapons and gunpowder had been also stockpiled in hidden underground stores. See *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 53, vi, p. 299.

¹⁹⁹⁹ *Leabhar Branach*, no. 41, p. 150.

²⁰⁰⁰ *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Salisbury*, iv (London, 1892), p. 564.

²⁰⁰¹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 35, p. 258.

²⁰⁰² *C.O.D.*, 1584-1603, no. 97.

plantations.²⁰⁰³ In October he mobilised all males between sixteen and sixty within Crioich Raghnuill, while his natural son raided settlements.²⁰⁰⁴ Government spies reported correspondence between Fiach and Tyrone, informing their masters that Fiach had requested reinforcements from Ulster and had met with Brian Óg O'Rourke of Leitrim.²⁰⁰⁵ Many feared that Fiach's activities heralded the rapid intensification of the war by Tyrone.²⁰⁰⁶ Deceitfully, on 26 October Fiach offered to submit and asked for a grant of his lands by letters patent as well as expressing a wish to go to England.²⁰⁰⁷

In response to Fiach's disingenuous offers, the government was equally duplicitous. After an exchange of letters, Russell agreed on 1 November that no harm would come to Fiach until Elizabeth's will was known.²⁰⁰⁸ Russell knew exactly how to fight Fiach, having benefited from his service on Grey's campaign of attrition and encirclement from January to July 1581. Armed with this invaluable experience, Russell proved a deadly foe, modelling his campaign on Grey's of 1581. Until his forces were in place, however, Russell temporised and opened communications with Fiach in November.²⁰⁰⁹ By 6 December Russell had decided upon his course, resolving to attack Fiach as soon as possible. Russell's decision was probably, in part, spurred on by Fiach's correspondence with Tyrone. Furthermore he was encouraged by the support of several of Fiach's Irish enemies for a campaign.²⁰¹⁰ On 12 December Fiach,

²⁰⁰³ Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 228; P.R.O. S.P. 63/177/5; *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 5, iv, p. 281; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 237. This Uaithne is probably the Rory Óg who was burning in Laois during October 1595; M.Deignan, 'Portlaoise: Genesis and Development', In P.Lane & Wm Nolan (eds) *Laois: History and Society* (Dublin, 1999), p. 696.

²⁰⁰⁴ P.R.O. SP 63/177/5, inclosures ii-iii; *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 59, p. 277.

²⁰⁰⁵ Ibid; MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow', p. 79. For Brian Óg O'Rourke see *N.H.I.*, iv, p. 163; *AFM*, v, pp 1546-7, 1608-9, 1742-3, 1744-5, 1770-1, 1810-1, 1826-7, 1830-1, 1870-1, 1871-2; *AFM*, vi, pp 1878-9, 1884-5, 1886-7, 1904-5, 1934-5, 1938-9, 2002-3, 2030-1, 2052-3, 2054-5, 2100-1, 2132-3, 2194-5, 2200-1, 2274-5, 2322-3, 2340-1, 2348-9, 2350-1; Domhnall Mac An Ghalloglaigh, 'Brian of the Ramparts O'Rourke', *Bréifne*, i, (1963), p. 50; Idem, 'Brian Óg O'Rourke', *Bréifne*, i, (1963), pp 172-202; Jerrold Casway, 'The last lords of Leitrim: the sons of Sir Teigue O'Rourke', *Bréifne*, vii (1988), pp 558-560.

²⁰⁰⁶ P.R.O. S.P. 63/177/31; *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 31, p. 285, no. 45, p. 287.

²⁰⁰⁷ P.R.O. S.P. 63/177/5; *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 5, i, p. 281; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 224.

²⁰⁰⁸ Ibid, no. 5, iii, p. 281. Russell was the second son of the earl of Bedford and a veteran of the Leinster War of 1580-1. Indeed, he had first hand experience of Fiach. During April 1581, along with Sir William Stanley he had burnt Ballinacor before suffering heavy losses at the hands of its obviously irate owner. See O'Brien, Feagh McHugh, p. 16.

²⁰⁰⁹ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 224.

²⁰¹⁰ *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 1, p. 280, nos 31-2, p. 285; *AFM*, iv, pp 1955-7.

possibly aware of Russell's resolution, dispatched an apology for not sending in his hostage. Four days later Walter Riabhach also requested that Fiach be pardoned for the sake of peace.²⁰¹¹ Russell was not impressed. Instead he forced Fiach to raise the stakes. After Christmas Sir Nicholas White reported that Fiach accompanied by 160 pikemen marched threateningly through Counties Carlow and Kildare to Saggart and had sent messengers to Ulster for reinforcements.²⁰¹² While Fiach paraded his troops along the edge of the mountains, Walter Riabhach and the Kavanaghs attacked the Irish loyalist, Art Kinsella.²⁰¹³ This latest display convinced Russell to act.

Despite Fiach's public flexing of his muscle, his raising of the stakes caused fractures among his own supporters. On 27 December Muirheartach Óg Kavanagh made terms for himself.²⁰¹⁴ Also, one of Fiach's trusted circle was a spy for Sheriff Joshua Mynce of Carlow.²⁰¹⁵ From the previous summer this spy had been providing Russell with invaluable information about Fiach's activities.²⁰¹⁶ He now encouraged Russell to attack Fiach as early as possible. Russell took this spy seriously and placed Ballinacor's capture as the central tenet of his emerging strategy, striking at Fiach's heartland on the night of 16 January 1595.²⁰¹⁷ Indeed, Russell got within earshot of Ballinacor undetected and would have captured Fiach only for the noise of a dropped drum. The noise was heard by Fiach's guards who warned their master. Although surprised, he led his followers through an escape passage into the surrounding forests. There his forces began firing on the English, pinning them down until the morning before retiring to the upland forests of Dromkitt.²⁰¹⁸

²⁰¹¹ P.R.O. S.P. 63/177/45; *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 45, iii-iv, p. 287.

²⁰¹² MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow', p. 34; *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-96, no. 45, p. 287.

²⁰¹³ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, pp 422-3.

²⁰¹⁴ *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 48, p. 287.

²⁰¹⁵ MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow', pp 79-81; O'Rourke, p. 23.

²⁰¹⁶ P.R.O., S.P 63/177/5, inclosure iv.

²⁰¹⁷ The key to Russell's success was his usage of the ground and of the all-important element of surprise. Using the cover of dense woodland and winter darkness, Russell's troops guided by Aodh Dubh drove Fiach out of Ballinacor before the arrival of the Ulster reinforcements. See *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-96, no. 10, p. 291, nos 14, 19, p. 292; P.R.O. S.P. 63/178/19; MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow', p. 81. *AFM*, vi, pp 1955-7. Aodh Dubh may be amongst Fiach's neighbours mentioned in the Four Masters who insisted upon the attack on Ballinacor. According to these Annals, Russell stayed in Ballinacor for 10 days before leaving two companies of troops there.

²⁰¹⁸ *AFM*, vi, p. 1956-7. His most prominent casualty was the Jesuit who was shot dead while standing with Rose, watching the fighting. See MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow', p. 82.

With Fiach regrouping in Dromkitt, Russell garrisoned Ballinacor under Captain Henry Street. However, Russell's strike had profound effects upon Fiach's inner circle as one of his brothers surrendered within days of Ballinacor's fall. Russell's taking of Ballinacor completely overturned the emerging pattern of warfare in the Leinster. No longer had Fiach a secure base from which to direct operations. And worse, a garrison had been established in his heartland as a check upon him. From Ballinacor patrols led by Street and Aodh Dubh seriously disrupted Fiach's plans by terrorising the populace. Just to the north of Ballinacor, the O'Tooles of Castlekevin were also ejected from their residence by another English garrison. While along the coast Newcastle McKynegan, Wicklow and Arklow blocked any possible eastern breakout by Fiach. To the south and west Fiach was limited by the establishment of government outposts at Clonmore, Rathvilly, Knockloe, and Ballymore.²⁰¹⁹ Furthermore, Ormond now opened a second front in Shillelagh against Fiach's forces. Fiach tried to regain the initiative by authorising attacks into the Pale, dispatching men to spy in Dublin.²⁰²⁰ Although Fiach's sons and the Fitzgeralds burnt Crumlin on 30 January and stole the lead roof of its church for ammunition, Russell demonstrated his advantage by attacking them the following day.²⁰²¹ The speed of Russell's counterattack shook the resolve of Fiach's lieutenants, leading many of them to submit.

Realising that Russell was in the ascendant, Tyrone and his confederates met in late January. In a letter to Sir Edward Moore of Mellifont on 2 February Tyrone conveyed their demand that the offensive against Fiach cease.²⁰²² Meantime Fiach played for time, requesting a parley on 4 February.²⁰²³ Russell refused but authorised Harrington to meet Fiach. The parley on 5/6 February ended as neither side was prepared to back down.²⁰²⁴ On 6 February Sir Geoffrey Fenton, secretary of the Irish council, wrote to Burghley, recommending a temporising course with Fiach. Russell would have

²⁰¹⁹ Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 227-31.

²⁰²⁰ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, pp 225-6.

²⁰²¹ *C.S.P.I., 1592-6*, p. 295; *A.F.M.*, iv, pp 1956-7.

²⁰²² P.R.O. S.P. 63/178/36 inclosures iii-iv; *C.S.P.I., 1592-6*, no. 36, iii-iv, p. 295.

²⁰²³ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 226.

²⁰²⁴ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 424; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 226.

none of it and commissioned fresh fortifications at Ballinacor. Now Russell's strategy of hemming in Fiach's forces moved into its second phase. This meant the establishment of secure supply routes from government-held territory through hostile country to the various theatres of operations. Ballinacor was supplied from the south by a line running from Arklow through Avoca, while from the east it was victualled from Wicklow through Glenealy to Rathdrum and onwards to Glenmalure. To the southwest of Ballinacor another supply route was established through Kilcommon to service the movement of food and munitions from Carlow and Wexford into the central Wicklow highlands.²⁰²⁵

On 9/10 February Russell burnt Fiach out of Dromkitt.²⁰²⁶ Fiach appealed to Tyrone.²⁰²⁷ Tyrone acted decisively, ordering his brother Art to take the Blackwater fort near Armagh on 16 February.²⁰²⁸ Undismayed, Russell set a reward of £100 on Fiach's head and £140 for his capture.²⁰²⁹ Like a big game hunter he systematically stalked Fiach's chain of command - particularly the Fitzgeralds.²⁰³⁰ After 20 February he directed a new offensive into Shillelagh. Walter Riabhach was driven out of his house at Cronyhorn near Carnew and his brother Gerald was captured and tortured. Before he died he revealed that Fiach had pressed Tyrone for reinforcements.²⁰³¹ Clearly, Russell was intent on isolating Fiach from his principal commanders. Walter Riabhach's capture was a priority.²⁰³² Russell was correct in this approach as Fiach and his lieutenants were still dangerous and may have been responsible for the burning of Arklow on 28 February.²⁰³³ In late March and early April Fiach changed his tactics, breaking his large force into a series of smaller ones to prevent Russell from forcing a decisive engagement. And it would appear he commuted between his forces to issue instructions only accompanied by a small bodyguard.²⁰³⁴ However, Fiach suffered a huge setback when Walter Riabhach was betrayed to

²⁰²⁵ Ibid.

²⁰²⁶ MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow', p. 82; Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 424.

²⁰²⁷ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 227.

²⁰²⁸ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, p. 185.

²⁰²⁹ *C.S.P.I, 1592-6*, no. 44, p. 297; Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 424.

²⁰³⁰ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi., p. 426.

²⁰³¹ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, pp 228-30.

²⁰³² MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow', p. 83.

²⁰³³ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 228.

²⁰³⁴ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi,p. 434.

the English by the O'Tooles of Imaal on 7 April.²⁰³⁵ Under torture he revealed Fiach's links with the Spanish and Tyrone, confessing that the earl promised to land a force of 1,000 men at Arklow.²⁰³⁶ Also he confessed that Philip II had consented to sending aid to Tyrone.²⁰³⁷ He was executed on 10 April.²⁰³⁸ In Wicklow the noose tightened further. On 28 April Rose was captured by Harrington²⁰³⁹, while after 16 May several members of Fiach's foster family were killed in Glenlorcan near Aughrim.²⁰⁴⁰ After a trial for treason in Dublin on 27 May, Rose was sentenced to be burned as a witch.²⁰⁴¹ Three days later Fiach was shot in the thigh and stabbed by Street's soldiers.²⁰⁴² His advancing years, ill health and these wounds caused Harrington to pen a letter to Russell, declaring that Fiach was no longer a force to be reckoned with.²⁰⁴³

The actions of the O'Tooles of Imaal and Rose's capture encapsulate the fragmentation of Fiach's forces. In the past these O'Tooles were allied to Fiach and their betrayal of Walter Riabhach reflected the steady clamour of some of Fiach's neighbours to serve against him.²⁰⁴⁴ The one major anomaly in Russell's relations with the loyalists was his unexplained arrest of the usually loyal Murchadh mac Edmund O'Byrne of Kiltimon on 21 April.²⁰⁴⁵ But Rose's capture had the most serious ramifications. Already Fiach was under huge pressure. Indeed, his troops had been forced to kill their horses for food.²⁰⁴⁶ Fiach's continuing defiance caused Russell to suspect that Catholic resistance was fuelled by his secret provisioning by sympathisers.²⁰⁴⁷ And in a blatant effort to destroy the Catholic

²⁰³⁵ Price, 'Notes', p. 157-8; *AFM*, iv, pp 1957-9

²⁰³⁶ MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow', p. 34.

²⁰³⁷ Price, 'Notes', p. 158.

²⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*; MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow', p. 35.

²⁰³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 230. See also p. 231 Donnio Reogh and Donnio McDallio (or Dallio), presumably Kavanaghs, were hanged, drawn and quartered for aiding Feagh's forces on 28 May 1595.

²⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 140-2; O'Brien, 'Feagh McHugh', p. 17.

²⁰⁴¹ *C.S.P.I., 1592-6*, no. 92, p. 319; P.R.O. S.P. 63/181/7.

²⁰⁴² *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 231.

²⁰⁴³ *C.S.P.I., 1592-6*, no. 22, iii, p. 328.

²⁰⁴⁴ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 229. On April 12 Dúnlaing mac Brian Kavanagh of Tincurry sent in the heads of Fiach's supporters. Donnio Spannio was also in service as was Aodh Dubh O'Byrne that April. For Dúnlaing mac Brian who was married to Fiach's cousin, the daughter of Muirheartach Óg Kavanagh of Garryhill (d. 30 November 1587), see K.W. Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs, 1400-1700', In *Ir. Geneal.*, 5 no. 5 (November, 1978), p. 575.

²⁰⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴⁶ MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow', p. 84; *C.S.P.I., 1592-96*, no 7, i, p. 336.

²⁰⁴⁷ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 426.

leadership, Russell now ruthlessly exploited Rose's capture and sentence. In a very unclear incident, Rose, while awaiting execution during May 1595, became convinced that Toirdhealbhach intended to betray his father to Russell. She conveyed a message to Fiach who had just been seriously wounded. Thus, Fiach was forced to choose between his son and his wife.

Fiach's unenviable predicament was not helped by the serious nature of his wounds. In late May Fiach chose and arrested Toirdhealbhach in spite of his son's vehement denial. He authorised his foster-sister to open negotiations with Harrington. His first official reaction though was to offer to put in Uaithne O'More as a pledge²⁰⁴⁸ On 1 June, however, Harrington informed Russell that Fiach was prepared to hand over Toirdhealbhach and Maurice Fitzgerald, Walter Riabhach's brother.²⁰⁴⁹ Fiach's decision even earned Russell's rebuke.²⁰⁵⁰ On 7 June Fiach wrote asking for a pardon for himself, Rose and his followers, promising to deliver Toirdhealbhach and Fitzgerald. He sent his son and Fitzgerald to Dublin to virtual death sentences on 18 June.²⁰⁵¹ There, government officials asked Toirdhealbhach to kill his father. His refusal ensured his execution on 18 July.²⁰⁵² Following her stepson's execution, Rose was quietly released and returned to her husband. Toirdhealbhach's fate, combined with Tyrone's entry into the war in May 1595, alleviated the pressure on Fiach. In response to Tyrone's capture of Monaghan and his defeat of a relieving English force on 27 May, Russell was lenient in Wicklow.²⁰⁵³ As a result Russell was forced to divert troops to fight Tyrone. In late June Fiach was taken into protection and Russell's offensive all but ceased.²⁰⁵⁴ Peace had come at the terrible cost.

