

Civil disobedience: the citizens and archbishop of Dublin during Hugh de Lacy's Irish rebellion, 1223-4

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In the first decades of the thirteenth century, Ireland remained a land of opportunity, where radiant rewards could still be won by those willing to seek them out. Power was most obviously invested in land, but opportunity could also present itself in appointment to ecclesiastical office, or to the secular administration. In some cases, multiple avenues of advancement might converge in one ambitious, or fortunate, individual. In 1213, one of King John's most talented *curiales*, Henry of London (d. 1228), was elected archbishop of Dublin. At the same time, the king sought to make the most of Henry's administrative aptitude by appointing him justiciar of Ireland, the highest secular office available in the Angevin colony.¹ In 1223, the archbishop, whose formidable reputation earned him the nickname 'Scorchevillein' – 'flayer of serfs',² faced the sternest test of his statesmanship. After a decade crusading in Languedoc, the disseised earl of Ulster, Hugh II de Lacy, landed in Ireland, raised a rebel army, and marched on Dublin:

Hugh de Lacy secretly passed over the sea [from Wales] to Ireland. And since Walter de Lacy, his brother, was lord of Meath, the said Hugh, having collected an army from the land of his brother, waged war in that part of Ireland which belonged to the king of England such that he reached almost as far as Dublin. And thus the archbishop of Dublin, who was then the king's justiciar in those parts, was constrained to buy a truce from [de Lacy] until the following summer because he was not prepared for the sudden and secret arrival of Hugh.³

What lay behind Henry of London's lukewarm response to rebellion? The Dunstable annals, a surprisingly well-informed source for Irish affairs, appear to lay a charge of complacency at the justiciar's door.⁴ Having been instructed to ready the

¹ The son of a London alderman, Henry of London's loyalty to King John during the papal interdict (1208-14) saw him employed in various positions within the English administration before his advancement in Ireland. He served as justiciar of Ireland on two occasions, 1213-15 and 1221-24, and as papal legate to Ireland from 1217-20. For detailed studies of his career, see Ralph Turner, *Men raised from dust: administrative service and upward mobility in Angevin England* (Philadelphia, 1988); Margaret Murphy, 'Balancing the concerns of Church and state: the archbishops of Dublin, 1181-1228' in Barry, T. B., Robin Frame and Katharine Simms (eds), *Colony and frontier in medieval Ireland: essays presented to J. F. Lydon* (London, 1995), pp 41-56; Aubrey Gwynn, 'Henry of London, archbishop of Dublin: a study in Anglo-Norman statecraft' in *Studies: an Irish quarterly review*, 38 (1949), pp 297-306, 389-402; Margaret Murphy, 'London, Henry of (d. 1228)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17036>].

² Gwynn, 'Henry of London', p. 297.

³ 'Annales prioratus de Dunstapilia, A.D. 1-1297' in H. R. Luard (ed.), *Annales Monastici* (5 vols, London, 1864-9), iii, p. 85. Hugh de Lacy had been expelled from Ulster by King John in 1210. For his participation in the Albigensian Crusade against the 'Cathar' heresy (1211-21), and his Irish rebellion (1223-4), see Daniel Brown, 'Fortune's Wheel: the rise, fall and restoration of Hugh II de Lacy, earl of Ulster, 1190-1242' (Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 2012), ch. 4.

⁴ From 1210 until his death in 1242, these annals appear to have been compiled, or orchestrated, by the 'man of affairs' and sometime Angevin envoy to France, Richard de Morins, prior of Dunstable: see Antonia Gransden, *Historical writing in England, c. 550-1307* (London, 1974), pp 332-6, quotation at p. 336.

