

# Prelude to the Tudor conquest: Henry VIII and the Irish expedition of Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, 1520–22

STEVEN G. ELLIS\*

*University of Galway*

**ABSTRACT.** *During the brief ‘universal peace’ following the treaty of London in 1518, Surrey’s expedition brought to Ireland as chief governor Henry VIII’s best general, ostensibly leading a reconnaissance in force to discover how the king might reduce the land to order and obedience. Despite the expedition’s protracted planning, as here outlined, the king’s aims remained unclear, at least to Surrey. His army spent most of the time garrisoning the Pale and compelling submissions by neighbouring border chiefs. As suggested in a previously unnoticed cache of documents, King Henry hoped the Irish could be persuaded to use English law and the king’s courts, restoring crown land since overrun, so that a recovery of the revenues would meet the expedition’s costs. When Surrey insisted that Ireland’s reform would entail a lengthy and costly military conquest, he soon lost interest. As renewed war threatened in continental Europe, Surrey was instructed to focus on the Pale’s defence to reduce the king’s costs, so conserving the monarch’s treasure for other ‘higher enterprises’. Surrey’s short-lived expedition and brief recall disrupted the political stability established by the earl of Kildare’s defence of the Pale, with little achieved.*

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Over the Tudor century, some two dozen nobles and knights represented the monarch as chief governor of Ireland. The most distinguished was probably Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, lord high admiral, influential courtier, able politician, and experienced military captain, who was accounted Henry VIII’s best general in the king’s wars in France and Scotland. Appointed by King Henry on 10 March 1520 as lieutenant, the highest viceregal office, Surrey served for two years to March 1522 — the first serving lieutenant since 1470.<sup>1</sup>

In its origins and aims, Surrey’s expedition (given its military objectives, Surrey’s lieutenancy has tended to be described in military terms) has never been convincingly explained. Recently, however, a small cache of documents has

\* *Steven G. Ellis, Department of History, University of Galway, [steven.ellis@universityofgalway.ie](mailto:steven.ellis@universityofgalway.ie)*

<sup>1</sup> S. G. Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors 1447–1603: English expansion and the end of Gaelic rule* (London, 1998), pp 365–9 (my calculation of two dozen Tudor governors excludes lords justices filling casual vacancies). For Surrey’s career: Steven Gunn, *The English people at war in the age of Henry VIII* (Oxford, 2018), pp 6, 26, 66–9, 86, 112–13; Helen Miller, *Henry VIII and the English nobility* (Oxford, 1986), pp 14–15, 25–6, 143, 145, 211–12; David Starkey, *The reign of Henry VIII: personalities and politics* (London, 1985), pp 55–7.

been uncovered which throw further light on the expedition's extended planning. Some relating to government and taxation had previously been entirely unknown. Two are longer, probably more accurate, copies of early Tudor reform treatises, as they are now described, with additional sections on the king's revenues and military practices and costs. They were probably composed mainly by Sir William Darcy and collected initially among Cardinal Wolsey's papers.<sup>2</sup>

The central difficulty in understanding the expedition's purpose is how to reconcile Henry VIII's appointment of Surrey, leading courtier and best general, with a greatly enhanced retinue, and the expedition's seemingly quite modest stated aims, to 'devise howe Ireland may be reduced and restored to good order and obedience'. For David B. Quinn, reviewing the available evidence sixty years ago in a typically perceptive, wide-ranging survey, the king's choice of Surrey, who was admired as soldier and statesman, reflected Henry's favour and trust in aristocratic delegation, and 'showed the importance Henry set on the experiment'. Quinn also detected Cardinal Wolsey's stamp in the expedition's planning, which aimed to revive 'Anglo-Irish loyalty' and 'recall outlying lords to their allegiance' but with 'the king's peace and taxes ... restored over the whole island' and the church 'unified and anglicized under Wolsey's legatine authority'. The plans were 'lacking any mention of Gaelic Ireland', but in autumn 1520 Henry intervened to remind Surrey that Ireland should be reduced to obedience rather 'by sober waies, politique driftes, and amiable persuasions ... than by rigorous dealing, comminacions, or any other inforcement by strenght or violence'.<sup>3</sup>

Eighteen years later, Brendan Bradshaw argued rather differently that Surrey's appointment removed from English politics a potential challenger to Cardinal Wolsey's dominant position. Surrey headed 'a military and administrative expedition' like that of Sir Edward Poyning in 1494–5, but 'more high-powered' and 'led by a great nobleman, not a mere administrator'. Although initially pursuing 'the consolidation of government in the obedient territories', in Bradshaw's account the focus soon shifted to the crown's relations with Gaelic chiefs, with 'the total subjugation of the island' the immediate objective. Surrey had thought in terms of military conquest and colonisation, but Henry later urged 'a strategy based on diplomacy and conciliation', unexpectedly instructing (Surrey in a departure from traditional policy) that no distinction should be made in submissions 'extracted whether from feudal or non-feudal lords', but all were to 'come in ... as our obedient subjects'. In this, Henry hoped to secure Irish chiefs' submissions without prolonged military resistance, thus anticipating the later Surrender and Regrant strategy. But whether by conquest or Surrender and Regrant, the expedition showed the enormous task of reducing Irish lords to obedience, foreshadowing later difficulties encountered by the Tudors.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Hatfield House Archives, Cecil Papers MS 144, ff 1–16. Christopher Maginn and S. G. Ellis, *The Tudor discovery of Ireland* (Dublin, 2015), pp 67–109 is a critical edition of this Hatfield Compendium, from which later references here are cited. It includes contemporary copies, probably made in the late 1530s, of eight documents, four of which Darcy probably composed for Surrey's expedition. For Darcy's career, S. G. Ellis, 'An English gentleman and his community: Sir William Darcy of Platten' in Vincent P. Carey and Ute Lotz-Heumann (ed.), *Taking sides? Colonial and confessional mentalités in early modern Ireland. Essays in honour of Karl S. Bottigheimer* (Dublin, 2003), pp 19–41.

<sup>3</sup> D. B. Quinn, 'Historical revision, XIII. Henry VIII and Ireland, 1509–34' in *I.H.S.*, xii, no. 48 (1960–61), pp 318–44 (quotations at pp 323, 324).

<sup>4</sup> Brendan Bradshaw, *The Irish constitutional revolution of the sixteenth century* (Cambridge, 1979), chapters 3, 7 (quotations at pp 59, 60, 61). See also Christopher

My own (technically accurate) view was that Surrey's expedition was 'a reconnaissance in force' and its main aim was to inform the king how he might best 'reduce this lond to obedience and gode order', as Surrey glossed his original instructions. I also included a more detailed survey of the expedition's progress, focusing on its impact on government, slight and patchy, so corroborating this minimalist interpretation.<sup>5</sup> Despite the expedition's planning, Henry VIII's personality was opportunistic and his concerns partly dynastic, leaving Tudor policy open to sudden changes. I am no longer fully convinced by this interpretation and this article aims to expand on it in the context of subsequent scholarship.

More recent discussions of Surrey's expedition have sought to resolve Quinn and Bradshaw's conflicting accounts,<sup>6</sup> but Christopher Maginn's study of Ireland in 1520 offered additional reasons for Surrey's ill success: his unfamiliarity with Ireland, its geography, the decentralised nature of Irish power, and the inhabitants' differing conditions.<sup>7</sup> Historians have all agreed, however, that Surrey's expedition was a failure, although agreement about failure does not necessarily indicate agreement about reasons for failure.

Surrey was an experienced military captain, somewhat older than Henry VIII. He had also distinguished himself in battle under his father, duke of Norfolk and commander at England's great victory of Flodden, being rewarded by grant of his father's previous title as earl of Surrey. An added attraction for service in Ireland was that Surrey stood to inherit his father's extensive but largely 'wasted' estates around Carlow and Wexford.<sup>8</sup> The choice of the most illustrious noble to serve as governor of Ireland in fifty years was of course the king's, but certain pressures influenced his decision, which apparently was made rather late in the expedition's planning.<sup>9</sup>

In late 1519, among matters of government which the king 'intendith in his awne person to debate with his counsail and to se reformacon don therin' was a proposal

Maginn, 'The Tudor policy of "surrender and regrant" in the historiography of sixteenth-century Ireland' in *Sixteenth Century Journal: Journal for Early Modern Studies*, xxxviii (2007), pp 955–74.

