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Throughout the Middle Ages most castles of any size accommodated a chapel; an architecturally distinguished space that housed a fixed altar for the celebration of Mass. In many cases these were small, intimate spaces located close to bedrooms or withdrawing chambers, set aside for the exclusive use of the head of the household and/or members of his family. In larger castles distinct structures big enough to accommodate the household or retinue were constructed, and maintained by a dedicated chaplain. From early on in its long history the castle at Dublin incorporated a chapel. The history of its development provides an interesting glimpse into the devotional concerns of the monarch and his representatives in the key military and administrative building of the country.

Work on the construction of the stone castle at Dublin commenced around 1213 and continued to around 1230.¹ The initial pragmatic, military, function of the castle is confirmed by an inventory of about 1224 listing goods contained within the three royal castles in Ireland at that time.² At Dublin these included household utensils, weaponry, and chains for the restraint of prisoners. While the inventory for the castle at Athlone included the contents of a small chapel, no such goods were listed for Dublin, suggesting, albeit through negative evidence, that the Castle Chapel had yet to be established. It was in the following year that the first reference to a castle chaplain, one William de Radeclive, appeared in the exchequer accounts.³

Together with its defensive role, Dublin Castle was the primary residence of the chief governor of Ireland and potential royal residence, should the English monarch choose to

¹ Conleth Manning, 'The Building of a Royal Castle in Ireland', *Château Gaillard*, 18 (1998), 119–22.

² Henry Savage Sweetman (ed.), *Calendar of Documents relating to Ireland, 1171–1251* (London, 1875–86) vol. 1, p. 187, no. 1227.

³ *Ibid.*, no. 1309.

visit.⁴ It was Henry III (r. 1216–72) who showed most direct concern for this, more domestic, aspect of Dublin Castle. A patron of the arts almost to the point of obsession, Henry invested vast sums in creating a courtly environment in his castles, spending large amounts on private chambers and brightly lit halls that were richly decorated with imagery intended to reflect power and status.⁵ Dublin was no exception, and in 1243 he specified his intentions for a new hall there:

120 feet in length and 80 feet in breadth, with glazed windows after the [archbishop's] hall in Canterbury; and ... in the gable beyond the dais a round window 30 feet in diameter ... [and] ... painted beyond the dais a king and queen seated with their baronage; and a great portal ... at the entrance to the hall.⁶

[p. 30] Henry was characterized by contemporary chroniclers as particularly devout and across his kingdom he maintained at least fifty chapels for his, and his households', exclusive use.⁷ Many were old inherited structures but he was also responsible for building at least eighteen entirely new chapels, and there are numerous references to his embellishment of them with stained glass, wall paintings and religious statuary. Unfortunately no detailed description survives of the decoration or building of a chapel or chapels in Dublin at the time. However, in 1242 the King ordered his treasurer, Geoffrey de Turville, to have glass windows made for 'the chapel of the king's castle of Dublin.'⁸ This work was paralleled in the chapel at Oxford Castle, where in 1243 the King ordered that the lead grilles in the windows be replaced with glass, which suggests that the Dublin work probably represented improvements to an existing structure, rather than the construction of a new building.⁹

Around the same time we also learn that the chapel was dedicated to St Edward the Confessor, with the King's request that the archbishop of Dublin celebrate the feast of the saint with 800 lighted tapers in the in the royal Victorine Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin, the

⁴ James Lydon, 'Dublin Castle in the Middle Ages' in Seán Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin III* (Dublin, 2002), pp. 115–27.

⁵ John Goodall, *The English Castle* (London, 2011), pp. 187–92; Howard Colvin, *The History of the King's Works: the Middle Ages* (London, 1963), vol. 1, pp. 93–159; Tancred Borenius, 'The Cycle of Images in the Palaces and Castles of Henry III', *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 6 (1943), 40–50.

⁶ *Calendar of the Close Rolls, 1242–47* (London, 1916), pp. 23, 152.

⁷ Colvin, *King's Works*, vol. 1, p. 124.

⁸ Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, p. 385, no. 2581.

⁹ Louis Francis Salzman, *Building in England down to 1540: a documentary history* (Oxford, 1952), p. 174.

