James the Usurper of Desmond and the origins of the Talbot–Ormond feud

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Is this the scourge of Ireland?
Is this the Talbot, so much fear’d abroad,
That with his name the mothers still their babes? ¹

It was, of course, not in Ireland but in France that Sir John Talbot (d. 1453), Lord Furnival and later earl of Shrewsbury and Waterford, ² secured the fearsome reputation that inspired the taunts of the countess of Auvergne in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI, Part 1*. ³ But our honorand – a famous stickler for accuracy – might be persuaded to forgive this particular misquotation, because long before Talbot earned renown in the latter phases of the Hundred Years War as the ‘scourge of France’, he was already the terror of Gaelic princes and poets. ⁴ Talbot was, in the venomous words of a Gaelic annalist, ‘a son of maledictions for malice and a devil for evils … and what the learned of Ireland say of him is that there came not from Herod, by whom was crucified Christ, downwards one so bad for ill deeds’. ⁵

Sir John Talbot’s appointment as the king’s lieutenant in Ireland, on 24 February 1414, ⁶ heralded an association between his family and Ireland that was to last until the mid-point of the fifteenth century. His first tour of duty as lieutenant from 1414 to 1420 was notable for the initiation of a long-running antagonism with the leading noble house of English Ireland: the Butlers of Ormond. ⁷ The principals to this conflict were Sir John Talbot himself and James

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² Sir John became sixth baron Talbot in 1421, and was later created earl of Shrewsbury (1442) and earl of Waterford (1446). See *CP*, v, pp 591–2; xi, pp 698–703; xii/1, p. 620; xii/2, p. 410.
⁵ *AU*, iii, p. 161. The passage has more usually been quoted from the rendering by O’Donovan in *AFM*, iv, p. 953 n. x: ‘Furnival was a son of curses for his venom, and a devil for his evils, and the learned say of him that there came not from the time of Herod, by whom Christ was crucified, any one so wicked in evil deeds’.
⁶ *CPR*, 1413–16, p. 164.
⁷ For the Talbot–Ormond feud in the period 1420–52, see E.A.E. Matthew, ‘The governing of the Lancastrian lordship of Ireland in the time of James Butler, fourth earl of Ormond, c.1420–52’ (PhD, Durham, 1994), pt 2. Some documents of importance printed in an appendix to Margaret Griffith, ‘The Talbot–Ormond struggle for control of the Anglo-Irish government, 1414–1447’, *IHS*, 2:8 (1941), 376–97. There are also details in Otway-
Butler, the fourth or ‘white’ earl of Ormond (d. 1452). These two men had much in common. They were both relatively young, being near contemporaries of King Henry V.8 Both had a background of service in the military enterprises of the Lancastrian dynasty. Both were to act as the king’s lieutenant in Ireland. And both were among that increasingly rare breed of magnate who held extensive possessions on both sides of the Irish Sea.9 The conflict that arose between them, therefore, requires some explanation.

One point on which the factions differed was in their respective attitudes to the Gaelic learned orders. Talbot’s predecessor as lieutenant of Ireland, Sir John Stanley, had died in office on 8 January 1414,10 reputedly from the ‘venom of the lampoons’ of Gaelic poets.11 Accordingly, after Talbot arrived in Ireland on 10 November 1414, he launched a series of expeditions against several of the more eminent poets of Munster, Meath and Leinster.12 As Katharine Simms has remarked,

Either Talbot believed the tale of Sir John Stanley’s assassination by satire and wished to wreak vengeance on the poets of Ireland, or, as seems more likely, he feared the story lent them a spurious credibility and hoped to undermine their pernicious influence by demonstrably surviving unscathed after a series of outrages against their order.13

Ormond, by contrast, projected his power in part through the patronage of Gaelic poets. This is not to deny that the English court was a focus for Ormond’s aspirations and that competition with the Talbots for control of the high offices in the administration of Ireland was intense. So much is clear from the many

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8 The fourth earl of Ormond was born c.1390: Matthew, ‘Butler, James, fourth earl of Ormond’, ODNB. King Henry V and Sir John Talbot were both born c.1387: Christopher Allmand, Henry V (New Haven and London, 1997), pp 7–8; Pollard, John Talbot and the war in France, p. 7. 9 The Talbot family claimed the liberty of Wexford by descent from John Hastings, earl of Pembroke (d. 1380), while through his wife Sir John Talbot, as Lord Furnival, inherited lands at Loughsewdy, Co. Westmeath: see R. Ian Jack, ‘Entail and descent: the Hastings inheritance, 1370 to 1436’, BIHR, 38 :97 (1965), 1–19; A.J. Otway-Ruthven, ‘The partition of the de Verdon lands in Ireland in 1332’, PRIA, 66C5 (1968), 417; A.J. Pollard, ‘The family of Talbot, lords Talbot and earls of Shrewsbury in the fifteenth century’ (PhD, Bristol, 1968), pp 103–6. 10 Stanley landed in Ireland on 25 Sept. 1413 (see below, n. 88) and on 1 Jan. 1414 he was at Ardee, Co. Louth: CPR, 1413–16, p. 253. According to the chronicle of Henry Marlborough, Stanley died a week later on 6 ides Jan. (i.e., 8 Jan. 1414): Bibliothèque Municipale de Troyes, MS 1316, fo. 52. The date of 18 Jan. 1414 given in NHI, ix, p. 476, comes from the translation produced by James Ware (Marlborough, ‘Chronicle’, p. 218) in which the date seems to have been calculated by counting forward from the ides. Another edition ignores the reference to the ides altogether and gives the date of Stanley’s death in error as 6 Jan. 1414: William Camden, Britannia […] (London, 1607), p. 834–11 AC, s.a. 1414.16. 12 AC, s.a. 1415.2. 13 Katharine Simms, ‘Bards and barons: the Anglo-Irish aristocracy and the native culture’ in Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (eds),
10.1 Genealogical table of the earls of Desmond, Ormond, Kildare and Shrewsbury.
surviving petitions and counter-petitions that trumpet the virtues of one party and decry the excesses of another. But a less formulaic glimpse of the cut and thrust of curial politicking comes from the poem composed by Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn to celebrate Ormond’s return to Ireland c. 1447 after facing down his critics at court.14 This source is interesting precisely because such praise-poems were ‘tailor-made to reflect the individual patron’s preoccupations’.15 The poet describes the machinations of Ormond’s enemies, including their efforts to bring about his removal from the office of chief governor of Ireland and his summons before the king’s council in England:

A secret plot was formed by some Saxons against Séamus [that is, James, fourth earl of Ormond]; they wished to banish him from Éire; the plot injured Fódla [that is, Ireland] as well as Séamus.

The only set-back which I can recall being inflicted on his power is that the earl of Ormond suffered eclipse for a year.

By the wickedness of the Goill he was out of office for a time, and Êire was, as it were, given over to the rule of the nobles of the Gaoidhil.16

Taken together, the content and form of the poem confirm that Ormond was an Englishman able to operate at many points along the cultural continuum that stretched from the Gaelic frontier to Dublin and thence to Westminster.17

Divergences in cultural outlook go some way towards explaining how the enmity between the Talbot and Ormond factions in Ireland was sustained until the mid-fifteenth century. Attitudinal differences are not, however, entirely satisfactory as an explanation for the growth of discord in the first place. The purpose of the present essay is twofold. First, I seek to trace the course of the conflict as it unfolded in the reign of King Henry V. Second, I argue that if we are to seek a single bone of contention then it may perhaps be located amid the byzantine politics of the resident aristocracy of English Ireland. The Talbot–
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Ormond feud can only be properly understood against the backdrop of the protracted factional conflict between the Butlers of Ormond and the Geraldines of Desmond. At the heart of the drama is a wicked uncle, the Geraldine leader James ‘the Usurper’ (d. 1463), who expelled his nephew Thomas (d. 1420) from the earldom of Desmond in 1411. Recognition of James the Usurper was, I argue, the major point at issue between the Talbots and Butlers in the ensuing decade.