²⁰⁴⁸ *C.S.P.I., 1592-6*, no. 31, i, p. 329.

²⁰⁴⁹ Price, *Notes*, p. 160.

²⁰⁵⁰ Russell wrote '*Feagh so far, that he whose arrogancy and pryde of mind hath bin hitherto so notorious in the eye of the world, should now stoope to this baseness of conduct as to seeke to redeeme his own safety by betrayenng the life of his dearest sonne and best frende*' See Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 428.

²⁰⁵¹ *C.S.P.I., 1592-6*, no. 41, p. 330.

²⁰⁵² Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 435; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 234; P.R.O. S.P. 63/181/7.

²⁰⁵³ Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 234.

²⁰⁵⁴ *C.S.P.I., 1592-6*, no. 10, p. 339.

However, Fiach's military position improved when divisions emerged between Russell, a client of the earl of Essex, and Sir John Norris - an ally of Burghley.²⁰⁵⁵ From Norris's arrival in Ireland during May 1595, he clearly viewed Tyrone as the main danger. Accordingly, he advised Burghley and the English Privy Council to relegate the importance of Russell's campaign and elevate the necessity of one against Tyrone.²⁰⁵⁶ By August Russell and Norris were campaigning against Tyrone, allowing Fiach to reorganise. Tyrone, by and large, had the best of the fighting, forcing negotiations in October. On 25 September, after more lengthy talks with Fiach, Harrington emerged with a deal. Fiach professed repentance, declaring himself anxious to be received into the queen's mercy. As a sign of good faith, he delivered a hostage and was duly granted two months protection.²⁰⁵⁷ On a more local level, his position continued to improve as a serious dispute broke out between Lee and Harrington. Also on 25 September Harrington angrily complained to Burghley that Lee had killed Cétach O'Toole and maimed his brother, Diarmait - some of the betrayers of Walter Riabhach.²⁰⁵⁸ On 9 November, Fiach, under Harrington's protection, submitted on his knees before Russell, obtaining a further protection of three months.²⁰⁵⁹

However, the government remained uneasy. And Fiach and Rose's movements were closely monitored in case of further plots with Tyrone.²⁰⁶⁰ No doubt this apprehension was magnified by the capture of Piers O'Cullen, a priest, in Drogheda before he could take ship for Spain. On his person were letters from Tyrone and O'Donnell to Philip II, Prince Carlos and Don Juan de Aguila. The contents of these letters are significant. The confederates protested that they were fighting for the Catholic faith and offered the Irish crown to Philip II. Also they asked for the dispatch of a Spanish expeditionary force to Ireland to aid their campaign.²⁰⁶¹ Naturally, the interception of these letters also focused attention back upon Fiach. Their unease was captured in Puckering's letter of 17

²⁰⁵⁵ Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', pp 233-34.

²⁰⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

²⁰⁵⁷ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 431.

²⁰⁵⁸ *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 52, p. 397; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 237. This mentioned is in Russell's diary on 2 October 1596. See also the entries for 8 & 16 October.

²⁰⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 14, p. 432; P.R.O. S.P. 63/184/14.

²⁰⁶⁰ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 127.

²⁰⁶¹ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, pp 194-5.

November to Burghley, urging the renewal of the offensive against Fiach.²⁰⁶² Early in 1596 Tyrone and O'Donnell again demanded Fiach's pardon, while he maintained his mask of loyalty. To highlight his repentance, he sent in pledges as well as asking Russell to intervene with local officials.²⁰⁶³ In April, he petitioned Burghley in April to speed his pardon and asked for a grant by letters patent of his estates as well as the return of Ballinacor. Most disconcerting of all for the government was the fact that Fiach's letter to Burghley was loaded with a barely disguised threat of the return to war if these demands remained unfulfilled.²⁰⁶⁴ In reality, his forces already had. While Fiach did nothing openly, he authorised his sons and the O'Mores, Graces, Kavanaghs, O'Farrells and Butlers to burn throughout the midlands that spring.²⁰⁶⁵ The clearest sign of Fiach's decision was the return of Uaithne O'More to the midlands. There he joined the mac Seaáin MacGillapatricks and was soon exploiting the relatively weak position of the planters. Uaithne's campaign began with a settling of scores with the Cosbys at Stradbally Bridge on 19 May.²⁰⁶⁶

Outwardly, Tyrone in late April was engaged in negotiations with the government to conclude a lasting peace. Behind these signs, though, he resumed contact with the Spanish as messengers fluttered between Madrid and Dungannon between March and May. Ominously, Spanish shipping was spotted off the Kerry coast and three separate Spanish diplomatic missions met with Tyrone and O'Donnell at Lifford in Donegal during late May and early June. These ships were sent by Philip II to ascertain the commitment of the confederates in preparation for a Spanish landing. During the course of talks with Ensign Alonso Cobos in May, Tyrone agreed to reject the emerging peace with Elizabeth's government. Finally, Tyrone and O'Donnell again requested Philip to send an army to Ireland before

²⁰⁶² *'Of myne knowledge he is and hath bin the onely breeder nurse of all the mischiefs and rebellions that have ben in Leinster in my tyme, and is the onely ffather of this northern rebellion, which would never have been interprised yf he had not wrought the escape of Odonnell and the other Northern pledges out the Castell of Dublin.'* See Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, pp 432-3.

²⁰⁶³ *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, nos 88-92, p. 481.

²⁰⁶⁴ P.R.O., S.P. 63/188/37. See also Fiach's letter of 29 February 1596 to Russell in P.R.O. S.P. 63/186/92.

²⁰⁶⁵ Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 237.

²⁰⁶⁶ Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order', p. 247; Cosby, 'The English Settlers in Queen's County, 1570-1603', p. 301; Edwards, 'The MacGiollapádraigs (Fitzpatricks) of Upper Ossory, 1532-1641', pp 350-1.

petitioning the king to appoint his nephew, Cardinal Archduke Albert, governor of the Spanish Netherlands, as their sovereign prince.²⁰⁶⁷

Clearly, Fiach's activities during June indicate that he was aware of Tyrone's plans. The government, who knew of Tyrone's intrigues, was obviously concerned and replenished the ammunition stores of the Ballinacor garrison.²⁰⁶⁸ Whereupon Fiach drew the sons of his old rival Sir Edmund Butler into the conspiracy and it was reported in May that James Butler of Cloghgrenan intended to marry Doireann O'More, Fiach's niece.²⁰⁶⁹ In due course, this development was paralleled by Catholic activities in north Carlow and Wexford, while raids were launched into Kildare for horses.²⁰⁷⁰ Soon afterwards Fiach launched a campaign of intimidation against neighbouring Irish loyalists. On 13 June Fiach wrote to Ormond, ordering him to cease his interference with the lands of his mother in Cosha. Tellingly, Ormond informed Russell that Fiach was openly plotting with the Kavanaghs.²⁰⁷¹ Fiach also wrote on 21 June to Sir Thomas Colclough of Tintern County Wexford, demanding him to desist from raiding south Wicklow and attacking St Mullins in Carlow.²⁰⁷² Two days later Colclough complained to the government that Fiach was intimidating the loyal Donnchadh Riabhach Kavanagh. Even more troubling, he warned that Fiach was assembling troops in the forests north of Mount Leinster known as the Briskillo. According to Colclough's informant, Féilim mac Fiach held a major conference there with Gerald mac Muirheartach Kavanagh of Garryhill and Uaithne O'More. His letters voiced suspicions that the Keatings, Viscount Richard Butler of Mountgarret and the Cloghgrenan Butlers were also implicated.²⁰⁷³ Four days later Colclough again highlighted the emerging danger in East Leinster, reporting that Uaithne had crossed the Barrow at Carlow early on 25 June.²⁰⁷⁴ More seriously, Uaithne also rendezvoused with the Butlers and the Kavanaghs.

²⁰⁶⁷ Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion*, pp 205-10; For Archduke Albert see Limm, *The Dutch Revolt*, pp 64-5.

²⁰⁶⁸ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 246.

²⁰⁶⁹ Richard Masterson to Russell May 25 1596 P.R.O. S.P. 63/189/46.

²⁰⁷⁰ Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 237.

²⁰⁷¹ *C.S.P.I. 1596-7*, no. 15, viii & ix, pp 29-30.

²⁰⁷² Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 435; *C.S.P.I. 1596-7*, no. 15, vii, p. 30.

²⁰⁷³ *C.S.P.I. 1592-6*, no. 44, xii, p. 543, no. 47, ii, p. 544; *C.S.P.I. 1596-7*, no. 15, vii, pp 29-30.

²⁰⁷⁴ *C.S.P.I. 1596-7*, no. 15, p. 30.

According to Colclough, Piers Butler of Cloghgrenan swore oaths binding himself to Domhnall Spainneach.²⁰⁷⁵ Afterwards they travelled to an evening conference with Fiach in the Coolatin forests.²⁰⁷⁶ Apparently this build-up caused the defection of several Irish loyalists of Wexford to Fiach.²⁰⁷⁷ Any lingering doubts were dispelled when Uaithne again appeared in Wicklow to take instruction in early July. And it was hardly a coincidence that Uaithne was in Wicklow about the same time as messengers from Tyrone and MacMahon arrived at Fiach's encampment.²⁰⁷⁸ Elsewhere Sir Edward Moore of Mellifont also noted that Fiach's messenger was in the earl's retinue at a conference later that month.²⁰⁷⁹ Added to this, Tyrone and O'Donnell were making preparations to dispatch 200 troops to steel Fiach's forces.²⁰⁸⁰

In this game, Fiach had the edge on Russell. Russell's ability to check Fiach was further hindered because the army was under strength throughout Leinster. Moreover, Fiach outmanoeuvred him again by concluding a secret peace with Norris to last until Christmas - winning the latest round of this phoney war. Government frustration erupted in late July. Then Lee, perhaps urged by Russell, tried to capture or kill Fiach at a parley. As Fiach arrived, the English cavalry charged but he again escaped.²⁰⁸¹ In spite of this provocation, Fiach bided his time. On 22 July the English Privy Council instructed Russell that Elizabeth was resolved to grant Fiach his pardon and that all activities cease forthwith.²⁰⁸² Four days later Harrington wrote to them, at Fiach's request, protesting Fiach's loyalty and enquired when letters patent to his estates would be issued.²⁰⁸³

²⁰⁷⁵ *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 47, ii, p. 544; *AFM*, vi, p. 2007. In 1596 Uaithne is recorded as warring throughout Laois and as having killed Alexander Cosby; For Domhnall Spainneach, read Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', (Nov 1979), p. 732. Also read G.E.Hamilton, 'Fiacha MacAodha Uí Bhroin and Domhnall Spainneach Caomhanach', In *R.S.A.I. Jn.*, 5 (6th series) (1915).

²⁰⁷⁶ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 434.

²⁰⁷⁷ *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-6, no. 47, ii, p. 544; See also Moore, 'The MacMurrough Kavanaghs', pp 19-20.

²⁰⁷⁸ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 435.

²⁰⁷⁹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-7, no. 23, p. 36, no. 26, p. 37, no. 34, p. 41, no. 37, p. 45.

²⁰⁸⁰ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 434.

²⁰⁸¹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-7, no. 16, pp 81-82, see also p. 53.; Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 238; H.Morgan, 'Tom Lee: the posing peacemaker', In B.Bradshaw, A.Hadfield & W.Maley (eds), *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660* (Cambridge, 1993), pp 162-60.

²⁰⁸² *Acts Privy Council*, xxvi, p. 45.

²⁰⁸³ *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-7, no.42, p. 48.

For Ormond, Fiach's alliance with the earl's nephews of Cloghgrenan was extremely worryingly - not to say embarrassing. Since Ormond had no son, they were also his heirs and had allied with Fiach and Tyrone to press their claims to Ormond's earldom.²⁰⁸⁴ On the other hand, Fiach was determined to have them irreversibly committed to his cause - in other words beyond redemption in the eyes of the law. On 3 August 1596 Fiach and the Butlers formalised their alliance in a solemn covenant on Barnacashel Hill in Shillelagh. This commitment was doubly sealed by James Butler's marriage to Doireann O'More - probably later that month.²⁰⁸⁵ Ironically on 3 August the English Privy Council granted Fiach his pardon and ordered Ballinacor and his lands to be returned.²⁰⁸⁶ Yet the ongoing wars of Fiach's lieutenants throughout Leinster infuriated Russell who was unable to take action against Fiach.²⁰⁸⁷ On 13 August Captain Tutcher Parkins, commander of the Ballinacor garrison, urgently dispatched a letter to Russell. Its contents were urgent informing him that James Butler, Uaithne and the Kavanaghs had arrived at Fiach's camp a day earlier.²⁰⁸⁸ Indeed, Uaithne's presence with Fiach was an act of brilliant manipulation. On 7 August he agreed to a truce of eight days with government forces in Laois²⁰⁸⁹ - which freed him for the Wicklow campaign. Parkins added that James Butler hanged six foragers of the Ballinacor garrison after granting them quarter before attacking the fort. Once again Fiach's hand was detected as Parkins alleged that he forced Butler to hang the six.²⁰⁹⁰ Subsequently, Parkins was proved correct as Fiach and Uaithne made the hanging of the soldiers a precondition for access to the Catholic inner circle of command.²⁰⁹¹ When asked to explain the attacks, Fiach blamed the assault on strangers.²⁰⁹² At midnight on Monday, 16 August, the softening up of the Ballinacor garrison began again with an attack led by the Butlers. Fiach's agility earned even Russell's grudging admiration. In a letter of 15 August he famously commented to

²⁰⁸⁴ Price, 'Notes', p. 162.

²⁰⁸⁵ *C.S.P.I., 1596-7*, no. 7, ix, p. 72; Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 436.

²⁰⁸⁶ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, no. 247, pp 181-2.

²⁰⁸⁷ *C.S.P.I., 1596-7*, no. 7, ix, p. 72, see also , no. 247, p. 70

²⁰⁸⁸ *Ibid*, no. 11, ii, p. 80.

²⁰⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 74.

²⁰⁹⁰ *Ibid*; Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi., p. 436.

²⁰⁹¹ Price, 'Notes', p. 163.

²⁰⁹² Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 239; *C.S.P.I., 1596-7*, no. 16, pp 81-2.

Burghley that Fiach had greater ability than Tyrone.²⁰⁹³ Fiach now readied himself for the assault. A letter was dispatched on 17 August, telling Tyrone he was ready to carry out his wishes. Also, he requested Tyrone to allow O'Donnell release a company of Connacht shot to serve as his personal bodyguard. Fiach also absolved himself of provoking Lee's attack during July, blaming the captain's treachery for the affair.²⁰⁹⁴ On its way to Ulster, this letter was intercepted by Lee who copied it for Russell before sending it on its way to Tyrone.²⁰⁹⁵

Tyrone encouraged Fiach to recapture Ballinacor to coincide with the expected arrival of the Spanish.²⁰⁹⁶ Fiach was to open a second front against the English in preparation for the landing. On 3 September it was reported that the Butler brothers were behaving rebelliously near Carnew.²⁰⁹⁷ Fiach's subtle manipulative skills now shone as he convinced a sergeant of the Ballinacor garrison to betray the fort.²⁰⁹⁸ Aided by the sergeant's treachery Fiach retook Ballinacor on 9 September. From the evidence of John Chichester, Fiach commanded the forces that took Ballinacor. Also his son Réamain was implicated, having ambushed garrison troops before Fiach's attack. After an obstinate defence, Fiach spared the garrison. When Parkins was brought before him, Fiach acted as if he was going to behead him before telling him that he would keep his word.²⁰⁹⁹ A sergeant was released to inform Russell that the price of Parkins's release was the cancelling of Rose's bonds.²¹⁰⁰ Fiach then turned on Lee, burning his lands at Newtown in Carlow.²¹⁰¹ However, his daring gamble doomed him as the Armada was wrecked by storms on 13 October.²¹⁰² Believing that the Spanish were on their way, Fiach pushed his advantage as far as he could. In a campaign with Barnaby O'Toole and Domhnall Spainneach he threatened to besiege

²⁰⁹³ *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-97, p. 101.

²⁰⁹⁴ *C.S.P.I.*, 1592-96, pp 81-2; *Cal. Carew MSS.*, 1589-1600, p. 182

²⁰⁹⁵ Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 238.

²⁰⁹⁶ *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-7, no. 10, p. 103.

