Richard II And The Chieftains
Of Thomond

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In 1927 the late Professor E. Curtis published for the first time the full text of the submissions of many Irish chieftains to Richard II during his expedition to Ireland in the early months of 1395. He took his text of these submissions from a roll which is now in the Public Record Office, London, where it is classed as Exchequer Q.R. Memorandum Roll (18 Richard II). This roll contains an official transcript of the original notarial deeds which recorded in official form the submissions of the various Irish chieftains. Some ten of these notarial deeds still survive in the Public Record Office, where they are now classed as Chancery Miscellanea, Bundle 10, File 25; but they are in poor preservation, and Curtis wisely based his printed text on the official transcripts of the Memorandum Roll. These transcripts included the text of thirty-eight notarial deeds, and also of twenty-three letters which were addressed to the King in the course of his stay in Ireland. Before we say something of their contents, it may be helpful to recall briefly the principal dates of this royal tour.

Richard II landed at Waterford with his army on 2 October 1394, and spent a month in the neighbourhood of that city. He marched from Waterford to New Ross, and thence along the Barrow to Leighlin : whence he organised a series of punitive expeditions against Art Mac Murchadha and his men of Leinster. Richard did not reach Dublin until 6 November, and it is known to have held a parliament in that city on 1 December. For the ten weeks from 6 November to the middle of January the King was in Dublin; but meanwhile one of the great English Lords who had crossed over to Ireland with him received the formal submission of Art Mac Murchadha at Tullow on 7 January. This was Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham and Marshal of England, who is familiar to readers of Shakespeare’s Richard II as ‘Mowbray.’ The agreement between Art and the King, by which Art made his formal submission and swore fealty, in return for which he was received into the King’s grace, was binding also on Art’s ‘urraghists’: O Broin, O Mórdha, O Conchobhail Fálighhe and others. From Dublin the King

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2. In his edition Curtis follows the convenient system of numbering the notarial deeds in Roman numerals, and the letters in Arabic numerals. He prints the full Latin texts, and at the end of these texts a summary translation of both the deeds and the letters. In what follows I cite the deeds as Instr. I, II etc.; and the letters as Letter 1, 2, etc.
3. Instr. XV (Curtis, p. 80-84).
marched to Drogheda, where on 19 January 1395, he received the important submission of Niall mór O Neill. Niall’s son, Niall óg, had given his father full powers to treat in his name with the King by an instrument dated 6 January. The submission of O Neill was a very great success for the King’s Irish policy, and on 1 February Richard wrote a letter to the Duke of York, who was acting as Regent in England during Richard’s absence, in which he tells the Regent of his success in Ireland.

On 12 February the King commissioned the Earl of Nottingham to receive the submission in person of the chieftains of Leinster. O Broin, O Conchobhair Fáilghe, O Tuathail and others made their submissions to him at Carlow and at Tristeldermot on 16, 17 and 18 February. Formal notarial deeds, recording these submissions, were then brought to the King, who had meanwhile returned to Dublin. On 1 March Brian mór O Briain came to Dublin Castle, and there in person made his formal submission to the King. On 10 March Richard was back in Drogheda, where he received the submissions of Mac Mathghamhna on 10 March, and of several lesser northern chieftains on 14 March. Niall óg O Neill, O h-Anluain, Mac Domhnall and Mac Aonghusa made their submissions at Drogheda on 16 March; and on 19 March the King was at Dundalk, where he received the submissions of Cú Uladh Mac Aonghusa and other northern chieftains. On 21 March he was back at Drogheda, where he ordered a letter just received from Maelsechlainn O Ceallaigh of Úi Mháine to be copied on that date.

