

LETTERBOOK OF THE 16TH EARL OF KILDARE

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George Fitz Gerald Earl of
Kildare Son in Law to Richard
Boyle the first Earl of Corke and
Grandfather of Robert Earl of
Kildare. Anno. 1633.

Portrait of Gerald, 16th earl of Kildare (unknown artist, private collection). Another portrait of the earl, painted around the same time and also by an unknown artist, but in a completely different style, is held at Castletown, Co. Kildare. It is reproduced as Plate 1 in Jane H. Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English: the Irish aristocracy in the seventeenth century* (London, 2012).

LETTERBOOK
OF GEORGE,
16TH EARL OF KILDARE

edited by

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and

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INTRODUCTION

The letterbook presented here consists for the most part of copies of the incoming correspondence of George Fitzgerald (1612–1656/7),^{1,2} 16th earl of Kildare, from 1628, when he was sixteen years of age, to 1634, with a few later items.³ They deal principally with matters arising from the acquisition of George's wardship by Richard Boyle, 1st earl of Cork, in 1629 and the attainment of his majority in 1633, but the ever-present theme is the condition of the Kildare estates. These had been forfeited to the crown after the attainder of the 9th earl in 1536 and the execution of the 10th earl in 1537. Their extent and location at that date may be traced in the crown survey and rental published by the Irish Manuscripts Commission in 1992.⁴ The core lands were in Kildare, Meath, Westmeath and Dublin, supplemented by further estates in Co. Down and in four Leinster⁵ and four Munster⁶ counties. Much of this property was redistributed, along with the monastic lands, as part of the programme of patronage adopted by subsequent administrations and some was encroached upon by opportunist neighbours. The 10th earl's half-brother Gerald was pardoned in 1549, regranted five of the forfeited manors in 1552,⁷ and restored as 11th earl in 1554. In May 1555 he was granted all the lordships, lands and hereditaments that were in the hands of the crown by virtue of the attainder of his father. His long drawn out attempts to regain control of his patrimony, and his consolidation of his position by purchase left many problems of ownership and

¹ There are entries on the 16th earl in both the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* and the *Dictionary of Irish Biography (DIB)* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009; dib.cambridge.org). Aspects of the matters with which the letters are concerned are dealt with in: Nicholas Canny, *The upstart earl* (Cambridge, 1982); Victor Treadwell, *Buckingham and Ireland, 1618–1628* (Dublin, 1998); and Patrick Little, 'The Geraldine ambitions of the first earl of Cork', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxiii, no. 130, Nov. 2002, pp 151–168. Dr Little's assertion that 'Cork's note on p. 151 of this volume makes it clear that this is his own letter-book' (p. 156, n32) properly refers to D3078/1/1/1 in the same collection.

² George is commonly said to have died in 1660, but he was last recorded alive on 4 December 1656 and his son Wentworth had succeeded to the title by 6 April 1657. Patrick Little, *Lord Broghill and the Cromwellian Union with Ireland and Scotland* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 199 (citing the diary of the second earl of Cork, Chatsworth, Lismore 29).

³ There are also two King's letters and five letters written by Kildare. Four of the latter are deleted, presumably because they had been entered in the wrong book. There are no copies of correspondence between 20 November 1633 and 29 April 1634.

⁴ Gearoid Mac Niochaill (ed.), *Crown surveys of lands 1540–41 with the Kildare rental begun in 1518* (Dublin, IMC, 1992).

⁵ Carlow, Louth, Kilkenny, Wexford.

⁶ Cork, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford.

⁷ When he was restored to the manors of Kilkea, Maynooth and Rathangan in Co. Kildare and Moylagh and Portlester in Co. Meath.

possession unresolved at his death.⁸ They were exacerbated by the consequences of a rapid succession of further deaths which deprived the lordship of forceful management and left it greatly encumbered.