When Sir John Talbot landed in Ireland on 10 November 1414 there was little reason to suspect that his dealings with the Butler family would descend into the acrimony that was to dominate affairs of state in colonial Ireland until the mid-1440s. Indeed, the choice of Talbot as lieutenant may have been considered appropriate in part because of the blood relationship that existed between the Talbots and the Butlers of Ormond. Before 1352, Pernel Butler – a daughter of James, first earl of Ormond (d. 1338), great-grandfather of the White Earl – had married Gilbert, third Lord Talbot (d. 1387), grandfather of the ‘scourge of France’. The marriage brought the interests of the two families together, and we find them in the records of the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries acting as agents and attorneys for each other. Upon Talbot’s arrival in Ireland, these ties of blood and friendship were reinforced. On 2 February 1415, Ormond entered an indenture with Talbot by the terms of which he was to serve with the lieutenant in Ireland for one year with all his defensible men, on horse and foot, at a fee of £100. In the same month, Ormond benefited from a rush of patronage, including £10 per year from the fee-farm of the city of Waterford, and custody of a moiety of the manor of Inchiquin and the town of Youghal. So far, so cordial. There were, however, some other straws in the wind. Ormond was
later to complain that he had served in five expeditions with Talbot, in the course of which he claimed to have lost some £300 worth of men and horses. More ominously, an investigation got underway at the Irish exchequer during February 1415 as to the relief that Ormond owed the king for gaining livery of his Irish lands. The earl’s protests that all such debts had been pardoned were dismissed as insufficient. Notwithstanding the exchequer’s harassment of Ormond, the breakdown in his relationship with Talbot came later. Butler adherents were still finding favour early in February 1416, as the term of one year’s military service specified in Ormond’s indenture came to a close. On 4 February 1416, Robert Haubryk, one of those to whom custody of the Butler estates had been entrusted in 1407 during Ormond’s minority, was granted a ship called *La Trinité* of the port of New Ross; while two days later Patrick White, a servant of Ormond’s half-brother Thomas Butler, prior of the Kilmainham, was granted a pardon for treasons. On the following day, 7 February 1416, Talbot set sail for England at Clontarf, Co. Dublin. It would seem, then, that Ormond and Talbot remained on good terms throughout the latter’s first period of residence in Ireland.

Matters were rather different a year later. Talbot returned to Ireland in the latter half of 1416. At a parliament held at Dublin in January 1417, the archbishop of Dublin, Thomas Cranley, was elected as a messenger to King Henry V of England. The precise nature of Cranley’s mission is unspecified, but it was almost certainly critical of Talbot. Cranley’s message was ‘made out by certain engrossers appointed thereto by authority of the said parliament’; but the chancellor of Ireland, Sir Laurence Merbury, refused to affix the great seal of Ireland to the message. Merbury was a retainer and annuitant of Talbot, and so his refusal cannot be considered the action of an impartial royal minister.

acquisition of the various purparts of these lands is traced in A.F. O’Brien, ‘The territorial ambitions of Maurice fitz Thomas, first earl of Desmond, with particular reference to the barony and manor of Inchiquin, Co. Cork’, PRIA, 82 C3 (1982), 80–3.

24 TNA (PRO), C47/10/27, m. 1 (printed in Griffith, ‘The Talbot–Ormond struggle’, p. 393, item 1). The details of these expeditions can be reconstructed from annalistic sources (*AC*, s.a. 1415.16; *AU*, iii, pp 68–9; *AFM*, iv, pp 820–1; *ALC*, ii, pp 144–5) and a letter sent to the king in 1417 (Ellis, *Original letters*, i, letter xix, pp 53–63).


26 *COD*, ii, no. 380. Haubryk was still benefiting from Ormond’s patronage in 1420: see *Parls & councils*, pt 2, pp 188–9.

27 RCH, p. 213, no. 114.

28 RCH, p. 212, no. 82. For Prior Thomas Butler, see below, n. 40.

29 RCH, p. 212, no. 102.

30 *AC*, s.a. 1416.16; *AFM*, iv, pp 828–9; Matthew, ‘Governing Lancastrian Ireland’, p. 484 n. 11.


32 In a letter to John duke of Bedford, dated 11 July 1417, Talbot refers to the allegations made at court by persons ill-disposed towards him (mes nient bienveillantz): BL, Cotton B.XI, no. 31 (=appendix 9.2). Cranley’s message of 1417 presumably included complaints about Talbot’s ‘divers oppressions and extortions’ to which the Irish parliament was again to refer in 1421. See 9 Hen. V [Ire.], c. 9 (*Statutes John–Hen V*, pp 570–1).

33 Pollard, ‘Family of Talbot’, appendix 3, ‘Prominent members of John Talbot’s affinity’, p. 417. The chancellor’s opposition notwithstanding,
Talbot seems to have been anxious both to defend his reputation and to forestall further attacks. In a letter to Henry V dated 26 June 1417, an impressive list of the king’s ‘humble lieges’ testified to Talbot’s manifold achievements and his ‘good & gratious government’ as lieutenant of Ireland. Yet the roll-call of prelates, magnates and commons was not entirely representative, being weighted towards the communities of Dublin, Kildare, Meath and Louth. Conspicuously absent were associates of the Butler family. This may have been no accident. By this time, Talbot’s relationship with the Butlers was in the process of breaking down. The conflict became overt on 18 July 1417, when all Ormond’s lands in Ireland were seized into the king’s hands on the basis of his outstanding debts to the king.

Talbot’s seizure of the Butler estates brought matters to the brink. Rich details of the course of events between the autumn of 1417 and June 1418 are supplied by a report that Talbot subsequently sent to England to explain the actions of his administration. Its contents have been described more than once. There were two interrelated strands of discord. The more prominent was the Talbot–Ormond rivalry. The White Earl himself had left Ireland in 1416, and in his absence the Butler interest was represented by his half-brother, Prior Thomas Butler of Kilmainham. A substratum of factional conflict increased the pressure and caused the fissures between the Talbots and Butlers to rupture into an open breach. Prior Thomas Butler found himself embroiled during...
1417–18 with Walter Burke (de Burgh), a disaffected member of the Burkes of Clanwilliam of west Tipperary and east Limerick descended from Sir Edmund de Burgh (d. 1338), a younger son of Richard, the Red Earl of Ulster (d. 1326). This Walter Burke was later described as ‘the most rebell of Irelond for malys of the sayd Erle [of Ormond],’ and it was he who had vigorously attacked Co. Kilkenny in 1407 in alliance with Tadhg Ó Cearbhaill of Éile, only to be put to flight at Callan by an army led by the then chief governor Sir Stephen Scrope. It seems likely that, after the seizure of Ormond’s estates in 1417, Burke took the opportunity to assault the Butler lordship again.

Towards the end of August 1417, Talbot began a southward itinerary from Dublin, passing through the towns of Kilkenny, Clonmel and Waterford. Ostensibly, his journey was intended to compose the discord between Prior Thomas Butler and Walter Burke by exacting pledges from each for their good behaviour. A secondary motive was presumably to assert his authority over the estates of the earldom of Ormond, which had so recently been seized into the king’s hand. Talbot had reached the city of Waterford by 20 September 1417, where in the cathedral he received Walter Burke into the king’s peace. This outraged the Butlers and tipped the colony into crisis. The winter of 1417–18 was dominated by the vain attempts of the lieutenant to bring Prior Thomas Butler before sessions of the Irish great council or parliament to answer for breaches of the king’s peace. Talbot left Ireland in February 1418 with these issues unresolved. He did not return until 10 July 1418. His mission was partly with the purpose of securing the arrears of pay owed to him as lieutenant; but it is also likely that he sought a remedy for the situation he had left behind him in Ireland. On 3 June 1418, at the abbey of Bec Hellouin in Normandy, Henry V issued a warrant arranging for shipping to bring the prior of Kilmainham to France with a company of two hundred horse and three hundred foot.

