

CAMPAIGN JOURNALS
OF THE ELIZABETHAN
IRISH WARS

Edited by
DAVID EDWARDS



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I dedicate this book to the memory of my Dad, Harry Edwards, who died before it was completed, after a long illness.

DAVID EDWARDS

INTRODUCTION

It is surprising some of the things that were written down in the course of crown military operations in Tudor Ireland to form part of the official wartime record. Late in the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603), while preparing an expedition into Wicklow where native rebels were showing in strength, the English viceroy and commander-in-chief of the queen's forces received a message that had nothing at all to do with his impending mission. Instead it dealt with the fate of an Irish baby girl. She had been born 'dead, with two heads upon one body' and her little corpse had been sent to Waterford for medical examination. The message is entered, briefly summarised, in the viceroy's journal of service.¹ Markedly less poignant, but equally unrelated to the waging of war, years earlier an English commander stationed in Connacht had casually noted in a campaign report how each year about fifty English boats could be found fishing 'for salmon, herring and all kinds of sea fish' off the north Mayo coast. The observation was more suited to a travelogue, yet it too was written into a formal military record.²

Unusual details are also logged about the behaviour of the crown's officers and soldiers during the campaigns in which they participated. For example, of the seniormost officers, it is recorded that the viceroy, Sir William Russell (chief governor 1594–7), enjoyed country walks, and would sometimes leave his command to 'take the air' or 'walk abroad', often alone – something that plainly alarmed his servants and attendants, and endangered his person.³ Of the provincial commanders, records suggest that the notorious military governor of Munster Humphrey Gilbert (colonel 1569–71) invested much nervous energy in a Spartan-like show of courage and sternness when serving in the province: no surprise there, except that the same records also indicate that in private he suffered from stress and anxiety brought on by his exertions. On reaching Kilmallock after a hazardous journey from Cork in which he had brought reinforcements through miles of enemy territory it is noted down that 'the care and trouble of this service threw the Colonel in a fever'.⁴ The physical and mental strain of service could also fall heavily on junior officers, particularly those given command of remote garrison outposts. In July 1580 the stress of holding out for months in the middle of Desmond country proved too much for Captain Roger Butler, the English constable of Adare. A contemporary journal states that as the main detachment of the royal army passed by his fort, marching away towards Limerick, he 'wilfully slew himself' with his handgun.⁵

¹ LPL, MS 612, f. 89r.

² Malby's discourse, n.d., Apr. 1580 (TNA, SP 63/72/39).

³ LPL, MS 612, ff 7v, 16v, 43r, 91v.

⁴ Captain Ward to Cecil, 18 Oct. 1569 (TNA, SP 63/29/68).

⁵ LPL, MS 597, f. 67v.

Stillborn babies, English fishing fleets, raw nerves, suicides, country walks: varied and diverse fragments of information, yet all somehow reflective of English service in sixteenth-century Ireland — and, crucially, all preserved among a distinct group of official documents that record that service, the campaign journals that were kept for the commanding officers in the field.

By any measure the journals are of major importance to the history of the period. Most obviously, they comprise a key source for the many armed conflicts between royal forces and native rulers that occurred almost continually across the country from the middle of the century until 1603, and which formed the central episodes in what is usually termed the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland. Journals survive for many of the most important of these regional wars. They record the royal expeditions into central and north-east Ulster against Shane O'Neill and the Antrim MacDonnells with which Elizabeth I's reign commenced; the Munster operations against James FitzMaurice and the earl of Desmond that occupied successive administrations during the middle years of the queen's reign; the conflict in Connacht with the Clanricarde and Mayo Burkes that followed; and, lastly, the numerous 'hostings' and 'journeys' undertaken to combat the turmoil sparked by Tyrone's rebellion and Spanish invasion plans in the final years of the reign.