Gerald, the 11th earl, whose eldest son Lord Offaly had predeceased him, died in 1585 and was succeeded in turn by his younger sons Henry, who was killed in 1597, and William, who was drowned in 1599. The succeeding 14th earl was the 11th earl's English nephew Gerald, who was the son of his courtier brother Edward, and was related to the Tudors through his mother. On his death in 1612 he was succeeded by his infant son, who died on 11 November 1620 to be succeeded by his cousin George, son of the 14th earl's brother Thomas and Frances, daughter of Thomas Randolph, Postmaster of England, both of whom were already deceased. The 15th earl had been given in wardship to the influential courtier Lord d'Aubigny, brother of the Duke of Lennox, in 1618 (though ill health had delayed his removal from his mother's care) and the same arrangement was made for George, whose wardship was granted to d'Aubigny in 1621. D'Aubigny died in 1624, shortly after succeeding to the dukedom, and the wardship was assumed by his widow, who sold it to the earl of Cork in 1629.

The legacy of this rapid turn-over in the occupancy of the earldom was a series of damaging jointures: to Mabel (Browne), widow of the 11th earl; to Frances (Howard), widow of the 12th earl; to Elizabeth (Nugent), widow of the 14th earl; and, most vexatiously as it proved, to Katherine (Knollys), widow of the 11th earl's eldest son, Lord Offaly. These arrangements variously reduced the income of the estate, increased its charges and seriously damaged its integrity. The case of Lady Frances had been settled, at a price, in 1602 when she had agreed to lease her jointure, which comprised the manors of Moylagh in Meath and Lea (or Castle Leigh) in Queen's County, to the 14th earl. On the remarriage of Lord Offaly's widow, Katherine, to Sir Philip Boteler of Hertfordshire, her jointure, which was made up of the three manors of Portlester in Meath, and Woodstock and Athy in Kildare, was exchanged for a pension of £200 per annum, charged on the estate, and the manors were added to the jointure of Lady Mabel. This was to reckon without the ambitions of Katherine's daughter Lettice, who had defiantly assumed the title Lady Offaly, and her husband Sir Robert Digby, who had come to Ireland with the earl of Essex and quickly rose to become a privy councillor. Dedicating themselves to establishing that Lettice was heir general to the 11th earl and to achieving the restoration of Katherine's jointure, they went to the court of Castle Chamber in 1602 to have the 11th earl's inquisition *post mortem* invalidated on the grounds that a forged deed of entail to heirs male, dated 7 September 1566, had been used to disinherit Lettice. In February 1609, the court accepted evidence that the deed had been altered after the event but left the question of its validity to be tried at common law. The earl's counter-claim of collusion against Lady Mabel and the Digbys, evidenced by Mabel's 'faint pleading and voluntary confession'⁹ in the interests of her grand-daughter Lettice, was dismissed for want of proof. In the meantime the Digbys had secured possession of the manors by buying the lease of Woodstock and Athy from the lessee and negotiating the tenancy of

⁸ Vincent P. Carey, *Surviving the Tudors: the 'Wizard' earl of Kildare and English rule in Ireland, 1537–1586* (Dublin, 2002), chapter 3 and Appendix I: 'Transfer of Kildare lands in Leinster, 1540–1570'.

⁹ Entry book of the court of castle chamber, *Report on the manuscripts of the Earl of Egnont* (London, HMC, 1905), i (I), pp 34–5.

Portlester from Mabel. When Mabel died in 1610, they refused to allow the earl to repossess the manors and secured an injunction against him. His sole benefit was the recovery of Maynooth.

After his death, matters disimproved with the allocation of one-third of the net income of the estate to the maintenance of the earl and the payment of his debts, one-third to his mother, the Dowager Countess Elizabeth, daughter of Lord Delvin, who was also a grand-daughter of the 11th earl, and one-third to the exchequer. Confusion followed. Arbitration of the claims of the Digbys was ordered early in 1614, but did not proceed. The intended confirmation of Countess Elizabeth's jointure by act of parliament did not materialize and in 1615 she sought an inquisition of the entire estate. In 1616, a royal warrant was issued requiring that her jointure should be confirmed by an act of state. Three months later, after Digby objected, the warrant was withdrawn and King James declared that he would arbitrate the dispute himself. His decision on the core issue, finally announced on 11 July 1619, was that Lettice, who had been widowed a year earlier, was not heir general to the 11th earl. Nonetheless, he awarded, to her and her heirs, possession of the 30,000 acre manor of Geashill in King's County, which had been acquired by the 11th earl after he had made his contested feoffment of 1566; confirmed her in possession of the three disputed manors for the lifetime of her mother; and awarded her the reversion of the manors of Moylagh and Lea on the death of Lady Frances.¹⁰