<sup>5</sup> S. G. Ellis, *Tudor Ireland: crown, community and the conflict of cultures, 1470–1603* (London, 1985), pp 105–15; idem, *Reform and revival: English government in Ireland 1470–1534* (Woodbridge, 1986), esp. chapters 1, 3; idem, 'Tudor policy and the Kildare ascendancy in the lordship of Ireland, 1496–1534' in *I.H.S.*, xx, no. 70 (1977), pp 235–71 (quotation at p. 239).

<sup>6</sup> D. B. Quinn, 'The reemergence of English policy as a major factor in Irish affairs, 1520–34' in Art Cosgrove (ed.), *A new history of Ireland*, ii: *medieval Ireland 1169–1534* (Oxford, 1987), pp 662–8; Colm Lennon, *Sixteenth-century Ireland: the incomplete conquest* (Dublin, 1994), pp 87–93.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher Maginn, *William Cecil, Ireland, and the Tudor state* (Oxford, 2012), pp 28–34. See also, more generally, Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, pt. 2.2.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, *Henry VIII and the English nobility*, pp 14–15, 25–6, 143, 145, 211–12; R. G. Eaves, *Henry VIII's Scottish diplomacy 1513–1524: England's relations with the regency government of James V* (New York, 1971), pp 29–32. For Norfolk's Irish estates, Gearóid Mac Niocaill (ed.), *Crown surveys of lands 1540–41 with the Kildare rental begun in 1518* (Dublin, 1992), pp 2–14.

<sup>9</sup> Surrey's belated appointment may be inferred from the grant in February 1520 of the more prestigious title of lieutenant with an enhanced, English retinue, instead of, as earlier envisaged, the normal title of deputy with a smaller, cheaper retinue of local troops: T.N.A., SP 1/30, f. 90 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv (i), no. 80), SP 60/1, ff 70–73 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii, no. 670); Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, p. 99.

‘to devise howe the lande of Irlande may be reduced & broughte to good ordre and obeysaunce’.<sup>10</sup> The council’s agenda apparently reflected an attempt by Henry’s first chief minister, Cardinal Wolsey, to reduce the influence on the king of leading courtiers (notably the king’s ‘minions’ recently exiled to Calais) by encouraging Henry to focus more on the detailed work of government. The king’s consuming interest was in war, however. Henry had grown up knowing that great kings won battles and made conquests, but following the Treaty of London and ‘universal peace’ in 1518, Wolsey aimed to cut royal spending and improve the king’s regular income.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, no exciting opportunities existed for warfare to vindicate Henry’s reputation as a great king. The upshot, the proposed expedition to Ireland, was a poor substitute for a French campaign and capture of Tournai, recently sold to France to save the costs of its upkeep. For Henry, pursuing ‘the wild Irish’ across bogs and mountains to establish order and obedience in this peripheral theatre was an unexciting prospect. Irish campaigns still cost money but did not promise the dazzling victories which Henry craved in Europe. Nor did they do much to enhance the king’s military reputation, although for Wolsey, Surrey’s expedition removed from court a leading noble who might otherwise challenge the cardinal’s influence there.<sup>12</sup>

By 1518, too, the king’s penchant for warfare was also clear to his subjects, none more so than the long-suffering subjects surviving on the margins of civility (as courtiers saw things) in his half-conquered land of Ireland. Late that year, fresh representations were made to Henry for a more ambitious forward policy to restore English rule there, instead of the holding operation across the English Pale maintained since 1496. Following apparently minor complaints, Ireland’s long-standing deputy, Gerald FitzGerald, ninth earl of Kildare, was summoned to court in January 1519 to discuss reform, arriving in late September.<sup>13</sup> A document entitled ‘Artycles for the reformation of Irlande’ perhaps outlined reform proposals. Only the first article survives, urging that the king’s seven leading officers should always be from England, headed by an earl or other noble as deputy.<sup>14</sup> Nothing is known of the ensuing discussions, but around November the king decided to replace Kildare, the first time he had departed from his father’s policy of entrusting Ireland’s government to a local noble. With Kildare’s discharge agreed in principle, Irish officials drafted some ‘Ordynau[n]ces and provisions for this lande of Irlande’.<sup>15</sup> Essentially, the Ordinances were a Tudor reform treatise. These reform treatises were lists of recommendations and proposals sent to the king from c.1515

<sup>10</sup> British Library, Titus, B I, ff 188–92 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 576). For the wider context, J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (new ed., New Haven, 1997), pp 118–19.

<sup>11</sup> Gunn, *English people at war*, pp 1–6; Starkey, *Reign of Henry VIII*, pp 74–83; Greg Walker, ‘The “Expulsion of the Minions” of 1519 reconsidered’ in *Hist. Jn.*, xxxii, no. 1 (1989), pp 1–16.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Gwyn, *The king’s cardinal: the rise and fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London, 1990), pp 242–8; Quinn, ‘Henry VIII and Ireland’, pp 322–30.

<sup>13</sup> As the Pale’s mightiest lord, so best able to defend it, three successive earls of Kildare had remained Ireland’s governor (as justiciar, or deputy) since 1470 (except 1475–8 and 1492–6): Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, pp 68–118, 365–7.

<sup>14</sup> Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, p. 94; Quinn, ‘Henry VIII and Ireland’, p. 323. Perhaps Robert Cowley composed these articles: *Cal. Carew MSS, Bk. of Howth*, p. 192. For the complaints: *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, ii, nos. 3853, 4293, iii, nos. 356, 430.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Ordynau[n]ces and provisions’: Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, pp 99–109. For discussion of contents, *ibid.*, pp 56–62. On Tudor reform treatises, see David Heffernan,

onwards by those connected with government in Ireland for revisions and improvements to English rule there. This treatise was itemised as 110 articles, but they did not offer exciting new proposals likely to attract the king's attention, nor did they justify the appointment of his best general. They focused on the incoming deputy's conduct, restoring good rule, and military matters, especially the Pale's defence and general hostings. The early articles apparently include responses to the king and council's request for further information, especially about the composition and cost of the deputy's retinue (articles 6–10). Other articles ordered enforcement of existing legislation. Article 104 suggested 'that the lords and the kings counsayll shall adde correcte and amende all that is containeth in thys boke after there discretions'. Two officials later associated with Surrey perhaps helped draft these proposals: Chief Baron Patrick Finglas had written 'A briefe note of the gettinge and decaye of Ireland', while Robert Cowley, Surrey's clerk of the council, was an inveterate composer of such treatises. The Ordinances' content and wording suggests, however, that the main author was Sir William Darcy, leading Pale landowner and former and future undertreasurer. Darcy had submitted reform articles to the king's council in 1515, and perhaps influenced another reform treatise, the contemporary 'State of Ireland'. He probably brought over the Ordinances and was certainly at court early in 1520.<sup>16</sup>

As proposed in the Ordinances, the deputy's retinue was the principal additional cost to the crown of what developed into Surrey's expedition. It was somewhat larger than Kildare's usual retinue as governor, comprising 100 mounted archers, twenty mounted gunners, forty horsemen, 120 galloglass and 200 kerne, 480 men in all, but the heavy contingent of Irish troops suggested a local noble, perhaps Lord Delvin, rather than Surrey. The retinue's wages, costed very modestly at £1,500 annually, were necessary, so the Ordinances explained, 'in avoydyng thabomynable extorcyon of cou[n]ye and lyverye', whereby landlords quartered galloglass and kerne on the Pale marches for defence. Irish troops were cheaper to hire and more suited to local conditions, but a new deputy with this force could hardly have done much more than continue Earl Gerald's limited operations around the English Pale.<sup>17</sup> This indeed was the focus of the Ordinances, with particular attention to arrangements for general hostings. Hostings were the main means of

*Debating Tudor policy in sixteenth-century Ireland: 'reform' treatises and political discourse* (Manchester, 2018).

