

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 inauguration 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

¹ Misquoted from William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part 1*, act 2, scene 3. 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. 419. ³ For discussion of the scene, see James A. Riddell, 'Talbot and the countess of Auvergne', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 28:1 (1977), 51–7. ⁴ For Talbot's career in France, see A.J. Pollard, *John Talbot and the war in France, 1427–1453* (London, 1983). On the development of his reputation in the century before Shakespeare wrote *Henry VI Part 1*, see Matthew Woodcock, 'John Talbot, terror of the French: a continuing tradition', *Notes and Queries*, 51:3 (Sept. 2004), 249–51. 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-

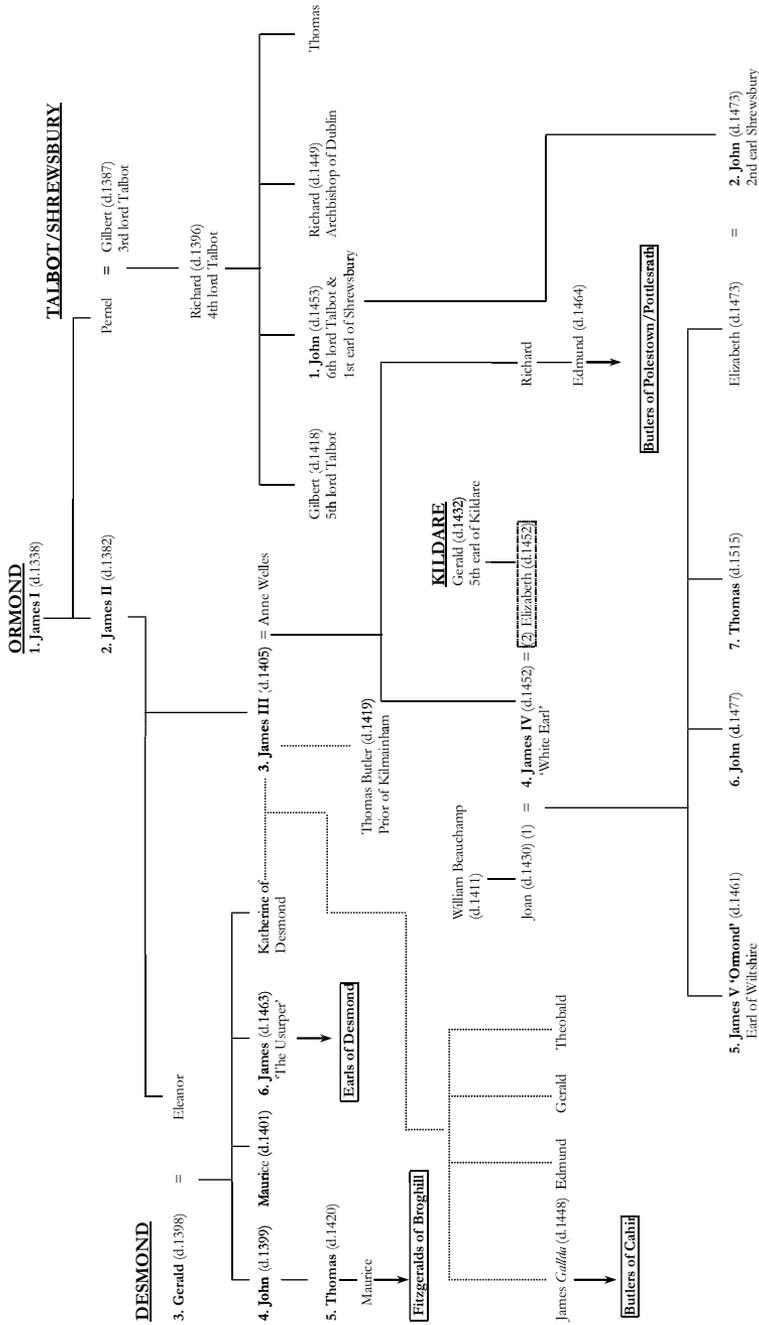
Butler, the fourth or 'white' earl of Ormond (d. 1452). These two men had much in common. They were both relatively young, being near contemporaries of King Henry V.⁸ Both had a background of service in the military enterprises of the Lancastrian dynasty. Both were to act as the king's lieutenant in 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

Ruthven, *Med. Ire.*, pp 348–58; *Ir. parl.*, pp 170–3, 200–2; R.A. Griffiths, *The reign of Henry VI: the exercise of royal authority, 1422–1461* (2nd ed., Stroud 1998), pp 162–7, 411–19. 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. 1389), 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 Éire 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–

Medieval frontier societies (Oxford, 1989), p. 184. ¹⁴ For discussions of the poem, which reach rather different conclusions, see Simms, 'Bards and barons', pp 186–7; Matthew, 'Governing Lancastrian Ireland', pp 413–20. For the poet, see Lambert McKenna (ed.), *Aithdioghluim dána: a miscellany of Irish bardic poetry* (2 vols, Dublin, 1939–40), i, p. xxxv. ¹⁵ Simms, 'Bards and barons', p. 178. See also Katharine Simms, 'Bardic poetry as historical source' in Tom Dunne (ed.), *The writer as witness: literature as historical source* (Cork, 1987), pp 60–7. There are further contextualizing comments on the genre in Katharine Simms, 'Literary sources for the history of Gaelic Ireland in the post-Norman period' in Kim McCone and Katharine Simms (eds), *Progress in medieval Irish studies* (Maynooth, 1996), pp 207–15; and Katharine Simms, *Medieval Gaelic sources* (Dublin, 2009), ch. 3. ¹⁶ McKenna (ed.), *Aithdioghluim dána*, ii, no. 36, pp 84–5. ¹⁷ This emerges also from the seigneurial ordinances of the White Earl, which regulated the imposition of 'coign' [*coinnmheadh*] in Tipperary and Kilkenny, for discussion of which, see C.A. Empey and Katharine Simms, 'The ordinances of the White Earl and the problem of coign in the later Middle Ages', *PRIA*,

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.