There remained, however, some matters that could not be resolved without further information. First, it was not known with certainty which of the Kildare lands had been included in the feoffment of 1566. The significance of the distinction was that by the terms of the King's ruling the lands that had been part of this transaction rightfully descended to the earl by entail, while the lands that had not been thus expressly assigned to the male line either belonged to Lady Lettice as her grandfather's heir or were to be divided between the two. Secondly, the Kildare lands had been subject to constant intrusion over the years and the extent to which the earl was in actual possession of the lands that were nominally in his ownership was also unknown.

The dual purposes of the survey that constitutes the ancillary manuscript from the British Library published herewith were to identify additional lands to which the terms of the arbitration entitled Lady Lettice and to discover land 'out of possession' of the earl which, in cases where the interest of Lady Lettice was involved, was to be 'sued for, recovered and divided' between the two. The inquiry covered eleven counties and the city of Dublin, in varying degrees of detail, finding lands 'out of possession' that qualified for recovery and sharing in King's County, Longford and Westmeath and lands in possession in King's County and Longford of which the date of acquisition was unknown, so that its status could not be determined. In Queen's County it found

¹⁰ There was already a precedent, of a kind. In October 1618 James had announced his arbitration award on an inheritance dispute in the earldom of Ormond following the death of the 10th earl in 1614. His designated successor, Lord Tulleophelim, had recently predeceased him and Walter Butler of Kilcash succeeded. Elizabeth Butler, Tulleophelim's widow (and first cousin), who was the 10th earl's daughter, remarried a Scottish courtier, Richard Preston, Lord Dingwall, at the king's prompting, and laid claim to the entire Ormond estate, without success until the king's intervention. His judgement, largely in her favour, defied the evidence. David Edwards, *The Ormond lordship in County Kilkenny, 1515–1642: the rise and fall of Butler feudal power* (Dublin, 2003), pp 108–28.

lands in possession that had been leased for 101 years to the 11th earl's 'base son' Gerrald: since these were not, ipso facto, entailed lands it was directed that the reserved rents should properly be paid to Lady Lettice. Elsewhere the report noted that lands 'out of possession' were covered by letters patent, either of Philip and Mary (County Dublin, Tipperary and Wexford) or of Elizabeth (Kildare, Carlow, Meath and Queen's County). The quality of the report diminished with distance: its authors admitted ignorance of both the identities of intruders and the details of the 11th earl's land purchases in Wexford and provided no useful information under the heading County Sligo 'and other parts in Connacht'. The clear intention of the survey was to ensure that Lady Lettice received the full benefit of the arbitration award. In 1620, she was confirmed as baroness of Offaly for life and her son Robert was ennobled as Baron Digby of Geashill.

The encumbering of the Kildare estate continued with the death of the 15th earl, which made it necessary to specify formally the lands that constituted his mother's jointure. Countess Elizabeth was allotted Kilkea and Graney in Kildare, Ardglass and Strangford in County Down (together with a set rent for the customs of the two ports), the reversion to Woodstock and Athy after Katherine's death and assorted lands in Westmeath.¹¹ This amounted, as the earl of Cork later informed George, to 'a very great part of your earldom'.¹² In 1624 Richard Talbot, Kildare's trustee, estimated that his inheritance was worth no more than £900 a year.

In the following years, another layer was added to the complex relationships that underlie many of these letters. In 1626 Robert, Lord Digby, married the earl of Cork's daughter, Sarah Boyle. In 1629, Cork acquired Kildare's wardship with the express intention that he should marry Sarah's sister Joan.¹³ They were married on August 15 in the following year and George's prospects improved significantly under Cork's management, most notably through a successful challenge to the generosity of the jointure bestowed by King James on Countess Elizabeth. However, Cork's hopes of presiding over the restoration of a Kildare lordship harmoniously divided between his daughters' husbands were not to be realised. George, having attained his majority in January 1633 and sued his livery in February, lost no time in making it clear that he did not intend to continue to be ruled by his overbearing and sententious guardian. Guided by Sir William Talbot, who had, as he expressed it, 'travailled near 40 years in defence' of the Kildare estates,¹⁴ George set out to recover his patrimony. As soon as he learned of the death of Lady Katherine, Lady Offaly's mother, he petitioned the king for the restoration of Woodstock, Portlester and Athy and followed this by challenging James's award of the reversion to Lady Offaly of the jointure lands of Lady Frances, who had died in 1628, on the grounds that she had not met the condition that she must fulfil the terms of a mortgage with which it was encumbered.¹⁵ In November he