For anyone with a serious interest in military affairs the journals are essential reading. They provide precise chronologies for major crown expeditions, something not always attainable in other sources. They describe the routes the royal forces took and the terrain through which they passed as they proceeded through friendly or neutral areas into enemy country. They record the sites chosen for field camps and the efforts made to maintain supply lines over ever-longer distances, the impact of rough weather on combat conditions and communications systems, and the sheer difficulty of making a rendezvous, reaching a destination, or simply locating the enemy in a landscape that often enabled concealment. The journals are especially valuable for the light they shed on the internal structures of the royal army in the field, specifying such things as the total numbers of troops deployed and their captains, the proportion of cavalry to infantry and of gunners to swordsmen, the division of responsibility among lesser officers, and (no small matter) the contribution of native auxiliary forces and their leaders as guides, specialist fighters, or simply reinforcements, as operations progressed. And, of course, the journals portray the cut and thrust of combat itself. They provide vivid first-hand descriptions of battles and skirmishes on land and sea, beside rivers, forests, and mountain passes, and involving castles, crannogs, and other defensive enclosures. They also deal with atrocity, supplying unforgettable testimony to the wilful slaughter of non-combatants — women, children, and the elderly — and the deliberate inducement of famine which punctuated the wars. All told, for the sheer fascination of perceiving the Irish wars as they were experienced, from within the ranks of Elizabeth's army, the journals are second to none.

However, the campaign journals are a significant primary source for other reasons too. Not least, they record senior crown officers such as the viceroys and provincial governors performing a wide range of tasks besides waging war; that is to say, they are professional work journals as well as campaign journals. In Elizabethan Ireland, because of the

frequency of military conflict, crown government and administration was necessarily often itinerant, literally government on horseback or government by campsite. When the viceroy went on campaign routine administration followed him. Messengers galloped back and forth between his field headquarters and Dublin carrying letters to and from the members of the Irish Council remaining in the capital to oversee government in his absence, or to and from the queen and Privy Council at Whitehall, other crown commanders, local lords and landowners, merchants, purveyors, Exchequer officials, and all manner of litigants and petitioners seeking favours or other concessions. Often these letters and messages dealt with military matters, but nearly as often they did not. Appointments to secular and clerical positions, leases of crown land, authorisation of payments, redress of grievances, settlement of disputes, arrangements for public receptions, licences to trade or travel: all of these matters, and more, required the personal sanction of the viceroy, and sometimes of the provincial governor, and seeing to their implementation could demand much time on campaign. The journals record this in considerable detail, directly and indirectly. As such they are a valuable additional source for Tudor administrative history.

Indeed in some cases the administrative data they contain is unique. Sir William Pelham's journal, covering the period from late October 1579 until early September 1580, contains a number of land grants and appointments to church benefices, school teaching positions, shrievalties, and martial law commissions that are not recorded elsewhere, and concludes with page after page of 'custodiams' of rebel estates and property that were dispensed by Pelham to his servants and clients in the final weeks of his rule. This latter feature is noteworthy. Because custodiams fell within his prerogative power as viceroy they are barely noticed in other records of the crown estate at this time; their listing in his journal throws a welcome light on the distribution of wartime spoils among various crown servitors and viceregal hangers-on, an otherwise mysterious subject.⁶ Regarding the emergence of an English-style presidential administration in Munster it is only in the campaign journal of Lord President Drury, ostensibly reporting his expedition against dissident elements in Tipperary and the Limerick borders, that we know virtually anything about his gathering in of arrears due on crown lands, spiritual livings, escheats and wardships, or the revenues he raised through fines imposed at court sessions across the province in 1578.⁷ Viceroy Russell's journal, meanwhile, is almost as valuable for study of conciliar government as of military affairs early in the Nine Years War, including as it does details of more than 340 meetings of the Irish Council between August 1594 and May 1597. Many of these meetings are nowhere else recorded. The same source is also remarkable for the information it contains about Protestant religious practice, recording more than 70 Sunday services that Russell attended, mostly in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, but also while with the army in the field in places as far apart as Enniskillen, Dundalk, Galway, and Rathdrum. In many cases these entries not only name the officiating clergy, but also record whether one or two sermons were preached, with the names of the preachers, information which, again, is rarely noted in other sources.⁸

⁶ For example, LPL, MS 597, ff 41v, 43v, 53v, 64v, 66v, 69v–74r.