In the last days of March we find Richard at Great Connell in Kildare (28 March) and at Carlow (30 March). He was then on his way to Kilkenny, where he planned to hold a second parliament on 12 April. That parliament never met; but the King is known to have received the submission of various Hiberno-Norman lords at Kilkenny on 3 and 6 April; and of some Irish chieftains on 16 April. On 19 April he held a Great Council at Kilkenny instead of the parliament which had been summoned for 12 April. Richard was still at Kilkenny on 21 April, when he received the submission of Art O Diomusaigh there; and on 25 April, when he received the submission of Toirdelbach, son of Murchadh O Briain. Before the end of the month he had moved from Kilkenny to Waterford, where he pardoned William de Burgo and Walter Bermingham, two

6. Instr. XV (Curtis, p. 76-7).
11. Curtis, p. 43-24. His comment is worth recording here: ‘No evidence exists that this assembly met, at least no records of its proceedings are extant, and we cannot but regret that the royal visit was not signalized by some great act of legislation, made in a full parliament, such as might have reconciled the two races of Ireland.’
rebellious lords of Connacht on board his ship in the harbour.\(^{15}\) He sailed from Waterford for England on 15 May 1395.

Apart from the formal record of Brian O Briain’s submission at Dublin Castle on 1 March 1395, light is thrown on his movements and policies by some of the letters which Curtis printed from the Memorandum Roll. On 26 February Niall òg O Neill, to whom his father had surrendered the active government of his lordship for some years before his death in 1397, wrote a letter to Archbishop John Colton, Primate of All-Ireland, who was then acting as intermediary between the King and the northern chieftains\(^{16}\). In this letter Niall òg tells the archbishop that he, on the Archbishop’s advice, had summoned all the chieftains of Ulster to meet him and to consult about their appearance at the King’s court: most probably in January or early February. He adds that messengers had come to him from O Brian, O Conchobhair, Mac Carthaigh (McKarrych) and other southern chieftains, who had earnestly begged O Neill not to appear at the King’s court. But O Neill had had heed instead to the Archbishop’s counsels, who had bidden him remember the many honours and liberties which he might hope to gain from the royal favour, and the lordships which his ancestors had held from past kings of England. Niall òg therefore offers to make all arrangements for his visit to the King’s court; and he did in fact, as we have seen, make his formal submission at Drogheda on 16 March. Niall’s submission, following his father’s submission, which had been made on 19 January, must have had a powerful effect on the policy pursued by the southern chieftains.

Three letters from Brian O Briain have been printed by Curtis from the Memorandum Roll. Only one of these can be dated: for the King ordered it to be enrolled on 4 February, after it had been read in his presence at the Abbey of St. Thomas, Dublin\(^{17}\). It must have been written in the last days of January or the first two days of February. In this first letter Brian assures Richard that, if he had known that the King would welcome his letter of submission, he would have written at once in this sense as soon as he had heard of the King’s arrival in Ireland (in October 1394). He now offers his formal submission, and begs the King’s pardon for any offence of which he may have been guilty in the past, promising amendment for the future. He assures the King that he has never acquired or gained any lands ‘among all the English and Irish of your land of Ireland’ save those which the King’s predecessors had granted to his own ancestors. Should any complaints be made against him to the King, he offers full satisfaction ‘according to our common and ancient customs, which have been observed among us to this present day.’

Two other letters must have followed this first and most obsequious letter, though neither of them is dated\(^{18}\). In the first Brian assures the King that he owes obedience to his majesty and lordship as a son to a father. Complaints must have been made of Brian’s conduct, and he has plainly heard of them in Thomond. He hastens to offer full satisfaction and sureties against any of his adversaries; and, as proof of his claim that ‘we and our predecessors have been, in comparison with all others in Ireland, more submissive to your lordship’ (dominacioni nostra plus nativi) he reminds Richard that when the King’s brother, Duke Lionel, had recently come to Ireland, he and his father had been sincere and faithful in helping the Duke to recover what was his own in Ireland. The

17. Instr. XIV (Curtis, p. 74-5).
second letter seems to have been written shortly before Brian's journey to Dublin. In it he tells the King that James Butler, Earl of Ormonde, had come to meet him in person at Limerick. He begs the King to excuse the Earl if he is somewhat late in coming to the King's presence, since the two lords are about to make the journey together, so as to greet the King in this his land of Ireland.