²⁰⁹⁷ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 436; Later on 13 October 1596, Ormond was commissioned to make war on Uaithne O'More, the Butler brothers and their cousin, Walter Butler - the natural son of Viscount Mountgarret See *Cal. Fiants Eliz.*, no. 6020.

²⁰⁹⁸ Price, 'Notes', pp 163-4; *Cal. Carew MSS.*, 1589-1600, p. 248.

²⁰⁹⁹ MacCarthy, 'The O'Byrnes of Wicklow,' p. 235; *Cal. Carew MSS.*, 1589-1600, p. 248.

²¹⁰⁰ O'Brien, 'Feagh McHugh', p. 17.

²¹⁰¹ Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, pp 436-7.

²¹⁰² Edwards, 'In Tyrone's Shadow', p. 241; *Cal. Carew MSS.*, 1589-1600, p. 253.

Castlekevin and burnt throughout much of east Wicklow and south Dublin, encouraging some Catholic Palesmen to join him.²¹⁰³ Further afield, his lieutenants even attacked Meath.²¹⁰⁴ Russell had no doubts that Tyrone desired Fiach to take Ballinacor, noting that the earl's messenger had been with Fiach shortly before his capture of Ballinacor.²¹⁰⁵ The lord deputy's letters of 10 and 17 September leave no illusions that Tyrone and Fiach timed their move to coincide with the arrival of the Spanish fleet off Ireland.²¹⁰⁶

Russell established his headquarters in the now fortified church of Rathdrum to prevent Fiach from attacking O'Byrnes's Country and raiding the Pale.²¹⁰⁷ His reappearance in Wicklow signalled a war to the death with Fiach, beginning with major clashes between the rival armies at Greenan ford beside Ballinacor on 24 September.²¹⁰⁸ Fiach's tactics clearly demonstrate that he had learned from the experience of the last war. Because of Russell's capture of Ballinacor in January 1595, Fiach had been forced into a mainly defensive war. Now Fiach was determined to prevent Russell from establishing a foothold in Glenmalure. This set the tone of the conflict. Throughout the winter Russell attempted to break into Glenmalure, while Fiach battled to keep him out. Furthermore, the government's efforts were actively supported by the loyalist gentlemen of O'Byrnes's Country.²¹⁰⁹ In the meantime Tyrone had opened negotiations with Norris. According to his letter dated 12 September to Fiach, Tyrone claimed that he had obtained Norris's agreement to a peace lasting sixteen days that included Fiach.²¹¹⁰ If so, Russell disregarded it and pursued a scorched earth policy in Wicklow that winter.²¹¹¹ In response, Fiach's troops vigorously guarded Glenmalure, fighting fierce engagements with Lee's soldiers at Greenan ford on 3 and 23 October as well as on 10 November.

²¹⁰³ *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-7, no. 20, vi, p. 111, nos 6-7, p. 137, no. 15, p. 139.

²¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 48, p. 129, nos 6-7, p. 137, no. 27, p. 167, no. 48, p. 129; *A.F.M.*, vi, pp 2006-7.

²¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 20, p. 110.

²¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 10, p. 103.

²¹⁰⁷ He also made an example of the treacherous sergeant and some other soldiers by executing them. See *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 249; *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-7, no. 32, p. 117

²¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* One of Fiach's brothers was killed in the fighting between 24 September and 14 October, see Hore, *Wexford Town*, vi, p. 439.

²¹⁰⁹ *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-7, no. 16, p. 142.

²¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 32, i, p. 118.

²¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, no. 3, p. 156; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 251.

Significantly, the bitterness of the combat forced Russell to come to Lee's rescue during all three melees.²¹¹² In spite of Fiach's strenuous defence of Glenmalure, Russell had gained his foothold by mid-November. And once this foothold was consolidated, the war began to go badly for Fiach. On 4 November Russell executed the foster-brother of Féilim mac Fiach before putting the natural son of Fiach to death twelve days later.²¹¹³ Russell's pressure caused Fiach to create diversions throughout Leinster, appealing that month to uncommitted Irish Catholic nobles to fight for their faith.²¹¹⁴

With Russell in the ascendant, Fiach wasn't safe anywhere. A case in point is his near capture with Rose in the early hours of a November morning.²¹¹⁵ But the misery caused by the war convinced many to call for its cessation. Secretary Fenton wrote to Sir Robert Cecil on 25 November, telling them that famine was widespread and that the war against Fiach should cease.²¹¹⁶ According to a letter dated 22 November from Loftus and Bishop Thomas Jones of Meath to Burghley, Fiach was never included in the peace concluded by Tyrone and Norris. In the face of Russell's adamant refusal to admit Fiach to protection, Tyrone hovered with a force of several thousand near Dundalk and threatened to enter the Pale to draw the heat out of the offensive against Fiach.²¹¹⁷ Despite Tyrone's posturing, Russell held his nerve and informed the earl on 30 November that Fiach would continue to be persecuted '*according his deserts*'.²¹¹⁸ On 2 December Tyrone refused to accept Russell's interpretation, telling Fiach to make terms and that his confederates would not make peace until Fiach had obtained his pardon.²¹¹⁹ Two days later Tyrone again wrote to Russell, instructing him to halt his Wicklow campaign.²¹²⁰ On 8 December Norris warned Cecil that Tyrone's forces were on the Pale borders and that the earl had proclaimed he would go to war unless Fiach was pardoned.²¹²¹ Tyrone's concern for Fiach was well-justified. For, on December 11,

²¹¹² *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, pp 250-2.

²¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 252.

²¹¹⁴ *C.S.P.I, 1596-7*, no.7, v, p. 159.

²¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, no. 3, p. 156.

²¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, no. 37, p. 175, no. 2, p. 180.

²¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, no. 27, p. 167.

²¹¹⁸ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, no. 254, p. 185.

²¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, no. 255, p. 185.

²¹²⁰ *Ibid*, no. 256, p. 186.

²¹²¹ *Ibid*, no. 10, p. 184.

Ormond told Russell that his nephews were preparing to make their flight to Ulster.²¹²²

Fiach now adapted to deal with Russell's troops at Greenan. He attempted to isolate them from the main body of Russell's campaign army by cutting their supply lines.²¹²³ Later that month it was noted that the government offensive slowed as Russell was encountering considerable difficulties in supplying his troops in the central highlands. Broadly speaking though, the military situation was bleak for Fiach. To the south of Glenmalur, Chichester and Ormond inflicted serious reverses upon the Kavanaghs and Piers Butler in the Briskillo, while Lee enjoyed a victory over Fiach himself late in December.²¹²⁴ On 27 December a confident Russell wrote to Cecil, advising that the campaign be pursued until the bitter end.²¹²⁵ But yet Fiach grimly hung on. Unsurprisingly Tyrone now again pressed Norris to seek Fiach's pardon.²¹²⁶

The war in Leinster continued into 1597. Even though Fiach's army had suffered considerable losses, he still offered stout resistance.²¹²⁷ Tyrone now moved a step closer to outright war with the government, sending Captain Richard Tyrell into the midlands in early January.²¹²⁸ There he linked up with Uaithne O'More, but was wounded in a skirmish. Despite this Tyrell was able to meet Piers Butler who had travelled from the Briskillo before Féilim Riabhach O'Connor, Fiach's messenger, arrived to guide Butler to Tyrone.²¹²⁹ Soon afterwards Tyrone's negotiations with Norris bore fruit, concluding a peace that seemingly included Fiach. On 5 January the earl wrote to Fiach, telling him of the news and instructed him to respect a cessation.²¹³⁰ Russell was no respecter of this truce and

²¹²² Ibid, no. 31, iv, p. 192.

²¹²³ Confirming this strategic shift were his attacks upon their lifelines - the supply trains. Although his attack of 14 December ultimately failed and cost the lives of Muiris Dubh Kavanagh, his nephew and secretary, his plan had some success in alleviating pressure. See *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 253; *C.S.P.I, 1596-7*, pp 169-70, see also no. 34, p. 173.

²¹²⁴ *C.S.P.I, 1596-7*, no. 31, vi, p. 192-3; no. 13, viii, p. 207.

²¹²⁵ Ibid.

²¹²⁶ Ibid, no. 10, p. 184, no. 13, i, p. 186; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, nos 256-57, p. 186.

²¹²⁷ Ibid, no. 7, i, p. 240, no. 31, p. 241.

²¹²⁸ Ibid, no. 13, vii, p. 207.

²¹²⁹ Ibid, no. 13, x, p. 207.

²¹³⁰ Ibid, no. 65, i, p. 226.

continued fighting. The natural death of Barnaby O'Toole on 17 January in Glenmalure deprived Fiach of yet another of his lieutenants.²¹³¹ His death may have prompted Fiach to swiftly shore up his alliance with the O'Tooles of Castlekevin by arranging the marriage of his daughter Margaret, Walter Riabhach's widow, to Barnaby's brother, Féilim.²¹³² On 24 January Secretary Fenton championed the Pale's desire for peace and questioned the purpose of Fiach's continued prosecution.²¹³³ Strikingly Fenton mentioned that Fiach's military position had improved and that he had actually derived encouragement from Russell's inability to finish him off.²¹³⁴ On 8 February Fiach wrote to Norris, inquiring whether he was privy to Tyrone's peace.²¹³⁵ If Fiach had his doubts, Norris confirmed them. On receipt of Fiach's request, on 16 February Norris dispatched a letter to Cecil, telling him of Fiach's desire to be admitted to the peace. Despite the increasing hardships suffered by the English army in the Leinster mountains, Norris recommended the general prosecution of Tyrone and Fiach.²¹³⁶ In a letter to Burghley the next day Russell also rejected Fiach's claims.²¹³⁷

With his back now firmly against the wall, Fiach displayed remarkable leadership, sharing the hardships of his men. His continued belief in the Spanish is evidenced by his initiatives with them. Sir Edward Moore of Mellifont reported that Muirheartach O'Toole, Fiach's emissary to Philip II, was in Dungannon having returned to Ireland through Scotland from Spain with a passport given to him by the king.²¹³⁸ But the mood for peace among the Dubliners increased when an ammunition train exploded on 13 March, destroying much of the city.²¹³⁹ The strain was also showing among Fiach's ranks as Piers Butler asked protection of Sir William Harpoole, constable of Carlow Castle, on the same day.²¹⁴⁰ As war weariness set in Russell

²¹³¹ O'Toole, *The History of the Clan O'Toole*, p. 370; *Cal. Fiants Eliz.*, no. 6105. Lee was granted the custody of Barnaby's lands and the wardship of Fiach, Barnaby's heir, probably in May 1597.

²¹³² *Cal. Fiants Eliz.*, no. 6560. On 13 July 1601 Féilim of Castlekevin, Margey Birne, his wife, and Rose Basnett, his mother, were pardoned.

²¹³³ *C.S.P.I. 1596-7*, no. 46, p. 219, no. 42, p. 216.

²¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 46, p. 219, no. 42, p. 216.

²¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 65, i, p. 226.

²¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 96, p. 233.

²¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 99, p. 235.

²¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 102, p. 236.

²¹³⁹ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, pp 256-57.

²¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

became increasingly desperate to kill Fiach as another of his secret operations was apparently bungled on 14/15 March.²¹⁴¹ Yet while Russell was steadily drawing the net in, Fiach still used his considerable guile to effect a cease fire. According to two pieces of disputed evidence, both Harrington and Harpoole were negotiating with Fiach unbeknownst to Russell. Significantly, Rose, Fiach's premier envoy, figured in both sets of allegations. The first piece of evidence emerged within weeks of Fiach's death and the second some thirteen years later. During summer 1597 Lee accused Harrington of holding several secret audiences with Rose during the height of Russell's offensive.²¹⁴² The second piece of evidence surfaced in March 1610. Then the earl of Thomond also accused Harpoole of harbouring Rose during Russell's last campaign.²¹⁴³ While this evidence cannot be taken as wholly trustworthy, it is possible that Fiach was communicating with them. Also he may have sent his wife away from the war zone to safety as the military situation became desperate. By late March the writing was on the wall. Confirming this fact, Féilim mac Toirdhealbhach of Powerscourt, Fiach's brother-in-law and erstwhile ally, was in service.²¹⁴⁴ Fiach's precarious position was further exacerbated by the killings of the sons of Aodh Geangach O'Byrne of Clonmore as well as James Butler by Lee during March/April.²¹⁴⁵ According to a spy's report of 24 March, Tyrone was now deeply concerned.²¹⁴⁶ In April Tyrone threatened to send a force to Wicklow and met with Norris before telling Fiach to send Rose to attend the talks on 17 April. On 30 April 1597 Norris advised Cecil of Tyrone's request that Fiach be pardoned.²¹⁴⁷

This came too late for Fiach. It is clear that he was still in Glenmalur, fighting the English as well as commuting between his forces throughout East Leinster. His decision to remain here was not

²¹⁴¹ Price, 'Notes', p. 169.

²¹⁴² *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-7, no. 70, p. 304.

²¹⁴³ *C.S.P.I.*, 1608-10, no. 651, p. 401; Cosby, 'The English Settlers in Queen's County, 1570-1603', p. 287.

²¹⁴⁴ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 257.

²¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 256-8; Cathaoir Ruadh Kavanagh, brother to Fiach's first wife, was also captured in the Briskillo during March 1597. He was probably later executed by Russell's forces, see also Nicholls, 'The Kavanaghs', Nov, 1981), p. 193.

²¹⁴⁶ Tyrone reputedly said: '...if wars continued, he would make Feagh McHugh's glyns more hot for the lord deputy than they were for Lord Grey.' See *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-7, no. 37, p. 255, no. 69, vii, p. 258.

²¹⁴⁷ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, no. 128, p. 278; *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-7, no. 111, ii, p. 272 and no. 128, p. 278.

his undoing. Instead it was treachery. His whereabouts were disclosed to Russell by a disgruntled relative - possibly Mynce's spy. In the small hours of Sunday, 8 May 1597, Russell's forces, guided by the traitor, captured and killed Fiach.²¹⁴⁸ Fiach's death was to hasten the advance of English government in Leinster and throughout the country. The reactions to Fiach's end were mixed. Russell, of course, made the most of it. His diarist recorded on 8 May that '*...his carcass was brought to Dublin, to the great comfort and joy of the province*'.²¹⁴⁹ On 9 May he recorded '*...all the people of the country met him with great joy and gladness, and, as their manner is, bestowed many blessings on him (Russell) for performing so good a deed*'.²¹⁵⁰ The same day that Fiach's head arrived in Dublin, Loftus and the Council announced to the English Privy Council '*...that ancient and cankered traitor..*' had been killed.²¹⁵¹ Secretary Fenton's letter to Cecil about the death of Fiach shows palpable relief, exclaiming '*Thinks they (the Spanish) built more for their purpose upon Fiach than upon Tyrone himself*'.²¹⁵² On the other hand, Sir Edward Stanley, in a letter to Cecil, wrote that the hearts of the people '*..be so hardened towards us that few of them rejoiceth at any good service done*'. There are also the eye witness accounts of the McKeogh poets of Wicklow who saw the display along the walls of Dublin Castle. Domhnall McKeogh's lament for his master was particularly heartfelt, wishing for blindness after viewing the horrible sight.²¹⁵³

From the grave Fiach still cast a long shadow in Leinster and Ireland. Undoubtedly, Fiach also made a tremendous impression upon his successors - the inheritors of his legacy. Such was the effect of his memory that his sons fought on. Féilim and Réamain also held their father's religious beliefs and continued his resistance to the Elizabethan conquest of Leinster. Indeed, they inherited a foundation from Fiach to further prolong the war. This foundation consisted of Fiach's military reforms, his links with Catholic nobles countrywide

²¹⁴⁸ Ibid, pp 258-259; The O'Mores were fighting in West Leinster on 4 May 1597, see *Cal. Fiants Eliz* no. 6077.

²¹⁴⁹ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, p. 259.

²¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

²¹⁵¹ *C.S.P.I, 1596-7*, no. 22, p. 286.

²¹⁵² Ibid, no. 25, p. 287.