41 For this family, see Denis G. Marnane, *Land and settlement: a history of west Tipperary to 1660* (Tipperary, 2003), p. 203. For a genealogy of the Burkes of Clanwilliam, see S.H. O’Grady (ed.), *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh* (2 vols, Dublin, 1929), ii, pp 169–71. 42 TNA (PRO), C 47/10/27, m. 1 (printed in Griffith, ‘The Talbot–Ormond struggle’, p. 393, item 5). 43 Troyes, MS 1316, fo. 51. The sequence of events in 1407 is reconstructed in Crooks, ‘Factionalism and noble power’, pp 307–9. 44 Talbot mentions that his expedition to Munster took place before Michaelmas 1417 in a letter sent to John duke of Bedford in Oct. 1417: BL, Cotton Titus B.XI, pt 1, no. 46 (=appendix 9.3). His itinerary is described in more detail in Otway-Ruthven, ‘Arrest’, 75–6, 86–7. Independent evidence confirms that Talbot was testing letters at Naas on 30 Aug. (NLI, D 15844; =Dowdall deeds, no. 400), had reached Kilkenny by 8 Sept. 1417 (NAI, RC 8/37, pp 189–91) and was at Waterford on 21 Sept. (NAI, RC 8/37, pp 188–9). 45 Otway-Ruthven, ‘Arrest’, 75–6. 46 Otway-Ruthven, ‘Arrest’, 76; BL, Cotton Titus B.XI, pt 1, no. 46 (=appendix 9.3). 47 Ormond was later to complain that after Walter Burke was received into the king’s peace, Talbot encouraged him to attack the Butler lordship: TNA (PRO), C 47/10/27, m. 1 (printed in Griffith, ‘The Talbot–Ormond struggle’, p. 393, item 5). 48 TNA (PRO), E 101/698/34 (printed in Crooks, ‘Missing membrane’, p. 15). 49 See BL, Cotton Titus B.XI, pt 1, no. 46 (=appendix 9.3). This letter was written on 25 Oct. 1417, a few months before his departure from Ireland. 50 TNA
prior probably arrived in Normandy late in November 1418, and he died there on 10 August 1419. The salient point is that the decision to remove Prior Thomas from the Irish stage was made even before the final act of the drama had been played. On 24 June 1418, Sir Thomas Talbot, brother and deputy of the lieutenant, arrested Gerald fitz Maurice, fifth earl of Kildare, and Sir Christopher Preston at Clane, Co. Kildare. Henry Marlborough explains the arrest with the enigmatic comment that ‘they sought to commune with the prior of Kilmairinham’. This can be taken as an oblique confirmation that Kildare and Preston were sympathetic to Prior Thomas Butler and hostile towards the Talbot regime. The result was that by June 1418 the lands of two of the colony’s three resident earls – Ormond and Kildare – had been seized into royal hands, while the earldom of Desmond (as we shall see) remained in the hands of a usurper. From this perspective, Talbot’s lieutenancy appears as a disaster.

What was the cause of all the commotion? One suggestion is that the ingredients of Talbot–Ormond feud pre-dated Talbot’s arrival in Ireland. Late in 1413–14, Talbot was involved in a major quarrel with his rival in Shropshire, Thomas earl of Arundel (d. 1415). On 16 November 1413, as a consequence of his dispute with Arundel, Talbot was compelled to make recognizances of £4,000 to

(PRO), C 81/1364/59. The full text of the record is in print, but it appears across two different publications: the French text appears in J.L. Kirby, Calendar of signet letters of Henry IV and Henry V, 1399–1422 (London 1978), no. 836 (at p. 170); while the English, in a different hand, is printed in John H. Fisher, Malcolm Richardson and Jane L. Fisher (eds), An anthology of chancery English (Knoxville, TN, 1984), no. 30 (at p. 98).


Troyes, MS 1316, fo. 53; Crosthwaite (ed.), Book of obits […] Christ Church, Dublin, p. 36. His death is also reported in the Gaelic annals: AC, s.a. 1419–5; AU, iii, pp 82–3; ALC, ii, pp 148–9; APM, ix, pp 840–1. Mac Fhir Bhisigh states that he died at Rouen, but his genealogy is not entirely reliable. He states, for instance, that Prior Thomas attained the dignity of primate of Armagh, which is untrue: LMG, iii, pp 140–1; pp 738–9, no. 1390.3. Troyes, MS 1316, fos 52v–53. Otway-Ruthven reverses the order of events, so that Prior Thomas’ summons to Normandy seems to be prompted by the arrests: Otway-Ruthven, ‘Arrest’, 74. I have followed the translation in Marlborough, Chronicle, pp 219–20. The Latin text runs ‘qui voluerunt loqui cum Prioire de Kylmainan’: Troyes, MS 1316, fos 52v–53. Comparable, in certain respects, to the justiciarship of Ralph Ufford, for which see Robin Frame, ‘The justiciarship of Ralph Ufford: warfare and politics in fourteenth-
maintain the peace, and he was arrested and briefly confined in the Tower of London. Talbot’s appointment as lieutenant of Ireland on 24 February 1414 has been interpreted as a ploy made under pressure from Arundel to remove Talbot from the English political scene and allow him to ‘cool his heels’ in Ireland. Subsequently, it has been suggested that an unfortunate side-effect of Talbot’s appointment as lieutenant was that the Arundel–Talbot quarrel was exported to Ireland. It is certainly possible that Ormond’s Beauchamp affiliations subsequently hardened Ormond in his hostility to Talbot; but the patronage that Talbot lavished on Ormond early in 1415 suggests that their relationship was not acrimonious from the outset. The point of contention is, therefore, to be sought after 1415 and within the colony.

If any pre-existing antagonism sparked the enmity between Talbot and Ormond, then it seems likely that it was the rancorous relationship between the earls of Ormond and their neighbouring comital house in Munster, the Geraldines of Desmond. Tensions between these families dated back to at least the 1350s. The conflict reached a high-point in 1396 when the brother of James, third earl of Ormond (d. 1405), was killed by one ‘Shane fitz Thomas’ at Waterford. Reprisals followed in the form of a brief but destructive war
between the two comital houses. Violence broke out again in 1399 during the expedition of Richard II to Ireland, during which certain of the king’s magnates reputedly attacked the son of the earl of Desmond – presumably John, fourth earl of Desmond, who had only recently succeeded Gerald (d. 1398), the third earl – and seized Dungarvan Castle from Geraldine hands. After plundering the area surrounding the castle, they returned with their booty to the king, who was then resident at Waterford. The Geraldines are said to have blamed James, third earl of Ormond (d. 1405), for the seizure of Dungarvan, and in revenge for that traitorous act Earl John and a great army of the Irish of Munster entered Ormond’s lands where they laid waste to the greater part of the barony of Cahir. At length, the two earls made peace and, while returning with his army, Desmond was drowned in the River Suir near the ford of Ardfinnan.

The drowning of the fourth earl of Desmond was the first in a succession of misfortunes to blight the Desmond earldom in the early decades of the fifteenth century. Earl John had a son named Thomas, who was around 14 years old at the time of his father’s premature death and, according to some reports, of doubtful legitimacy. Thomas also had rather too many uncles. On 29 May 1400, custody of the Desmond inheritance was entrusted jointly to Thomas together with his uncle, Maurice fitz Gerald, a brother of Earl John. It has been suggested that this Maurice fitz Gerald gained official recognition as earl of Desmond, but the evidence on which this conclusion is based – namely English letters patent of 17 March 1401 in which Maurice is styled ‘earl of Desmond’ – must be treated with circumspection. The letters were issued at the petition of John Hethe, a Bristol merchant who traded frequently with Ireland. We cannot, however, assume that Hethe had mastered the intricacies of power-politics in Munster, and the description of Maurice as earl of Desmond may well stem from the unthinking regurgitation by an English chancery clerk of the language of this merchant’s petition. Certainly there was some confusion surrounding the status of the earldom of Desmond within the English chancery. A memorandum in the margin of the patent roll in question records that the enrolment was amended in December 1402 to read ‘county or lordship of Desmond’. Another record, (s.a. 1396) that Thomas Butler was killed by the Geraldines: AFM, ix, p. 746 n. q. 61 ‘Annales Anonymi’, ed. Nicholls in idem, ‘Late medieval annals’, p. 90. 62 ‘Annales Galfridi Hogain’, ed. K.W. Nicholls in idem, ‘Late medieval annals’, p. 92. 63 Ibid. 64 Nicholls, ‘Late medieval annals’, p. 89 n. 7. 65 RCH, p. 157, no. 92; NAI, Lodge MS 19, p. 203. The following day, instructions were issued for the taking of inquisitions post-mortem: RCH, p. 159, no. 8. 66 Nicholls, ‘Late medieval annals’, p. 89. 67 TNA (PRO), C 66/363, m. 10 (calendared in CPR, 1399–1401, p. 451). 68 In a petition of a slightly later date, the same John Hethe seeks a licence to ship wine, cloth and salt to Ireland and to return with salmon and other victuals: TNA (PRO), SC 8/332/15783. The resultant letters patent are dated 1 Apr. 1406: CPR, 1405–8, p. 170. 69 On each of the six occasions when the ‘county of Desmond’ is mentioned, the words ‘or lordship [sive dominium]’ have been interlined: C 66/363, m. 10. These interlinearations are not recorded in the calendared version: CPR, 1399–1401, p. 451. The fact that the liberty of Kerry would theoretically have been resumed into the...
dating from after 17 June 1401, describes Maurice merely as ‘Moryssh de Decymond’, without according him the rank of earl. The evidence of literary sources suggests that this was his true status. In his obit in the annals, he is described simply as ‘Maurice, the earl of Desmond’s son’, while the Mac Fhir Bhisigh genealogies record that Earl John was succeeded by his son Thomas. The reference to ‘Maurice, earl of Desmond’ in the letters patent of 17 March 1401 is, then, probably best interpreted as mistaken in point of fact but nonetheless an accurate reflection of political realities. After the drowning of Earl John in 1399, leadership of the Desmond Geraldines had clearly passed to John’s brother Maurice, and in his custody the earldom might well have prospered into the fifteenth century.