⁷ Drury's report, 24 Mar. 1578 (TNA, SP 63/60/25).

⁸ LPL, MS 612, *passim*.

1. ANTRIM AND THE SACKING OF RATHLIN ISLAND

A HERALDIC JOURNAL, 10 AUGUST–21 SEPTEMBER 1557

TCD, MS 581, ff 86r–89v

INTRODUCTION

When Elizabeth I¹ became queen on 17 November 1558 the English crown had been pursuing a policy of military expansion and regional conquest in Ireland for a number of years. Besides campaigns in the Midlands, southern Leinster, and along the Shannon in the west, crown forces had made a particular effort to seize control of eastern Ulster, where fear of French and Scottish influence had been exacerbated by the growing power of the Gaelic Scottish dynasty, the MacDonnells, in Antrim. Elizabeth would inherit this war (and the others too) together with its chief prosecutor, Thomas Radcliffe, 3rd earl of Sussex², who serving as English viceroy had taken personal charge of army operations, with mixed results.

The following document records one of the most ambitious of Sussex's campaigns, undertaken fifteen months before Elizabeth's accession, in August 1557. Initially directed against James MacDonnell³ and his brothers, the campaign was greatly complicated by the defection of Shane O'Neill⁴, which created a dangerous second front in the province and necessitated a division of the crown forces. The earls of Ormond and Kildare and other loyalist Irish lords took the western shores of Lough Neagh, while Sussex and the English levies proceeded along its eastern side from Belfast and Carrickfergus north to Antrim town, before rendezvousing somewhere beyond Bellaghy on the Bann. The Scots proved elusive, but supported by a small fleet that had arrived at Coleraine, Sussex despatched an invasion force to Rathlin on 3 September. In the course of two days the island was sacked and many of its inhabitants killed.

The attack damaged but did not break MacDonnell power: as Sussex headed back towards Dundalk the tail of his army was waylaid by some of the MacDonnells near Killwarlin wood. Sussex returned briefly to Rathlin in autumn 1558, when forced to abandon his planned assault on the Western Isles by bad weather (This latter landing

¹ *ODNB*.

² *DIB*.

³ *DIB*.

⁴ *DIB*.

has caused the 1557 attack described here to be misdated to 1558 in some historical accounts).

There is only one extant version of this journal: TCD, MS 581, ff 86r–89v. Like similar accounts of Sussex's campaigns of 1556, 1557, 1558 and 1563 that survive elsewhere, among the Carew Manuscripts, it was composed by the Athlone pursuivant-at-arms, Philip Butler. The TCD journal may have been Butler's original working draft, as it is quite roughly written. Regrettably, the poor identification of local placenames that is common to each of his other journals is also a feature of this one, and is compounded by the poor condition of the manuscript, which is badly frayed and torn in places.



A JOURNEY MADE BY THE EARL OF SUSSEX, LORD DEPUTY

Tuesday the 10th of August my Lord Deputy departed Kilmainham and came to Mo[rnington],⁵ Mr Draycott's house, and there lay that night.

Wednesday the 11th of August my Lord Deputy removed from Mornington and came to Drogheda, and there banqueted in the Tholsel with the Mayor and his co-brethren, and from thence to Dundalk and there remained a little space, and from thence his lordship came to Latahdagh [Laghtaggard] by Raskeagh, and there camped this night. In the plain is a long stone with Irish letters written.

Thursday the 12th of August, my Lord Deputy rode to Sir John Bellew's house called Dala...⁶ from the camp to dinner, and after dinner came to the camp again, and the Earl of Kildare [and] with him the Viscount of Baltinglass, the Baron of Delvin also. And there stayed camp this night. And this day came the Earl of Ormond to the camp.