I

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.¹⁸ 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’.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ 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 £100.²¹ In the same month, Ormond benefited from a rush of patronage, including £10 per year from the fee-farm of the city of Waterford,²² and custody of a moiety of the manor of Inchiquin and the town of Youghal.²³ So far, so cordial. There were, however, some other straws in the wind. Ormond was

75C (1975), 161–87. ¹⁸ In the Westminster parliament of Oct. 1423, the antagonistic Talbot and Butler parties were exhorted to recall their ‘mutual links of consanguinity’ and to establish a ‘perfect link of love and harmony between these our lieges, connected by so close a blood relationship’: Anne Curry (ed.), ‘Henry VI: parliament of October 1423, text and translation’ in Chris Given-Wilson (ed.), *The parliament rolls of medieval England, 1275–1504* (16 vols, Woodbridge, 2005), available online at <http://www.sd-editions.com/PROME> [hereafter *PROME*], item 9. ¹⁹ *CP*, xii, pt 1, p. 615. See also the genealogical table that accompanies this essay. ²⁰ Peter Crooks, ‘Factionalism and noble power in English Ireland, c.1361–1423’ (PhD, TCD, 2007), pp 320–3. ²¹ East Riding of Yorkshire County Record Office (Beverley), DDX 152/50 (=appendix 9.1). The indenture is of special interest because it makes provision for the ransoming of captured Irish chieftains. The term of one year from 2 Feb. 1415 means that it is unlikely that Ormond fought (as tradition has it) at the Battle of Agincourt on 25 Oct. 1415. Elizabeth Matthew reaches the same conclusion, arguing from different evidence, in Matthew, ‘Governing Lancastrian Ireland’, pp 111–12. ²² *RCH*, p. 207, no. 142; *Rot. selecti*, p. 70. ²³ *RCH*, p. 208, nos 143, 155; *Rot. selecti*, p. 64. Ormond already held the other moiety in his own right, so this grant brought the entire territory under his control. Ormond’s

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.²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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,²⁶ was granted a ship called *La Trinité* of the port of New Ross,²⁷ 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.²⁸ On the following day, 7 February 1416, Talbot set sail for England at Clontarf, Co. Dublin.²⁹ 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 1416.³⁰ 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.³¹ The precise nature of Cranley's mission is unspecified, but it was almost certainly critical of Talbot.³² 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.³³

acquisition of the various purparties 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*, 82C3 (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. 1415.2; *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 54–63). 25 NAI, RC 8/36, pp 102–4 (printed in C.A. Empey, 'The Butler lordship in Ireland, 1185–1515' (2 vols, PhD, TCD, 1970), i, appendix 5, no. 1, p. xxxi). See also NAI, RC 8/36, pp 113–15, for another case that arose during the first half of 1415 concerning arrears of accounts owed by Ormond for the office of sheriff of Co. Cork, granted to his father on 28 May 1400. 26 *COD*, ii, no. 389. 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. 31 9 Hen. V [Ire.], c. 5 (*Statutes John–Hen V*, pp 566–7). 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 & gracious government' as lieutenant of Ireland.³⁴ Yet the roll-call of prelates, magnates and commons was not entirely representative, being weighted towards the communities of Dublin, Kildare, Meath and Louth.³⁵ 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.³⁶

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.³⁷ Its contents have been described more than once.³⁸ There were two interrelated strands of discord. The more prominent was the Talbot–Ormond rivalry. The White Earl himself had left Ireland in 1416,³⁹ and in his absence the Butler interest was represented by his half-brother, Prior Thomas Butler of Kilmainham.⁴⁰ 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