It was not to be. Maurice was dead before the end of 1401, leaving his nephew Thomas in minority. The third earl of Ormond sought to project his influence into this vacuum, and a ‘great war’ arose in 1403 between Ormond and Desmond in which ‘the two Mac William Burkes with their muster went to assist the earl of Ormond’. The balance of power was redressed on 7 September 1405 when Ormond died at Gowran, Co. Kilkenny. His passing prompted a Gaelic

king’s hands during a minority and assumed the status of a royal county may be the source of the muddle. On the other hand, the ‘county’ of the calendared version might possibly be better translated as ‘earldom’. TNA (PRO), E 28/27/67 (calendared in Paul Dryburgh and Brendan Smith (eds), Handbook and select calendar of sources for medieval Ireland in the National Archives of the United Kingdom (Dublin, 2005), p. 176). AClon., p. 323 (in quoting AClon. here, I have modernized the spelling of Conell Mageoghegan’s antiquarian translation). AC mistakenly describes Maurice as the ‘son of the earl of Desmond’s son [Muris mac meic Iarla Desmuman]’: AC, s.a. 1400.21. Likewise, a verse genealogy from the Ó Cléirigh pedigrees states that Thomas succeeded his father John: ‘Thomas the earl, who denied not friendship, | In the earlship after John’. It may be worth noting that Thomas Russell’s ‘Relation of the FitzGeralds of Ireland’, while hardly a reliable text, also makes no mention of Maurice as earl: see Samuel Hayman (ed.), ‘Unpublished Geraldine documents: part 1’, JRSAI, 3rd ser., 1 (1868), 364. This does not, however, seem to me to be sufficient reason to follow the numbering of the Desmond earls in NHI, ix, pp 168, 233 (in which Maurice is listed as de facto fifth earl of Desmond). See also CP, iv, pp 243–8. The date of Maurice’s death cannot be precisely ascertained. It appears in the annals under 1400 (AC, s.a. 1400.21; AClon., p. 323), but these annals lag one year behind at the turn of the fifteenth century. The obit is placed immediately after an entry recording the arrival of Thomas of Lancaster in Ireland: AC, s.a. 1400.20; AClon., p. 323. If the chronology within the calendar year can be taken as reliable, this would place Maurice’s death after 13 Nov. 1401, on which date Lancaster landed near Dalkey, Co. Dublin: Troyes, MS 1316, fo. 50. Maurice was certainly dead by 19 Dec. 1401, when Thomas of Lancaster granted James, third earl of Ormond, custody of the Geraldine lands in Tipperary: RCH, p. 161, no. 58. Several sets of related annals record the ‘great war’ between Desmond and Ormond under the year 1402: AC, s.a. 1402.2; ALC, ii, pp 100–1; AIRM, iv, pp 774–5. The Annals of Ulster, drawing from a common source, correctly place the confrontation in 1403: AU, iii, p. 49. A fragment from Bodl., MS Rawlinson B488, is particularly rich for 1392–1407: here too a ‘great war between the earl of Desmond and earl of Ormond’ is recorded in the year 1403: AMisc., pp 170–1. There is a lacuna in AClon. for 1401–2. Two sets of Latin annals record his death ‘in vigilia Nativitatis Beate Virginis [7 Sept.]’: CSI/M, ii, p. 286; Troyes MS
annalist to observe that ‘the Galls were very powerless after that [amhneart mór ac Gallaibh iar sin]’. Now both Munster earldoms were in minority and the two heirs – Thomas of Desmond and James Butler, the future White Earl – spent some time in each other’s company in the household of Stephen le Scrope, then deputy lieutenant of Ireland. In March 1406, Thomas, while still under age, received custody of the Geraldine inheritance. Little is known of his period of personal rule as fifth earl of Desmond, and so the chance survival of a record concerning the Desmond liberty of Kerry is especially valuable. By a mandate dated 20 December 1410, the treasurer of the liberty was instructed to cause the tidy sum of £674 13s. to be levied from the issues and profits of assizes held at Tralee before the seneschal of Kerry between July and December 1410. The document affords us no more than a glimpse of the judicial machinery of the Desmond earldom at work, but it leaves the impression of a young earl who was thrusting, perhaps even predatory, in the pursuit of his fiscal rights.

Perhaps, then, there was little sympathy for Thomas when he was banished from Ireland in 1411 by his uncle James, another of the sons of Gerald, third earl of Desmond. For details of this event we are dependent on the report in the Gaelic annals that the ‘earl of Desmond was expelled by his own kinsman, namely by James, son of Gerald, so that he put the warl out from Ireland; that is, Thomas, son of Earl John’. The expropriated earl of Desmond did not lightly accept his fate. He travelled to England, where he busied himself with the

1316, fo. 50v. The obits appended to Grace’s annals place it under 20 Aug.: *Annales Hiberniae, Kilkenniensis, Jacobi Grace*, ed. Richard Butler (Dublin, 1842), pp 162–3. The dates in the English inquisitions post-mortem vary, but most attribute his death to 7 Sept.: CIPM, 1405–13, nos 26–30 (7 Sept.), no. 31 (4 Sept.), nos 32–3 (6 Sept.). AMisc., pp 174–5 (s.a. 1405.11). Ormond is described as the ‘head of valour of Ireland [cenn crodachta na hErenn]’ in his death notice in the other annals: AC, s.a. 1404.15 (quotation); AFM, iv, pp 780–1; ALC, ii, pp 108–9; ACLon., pp 324–5. Sir Stephen Scrope later sought allowance of £66 13s. 4d. for the expenses of the earls of Ormond and Desmond who were in his household (BL, Add. Charter 18222). This fragment of Scrope’s account is undated. A note in pencil on the dorse suggests a date of 1401, but it is more likely that it should be attributed to Scrope’s tenure as deputy lieutenant in 1406–7, when both the earldoms of Desmond and Ormond were in minority. RCH, p. 182, no. 67. The letter is attested by William fitz Gerald, seneschal of the liberty of Kerry at Tralee: NLI, Harris MS 4, fos 173–174v. The record is mentioned in William Lynch, *A view of the legal institutions, honorary and hereditary offices and feudal baronies, established in Ireland during the reign of Henry the second: deduced from court rolls, inquisitions and other original records* (London, 1830), p. 248. On 8 Dec. 1388, Gerald, third earl of Desmond, had received a licence to send this James to be fostered with the Uí Bhriain of Thomond: RCH, p. 139, no. 88 (misnumbered in RCH as no. 82). AU, iii, pp 60–1; AFM, iv, pp 806–7. ALC and AC erroneously describe James of Desmond as ‘his [Thomas]’ brother’: ALC, pp 136–7; AC, s.a. 1411.16. James of Desmond’s position was subsequently legitimized, so it is little surprise to find that later Geraldine tradition tends either to gloss over the expulsion of his nephew or to stress Earl Thomas’ flaws and culpability. No mention is made of the usurpation in Séamus Pender (ed.), ‘The O Clery book of genealogies’, AH, 18 (1951), nos 2137–8; Samuel Hayman (ed.), ‘The Geraldines of Desmond’, *JRSAI*, 4th ser., 5 (1879–82), 220–1, 227. The Mac Fhir Bhísigh genealogies do not refer to the expulsion, but twice state that ‘he [Tomás] died without offspring [d’imthigh
recruitment of a force for the recovery of his earldom. It was not until the accession of Henry V in 1413 that Thomas’ activities in exile came to anything. On 21 August 1413, a commission issued from the English chancery for the arrest of shipping at Bristol or other ports along England’s west coast to carry a force of some sixty men-at-arms and three hundred archers to Ireland with Thomas of Desmond.83 His supporters were drawn from the south-west of England, an area to which many Munster-men seem to have emigrated in the later fourteenth century.84 Roland Roche and John Hoigge of Cornwall and Peter Yorke of Shaftesbury (Dorset) were granted letters of protection in December 1413 because they were about to go to Ireland in the king’s service with Thomas, earl of Desmond.85 Another recruit who accompanied Desmond to Ireland was the abbot of the house of Augustinian canons at Keynsham in Somerset.86 It was presumably in gratitude for the abbot’s support that Thomas petitioned the king for a licence to make a grant in perpetuity to the abbot and convent of Keynsham of the advowson of the church of Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, which Desmond held in chief of the king.87 Thomas seems to have arrived in Ireland during 1414.88 The annals report that the ‘Earl of Desmond came into Ireland this year
and a force of Saxons came with him [nert Saxanach do thecht leis] to destroy Munster’. The ensuing campaign failed in its objective of dislodging James the Usurper. We next hear of Earl Thomas in 1417, when we are told that he had been ‘falsly & deceatfully taken & detayned in prison by his unkle [James], to the greate distruction of all the contry of Mounstre’.

