

The 1626 Rental of Thomond Property

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A 1626 document listing the rents due to the 5th Earl of Thomond (1589-1639) is transcribed and published for the first time. It sheds valuable light on the Anglicisation process in the early seventeenth century and in particular helps in understanding the process of transition of Thomond from a Gaelic lordship to an increasingly anglicised county under the stewardship of the Earls of Thomond.

Introduction

A document titled: 'An abstract Of Such Rents and Revenewes as doe belonge to the right Hon:ble. Henrye Earle of Thomond', dated 1626, can be found at Petworth House Archives, West Sussex, filed as manuscript C27A/39.¹ Petworth House is the seat of the Earl of Egremont and the Thomond material deposited there most likely owes its origin to Barnabas O'Brien, sixth Earl of Thomond, who left Bunratty Castle, Co. Clare, in 1646 and settled at Great Billing in Northamptonshire, an estate which he had acquired in 1628.² Barnabas's son Henry succeeded in 1657 as seventh earl, inheriting his father's Irish estate in Thomond which by 1665 amounted to 85,000 acres in County Clare.³ Barnabas's grandson, also Henry O'Brien, eighth Earl of Thomond, continued to live at Great Billing and died without issue in 1741. The Thomond estates then passed to Percy Wyndham, a nephew of the latter Henry O'Brien's wife, Elizabeth Seymour.⁴ The title, Earl of Thomond (of the 2nd creation), became extinct in 1774 on Percy's death, and, as he also died without an heir, his nephew George Wyndham, third Earl of Egremont,⁵ succeeded to the estates. George Wyndham's descendants continue to reside at Petworth House and hold the titles, Barons Leconfield and Earls of Egremont. The O'Brien estate at Great Billing was disposed of in 1776 by George Wyndham.⁶ It is likely that during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the O'Brien estate papers were transferred from Ireland to Petworth House, possibly via the O'Brien estate at Great Billing.

The 1626 rental complements other similar documents such as the 1615 survey of Ibrickan,⁷ the 1641 depositions,⁸ the 1656 Thomond Rental⁹ and 1659 census of Ireland.¹⁰ The style of the handwriting in the manuscript is the italic style of the Jacobean period and is easily understood and transcribed when compared with the Elizabethan 'Secretary

¹ I wish to express my thanks to Luke McInerney for his help in preparing this paper, also to Ciarán Ó Murchadha for initially bringing the existence of the MS to my attention, to Brian Ó Dálaigh for some useful suggestions, and to Nichola Court at Petworth House Archive.

² <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=66318>, accessed 14/11/12.

³ Brian Ó Dálaigh, 'From Gaelic Warlord to English Country Gentlemen: The O'Briens of Thomond 1543-1741', *The Other Clare*, vol. 25 (2001) p. 42.

⁴ Ivar O'Brien, *O'Brien of Thomond* (Chichester, 1986) p. 239.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=66318>, accessed 09/01/13.

⁷ Luke McInerney, 'The Earl of Thomond's 1615 Survey of Ibrickan, Co. Clare', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, vol. 53, 2013, pp 173-91.

⁸ Available at: <http://1641.tcd.ie/>.

⁹ John Ainsworth (ed.), *The Inchiquin Manuscripts* (Dublin, 1961) pp 535-42, no. 1538.

¹⁰ Séamus Pender, *A Census of Ireland, Circa 1659* (Dublin, 1939) pp 163-88.

Script' which was common in manuscripts fifty years earlier. The numerals in the document are more common to the 'Secretary Script', and the letters representing the value of monies due, L, S and D, (*librae*, *solidi* and *denarii*, or, pounds, shillings and pence¹¹) are in the 'Secretary Script'. It was not uncommon for documents in this transitional period of handwriting to be written with a combination of both scripts.¹²

The rental was made for Henry O'Brien, fifth Earl of Thomond, shortly after he succeeded his father Donough O'Brien (*ob.* 1624) as earl. Both Donough and Henry lived at Bunratty Castle, Donough having made Bunratty his headquarters sometime between 1583 and 1588, when most likely for reasons of security, he retired from his castle at Clonroad in Ennis.¹³ On the front cover of the rental is an interesting, though very faint endorsement in a later hand: 'Hee that pittiets the poore lendets unto the Lord. 1639.'¹⁴ and a signature which may possibly be transcribed as: 'J [?] Warren'.¹⁵ The date on the endorsement is the year of the death of Henry O'Brien, fifth Earl. Perhaps it was an attempt to gain a Divine indulgence for the earl after his death. The title page of the document reads as follows:

1626 An abstract. Of Such Rents and Re=venewes as doe belonge to the right Hon:ble.~ Henrye ~Earle of Thomond ~Together With a rehersall of the Castles and Landes out of which ye said Rents are due ~With The quantitie of the said Landes by Quarters ~Halfe quarters, quartermires & other proportions. Declaring farther In whose tenure the said Landes are, and in what ~Countie & Barony they lye. And. What Rents are due out of the said Lands For everie Gale. __Taken 1626.

Historical Context

The period to which the rental relates was a time of great political change and upheaval in Ireland. The relatively peaceful period from the 1350s to the 1550s had come to an end with the onset of the Tudor conquest. The old Gaelic world as the ruling O'Briens had known it was to vanish forever as the process of anglicisation in Ireland, initiated in the 1540s by Henry VIII, and continued by Elizabeth I, was beginning to be experienced in Thomond. Under the surrender and regrant agreement, succession by primogeniture was to replace the Brehon law system of tanistry and the earls of Thomond had to decide on how best to survive as aristocratic proprietors of their lands, held and ruled for centuries before this time by the O'Briens, kings and later earls of Thomond.