Cranley departed for England on 30 Apr. 1417, dying at Faringdon, Berkshire, on 25 May 1417: Troyes, MS 1316, fo. 52v; *The book of obits and martyrology of the cathedral church of the Holy Trinity, commonly called Christ Church, Dublin*, ed. John Clarke Crosthwaite (Dublin, 1844), p. 26. 34 Ellis, *Original letters*, i, letter xix, pp 54–63. 35 'Priell' in the text of the letter should read 'Uriell', i.e. Co. Louth (*ibid.*, p. 62). 36 NAI, RC 8/36, pp 170–3 (printed in Empey, 'Butler lordship in Ireland', appendix v, no. 2, p. xxxii). The Butler estates nearest to Dublin were the easiest for Talbot to seize, and the memoranda rolls reveal the arrangements made for their custody. On 9 Oct. 1417, the prisage of wines was granted to John Coryngham (NAI, RC 8/37, pp 20–1); and on 12 Oct. 1417, a receiver was appointed for the Butler manors of Cloncurry, Oughterard and Donaghdea, Co. Kildare (NAI, RC 8/37, pp 21–2), and for Blackcastle and Donaghmore, Co. Meath (NAI, RC 8/37, pp 23–4). 'Blake Castell' (barony of Lower Navan, Co. Meath) had been granted to James, third earl of Ormond (d. 1405), by Sir John Stanley (d. 1414): NLI, D 1384/1 (=COD, ii, no. 340, item 1). A transcript of this grant in a late hand is NLI, D 1044. In his calendar of the latter document (COD, ii, no. 68 at p. 62), Curtis misread the regnal year in the dating clause as 6 July [1349] 23 Edward III, as opposed to the true date of 6 July [1399] 23 Richard II, exactly half a century later. 37 TNA (PRO), E 163/7/12; a detached membrane of the same document has survived as TNA (PRO), E 101/698/34. Both MSS have been printed in modern editions: A.J. Otway-Ruthven (ed.), 'The background to the arrest of Sir Christopher Preston in 1418', *AH*, 29 (1980), 73–94 (hereafter, Otway-Ruthven, 'Arrest'); Peter Crooks (ed.), 'The background to the arrest of the fifth earl of Kildare and Sir Christopher Preston in 1418: a missing membrane', *AH*, 40 (2007), 1–15 (hereafter, Crooks, 'Missing membrane'). 38 Otway-Ruthven, *Med. Ire.* (2nd ed.), p. 354; Crooks, 'Missing membrane', pp 3–10. 39 Ormond's movements and service in France between 1412 and 1420 are carefully traced in Matthew, 'Governing Lancastrian Ireland', pp 111–15. 40 T. Blake Butler, 'Thomas le Botiller, prior of Kilmainham, 1403–1419', *Ir. Geneal.*, 1 (1937–42), 362–72.

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).⁴¹ This Walter Burke was later described as ‘the most rebell of Ireland for malys of the sayd Erle [of Ormond]’,⁴² 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.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ This outraged the Butlers and tipped the colony into crisis.⁴⁷ 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 1418.⁴⁸ His mission was partly with the purpose of securing the arrears of pay owed to him as lieutenant;⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰ The

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 Thoirdhealbhagh* (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; =*Domdall 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 1418,⁵¹ and he died there on 10 August 1419.⁵² 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.⁵³ Henry Marlborough explains the arrest with the enigmatic comment that ‘they sought to commune with the prior of Kilmainham’.⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵

II

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). 51 A commission addressed to the mayor of Southampton, concerning the passage to France of the prior of Kilmainham and his company, is dated 27 Oct. 1418: *CPR*, 1416–22, p. 202. On 7 Dec. 1418, a commission of array was issued for ‘John [recte Thomas] Potillere, prior of St John of Jerusalem in Ireland and all Irishmen in his service’: ‘Calendar of Norman rolls’, *Forty-First Annual Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* (1880), appendix i, p. 720. 52 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; *AFM*, iv, 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, no. 813.1; pp 738–9, no. 1390.3. 53 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, *Med. Ire.*, p. 355. She is followed in this by David Beresford, ‘The Butlers in England and Ireland, 1405–1515’ (PhD, TCD, 1999), p. 48. After their arrest, Kildare and Preston were then taken to the castle of Trim and they were later forced to enter recognizances of 1,000 marks and 50 marks respectively for their appearance before the king at Westminster at Hilary 1419: Otway–Ruthven, ‘Arrest’, 74. 54 I have followed the translation in Marlborough, *Chronicle*, pp 219–20. The Latin text runs ‘qui voluerunt loqui cum Priore de Kylmainan’: Troyes, MS 1316, fos 52v–53. 55 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.⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ The White Earl of Ormond had recently married Arundel's niece, Joan Beauchamp. Consequently, 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.⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰ Reprisals followed in the form of a brief but destructive war