Where did the Butlers of Ormond stand with respect to the turmoil engulfing their neighbours in Munster? At the time of the expulsion of Thomas of Desmond in 1411, the incumbent chief governor of Ireland was Thomas Butler, prior of Kilmainham, deputy of the king’s lieutenant, Thomas of Lancaster. Prior Thomas may not have been in cahoots with James the Usurper, but there is a circumstantial case to be made that he was content to look the other way as the wicked uncle ousted his nephew from power. On 13 December 1411, James of Desmond was granted custody of the manor of Lemardcale, Co. Kerry, then in the king’s hand. This was a modest show of favour to be sure, but its timing suggests that it was pregnant with significance. The grant was made in the aftermath of James’ usurpation of Desmond. Given that the letters patent had to pass under the great seal of Ireland, it is safe to assume that they were issued with the assent of the chief governor. In other words, Prior Thomas Butler seems then to have acquiesced in James’ usurpation of Desmond. A further crumb of record evidence strengthens this interpretation. By Irish-seal letters dated March 1413, one David son of Odo de Lees, formerly sheriff of Limerick, received a pardon of treasons and felonies at the request of James of Desmond. Here, James the Usurper is seen intervening successfully with the central government to obtain this small piece of patronage on behalf of a member of the Geraldine affinity in Munster. The wider significance of this is that the chief governorship of Ireland was then still in the hands of Prior Thomas Butler of Ormond.

On the other hand, the fact that men in Desmond’s company were still taking out letters of protection on 18 Dec. 1413 (CPR, 1413–16, pp 146, 150) suggests that his force may have only set out after this date and arrived in Ireland during 1414. 89 AU, iii, pp 66–7 (quotation at p. 67); AFM, iv, pp 816–17. AC, s.a. 1414.11, reads ‘to devastate Meath [Ir. do milled na Mide]’, but this is an error for Munster (Muman). ALC does not record the event. 90 Ellis, Original letters, i, letter xix, p. 61. 91 RCH, p. 198, no. 10 (the recipient is recorded as ‘Jacobus de Dessemond’). The manor in question occurs as ‘Lymerkaghell’ (par. Ballymacelligott, bar. of Trughanacmy, Co. Kerry) in the Desmond survey of Kerry taken in 1584: NAI, MS 5037. I am indebted to Paul MacCotter for the identification of this place-name. For the cantred of Acumys, see Paul MacCotter, ‘The cantredes of Desmond’, JCAHS, 105 (2000), 58; idem, Medieval Ireland: territorial, political and economic divisions (Dublin, 2008), p. 166. 92 The grant to James the Usurper also coincided with a rush of favours made to other known Butler supporters, for which see Crooks, ‘Factionalism and noble power’, pp 314–15. 93 The letter is calendared as follows in NAI, RC 8/34, p. 111 (I have expanded the abbreviations): ‘Henricus &c. ad requisicionem Jacobi Dessemon’ pardonamus David filius Odonis de Lees nuper vicecomitem Lymer’ sectam pacis nostre que ad nos versus ipsum pertinet pro omnimodis prodicionibus feloniis &c per ipsum factum &c. […] die Marcii anno regni nostri quarto decimo.’ The precise day of the month on which the letters passed under the Irish seal is not given. The omission is explained by a note in the margin of the Irish Record Commission’s calendar, which states that the original memoranda roll was torn.
Kilmainham, whose term in office only lapsed with the death of Henry IV on 20 March 1413. It was shortly after the accession of Henry V that the White Earl of Ormond returned from military service in France. He was destined next for Ireland. It is not entirely clear whether Henry V expected Ormond to aid Thomas of Desmond, who was preparing to sail for Ireland in the autumn of 1413 in order to recover his earldom; but it seems probable that this was what the king had in mind.\textsuperscript{94} Orders to arrest shipping for Ormond’s company of forty men-at-arms and 160 archers were issued on the same day and for the same port as those for Desmond.\textsuperscript{95} The king’s intentions are one matter. Political realities are another. There is, in fact, no evidence that Ormond offered Earl Thomas any assistance in his abortive enterprise.\textsuperscript{96}

Active military support for Thomas of Desmond was, however, forthcoming during the lieutenancy of Sir John Talbot. The last item in the encomium for Talbot composed on 26 June 1417 and intended for the eyes of Henry V refers to a campaign that the lieutenant conducted in Munster with the purpose of releasing Earl Thomas of Desmond from captivity.\textsuperscript{97} Talbot himself was to complain to John, duke of Bedford (left behind in England as the king’s lieutenant after Henry V embarked upon the reduction of Normandy in 1417), of the great costs he had incurred in delivering Earl Thomas from the hands of his enemies: the earl was now said to be resident in Talbot’s household without a penny of his own.\textsuperscript{98} Despite Talbot’s best efforts, James the Usurper retained control of the region: in 1417, the annals report that James killed ‘Tomas mac Meic Muris Ciarraigi’,\textsuperscript{99} probably the son of Maurice Óg of the FitzMaurices of Kerry.\textsuperscript{1} Nonetheless, Talbot’s intervention in the politics of Munster must have rankled with the Butlers, and it is surely significant that it was on 18 July 1417 – as couriers sought to cross the Irish Sea with news of Desmond’s release\textsuperscript{2} – that the estates of the White Earl of Ormond had been seized into the king’s hand. In the autumn of 1417, Thomas of Desmond accompanied the lieutenant as the latter journeyed through the newly confiscated Butler estates, and he was among those in Waterford Cathedral on 20 September 1417 when Talbot took the submission of Walter Burke (the enemy of the prior of Kilmainham). Present at the same ceremony were some of the principal members of the king’s council in Ireland (the chancellor and treasurer), as well as the bishop of Waterford and the mayor of the city.\textsuperscript{3} That Desmond was fraternizing with these dignitaries may be taken as indicative of his high standing with Talbot.

\textsuperscript{94} For an alternative view, see Matthew, ‘Governing Lancastrian Ireland’, p. 112. \textsuperscript{95} CPR, 1413–16, p. 117. \textsuperscript{96} Ormond’s failure to support Desmond may be reflected in the way in which the annals report their respective arrivals in 1414 as two separate events with discrete motives: \textit{AC}, s.a. 1414.11; \textit{AFM}, iv, pp 816–17. \textsuperscript{97} Ellis, \textit{Letters}, i, letter xix, p. 61. Pollard erroneously places this event in the summer of 1418: Pollard, ‘Family of Talbot’, p. 117. \textsuperscript{98} BL, Cotton Titus B.XI, pt 1, no. 31 (=appendix 9.2). \textsuperscript{99} AC, s.a. 1417.5. \textsuperscript{1} For whom, see K.W. Nicholls, ‘The FitzMaurices of Kerry’, \textit{JK.AHS}, 3 (1970), 35. \textsuperscript{2} BL, Cotton Titus B.XI, pt 1, no. 31 (=appendix 9.2). \textsuperscript{3} Otway-Ruthven, ‘Arrest’, pp 76, 87; BL, Cotton Titus
Talbot’s promotion of the cause of Earl Thomas of Desmond is clear enough. It is more difficult to show a direct connection at this time between the Butlers and the earl of Desmond’s uncle, James the Usurper. An indirect link is, however, suggested in a letter ‘writon in grete haste’ by John Marshal, constable of Athy Castle, Co. Kildare. The letter reports that one M’gilfatrike (that is, Mac Giolla Phádraig of Osraige) wished to become Talbot’s man. To prove his good faith, Mac Giolla Phádraig offered to serve at Talbot’s command, in particular against ‘Acalagh’ (that is, An Calbhach Ó Conchobhair Failghe) and James of Desmond, who were said to be making themselves strong against Talbot. Mac Giolla Phádraig’s offer contains a strong element of self-interest. His territory was located on the northern marches of the Butler lordship and he was a traditional enemy of the earls of Ormond. His application to Talbot enables us to delineate the rival parties in Ireland. An Calbhach, whom the letter identifies as hostile to Talbot, was an ally of the Butlers. Together with Prior Thomas Butler, An Calbhach laid siege to Roscommon Castle in 1417–18. This was to provide the Talbot party with ammunition. Talbot later alleged that Ormond extracted ‘black rent and tribute money’ from his manor of Oughterard, Co. Kildare, and ordered that it should be paid to An Calbhach’s wife, Margaret. Ormond was further accused of arresting Thomas Talbot esquire, Sir John Talbot’s cousin, and passing him into the hands of An Calbhach. Thomas was said to have been ransomed for £10, but before his release his Gaelic captors ‘beat him and laid their cudgels on him, more than he might bear, by which matter the said Thomas is seriously injured’. In this context, it is interesting to note that on 23 October 1417 Talbot had attacked Ó Conchobhair Failghe’s castle of Croghan, Co. Offaly, and burned it to the ground. The significance of all this
lies in the fact that Mac Giolla Phádraig mentions An Calbhach and James of Desmond in the same breath. Clearly both men were allies of the Butlers. Since Talbot was also hostile to Butler interests, Mac Giolla Phádraig seems to have calculated that the enemy of his enemies might be a powerful friend.