We know that Donough O'Brien had been sent to England as a child to be reared in the Protestant faith at the court of Queen Elizabeth I in the 1570s.¹⁶ This strategy was calculated to ensure the good behavior and loyalty of his father, Conor, during the campaign of anglicisation, as well as to ensure that Donough would grow up to become a loyal subject of the crown. A perusal of the rental will confirm the evident success of the strategy; the names of a high proportion of those paying rent to the earl at this time were

¹¹ In old currency the pound (£) had 20 shillings (s) and the shilling had 12 pennies (p).

¹² Giles E. Dawson & Laetitia Kennedy-Skipton, *Elizabethan Handwriting 1500-1650* (Chichester, 1981) p. 9.

¹³ Martin Breen, *The History of Bunratty Castle* (Ruan, 2012) p. 26.

¹⁴ The verse is from the 1611 King James Bible, Proverbs, 19:17, 'He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.'

¹⁵ I wish to express my gratitude to Luke McNerney and Nichola Court (P.H.A.) for deciphering this difficult tract.

¹⁶ H.C. Hamilton (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers Ireland: Elizabeth I, 1574-85* (London, 1867) p. 113; J.S. Brewer & W. Bullen (eds), *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts Preserved in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth 1575-1588* (London, 1868) p.115. In this State Paper of 1577, the Queen refers to Conor O'Brien, third Earl: 'He has also besought us that his son Donoughe, now Baron of Ibrechane (sic), and brought up here in our Court, might be nominated by us in the remainder of his earldom....'. I wish to thank Luke McNerney for this reference.

of English and Dutch extraction. Many of these tenants, such as Keatinge, Mordant, Delahoyde, Norton and Holland also appear as beneficiaries in Donough's will, dated 1617.¹⁷ Earl Donough had evidently become a loyal servant to the Queen, and had planted his lands with both English and Dutch merchants, farmers and tradesmen as tenants, with a view to developing his property and introducing some much needed capital, while at the same time endearing himself to the Queen. Although outwardly anglicised, Donough still continued to patronise the poets who were his propagandists, while simultaneously embracing those aspects of English culture which could serve his purpose.¹⁸ It was under Donough's stewardship that the towns of Ennis, Sixmilebridge and Kilrush emerged as mercantile centres in the early seventeenth century and where significant numbers of his English and Dutch tenants were settled.¹⁹

What can be perceived from the rental is that Donough productively colonised his property in order to increase the economic viability of his estates, all of which was aided by the consolidation of English administration in Ireland after the Nine Years' War. It is known that he successfully resisted any attempt by the colonists to purchase large tracts of land within his lordship: He only ever offered leasehold and not freehold to his English settlers, thus ensuring that they were always his tenants, and were subordinated to him.²⁰ It will be noted from the rental that it was these New-English and Dutch tenants who paid the greatest rents, while also taking into account that these people were settled on the most productive land, and had ready money to pay rent. The earl also encouraged these settlers to introduce sub-tenants onto their lands, and if these sub-tenants were English or Dutch, rather than Irish, then the settler's rent would be reduced by the earl.²¹ To some contemporary commentators he was known to be more comfortable in the company of English gentlemen.²² However, Donough, being a member and supporter of the Established Church, did not want English Catholics settled on his lands.²³ His informal colonisation policy, which did not endear him to his countrymen, was to have serious consequences for his family in the aftermath of the 1641 rebellion.

It is known that parts of his Thomond estate were under-populated,²⁴ but there are also

¹⁷ Brian Ó Dálaigh, 'A Comparative Study of the Wills of the First and Fourth Earls of Thomond', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, vol. xxxiv (1992) pp 59-63.

¹⁸ Bernadette Cunningham, 'Newcomers in the Thomond Lordship, c1580 - c1625', *Dal gCais*, no. 11 (1993) p. 105.

¹⁹ On the development of urban settlement in early seventeenth century Co. Clare see Brian Ó Dálaigh, 'A History of Six-milebridge, county Clare 1603-1911', in Katrina Holton, Liam Clare & Brian Ó Dálaigh (eds), *Irish Villages: Studies in Local History* (Dublin, 2004) pp 243-80. Also on the interaction of these new settlers and the Gaelic Irish see Patrick Nugent, 'The interface between the Gaelic clan system of Co. Clare and the emerging centralising English nation-state in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century', *Irish Geography*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2007) pp 79-98.

²⁰ Cunningham, 'Newcomers in the Thomond Lordship', p. 105.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp 105-07.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

²³ Bernadette Cunningham, *Clanricard and Thomond, 1540-1640: Provincial Politics and Society Transformed* (Dublin, 2012) p. 49. In 1607 Donough warned 'There come many English recusants out of England who do much hurt here', *eadem*, 'Newcomers in the Thomond Lordship', p. 109.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104. This was in common with other areas in the west of Ireland at this time. For further comment on this see Bernadette Cunningham, 'The Composition of Connacht in the Lordships of Clanricard and Thomond, 1577-1641', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. xxiv, no. 93 (May 1984) p. 6, where she states that it was noted in 1592 by Sir Richard Bingham, President of Connacht (1584-96) that 'Connacht hath not been inhabited within the memory of man - but a great deal of waste in many places'. Clare formed part of Connacht between 1569 and 1576 and again between 1579 and 1602, in the latter year it was reunited with Munster at the request of Donough O'Brien, fourth earl of Thomond, see James Hardiman, *History of the Town and Country of the Town of Galway* (Dublin, 1820) p. 91. Also of interest on this subject is a comment by Thomas Gainsford, a soldier of the crown forces in Ireland during the Nine Years' War, who wrote an account of the country from his perspective in 1618. Gainsford implied that the reduction of the Irish to civility was one of the primary objectives of the crown, as well as recording the fact that only in Leinster was there a reasonable level of population 'the place wherein we first settled many English families', see Luke McNerney, 'A Description of Ireland: A.D. 1618', *The Other Clare*, vol. 36 (2012) pp 33-7.

recorded instances of his use of force in the acquisition of lands for plantation. Examples of families affected by these acquisitions include the MacNamara,²⁵ O'Meere,²⁶ and O'Mulconry lineages.²⁷ As a result of their growing unpopularity many of the future earls of Thomond became essentially 'absentee landlords', preferring to spend their time in the security of their English estate in Northampton, while comfortably drawing revenue in the form of rents from their estates in Ireland.