Friday the 13th of August the Earl of Desmond came to the camp to my Lord Deputy, and departed to Dundalk to tarry for his men. And this day Edward Welsh, one of my Lord's clerks, was sent against Shane O'Neill and returned on Saturday and brought with him fifty beefs to my Lord Deputy.

Saturday the 14th of August the Earl of Desmond departed from the camp home to his country for fault of his men, which came not.

Sunday the 15th of August my Lord Deputy removed his camp from Laghtaggard by Raskeagh and came to Maghery Carran,⁷ and camped in the plain by the river called Urmanecan beyond the great hill of stones called Maghery Carran a.. Cloughelan and this night came in Magennis unto my Lord, and brought with him ...⁸

⁵ Most of the word is missing with the right-hand margin worn away.

⁶ Margin worn away.

⁷ According to Ulster placename specialists there are a number of *machaire* names recorded in the territory of Iveagh/ *Uibh Eachach*, but Maghery Carran is not among them. It probably lay north of Newry.

⁸ Margin worn.

Monday the 16th of August my Lord Deputy removed his camp from Maghery Carran 2 miles beyond and came to Ballagh Tryhan upon a hill⁹ woods, a mile-and-a-half from Dromore Yveagh. This day departed my Lord Deputy his army into two parts, his Lordship to Knockfergus, and the Earls of Kildare and Ormond to Armagh, and with them were all the Irish army of noblemen the Viscount of Baltinglass, Barons of Delvin, Dunboyne and Dunsany, and Mr Edmund Butler, son and heir to the Lord of Cahir; and also O'Carroll, O'Molloy, Mageoghegan, with divers others as the bands of Dublin and Drogheda. Also this day we came over a little river called Arna....¹⁰ whereon is a broken bridge of timber and a little beyond it is a little island called _____ which this day we came by also in the country of Magennis. And this day also departed the Lord Primate from my Lord Deputy. Rode the day with the Baron of Dun[gannon]¹¹ unto the castle of Briekhill where is a lough and an island¹² in the same, the which my said lord took the same and gave it to the keeping of the said Baron of Dungannon. And ere ever they would have yielded the island my Lord Deputy sent for the great piece of ordnance and harquebusiers. And that being come to the lough side, and they perceiving the great piece, they yielded up the place and came to my Lord and submitted themselves and was pardoned. And within that island was a boy of Sir Nicholas Bagenal's.

Tuesday the 17th of August my Lord Deputy removed his camp from Ballagh Cryhan and came to Donnewarne by the wood of Kilwarlin, and this day his lordship came through two little passes, the one called the pass of Dromore and the other the pass of Kilwarlin in the country of Rory Magennis.

Wednesday the 18th of August my Lord Deputy removed his camp from Ballagh Cryhan and came to Ullagh Idrerne upon a hill by the wood of Dirry, and this day we came over a river called Garry ~~Dirry~~ Clough. Also this day we came through a great pass called ... Ballagh I Tyrrenawe, and by the camp runneth a river called Urma Lagan. At the other side of the camp standeth a chapel called Dromah. This day came to my Lord Ranall O Boy in the country of Orran Rowe in the country called Lagan.¹³

Thursday the 19th of August my Lord Deputy removed his camp from Idrere and camped underneath Banne Vaddegan [Cave Hill]¹⁴ in the plain by the seaside *and a monastery called Moessary Reagh*.¹⁵ And this day we came through a pass the which was by Belfast called Balle Valle Galle; also through another pass called Ballagh Belfast. This day came into my lord Brian McPhelim Backagh.¹⁶ And this day we saw part of the Scottish creaght¹⁷ going upon the hills before our eyes. And my Lord Deputy with

⁹ The margin is worn. *Ballagh Tryhan* is a defunct local minor name. It has been suggested that it is perhaps *Bealach an tSrutháin*, the route or way of the stream.

¹⁰ Margin worn.

¹¹ Margin worn.

¹² Loughbrickland, Co. Down.