king's castles prior to Hugh de Lacy's clandestine appearance in Ireland,⁵ it was perhaps in response to accusations of slothfulness that the archbishop would later write to the king, claiming to have placed 'a good and sufficient *familia*' in Ulster's fortresses, and to have spent significant sums of money in equipping men to guard the coastal areas.⁶ But Henry had not anticipated an attack on the seat of colonial government itself. The royal administration in Ireland had been lax in its attitude towards the defence of Dublin: money set aside by the crown for this purpose, or gleaned from a murage tax (1221), seems mainly been spent on repairs instead of new walls or towers.⁷ As justiciar, Henry of London had been instrumental in the works at Dublin Castle, but nothing had apparently been done to prepare that fortress to mount an effective defence against Hugh de Lacy's army. An inventory taken c. 1224 uncovered little of use for the castle's garrison beyond two mangonels, one crossbow (with wheel), one crossbow for the foot, and 4,500 bolts.⁸ The city walls may also have been insufficiently redoubt. In 1225, the abbey of St Thomas, situated in Dublin's western suburb, beyond the New Gate, was compensated for a fosse constructed on its lands.⁹ It seems likely that this earthen bank had been hurriedly erected in 1223/4 against Hugh de Lacy's army, which, according to the Dunstable account, had approached Dublin from Meath, northwest of the city. As well as the men gathered from de Lacy's former estates in the lordship of Meath, the rebel army included a contingent of Irish troops led by the powerful king of Cenél nEógain, Áed Ua Néill (d. 1230).¹⁰ The inadequate state of Dublin's defences, and the strength of the force menacing the city, may go some way in explaining the justiciar's reticence to engage in open war.

At the same time, Archbishop Henry's freedom to act as royal representative was constrained by membership of the tenant community in Ireland. While allowing an individual to accumulate power through multiple channels, an ability to be at once a royal justiciar and landed magnate was an institutional weakness built into the Angevin administration. A catalyst for the baronial crisis of 1207-8 had been the justiciar, Meiler fitz Henry's abuse of his office in order to encroach on the lands of the lord of Leinster, William Marshal.¹¹ Lessons from that conflict were not learned, however, and nothing was done to prevent subsequent justiciars from 'double-jobbing'. C. 1223, Henry of London granted to his nephew, John of London, the vill of 'Portmacluyeran' (perhaps Port, near Clonmore, co. Louth), which Henry held from William Sancmelle.¹² The Sancmelles (from *sang-mêlé*, 'mixed-blood'?) were

⁵ *PR 1216-25*, pp 374-5, 378.

⁶ A. J. Otway-Ruthven, *A history of medieval Ireland* (2nd edn, London, 1980), p. 91.

⁷ J. F. Lydon, 'The defence of Dublin in the Middle Ages' in Seán Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin, IV: Proceedings of the Friends of Medieval Dublin Symposium 2002*, pp 63-79, at pp 65-7.

⁸ *Calendar of documents relating to Ireland preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office, London, 1171-1251* [etc.], ed. H. S. Sweetman and G. F. Handcock (5 vols, London, 1875-86), *1171-1251*, no. 1227; Lydon, 'The defence of Dublin', pp. 69-70.

⁹ *Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251*, no. 1314.

¹⁰ 'The son of Ugo De Lacy came into Ireland in despite of the king of the Saxons, until he came to Aedh O' Neill; so that they went together against the Foreigners of Ireland and destroyed much in Meath and in Leinster': *Annala Uladh. Annals of Ulster, otherwise Annala Senait, Annals of Senat; a chronicle of Irish affairs, A.D. 431-1131, 1155-1541*, ed. Bartholomew Mac Carthy (4 vols, Dublin, 1893), *s.a.* 1222 [*recte*, 1223].

¹¹ For a recent study of the crisis of 1207-8, see M. T. Flanagan, 'Defining lordships in Angevin Ireland: William Marshal and the king's justiciar' in Martin Aurell and Frédéric Boutouille (eds), *Les seigneuries dans l'espace Plantagenêt, c. 1150-1250* (Bordeaux, 2009), pp 41-59.

¹² *Calendar of the Gormanston register: from the original in the possession of the Right Honourable the Viscount of Gormanston*, ed. James Mills and M. J. McEnery (Dublin, 1916), pp 150-2, 198; Eric St

long-standing supporters of Hugh de Lacy, and William Sancmelle would be one of the rebels captured by crown forces at Trim (*caput* of the lordship of Meath) in the summer of 1224.¹³ The implication seems to be that, at the time of Hugh de Lacy's rebellion, the justiciar of Ireland was a Sancmelle tenant, a conflict of loyalty which caused Henry of London to relinquish his tenure at 'Portmacluyeran'.¹⁴ As well as bonds of tenure, the archbishop of Dublin may even have shared blood-ties with some of the rebels. Henry of London's family name was Blund: two men, Thomas and Henry Blund, were among Hugh de Lacy's supporters in 1223-4, but what, if any, connection they had to the archbishop's line has yet to be established.¹⁵