¹¹ James I to Lord Deputy Grandison and the Lord Chancellor, 9 February 1621. Leinster Papers, PRONI, D3078/1/1/1, pp 455–6. Chancery pleadings relating to these arrangements, together with the court's decree, are at *idem*, pp 91–114.

¹² Letterbook, p. 8 (no. 39, p. 24 in this edition).

¹³ The grant of the wardship 'of the body and lands' of the earl was formally issued on 10 May 1630. There is a copy in Leinster Papers, PRONI, D3078/1/1/1, pp 179–83.

¹⁴ Letterbook, p. 97 (no. 143, p. 71 in this edition).

¹⁵ *Cal. S. P., Ire., 1633–1647*, pp 9, 19. TNA, S.P., Ire., 63/254, nos 25, 60.

received the king's 'final resolution' that James's award 'shall be strictly observed on both sides'.¹⁶ This settled the issue of Lady Katherine's jointure in the earl's favour but it allowed Lady Offaly to counter-claim that his own failure to observe the terms of the award in full entitled her to retain possession of the jointure of Lady Frances. When the lord deputy, Viscount Wentworth, ruled in Lady Offaly's favour, Kildare refused to abandon his claim and in March 1635 the lord deputy was authorized to proceed against him for contempt in the court of castle chamber.¹⁷ Wentworth, who was concerned about the earl's improvident disposal of his assets, respited the case and used it as a threat to persuade Kildare 'to refer the ordering of his estate' to the lord chancellor, the earl of Ormond, Lord Robert Dillon and the lord deputy himself.¹⁸ It was the earl's continued intransigence that placed him in the difficulties that prompted the two unattributed letters of advice with which the letterbook concludes in 1637. He was finally imprisoned for contempt in July of that year and released eight months later on condition of renouncing his claim to Lea.¹⁹ Difficulties arising from the need to take account of the interests of Lady Brigid, daughter of Lady Frances and the 12th earl, and widow of the earl of Tyrconnell, appear to have delayed a decision on the manor of Moylagh.²⁰

The correspondence falls naturally into two parts: letters written to George before he came to Ireland in July 1630 and letters written to him afterwards. The principal earlier correspondents were the earl of Cork, in relation to his wardship, marriage and return to Ireland; his aunt, the Dowager Countess Elizabeth, who was anxious to have the earl 'on side' in the event of threats to her jointure from the earl of Cork; his tenant in Co. Down, Valentine Payne, who had somewhat similar concerns; his inherited legal adviser, Sir William Talbot; his 'man of affairs' in Ireland, Robert Fitzgerald; and the Irish lord chancellor, Lord Aungier. After his arrival in Ireland he continued to receive letters from all of these, apart from Cork, but his correspondence expanded and diversified. This was partly because he needed agents, whether servants or relatives, to act in his interests in England: Thomas Holmes, Dennis Murphew and William Chenely were chief among the former and his maternal relatives, Ambrose and Robert Randolph, chief among the latter. It was mostly because relatives, tenants and others in Ireland were positioning themselves to adapt, after a twenty-year interval, at first to the imminence and then to the reality of an adult head of the Kildare family who not only had no experience of Ireland but was disturbingly connected with the earl of Cork. Thus there are letters from relatives and others with interests in Kildare property seeking to establish friendly relations with the earl, most obviously Lady Offaly and the Digbys; letters from tenants and would-be tenants, reports from local agents, petitions for favour and jobs; letters from officials (Lord Deputy Wentworth and the secretary of state, Sir Francis Windebank) and from fellow peers (the earl of Westmeath, Lords Dillon, D'Aubigny and Barrymore and Garrett the last earl of Desmond).