<sup>16</sup> Darcy's articles to the king's council, 1515, Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, pp 91–3; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 1–33; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 17, (ii), p. 1540 (the 'Sir Roger Darcy of Ireland' rewarded 'by the lord admiral' is clearly Sir William); *Cal. Carew MSS 1515–74*, p. 143; *Cal. Carew MSS, Bk. Of Howth*, pp 192–3. For Finglas's 'briefe note', see Lambeth Palace Library, Carew MS 635, ff 185–7; Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, pp 27–34, 69–79.

<sup>17</sup> 'Ordynau[n]ces and provisions': Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, pp 99–109. The English Pale was the name coined in 1495 for the region around Dublin previously described as 'the four obedient shires'. Coign and livery was a quasi-Gaelic practice denoting various Irish exactions arising from free quartering on the country of an Irish chief's troops. Within the Pale, the Act of Marches and Maghery (1488) proscribed coign and livery except by landlords on their own tenants in the marches (as defined by the statute). In his 1515 articles against Kildare's rule, Darcy complained about this, but hardly more than two of County Kildare's fourteen baronies lay within the maghery, so permitting the earl as governor to quarter his retinue on his extensive marchland, as no other lord could: S. G. Ellis, *Ireland's English Pale, 1470–1550: the making of a Tudor region* (Woodbridge, 2021), chapters 2–3.

augmenting the governor's retinue for offensive operations into the surrounding Irishry, raising an army of over a thousand landowners, tenants, and townsmen from across the Pale. Only three articles referred specifically to English rule beyond the Pale, including a proposal (later prompting a parliamentary bill) that the deputy receive half the fee-farms and customs of Waterford, Cork, Youghal, Limerick and Galway. About reducing Gaelic Ireland to obedience, nothing at all appeared, although completing 'the whole conquest' had long been an ambition of the king's subjects there when opportunity arose.<sup>18</sup>

The Ordinances, thus, envisaged a minor campaign with limited objectives at minimal cost to the crown, noting of the deputy's retinue that 'the forsaide chardges can not be borne untyll the revenues be increased', hence the proposal for fee-farms and customs. As Sir William Darcy certainly knew, continuing Kildare as governor saved the king around £3,000 a year, the basic cost of a deputy and retinue from England. In advising the king about the expedition's costs, Darcy talked up the potential and profits of the Irish revenues. In his 1515 reform articles, he had asserted optimistically that in the last twenty-four years the king's revenues in the Pale had been better than they had been over the previous thirty years. He also claimed that the earldom of Ulster, extending over five shires, had once been worth 30,000 marks annually.<sup>19</sup> During the expedition's planning early in 1520, he improved on this assessment, assuring Wolsey and the king that the revenues' profits now exceeded 2,000 marks a year. He probably also stressed the revenue potential of the king's Ulster title as earl.<sup>20</sup>

To meet the costs of the deputy's retinue, increased taxation on the Pale was proposed, doubling the parliamentary subsidy from 13s. 4d. to 26s. 8d. per ploughland (120 acres) in return for abolishing coign and livery. Someone familiar with local conditions, probably Darcy, wrote a reasoned objection to this. If coign and livery were suddenly abolished, the marchers would refuse to grant the new subsidy because of their charges in maintaining galloglass and kerne; nor would they readily accompany the deputy on hostings if they had to pay for meat and drink. Landowners in the Pale maghery would be loath to grant a new subsidy for putting down coign and livery with which they were seldom now oppressed; and without galloglass and kerne, the deputy could not readily defend the Englishry nor be effective against Irish enemies. Englishmen unfamiliar with the country would be in great danger if they followed the Irish into woods or marshes, but with galloglass and kerne the deputy could pursue and skirmish with them, and if they were slain, could easily retain others. Thus, instead of abolishing coign and livery suddenly, the next parliament should see what the king's subjects would give to abolish it and certify the king.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the council looked for other ways to raise the revenues.

<sup>18</sup> 'Ordynau[n]ces and provisions': Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, pp 99–108; Ellis, *Ireland's English Pale*, pp 55–8. For 'the whole conquest', see parliament's address to Edward IV, 1474: T.N.A., C 47/10, 29, no. 1; Ellis, *Ireland's English Pale*, pp 24–7.

<sup>19</sup> Darcy's articles to the king's council, June 1515: Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, pp 91–3; 'Ordynau[n]ces and provisions', *ibid.*, p. 99; Ellis, *Ireland's English Pale*, pp 136–42.

<sup>20</sup> Henry and Wolsey originally understood Darcy to mean that revenue exceeded ordinary charges by 2,000 marks, whereas Darcy actually meant a total receipt of 2,000 marks annually: *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 77–8; *Stat. Ire., Hen. VII & VIII*, pp 121–2. For the crown's title to Ulster, see 'The petygrewe of the Bourkes': Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, pp 97–8; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 53–4.

<sup>21</sup> T.N.A., SP 60/1, f. 71 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 670ii); 'Ordynau[n]ces and provisions': Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, pp 99–109. As Darcy probably knew, the double



As the expedition's planning took shape, the main conclusions were outlined in 'Remembrances for Ireland', probably drafted by Wolsey in February 1520. The Remembrances incorporated many proposals from the Ordinances, but also broadened its narrow Pale focus. The king's lieutenant should hold a great council after arrival, in Dublin and then in Kilkenny or Waterford. The single belated reference here to a lieutenant, a more prestigious title only accorded to some governors, perhaps reflects the king's final decision to appoint Surrey, whose appointment satisfied the request in the articles for reformation for the deployment of an English earl. The great council should bind lay landowners in the value of their lands when warned to answer for their conduct before the king's deputy. Irish captains should surrender pledges to observe ordinances by the deputy and council for the common good. Wolsey, as legate of England and Ireland, should appoint as his substitute a bishop to enforce these ordinances and articles for ecclesiastical reform, fulminating ecclesiastical censures for disobedience. A remembrance that the king should send a sufficient army of spears, archers, and gunners to support the deputy replaced the Ordinances' prescription of cheaper Irish troops.<sup>22</sup> 'Put not your full truste in Irishe horsemen', Henry later warned Surrey: if they outnumbered 'your Inglishe horsemen', they 'may percaas putte boothe you and theym in dangier'.<sup>23</sup> The fee-farms and customs proposal reappeared as a bill for resumption, although this required a parliament to enact appropriate legislation. Finally, the Remembrances projected a considerable increase in revenue through an ambitious, all-Ireland subsidy: 12*d.* annually to be paid on every twenty acres arable land across the twelve English shires and all the churches; 8*d.* annually on every twenty acres throughout the Irishry, with commissioners assessing arable lands, the subsidy, and the churches.<sup>24</sup>

The subsidy proposal betrayed only a sketchy knowledge of taxation in Ireland. As noted, traditionally subsidies were levied at 13*s.* 4*d.* per ploughland of cultivated land, in return for eschewing of coign and livery, and since the 1460s they had mostly been confined to the Pale. If a new subsidy replaced the existing subsidy, unless wastes (uncultivated land) were included, this would reduce by over 60 per cent receipts from the Pale, the only region with a commercial focus on tillage. Subsidies collected from outlying shires, once assessed, would scarcely offset this reduction, while the chances of collecting anything from the Irishry were remote. Unsurprisingly, the proposal disappeared. Instead, someone with local knowledge, probably Darcy, drafted a new revenue-raising proposal, entitled in later abridged copies 'The revenues of Ireland'. Its centrepiece, an ingenious but equally unrealistic scheme for an all-Ireland subsidy, was based on accurate information about the subsidy's operation since Edward III's days across 'the iiiii obedient shyres' of the future Pale region. Entirely spurious calculations about the numbers of cantreds, betagh towns and arable acres in Ireland before Christ's incarnation then extended the subsidy across Ireland's five provinces. Ireland supposedly contained 5,920 betagh towns, each of 960 arable acres. So, a subsidy to the king of 1*d.* per acre levied by collectors appointed by the bishops and archbishops of each

subsidy granted by Poyning's parliament had realised over £1,500 in 1495–6: S. G. Ellis, 'Henry VII and Ireland, 1491–1496' in James Lydon (ed.), *England and Ireland in the later middle ages: essays in honour of Jocelyn Otway-Ruthven* (Dublin, 1981), p. 244.