These letters do not make very glorious reading today. But it is well known that, when Richard II left Waterford on 15 May 1395 for his last brief and unhappy years of reign in England, he brought with him the thirty-eight notarial deeds which recorded his apparent triumph over his enemies in Ireland, and also the twenty-three letters from several of the leading Irish chieftains, all of which are couched in very much the same obsequious language as these three letters of Brian O Briain. Yet, as Curtis very truly remarks in the Introduction to his edition of these texts, 'it is doubtful whether the English land, language and law gained a single foot at the expense of the Irish Revival, as a result of the submissions of 1395'. I am not concerned here with the causes of this apparent success, and the ultimate failure of Richard's expedition to Ireland. My purpose in recalling this series of events is to discuss their probable relation with certain facts set forth in a document of which Curtis knew nothing in 1927, and which is not included among the official English records of the King's visit to Ireland. This document was printed by Father Myles Ronan in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* in 1937, from a very late transcript of an original deed (now lost) made for the use of the Chevalier O'Gorman in 1792. It was certified as a true copy by James Earl of Clanbrassil, Chief Remembrancer of His Majesty's Court of Exchequer in Ireland, on 3 July 1792. The copy is stated to have been made 'from the records of the office concerning the house of O Gorman or Mac Gorman, and comprized in three folio pages.' The copy was attested by two Dublin public notaries, Anthony and James Boland; and Lord Clanbrassil's signature is accompanied by the signature of William Hunter, Registrar. It must be presumed that the original deed, from which this copy was made in 1792, was lost in the destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland in 1922; unless it had already disappeared from the Public Records before that date.

The text which Father Ronan has published gives a full account of the submission of Brian O Briain and his chief followers to 'Thomas, Earl of Nottingham and Marshal of England' at a place which is described as 'a field call Maghadir near the town of Quin, in the region of Thomond and the diocese of Killaloe.' Magh-Adhair is the traditional site of the inauguration of the Dalcaßian kings of Thomond. The date of this formal submission is given as 4 March 'in the seventh year of Pope Boniface IX.' There is here at least one error, since Boniface IX was elected to succeed Urban VI on 2 November 1389. Any date in March 1395 would thus be in the sixth, not the seventh year of the Pope's reign. Moreover, it is very difficult to believe that Brian O Briain could have made, as we know from the official notarial deed now in the London Public Record Office, his submission in person at Dublin Castle on 1 March 1395; and then have had time to return to Thomond and summon his chief men to meet him at Quin as early as 4 March. A simple solution of this latter difficulty is to be found in the suggestion that the manuscript copy, from which Father Ronan has

10. Curtis, p. 53
21. It was my friend, Dr. Dermot Gleeson, who first called my attention to this discrepancy in the dates of Brian's movements, and thus caused me to undertake a careful review of the whole documentary evidence for this episode.
printed his text, is inaccurate in this point. The true date may have been 14 March (decimo quarto), and the copyst of the original deed may have accidentally omitted decimo. An error of almost exactly the same nature may be found in one of the texts printed by Curtis from the official transcript of the London Memorandum Roll. It is known from other official records that Richard II held a Great Council at Kilkenny 'on Monday the morrow of Low Sunday' (19 April 1395); and the notarial deeds of his Irish expedition show us that he received the submission of Art O Diamuiseigh and Tadhg O Cearbhall at Kilkenny on 21 April. Yet the text of another deed, as printed by Curtis, records the submission of Toirdelbach O Conchobhair, made in person to the King at Waterford on 20 April. Since we know that Richard was still at Kilkenny on 25 April, where he received the submission of Toirdelbach O Briain, it seems clear that this date of a submission made at Waterford on 20 April must be wrong. Richard was certainly at Waterford on 1 May, when he pardoned the rebellious lords of Connacht on board his ship in the harbour of Waterford. It occurred to me that the copyst of the notarial deed, now dated 20 April, omitted nono from his text; and that Toirdelbach O Conchobhair made his submission to the Earl at Waterford on 29 April 1395. My friend, Mr. G. R. Hand, has very kindly compared the printed text with the manuscript transcript, and tells me that the manuscript reading is in fact vicesimo nono. The mistake was made by Curtis in 1927.