century Ireland', *Studia Hibernica*, 13 (1973), 7–47. ⁵⁶ CCR, 1413–19, pp 97–9; *Calendar of signet letters*, no. 772. The dispute is described in Edward Powell, 'Proceedings before justices of the peace at Shrewsbury in 1414: a supplement to the Shropshire peace roll', *EHR*, 91:392 (1984), 535–41; idem, 'The restoration of law and order' in G.L. Harriss (ed.), *Henry V: the practice of kingship* (Oxford, 1985), esp. pp 69–72; idem, *Kingship, law and society: criminal justice in the reign of Henry V* (Oxford, 1989), pp 220–3. ⁵⁷ Powell, 'Proceedings before justices of the peace at Shrewsbury in 1414', p. 539; idem, *Kingship*, p. 223 (quotation). ⁵⁸ Matthew, 'Governing Lancastrian Ireland', pp 115–16. ⁵⁹ For the earlier stages of the conflict between the Geraldines and Butlers, see Peter Crooks, "'Hobbes", "dogs" and politics in the Ireland of Lionel of Antwerp, c. 1361–6', *Haskins Society Journal*, 19 (2005), 117–48; Crooks, 'The "calculus of faction" and Richard II's duchy of Ireland, c. 1382–9' in Nigel Saul (ed.), *Fourteenth Century England*, 5 (Woodbridge, 2008), pp 94–115. More generally, see Peter Crooks, 'Factions, feuds and noble power in the lordship of Ireland, c. 1356–1496', *IHS*, 35:140 (2007), 425–54. ⁶⁰ The annals give the name of the perpetrator as 'Shane [or, in another version, 'Johannes'] fitz Thomas': 'Annales Anonymi' in K.W. Nicholls (ed.), 'Late medieval Irish annals: two fragments', *Peritia*, 2 (1983), 90, 92 n. b. He has been identified several times as John, the future fourth earl of Desmond (d. 1399); but it is by no means certain that this identification is correct. The fourth earl of Desmond's father was Gerald (i.e. *not* Thomas). There was a contemporary 'John fitz Thomas fitz John Mac Gybon' of Kilbolane who did homage to the bishop of Cloyne in 1403: Paul MacCotter and K.W. Nicholls (eds), *The pipe roll of Cloyne: Rotulus Pipæ Clonenensis* (Cloyne, 1996), pp 128–31, 243–4. It is more probable, however, that 'Shane fitz Thomas' came from the branch of the Desmond Geraldines that descended in an illegitimate line from Sir Thomas 'le Neve', nephew of the first earl of Desmond; this sept was known as Fitz Thomas (later MacThomas) and had its base in west Waterford: see Paul MacCotter, 'Lordship and colony in Anglo-Norman Kerry', *JKAHS*, 2nd ser., 1 (2004), 76 n. 56. This notice of Butler's death can also be located in the calendared version of the papers of Meredith Hanmer: Robert Pentland Mahaffy (ed.), *Calendar of the state papers relating to Ireland, 1601–3 (with addenda, 1565–1654) and of the Hanmer papers, preserved in the Public Record Office* (London, 1912), p. 686. The lost 'Annals of Lecan' record

between the two comital houses.⁶¹ 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.⁶² 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.⁶³

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.⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵ It has been suggested that this Maurice fitz Gerald gained official recognition as earl of Desmond,⁶⁶ 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'⁶⁷ – must be treated with circumspection. The letters were issued at the petition of John Hethe, a Bristol merchant who traded frequently with Ireland.⁶⁸ 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'.⁶⁹ Another record,

(s.a. 1396) that Thomas Butler was killed by the Geraldines: *AFM*, iv, 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 interlineations 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.⁷⁰ 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’,⁷¹ while the Mac Fhir Bhisigh genealogies record that Earl John was succeeded by his son Thomas.⁷² 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.⁷³

It was not to be. Maurice was dead before the end of 1401, leaving his nephew Thomas in minority.⁷⁴ 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’.⁷⁵ The balance of power was redressed on 7 September 1405 when Ormond died at Gowran, Co. Kilkenny.⁷⁶ 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’. ⁷⁰ 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). ⁷¹ *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. ⁷² *LMG*, iii, pp 74–5, nos 787.5, 787.6. 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’: Samuel Hayman (ed.), ‘The Geraldines of Desmond’, *JRSAI*, 4th ser., 5 (1879–82), 221. It may be worth noting that Thomas Russell’s ‘Relation of the FitzGerald’s 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. ⁷³ 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. ⁷⁴ 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. ⁷⁵ 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; *AFM*, 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. ⁷⁶ Two sets of Latin annals record his death ‘in vigilia Nativitatis Beate Virginis [7 Sept.]’: *CSiM*, ii, p. 286; Troyes MS

annalist to observe that ‘the Galls were very powerless after that [*amhneart mór ac Gallaibh iar sin*].⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸ In March 1406, Thomas, while still under age, received custody of the Geraldine inheritance.⁷⁹ 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 1410.⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹ 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’.⁸² 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.). 77 *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. 78 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. 79 *RCH*, p. 182, no. 67. 80 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. 81 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). 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’, *JRSAL*, 4th ser., 5 (1879–82), 220–1, 227. The Mac Fhir Bhisigh genealogies do not refer to the expulsion, but twice state that ‘he [Tomás] died without offspring [*d’imhigh*