¹⁶ Letterbook, p. 145 (no. 196, p. 100 in this edition).

¹⁷ W. Knowler (ed.), *The earl of Strafford's letters and dispatches* (2 vols, London, 1739), i, 393.

¹⁸ Wentworth to Sir John Coke, 19 May 1635. Sheffield City Libraries, Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, Str. P. 9, ff 30–39.

¹⁹ *Cal. S. P., Ire., 1633–1647*, p. 184. See *Cal. S. P., Domestic, 1636–37* (London, 1869), p. 309.

²⁰ Letterbook, p. 85 (no. 119, p. 62 in this edition). *Cal. S. P., Ire., 1633–1647*, p. 96.

THE MANUSCRIPTS

The Leinster Papers consist of 28 volumes of material relating to the family of the Fitzgerald earls of Kildare and dukes of Leinster (c. 1250–1949), purchased by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland from the 4th duke in 1975. They were then in the duke's family home (in England) and it is most unlikely that they had ever been out of the family's possession. PRONI, D3078/3/1/5 is a folio volume, originally of 92 leaves of which seven (folios 47, 52, 69, 75, 80, 90 and 91) are missing. The text, however, is continuous at each of these points. Two breaks in the text indicate that a leaf or leaves are missing — and were missing when the volume was paged — between pages 88 and 89 and pages 96 and 97. The paper throughout bears a single pot watermark containing the letters DIV and closely resembles No. 3584 in Heawood, *Watermarks* (1950), where it is described as 'England? 1624'. The book was bound in full brown calf sometime after 1835, the date of a made up newspaper used as a strengthening. The cover bears the bookplate of the Carton Library and the first flyleaf records that: 'This book was carelessly thrown about my brother Shaen's house on College Green and in regard it might concern my Nephew the Earl of Kildare I took it from one of my brother Shaen's servants the 22nd of March 1667 being Easter day.'²¹ A second flyleaf is headed 'G Kildare His book' and contains various scribblings, as does a third. The pagination of the volume begins on the fourth leaf and continues to page 165, followed by two end leaves containing scribblings and a (later) rudimentary index.

BL, Add. MS 19937 — Schedule of lands in Ireland belonging to the Earl of Kildare, or to Lettice, granddaughter of Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare, and widow of Sir Robert Digby; but partly out of their possession and in other hands — consists of a cover, a blank folio and 15 further folios. On two of these, text written on a separate piece of paper has been affixed to the recto and the verso left blank (ff 4r–v, 8r–v). A bookplate indicates that the MS was formerly in the collection of Jeremiah Milles [Miles], D.D. and a note records that it was 'Purchased of Jos. Lilly, 12 August 1854'. Miles (1714–84) was Dean of Exeter and a well-known antiquary whose first appointment had been as Treasurer of Lismore cathedral (1735–45) in the diocese of his uncle Thomas Mills,²² whose heir he was.²³ Lismore Castle was the principal Irish residence of the Boyles, which may explain Miles's acquisition of the document. His signature appears on f. 1: 'Jer. Milles, 1746/7' with the initials D.:L., followed by the number 1005, presumably a library identifier. The text begins on f. 2 and is largely written on the right hand side of the folios, with notations on the left.

EDITORIAL NOTE

In the following transcriptions, spelling has been modernized with the exception of personal and place names. Capitalization and punctuation have not been altered, except that apostrophes have been added to the text of the letter book. The letters have been rearranged in chronological order, commencing with those that are undated.

²¹ That is, 22 March 1668 new style. A note in a different hand identifies the author as 'brother of Sir James Shaen's married to Lady Frances FitzGerald aunt to John 18th Earl of Kildare'.

²² Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, 1708–40.

²³ *ODNB*.

LETTERBOOK OF THE
EARL OF KILDARE

PRONI, D/3078/3/1/5

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UNDATED LETTERS

1. / 21 **LETTICE OFFALY¹ TO KILDARE** **UNDATED [AFTER AUGUST 1630]**

My Lord were not the near ties of blood and alliance a sufficient motive to endear my affection towards you, your noble courtesies are of power to command my best respects ever to attend you, and therefore if there were an omission it was on my part for leaving town without your lordship's licence, but believe me I was confident to kiss your Lordship's hand that morning before my departure, had not your occasions called you another way and therefore it being no wilful error I presume of your pardon and am still ambitious of the title of your Lordship's most affectionate cousin that truly loves and honours you.