<sup>22</sup> T.N.A., SP 1/30, f. 90 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv (i), no. 80).

<sup>23</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 55.

<sup>24</sup> T.N.A., SP 1/30, f. 90 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv (i), no. 80).

diocese throughout Ireland and accountable to royal officials should realise £23,900 yearly: if necessary, the ‘lorde lieutenaunte and army’ should ‘mantayne them to levie the same’. This subsidy, and the resumption of fee-farms and customs, should ‘be enacted in the fyrste parlyamente’ held thereafter. A note followed of rents and profits of the king’s manors and the ‘esthate’ [estreats?] and casualties per annum, but the council again rejected the all-Ireland subsidy proposal.<sup>25</sup>

The idea was nonetheless retained of supporting the expedition through the church’s influence, albeit transferred in the final plan from finance to using the church to implement reform objectives. Darcy’s influence on planning, especially finance, likewise survived: in April 1520, he was handsomely rewarded £40 for services to Lord Admiral Surrey who, once in Ireland, remained heavily reliant on Darcy’s advice. The new undertreasurer, Sir John Stile, soon realised, however, that the Irish revenues were far less than had been suggested. Unable to recover the revenues to £1,400 a year Irish money (worth two-thirds that of sterling), Stile complained a year later that Darcy’s own accounts from twenty-five years before showed his highest annual receipt as treasurer as just £1,587 13s. 3¼d.<sup>26</sup>

With planning now well advanced, the decision was taken in late February to send Surrey as lieutenant with an enhanced retinue including 400 of the king’s guard and additional troops raised through Surrey’s indenture of retainers. All this confirmed the much more ambitious campaign into Gaelic parts now planned and the king’s growing expectations of the expedition. The distinguished lord admiral and Tudor noble with yeomen of the guard was not only intended to project the power and majesty of monarchy but also to stress a credible threat of conquest by which Henry hoped to recover his lands, rights, and revenues from Irish chiefs. The king apparently anticipated easy submissions, certainly not an expensive military conquest costing, in Henry’s estimation, far more than the enterprise was worth, but Surrey’s instructions did not tie him to a particular course of action.<sup>27</sup>

What was tantamount to the expedition’s official announcement followed, with the guard summoned in early March to appear before the council on 24 March to accompany Surrey, the king’s ‘lieutenant & deputy’, to Ireland at Easter [8 April]. As an inducement to combat service, the guards’ daily pay during the expedition was raised from 4d. to 6d. sterling — the equivalent of 9d. Irish, over twice the pay of Surrey’s footmen. The guards’ appearance was also improved by 400 jackets and gilt halberds and javelins provided by Sir William Skeffington who repaired Surrey’s ordnance — probably the first association of another future governor with Ireland. These were the centrepiece of the king’s army sent ‘for the good government of our obedient subjects there & to subdue those not obedient to our laws, contrary to their duties of allegiance’. Surrey’s later written instructions, recalling the council’s earlier minute, stated disarmingly that his mission was chiefly ‘to enforme your highnes by wich meanys and ways your grace myght reduce this lond to obedience and gode order’.<sup>28</sup> The assumption remained, however, that the revenues would meet the expedition’s costs, beyond the first half-year’s

<sup>25</sup> [‘The revenues of Ireland’]: Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, pp 94–6. To this copy, two more articles were later appended, probably in 1524. For Darcy’s likely authorship: *ibid.*, pp 50–52. A betagh town, or ballybetagh, was a thirtieth part of a cantred, or *triocha céad*.

<sup>26</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 39, 77–8; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), app. 15, and p. 1540.

<sup>27</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 73; T.N.A., SP 60/1, f. 70 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 670); SP 1/20, f. 112 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 889).

<sup>28</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 73, 96; T.N.A., SP 1/19 ff 224–5 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 669); SP 60/1, f. 70 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 670); *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), pp 1540–44.



expenses borne by the king's chamber. Henry later reminded Surrey that 'our ... revenues there' should cover 'the entretaynment of you, and our retynue under you', but the retinue's increased size and pay ruled out any prospect of this. For Irish officials, however, these enhanced preparations suggested a major expedition in prospect, with the king undertaking something closer to 'the whole conquest' long requested.<sup>29</sup> Surrey's own military reputation also provided a strong hint how reform might be achieved, as did his accompanying 'army for Ireland'.

The particulars of Surrey's expedition were then summarised in the unassuming 'device how Ireland may be well kept in obedience', probably composed by Wolsey. 'The army for Ireland, besides the deputy's own charge' listed 400 of the king's guard, twenty-four of the king's gunners (half coming from Tournai), and the ordnance (a siege train with three large battery pieces), all paid for by the king, plus 100 Irish horse financed by resumption of customs and fee-farms at the next parliament. Additional troops were raised more cheaply through Surrey's indenture of retainer which recalled the practice of medieval kings in contracting out Ireland's government and limiting costs to an agreed salary for governor and retinue. As later emerged, Surrey was to retain (pay for and equip) fifty mounted archers and demi-lances (or spears), and fifty footmen, all English, plus 300 Irish kerne and 100 Irish horse, from his £2,000 annual salary. The army of 1,024 men thus envisaged would be the largest retinue provided for any Irish governor since Richard II in the 1390s, so further raising local expectations of Surrey's expedition.<sup>30</sup>

Of the expedition's other particulars, however, some remained problematic. The king was to send 'loving letters' by officers of arms to the earl of Desmond (promising a general pardon, if he did his duty), to Sir Piers Butler (who claimed to be earl of Ormond), and to others as the king's council thought convenient, asking them to resort to the governor on arrival to know the king's pleasure, meanwhile keeping the peace. Rouge Dragon Pursuivant accompanying Surrey would convey the letters.<sup>31</sup> An executive privy council was appointed for the governor, Wolsey's initiative here anticipating by over a decade the privy council's emergence in England. The king was to assign three councillors who should be Englishmen then present in England, with the governor acting only on the council's advice. Surrey was to arrive by Easter, with a parliament (as yet unlicensed, replacing the proposed great council) beginning in Dublin on 1 May, well within the traditional forty-days' notice. All holding land in Ireland were to take up residence there for its defence, but George Talbot, fourth earl of Shrewsbury, recently induced to retain forty men to defend his liberty of Wexford, would as leading courtier and general soon be needed

<sup>29</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 54; Maginn & Ellis, *Tudor discovery*, p. 146; Ellis, *Ireland's English Pale*, pp 24–7.

<sup>30</sup> T.N.A., SP 1/19, ff224–5 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 669); SP 60/1, f. 70 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 670); SP 1/20, f. 112 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 889); SP 60/3, f. 162 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xi, no. 709); *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), pp 1540–44; Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, p. 367. Cf. Richardson & Sayles, *Admin. Ire.*, p. 6; Philomena Connolly, 'The financing of English expeditions to Ireland, 1361–1376' in Lydon (ed.), *England and Ireland in the later middle ages*, pp 104–21.