If an alliance between James the Usurper and the Butlers is only hinted at during Talbot’s tenure, it comes into clear focus soon after Ormond was appointed as king’s lieutenant in Ireland on 10 February 1420. On 10 December 1420, James of Desmond was appointed to a wide-ranging commission of the peace, and Ormond also authorized a payment to James of £100 in response to the latter’s petition that he had long retained many men-at-arms in resisting the malice of the Irish enemies and English rebels of Munster and Connacht.

Given that during the Talbot regime James of Desmond was deemed to be first among those ‘English rebels’, his reinvention under the aegis of the White Earl as a respectable pillar of English government in the south-west is highly impressive. Still greater advancement was to follow. In December 1420, rumours reached Ireland that Earl Thomas of Desmond had died in France, where he had been buried in the convent of Friars Preachers in Paris in the presence of Henry V himself. The inquisitions post-mortem taken soon afterwards identify James of Desmond as the next heir of his brother John, fourth earl of Desmond, and state that since John’s death

Maurice fitz Gerald and Thomas fitz John … have occupied and do occupy all the said manors and lordships and received the issues and profits of the same, in virtue, the jurors say, of a grant made by the king [Henry IV] to Maurice and Thomas by reason of the minority of Thomas son of John.

Not only is the matter of James of Desmond’s usurpation brushed over, but the late Thomas son of John is nowhere accorded the comital title. This outcome was politically expedient and may have been manipulated. In effect, Thomas was
posthumously disinherited and the jurors’ findings ‘proved’ that the Butlers had been supporting the rightful heir to the earldom of Desmond all along.19 With James the Usurper now sporting the title earl of Desmond, the Geraldines’ cooperative relationship with the Butlers could be placed on an official footing. By an indenture of January 1422, Ormond appointed Desmond as ‘keeper, governor and supervisor’ of the Butler moiety of the barony of Inchiquin and the town of Youghal, Co. Cork.20 Two months after this agreement, a testimonial was composed in favour of Ormond by the community of Co. Limerick. It mentions both Ormond and Desmond and extols the virtues of their partnership. The authors report that Ormond ‘made war against the enemies and rebels of our lord the king in that land, in the most commendable manner, receiving great help from James of Desmond, the earl of Desmond … to the praise of God, the great honour of our lord the king [and] the comfort and relief of the loyal people of the land’.21 Apparently, the two comital houses in the south of Ireland had found a means of living together and this seems to have acted to the benefit of the colony at large.

James the Usurper’s affiliation with the Butlers had, therefore, served him well. He gained a comital title as well as control of the estates in east Cork that the Munster Geraldines had coveted since the time of his grandfather, Maurice fitz Thomas, first earl of Desmond (d. 1356).22 The price of accepting Ormond’s sponsorship was that the new earl of Desmond acknowledged himself to be the junior partner in the relationship. This was a startling departure. A cardinal feature of the Geraldine–Butler conflict since the 1350s had been the stubborn refusal of successive earls of Desmond to bow to the reality that the Butlers held the advantage. It was not, however, a compromise that succeeded because it pleased neither party. On the contrary, the Talbot–Ormond feud has its origins in the fact that, by supporting Earl Thomas of Desmond, Sir John Talbot had imperiled the modus vivendi that had operated to the satisfaction of the Geraldines and Butlers since James’ usurpation of 1411. In the event, their spirit of détente endured no more than a matter of decades. The Geraldine–Butler
alliance was strengthened in 1429 – significantly, a year of high tension with the Talbots – by an agreement under the terms of which Desmond’s infant son, Thomas, was to marry Anne Butler, daughter of the White Earl of Ormond. But it collapsed when, c. 1444, the White Earl’s daughter, Elizabeth, was wedded to Sir John Talbot’s heir and namesake, John (d. 1460). It may have been this act of reconciliation between the Talbot and Ormond parties that prompted Desmond to launch a raid deep into Butler territory in 1444. Not for the first time, the resolution of one conflict sowed the seeds for another.

APPENDIX 10.1

Documents on the origins of the Talbot–Ormond feud

Note on editorial conventions

The language of documents 1, 2 and 3 below is Anglo-Norman. Abbreviations have been silently expanded and contractions noted only in exceptional cases. Miniscule i and u have been standardized where they are used for consonantal j and v. Endorsements are printed at the end of the texts, signalled by the word ‘Dorse’ in angled brackets.

Document 4 is written in a form of Middle English associated with Nottinghamshire. In the edition presented below, italics indicate letters supplied editorially; superscript is used for superior letters in the MS. Some modifications have been made to word division: hyphens have been added to words written separately but which are now considered as single (for example, ‘a-nother’). I have retained the letter ȝ throughout: it is used consistently as a consonantal y in the text. The letter þ is used in print to represent the thorn although in the original MS this letter takes the form of a y. Where a Tironian note is employed for ‘and’ I have supplied the full word in italics.

In all four documents, the vertical bar (|) marks the end of each line in the manuscript. Paragraphs have been introduced for convenience, as has some punctuation. Interlineations are printed in superscript set off from the rest of the text by obliques. Letters enclosed by square brackets indicate a lacuna in the MS. A barred double-L (for example, worchipfu ll) is used in documents 2, 3 and

Thomas, first earl of Desmond’, passim. There are, in fact, two MSS under this number in NLI: Ormond’s portion of the original indenture and a sixteenth-century copy of the same document. Only the latter is mentioned by Curtis in COD, iii, no. 88. For the historical background to the agreement, see Matthew, ‘Governing Lancastrian Ireland’, pp 241–2. AMacFirbis, p. 205. The episode is discussed in Matthew, ‘Governing Lancastrian Ireland’, pp 361–2. The later phases of the Geraldine–Butler feud are discussed in Anthony McCormack, The earldom of Desmond, 1463–1583: the decline and crisis of a feudal lordship (Dublin, 2005). Angus McIntosh, M.L. Samuels and Michael Benskin (eds), A linguistic atlas of late medieval English (4 vols, Aberdeen, 1986), i, pp 120, 231.
4: in each case it appears to be a flourish rather than a mark of suspension and consequently it is not noted. I have, however, retained the double-F because it may be of palaeographical interest.