Henry O'Brien, fifth earl, succeeded to the earldom in 1624, at the age of thirty-six, on the death of his father Donough, the fourth earl. Donough, who was to all intents and purposes anglicised, had accomplished his plan of colonisation, and the estate was in good order at his demise. He was held in high regard by the Queen, having proved himself worthy of her affection fighting on the English side at Kinsale, and at several other engagements. In addition he had suitably impressed the President of Munster, Sir George Carew, who had this to say of him in about 1600 'I have not known in my life any man of Ireland birth to be equaled to him, for I do suppose him to be as truly English as if he had been born in Middlesex...he spares neither brother, uncle, kinsman, or follower that is not obedient to the state.'²⁸ Again in 1602 Carew heaped praise on Donough writing that the earl 'is the first and last of Ireland birth that ever I found wholly addicted to the queen as he is. For her sake he is hated of all his nation.'²⁹ Donough's efforts were rewarded with the Presidency of Munster, a position to which he was appointed in 1615, (after several requests by himself), and retained until his death in 1624.³⁰ Although he was successful in convincing England of his loyalty to the crown, he also continued to patronise the native Gaelic *literati* families, many of whom appear as tenants in the rental. One of these families, the MacBrody's, hereditary poets of the O'Briens, composed several praise poems dedicated to him, many of which survive.³¹

Donough's son and successor Henry O'Brien married Mary, daughter of William Brereton, 1st Baron Brereton, an absentee landlord with estates in Cheshire in England as well as in Co. Carlow.³² Together they had five daughters, and having no male heir to succeed, Henry sought to provide handsomely for each of these five ladies from the estate, securing for them titled English gentlemen as spouses. His preoccupation with raising finance from his estate might possibly have been the reason for the creation of the rental in 1626. When Henry died in 1639 at the age of 50, his successor, his brother Barnabas, (just two years his junior), found the estate to be in poor financial circumstances as a result of Henry's financial dealings.³³

The Rental

The rental, which runs to thirty manuscript pages, is reproduced in this paper in spreadsheet format, similar to the layout of the original document. Spellings are unchanged. The

²⁵ Cunningham, 'Newcomers in the Thomond Lordship', p. 109.

²⁶ Luke McNerney, 'A note on the Uí Mhaoir of Drumcliff, Co. Clare'. *The Other Clare*, vol. 35 (2011) pp 26-9. The Uí Mhaoir were a clerical family who were settled on Drumcliffe termon until ejected by Donough O'Brien.

²⁷ Luke McNerney, 'Documents from the Thomond Papers at Petworth House', *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. lxiii (2011) pp 7-55.

²⁸ Cunningham, *Clanricard and Thomond*, p. 17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 17-18.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp 36-7. On the MacBrody's, or Clann Bhruaídeadha, including their fosterage connection with the earl, see Luke McNerney, 'Lettermoylan of Clann Bhruaídeadha: A résumé of their landholding, topography & history', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, vol. 52 (2012) pp 1-33.

³² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Brereton,_1st_Baron_Brereton.

³³ Breen, *History of Bunratty Castle*, pp 29-30.

rental is divided into the nine ancient baronies of Thomond: Bunratty, Tulla, Islands, Clonderlaw, Moyarta, Corcomroe, Burren, Inchiquin and Ibrickan. Each barony is divided into the following 12 sub-headings: Barony, Names of Lands (townland names), Quarters, Half-quarters, Cartrons, Cessies³⁴ (sessiagh), Castles, Tenants, County, Barony, Parish, and Rent due. The four units of land measurement are archaic to the modern reader, but may be explained to roughly equate as follows, though we must remember that the physical land area of these units at the period varied greatly according to the quality and productivity of the actual land in question. A quarter was about one hundred and twenty acres, a half-quarter was half of this, or about sixty acres, a cartron was a quarter of the quarter of land, or thirty acres, and a cessie, or seissiagh, being a sixth part of the quarter or twenty acres.³⁵ Although we have the above approximations to give some impression of land area, when we introduce the 'acre' in relation to these ancient terms, we can have the wrong impression entirely if we try to 'modernise' our impression of the land area units. Captain Thomas Larcom, Director of the Ordnance Survey, in discussing the various acre measurements in 1846, wrote that because there were so many different types of acre, such as the 'large acre', the 'small acre', the Plantation acre, the Cunningham acre and the statute acre, (not even mentioning the Irish acre, as if to avoid confusion), there was no means to compute the land area measurement in relation to ancient documents.³⁶ It has even been suggested that during the Middle Ages, an acre was considered to be the amount of land that could be ploughed in one day with a pair of oxen, rather than the finite quantity of land which we now accept it to be.³⁷

The amount of rent generated from each barony in the rental gives an indication of the quality of the land in that particular barony. When all the ancient units of land denomination in the rental are added up according to the above calculations, we only get a total of 40,443 acres in the Thomond estate, or about 5% of the modern calculated acreage for Co. Clare, which is about 800,000 acres,³⁸ adding further credence to the argument that acreage in ancient times was not a physical measurement of land, but rather an indication of its quality or productivity. Also of interest when attempting to calculate land areas in ancient documents, is the fact that even the quarters of land in each barony changed with time and the emerging market-based society that evolved when colonisation took place.³⁹ The 1626 rental records Bunratty Barony as containing 97 quarters of land (in 63 townlands), whereas the *Books of Survey and Distribution*, compiled between 1655 and 1701,⁴⁰ in the aftermath of the wars of the mid-seventeenth century and the Cromwellian conquest, show Bunratty Barony to contain 296 quarters.⁴¹ This trend of upward change in the number of quarters holds true for all baronies in both sources. The total number of quarters of land in the earl's estate in 1626, when all the units of land measurement are summed up is 336 quarters.