Cathedral of the Holy Trinity and ‘the chapel of that saint in the castle.’¹⁰ Henry III was a particular promoter of the cult of St Edward.¹¹ As a royal predecessor of Henry’s, St Edward was promoted as a means of legitimizing Plantagenet rule, and by 1241 Henry was engaged in plans for a new shrine to the saint at the royal abbey in Westminster. Images of St Edward’s coronation, together with those that stressed his virtues – his charity, dressed as a pilgrim, his wisdom and virtues of temperateness and moderation – all featured in the decoration of royal halls and chapels across the kingdom.¹² Promotion of the cult in three Dublin institutions was, by extension, promotion of the royal dynasty and Henry III himself.

That a chapel was maintained in regular use in Dublin over the following decades is documented in surviving exchequer accounts listing regular payments made to castle chaplains, the purchase of altar plate and vestments ‘for the king’s use’ and repairs to liturgical books.¹³ The accounts of the castle’s keeper of works, John Bouwet, dating from between 1300 and 1302, shed a little more light on its form; including a sum for repairs to the ‘oriel between the chamber of the Justiciar and the chapel’ and the ‘covering’ (possibly re-roofing) of the chapel.¹⁴ In the fourteenth century the term oriel was used to refer to either a porch or a passage, suggesting a direct entry into the chapel from the private chambers of the justiciar. This type of arrangement was quite typical for chapels in royal castles. It was found, for example, at Westminster, where a chapel was built between 1237 and 1238 at the southern end of Queen Eleanor’s chamber, which was entered through an ‘oriel’ of two moulded doorways.¹⁵ Together with a private entrance, chapels of this type would typically have had a private room or balcony from which the head of the household could sit and view the altar, separated from the other people in the chapel. At Dublin this was probably also the case, with [p. 32] a reference appearing some years later to work on a ‘*closetta*’ in the chapel.¹⁶

¹⁰ Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, p. 198, no. 1309, p. 373, no. 2497. Two years later the order was repeated (Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, p. 385, no. 2581).

¹¹ Paul Binski, ‘The Cult of St Edward the Confessor’, *History Today*, 55:11 (November, 2005), 21–27.

¹² See, for example, Colvin, *King’s Works*, vol. 2, p. 945.

¹³ Philomena Connolly, *Irish Exchequer Payments, 1270–1446* (Dublin, 1998), vol. 1, p. 293; Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 2, pp. 309–10, no. 1570.

¹⁴ *Public Record Office, Ireland, Report of the Deputy Keeper* (Dublin, 1869–1928), vol. 34, p. 25.

¹⁵ Colvin, *King’s Works*, vol. 1, pp. 501–02.

¹⁶ J.T. Gilbert, *History of the Viceroys of Ireland* (Dublin, 1865), p. 547. For a discussion of the various forms of chapel closets see Goodall, *The English Castle*, pp. 29–30.

Sometime between 1358 and 1361 the interior of the chapel at Dublin Castle received a decorative overhaul.¹⁷ Perhaps most significant was the purchase of 600 lb of glass for the windows. This has been estimated as sufficient to glaze an area of approximately 200 sq ft, or about nine lancet windows of average size for the thirteenth century.¹⁸ A new crucifix was made and painted for the altar, together with a rood (a suspended crucifix marking the entry to the sanctuary area) and two devotional statutes, one depicting Mary, and the other St Thomas the Martyr, the latter referred to as the chapel's patron saint.¹⁹ In addition, the chalice was repaired, and both it and the paten re-gilded. The purchase and repair of vestments is also documented. The nature of the works, the apparent complete re-glazing (rather than just repairs to the glass) together with the commissioning of new statues suggests a devotional re-ordering, linked perhaps to a change in dedication, from St Edward the Confessor to St Thomas the Martyr.²⁰