²¹⁵³ *Leabhar Branach*, no. 42, pp 151-3. See also the poem of Domhnall's probable son, Donnchadh mac Dhomhnaill, no. 44, pp 155-8.

and Catholic Spain as well as the alliance with Tyrone. However, the impact of Fiach's death in Wicklow and Leinster was immediate. Militarily, the situation in Leinster was grim. Fiach's remaining confederates, however, were galvanised by the manner of Fiach's death and the exhibition of his remains at Dublin. On a wider scale, though, Fiach's end was a huge setback to Tyrone. And because of the untenable military situation in Leinster, Tyrone may have encouraged Fiach's sons to withdraw into the safety of Ulster in late May or June. Accompanying them were Domhnall Spainneach, king of Leinster, together with Uaithne and Brian O'More, testifying to the crisis besetting the Catholic leadership of Leinster.²¹⁵⁴ The escape of Féilim caused irritation at court, spurring Cecil to predict: '*..his son be still out, his youth will better his father's age*'.²¹⁵⁵ In Ulster Féilim fought at Tyrone's defence of the Blackwater during July, while Réamain returned to Wicklow, albeit briefly, in the late summer.²¹⁵⁶ It was only in October that Tyrone considered it safe enough in Leinster for the brothers to return to continue Fiach's war. On 18 October Loftus reported that they and Brian O'More with 800 of Tyrone's belated reinforcements were burning towns within six miles of Dublin.²¹⁵⁷ In January 1598 Féilim agreed to respect Tyrone's December truce, gaining his pardon in May.²¹⁵⁸ Broadly speaking, though, he was generally doubted.²¹⁵⁹ In October Féilim held a conference with other Catholic leaders, principally Domhnall Spainneach and Viscount Mountgarret, before returning to war. The highlight of the Catholic campaign was their victory at the Pass of the Plumes on 17 May 1599 as well as Féilim's annihilation of

²¹⁵⁴ *C.S.P.I.*, 1596-7, no. 115, p. 322 & p. 388 see especially no. 30, i, p.345 This mentions that one of the Kavanaghs returned from Spain in July 1597. Presumably he was sent by Fiach.; *C.S.P.I.*, 1598-9, no. 112, p. 213.

²¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 60, p. 300.

²¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 30, i, p. 345.

²¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 22, p. 423, see also no. 7, p. 414; For Féilim's pardon of 28 May, see *Cal. Fiants Eliz.*, no. 6232. Interestingly this pardon includes Cathaoir, Domhnall, Toirdhealbhadh - the sons of Aodh Dubh. In June there was considerable disturbances between Ormond the the Catholic forces in the midlands. In a major battle with Ormond's forces, Brian O'More was killed. *AFM*, vi, pp 2050-1, 2056-7, 2077-83.

²¹⁵⁸ *C.S.P.I.*, 1598-9, no. 39, p. 47; *AFM*, vi, p. 2050-1; *Cal. Fiants Eliz.*, nos 6216, 6217. The first records the fresh commission of martial law on 25 March 1598 to Charles Montague and Gerald Byrne for O'Byrnes's Country. The second mentions a similar commission on 29 March for Kildare to James Fitzgerald, its sheriff.

²¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 72, p. 180 & no. 1, p. 218 & no. 135, p. 305; The tension in Leinster is evident by the grant of martial law to Robert Bowen on 17 June 1598. See *Cal. Fiants Eliz.* no. 6240.

Harrington's force on 29 May.²¹⁶⁰ Féilim's success was brief, as Lord Deputy Essex on 29 June outside Arklow inflicted a significant defeat upon him and the assembled Catholic forces of Leinster.²¹⁶¹

In spite of Essex's victory the blow was not fatal, and Catholic resistance in Leinster continued into 1600, earning a notable success in Uaithne O'More's capture of Ormond in April. Ormond remained in the clutches of the Catholic forces until they released him in June.²¹⁶² Despite this success 1600 proved the decisive year of the war in Leinster. This was for a number of factors. Firstly, Essex was replaced as lord deputy by Charles Blount, lord Mountjoy. In comparison to the somewhat erratic Essex, Mountjoy was systematic in his approach to the war in Leinster, leading to heavy fighting throughout the summer.²¹⁶³ Secondly, because of the dramatic increase in government pressure upon the Leinster Catholics, Uaithne O'More, the most talented Catholic commander, died in early August of wounds received in battle with Mountjoy's forces.²¹⁶⁴ His loss was a disaster which undermined the Catholic resolve to fight. One of its first effects was the submission of Domhnall Spainneach Kavanagh on 24 August to Mountjoy near Cashel.²¹⁶⁵ The surrender of the last king of Leinster convinced Féilim to seek a truce. In September Ormond met him and agreed to grant him his personal protection.²¹⁶⁶ Mountjoy, however, was determined to take the fight into the Leinster mountains. In a campaign reminiscent of Grey and Russell, Mountjoy went for the jugular, seizing Ballinacor from Féilim, in a surprise nighttime attack, on 6 December. Although inclement weather and the flooding of the Avonmore prevented Mountjoy from finishing off Féilim, the war was effectively over by late January 1601. Finding

²¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, no. 144, p. 333; see also *C.S.P.I., 1599-1600*, no. 74, p. 53, no. 75, pp 58-60; *AFM*, vi, pp 2094-5, 2110-1, 2112-3, 2114-5, 2146-7.

²¹⁶¹ *Cal. Carew MSS, 1589-1600*, no. 305, pp 310-2.

²¹⁶² *C.S.P.I., 1600-1600*, no. 148, i & ii, p. 127; *AFM*, vi, p. 2166-7.

²¹⁶³ *AFM*, vi, p. 2178-9; See *Cal. Fiants Eliz*, no. 6375. On 19 March a commission of martial law was granted to Henry Davells, sheriff of Carlow. For cracks in Féilim's forces see the pardon on 13 June of his McDonnell commander, Walter McEdmund of Booley boye Co.Dublin see *ibid*, no. 6406. See other pardons: 7 July, no. 6408, Gerald McMortagh Kavanagh; 12 September, no. 6432, William McHubert O'Byrne; 13 Sept no. 6433 Walter Boye Roche of Newton Co.Wexford; no. 6447, Brian mac Donnchadh Kavanagh of Ballyloghan Carlow.

²¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*; *Ibid*, p. 2186-7; Carey, 'The End of the Gaelic Political Order', p. 248; Cosby, 'The English Settlers in Queen's Country, 1570-1603', pp 316-8.

²¹⁶⁵ *C.S.P.I., 1600-1600*, no. 15, p. 422; Hamilton, 'Fiach MacAodha Ui Bhroin and Domhnall Spainneach Caomhanach', p. 113.

²¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*; *Ibid*, no. 55, p. 449, no. 92, p. 472.

themselves virtually alone, Féilim and Réamain surrendered in March before the Dublin Council.²¹⁶⁷ The government was inclined to mercy, introducing a policy to finally pacify the formerly disaffected Catholic Leinster aristocracy and to detach them from Tyrone. On 5 May Domhnall Spainneach was granted his pardon, while the O'Byrne brothers along with the O'Tooles of Castlekevin were pardoned in July.²¹⁶⁸

Féilim and Domhnall Spainneach resolved to become loyal subjects of Elizabeth. Their momentous decision finally ended the war Fiach had started in Leinster. This decision was underlined by their refusal, despite Tyrone's urgent request, to attack government forces after Don Juan de Aguila's expeditionary force landed in September 1601 at Kinsale.²¹⁶⁹ No doubt Féilim was determined to avoid the fate of Féilim mac Toirdhealbhadh of Powerscourt who was murdered by the Wingfields on 14 May 1603, paving the way for them to receive a grant of the dead man's estates.²¹⁷⁰ Thus, both men embarked upon the transition from warlord to landowner, declaring their loyalty to James I. Féilim, in particular, was intent upon preserving Fiach's lordship by incorporating himself into the new order, receiving a grant of his estates from James on 25 March 1604. He also entered into negotiations in October 1605 with the government for the inclusion of his lordship within the proposed county of Wicklow. This led to a prolonged dispute over territory with his brother Réamain but both settled their differences satisfactorily by March 1606. Their consent allowed the establishment that year of the last of the Irish counties - County Wicklow.²¹⁷¹ Thus, the shiring of the Wicklow nobility's estates as the County of Wicklow combined with the Cosby victory over the

²¹⁶⁷ *C.S.P.I, 1600-1*, no. 82, p. 89, no. 15, p. 152, no. 105, p. 240; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1601-1603*,

²¹⁶⁸ *Cal. Fiants Eliz*, no. 6517 Domhnall's pardon also included Muirheartach mac Gerald Kavanagh of Clonmullen, Edmund mac Brian mac Cathaoir Kavanagh and Eleanor, Domhnall's wife and also Edmund's sister. Eleanor was also Fiach's niece and therefore Féilim's first cousin. Significantly this pardon also includes Donal O'Cahan, Toirdhealbhadh O'Neyle and fourteen O'Dorchys. These must have been troops sent by Tyrone at some point. Earlier Richard Butler son and heir of Mountgarret was also pardoned 28 March, see *ibid*, no. 6484. For the O'Toole pardon on 13 July, see no. 6560. For Féilim's pardon, see no. 6577.

²¹⁶⁹ *C.S.P.I, 1601-3*, p. 381.

²¹⁷⁰ *Cal. Inquisitions J 1 11/18*, p. 326; O'Toole, *The History of the Clan O'Toole*, pp 411-2, 426-7.

²¹⁷¹ *C.S.P.I, 1603-6*, no. 567, p. 342, no. 661, p. 416.

O'Mores at Aughnahilly that year finally stilled the heartbeat of Gaelic Leinster.²¹⁷²

The death of the last Gaelic king of Ireland, Hugh O'Neill, in 1603, was the end of the Gaelic era in Ireland. The English, who had been conquering Ireland since the late 12th century, had finally achieved their goal of bringing the whole of Ireland under their control. The English had been fighting the Gaelic lords for centuries, and the Gaelic lords had been fighting back. The English had been conquering Ireland since the late 12th century, and the Gaelic lords had been fighting back. The English had been conquering Ireland since the late 12th century, and the Gaelic lords had been fighting back.

While Donnell MacMurrough's conquest of Ireland in 1167-69 is often cited as the beginning of English rule in Ireland, it does not necessarily follow that his actions were regarded as the beginning of the English conquest of Ireland. In fact, Donnell's conquest was a temporary one, and his kingdom was soon reconquered by the Gaelic lords. It was not until the reign of King David I of Scotland, who invaded Ireland in 1171, that English rule in Ireland became permanent. King David I of Scotland, who invaded Ireland in 1171, brought with him a large number of knights and soldiers, and he established a permanent English presence in Ireland. King David I of Scotland, who invaded Ireland in 1171, brought with him a large number of knights and soldiers, and he established a permanent English presence in Ireland. King David I of Scotland, who invaded Ireland in 1171, brought with him a large number of knights and soldiers, and he established a permanent English presence in Ireland.

²¹⁷² Cosby, 'English Settlers in Queen's Country, 1570-1603', p. 284.

Conclusion

The establishment of County Wicklow in 1606 set the seal upon the Tudor and Jacobean conquest of Leinster and of Ireland. The co-operation of the O'Byrne and O'Toole leaders confirmed the end of the long resistance of the Leinster aristocracy to the advance of royal jurisdiction throughout the province. In fact, their acquiescence in the establishment of County Wicklow was a recognition of political reality, signalling their full incorporation into the English kingdom of Ireland. Thus, this recognition of the English kingdom relegated the old Leinster provincial kingship that had proved so durable to the dustbin of history.

While Diarmait MacMurrough's recruitment of Norman aid between 1167-70 in order to reclaim his kingdom, it does not necessarily follow that his actions were responsible for the destruction of the Leinster kingdom and the subjugation of the Irish nation to English rule. In short, Diarmait deserves an reevaluation. Indeed, MacMurrough's contemporary, King David I of Scotland, introduced Norman settlers and knights into his kingdom to give his royal government more backbone. Whether this example lurked somewhere in the recesses of Diarmait's mind, we shall never know. But his actions at least deserve to be seen in the context of his times. Quite clearly from the days of Brian Boru, Ireland was under going considerable change and there were definite signs that a unified kingdom of Ireland was about to emerge under O'Connor suzerainty. Indeed, during last fifteen years of Diarmait's reign as king of Leinster between 1156-71, the speed of this process had greatly accelerated. In fact, Diarmait fell victim to these changes. There can be no arguing that the events of 1166 form one of the greatest watersheds in Irish history. Then Diarmait was betrayed by his clients and his own brother in exchange for the favours of the new high-king - Ruaidhrí O'Connor. This betrayal changed Irish history, leading to Diarmait's flight in search of Henry II. His return to Ireland in 1167, signalled his settling of scores with his rebellious vassals and Ruaidhrí. By 1171, Diarmait was in a strong position to directly challenge Ruaidhrí for the high-kingship. Critically,

at this point, fate intervened. His death in May 1171 was a radical change to the situation in Leinster, removing his check upon his Norman allies, resulting in a determined attempt by the Leinstermen to militarily defeat the Normans. But the Norman victory that year over Ruaidhrí and his Leinster clients allowed Strongbow and his followers to penetrate deeper into Leinster and carry the war as far as the Shannon frontier, ensuring that Norman Leinster was the new reality by 1180.

The reaction of the Leinstermen to this new reality was different in the two parts of Leinster. In the old MacMurrough heartlands of East Leinster, the Irish after 1180 showed themselves eager to be incorporated within the new order as evidenced by the actions of Domhnall MacGiollamochoilmóc and Muirheartach MacMurrough. And although Domhnall Kavanagh and his sons as well as the O'Tooles proved themselves hostile to the Normans after 1173, they too found places within the new social order, resulting in a long-lived toleration between native and newcomer between 1180-1265. On the other hand, West Leinster was considerably more volatile. There the ambitions of the Irish provincial kings were exposed to sustained Norman expansion. And while the O'Briens and MacCarthy's tried to seek an accommodation with the Normans, the O'Connors of Connacht were fearful of Norman expansion into their kingdom, resulting in considerable efforts to limit Norman castle building along the Shannon frontier and in the midlands.

However, after the trauma of 1200-3, Cathal Cróibhdhearg acknowledged that Connacht was on the backfoot and that the Shannon was no longer a defensible frontier. His recognition of this fact combined with Máelsechlainn Beag O'Melaghlin's desire to appease the Normans resulted in growing anger among their vassals. The greatest example is Cormac mac Airt O'Melaghlin. He with similarly frustrated O'Connor and O'Brien nobles were determined to resist all Norman attempts to impose themselves upon the midlands, resulting in tremendous regional upheaval between 1210-15. The region was again shook by the O'Connor succession dispute in the aftermath of Cathal Cróibhdhearg's death in 1224. But the 1240s witnessed the intensification of Irish resistance in Connacht and West Leinster as well

as in Munster and Ulster. Indeed, it may be argued that Féilim O'Connor's experience, convinced many Irish nobles of the futility of appeasement. And what is remarkable about this period is the increasing dominance of younger Irish leaders from 1241 in these anti-settler wars, producing a dramatic upsurge in violence against the settlers between 1247-50. This also led to the regeneration of links between the O'Connors and midland kings such as Donnchadh MacGillpatrick. Two direct results of this upheaval was the O'Connor alliance with Brian O'Neill of Tyrone in 1249, and their recognition of his high-kingship in 1258, resulting in a brief shift in their compass towards Ulster in the 1250s. But after the death of O'Neill in 1261, they again directed themselves towards the midlands.

This renewal of O'Connor interest in the midlands proved short-lived, ending with the death of Aodh O'Connor in 1274 and the dynastic feuding that engulfed his dynasty thereafter. Consequently warfare within West Leinster and the midlands began to be determined by the ambitions of Irish lords native to the region. And between 1270-1320, many of the midland dynasties recovered much of their ancestral lands at settler expense. The gradual collapse of the midland colony had far reaching consequences for the settlers of East Leinster. Clearly Irish pressure from within the midlands began to mount upon the strategic Barrow valley - the frontier with East Leinster. In East Leinster, its political landscape was also undergoing a dramatic change. Because of Norman insensitivity to the Irish of Wicklow during the late 1260s and early 1270s, endemic warfare had broken out, destroying the co-existence of both nations. In this period the old MacMurrough provincial kingship began to steadily emerge with its kings grimly determined to enforce their ancient hegemony over their vassals - particularly the O'Byrnes. But the emergence of Irish kings in both parts of Leinster intent on pushing the settlers out of their traditional heartlands did lead to greater co-operation among the Leinster Irish. Examples of this are 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 Dublin government became increasingly isolated from the rest of the country. In short the emergence of this 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.