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

gan tsliocht]: *LMG*, iii, pp 74–5, nos 787.5, 787.6. 83 *CPR*, 1413–16, p. 117. 84 A petition of c.1382 reports the flight of Munstermen to Bristol and Cornwall: TNA (PRO), SC 8/118/5889. 85 *CPR*, 1413–16, pp 146, 150. 86 For Keynsham, see David Knowles, *The religious houses of medieval England* (London, 1940), p. 85. Despite the title of a recent book, the cartulary of Keynsham Abbey is not extant: Barbara J. Lowe, *Keynsham Abbey: a cartulary* (Victoria, BC, 2006). A motivation for the abbot's support of Thomas of Desmond may have been a desire to re-establish his right to present to a number of churches in Co. Limerick whose advowsons the abbey of Keynsham had acquired early in the conquest of Ireland. The diocese of Limerick had recovered the advowsons of several of these churches in the mid-thirteenth century (*The Black Book of Limerick*, ed. James MacCaffrey (Dublin, 1907), pp 84–5), but Keynsham retained the advowsons of 'Iniskefty' and 'Garthbibboys' (i.e., Askeaton and Ballingarry). The abbot's presentations to Ballingarry were challenged 1411 and 1427: *CPL*, 1404–15, p. 232; *CPL*, 1417–31, p. 509. On 16 June 1423, the abbot of Keynsham was granted a licence to appoint a proctor to look after the Irish lands of the convent: *CPR*, 1422–9, p. 104. See also Henry Molony, 'Ancient churches and topography of Ballingarry parish, County Limerick', *JRSAL*, 35:3 (1905), 258–9; Thomas J. Westropp, 'Notes on Askeaton, County Limerick. Part I. The history, AD900 to 1579', *JRSAL*, 33:1 (1903), 29. 87 TNA (PRO), SC 8/307/15344 (petition of 'Thomas count de Dessemond'). On 12 Sept. 1413, Henry V assented to Desmond's request, and the lieutenant, chancellor, treasurer and other royal ministers in Ireland were ordered not to molest either the earl of Desmond or the abbot and convent of Keynsham on account of the donation: *CPR*, 1413–16, p. 160. The letters patent were subsequently enrolled in the Irish chancery: *RCH*, p. 204, no. 37. Henry Marlborough's obit for Thomas, earl of Desmond, cites the granting of lands to Keynsham as one of the reasons that James 'the Usurper' had renounced his nephew, 'alleging that he was an unthrift, and had wasted his patrimony both in Ireland and England, and that hee gave or would give lands unto the monastery of Saint Iames of Keynsham': Marlborough, 'Chronicle', p. 30 (quotation). In fact, Thomas' licence to grant lands to Keynsham dates from after he was expelled from Ireland for the first time. 88 His return is recorded in the annals before the arrival of Sir John Stanley as lieutenant: *AC*, s.a. 1414.16; *AFM*, iv, pp 818–19. We know from other sources that Stanley landed at Clontarf, Co. Dublin, on 25 Sept. 1413 (Troyes, MS 1316, fo. 52), which may indicate that Desmond's return should be placed in

and a force of Saxons came with him [*nert Saxonach do thecht leis*] to destroy Munster'.⁸⁹ 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 destruction of all the contry of Mounstre'.⁹⁰

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.⁹¹ 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.⁹² 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.⁹³ 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

1413. 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 cantreds 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, 'Fractionalism 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 felonis &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.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.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.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.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.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',⁹⁹ probably the son of Maurice Óg of the FitzMaurices of Kerry.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 release² – 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.³ That Desmond was fraternizing with these dignitaries may be taken as indicative of his high standing with Talbot.

⁹⁴ For an alternative view, see Matthew, 'Governing Lancastrian Ireland', p. 112. ⁹⁵ *CPR*, 1413–16, p. 117. 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: *AC*, s.a. 1414.11; *AFM*, iv, pp 816–17. ⁹⁷ Ellis, *Letters*, i, letter xix, p. 61. Pollard erroneously places this event in the summer of 1418: Pollard, 'Family of Talbot', p. 117. ⁹⁸ *BL*, Cotton Titus B.XI, pt 1, no. 31 (=appendix 9.2). ⁹⁹ *AC*, s.a. 1417.5. ¹ For whom, see K.W. Nicholls, 'The FitzMaurices of Kerry', *JKAHS*, 3 (1970), 35. ² *BL*, Cotton Titus B.XI, pt 1, no. 31 (=appendix 9.2). 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.⁴ The letter reports that one M^cgilfatrike (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)⁵ and James of Desmond, who were said to be making themselves strong against Talbot.⁶ 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.⁷ 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 1417–18.⁸ 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.⁹ Ormond was further accused of arresting Thomas Talbot esquire, Sir John Talbot's cousin, and passing him into the hands of An Calbhach.¹⁰ 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'.¹¹ 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.¹² The significance of all this

B.XI, pt 1, no. 46 (=appendix 9.3). 4 TNA (PRO), SC 1/43/176 (=appendix 9.4). 5 For whose long career, see Cormac Ó Cléirigh, 'The O'Connor Faly lordship of Offaly, 1395–1513', *PRLA*, 96C4 (1996), 90–3. He was son of Murchadh Ó Conchobhair Failghe (d. 1421), lord of Uí Failghe. For a genealogy, see *NHI*, ix, pp 150–1. A praise poem ('Briathra cogaidh con chath Laighnech') records his battle achievements against the foreigners: see Osbern Bergin (ed.), *Irish bardic poetry: texts and translations* (Dublin, 1970), no. 40, pp 154–7. 6 TNA (PRO), SC 1/43/176 (=appendix 9.4). Pollard misread James of Desmond as 'James of Ormond' in Pollard, 'Family of Talbot' (PhD), p. 121, and consequently the significance of the passage is lost. 7 Emmett O'Byrne, *War, politics and the Irish of Leinster, 1156–1606* (Dublin, 2002), pp 117–18. A Piers son of James son of Edmund Butler was slain in 1417 in the house of Donnchadh Mac Giolla Phádraig, 'by Donnchadh's blacksmith while they were dancing' (*AC*, s.a. 1417.15). He was of the Butlers of Slieveardagh or Lismallon, tenants of Inchirourke in Tipperary: see K.W. Nicholls, 'Anglo-French Ireland and after', *Peritia*, 1 (1982), 401, n. 5. A James son of Edmund Butler, possibly father of the Piers killed in 1417, was elected as seneschal of Tipperary in 1405: *RCH*, p. 181, no. 13. 8 Otway-Ruthven, 'Arrest', 78; Crooks, 'Missing membrane', 13. 9 Anne Curry (ed.), 'Henry VI: parliament of October 1423, text and translation', *PROME*, item 9. For a family connection between Margaret's father, Tadhg Ó Cearbhaill, and the Butlers, see O'Byrne, *War, politics and the Irish of Leinster*, p. 117. 10 Thomas Talbot esquire is not to be confused with Sir Thomas Talbot, brother of Sir John, and the latter's deputy at the time of the arrest of the earl of Kildare and Sir Christopher Preston. 11 Curry (ed.), 'Henry VI: parliament of October 1423'. 12 BL,