<sup>31</sup> T.N.A., SP 60/1, f. 70 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 670). Rouge Dragon Pursuivant was an officer in the College of Arms, named after the red dragon of Wales. In December 1520, diets of 2s. per day were paid by the king's chamber for Rouge Dragon 'attingyng upon the lyueten[au]nte of Irlande' from 25 May to 12 September: T.N.A., E 36/216, f. 113v.

elsewhere. Thomas Boleyn and George St Leger, coheirs (via their wives) of Ormond estates claimed by Piers Butler, were perhaps better kept away.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, an ambitious but far-fetched device aimed to recover the king's rights and revenues as feudal overlord. This expanded Wolsey's projected role in the Remembrances, invoking the church's influence over the Irish to support the expedition and restore order. Wolsey as legate was to appoint a commissary who should call before him all bishops, abbots and ecclesiastical heads to notify the Irish that the king had sent his deputy to reduce the land to order, not intending war against any doing their duty nor taking anything to which they were lawfully entitled, but making a fair distribution of lands at reasonable rents to the king, seeing they now 'live without order, not wealthy, ne being assured of any succession to their heirs'. The priors and wardens of the four orders of friars and the Observants who were seen as particularly influential in Gaelic Ireland should be sworn before the commissary to exhort Irishmen in their sermons according to instructions from the deputy and council, and to reveal anything prejudicial to the king or his deputy. The commissary was also to accurse (and excommunicate) 'all men moving war against' the king or his deputy. As Surrey was later reminded, the intention here, foreshadowing Surrender and Regrant in the 1540s, was to persuade Irish chiefs to surrender to the king lands unlawfully detained and, in return for a grant of English law, to hold their lands of the crown, paying an annual rent for their defence. The king's best hopes of meeting the expedition's costs, apparently, rested on this device, but Wolsey's commissary never appeared, and Surrey soon dismissed the chances of persuasion among the Irish.<sup>33</sup>

The protracted planning also meant that the expedition's schedule slipped. Two galleys, *Kateryn* and *Rosse*, being prepared from 1 March to transport the lord admiral and his retinue, were apparently not ready until 10 May, but Surrey's retinue was taken into pay from 26 April at Westchester before embarkation, and paid monthly in advance: Undertreasurer Stile received £3,317 15s. 10d. from the king's chamber for the first half-year's payment.<sup>34</sup> Eventually, as the *Dublin Chronicle* related, Surrey 'w<sup>ith</sup> his lady and [two hundred] of the king's honorable garde with many northyne spermen landide at the Wode Key' (in Dublin) on 24 May, 'and went to the kynges castell', then very ruinous and in decay. Surrey's arrival was six weeks behind schedule, long after parliament's intended meeting for supply, and quite late for a summer campaign. No absentee landowners returned with him, as Wolsey's Device had recommended, although Prior John Rawson of Kilmainham accompanied him after the king revoked his licence of absence to go to Rhodes. Works to refurbish Dublin Castle, the seat of government, soon dispelled any notion of a short campaign, however, with repairs to buildings, stables and Bermingham's tower, and the creation of a new parlour in the courtyard with a dwelling chamber above it to accommodate the viceroy's family. The

<sup>32</sup> T.N.A., SP 60/1, f. 70 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 670); *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 439; *Ormond deeds, 1509–47*, pp 116–26; G. W. Bernard, *The power of the early Tudor nobility: a study of the fourth and fifth earls of Shrewsbury* (Brighton, 1985), pp 24–5, 107–9, 114–15, 140.

<sup>33</sup> T.N.A., SP 60/1, f. 70 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 670) (quotation); *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), p. 1543; Ellis, *Reform and revival*, pp 42–4.

<sup>34</sup> T.N.A., SP 1/19, ff 224–5 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 669); SP 60/1, ff 44–5v (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 963), f. 70 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 670); E 36/11/92–5 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 800); *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 54; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), p. 1540; Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, p. 367.

refurbishments, overseen by Surrey's servants, Robert Cowley and George Peryent, clerks of the works, cost a substantial £367 3s. 3d.<sup>35</sup>

Soon after Surrey's arrival, the king and court, with many Tudor nobles, including Kildare, decamped to Calais and the Field of Cloth of Gold, the spectacle of the century: throughout the summer from early June, Surrey could get no answers from Henry or Wolsey to his letters, requests and complaints. His commission as lieutenant lacked power to proclaim martial law or confer knighthood, which the king soon rectified, but in 1521 he needed a commission to execute or pardon pirates.<sup>36</sup> If he retained more than half the 400 Irish troops specified, he complained on sight of his indenture from Wolsey, this would cost him more than his salary and all his lands in England combined. Instead, he asked for diets (a daily allowance in lieu of salary) — Sir Edward Poynings had ten marks daily in Tournai — with his men in wages, paid by the undertreasurer who should have his remaining salary to hire Irish troops. Of the king's guard, only 220 arrived with Surrey, plus his company of 100 English. Though fewer than originally envisaged, the unwonted numbers of soldiers in Dublin 'causith the more skarsety and derth': bread and ale were so dear, Surrey complained, that his footmen could not live on 4d. a day and the horsemen had to be allowed to take coign and livery as before.<sup>37</sup>

Unsuitable troops also hampered Surrey's early campaigning. He was short of the Irish troops needed to make headway in mountains and bogs, and he argued that footmen of the king's guard who were less mobile were better deployed in garrisoning the Pale. A week after landing, Surrey was 'at his dynner' when word reached him 'that ONeyll was commynge with great pouer in to the Englyshe pall to doo hvrte', as the *Dublin Chronicle* related. Commanding the mayor and 'the holle Cittie' to go forthwith to resist O'Neill, Surrey's company followed a day later, 'whiche wase a goodle sighte to see them goo in array', but on reaching Slane the threat had disappeared, and his troops were far behind anyway, so he 'gaw the fott mene lissens to re torne bake agayne'.<sup>38</sup> Surrey immediately asked the king for more horsemen to resist such invasions: the Gaelic Irish were 'assembled in soo many sundrye places, soo ferre distant the oon from thoder, in woddes, and other strong groundes', he reported, making it impossible 'for fotemen to encounter with theym'. His 'lacke of kroulege of the cuntry, and the variaunt condicions of thinhabitautes' presented further problems, as did an outbreak of plague in the Pale. The king sent over Sir William Bulmer with 100 northern horsemen and Sir Rhys ap Thomas with fifty Welsh spears, Surrey discharging (dismissing from service) an equivalent number of the king's guard. Bulmer's company was to embark on 10 August but only arrived on 20 September, comprising mainly mounted archers, 'many of theym right ill horsid', with no more than thirty Northumberland spears, far fewer than had been requested by Surrey.<sup>39</sup>

The decision not to send the earl of Kildare back to Ireland to support Surrey proved another mistake. He accompanied the king to the Field of Cloth of Gold but was otherwise kept answering charges of misgovernment. Apparently

<sup>35</sup> T.C.D., MS 543/2, s.a. 1520; T.N.A., E 101/248, no. 21; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 94, 96.

<sup>36</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 40, 42, 55, 76–7; *Cal. Carew MSS, 1515–74*, no. 11; Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, pp 75–80.

<sup>37</sup> T.N.A., SP 1/20, f. 112 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 889); *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 33, 43; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), app. 15; T.C.D., MS 543/2, s.a. 1520.

<sup>38</sup> T.C.D., MS 543/2, s.a. 1520.

<sup>39</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 31–3, 48; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), app. 15, iv, no. 2216

uncooperative, Kildare was bound over not to leave the London area. Surrey suspected that he had deliberately stirred up neighbouring chiefs to foment the wars breaking out on his arrival, but these charges were difficult to prove. Every incoming governor had to negotiate for submissions, pledges, and peace with neighbouring chiefs which, at best, might last until his recall. Kildare's continued absence meanwhile released the chiefs from personal agreements and undertakings given to him on submission. The lieutenant's early labour and costs were mostly wasted on the Pale's defence which Kildare could easily have organised had he returned with Surrey.<sup>40</sup> Even so, the land was in a rebellious state. Through July, Surrey was 'soo troubled with war, in soo many places' he had no leisure to convene the council of Ireland or his new privy council to devise how best to 'bring the Irishmen to summe good order' and recover the revenues.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile, the king's guard was distributed in small garrisons, Surrey lodging them 'by 40, 30, and 20, in townes where noon infeccion is', because 'the great sicknes is soo universally spredd in the English Pale'. According to Surrey, they called on the lieutenant for 'license to goo home', some alleging they could not live on their wages, others had farms and husbandry at home, and others 'beeing a litill seke' wished to 'retourne into England to take the ayer'.<sup>42</sup> Tudor armies were more likely to die of disease than be killed in battle. Surrey's force was no exception. Eighteen of the guard soon died of plague. Within a year, above sixty of the king's retinue had died of the flux [dysentery], and more of plague. By March 1522, when finally disbanded, the guard had dwindled to sixty-five, many being 'ajed and seke, not abille for the warres', according to Stile. Just nine of the king's gunners were left.<sup>43</sup>