³⁴ These denominations only appear in the rental for the Barony of Burren.

³⁵ Michael MacMahon, 'Old Territorial Divisions & Land Measurements: Where to draw the line', *The Other Clare*, vol. 24 (2000) p. 40.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

³⁷ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/4100/acre>. Accessed 08/01/2013.

³⁸ Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* (London, 1837), Vol I, p. 329 and Patrick Nugent, *The Gaelic Clans of Co. Clare and their Territories 1100-1700 A.D.* (Dublin, 2007) p. 110. Lewis recorded that Co. Clare contained 802,352 acres whereas Nugent gives the total acreage as 768,265 acres. Current acreage of Co. Clare according to Clare Co. Council is 783,900. I use an approximate figure of 800,000 for the purpose of calculation in this paper.

³⁹ Nugent, *Gaelic Clans of Co. Clare*, p. 110.

⁴⁰ R.C. Simmington (ed.), *Books of Survey and Distribution, Vol. IV, County of Clare* (Dublin, 1938) p. vi.

⁴¹ Nugent, *Gaelic Clans of Co. Clare*, p. 110.

The rental income for each barony may be presented as follows: Bunratty: £332-00s-08d. Tulla: £191-10s-00d. Islands: £406-00s-00d. Clonderalaw: £113-13s-04d. Moyarta: £86-11s-08d. Corcomroe: £26-13s-04d. Burren: £15-00s-00d. Inchiquin: £23-13s-09d. Ibrickan: £253-10s-00d.

Total income from the estate according to the rental was £1445-12s-09d. The average revenue from each quarter of land in Thomond was therefore about £4-6s. The most fertile lands in the east of the county, which had the greatest concentration of English and Dutch settlers, can be seen to have generated the greatest income. The less fertile lands in the west of the county, almost exclusively rented to Irish tenants, generated considerably less income. The poor return from Inchiquin Barony can be explained by the fact that only the townlands in the area around Corofin were set down as rented lands.

The details contained in the rental give us a good deal of information about Co. Clare in the aftermath of the informal plantation carried out by the fourth earl. About 42% of the lettings in the rental were to English tenants, especially in the more fertile eastern and central portions of Co. Clare, and to a much lesser degree in the north and west of the county where the land could be considered more marginal. About 5% of the lettings were to Dutch tenants, with the remaining 50% or so to Irish tenants, mostly consisting of the poorer quality land in the west and north of the county.⁴² The total money due to the earl according to the rental was almost £1450 per annum, a considerable amount of money at the time, to be paid on 'everie gale', the day on which the rent was due, usually observed in May. One can visualise the earl sitting in state in his Great Hall at Bunratty Castle receiving rents from his tenants, Irish, English and Dutch, and his accounts, as displayed in this rental for the year 1626, being updated accordingly. Interestingly in 1642 a Parliamentary force under Lord Forbes and General MacAdam, after they had taken over Bunratty Castle during the Catholic uprising, found a sum of £2,000 hidden in its walls, which they made use of to pay their troops.⁴³ Most likely this was the earl's rental income from his estate, which prior to the 1641 rebellion was yielding a good return. The earl at this time was Barnabas, sixth earl, who, having handed over his castle to the Parliamentarians and excused himself to England, claimed to have no money to help the army.⁴⁴ Obviously this amount of money was too large to attempt to carry safely in troubled times to England. The earl presumably entertained hopes of returning to enjoy his estate revenue in Ireland in quieter times, an event which in the end, was not to happen for him, or any of the O'Briens of Thomond.

The rental details a total of 210 lettings of lands (appearing as town and townland names), containing 334 quarters, to 148 named tenants. Some tenants are not named, these land allocations, mainly in the new urban areas, being grouped under the titles, 'Severall Tenannts' or 'London Merchants', possibly evidence of capital speculation in the land market in early-seventeenth-century Co. Clare. In the absence of actual names for these people in the two locations of Ennis and Sixmilebridge, we can only speculate as to their nationality. It is unlikely that they were Irish, as the denominations nearest to each location were tenanted by English and Dutch settlers, and it was in keeping with the earl's plan to populate these urban centers with foreign settlers.⁴⁵ The number of denominations which appear in the rental would represent only about 10% of the number

⁴² Patrick Nugent, 'The interface between the Gaelic clan system of Co. Clare and the emerging centralising English nation-state in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century', *Irish Geography*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2007) p. 93.

⁴³ Breen, *History of Bunratty Castle*, p. 33.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Cunningham, *Clanricard and Thomond*, p. 46.

of townlands in Co. Clare today, which stand at 2,211, giving an indication of the change in the political geography of the county in just under 400 years. Almost all of the townlands in the rental are recognizable today, though they were obviously written by a scribe who had little understanding of the Irish language. Most are spelled phonetically, a small number are difficult to identify, and some townland names have disappeared with the passing of time.