[p 33] Following the death of Henry III royal promotion of St Edward had waned, and Henry's son, Edward I (r. 1272–1307), demonstrated a greater interest in St Thomas. By the time of Edward III's reign (1327–77) the cult of the militaristic St George was deemed more appropriate for royal devotion; seen, for example, with the re-dedication of the royal chapel of St Edward at Windsor Castle to St George in 1348.²¹ Although the cult of Thomas had always enjoyed royal support, the motivation behind the re-dedication may be a reflection of more localized interests, as the English monarch became increasingly preoccupied by his military efforts in the Hundred Years War. In March 1359, James Butler, 2nd Earl of Ormond was appointed justiciar, with his official residence at Dublin Castle.²² The Butler family claimed collateral descent from St Thomas, and so held him as their patron and were actively involved in the promotion of his cult. The works at the Castle Chapel were, therefore, more likely an

¹⁷ *Report of the Deputy Keeper*, vol. 43, p. 57; Connolly, *Exchequer Payments*, vol. 1, p. 396.

¹⁸ H.J. Lawlor & M.S. Dudley Westropp, 'The Chapel of Dublin Castle', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 13:1 (30 Jun. 1923), 40.

¹⁹ Gilbert, *Viceroy of Ireland*, pp. 544–46.

²⁰ By the fourteenth century altars were typically equipped with statues of the blessed virgin, a crucifix and the patron saint, see Richard Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud, 2004), pp. 73–75.

²¹ Binski, 'St Edward the Confessor.'

²² T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin & F.J. Byrne, *A New History of Ireland* (Oxford, 1989), vol. 9, p. 474.

expression of the justiciar's faith and familial promotion, than that of the sovereign he represented.²³

That the refurbishment may have reflected a quite personal expression of devotion might explain why, sometime between 1364 and 1366, under the viceroyalty of Edward III's son, Lionel of Antwerp, 1st Duke of Clarence, the integrity of the liturgical space in the chapel was compromised, with the installation of the books and shelving that had formerly occupied the Dublin exchequer.²⁴ The move probably coincided with the transfer of the exchequer to Carlow town; the choice of the Castle Chapel as an alternative storage space was possibly because of its size, condition and relative security within the walls of the castle.²⁵ Whatever the logic, it does not appear to have caused too much disruption, as the building continued to function not only as a chapel but also as a place used to host meetings of the privy council, where, in 1442, an agreement was reached in 'the Council Chamber viz the Chapel of the King in the Castle of Dublin.'²⁶

History remains almost totally silent regarding the chapel for much of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and, like the rest of Dublin Castle, it may also have become 'ruineous, foul, filthy and greatly decayed' by the late 1560s, when Sir Henry Sidney, as lord deputy, undertook the restoration and rebuilding of the castle complex.²⁷ Sidney's household accounts give a reasonably detailed outline of the works carried out, but there is no contemporary [p. 35] reference to works on the chapel.²⁸ It appears, however, that he did either restore or rebuild the chapel, as a narrative written by Robert Ware in 1678 describes the south range of the castle as incorporating an 'ancient piece of building, wherein upon the ground is a Chappell, over which a stately drawing room built in the time

²³ *Report of the Deputy Keeper*, vol. 47, pp. 33, 58; Colmán Ó Clabaigh & Michael Staunton, 'Thomas Becket in Ireland' in Elizabeth Mullins & Diarmuid Scully (eds), *Listen, O Isles, Unto Me: Studies in the medieval word and image in honour of Jennifer O'Reilly* (Cork, 2011), p. 98.

²⁴ Gilbert, *Viceroy of Ireland*, pp. 546–48.

²⁵ Lawlor & Dudley Westropp, 'The Chapel of Dublin Castle', 44–45.

²⁶ Edward Tresham (ed.), *Rotulorum Patentium et clausorum Cancellariae Hiberniae Calendarium, Hen. II–Hen. VII* (Dublin, 1828), p. 263, no. 25 (intimating that it was in use for both).

²⁷ Raphael Holinshed, *The first and second Volumes of Chronicles ... newlie augmented and continued ... to 1586 by John Hooker alias Vowell* (London, 1586), vol. 1, pt. 4, p. 152.