1. **INDENTURE between SIR JOHN TALBOT, Lord Furnival, and JAMES BUTLER, fourth earl of Ormond. Dated 2 February 1415**

East Riding of Yorkshire County Record Office (Beverley), DDX 152/50

Ceste endenture faite parentre John Talbot, Sire de ffurnyvalle, lieutenant a nostre tressouverain Seignur le Roi en sa terre dirlande | dune part et James le Botiller, count dormond, dautre part tesmoigne qu le dit count est retenuz et demurez ovec le dit a (sic) | lieutenant pur luy servir en la dite terre ovec toutz ses gentz defensibles a chival et \^\^/ pee sufficeantement mountez, armez et | arraiez come affiert a guerre pur quex il vorra respondre durant le temps qils serront as ascuns journeys et envenantz | et retournantz par un an entire, preignant du dit lieutenant pur lan suisdit c. licres.\(^{28}\) Et le dit count serra prest a tout | temps ovec ses ditz gentz de venir a mesme le lieutenant par resonable garnisment a luy afaire a devant pur travailler, | aler et chivacher\(^{29}\) ovec luy en toutz ses journeys et hosteynges a faires ou a purposers deinz lavantdite terre par le lieutenant | suisdit. Et avera le dit count pur luy et ses ditz gentz bouche de court as coustages le dit lieutenant (sic) ou autrement | par sou assigment enveignantz devers luy a ses journeys y demurantz et retournantz a soun countrte. Et avera mesme le | lieutenant les tierces des gaignes de guerre du dit count et ses gentz avantditz. Et en cas qil avient le | dit count ou ascun de ses gentz de prendre ascuns prisoners, cestassaver chieftayn, capitayn ou ascun autre | comune\(^{30}\) mailefaisour des Irroys ennemys, qils les ne mettront a raunceon saunz licence del dit lieutenaut meas | qil ait tielx prisoners, faisant resonable guerdon a celuy qi les prist. En tesmoignance de quelle chose | as ycestes endentures les parties avantditez entrechaungeablement ount mys lour sealx. Doun le secunde jour de ffeverer | lan du regne nostre Seignur le Roi Henri quint secunde. {Et qe le dit count et ses ditz gentz veignantz as journeys et | hosteynges du dit lieutenant y demurantz et dilleoqes retournantz soient frankes et seurez saunz empechement dascuny.}\(^{31}\)

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\(^{27}\) This edition appears by permission of the East Riding of Yorkshire County Record Office.  
\(^{28}\) That is, £ 100. Abbreviated in MS as ‘li.’  
\(^{29}\) Written in MS with a mark of suspension through the ascender of the final letter.  
\(^{30}\) Contracted in MS.  
\(^{31}\) The final sentence, printed here within curly brackets, appears to have been added after the remainder of the indenture had been written out. The impression of a seal in red wax is attached to the plica by a parchment tag.
2. From SIR JOHN TALBOT to JOHN, duke of Bedford. Written at Lassenhale, Co. Dublin, 11 July 1417
BL, Cotton Titus B. XI, pt 1, no. 31

A° 5. H5

Treshaut et puissant Prince et moun tresnoble et gracious Seignur, Jeo me recomanc a vostre treshaute Seignurie si humblyment come jeo say ou puisse | od tressoverain desire de lassaver auxi gracious et tresjoious novelx come vostre tresnoble coer meuex sawera ymaginer a mespeciale consolacioun | toutfois lesmericiant des plusieurs tresnobles et graciosues seignuries queu lad plu de me moustriert toutdis saurs desert du ma parte avaunt | ces heures humblyment lensuppliant du graciouse perseverance.

Et treshaut et puissant Prince et moun tresnoble et gracious Seignur please | a mesme vostre treshaute Seignurie benignement a considerer le grande et importable charge qe nostre tressoverain Seignur le Roi mad commys a | perfaire dupardecea ovec trope petite soumme de monioe de la mayntener, come il est bien conue, par quelle enchesousen ses ennemys | dupardecea toutdis perceviantz ma nounpoair toutsoit qe jeo eux plusours foitz amesne a peas encuentre lour gree, meyntenant | resourdient a guerre a moy contenuelle labour et vrayssemblable anientisment du ma persone qest forsque petit perde et mes auxi | grandes expenses et coustages jeuxay es longe temps entour la deliverance de le Count de Dessemond hors des mayns de ses | ennemys, qest pleynement delivere et ovec moy aupresent en hostiell nient aint acanse deri de ses propres dont il purra viver | pur ceeq que depuis sa enprise toutz ses seignuries chastielles et villes sont outremen destruez et degastez pur greindre partie, qest trop | dolorouse a counstre; treshuminglyensuppliant a vostre treshaute Seignurie desuisdite qala please en salvacioune de lestate nostre | dit Seignur le Roi et sa dite terre et de ses foialx lieges dicelle si graciosement ordeigner pur moy et en tielle manere par advys de le | tressage conseille mesme nostre Seignur le Roi qe jeo purrey aver en mayn ce qest a moy due pur la salve garde diceste terre en haste, pur ceeq qe mes | souldeurs ne voillent attendre ovec moy ne le pays eux responde de nulle manere vitaille nautre chose sauns prest paiement en | mayn, considerantz qe toute la forte guerre de les irroys ennemys et engleys rebelx est toutdis commenceant chescun | an le jour de Seint | Patric et contenuvant jesqes a la feste de Seint Michell enusyant.

Entendantz outre cee, moun tresgracious Seignur, qe jatarde devant le passage | de nostre dit Seignur le Roi as parties de ffraunce, lou nostre seignur Jhesu par lensupplicacion de sa gloriouse mier luy otorre tresgracious esploit et victorie | de ses ennemys, jestoie ordeigne dapprochier sa tresgracious presence.

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32 This edition appears by permission of the British Library Board. The contents of the letter are discussed in Otway-Ruthven, Med. Ire., pp 352–3. 33 This heading (indicating the fifth regnal year of Henry V) appears at the head of the MS in a later hand. 34 Contracted in MS. 35 Contracted in MS as ‘ihu’, with a flourish.
pur y pursuyer pur les maters avantditez et auxi a respondre as certains suggestions a luy faites sur moy en mabsence par mes nient bienveillantz come jeo suy enforunve comme sa tresgraciouse ordenaunce voudra agarder celle partie et les foialx lieges espirituelx et temporelx diceste terre considerantz la graunde guerre eux enyrone et doubdantz la grande perile et destruccioune semblables descheier par mabsence, toutsoit qele est forsqe petit vaillant, mont requiz depart nostre dit Seignur le Roy dattendre et eux descrier a luy en message pur moy et pur moun paiement aver en mayn, le quelle message fuist prest a le meer ovec | monsire Barthelmewe Verdon, lour messanger, pur passer envers nostre dit Seignur le Roy et sur ceo certainx novelx viendroit depardula la meer | qil estoit passe en souin dit viage, pur quelle cause le dit monsire Bartelmewe retourna de la meer ovec le dit message tanqe a la | repaire de nostre Seignur le Roi suisdit, par cause de quelle retourne dicelle message me faute de force de vous moun tresnoble Seignur certifier de ma | necessitee et distresse ycy sauns aucun comfort ou relevelement sinoun qil soit par vostre treshauta discrsioune celle partie fait, la copie du quelle message jay gaigne de les lieges avantditz de vous lenvoier par cause qe le dit messanger est retourne par moun | servitour John Kirkam portour dicestes qe vous en purrez estre avisez par le tressage conseille avantd dit et moy covenable et | hastive remedie ordeign’ come le cas requiert.

Dautre part moun tresnoble Seignur sil vous plese soit riens assav’ de moun simple labour | dupardeecia deux jours devant la faisance dicestes jeo faisoie un journey sur un fort irroys ennemy Chieftayn’ de sa nacioun nomme | Occonour, lou jeo dona escomfite sur luy et soun people et furent plusours deux tuez naufrez et pris prisoners et grande partie de lour | pais aida et preia et un fort Chastiell appelle le Chastiell de Croghan’ debrusa a terre, a lour tresgrande rebuke, mercie dieu.

Treshaut et puissant Prince et moun tresnoble et gracious Seignur, autres ne say aupresent a vostre tresgracieouse Seignurie escriver meas | qala please adjuistier gracieouse audience a mon dit servitour de tout ces quil ala certifiera dupart moy et sy isoit chose dupardeecia ou | aillours qe faire puisse a vostre plesieur Vous plese de me commanduer come vostre homme demesne pur laacmoplier sauns feintise du | treslee coer a ma poair. Et luy toutpuissant vous ottroie tresgracieouse et tresnoble prosperitee toutvois perseverante a sa | plesance.

Escript a Lassenhale le xi jour de Juylle
Vostre homme demesne |
John Talbot

36 Some letters are clipped along the right margin of the endorsement.
A treshaut et puissant prince et moun tresnoble et gracious Seignur le Duc de Bedeford lieu[tentant] Deng[lettere].

3. From SIR JOHN TALBOT to JOHN, duke of Bedford.
Written at Naas, Co. Kildare, 25 October 1417
BL, Cotton Titus B. XI, pt 1, no. 46

Ae. 5. Hen 5

[T]reshaut et puissant prince et moun tresnoble et tresgracious Seignur, Jeo moy recommank a vostre haute Seignurie si humblement come jeo say ou puisse ove souveraigne desire de lassavoir auxi graciouses et joiouses novelx come vostre tresnoble coer meulx savera ymaginer a ma tressingulere consolacioun affectuousement lesmerciant des plusours graciouses et tresnobles Seignuries queux vous ad plu de me mouster souvent foitz devant ces heures sauns desert du ma part, humblement vous ensuppliant de graciose perseverance.