Having had no response to his requests for horsemen, Surrey dared not discharge the guard. They were in his army invading O'More's country in mid-July, with 120 Irish horse, 300 kerne, plus the Pale hosting which, alarmingly, provided Surrey with 'the leest assistence of the Englishry that ever was seen', just 48 horsemen and 120 footmen. Initially, the king's letters asking the earls of Desmond and Ormond to resort to Surrey on arrival went unanswered. Surrey sent councillors to Waterford to negotiate a truce between them, and with nine more Munster lords and gentry, to serve the king. Ormond then joined Surrey in O'More's country, with Shrewsbury's seneschal of Wexford liberty, Cormac Oge MacCarthy, one of the MacMurroughs, Brian O'Connor, and eventually O'Carroll and O'More who were all sworn to the king. With O'Donnell also awaiting the lieutenant's return to Dublin, Surrey believed peace was now established 'with all the Irishre, saving only ONEle and a few light capeteyns'. He proposed to invade O'Neill's country in mid-August, but struggled to 'get sufficient company with me, because off the mervelous deth' throughout the Pale. On 3 July, Surrey wrote to Wolsey that three of his

<sup>40</sup> When Surrey's examinations and inquisitions failed to reveal 'sufficient proffes against thErle', the king had 'noon evident testimonies to convince hym upon the same, but onoly presumptions and uncertain conjectures', and so released Kildare from prison about November: *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 56; Quinn, 'Henry VIII and Ireland', pp 329–30; Ellis, *Ireland in the age of the Tudors*, pp 118, 120, 124–5. For 'th'erll of Kyldaris duties upon Irishmen': Mac Niocaill (ed.), *Crown surveys of lands*, pp 264–77.

<sup>41</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 31, 33–4, 36–7; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), nos. 2693, 3053.

<sup>42</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 37–8.

<sup>43</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 35, 48, 84, 87, 96; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), app. 15; Gunn, *English people at war*, p. 112.

household had sickened and died in Dublin within the past week.<sup>44</sup> When Bulmer's company finally arrived, Surrey discharged 117 of the guard, but still dissatisfied, he had within a month discharged the Welsh spears, and soon after fifty of Bulmer's northern horsemen to wage twenty 'good English horsmen' and thirty Irish. Thus, by late October Surrey finally had a retinue to his liking: 170 English horse, mainly northern spears, 150 Irish horse, 300 kerne, 24 gunners and 85 yeomen of the guard. This was 300 fewer than originally planned, but a more balanced force.<sup>45</sup>

By then, however, Surrey had run out of money, with little achieved beyond stabilising control of the Pale. On 13 September, the army was paid its final month's wages of the half-year's advance in April to Undertreasurer Stile. Credit was unobtainable, Surrey and the council advised, and without new wages, due on 12 October, the soldiers could not obtain victuals and might take this as an excuse to go home. The king had expected that by October the Irish revenues would bear Surrey's costs, but Surrey's late arrival meant that Kildare's officers had received the half-year's revenues due in late March. The subsidy and revenues due at Michaelmas could hardly be levied much before Christmas, Stile explained, nor were there casualties (court-imposed incidental fees, fines and amercements) because, due to plague, the king's courts, except the exchequer, had not been held in Trinity term.<sup>46</sup> Very reluctantly, the king sent another £4,000, complaining of the 'right greate charge' for 'soo shorte tyme'. He urged Surrey 'substauncially to loke to the spedie recoverye of our revenues', but by November, pending the money's arrival, Surrey's army was unable to stir out of Dublin 'for lake of money'.<sup>47</sup> According to Stile's accounts, the Irish revenues eventually raised for two years to Easter 1522 £3,536 17s. 8d., no more than usual. £511 6s. 1d. was in arrears and mostly still outstanding in 1538, but £1,500 15s. 11½d. was transferred to the military account, mainly the normal proceeds of subsidies towards costs of the governor's retinue.<sup>48</sup>

Surrey had meanwhile secured widespread submissions from Irish chiefs, most recently O'Neill and McMahon whose lordships he invaded in mid-August, doing 'suche annoysaunce as I might'. He had no illusions about the fragility of the peace ensuing, however, nor the difficulty of reducing the Irish to obedience. His initial opinion to Henry of the expedition's prospects in July was that Irishmen

wol not bee brought to noo good order, onles it bee by compulsion, which  
 woll not bee doon without a great puissaunce of men, and great costis of  
 money, and long continuance of tyme.

When the king should 'put to your royall power', he should 'at lenght obteyne the conquest of this land', but a long costly campaign for conquest was the last thing Henry wanted to hear.<sup>49</sup> Replying in October to some half-dozen letters and reports sent between July and September, the king's lengthy response, only received in December, perhaps surprised Surrey.

<sup>44</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 35–9.

<sup>45</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 35, 54–5, 57–8, 84, 96; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), app. 15.

<sup>46</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 40–41, 47, 54; T.N.A., SP 60/1, ff 44–5 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 963).

<sup>47</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 54, 58; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), no. 2750, app. 15.

<sup>48</sup> T.N.A., E 101/248, no. 21; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, xiii (i), no. 641; Quinn, 'Henry VIII and Ireland', p. 329.

<sup>49</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 37, 40; T.N.A., SP 60/1, f. 44 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), no. 963).

Henry began with praise for Surrey's efforts to reduce our dominion and 'disobeisaut subgiettes' to peaceable 'gouvernaunce, due order, subjeccion, and obeisaunce'. By their submissions, O'Neill and other Irish captains had 'according to their naturall duetie of liegeaunce ... recognised us as their sovereign Lorde'. Surrey should now bring them 'by sober waies, politique driftes and amiable persuasions, founded in lawe and reason' to 'ferther obedience for thobservaunce of our lawes' and government, no longer rebelliously detaining crown lands, but not 'by rigorous dealing, comminacions ... strenght or violence'. Disregarding 200 years of English constitutional practice, Henry observed that these captains were not Irish enemies, but 'Irish rebels and disobedient subjects': they should be treated as his natural subjects and ruled by English law and justice.<sup>50</sup> It took another twenty years, however, before Henry reluctantly agreed a viable strategy, so-called Surrender and Regrant, granting Irish chiefs and clansmen the same rights and protection as the king's subjects.

A long justification and homily followed. Surrey should call the lords and captains before him, declaring 'the greate decaye, ruyne, and desolacion of that ... fertile lande, for lacke of politique gouvernaunce and good justice' to bring 'the unbridled sensualities of insolent folks ... under the rewles of the lawes'. Realms without justice 'be but tirannyes and robories', Henry opined: where 'wilfulnesse dooth reigne by strenght, ... noo distinction of proprietie' exists, 'but by strenght the weker is subduyd'. If, however, the Irish should 'allege that our lawys' were too 'extreme and rigorous', they might be 'mytigate and browzt to such moderacion' that they could live under them. Nevertheless, although as 'their sovereign lorde ... of our absolute power we be above the lawes', we will take nothing 'that righteously apperteigneth to theym', so 'of good congruence they be bound to restore unto us our oune'. But it impugned the king's honour to 'suffer our awne subgiettes to deteigne violently ... lands to us ryghtuously appertaynyng', whether 'thErlodome of Ulcestre, wherunto as ye write Onele hath promised his assistance', 'the residue to us belonging', or lands 'deteigned from ... other lordes'. In sum, to 'spende so moche money', Henry observed, 'to bring the Irishry in apparaunce oonely of obeisaunce', but not to 'observe our lawes, ... resourte to our courtes for justice', nor restore lands unlawfully detained 'were a thing of litle policie, lesse advantage, and leste effecte'.<sup>51</sup>

Surrey's later correspondence suggests that some initiative akin to Surrender and Regrant had been considered during planning, whereby Irish chiefs agreed to become English subjects, subject to English law, hold their lands of the crown, and pay rent for protection and defence. Thus, as Surrey reported, Cormac Oge MacCarthy wished to become an English subject and parliamentary peer, holding of the crown lands to which, however, the king had no title, but 'whate yerely rent he wol geve, [of which] I am not certayne'.<sup>52</sup> What Surrey had not appreciated, apparently, was the urgency for Henry of the initiative's financial aspects, recovering crown land and establishing feudal rights over his new subjects. Henry's letter, evidently not for wider circulation, provided a lengthy justification of a policy

<sup>50</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 51–7. For relations earlier with Irish chiefs, see Robin Frame, 'English officials and Irish chiefs in the fourteenth century' in *E.H.R.*, xc, no. 357 (1975), pp 748–77; for their traditional designation as 'Irish enemies', James Lydon, 'The middle nation' in idem (ed.), *The English in medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1984), pp 10–22.