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 1420.¹³ On 10 December 1420, James of Desmond was appointed to a wide-ranging commission of the peace,¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸ In effect, Thomas was

Cotton Titus B.XI, pt 1, no. 46 (=appendix 9.3). The date on which Croghan was attacked can be precisely identified because Talbot informed the duke of Bedford that it took place 'deux jours devant la faisance dicestes', i.e. two days before the making of the letters, which are dated 25 Oct. 1417. 13 *CPR*, 1416–22, p. 256. Ormond assumed office as lieutenant on 22 Apr. 1420. 14 *RCH*, p. 217, no. 18. The commission's competence comprehended the counties of Waterford, Cork and Limerick, as well as the crosslands of the liberty of Kerry. 15 *RCH*, p. 252, no. 28. 16 Bodl., MS Laud Misc. 614, pp 99–100 (=a late transcript of Henry Marlborough's chronicle). 17 *COD*, iii, no. 45, p. 31. The grant referred to is that made on 29 May 1400, by which custody of the Geraldine inheritance was granted to Maurice, the *de facto* fifth earl (d. 1401), and Thomas, the future sixth earl of Desmond: *RCH*, p. 157 no. 92. 18 The suggestion that there may have been sharp practice at work is strengthened by the fact that some of the jury lists seem to be deficient. K.W. Nicholls noted, for instance, that the jury list for the inquisition taken at Ardrahan, Co. Galway, 'would appear to have been copied from that of an inquisition taken at the same place a hundred years earlier, in 1321': Nicholls, 'Late medieval annals', p. 89 (quotation). The text of the earlier inquisition is printed in H. T. Knox,

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

'Ardrahan Castle', *JGAHS*, 7 (1911–12), 81. 19 Ormond's support of James the Usurper may lie behind the extraordinary charge made by John Geese (d. 1425), bishop of Lismore–Waterford, at a parliament held before Ormond in 1421 to the effect that the archbishop of Cashel – Risdéard Ó hÉidighéain, who is known to have fostered Ormond's nephew, Edmund son of Richard Butler – had 'taken a ring from the image of Saint Patricke (which the earl of Desmond had offered) and bestowed it upon his Concubine': Ware, 'Marlborough', pp 30–1 (quotation); Bodl., MS Laud Misc. 614, p. 100. For a reappraisal of the episode, see Peter Crooks, 'Representation and dissent: "parliamentarianism" and the structure of politics in colonial Ireland, c.1370–1420', *EHR*, 125:512 (Feb. 2010), 14–16. 20 'custodem, gubernatorem et supervisorem': NLI, D 1578 (=COD, iii, no. 51). Another copy is TNA (PRO), C 47/10/26/4, listed in James Hogan, 'Miscellanea of the chancery, London', *AH*, 1 (1930), 200. Ormond also appointed Desmond as his seneschal in these lands, and granted him all rents and profits accruing from them together with 240 acres of demesne land to be chosen by Desmond himself. 21 TNA (PRO), C 47/10/26/5 (translated in Griffiths, 'Talbot–Ormond struggle', p. 392). 22 O'Brien, 'Territorial ambitions of Maurice fitz

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.²³ 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 1444.²⁴ Not for the first time, the resolution of one conflict sowed the seeds for another.²⁵

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.²⁶ 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 $\bar{\text{L}}$) is used in documents 2, 3 and

Thomas, first earl of Desmond’, *passim*. 23 NLI, D 1624. 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. 24 *AMacFirbis*, p. 205. The episode is discussed in Matthew, ‘Governing Lancastrian Ireland’, pp 361–2. 25 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). 26 Angus McIntosh, M.L. Samuels and Michael Benskin (eds), *A linguistic atlas of late medieval English* (4 vols, Aberdeen, 1986), i, pp 129, 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 152/50²⁷

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 qe le dit count est retenuz et demurez avec le dit a (*sic*) | lieutenant pur luy servir en la dite terre avec toutz ses gentz defensibles a chival et \^a/ pee sufficeantement mountez, armez et | arraiez come affiert a guerre pur queux 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. livres.²⁸ Et le dit count serra prest a tout | temps avec ses ditz gentz de venir a mesme le lieutenant par resonable garnishment a luy affaire a devant pur travailler, | aler et chivacher²⁹ avec luy en toutz ses journeys et hosteynges a faires ou a purposers deinz lavant dite 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 soun assignement enveignantz devers luy a ses journeys y demurantz et retournantz a soun countre. 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 | comune³⁰ mailefaisour des Irroys ennemys, qils les ne mettront a raunceon saunz licence del dit lieutenaunt meas | qil ait tielx prisoners, faisant resonable guerdon a celui 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 dilleoques retournantz soient frankes et seurez saunz empechement dascuny. }³¹

²⁷ This edition appears by permission of the East Riding of Yorkshire County Record Office.