Pray my Lord, suffer this paper to kiss your noble Lady's hands and to present my affectionate love and service to her Ladyship.

2. / 22 **LETTICE OFFALY TO KILDARE** **UNDATED**

My Lord, though I did write lately to your Lordship by Mr. Floyd my Lord of Cork's chaplain, yet having the opportunity of this bearer my son and your Lordship's most humble servant, give me leave to recommend him to your noble favour that you will be pleased to cast the eye of a kinsman upon him which will be a great encouragement to a young scholar and make him ambitious by his best endeavours to enable himself hereafter to do your Lordship service and oblige me if it were possible in a stricter bond of love and observance to express how much I am your Lordship's affectionate cousin and truly your honour's servant.

3. / 27 **SARAH DIGBY² TO KILDARE** **UNDATED [AFTER AUGUST 1630]**

My ever honoured Lord, so many retributions of favours as I am to make returns for claim a larger time of expression to kiss your hands for many obligations I owe your Lordship, than this convoy will admit of a stay till I perform, yet my Lord if I write volumes to this effect I could (though in more words and better phrase) say none

¹ A note in a later hand identifies Lady Offaly as 'daughter of Gerald Lord Offaly eldest son of Gerald 11th earl of Kildare, who died before his father, she married Sir Robert Digby of Coleshill County Warwick, she carried the estate of Geashill, King's County into that family and was made Baroness Offaly for life' (*DIB*). For Sir Robert Digby, MP for Athy, 1613, see B. McGrath, 'The membership of the Irish House of Commons, 1613–15' (*M. Litt. thesis, University of Dublin, 1987*), p. 50.

² Sarah Boyle, second daughter of Richard, first Earl of Cork, sister to the Countess of Kildare, married to Robert Digby, first Lord Digby.

honoured you more or wished you a greater measure of happiness than your most obliged sister and servant.

My Lord I beseech your Lordship with your licence let this paper say my thanks to honest Mr. Sibthorpe³ and good Captain Smith.⁴ I am their true friend.

4. / 27 SARAH DIGBIE TO KILDARE UNDATED

My Lord, I have so great an ambition to be retained in your Lordship's memory that being deprived of all other occasions to express my desire, I am thus forced to beg it, which I do with much hope of prevailing, as one who desires nothing more than the honour to be accounted your lordship's affectionate friend to serve you.

I beseech your Lordship to present my kind respects to your uncle.

5. / 67 FRANCIS ASTON TO KILDARE UNDATED [AFTER AUGUST 1630]

Right honourable, since my being in this kingdom, I have heard so much worth, and have been myself an eye witness to your Lordship's noble and free disposition. The consideration whereof hath emboldened me to express unto your Lordship that I have desire to spend some years in this kingdom (if God bless me with life) and to avoid idleness and for that I would not willingly mis-spend my time I do most humbly offer and present unto your Lordship the first fruits of my service which if your Lordship be pleased to accept and if it might agree with your Lordship's free will and pleasure I should employ my best hours and whole study to do your Lordship service. Thus fearing I have been too prolix, I humbly crave your Lordship's charitable censure, as well for my presumption as these untutored lines, all which I submit to your Lordship's wisdom, and humbly kiss your Lordship's hand remaining at your Lordship's commandment.

6. / 81 ELIZABETH FITZGERALD⁵ TO KILDARE UNDATED

My Lord, having so fit an opportunity, I could in no wise slip the opportunity in presenting my humble service to your Lordship in a line or two, which lines have a strict command in my absence to kiss your Lordship's hand. Beseeching you to pardon this my boldness, not looking upon them as they are of themselves but as from one

³ Robert Sibthorp, son of the Rev. Robert Sibthorp of North Cadbury. The younger Robert was educated at Lincoln College, Oxford, and was treasurer of Killaloe 1633–4; Prebendary of Maynooth, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, 1634–8 and Bishop of Kilfenora (1638–1642) and of Limerick, (1642–9). He died in April 1649 and was buried in St. Werburgh's, Dublin. W. J. R. Wallace (ed.), compiled by J. B. Leslie, *Clergy of Dublin and Glendalough: biographical succession lists* (Belfast, 2001), p. 1052.