²⁸ C.L. Kingsford (ed.), *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley preserved at Penshurst Place* (London, 1925), vol. 1, pp. 398–99.

of Henry Sidney his government whose arms are placed thereon.²⁹ An additional marginal note clarifies matters by referring to 'The Chappell built by Sir Henry Sidney.'³⁰ A plan of the castle, roughly contemporary with Ware's description, clearly locates the chapel on the ground floor of the eastern part of the south range of the castle, with a drawing room over it (figs 1.1, 1.2).³¹

This chapel was probably the same one that was damaged by fire in 1638, described by Mrs Alice Thornton, a cousin of Lord Deputy Thomas Wentworth, 1st Viscount Wentworth:

[the fire destroyed] ... that room called the chapell chamber above the chapell, which was most richely furnished with black velvet, imbroidered with flowrs of silke work in ten stich; all fruit trees and flowers, and slips imbroidered with gold twist; and it burned the statly chapel built by my lord.³²

Given that this description pre-dates that of Ware, the fire probably did not affect the structure of the chapel, and was limited to the interior fittings installed by Wentworth, which may be what Mrs Thornton is alluding to when she mentions the chapel 'built by my lord.'

It is clear that during the seventeenth century successive viceroys added their own personal mark to the furnishings of the chapel, just as James Butler had done in the mid fourteenth century. An inventory of 1677 describes the seat of the viceroy's wife, Lady Essex, in the chapel as of red baize hangings and flooring of cloth, with two chairs and curtains of grey kidderminster.³³ Following James Butler, 1st Duke of Ormond's resumption of the viceroyalty in that year, this was replaced by his Duchess's chair with crimson taffeta curtains, an elbow chair with six damask cushions and a Persian carpet.³⁴ The Duke's seat had curtains of crimson taffeta, an elbow chair covered with crimson velvet and silver and

²⁹ Robert Ware, 'History and Antiquities of Dublin', Dublin City Library and Archive, MS 1678, f. 23, quoted in J.B. Maguire, 'Seventeenth-Century Plans of Dublin Castle', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 104 (1974), 9–10.

³⁰ James L.J. Hughes, 'Dublin Castle in the Seventeenth Century', *Dublin Historical Record*, 2:3 (1940), 87.

³¹ Plan of Dublin Castle, 1673, Dartmouth Collection, Staffordshire Record Office, MS D(W) 1778/III/85.

³² Charles Jackson (ed.), 'The Autobiography of Mrs Alice Thornton of East Newton, Co. York', *Surtees Society*, 62, (Durham, 1873), 11–12.

³³ Jane Fenlon, *Goods and Chattels: A survey of early household inventories in Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), p. 93.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

gold fringe, and a Persian carpet, while the altar cloth and carpet were made of crimson taffeta and purple mohair.³⁵

These fittings were, however, to meet a similar fate as those installed by Lord Deputy Wentworth. On 7 April 1684 a large fire broke out in the lodgings immediately to the west of the chapel.³⁶ The fire was discovered by Ormond's son, Lord Arran, who, in order to stem the spread of the flames to the Bermingham Tower, where the records were kept, and the Gunpowder Tower, blew up a number of the castle structures, including the chapel.³⁷ This, it [p. 36] would seem, was little lamented, Arran commenting that the king had lost 'nothing except six barrels of powder, and the worst castle in the worst situation in Christendom.'³⁸

Even before the fire, there had been plans to develop the castle into a residence more fitting for the king's representative in Ireland, and within a couple of months work had commenced on its rebuilding.³⁹ Given the levels of destruction in the south-east corner, this was the first area attended to by the architect appointed to the work, Sir William Robinson (1645–1712).⁴⁰ An anonymous plan of about 1684, probably executed by Robinson, shows what was intended to replace the missing range, including a passage at the east end of the new south-east range, which is marked as 'to ye chapel.'⁴¹ Bernard de Gomme's map of Dublin of about 1673 (fig. 1.3) shows that a range of buildings projecting eastward from the Wardrobe Tower was already in place at the time of the fire, so it is unclear whether this plan simply represented a conversion of existing fabric to liturgical use, or whether an entirely new chapel structure was built.⁴²

Soon after the appointment of Richard Talbot, 1st Earl of Tyrconnell as lord deputy in 1687, he took over the Castle Chapel for Roman Catholic service, spending a total of £789

³⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

³⁶ Rolf Loeber, 'The Rebuilding of Dublin Castle: Thirty critical years, 1661–90', *Studies*, 69 (Spring, 1980), 60, 62.