²⁸ That is, £100. Abbreviated in MS as ‘*℥*.’. 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. 31³²

A^o 5. H5³³

Treshaut et puissant Prince et moun tresnoble et graciosus Seigneur, Jeo me recomanc a vostre treshaute Seignurie si humblement come jeo say ou puisse | od tressoverain desire de lassaver auxi graciosus et tresjoious novelx come vostre tresnoble coer meux savera ymaginer a mespeciale consolacioun | toutvois lesmerciant des plusours tresnobles et graciosuses seignuries qeux lad plu de me moustrier toutdis sauns desert du ma parte avaunt | ces heures humblement lensuppliant du graciouse perseverance.

Et treshaut et puissant Prince et moun tresnoble et graciosus Seigneur please | a mesme vostre treshaute Seignurie benignement a considerer le grande et importable charge qe nostre tressoverain Seigneur le Roi mad commys a | perfaire dupardecea avec trope petite soumme de monoie de la mayntener, come il est bien conue, par quelle enchesoun ses ennemys | dupardecea toutdis perceviantz ma nounpoair toutsoit qe jeo eux plusours foitz amesne a peas encountre lour gree, meyntenant | resourdent a guerre a moy contenuelle labour et vraysemblable anientisment du ma persone qest forsque petit perde et mes auxi | grandes expenses et coutages qeux jay es longe temps entour la deliverance de le Count de Dessemond hors des mayns de ses | ennemys, qest pleynement delivere et avec moy aupresent en hostiell nient aiant ascune denir de ses propres dont il purra viver | pur ceo que depuis sa enprise toutz ses seignuries chastielles et villes sont outrement destruez et degastez pur greindre partie, qest trop | dolorouse a counstre; treshumblement ensuppliant a vostre treshaute Seignurie desuisdite qala please en salvacioune de lestate nostre | dit Seigneur le Roi et sa dite terre et de ses foialx lieges dicelle si graciousement ordeigner pur moy et en tielle manere par advys de le | tressage conseilte mesme nostre Seigneur le Roi qe jeo purrey aver en mayn ce qest a moy due pur la salve garde diceste terre en haste, pur ceo qe mes | souldeours ne voillent attendre avec moy ne le pays eux respoundre 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 chescun³⁴ an le jour de Seint | Patric et contenuaunt jesques a la feste de Seint Michell ensuyant.

Entendantz outre ceo, moun tresgraciosus Seigneur, qe jatarde devant le passage | de nostre dit Seigneur le Roi as parties de ffrance, lou nostre seigneur Jhesu³⁵ par lensupplicacion de sa gloriouse mier luy ottoie tresgraciosus exploit et victorie | de ses ennemys, jestoie ordeigne dapprochier sa tresgraciosus presence

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 respoudre as certains | suggestions a luy faites sur moy en mabsence par mes nient bienveillantz come jeo suy enfourme come sa tresgraciously ordenaunce voudra | agarder celle partie et les foialx lieges espirituex et temporelx diceste terre considerantz la grande guerre eux envyrone et doubdantz la grande | perile et destruccioune semblables descheier par mabsence, toutsoit quele est forsque petit vaillant, mont requiz depart nostre dit Seigneur 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 avec | monsire Barthelmewe Verdon, lour messenger, pur passer envers nostre dit Seigneur le Roi et sur ceo certains novelx viendroient depardula la meer | qil estoit passe en soun dit viage, pur quelle cause le dit monsire Bartelmewe retourna de la meer avec le dit message tanqe a la | repaire de nostre Seigneur le Roi suisdit, par cause de quelle retourne dicelle message me faute de force de vous moun tresnoble Seigneur certifier de ma | necessitee et distresse ycy sauns aucun confort ou relevement sinoun qil soit par vostre treshaute discrecioun celle partie \^{fait}/, la copie | du quelle message jay gaigne de les lieges avantditz de vous lenvoyer par cause qe le dit messsanger est retourne par moun | servitour John Kirkam portour dicestes qe vous en purrez estre avisez par le tressage conseilte avantdit et moy covenable et | hastive remedie ordeign' come le cas requiert.

Dautre part moun tresnoble Seigneur sil vous plese soit riens assav' de moun simple labour | dupardecea deux jours devant la faisance dicestes jeo faisoie un journey sur un fort irroys ennemy Chieftayn' de sa nacioun nomme | Oconour, 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 Seigneur, autres ne say aupresent a vostre tresgraciously Seignurie escriver meas | qala please adjoustier graciously audience a mon dit servitour de tout ces quil ala certifiera dupart moy et sy isoit chose dupardecea ou | aillours qe faire puisse a vostre plesieur Vous plese de me commander come vostre homme demesne pur laccomplir sauns feintise du | treslee coer a ma poair. Et luy toutpuissant vous otroie tresgraciously et tresnoble prosperitee toutvois perseverante a sa | plesance.

Escrip a Lassenhale le xi jour de Juylle

Vostre homme demesne |

John Talbot

<Dorse>³⁶

36 Some letters are clipped along the right margin of the endorsement.

A treshaut et puissant prince et moun [tresnoble] | et gracious Seigneur le Duc de Bedeford lieu[tenant] | Deng[leterre].