The quality as well as the area of land was reflected in the varying rents paid per quarter, and the fact that some tenants also rented a castle on the lands can be seen to have increased the revenue. The earl was receiving an average of £3 to £6, and occasionally as high as £15 per quarter. John Jasper was paying this latter amount at Tullyvarraga and Ballycasey near the present-day Shannon Airport, and the earl's own castle and 2 quarters at his manor of Doonass were rented to 'Thomas Thornton and Robte Chaloner' for £33-10s. It is obvious from the figures that a certain small number of tenants, perhaps favourites of the earl, were getting land at much lower rents, and a few such as Rowland Delahoyde,⁴⁶ Boetius Clanchy, William Brickdale⁴⁷ and some O'Briens and Mac Namaras, had no rent at all recorded against them. That Rowland Delahoyde was a favourite of the earl is further evidenced in two entries for Tulla Barony. John Costeloe was renting five quarters of land and a castle at Lisofin for £16 -10s. per annum: Delahoyde (in the next entry) was also renting five quarters and one cartron of land, and a castle at Fomerla, but he was only paying £1-10s. He appears in two other entries paying £3 for 2 quarters at Forby and Loghan, and no rent at all for a half cartron at Classagh. Also of interest is the fact that the earl's towns were bringing in good revenue. Sixmilebridge and Ennis were let to 'Severall Tennants' and were earning £17-10s, and £100 respectively. Another high earning property was Crovraghan with five quarters which was rented to Thomas Luther at £50. Kilrush and Cappagh in west Co. Clare which were rented to Jacques Gronier and Thomas Chambers were only realising £18, while little interest appears to have been shown in the earl's north Co. Clare towns of Ennistymon and Liscannor which were rented to Irish tenants, Boetius Clancy and Andrew Comyn, and were only returning £2-3s-4d.

The rental contains the names of forty-six castles, or forty-seven if we take Coollisteige as having the two castles which the rental records. There are three other castles in the area around Coollisteige, and as two of these, Newtown and Doonass⁴⁸ are already recorded in the rental, the second castle recorded at Coollisteige must be John's Castle, (also known as Rinroe Castle), which lies less than one mile to the south of Coollisteige. These four castles were rented by the same two English tenants, Thomas Thornton and Robte Challoner. Twenty-seven of these castles were occupied by English tenants and fourteen by Irish tenants. The earl himself owned the first three castles in the rental (though his name is not recorded), and no tenants are recorded for two other castles. One of these, the castle of Clonmoney, was recorded as being in ruins, while the castle on

⁴⁶ Delahoyde, an Old-English catholic from Leinster, was a firm favourite with the earl and appears in an Inquisition dated 1636 where Earl Donough transferred to him by deed the castle, town and lands of Fomerla, as well as several other denominations. He was married to a daughter of Clancy of Inch near Ennis, and when his son Oliver was brought before earl Barnabas in 1642 charged with depredation against the protestant settlers, the earl dismissed the charges and gave him the power to execute martial law, see James Frost, *The History and Topography of the County of Clare* (Dublin, 1893) pp 287, 295 & 341-2.

⁴⁷ William Brickdale, Boetius Clancy and Rowland Delahoyde, as favourites of the earl, all sat as jurors on Inquisitions in the 1630s, *ibid.*, pp 324-5.

⁴⁸ The earl had introduced a sizeable number of settlers at his manor of Doonass. These suffered badly during the 1641 rebellion, *ibid.*, p. 360.

Feenish Island had no tenant mentioned, and may also have been in ruins at this time.⁴⁹ When the 1626 rental is contrasted against the 1570 and 1574 'castle lists' for Co. Clare,⁵⁰ where no castle was in foreign ownership, we can observe the changing political landscape of the county in the half century or so preceding the rental, the period of the tenure of Donough O'Brien, fourth earl of Thomond. The only exceptions in the sixteenth-century castle ownership lists were seven of the earl of Thomond's castles (who at this time was Conor, third earl, and who was not on good terms with Queen Elizabeth), which were held in 1570 for the Queen by the Anglo-Irish Earl of Ormond Thomas Butler⁵¹ whose aunt, Ellen Butler, widow of Donough O'Brien, second Earl of Thomond, held Lissosfin Castle.⁵²

When we compare the names of the English tenants who were renting castles in the 1626 manuscript with the tenants who appear in the list of castles in Co. Clare which were in the hands of Englishmen just prior to the rebellion of 1641,⁵³ we see that only eight were still living in the same castles in 1641, or at least members of the same family name. Perhaps many of these individuals and their families prudently left their allotments in Thomond before the commencement of hostilities. Many of the Dutch settlers who came were not successful, or at least not all established themselves permanently in Thomond.⁵⁴ The remaining tenancies came to an abrupt end with the onslaught of the rebellion of that year, though some of these tenants returned in later years.⁵⁵ In fact ten settler families from the 1626 rental appear giving evidence of their losses and distress during the rebellion in the 1641 Depositions List.⁵⁶ These names include Ward, Graneere, Chambers, Blood, Vandeleure, Mordant, Hill, Hickman and Heathcote. The depositions of some of the expelled New-English settlers reveal a genuine unawareness that their Gaelic neighbours generally despised them.⁵⁷ It is thought-provoking to speculate as to whether the architect of their misery, Earl Donough, shared their belief, or if he could have been so detached from reality not to imagine that his Irish tenants would resent his plan of colonisation.⁵⁸

When we consult the 1659 census⁵⁹ only two of these families were still living at the same location in 1659 as they had been in 1626. Starkey was at Dromoland (though now also at Killaloe), and Granier was at Kilrush. Several other colonist surnames such as Blackwell, Hickman, Vandeleure and Thornton appear in both rental and census, though at different locations. Further plantations followed in aftermath of the 1641 rebellion and

⁴⁹ Feenish Island was an O'Brien property in the Shannon Estuary, which appears in many O'Brien documents and wills. The castle was in ruins by 1703, see Martin Breen and Risteard UaCróinín, 'Some Island Castles of Co. Clare', *The Other Clare*, vol. 33 (2009) p. 11.

⁵⁰ State Papers, Ireland, Elizabeth, Vol. XXX, No. 68,1 published by Martin Breen, 'A 1570 List of Castles in County Clare', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, vol. xxxvi (1995) pp 130-8:133, and State Papers, Ireland, Elizabeth, Vol. XLV, No. 35,1, published by R.W.Twigge, 'Edward White's description of Thomond, 1574', *Journal of the North Munster Archaeological Society*, vol. 1, no 2 (1910) pp 75-85:80.

⁵¹ S.P.I. Elizabeth. Vol XXX. No. 67.