⁴ Captain Robert Smith. MP in 1640, possibly for Bannagher (B. McGrath, 'Biographical dictionary of the members of the Irish House of Commons' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Dublin, 1997), i, pp 267–8). George Earl of Kildare to Dorchester seeking the reversion of a company in Ireland for Capt. Smith, "who through unfortunate disasters in his Majesty's service is now a subject of pity. The Earl has made choice of Captain Smith to live with him." Drury Lane, 20 April 1630 (*Cal. S. P. Domestic, 1629–31*, p. 239).

⁵ Lady Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Fitzgerald and Frances, daughter of Thomas Randolph, sister to the 16th Earl of Kildare.

that as truly wisheth your welfare as her own and craving your favour in accepting this poor token, being of mine own working, I presume you will vouchsafe to wear it, though of itself it be not worthy of so great an honour. Thus fearing lest I should be tedious in a matter of so small moment I take my leave and rest your Lordship's loving sister and servant to be commanded.

My Lord the man that made the viol lies very sick and is in great distress for the money which is owing him for it, if it please your Lordship to send it him by the next messenger it shall be delivered with speed.

7. / 90 **AMBROSE LOSSE⁶ TO KILDARE** **UNDATED [AFTER AUGUST 1630]**

My Lord but that I will not question what you think fit, I should wonder how this bearer is thrust upon you for a groom, who I fear is no way fit for you nor have you as yet employment for him and if it please you that I may a little advise you, I desire that you will give entertainment to no more servants of any condition for we have resolved on some business concerning you which we shall inform you of at your coming, which you ought to attend to in your own person, besides you draw an unnecessary charge upon you not knowing how to dispose those you have but with vexation. You desire to know my resolution for gentleman of the horse, my love ties me to your commands and when any occasion shall take me from that employment which yet I think nothing shall, I will see you shall not want a man fit for that employment. I hope to see you here tomorrow when I shall more fully resolve you and in particulars in the interim I am studious in your service and how I may express myself your truly loving servant and kinsman. Maynooth, this Sunday.

8. / 94 **DILLON⁷ TO KILDARE** **UNDATED [AFTER AUGUST 1630]**

My honourable Lord, necessity makes me now call upon you for £33 which you hath been my debtor for this 2 years. My wife owes my Lady £15 and if you will be pleased to allow that and to send me the other £18 I shall be satisfied. Or else if you will be pleased to assign me for the £33, I will send to my Lady her money. I beseech your Lordship to think upon it for I must be forced to pay another to whom I am indebted in that kind. I rest your Lordship's humble servant. St. Mary Abbey.⁸

9. / 140 **KILDARE TO MR. [EDWARD] BLUNT⁹ AND MR. FITZGERALD** **UNDATED**

[Deleted in toto] Whereas I heretofore chose you as commissioners (for and on my behalf) for the executing of a commission of perambulation in the Queen's County

⁶ Son of Sir Hugh Losse, kt. and related to the Randolphins (www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=8938, accessed 6 March 2011). Described as 'of Dublin, esquire' when he lent £400 on bond on the Dublin Staple, 2 July 1635 (J. H. Ohlmeyer and E. Ó Ciardha (eds), *The Irish Statute Staple books, 1596–1687* (Dublin, 1998), p. 251.

⁷ Presumably Lord Robert Dillon, eldest son of Lord Kilkenny West.

⁸ St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin.

⁹ Son of George Blount, MP for Athy 1634, died 23 May 1640.

between Mr. Robert Hartpole¹⁰ plaintiff and myself defendant, I would desire you not to go forward in the execution thereof without the approbation, consent and liking, of my tenant there, who will advise you in the premises. So not doubting of your care herein I remain your loving servant.