The colony in the midlands also suffered irreversible damage during Edward Bruce's campaigns of 1315-18. Doubtless the devastation wreaked by Bruce must have facilitated the dramatic rises of Laoiseach O'More of Laois and Brian Bán O'Brien which must have encouraged the O'Kennedys of Ormond, MacGillapatricks of Ossory and the O'Carrolls of Ely to become more aggressive towards the settlers between the 1320s and the 1350s. While in East Leinster the MacMurroughs, O'Nolans, O'Tooles and O'Byrnes gradually subdued the settler families living in the Barrow artery. The plight of the settlers was not helped by the government whose actions to counter the coalescing of East Leinster and the midlands along the Barrow were sporadic and limited by lack of finance. Too often the settlers were left to fight the Irish on their own as evidenced by the careers of Henry Traherne and Fulk de la Freyne. This inevitably led individual settlers to fraternise with the Irish in order to survive, resulting in Brian Bán and the English of Ely attacking the English of Ossory in 1325, and the interventions of the English of Ossory, Kildare and Carlow in internal O'More politics during 1348. In spite of Lionel of Clarence and Sir William of Windsor's devastating campaigns against the Leinster Irish in the 1360s, the wars of 1329, 1336, 1344, and 1354-9 showed that the English lordship of Ireland was in danger of been cut in two by Irish pressure.

That grim reality for the English lordship dawned with the career of Art MacMurrough. His reign as provincial king saw the Leinster nobility reach their political, military and territorial apex, resulting in large scale Irish gains throughout Leinster and the midlands, heralding the emergence of a belt of Irish territories stretching from North Munster to the Leinster coast. This cut Anglo-Irish Ireland in two, separating Dublin from the south. Throughout Art played a dominant role in this process, promoting alliances with Irish kings through marriage and military aid. 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, changing the course of English history. But between 1414-7 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 Lord Lieutenant Sir John Talbot. This alliance was affirmed through the marriage of Art's son, Donnchadh, to Aveline, the half-sister of the 4th earl of Ormond. Also the evidence 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 Art's sons were unable to maintain his kingdom. Ironically Art facilitated the rise of the Butlers - his traditional enemies.

The period between 1420-70 witnessed intense political turmoil in Leinster. During this period the hegemony of Art gave way to the dominance of the 4th earl of Ormond. However, the MacMurroughs renegotiated their position in Leinster after the emergence of Domhnall Riabhach MacMurrough in the middle of the 1440s. After 1447 Domhnall Riabhach began the MacMurrough resurgence, allying with his uncle, Donnchadh, and the Butlers. Effectively their agreement stabilised both the MacMurroughs and the Butlers, strengthening them against their enemies - most notably the O'Byrnes and the Fitzgeralds. However, Ormond's death in August 1452 was a decisive point - leading to the reemergence of the Kildare heir - Thomas fitzMaurice. In 1453-4 Thomas wrested the Kildare earldom back from the Butlers - a victory which propelled him to the Kildare title and into York's government. And in the years that followed, Kildare turned on his former friends, promoting the fortification of the Pale and County Kildare. And with the implosion of the Butlers in 1461-2, Kildare was positioned to take up their mantle.

Between 1470-1520, Kildare with his son and grandson transformed the English lordship of Ireland, modelling their style of government upon the career of the 4th earl of Ormond. Also they benefited directly from the Butler collapse of the 1460s and the withdrawal of the earls of Desmond from affairs of state. The secret of Kildare success lay in their ruthless approach to the government of Ireland. On paper their achievement between 1470 and 1520 is truly staggering. In 1470 the Dublin Council had difficulty in enforcing its

writ outside the city. But by 1520, though, the Kildares had forcibly extended the power of the royal government into Leinster and much of Ireland. In reality, though, it was Kildare power supported by Tudor resources that advanced throughout Ireland. In East Leinster, the Irish was gradually ground down by the Tudor/Kildare partnership between 1480-1505. But the Kildare overlordship in West Leinster and the midlands was always vulnerable. However, the establishment of a Kildare overlordship in the midlands was only possible by the absence of the 6th and 7th earls of Ormond. In fact, Kildare power in the midlands was reinforced by the 8th Kildare earl's alliance with the Butlers of Polestown. This alliance underpinned the Kildare hegemony throughout Leinster. But once the feud between Piers Butler and the 9th earl of Kildare emerged in the late 1510s and early 1520s - the full vulnerability of the Kildare overlordship in the midlands was exposed with dire consequences for Kildare's hegemony in Leinster and his government of Ireland.

The feud between Kildare and Ossory combined with Henry VIII's wish to reform his Irish lordship resulted in the implosion of the Kildares in 1534-5. The Kildare collapse and the rise of the Tudors changed the political equilibrium of Ireland. But it was the Leinster nobility who were to be the most profoundly affected by this process. The Leinster nobility were fully exposed to Tudor reforms because of their proximity to the centre of reform. Clearly, the government, like the Kildares and the Ormonds, were intent upon imposing a hegemony in West Leinster and the midlands. After the failure of the strategies of Grey and St Leger, the government became more hardline, resulting in the plantations of Laois and Offaly and martial law. The imposition of these plantations caused the provincial centre of gravity to shift to the Wicklow mountains. There Aodh O'Byrne sheltered refugees from the midlands, using them to develop his own power. As a result he took upon himself the mantle of leadership, projecting himself as their natural protector. This role was continued by his son Fiach who sought weld the provincial nobility into a coherent force opposed to the English. Fiach was also a radically new development in Irish politics. The most significant feature of his leadership was his fusion of the right to religious liberty with the defence of the rights of the Irish nobility. His fusion of these ideas set him apart from any leader of

Leinster before him or from the Irish leaders of his generation. While leader of the Leinstermen, he also looked beyond the borders of the province and into Munster, Connacht and Ulster, promoting a religious and political crusade against the English. His emergence not only stiffened the resolve of the provincial nobility but resulted in three major wars in Leinster between 1580-1601, forcing successive governments to devote considerable resources to pacify the province. And when he was killed on 8 May 1597, it could be argued that centuries of tradition in Leinster died with him.

Appendix 2

1. A List of the Kings of Leinster, 1170-1601

1. The MacMurroughs

2. The O'Byrnes

3. The O'Conor Kings

4. The O'Neills

5. The MacDonnell Kings

6. The O'Connors

7. The O'Garra Kings

Appendix 1

The Kings of Leinster and MacMurroughs, 1156-1606

- 1 Diarmuid MacMurrough 1156-76 2161
- 2 Dubhghal MacMurrough 1176-87 2164
- 3 MacDonnell MacMurrough 1187-92 2172
- 4 MacDonnell MacMurrough 1192-102 2174
- 5 His brother was succeeded by King of Leinster in 1280 2177
- 6 Mairé MacMurrough 1300-1312 2174
- 7 Dubhghal MacMurrough 1312-22 2177

Appendix 1

1 A List of the kings of Leinster, 1156-1606

2 The MacMurroughs

3 The O'Byrnes

4 The O'Connor Falys

5 The O'Mores

6 The MacGillapatricks

7 The O'Carrolls

8 The O'Tooles

Outline 1

The kings of Leinster and MacMurroughs, 1156-1632

- 1 Diarmait MacMurrough c. 1127-71.²¹⁷³
- 2 Domhnall Kavanagh 1171-5.²¹⁷⁴
- 3 Muircheartach MacMurrough, king of Ui Cheinnselaig 1175-93.²¹⁷⁵
- 4 Muircheartach MacMurrough c. 1265-82.²¹⁷⁶
(His brother Art mentioned as king of Leinster in 1276)²¹⁷⁷
- 5 Muiris MacMurrough c. 1290-1312/3.²¹⁷⁸
- 6 Domhnall Riabhach MacMurrough c. 1312/3-7.²¹⁷⁹
- 7 Unnamed king c. 1317-23.²¹⁸⁰
- 8 Domhnall mac Airt MacMurrough c. 1323-38.²¹⁸¹
- 9 Domhnall Og MacMurrough c. 1338-47.²¹⁸²
- 10 Muircheartach MacMurrough 1347-54.²¹⁸³
- 11 Art MacMurrough 1354-62.²¹⁸⁴
- 12 Diarmait Láimhdhearg MacMurrough 1362-9.²¹⁸⁵
- 13 Donnchadh MacMurrough 1369-75.²¹⁸⁶
- 14 Art MacMurrough 1375-79.²¹⁸⁷
- 15 Art Mor MacMurrough 1377-1416/7.²¹⁸⁸
- 16 Donnchadh MacMurrough 1416/7-c. 1457.²¹⁸⁹
- 17 Domhnall Riabhach Kavanagh c. 1457-76.²¹⁹⁰

²¹⁷³ *AFM.*, ii, pp 1161-3.

²¹⁷⁴ *Ann. Tig.*, ii, p. 437; *AFM.*, iii, pp 20-1.

²¹⁷⁵ *A.U.*, ii, pp 220-1.

²¹⁷⁶ *Ann Clon.*, p. 254.

²¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

²¹⁷⁸ *CJR.*, 1295-1303, p. 61.

²¹⁷⁹ *A.L.C.*, i, pp 592-3.

²¹⁸⁰ *Grace*, p. 21; *Clyn, Annals*, pp 15-6.

²¹⁸¹ *Chartul. St Marys*, ii, pp 365-6; *Grace*, p. 107.

²¹⁸² *Grace*, p. 143; *The Book of Howth*, p. 165

²¹⁸³ *Ann Conn.*, pp 310-1; *AFM.*, iii, pp 604-5.

²¹⁸⁴ *Ann Inisf.*, pp 381-2; *Ann Conn.*, pp 320-1.

²¹⁸⁵ *Rymer, Fodera* (1816-20 ed) III, 2, p. 830; *AFM.*, iii, pp 645-7; *Ann Conn.*, pp 320-1

²¹⁸⁶ *Ann Conn.*, pp 344-5; Richardson and Sayles, *Parl. and Councils Med Ire.*, i, pp 99, 124-5.

²¹⁸⁷ *Rot. Pat. Hib.*, no. 2, p. 99, nos 27 and 30, p. 100.

²¹⁸⁸ *Ann Conn.*, pp 432-3; *A.U.*, iii, pp 72-3; *AFM.*, iv, pp 830-1.

²¹⁸⁹ *AFM.*, iv, pp 886-7; Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Annals', p. 99.

²¹⁹⁰ Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Annals', p. 99; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 31; *AFM.*, iv, pp 1098-9.

- 18 Murchadh Ballach MacMurrough 1476-1511/2.²¹⁹¹
 19 Art Buidhe MacMurrough 1511/2- 7.²¹⁹²
 20 Gerald MacMurrough 1517-22.²¹⁹³
 21 Muiris MacMurrough 1522-31.²¹⁹⁴
 22 Cathaoir MacInnycross MacMurrough 1531-c.1544.²¹⁹⁵
 Muirheartach MacMurrough 1544-7.²¹⁹⁶
 Cathaoir mac Airt Kavanagh 1547-c.1552.²¹⁹⁷
 Murchadh MacMurrough c.1552-7.²¹⁹⁸
 Brian mac Cathaoir Kavanagh 1557-78.²¹⁹⁹
 23 Crimthann MacMurrough 1578-82.²²⁰⁰
 24 Domhnall Spainneach Kavanagh c.1590-1632.²²⁰¹

²¹⁹¹Dowling, *Annals*, p. 33; *AFM.*, iv, pp 1310-1; Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Annals', p. 100.

²¹⁹²BL. Egerton MS 1782, p. 3; *AFM.*, v, pp 1342-3.

²¹⁹³Dowling, *Annals*, p. 34; Nicholls 'Late Medieval Annals', p. 101.

²¹⁹⁴Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Annals', p. 101; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 35.

²¹⁹⁵*S.P. Hen VIII, 1515-38*, lix, p. 157; Dowling, *Annals*, p. 35; Nicholls, 'Late Medieval Annals', p. 101.

²¹⁹⁶*AFM.*, v, pp 1504-5.

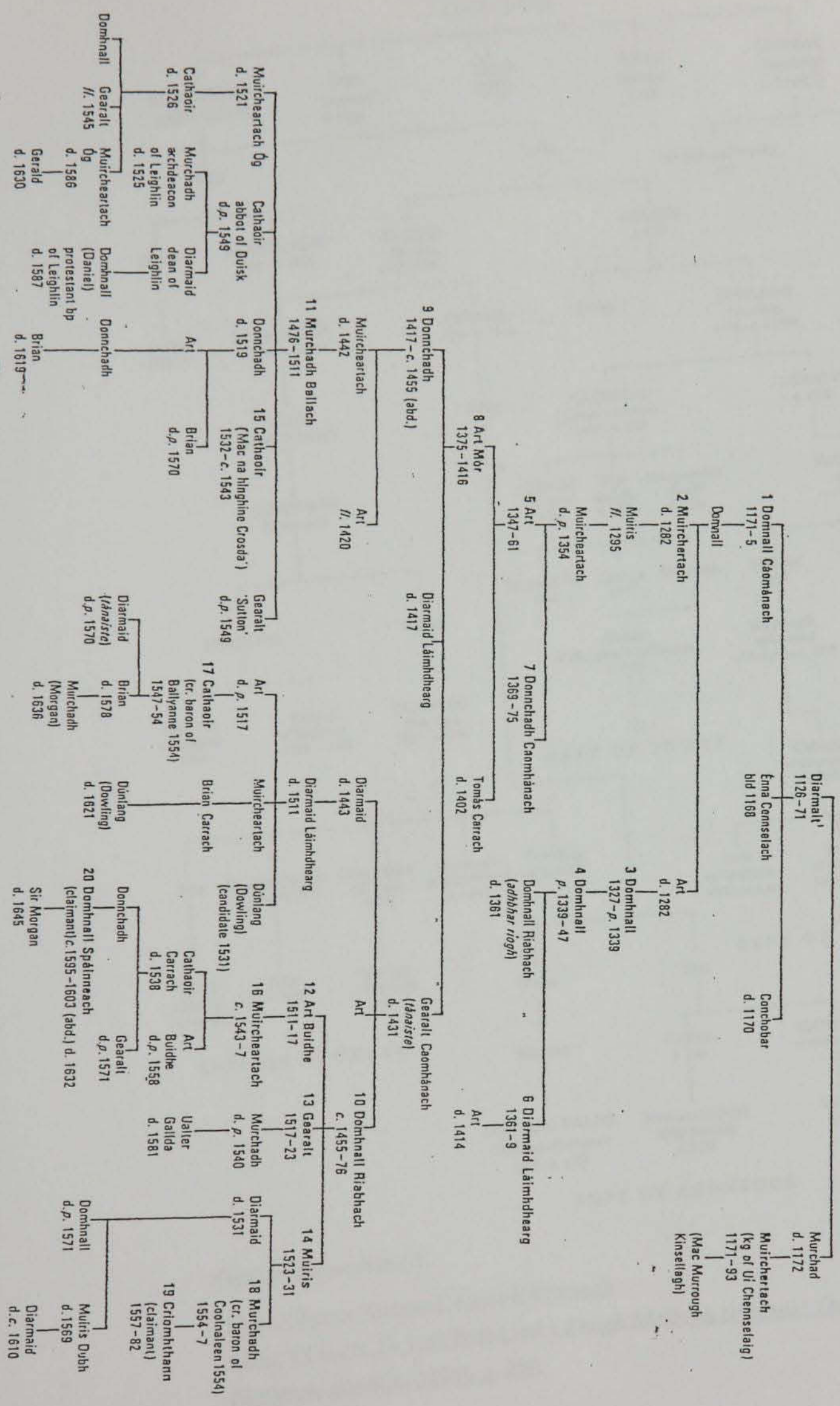
²¹⁹⁷Hughes, 'The Fall of the Clan Kavanagh', p. 39.

²¹⁹⁸*AFM.*, v, pp 1544-5.

²¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, v, pp 1702-3.

²²⁰⁰*C.S.P.I., 1574-85*, p. 451; Moore, 'MacMurrough-Kavanaghs', p. 16.