If we substitute 14 March (or perhaps even 24 March) for the date 4 March given in the text as printed by Father Ronan, there is no reason of internal probability for questioning the authenticity of the narrative which he has published. (23) We have seen that Art Mac Murchadha made his submission to the King's accredited representative, the Earl of Nottingham, at Tullow on 7 January; and that Art's chief men (his 'urrags') made their submission to the Earl at Carlow on 16 and 17 February. In the narrative of Art's submission, we read that Art 'swore on the Holy Cross, his hands touching the holy gospels of God, that he would keep perpetual fealty to our Lord the King and to his heirs and successors, the Kings of England'. (24) In the same official narrative it is recorded that 'O Byrn O More O Nullan O Murgha MacMoha O Dun MacKeralt David More MacManis and all of Kensi' were joined in this solemn oath of fealty with Art, their chieftain. In the narrative of Brian O Briain's submission at Dublin Castle we read that 'Bernard O Bryen of the diocese of Killaloe, appearing in person before our most excellent Lord the King Richard ... taking off his belt, knife and hood, and kneeling at the feet of our Lord the King, raised his two hands with palms joined together and held them between the hands of the aforesaid king, and spoke these words in the Irish tongue, 'as I (the notary) have learned from the relation of James Butler Earl of Ormond, interpreter, who is well versed in the Irish tongue, and of many other clerks and laymen who know well the Irish tongue.' (25) There follows the formal oath of allegiance to the King.

It will be seen that there is no statement in this narrative that O Briain's 'urrags' were included in the formal submission and fealty of their chieftain.

23. The error seems to have been made earlier than 1762, the date of the transcript printed by Father Ronan, for the additional memorandum at the end of this deed states that 'on the sixteenth day of the same month of March' Brian was with the King at Dundalk. A journey from Quin to Dundalk must have taken more than two days; but the author of this note is, as we shall see, guilty of other serious inaccuracies; and he may have had decimo quarto before him as the date of the original deed.
This omission makes it all the more probable that some formal and ceremonial submission would be required of these chief men of Thomond before the King left Ireland for England. We know from a notarial deed, dated 12 February, that the Earl of Nottingam was commissioned by the King on that date to receive the submission of the chief men of Leinster in the King's name; and we have seen that he fulfilled the terms of this commission at Tullow and Tristeldermot on 16, 17 and 18 February. There is no record among the London deeds of any similar commission to Mowbray concerning the submission of the chieftains of Thomond; but the collection of notarial deeds, preserved among the Chancery Miscellanea and also transcribed on the Exchequer Memorandum Roll, does not seem to have been a complete record of what was done in Ireland. Father Roman, in editing his text from the copy made for the Chevalier O'Gorman in 1792, says that 'for some reason the original was not included in the bundle brought with him to England by the King, but remained in the Court of Exchequer, Dublin.'

I can only suggest that the reason for this surprising omission is that this narrative of the submissions at Magh-Adhair was not certified by Thomas Sparkeford, the public notary of Bath and Wells who accompanied the King on this official visit to Ireland, and whose formal attestation of the accuracy of the various deeds is to be found in most of the texts printed by Curtis. The small slip in reckoning the years of Boniface IX's reign may be an example of the minor errors which it was the duty of Thomas Sparkeford to correct before granting his formal attestation.