⁵² Martin Breen & Risteard Ua Cróinín, 'Some Towerhouse Sites in East Clare', *The Other Clare*, vol. 27 (2003) p. 10.

⁵³ Philip Dwyer, *The Diocese of Killaloe* (Dublin, 1878) p. 197

⁵⁴ Cunningham, 'Newcomers in the Thomond Lordship', p. 107.

⁵⁵ Nugent, *Gaelic Clans of Co. Clare and their Territories*, p. 216.

⁵⁶ <http://1641.tcd.ie/>.

⁵⁷ Nugent, 'Gaelic clan system of Co. Clare and the English nation-state', p. 96.

⁵⁸ For more information on how far the earls of Thomond had distanced themselves from the lives of their subjects, see Brian Ó Dálaigh, 'From Gaelic warlords to English country gentlemen—The O'Briens of Thomond 1543–1741', *The Other Clare*, vol. 25 (2001) pp 40-42:42 where Ó Dálaigh wrote that Earl Barnabas broke down and cried at the assizes in Ennis in 1641, begging the people not to enter into the rebellion: his cries fell on deaf ears.

⁵⁹ Pender, *Census 1659*, pp 163-88.

the subsequent Cromwellian confiscations. The 1659 census (in common with the 1626 rental, for its period) shows that the number of New-English settlers had once again continued to increase. In 1659 they were generally clustered in and around the newly formed borough-towns of Kilrush, Ennis and Sixmilebridge, and also in the southeast corner of Co. Clare, at Ballykeellaun, just north of Limerick City (beside Castlebank, one of the earl's strongholds⁶⁰) where there were twenty-nine English '*Titulados*', or title-holders.⁶¹ In 1626 these centres held some New-English tenants, but not to the same extent. Perhaps the newer settlers had learned from the experiences of 1641, and felt that it was safer to settle in larger groups near centres of population. Once again, they were settled in the most fertile areas of the county, with little or no English tenants in the Baronies of Corcomroe and Burren. At first glance we only see a misleadingly low percentage of just 2.6% of the population in the 1659 census denominated as English.⁶² A closer study of the census however reveals that very many of the '*Titulados*' were in fact English, though they were enumerated as Irish. Examples of these names are Colpoys, England, Poore, Purden, Denn, Stapleton and Thobbin. Quite obviously it had taken little time for these families to consider themselves Irish.⁶³ In the 1641 depositions many deponents described themselves as 'British' Protestants⁶⁴ though some used 'Irish' Protestants, while James Vandeleure stated that he was a 'Dutch' Protestant.⁶⁵

The names of the Irish tenants in the 1626 rental contain typical Co. Clare surnames such as MacNamara, O'Brien, O'Hogan, O'Grady and Considine. It also shows that a few of the old Gaelic '*literati*' still held on to a portion of their land. The MacBrody family,⁶⁶ who for generations were *ollamh* to the O'Brien earls of Thomond, were renting eight parcels of land in their ancestral territory of Ibrickan, though in the past their land was held rent free by virtue of their office as learned poet-chroniclers. Interestingly, we note that 'Teig mc Brodies widdowe' still held the family's patrimonial land at Knockenalbona, which shows that Teige MacBrodie, *ollamh* to the O'Briens, was deceased by 1626. According to the rental, no money was due for this land, which amounted to 'one quarter', though the other seven MacBrody rentals were charged at the regular rate of £3 to £6 per quarter, with 'Teig mc Brodie's sonnes' holding five quarters at Kildeema and Finnore and paying £30 rent to the earl. Although the process of anglicisation was in full sway by 1626, it is interesting to note that aspects of customary Gaelic practices such as rent-free estates for favoured members of the learned class persisted down to the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Knockanalban Castle, which was situated on a *crannóg*, was under the proprietorship of the MacBrodys from at least 1586.⁶⁷ They were still in residence there in 1615 and the denomination was rent free.⁶⁸ A similar rent-free arrangement is recorded for Knockanalban in the 1626 rental, though the castle is not mentioned. Their other residence, a hilltop towerhouse at Dunogan, was by this time in the hands of one James Bourke. This towerhouse was the property of the MacBrodys up to at least 1615, though it was not rent free at that time.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ Frost, *History of Clare*, p. 362.

⁶¹ Pender, *Census 1659*, p. 166.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁶³ Cunningham, *Clanricard and Thomond*, p. 48.

⁶⁴ Max Granieer for example, TCD, 1641 Depositions Project, online transcript, January 1970 accessed 01 January 2013.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ On these learned poet-chroniclers see McInerney, 'Lettermoylan of Clann Bhruaidealha', pp 1-33.

⁶⁷ *The Irish Fiant of the Tudor Sovereigns* (Dublin, 1994), Fiant no. 4860.

⁶⁸ Luke McInerney, 'The Earl of Thomond's 1615 Survey of Ibrickan, Co Clare'.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Members of other learned families also appear to have remained as chief tenants of the earl, some at reduced rents, and some paying little or no rent, perhaps an indication of appreciation by the earl at their changing attitude to anglicisation, or perhaps it may have been their ability to accept change when the portends of the end of the old Gaelic civilisation became evident. Some families successfully made the political and economic transition of the early seventeenth century and retained their status and landholding intact. One example is the MacClancy family who for generations were professors of brehon law and poetry in both Corcomroe and Tradraige. By 1588 a member of the lineage, Boetius MacClancy appeared as sheriff of Co. Clare, ruthlessly dealing with the storm-tossed crews of the Spanish Armada, actively carrying out the orders of the president of Connaught, Sir Richard Bingham.⁷⁰ In 1615 another Boetius was sheriff of Co. Clare⁷¹ but by this time his name was anglicised to Clancy.⁷² It is highly likely that this was Baothghalach Óg (Boetius the younger) who also featured in the rental and was granted the manor of Knockfinn in 1622 by King James I.⁷³