²²⁰¹*C.S.P.I., 1600-1600*, no. 15, p. 422

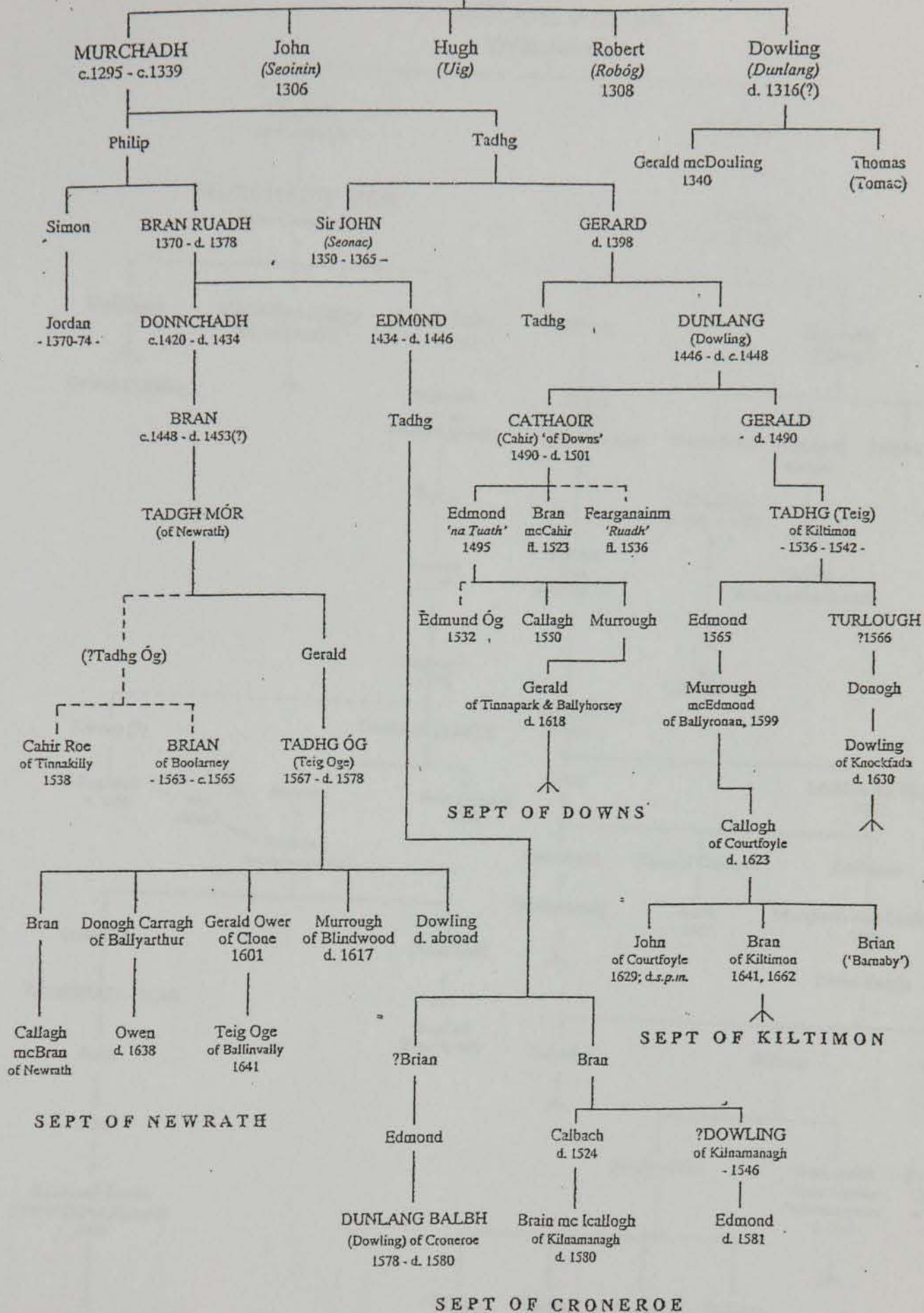


Outline Genealogy 2

The MacMurrrough Kings of Leinster and Uí Cheinnsealaigh

GERALD O'BYRNE

- 1268 - c.1295



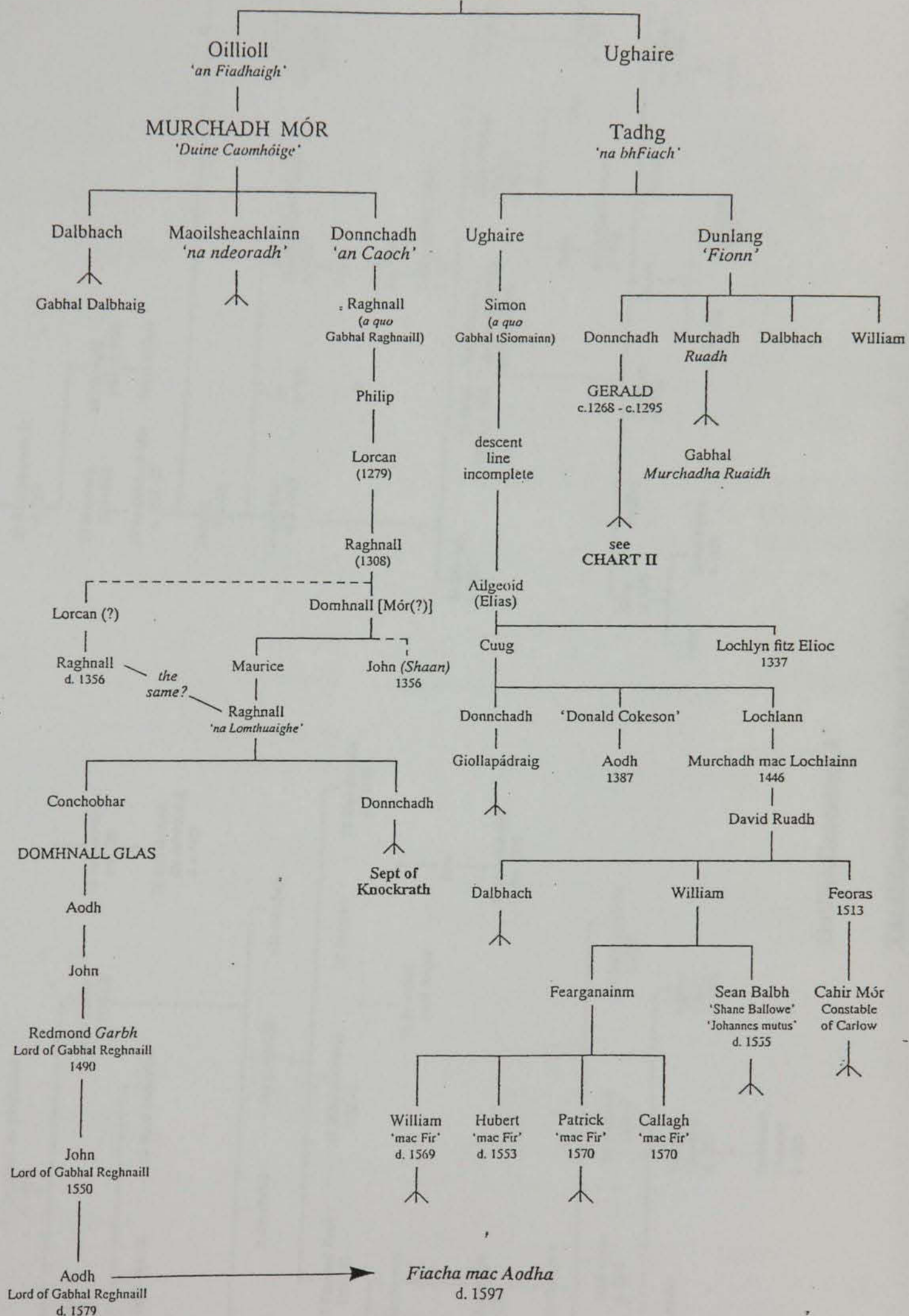
Outline Genealogy 3

The O'Byrne Kings of Cricoch Branach

After Nicholls In C.O'Brien (ed.) *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne: The Wicklow Firebrand* (Dublin, 1998), p. 280.

DUNLANG Ó BROIN

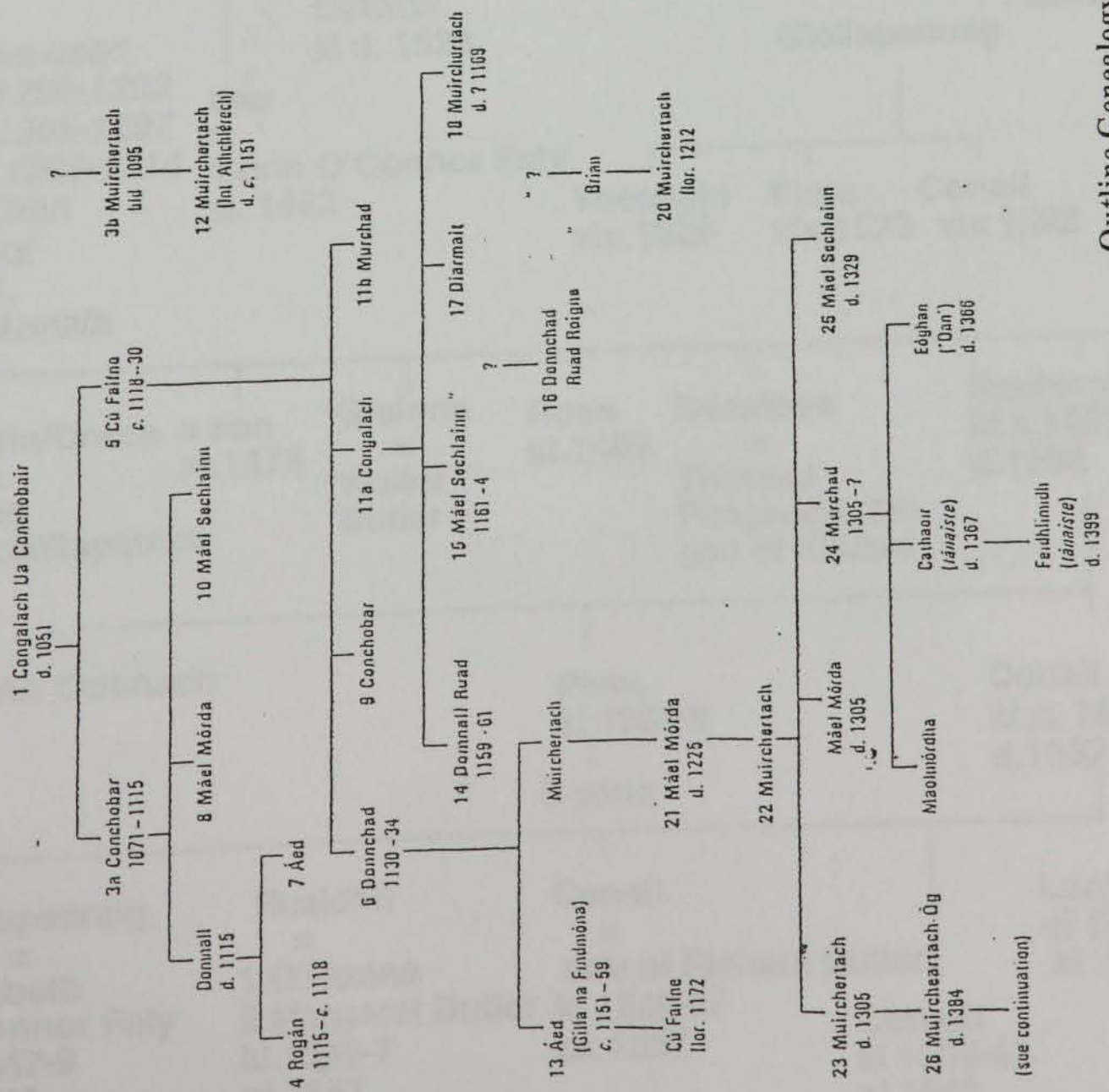
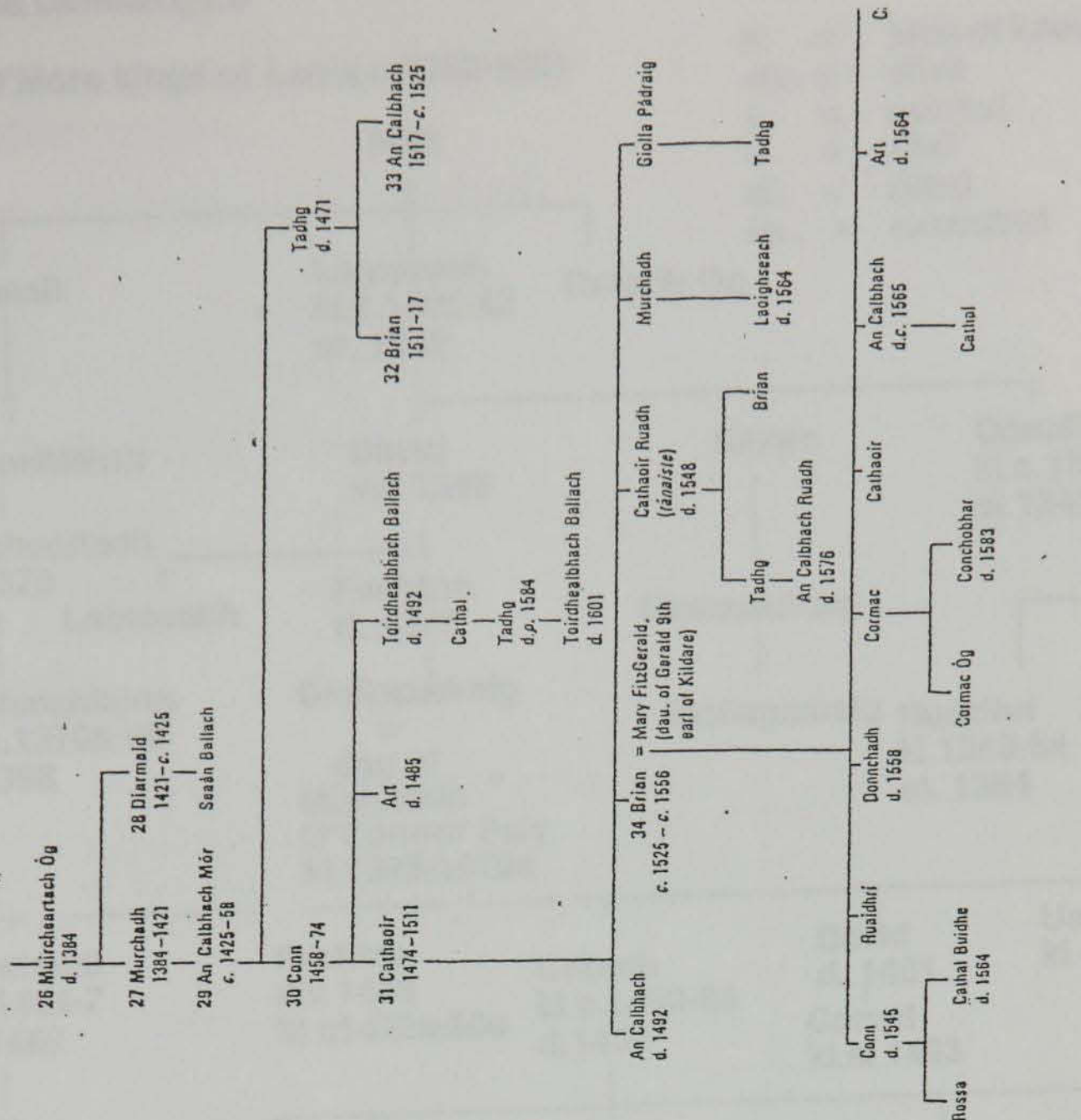
'Dubhchluana'



Outline Genealogy 3

The O'Byrne Branches

After Nicholls In C.O'Brien (ed.) *Feagh McHugh O'Byrne: The Wicklow Firebrand* (Dublin, 1998), p. 279.