¹³ Most likely this refers to Alastair, leader of the MacRanald Boy sept of the MacDonnells of Lecale.

¹⁴ *Binn Mhadagáin*, or Cave Hill, the mountain to the immediate north of Belfast.

¹⁵ The words in italics are inserted into the MS.

¹⁶ O'Neill, of Clandeboy.

¹⁷ Anglicised form of the Gaelic *caoruigheacht*, meaning a great herd of cattle and the herdsmen who tended it.

Mr Treasurer¹⁸ and Mr Marshal,¹⁹ accompanied with our horsemen rode up to the hill of BanneVaddegan beholding the cows, and from thence to another hill from whence we might see the great lough called Na [Lough Neagh], and a castle of Hugh McPhelim Backagh²⁰ called Eden Dongeard²¹ 12 miles from BanneVaddegan. The lough is reputed to be 25 miles of length and 10 miles of breadth. Also this day my Lord rode to Knockfergus [Carrickfergus] and to the friary and there offered, and in the said friary is buried Hugh de Lacey and Hugh McNeill Oge,²² and at the other side is buried the MacQuillans; and from thence his lordship went to the castle and there dined with Captain Piers,²³ constable, and from thence to the camp. And in the way his lordship met with Owen Rue and his men being 200 or 3 reputed, which came to the camp that night. And there remained Friday all day being the 20th of August. And this day chanced a fray betwixt certain of the galloglass²⁴ and MacRannell Boy and his men, and certain of the galloglass and on the other part also was hurt: And at this camp remained all Saturday all the day being the 21st of August.

Sunday the 22nd of August my Lord Deputy removed his camp from under Banne Vaddegan and came to Mykellagh, a little beyond the churches of Kallaghe and the foundry of Kallagh. And this day we came over a great ford or river called Urma Mylinny, the water of Moylinny, in Clandeboy, which is reputed to be the best part for grazing of cattle within the county of Ulster. And this day we came over another river called Owen Voyeh. Also this day Mr Treasurer went to see an old town and friary by the great lough called Lough Na, the friary called Massereene and the town called Enthrove. Also this day came to my Lord Deputy Hugh McPhelim Backagh and one of the Savages, Seneschal Savage; and came to the camp and there remained that night. And Monday the 23rd of August his lordship with Mr Treasurer and Mr Marshal rode from the camp and the footmen with him to the woods and to the great Lough Na and spoke with Moriarta O'Neill's men of Lough Beg, and that night his lordship returned to the camp again. And on Tuesday his lordship rode forth again to cause the passes to be cut, and so returned to the camp that night. And this day was hanged our soldiers' boy ____ for stealth.

Wednesday the 25th of August my Lord Deputy removed his camp from Kallogh and came to Mollogh Connlo upon a hill by the Bann. This day we came to the Lough Beg wherein is an island and a chapel therein, and a ward of Hugh McMoriertagh O'Neill. Also this day we might see the Castle of Toome which the Red Earl caused to be built. My Lord Deputy at his coming to the Lough sent word to the ward thereof which after long pro....²⁵ and divers shots the said ward came forth and submitted themselves

¹⁸ Sir Henry Sidney (1529–86) (see *DIB*).

¹⁹ Sir George Stanley.

²⁰ Also an O'Neill of Clandeboy.

²¹ Perhaps Edenduffcarrick.

²² An O'Neill leader of an earlier period, not to be confused with Hugh McNeill Oge O'Neill who was reported to be in revolt against the crown after breaking out of Carrickfergus jail in late 1556.

²³ William Piers (d. 1603) (see *DIB*).

²⁴ Gaelic professional soldiers, usually of western Scottish ancestry; they were renowned for their use of a long-handled axe that was ideal for combating cavalry.