Boetius McClancy⁷⁴ held half of a half-quarter and one cartron of land at Lisroe in Kilmaley rent free, and more than three quarters of land and a castle in Ennistymon at just ten shillings annual rent, while Donough McClancy held four quarters and one cartron of land in Ballymacon in Bunratty at £10 rent and a small parcel of land in Kilraghtis rent free. Morris O'Mulconry held one quarter of land in Tulla Barony at an annual rent of £2-10s. This family had a school of history and poetry at Ard Kyle near Bunratty. The O'Davorens still held their traditional law school residence at Cahermacnaghten, although they only held one half 'cessie' of land, at an annual rent of 13s-4d.⁷⁵ The Uí Dhálaigh, (O'Dalys), the hereditary poets of the O'Loughlins of Burren, retained their traditional residence in Finavarra in north Co. Clare, holding two quarters and one cartron of land at a rent of £1-6s-8d. They were also tenants of the earl at Ballaghboy in Doorra Parish, Barony of Bunratty, holding one cartron at £1-10s. They were still resident in Finavarra in 1659 according to the census of that year.⁷⁶ Only one of the MacCruitín family appears in the rental, 'Hugh McCruttin', who held three quarters at Glendine, near Miltown at a rent of £13-10s. The MacCruitín, (Clann Chruitín, Curtin), were an older *ollamh* family to the O'Briens. The first mention of them in the annals is from 1354.⁷⁷ In 1376 the Four Masters recorded the death of 'Kellach Mac Curtin, chief Historian of Thomond'.⁷⁸ By 1626 they appear to have declined in status and were paying full rent on their property.

The first three townland entries of the rental, which include Bunratty, were clearly retained by the earl, as no tenant or rent is shown. Each of these townlands had a substantial castle. The fourth entry, Ard Kyle, as already noted, long the property of the

⁷⁰ T.J. Westropp, 'Notes of the Sheriffs of Co. Clare', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xx (1890) p. 70.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² The surname in Irish is Mac Fhlannchadha and was commonly anglicised under numerous variants in the seventeenth century, including McClanchy, McClancy and Clancy.

⁷³ *Irish Patent Rolls of James I - Ireland* (Dublin, 1966) p. 526.

⁷⁴ For further information on this learned family see Luke McInerney, 'A Mac Fhlannchadha Fosterage Document, c.1580', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, vol. 51 (2011) pp 1-10.

⁷⁵ For further information on these learned families see Dermot F. Gleeson, 'Some Learned Men of Killaloe Diocese', *Molua* (1950, pp 18-35.

⁷⁶ Pender, *Census 1659*, p. 185.

⁷⁷ E. J. Gwynn, 'Fragmentary Annals from the West of Ireland', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, section c, vol. 37 (1924-7) p. 153.

⁷⁸ *Annals of the Four Masters*, *sub anno* 1376.

O'Mulconrys, legal notaries, jurors and keepers of a school of chronicling (*seanchas*), poetry and Gaelic learning in the townland,⁷⁹ was no longer held by this family. Donough O'Brien, fourth earl of Thomond, had desired the Ardkyle property, being good quality land, and situated close to his castle at Bunratty. In the absence of any agreement, the land was taken forcibly in 1618 by Donough O'Brien, and exchanged for poorer quality land in Shandangan, Kilmurry Parish.⁸⁰ According to the rental, 'Morris O'Mulconnery' held one quarter, and one third of a cartron in Clonmore⁸¹ at a rent of £2-10s. Another document in the Petworth House Archive sheds further light on this transfer: 'Donat, late earl of Thomond, having a great desire to gain and acquire the said lands...in regard that they lay convenient and near to his land of his manor of Bunratty...in the year 1618 [Muiris] was forced to give possession...to the said Donat.'⁸² In 1638, a petition to the earl (then Donough's son, Henry fifth earl, for whom the rental was drawn up) by Daniel O'Mulconry for the return of his father's lands at Ardkyle, met with little success.⁸³ The decline in status of the family probably began some time earlier: John O'Mulconry held Rossmanagher Castle in 1570⁸⁴ but by 1574 the castle was in the hands of Conor O'Brien, third Earl of Thomond.⁸⁵ We know that Rossmanagher Castle was used by the O'Mulconry family as part of their school and that members of the O'Davoren family from the law school at Cahermacnaghten studied and copied manuscripts there in 1564. A reference in the marginalia of the manuscript Egerton⁸⁶ in the British Library, written chiefly by Domhnaill O'Davoren and other scribes of the Burren law school notes: '*Sin a Domnuill ó Dábhí ocus a chair maille madtá ann. lá fheil Aoengus[a] aniu. a rios muin[e]chair dúinn uile ailim trócaie...damh*' (This, Donal, from David, and his love accompanying all the contents. Today is the festival of [S.] Angus, we all being at Rossmanagher. I crave mercy...for myself).⁸⁷

Examining the rental, barony by barony, it is clear that the earl had settled most of the best land on his English and Dutch tenants. Practically all the larger lettings of land, those of between four and nine quarters, were let to English and Dutch tenants, for which they were paying handsomely; for example two of the highest rents paid in the rental were by Garratt van Asperan who was paying £70 for six quarters in Kilfiltenan and Thomas Luther who was paying £50 for five quarters in Crovraghan near Ballynacally. Almost the entire Barony of Bunratty had foreign tenants, with the exception of the earl's own estate around Bunratty Castle, and a few lettings to his O'Brien relations and some to Mac Namara and Clancy tenants.⁸⁸ A similar situation existed in the Barony of Tulla in east Clare, in the Barony of Islands in central Clare and in the Baronies of Clonderlaw and

⁷⁹ Gleeson, 'Some Learned Men of Killaloe Diocese', pp 25-6.

⁸⁰ Luke McNerney, 'Documents from the Thomond Papers at Petworth House Archive', p. 21.