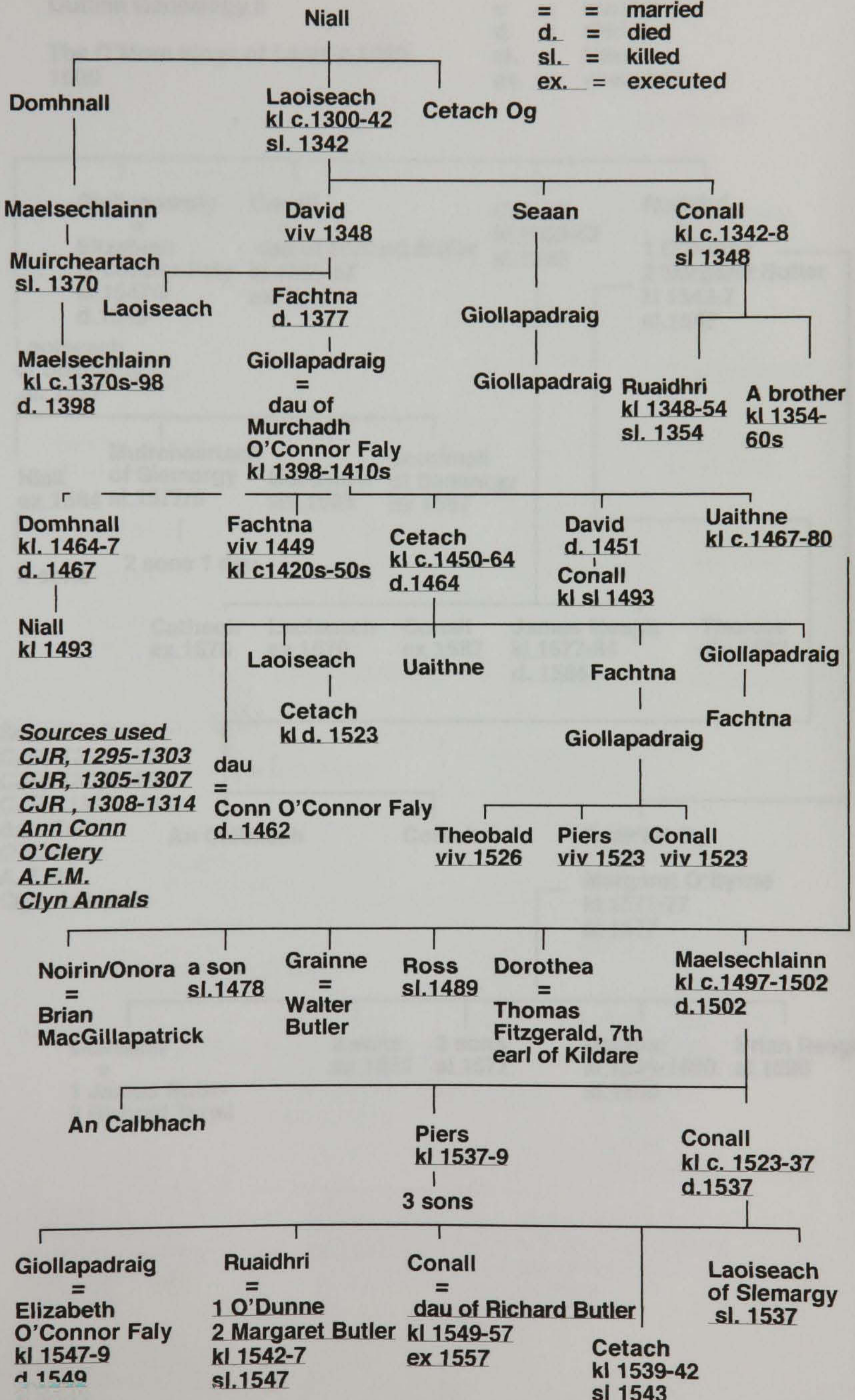
Outline Genealogy 4

Outline Genealogy 5

Keys

The O'More kings of Laois c.1280-1601

- kl = king of Laois
- viv. = alive
- = = married
- d. = died
- sl. = killed
- ex. = executed

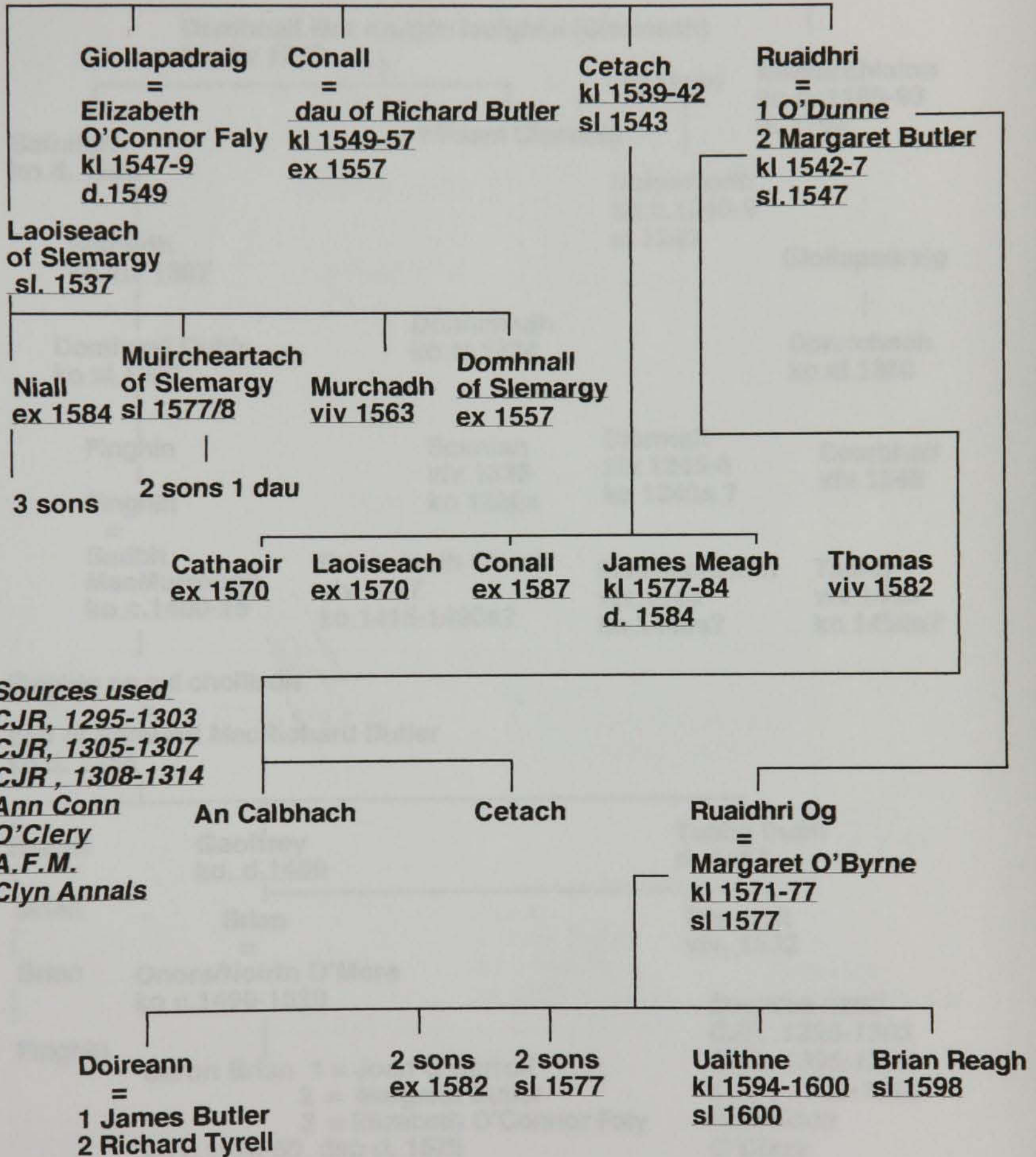


Keys

- kl = king of Laois
- viv. = alive
- = = married
- d. = died
- sl. = killed
- ex. = executed

Outline Genealogy 5

The O'More kings of Laois c.1280-1600



Genealogy 6

The MacGillpatrick kings and barons of Ossory/Upper Ossory

c.1160-1613

Domhnall
ko d. 1185

Scanlan

Domhnall Mor muighi Iaoighisi (Clannach)
ko viv 1213

Sefraidh
ko d. 1269

William Clannuig

Anchmad

Donnchadh

Maelsechlainn
ko c. 1185-93
d. 1193

Sefraidh
ko viv 1307

Donnchadh
ko c.1240-9
sl 1249

Giollapadraig

Domhnall Dubh
ko sl 1323

Donnchadh
ko sl 1324

Donnchadh
ko sl 1330

Finghin

Scanlan
viv 1336
ko 1330s

Diarmait
viv 1345-6
ko 1340s ?

Cearbhall
viv 1346

Finghin

Donnchadh Oirech
viv 1417
ko 1415-1430s?

Maelsechlainn
viv 1443
ko 1440s?

Tadhg
viv 1449
ko 1450s?

=
Sadbh MacMurrough
ko c.1400-15

Finghin na cul choilledh

=
dau of Edmund MacRichard Butler
ko d. 1468

Seaan

Geoffrey
ko. d.1489

Tadhg Dubh
d. 1487

Brian

Brian

Diarmait
viv. 1532

Brian

=
Onora/Noirin O'More
ko c.1490-1520

Finghin

Baron Brian 1 = Joan O'Carroll
2 = Margaret Butler
3 = Elizabeth O'Connor Faly
ko c.1520-59 dep d. 1575

Sources used
CJR, 1295-1303
CJR, 1305-1307
CJR, 1308-1314
Ann Conn
O'Clery
A.F.M.
Clyn Annals

Baron Barnaby
= Joan Eustace
ko 1559-81
d. 1581

Geoffrey
ex 1600

Baron Florence
= Katherine O'More
ko 1581-1613
d. 1613

Outline Genealogy 7

The O'Carroll kings of Ely

c.1200-1581

Keys

- ko = king of Ely
- viv. = alive
- = = married
- d. = died
- sl. = killed
- ex. = executed

**Guill an belaigh
ke c. 1190s**

**Fionn
ke sl 1205**

Maelruanaidh

**Ruaidhri
ke**

**Tadhg
ke sl 1346**

**Tadhg
= 1 Johanna Butler
= 2 Mor O'Brien
ke c.1375-1407
sl 1407**

Sources used

- CJR, 1295-1303*
- CJR, 1305-1307*
- CJR, 1308-1314*
- Ann Conn*
- O'Clery*
- A.F.M.*
- Clyn Annals*

**Margaret
= An Calbhach O'Connor Faly
d. 1451**

**Isabella
= 1 James O'Kennedy
= 2 MacGeoghegan**

**Maelruanaidh
ke prob 1407-43
d. 1443**

**Seaan
= Mary Butler
ke 1443-89
sl 1489**

**Catherine
= Edmund Butler**

Uaithne

**Maelruanaidh
ke 1489-1532
d. 1532**

Donnchadh

**Fearganinm
= dau of 9th earl of Kildare
ke 1532-41
sl 1541**

Maelruanaidh

**Grace
= Ulick Burke**

**Mor
= James of Desmond**

**Sir William Odhar
ke sl 1581**

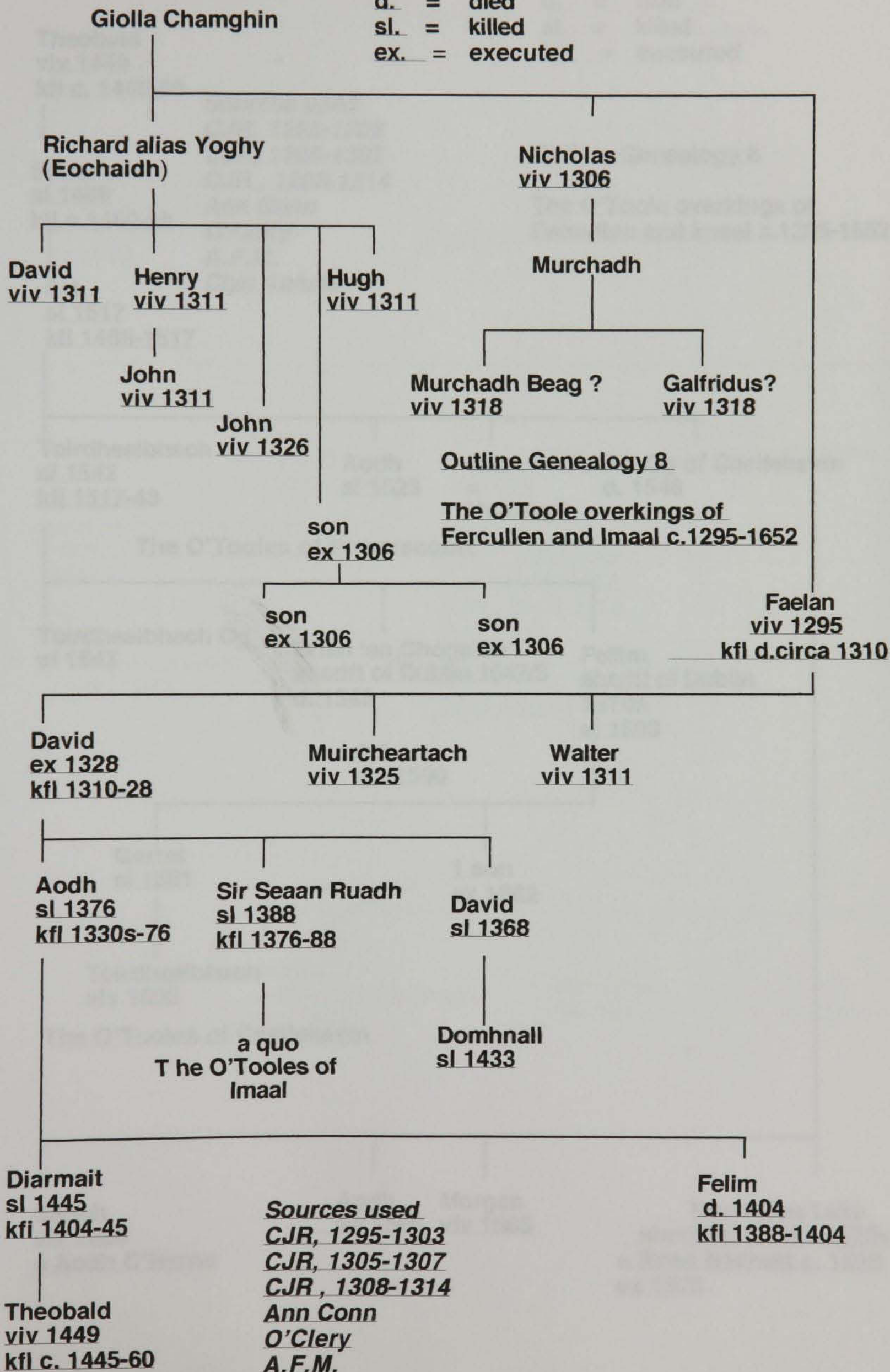
**Tadhg Caoch
ke 1541-53
d. 1553**

5 sons

2 sons

Keys

- kfl = king of Fercullen and Imaal
- viv. = alive
- = = married
- d. = died
- sl. = killed
- ex. = executed



Outline Genealogy 8
 The O'Toole overkings of Fercullen and Imaal c.1295-1652

Sources used
 CJR, 1295-1303
 CJR, 1305-1307
 CJR, 1308-1314
 Ann Conn
 O'Clery
 A.F.M.
 Clyn Annals

Keys

kfl = king of Fercullen and Imaal
 viv. = alive
 = = married
 d. = died
 sl. = killed
 ex. = executed

Theobald
 viv 1449
 kfl c. 1445-60

Sources used
CJR, 1295-1303
CJR, 1305-1307
CJR, 1308-1314
Ann Conn
O'Clery
A.F.M.
Clyn Annals