³⁷ F.E. Ball (ed.), *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Ormonde, preserved at Kilkenny Castle* (London, 1912), vol. 7, pp. 218–19.

³⁸ Lawlor & Dudley Westropp, 'The Chapel of Dublin Castle', 50.

³⁹ Loeber, 'The Rebuilding of Dublin Castle', 45–69.

⁴⁰ Ball, *Manuscripts of the Marquess of Ormonde*, vol. 7, pp. 234–35, 257–58.

⁴¹ J.B. Maguire, 'Dublin Castle: Three centuries of development', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 115 (1985), 13–39.

⁴² The Wardrobe Tower was alternatively known as the Gunners' Tower and is today known as the Record Tower.

on the manufacture of new furnishings and plate in London.⁴³ However, perhaps due to a delay in the completion of building work, in March of 1687 he received royal consent to have divine service said in the new chapel at Kilmainham. It was only in the following year that he returned to the castle to live when, according to an anonymous diarist, ‘the new building in the Castle was finished.’⁴⁴

In contrast with the new viceregal lodgings, the new chapel appears to have been quite a modest structure. It was located outside the original medieval curtain wall abutting the Wardrobe Tower. In 1696 it was described by the London bookseller John Dunton as being next to the office of the ordnance, ‘near where the king’s gunsmiths and armourers were.’⁴⁵ John Rocque’s map of 1756 shows it next to the ‘Arsenal and Guard’ (fig. 1.4). A painting of the chapel, made probably towards the end of the eighteenth century, now in the collections of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, shows a modest structure with an almost domestic aspect, built of brick and abutted by the arsenal building (fig. 1.5).⁴⁶

[p. 37] By the late eighteenth century it was felt that both the external appearance and internal decoration of the chapel were ‘little consistent with its attachment to a royal palace’ and plans were initiated for a new, more suitable building.⁴⁷ In August 1790 the *Dublin Evening Post* reported the rumour that a new chapel was ‘much wanted’ and was to be built in the castle garden, but by the following year this idea had apparently been abandoned.⁴⁸ A decade later, the project to replace the chapel was renewed and the chief secretary approached architect James Gandon (1743–1823) to draw up suitable designs.⁴⁹ One of the associated drawings shows the plan of the existing building (fig. 1.6).⁵⁰ The viceroy’s seat was elevated at the west end and could be directly accessed via passages cut through the walls of the Wardrobe Tower.⁵¹ The interior of the entire space was only fifty-four feet west to east, and lit by four windows facing north and four facing south. Gandon

⁴³ Lawlor & Dudley Westropp, ‘The Chapel of Dublin Castle’, 45.

⁴⁴ Ball, *Manuscripts of the Marquess of Ormonde*, vol. 8, p. 354.

⁴⁵ Edward MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century* (Cork, 1969), p. 386.

⁴⁶ That it was a brick-built structure is also recorded in the *Irish Builder*, 38 (1 Mar. 1896), 48.

⁴⁷ James Malton, *Picturesque and Descriptive View of the City of Dublin* (London, 1794), letter press of great court yard, Dublin Castle.

⁴⁸ *Dublin Evening Post*, 19 Aug. 1790, 22 Sept. 1791.

⁴⁹ Edward McParland, *James Gandon: Vitruvius Hibernicus* (London, 1985), p. 106.

⁵⁰ Lawlor & Dudley Westropp, ‘The Chapel of Dublin Castle’, pl. iv.

⁵¹ Conleth Manning, ‘The Record Tower, Dublin Castle’ in John R. Kenyon & Kieran O’Conor (eds), *The Medieval Castle in Ireland and Wales* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 72–95.

produced seven designs for the new chapel (now lost). However, as no formal arrangement for him to work within the existing Board of Works structure was forthcoming, he did not proceed with the job. It was not until 1807 that the lacklustre eighteenth century chapel was demolished to make way for Francis Johnston's new Chapel Royal, the magnificent Gothic Revival building that occupies the site today.⁵²

⁵² Christine Casey, *Dublin* (London, 2005), pp. 358–60.