Beyond unpreparedness and familiarity with at least a number of the rebels, it seems that the archbishop was being undermined by factions within the city of Dublin itself. By the eve of Hugh de Lacy's insurrection, Henry of London's overzealous prosecution of his secular and ecclesiastical jurisdictions had made him deeply unpopular with both the citizens of Dublin and other royal officials. Having already clashed with the king's forester and escheator, Thomas fitz Adam, in defending the liberties of the see of Dublin,¹⁶ Henry had also earned the enmity of the urban elite. This contention can be traced back at least as far as April 1220, when the citizens of Dublin wrote to the king regarding two of the archbishop's men who had savagely attacked a citizen and the wife of a citizen in the marketplace. The city's provost had been obstructed by bailiffs of the archbishop, who claimed the right to try the offenders in the ecclesiastical court. When this was refused, the archbishop's bailiffs proceeded to excommunicate the city provost, seneschal, and the council of twenty-four citizens elected to protect the laws and liberties of Dublin.¹⁷ Three years later, in August 1223, the king wrote to the archbishop regarding other 'astonishing and incredible' (*mirabilia et incredibilia*) matters brought to his attention by the men of Dublin: namely, that Henry had tried to exempt his men from taxes and tolls; was forcing citizens with complaints against his men to seek recourse to the justiciar's court; had constructed a pillory in the king's highway; and was allowing religious houses to encroach illegally on property belonging to the city of Dublin.¹⁸

The fallout from Henry's fractious relationship with the citizens of Dublin is brought into sharper focus by an entry in the Fine rolls. On 22 April, 1225, a year after the conclusion of Hugh de Lacy's revolt, it was stated that one Thomas le Corner [*alias* de la Corner], had 'made fine with the king by 40 m. for having grace and benevolence, because, it was said, he had been with Hugh de Lacy against the king in war'. William II Marshal, Archbishop Henry's replacement as Irish justiciar,¹⁹ was ordered to count the fine towards a payment made by Thomas and 'other citizens of Dublin' to 'sustain the king's war against Hugh de Lacy'. If it was found that this

John Brooks, 'Archbishop Henry of London and his Irish connections' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, sixth ser., 20, no. 1 (1930), pp 11-14.

¹³ *Royal and other historical letters illustrative of the reign of Henry III, from the originals in the Public Record Office*, ed. W. W. Shirley (2 vols, London, 1862-6), i, 500-3; *Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251*, no. 1203.

¹⁴ In 1215, Henry took over Penkrigde, the Staffordshire manor of Hugh Hose, a de Lacy tenant in Ireland: *Rot. chart.*, p. 218b; *Cal. Doc. Ire., 1171-1251*, no. 652.

¹⁵ *Royal & other historical letters*, i, 500-3; *Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251*, no.1203; Brooks, 'Archbishop Henry of London', pp 1-10.

¹⁶ Murphy, 'Balancing the concerns of Church and state', pp 50-2.

¹⁷ *Royal & other historical letters*, i, pp 108-11; *Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251*, no. 935.

¹⁸ J. T. Gilbert, *Historic and municipal documents of Ireland, 1172-1320: from the archives of the city of Dublin* (London, 1870), pp 78-9; *Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251*, no. 1130.

¹⁹ Marshal replaced Henry as justiciar in May, 1224: *PR 1216-25*, pp 437-8; *Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251*, nos 1186-8.