Edmund
 sl 1488
 kfl c.1460-88

Art
 sl 1517
 kfl 1488-1517

Outline Genealogy 8

The O'Toole overkings of Fercullen and Imaal c.1295-1652

Toirdhealbhadh
 sl 1542
 kfl 1517-43

Aodh
 sl 1523

dau
 =
 McKeogh

Art Og of Castlekevin
 d. 1546

The O'Tooles of Powerscourt

Toirdhealbhadh Og
 sl 1543

Brian 'an Chogaidh'
 sheriff of Dublin 1547/8
 d. 1549

Feilim
 sheriff of Dublin
 1570s
 sl 1603

Art
 viv 1590

Garret
 sl 1581

1 son
 ex 1582

Toirdhealbhadh
 viv 1608

The O'Tooles of Castlekevin

Sadbh
 viv 1550
 = Aodh O'Byrne

Aodh
 viv 1566

Morgan
 viv 1566

Fiach alias Luke
 sheriff of Dublin 1570s
 = Rose Basnett c. 1558
 ex 1578

Keys

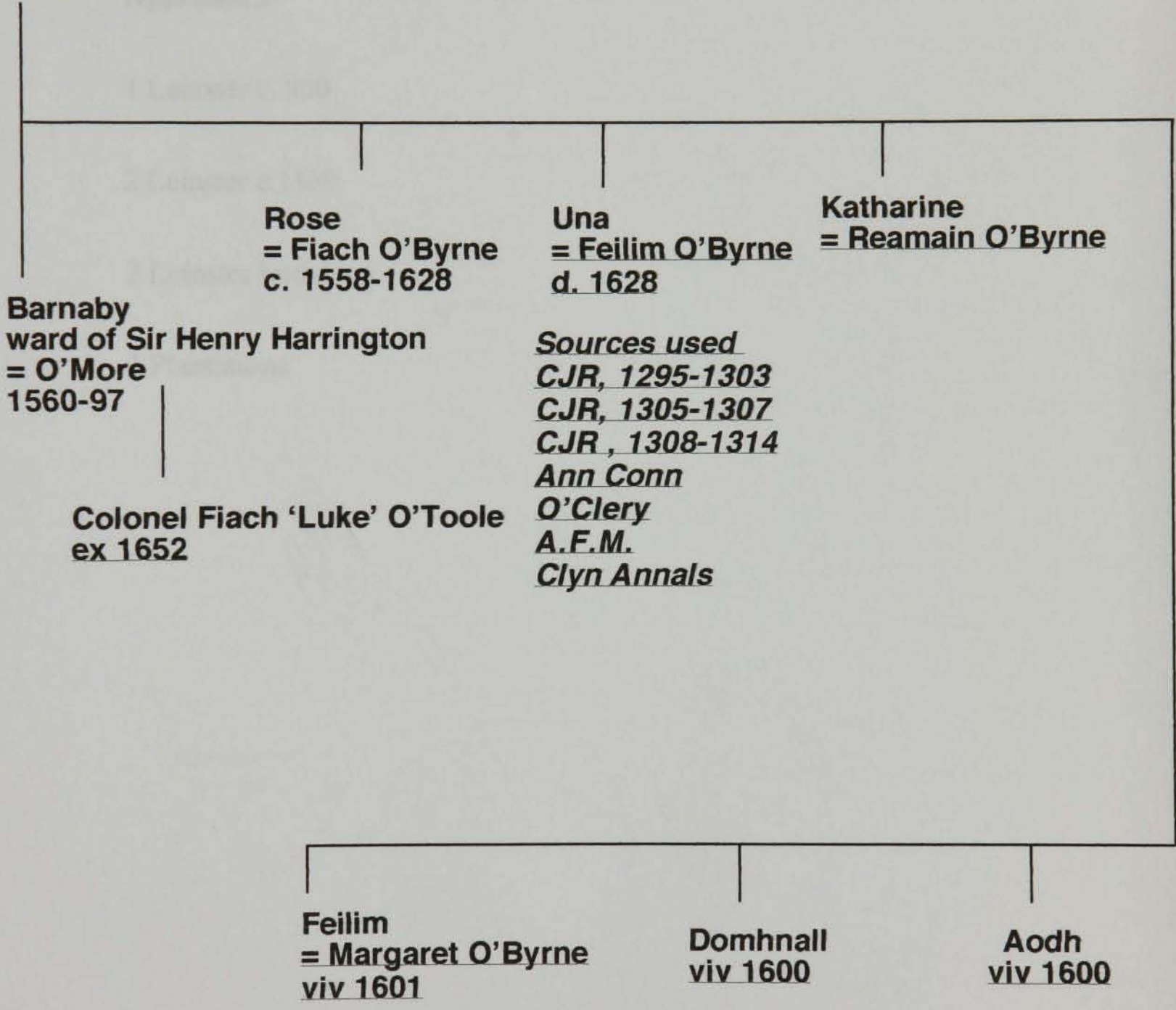
- kfl = king of Fercullen and Imaal
- viv. = alive
- = = married
- d. = died
- sl. = killed
- ex. = executed

Outline Genealogy 8

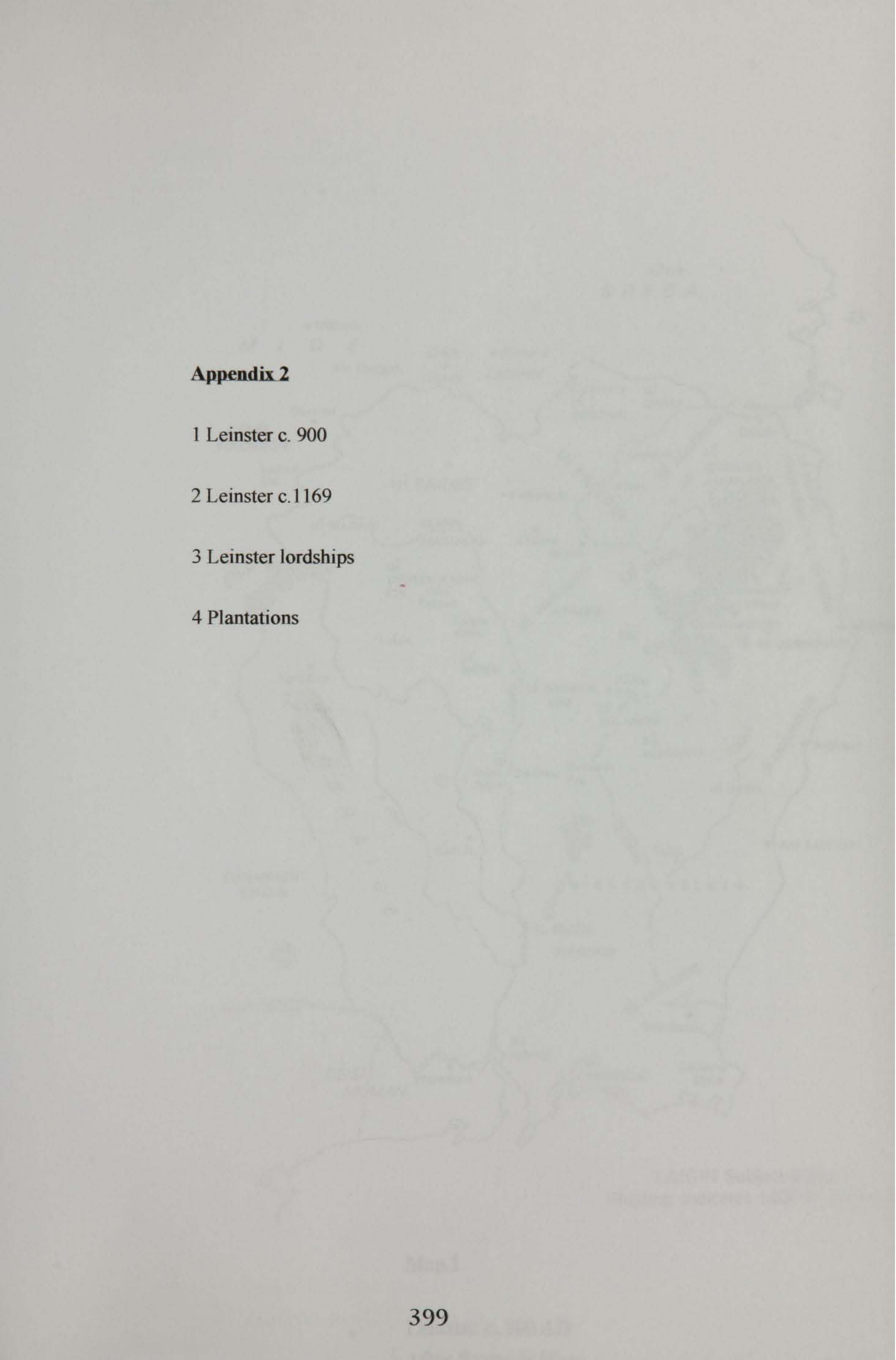
The O'Toole overkings of Fercullen and Imaal c.1295-1652

The O'Tooles of Castlekevin

Fiach alias Luke
sheriff of Dublin 1570s
 = Rose Basnett c. 1558
 ex 1578



Sources used
CJR, 1295-1303
CJR, 1305-1307
CJR, 1308-1314
Ann Conn
O'Clery
A.F.M.
Clyn Annals



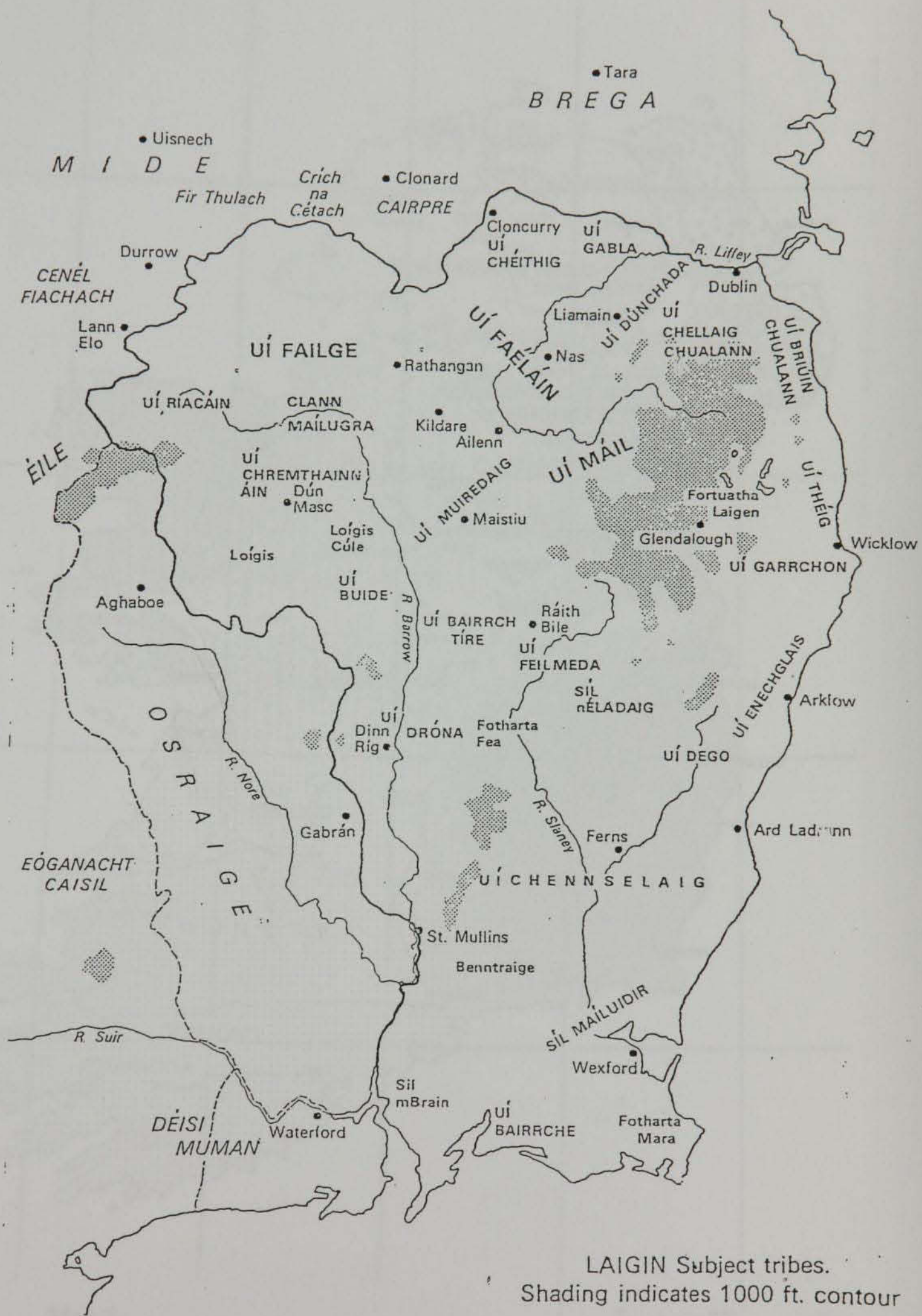
Appendix 2

1 Leinster c. 900

2 Leinster c.1169

3 Leinster lordships

4 Plantations



Map 1

Leinster c. 900 AD

After Byrne *Ir kings*

MUNSTER Provincial over-kingdoms

FIR LUIRG Sub-kingdoms

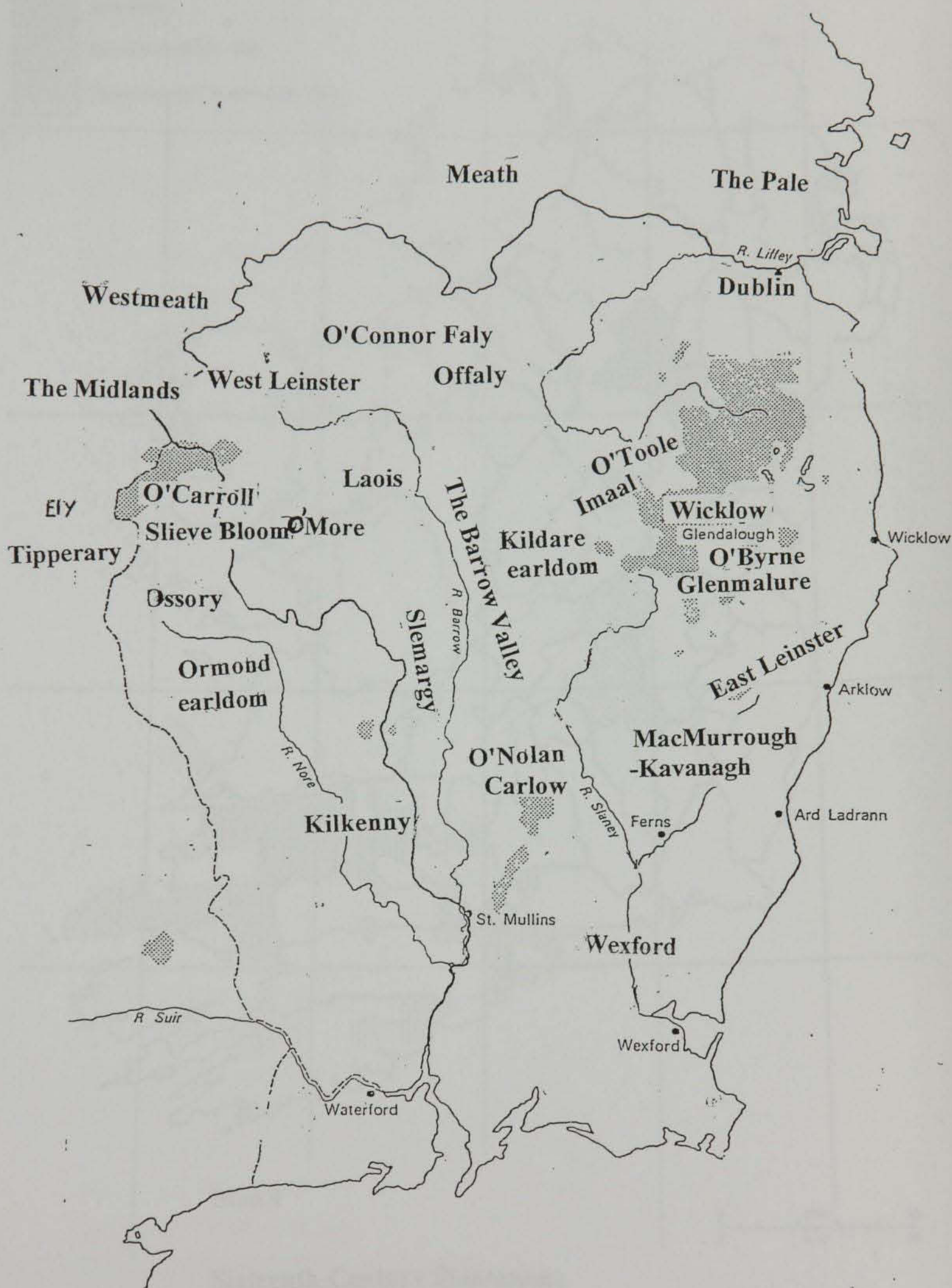
Tuam Place names



Map 2



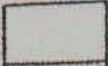



Political Divisions c. 1169

After Byrne *N.H.I.*, ix, p. 29



Map 3

Leinster lordships

-  Leix-Offaly plantation, 1556-
-  Sir Thomas Smith's plantation in the Ards, 1570
-  Essex's projected plantation, 1572-3
-  Area planted
-  Desmond plantation, 1584-
-  'Native plantation' in Monaghan, 1592



Map 4

Sixteenth-Century Plantations
 After Nicholls *N.H.L.*, ix, p. 46

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P.R.O. S.P. 63/37/37.

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