⁸¹ According to the 1570 and 1574 castle lists the castle of Clonmore, situated two miles west of Quin, was then the property of the family of Shane Reogh MacNamara.

⁸² McNerney, 'Documents from the Thomond Papers at Petworth House Archive', p. 35.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁸⁴ Breen, '1570 List of Castles', p. 132.

⁸⁵ Twigge, 'Description of Thomond 1574', p. 79.

⁸⁶ Standish Hayes O'Grady, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1926) Vol. I, p. 131, I am grateful to Luke McNerney for this reference. For further information on this subject see Luke McNerney, 'A Mac Fhlannchadha Fosterage Document, c.1580: Notes on the Siol Fhlannchadha of Tradraige', *The Irish Genealogist*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2011) pp 93-127.

⁸⁷ Some landholding septs, such as the McNerneys are not recorded but did nonetheless hold lands in Bunratty at Tomfinlough, Kilnasoolagh, Clonloghan and Kilmaleery, see Luke McNerney, 'Land and Lineage: The McEnerhyns of Ballysallagh in the Sixteenth Century', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, vol. 49 (2009) pp 1-26.

⁸⁸ P.H.A., C27/H1 and C27/H2.

Moyarta in south-west Clare, all with little or no Irish tenants. The less accessible areas in north-west Clare which lie within the Baronies of Burren and Corcomroe appear to have retained almost exclusive Irish tenancy, with just one exception, that of Captain Hugh Norton who held seven quarters of land, the largest letting in Corcomroe, at £24. 10s. The Barony of Inchiquin in central Clare was almost equally divided between Irish and English tenants, while the Barony of Ibrickan in west Clare was almost exclusively let to Irish tenants, with just a few exceptions, such as Valentine Blake, Peter Ward and Captain Hugh Norton.

Conclusion

While the rental is titled as having been created for Henry O'Brien, 5th earl of Thomond, it represents the work of anglicisation initiated by his father Donough. Although outwardly Protestant and being in high favour with the English government of the day (at a cost of unpopularity with his Irish peers and tenants), Donough still retained, albeit not outwardly, at least some of the trappings of a Gaelic lord, but was the last of his line to do so. Through the colonisation of large portions of his estate to foreign tenants, he raised substantial capital, and most likely tenanted many under-populated portions of his estate in the process; although some of this was affected through the forced acquisition of land from Gaelic proprietors in order to settle some of his New-English and Dutch tenants. The earl was equally active in consolidating his estates around Bunratty by appropriating the lands of nearby freeholders, thus ensuring the development of the core of his estate around his demesne.

The rental shows that very little of the Thomond estate remained unpopulated, or was not returning an income by 1626, two years after the death of Donough O'Brien. His son Henry, for whom the rental was drawn up, appears to have lived much of his life at Bunratty Castle, rearing his five daughters, and squandering the family fortune creating dowries to procure for them titled English gentlemen as husbands. Being preoccupied with finance may have been the reason for Henry drawing up this rental in 1626. It is even posited that the early-seventeenth-century sketch plans of Bunratty Castle⁸⁹ showing an orderly and well laid out castle and demesne, were created by him in order to attract possible suitors for his daughters.⁹⁰ Henry died in 1639, before the hostilities of the 1641 rebellion broke out, and was spared the horror of the upheaval. His brother Barnabas, also known as Barnaby,⁹¹ succeeded him as fifth earl. Barnabas had a troubled tenure at Bunratty, his reign coinciding with the 1641 rebellion and Confederate wars, which caused his allegiances to continually waver to suit the occasion. A political strategist of the highest order, but according to G.U. Macnamara's description of him,⁹² 'gymnast' might be a more fitting soubriquet; he had to beat a hasty retreat to his estate in England to preserve life and limb during the rebellion of 1641, and was the last earl of Thomond to live at Bunratty Castle.

Interestingly the 1656 Earl of Thomond's rental,⁹³ drawn up for Barnabas O'Brien, (then resident in England), shows that in the aftermath of the 1641 rebellion, many of the

⁸⁹ Breen, *Bunratty Castle*, pp 74-8.

⁹⁰ Christened Brian, but it appears that in keeping with his upbringing he preferred to be known as Barnabas, see George U. Macnamara, 'Bunratty, Co. Clare', *Journal of the North Munster Archaeological Society*, vol. iii, no. 4 (1915) p. 288.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 311. Macnamara described Barnabas as follows: 'An easy going, harmless man, perhaps in quiet times, but a political trimmer of the first water, who sat on three rickety stools at the same time – King, Confederation and Parliament – with unparalleled success'.

⁹² Ainsworth (ed.), *The Inchiquin Manuscripts*, p. 535, no. 1538.

⁹³ Nugent, *Gaelic Clans of Co. Clare and their Territories*, p. 216.

same New-English and Dutch settlers such as Starkey, Granier, Blood, Aylmer, Burton, Hickman, Delahoyde and Vandeleure as well as others, had returned and some had re-settled on their former estates. The number of New-English settlers in Thomond had increased from 42% in 1626 to 52% in 1656,⁹⁴ a figure which appears to have been reversed in the 1659 census, when the New-English figure dropped to about 40% and the native Catholic ownership increased to 60%,⁹⁵ although as previously noted, many of the New-English settler names were recorded as being Irish. The plantations initiated by the Tudors and continued on a different scale by Gaelic magnates such as the Thomonds, notwithstanding the period of the Cromwellian plantations, provided the initial backdrop to the later period of the Protestant Ascendancy and the landed gentry who dominated political life well into the nineteenth century.

⁹⁴ Patrick Nugent, 'The Interrelationship Between Population and Settlement in County Clare in the Seventeenth Century: the Evidence from the 1659 'Census'', in Matthew Lynch & Patrick Nugent (eds), *Clare History and Society* (Dublin, 2008) p. 81.