payment had exceeded the amount of Thomas's fine, the remainder was to be repaid to Thomas out of the royal treasury.²⁰ Intriguingly, this entry is one of seven in close succession relating to Ireland, all of which were recorded on the duplicate roll and subsequently cancelled 'because on the Close roll'.²¹ As Beth Hartland has pointed out, it is unusual to find clusters of Irish-related entries on the English Fine rolls.²² It may be that a chancery clerk had simply recorded the sequence on the wrong roll, and, realising his mistake, noted the entries as cancelled and transferred them to the appropriate set. Another possible explanation is that the sequence of double entries owed to the special interest of the English justiciar, Hubert de Burgh – before whom they were apparently recorded in both sets of rolls, alongside Richard Poore, bishop of Salisbury – in Irish affairs. As head of Henry III's minority government, de Burgh had resolutely opposed Hugh de Lacy's restoration to the earldom of Ulster, whether because of de Lacy's links with de Burgh's curial opponent, Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester,²³ or because de Lacy's return to Ireland threatened the interests of Hubert's nephew, Richard de Burgh, seneschal of Munster and royal custodian of the castle of Dundrum, in Ulster.²⁴

Thanks to an inquisition taken at Dublin in late 1224, we know exactly what 'was said' about Thomas le Corner's part in Hugh de Lacy's rebellion. During those proceedings, the court heard about several individuals who had aided de Lacy while the latter's army was camped outside the city. William Gallator had sold iron helmets to the rebels. Geoffrey de Lacy and John Forester, of Santry, bought arms and sent them to Hugh de Lacy, and 'related everything occurring in the city of Dublin to the same Hugh'. Adam Norensis, of the vill of the Ostmen (the settlement on the north bank of the Liffey), received money from one of de Lacy's men, Ralph Pedelowe, to buy arms and clothes. Canons of the abbey of St Thomas, at Dublin, received two horses from one of de Lacy's men, William fitz Fabri, at *Kilrethe* (Kilruddery?, co. Wicklow), and sent to Hugh one tun of wine with a cart and five horses. It was also found that Thomas le Corner, with Richard of Rouen and Warin Pedargent, 'received men of Hugh de Lacy and bought arms and other necessities in the city of Dublin to

²⁰ *CFR 1224-5*, no. 177 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_022.html).

²¹ *Ibid.*, nos 169-72, 174-7 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_022.html); *RLC*, ii, p. 35b.

²² Beth Hartland, 'Ireland and the Fine rolls' (<http://frh3.org.uk/content/month/fm-06-2009.html>), para. 4, where she notes a larger sequence of 63 Irish entries distributed between membranes 9 and 8 on the roll for 17-18 John (1215-16): see *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus in Turri Londinensi Asservati Tempore Regis Johannis*, ed. T. D. Hardy (London, 1835), pp 551–66.

²³ For de Burgh's opposition to Hugh de Lacy's restoration and his competition with Peter des Roches for control of Henry III's minority government, see Brown, 'Fortune's wheel', ch. 4; D. A. Carpenter, *The minority of Henry III* (London, 1990), *passim*. One of Hugh de Lacy's fellow participants on the Albigensian Crusade, William des Roches (d. 1222), Capetian seneschal of of Anjou, was a presumed relative of the bishop of Winchester, himself a native of the Touraine: see Nicholas Vincent, *Peter des Roches: an alien in English politics, 1205-1238* (Cambridge, 1996), pp 18-26; Brown, 'Fortune's wheel', pp 160-1.

²⁴ One of the Irish-related entries, granting seisin of four Munster cantreds to William of Worcester, also reserved to Richard de Burgh the cantred of Eóghanacht Chaisil (co. Tipperary), given to him in marriage to Egidia, daughter of Walter de Lacy, eldest brother of Hugh de Lacy and one of Hubert de Burgh's closest curial allies: *CFR, 1224-5*, no. 171 (http://frh3.org.uk/content/calendar/roll_022.html); *Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251*, no. 1268. For the breakdown in the relationship between Hugh and Walter de Lacy after 1210, often glossed over by historians, see Brown, 'Fortune's wheel', chs 3-4. In 1217, William Gorm de Lacy, half-brother of Hugh de Lacy, was ordered to restore the castle of Dundrum (co. Down), which had been in the custody of Richard de Burgh, and make restitution for damages done in taking the fortress: *Pat. rolls, 1216-25*, p. 74; *Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251*, no. 791.

their work, *against the prohibition of the lord justiciar*, and conducted them to the wood outside the city by night'.²⁵