<sup>51</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 51–7, 60, 62.

<sup>52</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 57, 64.



partly unfamiliar to Surrey and certainly not followed. Darcy's initial proposals had envisaged a limited expedition to reform the Englishry and consolidate the Pale. Surrey's written instructions apparently allowed him wide scope for a reconnaissance in force to determine how best to reduce Ireland to order. The Device talked vaguely about not taking anything from the Irish to which they were lawfully entitled but making a fair distribution of lands at reasonable rents to the king. Even the king's opening letter to Surrey and the council had instructed them to practice with captains and heads to 'come in ... as our obeisant subgiettes ... according to their natural duetie of liegaunce', repress the temerities of 'our rebellious Irishe enimy'es', and 'persecute our enimy'es'. Initially, Henry allowed, 'politique practices may doo more goode than exploite of werre', until by sowing division 'the strenght of the Irishe enimy'es shalbe infebled and diminissed'. Then next year, God willing, he would 'augment and increase your power there to annoye the said rebelles accordingly'.<sup>53</sup> By implication, their reduction to order and obedience would require considerable military force.

When the king's long response and money finally arrived in mid-December, Surrey replied almost immediately, writing a shorter despatch to Wolsey, and sending both letters with the king's servant, Captain Sir Leonard Musgrave, to report orally. Unmoved by the king's long justification of policy, Surrey repeated his verdict of July 'that this londe woll never be broght to dew obeysaunce, but only with compulsion and conqwest'. If the king's pleasure were 'not to go thorow with the conqwest ... wich wolbe a mervelous charge', he added, he should no longer waste the king's money only to keep Ireland in peace, but also the 'reproche and shame to spende his grace so moche money in vayne', whereby 'also I shalbe undone'.<sup>54</sup> Early in 1521, however, the 'universal peace' which had facilitated Surrey's expedition showed signs of breaking down. Anticipating Irish raids, Surrey learned in March of a projected invasion by the earl of Argyll over the summer to link up with O'Neill and other chiefs. Argyll's aim, Surrey feared, was to open a second front in case of war between England and Scotland: with the small force available, Surrey could hardly even defend the Pale. He sent over Sir John Wallop with an urgent request to Henry for reinforcements of 300 horse and 500 footmen, 1,000 marks, money for other contingencies, and to licence Kildare's return. Meanwhile, Ormond and Sir William Darcy threatened the Irish 'with a great power coming hether with thErl of Kildare' so that they agreed a truce until All Hallowtide.<sup>55</sup>

Henry's response to Surrey's requests, sending Sir John Peachey on a secret mission, underlined the fickle, contradictory character of his Irish policy. Peachey first explained the king's difficulties in meeting his commitments under the Treaty of London to the French king and the emperor, if either invaded the other's territory, and an army for war against Scotland. Surrey's reinforcements would raise the expedition's annual costs to £16,000–£17,000, leaving him unable to meet his other commitments. Instead, Surrey was asked 'to keep hym self in the limites of defence for the tuicion and savegarde of the foure shires', patching up truces with Irish rebels and not putting the king to further charge. By focusing on the Pale's defence, Henry added, Surrey would do him as 'acceptable service, as

<sup>53</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 34.

<sup>54</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 62.

<sup>55</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 63–70. Because of the 'auld alliance', Scottish hostilities against England would normally attract French support.

though ... he had conquered and subduyd the hole land'. As for Kildare, he had been discharged as the king's deputy, 'long deteigned here in duraunce and prisonament', and others 'assuryd that he shulde not retourne'. So, Surrey's suggested remedy did not stand with the king's honour, but he agreed to send 1,000 marks, and notify nobles and gentry around Chester to prepare troop reinforcements for Surrey in case of Scottish invasion.<sup>56</sup>

By the time Peachey brought the king's response in late June, expectations of a forward policy for reducing Ireland to order and obedience were fast evaporating. Despite Kildare's absence, the immediate aim of Tudor policy was again reduced to defending the four shires. In truth, the expedition's planned aims were hardly ever addressed following Surrey's arrival. With his small army, supported from the Pale, Surrey led regular invasions of neighbouring Irish lordships, much like Kildare previously, but made no real effort to encourage Irish chiefs to hold their lands of the crown, accept English law and the king's courts, or surrender estates to which the crown claimed title. The nearest Surrey came to viceregal progresses extending the range of government into outlying parts was a hasty journey to Clonmel and Waterford in early October, returning to Dublin before the army's pay day on 12 October, for which no money had arrived.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile, preparations proceeded for the long-delayed parliament proposed the previous May. Draft bills brought by Chief Baron Finglas in December were approved and returned with the king's licence for parliament. When Surrey's parliament finally began in early June, nine bills were considered: two bills to recover the revenues offered some insight into the king's original thinking in planning Surrey's expedition. The first proclaimed his intention for 'the reformation of this pore land', for relief of the church and augmentation of divine service, to 'the perpetuall common weale ... of all the holle inhabitants'. It was claimed the lordship had fallen into ruin by oppression of Irish rebels, by misgovernance of English subjects 'fallen to yrishe rule and order', and because previous kings 'have not loked' to punish English subjects or resist Irish rebels. Reform was impossible, however, 'without sumptuous & large costes and expences', for which the king had 'little helpe or relefe saue only of his cofres', unless he 'may haue summe reuenus growing yerely'. A monopoly on salt for seven years was, therefore, proposed, selling at 9*d.* a bushel. The second bill observed that Ireland had been 'sufficiently and well defended' until grants to 'dyuers particular persons' had greatly diminished the revenues. As 'apperith by the kynges recordes of his exchequer' (probably scrutinized by Darcy), Sir Thomas Stanley, Henry VI's lieutenant, 1431–7, had received 4,000 marks sterling yearly from the Irish revenues for the land's defence, 'with all other charges clerly paied', the parliamentary subsidy then being 3*s.* 4*d.* a ploughland. Now, however, 'the kynges holle reuenus ... excedeth not' 2,000 marks Irish yearly to bear all charges, although the subsidy was 13*s.* 4*d.* a ploughland with another 'subsidi called poundage graunted syns', worth 100 marks yearly, hence the long-planned resumption of customs and fee farms.<sup>58</sup> In parliament's eleven-day opening session, these two bills presumably faced strong opposition. Little was achieved in the six subsequent sessions, some held

<sup>56</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 65–72; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), nos. 1170, 1220; Eaves, *Henry VIII's Scottish diplomacy*, pp 90–92.

<sup>57</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 47–8, 50–51, 57–8.

<sup>58</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 63; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (i), nos. 1180, 1182; *Stat. Ire., Hen. VII & VIII*, pp 116–23; T.N.A., E 101/248, no. 21.

by Ormond in 1522. Surrey anticipated proroguing the October session because of wars but asked to have a private bill for Ormond returned beforehand. Just three minor statutes were eventually passed, but after Surrey's recall Ormond immediately requested a new commission for parliament to pass certain acts comprised in Surrey's commission.<sup>59</sup>

After receiving the king's instructions by Peachey, Surrey sent Henry his considered opinion in late June that 'this londe shall never be broght to goode order and dew subjeccion but only by conquest'. The conquest of Wales, he claimed, had taken Edward I in person ten years. Ireland was five times larger and separated by sea. Piecemeal conquest would take an army of 2,500 many years and would probably trigger a general Irish confederacy against the crown. A rapid conquest begun in several places at once would require at least 6,000 men, fed and equipped from England, with English settlers introduced, and castles and towns built.<sup>60</sup>