The internal evidence of the narrative of what took place 'in the field called Maghadhir near the town of Quin' at some date in March 1395 is strongly in favour of its authenticity. We read that Thomas Earl of Nottingham and Marshal of England, with some of his followers, caused an official letter of King Richard II to be read in public 'in the hearing of the Lord Brien O Brien, Duke of Thomond, and of many other Irishmen who came to the same Lord Thomas from a wooded place (de loco memoriao) distant about two stades, where many armed Irishmen were gathered together.' The King's letter commissioned the Earl of Nottingham to receive the fealty and obedience of 'Brien O Brien Duke of Thomond and of all others of Thomond aforesaid who had submitted themselves to our faith and obedience as our liegemen.' This letter is dated 12 February 1395: the date on which it is known from the London Memorandum Roll that the King had also commissioned Mowbray to receive the fealty of the men of Leinster.

The royal letter was read, and then explained in the Irish tongue, by Brother Edmund Vale, Master of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in Ireland, skilled in the Irish tongue, who had been commissioned to treat with all such Irishmen as might wish to come to the King. 'Brian O Brien' (and it may be noted that in this document his name is always given as Brien, not Bernard) then once more removed his belt, knife and hood, and kneeled before the Earl, placing his hands between the Earl's hands and making once more his formal oath of fealty to the King. He was followed in this ceremonial submission by several chieftains, whose names are all spelt in a distinctively Irish way: Sioda Mac-Conn-Mara; Teige-Mor-Mac-Mahown; his son, Teige-Oge-Mac-Mahown; Cnouea Mac-Gorman and his

23. The text of the King's commission to the Earl is in Instr. XV (Curtis, p. 76-7).
28. It should be noted that in the notarial record of his formal submission at Dublin Castle (Curtis, p. 93-4) Brian O Brien is given the title 'princeps Tothomone,' whilst in the record of what took place at Magh-Adhair he is invariably given the title 'dux Thomond.'
Melachlin Mac Gorman; Rory O Dea, 'captain of his nation of Tullach-I-Dea'; Connogher O Connogher; and Rory O Loghlin. When these submissions had been formally completed, 'the Lord Brien O Brien, Duke of Thomond, swore and promised that if any of the aforesaid who had sworn their oath should rashly presume to go against these conventions, he would make war on them to the best of his strength as against his deadly and capital enemies; and that all the aforesaid conventions will be faithfully observed by the aforesaid parties.'

The names of the witnesses to these submissions are then given: Matthew, Bishop of Killaloe; Patrick, Bishop of Killfenora; Sir John Galafre; Laurence Berkeroll, Lord of Coytiffe; John Freley of Gascony; David Wogan; Geoffrey de Vale; William Fryngton; Thomas Clynton; Nicholas Longford; Thomas Ilketsale; Thomas Pyworth; Alan Penyton; John Brassebrugge; Edward Pierce and Walter Bilterly, knights; and Brother Edmund de Vale, Master of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem. Most of these names have little interest for the student of Irish history, since they are plainly the names of knights who had accompanied the Earl of Nottingham on his journey to Thomond. But it may be noted that Bishop Matthew of Killaloe is Matthew Mac Craith, who ruled the diocese from 1391 to c. 1400; whilst Bishop Patrick is known to have ruled the diocese of Killfenora from c. 1390 to 1421.

Father Ronan has noted the very remarkable difference between the list of the chieftains of Thomond, as given in this contemporary document, and the names of those chieftains who accompanied Brian (Bernard), son of Tadgh O Briain and Diarmait, his son, when they made their submission to the King at Waterford on 29 April. Brian son of Tadgh and his son Diarmait were accompanied by two chieftains of the O Cinnéide family, whose names are given in the document as 'Odo O Kennedy Fen and Thomas O Kennedy Don of Munster'; these two made their submission in person on the same day at Waterford(29). It is also stated in the deed that 'Bernard O Bryen' had obtained power to do homage to the King on behalf of the following chieftains, most of whose names are given in their Irish form: Laurence Maconmara, Iriel O Laelayn, Cornelius O Deaygh, Odo O Hachir and Donald O Hachir. If these names are compared with the names of the chieftains who made their formal submission to the Earl of Nottingham at Magh-Adhair in March, it will be seen at once that the two lists are complementary. O Brian's leading 'urraghts' had appeared with him at Magh-Adhair in March; but those who were negotiating with O Briain on behalf of the King in Thomond—most probably Brother Edmund de Vale, the Master of the Knights Hospitallers—must have pressed for a more explicit recognition of the King's claims on behalf of the 'urraghts' who had not yet made their submission in person. Hence the visit of Brian, son of Tadgh, and of Diarmait O Briain with two O Cinnéide chieftains, to Waterford; and the special power given to Brian to do homage to Richard II on behalf of those 'urraghts' who had not yet made their formal submission. Among them we may note the name of Cornelius O Deaygh, who is almost certainly the future bishop of Limerick, who ruled the diocese from c. 1400 to 1426. In 1395 he was archdeacon of Killaloe; but his claim to the archdeaconry had been recently contested(30).