Hugh de Lacy's supporter was no ordinary citizen: there is little doubt that he was the same Thomas le Corner who would serve as mayor of Dublin in 1231-2,²⁶ and who is named by the *Les leys et les usages de la cyte de Diveline* ('The laws and usages of the city of Dublin'), drawn up before 1300,²⁷ as one of the 'prodehomes' who had purchased the franchises of the city.²⁸ Until the eighteenth century mayoral candidates were aldermen of Dublin, drawn from the city guilds, and several mayors in the thirteenth century had been provosts (bailiffs) of the city.²⁹ We do not know if Thomas le Corner had served in this capacity before his mayoral election, but the earlier jurisdictional tug-of-war between the citizens and the archbishop of Dublin, and the anathema pronounced by Henry of London against leading municipal figures, might more easily explain why Thomas was prepared to risk censure by encouraging sedition. In any case, by the time he was supplying Hugh de Lacy's men against the justiciar's orders, le Corner was already a man on the make. On the day his forty-mark fine was recorded by the Fine roll, 21 April, 1225, Thomas was issued with protection for two years, with licence for the same period, so that two of his ships – "La Bulrele" and "La Salvee" – could 'pass safely and securely through the realm with his merchandise for trading purposes'. A further mandate was issued to Geoffrey de Lucy, keeper of the seacoast from Pevensey to Bristol, and to the barons of the Cinque ports, instructing them not to impede Thomas's ships.³⁰ Two years later, in April 1227, the king ordered the bailiffs of Bristol to allow one of le Corner's ships to pass over to Gascony to purchase wine.³¹

It was not one factor, but many, which must ultimately have caused the archbishop of Dublin to adopt a policy of appeasement with Hugh de Lacy in 1223. Most resources had been misdirected for the defence of Ulster, while Dublin lay exposed to attack. The justiciar was constrained in his action by tenurial (and possibly familial) ties to some of de Lacy's supporters. Finally, it seems that influential parties within the city's walls were actively encouraging rebellion. From Thomas le Corner's appearance in the Fine rolls, we can infer that Hugh de Lacy had links with a disaffected element within the urban elite: men who controlled Dublin's trade, commerce, and public spaces; men who could keep a rebel army amply supplied, if they so desired. While Thomas le Corner would recover from his indictment by the crown to serve as Dublin's mayor, Henry of London's long record of royal service

²⁵ K. W. Nicholls, 'Inquisitions of 1224 from the miscellanea of the exchequer' in *Anal. Hib.*, 27 (1972), pp 101-12, at pp 107-9.

²⁶ *A new history of Ireland, under the auspices of the Royal Irish Academy*, ed. T. W. Moody, T. D. Williams, J. C. Beckett and F. X. Martin (9 vols, Dublin, 1968-2008), ix, 548. In 1231, Thomas's presumed relative, Richard de la Corner, was elected bishop of Meath: *ibid.*, ix, 285. For Richard's appearances in charters of Hugh de Lacy, see *Calendar of the Gormanston register: from the original in the possession of the Right Honourable the Viscount of Gormanston*, ed. James Mills and M. J. McEnery (Dublin, 1916), pp 161-2; *Register of the abbey of St. Thomas, Dublin*, ed. J. T. Gilbert (Dublin, 1889), pp 9-10.

²⁷ J. F. Lydon, 'The medieval city' in Art Cosgrove (ed.) *Dublin through the ages* (Dublin, 1988), pp 25-46, at p. 29.

²⁸ Gilbert, *Historic and municipal documents*, p. 266.

²⁹ H. F. Berry, 'Catalogue of the mayors, provosts and bailiffs of Dublin City, A.D. 1229 to 1447', in Howard Clarke (ed.), *Medieval Dublin: the living city* (Dublin, 1990), pp 160-1.

³⁰ *PR 1216-25*, p. 521; *Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251*, no. 1260. This mandate was replicated by another, issued on 22 April, in which Thomas's ships are named: *PR 1216-25*, p. 522; *Cal. doc. Ire., 1171-1251*, no. 1275.

³¹ *RLC, ii*, p. 180.

came to an abrupt end in May 1224, when the office of justiciar and the task of ending Hugh de Lacy's revolt were transferred to the lord of Leinster and earl of Pembroke, William II Marshal: a reversal in the archbishop's fortunes which, at least in part, was owing to the efforts of the citizens of Dublin.