As Surrey awaited the king's response, the summer largely passed in fruitless campaigning. The north remained comparatively quiet, but Surrey proclaimed a hosting into Offaly for early July, the mayors of Dublin and Drogheda attending with the Pale lords and gentry. A confederacy of Irish chiefs, including O'Connor Faly, O'More and O'Carroll, had assembled 'a right great power', but fled on encountering Surrey's army as they returned from raiding Meath. Burning houses, corn, and towns across Offaly, Surrey besieged and captured O'Connor Faly's principal castle of Monasteroris with three great pieces of ordnance, leaving a ward to hold it pending the king's response: if the king intended conquest, Monasteroris was as necessary for 'entre upon Irishmens cuntreys' as Berwick was for Scotland.<sup>61</sup> Returning to Dublin on 24 July, the lieutenant immediately issued proclamations for a new hosting into O'More's country beginning on 8 August, and then left to defend Naas which, he heard, the three chiefs intended to burn. Surrey saw 'no lyklyhod but contynuel warre': the chiefs refused offers of peace, but later concluded a shaky truce, offering the chiefs gifts and wages.<sup>62</sup>

The costs and capability of Surrey's army were, thus, largely expended in protecting the Pale, especially Kildare, against O'More and O'Connor, in Earl Gerald's absence. Stile claimed that Kildare's defence caused Surrey 'more payne, costes, and charges then all the rest of this land', particularly lands west of the Barrow recovered by Earl Gerald from O'More and O'Connor. Only half Kildare's subsidy could be collected in 1520–21 — western baronies from Carbury to Reban were largely waste — and in 1521–22 no subsidy was forthcoming at all. Even before Surrey's arrival, Kildare's brother and vice-deputy, Sir Maurice FitzThomas, had faced increasing raids on Kildare, and 'with in a shorte whill after' was 'slaine by trayssonne in Omor is counttre'. Surrey paid his younger brother, Sir James, £40 annually as captain but feared the shire would take 'summe hurtes, principally for lak of oon good capeteyne' for defence 'when I am besy in other cuntreys'. Fitzgerald 'defendyd not the contrey', Stile alleged, but 'dyd grete oppression ... with coyne and levery'. Surrey had invaded Leix in July 1520,

<sup>59</sup> *Stat. Ire.*, i, 60–62; *Stat. Ire., Hen. VII & VIII*, pp 116–23; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 49; T.N.A., SP 60/1, f. 76 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), no. 1926); *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv (i), no. 81.

<sup>60</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 73–5.

<sup>61</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 75–6, 79–81; Rolf Loeber, 'An architectural history of Gaelic castles and settlements, 1370–1600' in P. J. Duffy, David Edwards and Elizabeth Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Gaelic Ireland c.1250–c.1650: land, lordship and settlement* (Dublin, 2001), p. 308.

<sup>62</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 75–6, 79–81, 85.

securing the chief's submission, although the shire's military situation continued to deteriorate. The gentry were unwilling to stir for defence and Earl Gerald's kinsmen and servants incited neighbouring chiefs to break any peace or truce taken. Surrey's hosting into Leix in August 1521 saw the lieutenant 'ney slayne with a hande gone': the bullet struck the visor of his helmet, but he escaped unhurt.<sup>63</sup>

In mid-September, Surrey petitioned for recall. Ordered to focus on the Pale's defence, not putting the king to further charge, and with no prospect of raising more revenue locally, Surrey realised he could do little more with his small army. In another Irish winter, he feared, flux, to which this 'contree is so moche disposed', might endanger his life. Flux had already killed many of his retinue.<sup>64</sup> A month later, he appealed to Wolsey, but Surrey's recall was already approved, the king remarking on his need of Surrey's 'notable service' in the 'great enterprises' shortly to be 'set forward'. His replacement by an English or Irish lord was briefly considered, but Wolsey advised that Ormond's appointment on the same terms as Kildare would save money. At his own request, Surrey left to consult the king about Ireland's government before his final discharge, Ormond deputising for him. He then returned briefly in March, installed Ormond as the regular deputy, disbanded his retinue, and dissolved parliament.<sup>65</sup>

When Surrey left for consultations before Christmas 1521, the council thanked the king for 'your graciouse solliciting for the reduccion of this land', stating that Surrey had by feats of war and impartial justice brought the land 'in towardness of reformation' and knew best of anyone here how this 'reformacion may rathest be brought to effect'. They besought the king to 'persevere in your charitable bygone enterprise': if Henry furnished him 'with sufficient number of men', the land would 'nowe be brought to subjeccion and reformation, seyng the wayes well prepayred'.<sup>66</sup>

Despite these fine words, Surrey was acutely aware of the costs and lack of success. The king pointedly underlined 'the mervalouse great charges' sustained 'by enterteignement of you, our lieutenaunte, with the retinue under you', and 'the litle effecte that succedeth therof'. Appointing another English lieutenant with a similar retinue 'shulde be frustratorie and consumption of treasour in vayne', he concluded, and resources were better saved 'for thadvancement of other higher interprises ... in fewe yeres hereafter'.<sup>67</sup> In fact, higher enterprises began almost immediately, with Surrey's naval attack on the Breton port of Morlaix and his command of an army invading France from Calais. In recording Surrey's final departure, the *Dublin Chronicle* displayed a shrewder appreciation of Tudor priorities: 'the Erll of Surre and his lady w<sup>th</sup> ther childrine went to England, ffor the frenche kynge be gane warre be twix fraunce ande Englande'.<sup>68</sup>

To attract and retain the king's attention for enterprises in this peripheral territory proved a perennial difficulty for Ireland's English community. A long-term goal of

<sup>63</sup> T.C.D., MS 543/2, s.a. 1520; *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 35–6, 76, 86; T.N.A., E 101/248, no. 21; David Heffernan, 'Robert Cowley's "A discourse of the cause of the evil state of Ireland and of the remedies thereof", c.1526' in *Anal. Hib.*, xlviii (2017), p. 23.

<sup>64</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 84–7, 96.

<sup>65</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, i, 68–70, 72–4, 76, ii, 88–91; *Stat. Ire.*, i, 60–62; *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), nos. 1630, 1646–7, 1675, 1709, 1762, 1774; T.N.A., SP 1/23, f. 94 (*L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iii (ii), no. 1685), SP 60/1, f. 79; Miller, *Henry VIII and the English nobility*, pp 186–7.

<sup>66</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 91–2.

<sup>67</sup> *S.P. Hen. VIII*, ii, 90–91.

<sup>68</sup> T.C.D., MS 543/2, s.a. 1522; Miller, *Henry VIII and the English nobility*, p. 145.

Tudor policy was to make a reality of English claims throughout this half-conquered borderland, but the vicissitudes of warfare there seldom impinged on England's vital interests. In 1519–20, proposals by the king's Irish officials for a limited reform of English government attracted Henry VIII's interest at a time when a brief 'universal peace' precluded 'higher enterprises' elsewhere. This led to Henry's opening preference for a comprehensive reduction of Ireland to order and obedience, and Surrey, released from duties elsewhere, headed an expedition, a reconnaissance in force, assessing its feasibility. Henry's knowledge of Ireland was distinctly poor, however. Seemingly, he expected easy submissions by Irish chiefs overawed by the might and majesty of monarchy. He readily accepted assurances of Irish officials that recovering his revenues there would meet the expedition's costs. Surrey followed his brief to advise the king 'by which means and ways' he might 'reduce this land to obedience', but his predictable recommendation that the only solution was military conquest also reflected his understanding of why the king had appointed his leading general. For this, Henry was surprisingly unprepared, and soon became distracted by developments elsewhere — the Field of Cloth of Gold, and later the threat of renewed war on the continent. The ostensible aims of Surrey's expedition shifted, being finally reduced to a limited holding operation across the English Pale to save money.

Despite the protracted initial planning, Surrey's expedition proved one of the most ill-conceived, poorly executed and expensive initiatives ever to supply a governor for Tudor Ireland. Beyond disrupting the political stability painfully established by Kildare's defence of the Pale, the expedition achieved little. On succeeding Surrey as the king's deputy, Ormond immediately pointed to the great enfeeblement of the Pale and the Irishry's growing strength, highlighting the difficulty of defending the four shires without an army of English spears and archers. Within a few months he had also asked for Kildare's return to address disputes among his kinsmen and reform his estates, but stability across the Pale was not so soon restored.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>69</sup> *L. & P. Hen. VIII*, iv (i), no. 81.