²⁵ Margin worn away. The next letter is either an 'f' or an 's'

unto my Lord Deputy, who after their submission pardoned them, and gave the island and the lough in custody to Brian McPhelim who put therein a ward. And after that my said Lord Deputy departed to the camp. And ere his departure his lordship sent one of the said ward in message with a letter to the Earls of Ormond and Kildare. And immediately my said Lord Deputy came to the camp where came to him 2 friars with a letter from the foresaid Earls whose cap we might perceive at the other side of the lough, and once being proved on both parts the Earls immediately sent a boy as messenger unto my Lord Deputy. Also this day Mr Treasurer and Mr Marshal marched on foot with the footmen, eschewing their horses to be left for their ease at mead[ow], and my Lord Deputy and Captain Girton with his band to attend on my Lord's person, had the voward and Mr Francis Agarde the rearward. Also this day we came over a great river called Marna _____,²⁶ and remained at this camp on Thursday and Friday. And on Thursday being the 26th of August my [Lord]²⁷ Deputy, accompanied with Mr Treasurer, Mr Marshal and Mr Francis Agarde, and all the footmen and their captains, marched all one sort through the great pass of Ballahe Toullohe and came to the Bannside, and there remained till word came from the Earls, and answer being sent to them again; and there also dined, and after returned to the camp. And that night was Captain Piers and Captain Girton sent to Knockfergus, and on Friday morning came one Connell McPhelim Riagh unto my said Lord Deputy. And this morning Mr Marshal and a band of horsemen rode forth with 2 bands of footmen towards the island called Inish Roe...; the ward thereof fled their rome once hearing the Englishmen with their drums in the wood, the which island was given in custody to Connell McPhelim Riagh, who put therein a ward. And on Friday at night came a friar and a priest from Coleraine with news that our ships were there arrived. And at this camp remained my Lord Deputy this night.

Saturday the 28th of August my Lord Deputy removed his camp from Molloh Tullo and came to Bella ne Clouehoe.²⁸ And this day my Lord Deputy came through a little wood by the river of Moyiny,²⁹ the which runneth to the great Lough Na, also his lordship came by another river called Rouyll which runneth into the foresaid river of Moyiny and also divides Clandeboy and the Route. Also this day my Lord Deputy rode this day [*sic*] to see an old broken castle the which the Red Earl built called Clough Donnay or Castle Donnay; and beyond it is a little lough and an island called Lough Donnay. And this day coming to the camp we came by the lough and island called Lough ne ...rviernis, the which the Baron of Dungannon was prisoner the space of 18 weeks when that he and his father the Earl of Tyrone was taken by the Scots. Also this night came to the camp Captain Piers and Captain Girton from Knockfergus and brought with them 300 beeves. And this night came James McHenry of the Route unto my Lord Deputy; also this night died ~~McGyllyn~~ Magennis and was brought to Coleraine.

Sunday the 29th of August, my Lord Deputy removed his camp from Bella ne Clough and came to Caslan Lonagan by the Bann side. The said castle is broken and did

²⁶ Blank in MS: presumably the River Maine.

²⁷ MS torn.

²⁸ Perhaps Aughnecleagh.

²⁹ Maine.

2. HUMPHREY GILBERT IN MUNSTER

FIVE LETTER-JOURNALS, SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER 1569

TNA, SP 63/29/64, 68, 82a, 82b, 83

INTRODUCTION

The spread of rebellion across Munster and south Leinster in the spring and summer of 1569 seemed to pose a significant threat to the Elizabethan state. Coinciding with a series of complications in English domestic and foreign affairs — a succession crisis sparked by the flight of Mary, Queen of Scots⁴³; rumours of a conspiracy among senior English nobles; and deteriorating relations with Spain and the papacy — the timing of the southern Irish revolt caused great alarm at Whitehall. So did its scale. Under the combined leadership of James fitz Maurice Fitzgerald, acting governor of the Desmond lordship, Donal MacCarthy Mór, earl of Clancar, and Sir Edmund Butler, disaffected brother of the 10th earl of Ormond,⁴⁴ the rebels overran parts of counties Cork, Limerick and Tipperary before pushing eastwards to besiege Kilkenny town in mid-July and link up with Kavanagh forces in Carlow and Wexford. Thereafter the rebellion lost momentum. An anticipated second rising, in Ulster, failed to materialise, and following the combined impact of the arrival in the south of a government army under Lord Deputy Henry Sidney and Ormond's return from England, the rebels were soon made to retreat.