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. 46³⁷

A^o. 5. Hen 5³⁸

[T]reshaut et puissant prince et moun tresnoble et tresgracious Seigneur, Jeo moy recommand a vostre haute Seignurie si humblement come jeo say ou puisse | ove souveraigne desire de lassavoir auxi graciouse et joiouse novelx come vostre tresnoble coer meulx savera ymager a ma tressingulere | consolacioun affectuosement lesmerciant des plusours graciouse et tresnobles Seignuries queux vous ad plu de me moustrer souvent foitz devant | ces heures sauns desert du ma part, humblement vous ensuppliant de graciouse perseverance.

Et treshaut et puissant prince et moun tresnoble | [et]³⁹ tresgracious Seigneur, 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 | [p]aiement 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 Seigneur qe tout ceste an passe jeo navoie nulle denier hors | dengleterre pur yceste terre sinoun de mes rentz propres, qe sount forsque petit al mainteignance des guerres dirlande qare de | les assignementz dount jeo suy certifie par mes attourneez illeoques qe jay pur yceste terre ils nont resceu ascun denier 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 Typerare 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^lDC marc;⁴⁰ 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 avec toutz les irroys enemys enviroinez les ditz counteez et nomement le dit Wauter | devenuz liege homme a nostre tressouveraigne 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 plusours autres gentielz de pais pur la salvement | garder, la copie de quelle endenture jenvoie a vous tresgracious Seignur pur inspectioun ent avoir par le portour dicestes, sur | quelle peas jeo chargea les ditz Priour et Wauter sur lour ligeance pur la peas salvement garder.

Ensuppliant | humblement a vostre gracieuse Seignurie suisdite qe vous please \^{de}/ considerer toutz les matiers et meschiefs avaunt ditez et ent ordeigner | remedie come il semble a vostre tressage discrecioun qil soit affaire et moy ensignifier, en salvacioun de le liege people et la | terre avant ditz. Treshaut et puissant prince et moun tresnoble et tresgracious Seignur, autres ne say au present escriver a vostre tresgraciousse | Seignurie meas qa la please dajouster fois et gracieuse audience a moun tresame servitour John Kirkham, portour dicestes, de tout[z] | [c]eo qil a la certifiera touchant les matiers avant ditez ou aucune autre depart moy par bouche, toutdys moy commandantz, moun | tresgracious Seignur, voz gracieuses volunteez dupardecea ou aillours dacomplir a ma poair sauns feyntise. Et luy toutpuissa[nt] | [D]ieu vous otroie tresgraciousse et tresjoieuse vie toutdys perseverante a sa pleasance.

Escript a Naas le xxv. jour doctobre

Vostre homme demesne |

John Talbot

<Dorse>⁴²

A treshaut et puissant Prince et n[ostre] | tresnoble et gracious Seignur le Duc de Bede[ford] | lieutenant Dengl[eterre].

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 enimies of Laies, for the safe keeping whereof he hath erected a new tower upon the same for a warde to putt therwith a great fortificac[i]o[u]n aboute the same for resistance of the sayd enimies ... by which bridge your faythfull leiges were ofentimes prayeda & killed, but now ... may suffer their goods and cattels to remayne

TNA (PRO), SC 1/43/176⁴⁴

My moste worchipfull lorde I commande \^{me}/ to 3ow. And worchipfull lorde if it like | 3ow to witte þ^t M^cfaghton⁴⁵ was ate Adthe *and* M^cgilfatrike also *and* forsaid M^cfaghton p^rid | me þ^t I wald send 3ow worde þ^t M^cgilfatrike wile be-come 3owre manne ife it like to | 3owre lordechippe. And worchipfull lorde ife it like to 3owre lordechippe to send | M^cfaghton a letre of 3owre wile *and* me a-nother letre iij days befor þe parlement of M^cmorgh | for þe day wile M^cfaghton *and* M^cgilfatricke be þere to make amends with 3owre counsell | of þis mater *and* before my lorde sais 3owre avyse to 3owre counsell how þis mater sall | be governd for forsaid M^cgilfatrike sais he wile be with 3ow agayns þos þat 3e wile | charge \^{ham}/ to be agayns *and* namely agayns Acalagh *and* gayns James of Desymond for he | sais þat þai make ham strongke agaynes 3ow *and* sais ife þai halde anny castell in 3owre | countres he sall sige aboute þam to 3e send him helpe for þes wordes as M^cfaghton said | to me.

And also my worchipfull lorde tynkes on 3owre pore sowdiours of Adthe þat myght | hafe beter liverais þen þai had be-fore, for nowe are we be-hend of owre liveray fyfe | wykes.

My worchipfull lorde I can say nomore⁴⁶ at þis time bot gode send 3e victorie of alle 3owre enimys in England *and* Irelande *and* in France also *and* þat I gyfe yow to | to⁴⁷ 3owre 3eres gifte. |

Writon in grete haste ate Adthe in 3owre awne castell on next Sonnday afftir twelfeday.

John Marshall |
yowre servaunt

in the feilds day and night wouth [*sic*] being stolen, or sustayning any other losse, which hath not beene seene 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.

⁴⁴ This crown-copyright document appears courtesy of the National Archives of the United Kingdom. ⁴⁵ '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 Laoighis 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 Laoighis', see above, n. 142. ⁴⁶ No space in MS.

⁴⁷ Repeated in MS.