Et treshaut et puissant prince et moun tresnoble et tresgracious Seignur, si de moun petit estate et governance diceste terre dirlande vous please assavoir, Jeo suy lesse come homme desolate et la dite terre en pointe destre destruez, qe dieu defende, saunz ceo qe jeo soy releve par mye vostre tresgraciouse Seignurie, pur ceo qe jeo nay null paiement pur mes souldeours, les queux departent de moy de jour en autre pur defaute dicelle, ensy qe jeo ne suy de nulle poair [p]ur resister la malice des enemys et rebelx en yceste terre sauns hastive relevement des souldeours dupardela, le quelle jeo ne puisse faire sauns preste paiement en main; entendantz moun tresgracious Seignur qe tout ceste an passe jeo nay nulle dener hors dengleterre pur yceste terre sinoun de mes rentz propres, qe sount forsqe petit al mainteignance des guerres dirlande qare de les assignementz dount jeo suy certifie par mes attourneez illeqes qe jay pur yceste terre ils nont rescue ascun dener ne ne savont mye qaunt ils ferront.

Et come a la governance diceste terre, y est oretarde graunde rumour surdee es parties de Mounestre parentre le Priour de Kilmaynan, le quelle ait coilee a luy plusours irroys chiefains et ennemys ovec toute lour poair al nombre de xv. batailx, come jeo suy certifie, les queux gisount sur le liege people a lour costage, par cohercioun del dit Priour et sauns auctoritee, es countees de Kilkenny et Tyrerare au finale destruction de mesmes les Countees entaunt, come jeo suy acertes par les foialx des ditz Countees qe eux covient par compulsioun du dit Priour de paier au present as ditz enemys pur lour gages outre lour manger et boier qe amont’ a greindre somme m'DC marcz; et un Wauter Burk, graunde chieftain de sa nacioun, qi ait coilee a luy atauntz des enemys gisantz sur le

37 This edition appears by permission of the British Library Board. The contents of the letter are discussed in Otway-Ruthven, Med. Ire., p. 353. 38 This heading appears at the head of the MS in a later hand. 39 Some letters have been lost along the left-hand margin of the MS. 40 That is, 1,600 marks.
liege people es Countees de Lymeryk et Cork en mesme | la manere, au finale 
destruccioun dicelles, nient obstante qe oretarde devant le feste de Seint 
Michell41 darrein passe jestoie | es ditez partiez lou jeo fesoie peas owev toutz les 
irroys enemys environez les ditz counteez et nomement le dit Wauter | devenuz 
liege homme a nostre tressoveraigne Seignur le Roy et par son endenture a ceo 
obligeez et sur les seintz Evangeliez estroitement | sermenteez en presence de 
levesqe de Waterford’, maire de Waterford’ et plusieurs autres gentielz de pais 
pur la salvement | garder, la copie de quelle endenture jenvoie a vous 
tresgracious Seignur pur inspectioun ent par le portour dicestes, sur | 
quell peas jeo chargea les ditz Priour et Wauter sur lour ligeance pur la peas 
salvement garder.

Ensuppliant | humblement a vostre graciouse Seignurie suisdite qe vous 
please \xe/ considerer toutz les matiers et meschiefs avauntditez et ent ordeignier | 
remedie come il semble a vostre tressage discrecioun qil soit affaire et moy 
ensignifier, en salvacioun de le liege people et la | terre avantditz. Treshaut et 
puissant prince et moun tresnoble et tresgracious Seignur, autres ne sau 
present escriver a vostre tresgracioussse | Seignurie meas qa la please dajouster 
fois et graciouse audience a moun tresame servitour John Kirkham, portour 
dicestes, de tout[z] | [c]eo qil a la certifera touchant les matiers avanditez ou 
ascune autre depart moy par bouche, toutdys moy commandantz, moun | 
tresgracious Seignur, voz graciouses volunteez dupardecea ou aillours 
daccomplier a ma poair sauns feyntise. Et luy toutpuiss[nt] | [D]ieu vous 
ottenroie tresgracious et tresjoiouse vie toutdys perseverante a sa pleasance.

Escript a Naas le xxv. jour doctobre 
Vostre homme demesne |
John Talbot 

A treshaut et puissant Prince et n[ostre] | tresnoble et gracious Seignur le Duc 
de Bedeford] | lieutenant Dengler[terre].

4. JOHN MARSHALL, constable of Athy castle, to SIR JOHN TALBOT
Written at Adthe [Athy, Co. Kildare] on Sunday after Epiphany [No year]43

41 Michaelmas, 29 Sept. 1417.  42 Some letters are clipped along the right margin of the 
endorsement.  43 This letter was written in the month of Jan., but no year is given. Otway- 
Ruthven ventured a date of Jan. 1418 (Med. Ire., p. 353). Sir John Talbot served in person in 
Ireland in the first month of each of the years 1415–19. Consequently, the correct year may be 
1420, giving a precise date of 13 Jan. 1420. This would make sense of the author’s reference to 
Talbot’s enemies in France, because Talbot was bound for France in the first half of 1420 
(Pollard, John Talbot and the war in France, p. 9). From a letter of June 1417, we learn that 
Talbot had been responsible for repairing the bridge over the River Barrow at Athy, ‘sett in the 
fronture of the borders of the Irish enemies of Laiies, for the safe keeping whereof he hath 
ereccted a new tower upon the same for a warde to putt therwith a great fortificacioun aboute 
the same for resistance of the sayd enemies … by which bridge your faithfull leiges 
were oftentimes prayeda & killed, but now … may suffer their goods and cattells to remayne
TNA (PRO), SC 1/43/176

My moste worchipfull lorde I commande ow. And worchipfull lorde if it like ow to witte Mcfaghton was ate Adthe and Mcgilfatrike also and forsaid Mcfaghton p' id me I wald send ow worde and me another lettir iij days befor he parlement of M'morghe for he day wile Mcfaghton and Mcgilfatrike be here to make amends with 30wre counsell of his mater and before my lorde sais 30wre avyse to 30wre counell how his mater soll be governd for forsaid M'gilfatrike sais he wile be with 30w agauns þat 3e wile charge hem to be agauns and namely agauns Acalagh and gayns James of Desymond for he sais þat þai make ham stronge agauns 30w and sais ife þai halde any castell in 30wre countris he sail sige aboute þam to 3e send him helpe for þes wordes as Mcfaghton said to me.

And also my worchipfull lorde tynek on 30wre pore sowdiours of Adthe þat myght hafer better liverais þen þai had be-fore, for nowe are we be-hend of owre liveray fyfe wykes.

My worchipfull lorde I can say nomore at þis time but gode send 3e victorie of alle 3ower enimys in Ingland and Irelande and in France also and þat I gyfe yow to to 30wre seres giffte.

Writon in grete haste ate Adthe in owre owne castell on next Sonnonday aftir twelfeday.

John Marshall | yowre servaunt

in the feilds day and night whouth [sic] being stolen, or sustayning any other losse, which hath not beene scene here by the space of these thirty yeares past’ (Ellis, Letters, i, letter xix, p. 59). On 28 Jan. 1421, Sir Richard Wellesley was granted custody of Athy, referred to as a very great fortress and the key to the country (RCH, p. 251, no. 23). The tower mentioned here is now identified with the White Castle, Leinster Street, Athy. The current structure is, however, early sixteenth-century and it is not certain that it occupies the same site as the earlier tower. This crown-copyright document appears courtesy of the National Archives of the United Kingdom. ‘Mcfaghton’ here may be a true patronymic (i.e., ‘son of Fachtna’) and represent Giollaphádraig, the son of the king of Laoighis, Fachtna Ó Mórdha (d. 1377). The Irish annals report under the year 1415 that Sir John Talbot, Lord Furnival (named ‘Loard Furnamal’ by the annalist), plundered Laoghis and ‘the castle of Fachtna O Morda’s son [caslen meic Factna h. Mordai]’: AC, s.a. 1415.2; AFM, s.a. 1415.2. For Talbot’s fortification of Athy against the ‘Irish enemies of Laoghis’, see above, n. 142. 46 No space in MS. 47 Repeated in MS.