In printing this very interesting text Father Ronan has caused some confusion by comparing the list of O Brian's 'urraghts,' as given in this deed of March 1395, with the list of chieftains on whose behalf Brian son of Tadgh did

homage at Waterford on 29 April. He notes the absence of O Gorman or Mac Gorman from this second list, not appreciating the fact that this second list is a list of those whose names do not appear in the former list. There is thus no problem to solve—though he makes a fair point in noting that the map which Curtis prints at the end of his volume, and which is based on the names mentioned in the deeds preserved on the London Memorandum Roll, is incomplete for Thomond. Had Curtis known of this Dublin record, as transcribed for Chevalier O’Gorman in 1792, his map for this area would have been very much more complete.

A more curious problem is raised by statements made in a note or memorandum which Father Ronan prints as an addition to his text, and which is also taken from the transcript of 1792. The note runs as follows: ‘Memorandum that on the sixteenth day of this same month of March the aforesaid Brian O Brien Duke of Thomond, in the company of the aforesaid Matthew, Bishop of Killaloe, and Patrick, Bishop of Killfenora, proceeded to the town of Dundalk, and there in person did liege homage to the said Lord our King Richard the Second on his own behalf and on behalf of the aforesaid divers captains of his land of Thomond.’ This memorandum contains at least two statements that are demonstrably false. Brian O Briain had already done homage in person to Richard at Dublin Castle on 1 March as is plain from the notarial deed of that date, printed by Curtis from the London Memorandum Roll. This fact cannot be reconciled with the statement here made that Brian did homage to the King at Dundalk on 16 March. Moreover the King was not at Dundalk on 16 March. As we have seen, he was at Drogheda continuously from 5, 8, 10, 14, 16 March: on that last date he received the submission of Niall Óg O Neill and other northern chieftains at Drogheda. Richard was in Dundalk on 19 March, where he received the submission of Cú Uladh Mac Aonghusa and other northern chieftains; but there is no word in the London records of any southern submission on that day. The conclusion seems obvious: that this additional memorandum is untrustworthy. As printed by Father Ronan, it has the appearance of forming part of the original notarial deed; but we have only the transcript of 1792 to guide us. I think it very probable that this short Memorandum or note was added to the official record of the submissions at Magh-Adhair at some later date, and by an unknown hand. The two texts were copied together for the benefit of Chevalier O’Gorman in 1792, without any comment as to the date of each entry. If we set aside the statements of this additional memorandum as plainly inaccurate and untrustworthy, we are left with an exceedingly valuable and contemporary account of the ceremony which took place at Magh-Adhair in March 1395; and (apart from the error in its date of 4 March, which can easily be remedied by the addition of an omitted decimo) there is no statement in this narrative which is not in full harmony with the texts which Curtis printed from the official transcripts of the London Memorandum Roll.

31. It was, of course, precisely because this Dublin record preserved the names and the text of the submission of Caoiva Mac Gorman and his son Melachin’ that the Chevalier O’Gorman had a transcript of this record made in 1792. A note on the Mac Gorman pedigree (which includes this Caoiba, who died at Quin in 1412) will be found in the Journal R.Soc. Ant. Ireland, vol. 41 (1911), pp. 119-24.