Yet the rebellion was not over. In Munster Sidney had succeeded in taking some key strongholds from fitz Maurice's forces, but fitz Maurice and Clancar remained at large, holding out, it was feared, for foreign aid. Short of supplies, and needing to return to Dublin, the lord deputy appointed one of his leading officers, Humphrey Gilbert,⁴⁵ to check any rebel resurgence after his departure. While the ferocity of Gilbert's response is well known, most accounts of what he did are derived from a single later source, Thomas Churchyard's *A generall rehearsal of warres called Churchyardes choise* (London 1579), which contains an infamous description of Gilbert's killing of civilians residing in or near rebel country, and his subsequent display of their severed heads outside his field headquarters.⁴⁶

⁴³ *ODNB*.

⁴⁴ For James fitz Maurice Fitzgerald (d. 1579), Donal MacCarthy Mór (d. 1596), Sir Edmund Butler (d. 1602) and Thomas Butler (1531–1614), 10th earl of Ormond, see *DIB*.

⁴⁵ For Humphrey Gilbert (1537–83) see *DIB*; *ODNB*.

⁴⁶ For Thomas Churchyard (1523?–1604) see *ODNB*.

The five letters published here are all from the same volume of Irish state papers (TNA, SP 63/29, item nos 64, 68, 82a, 82b, and 83). They were written by Gilbert and his junior officer John Ward, and have been largely overlooked in histories of the period, partly because of the literary power of Churchyard's account, but also because the letters have received inadequate coverage in the Victorian-era calendars of state papers. This edition also adds to the summary information in the *Calendar of state papers, Ireland, 1568–1571* (IMC, Dublin 2010), nos 494, 498, 512(a), 512 (b), and 513) by showing the location of Gilbert's operations, the assistance he received from Sir Thomas of Desmond, his increasingly toxic relations with the Munster towns, and the numbers of casualties he inflicted and incurred.

Here published in full the letters reveal that Gilbert's defence of Kilmallock came close to disaster, something that was soon after forgotten. Moreover they suggest that behind his commitment to draconian measures he was nervous and under great strain, conscious of the inadequacy of his resources and mistrustful of the promises of service by local lords and leaders. While his hostility to the earl of Ormond was of a part with this, it should be noted that his insinuations against the earl also served to deflect attention from his own provocative conduct within Ormond's territory prior to his appointment as colonel of the army and military governor of Munster.



JOHN WARD TO [CECIL], 26 SEPTEMBER 1569

(SP 63/29/64, Holograph)

Right honourable, my humble duty premised. Pleaseth it your honour the 23rd day of this present Captain Gilbert & I came from 'Broleys' [Brulee, Co. Limerick] to the town of Kilmallock with our only company, which is distance 12 miles. And the 25th day James Fitz Maurice & MacCarthy More with their power to the number of a thousand five hundred footmen and 3 score horse came within half a mile of the town. Therewith Captain Gilbert commanded me to place at every gate within the town certain of my men & without the town in divers lanes & straights; and he himself with his own company & setting of any shot upon hackneys sallied forth. He told me a' would but view them & so retire himself in again, but he as soon as a' came there a' charged them very stoutly & killed 2 lords of his company⁴⁷ & hurt 20 very sore & of Captain Gilbert's men were slain one & 6 hurt. If all our company had been here, I meane Mr Woth his 2 hundred who is at Cork 24 miles from this town, we should by God's award [have] an end of all James Fitz Maurice's wars. This night Captain Gilbert doth take his journey towards Cork to furnish Mr Shutte with his company hither, whereby we shall when all our strength is together be able to do better service by God's help. Thus I desire the eternal God to preserve your honour in health &

⁴⁷ That is, of Fitz Maurice's company.