10. / 143 JOHN ANDREWS¹¹ TO KILDARE UNDATED [AFTER AUGUST 1630]

Right honourable and my very good Lord, let it not be thought presumptuous in me to apologise for myself in that I have neglected my service to your Lordship since I last observed you at Dublin, desiring your Lordship to conceive that I am in attendance of an indulgent father and a spiritual mother. Howsoever if my bounden service and duty may stead your Honour I am pleased to wait on you at the least notice and direction to the bearer when your Lordship's pleasure shall command. My humble duty and service remembered to yourself and yours, confessing myself the unworthiest to service and unabled to requite your unmerited favours. I shall yet press into the rank of them who truly take them to heart, and esteeming them as they are, will in all inward heart and service remain your Honour's humble servant and duteous chaplain.

11. / 144 THE ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM¹² TO KILDARE UNDATED [AFTER AUGUST 1630]

Right honourable I know no lady that hath more right to sit in Kildare Chapel than my Lady of Kildare.¹³

Howbeit my Lady of Athlone¹⁴ being some years in possession thereof, except she will be pleased in honour to give away a right I know not what to do therein. If her Ladyship would be persuaded by me sure I should wish her to yield it to my Lady of Kildare and be glad that we have a Countess of Kildare that come to church to give place unto. If my sub-dean hath forgotten his due respect to a noble personage, I am sorry and shall entreat your Lordship to remit and him to redeem his fault. My Lord I shall be shortly God willing in Dublin where I will be ready to give your Lordship any satisfaction and content that lies in my poor power till when and ever I remain your Lordship's in all love to serve you.

¹⁰ MP for Carlow 1640 (McGrath, 'Biographical dictionary', i, pp 172–3).

¹¹ Treasurer (1629) and praecentor (1633) of Killaloe (Henry Cotton, *Fasti Ecclesiae Hibernicae: The succession of the prelates and members of the Cathedral Bodies in Ireland*, i, pp 481, 483).

¹² Randolph Barlow, consecrated archbishop of Tuam, April 1629.

¹³ Kildare Chapel was St Mary's Chapel in Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin, built by the earl of Kildare in 1512.

¹⁴ Lady Mary, daughter of Sir Henry Colley, widow of Garrett Moore, Viscount Drogheda, and second wife of Charles Wilmot, first Viscount Wilmot of Athlone (*DIB*).

1628

12. / 24 ELIZABETH,¹⁵ COUNTESS OF KILDARE, TO KILDARE 30 JUNE 1628

Right honourable and my very dear Nephew, I have received your kind and very welcome letter sent me by Mr Holmes¹⁶ wherein your Lordship did please to esteem of me, not only as an aunt, but as a mother, whereof I am very joyful, assuring yourself that the affection which nature does oblige me to have towards your Lordship shall rather increase than any ways diminish or become backward in expressing itself to make true demonstration thereof both by word and deed to the uttermost of my power, as occasion shall be offered. And I say it sincerely, there is no friend you have that wishes and more longs to see your prosperous dwelling here among us your friends than does your Lordship's loving and faithful aunt. Maynooth

13. / 20 FRANCIS, LORD AUNGIER¹⁷ TO KILDARE 17 AUGUST 1628

My noble sweet Lord there is one James Wall, a tenant of some of the lands of Lady Frances¹⁸ her jointure, who did in his lifetime of my own knowledge sustain a long suit against Sir William Power¹⁹ in the defence of her jointure, and yet she would not contribute anything to his charge. This man is now to agree with my lady the Duchess²⁰ her officers for his holding. I pray you be a means for him that he may find the more favour for his defence of the land at his own cost. So wishing your Lordship much happiness I rest, your very loving uncle faithful to do you service.

This poor man James Wall has done more in defence of your land at his own charge than any tenant I know you have in Ireland.

14. / 28 SIR WILLIAM TALBOT TO KILDARE²¹ 30 AUGUST 1628

Finding so fit an opportunity as by this gentleman, Mr Holmes (who much affects your honour), I can do no less [than to write these] few lines to present my humble

¹⁵ Mother of the 15th earl. A note in a later hand identifies her as 'daughter to Christopher Nugent, 9th Lord Delvin, and widow of Gerald, 14th earl of Kildare'.

¹⁶ Thomas Holmes.

¹⁷ A note in a later hand identifies Aungier as 'Master of the Rolls, created Baron of Longford June 29 1621, married Douglas Fitzgerald, aunt to George, Earl of Kildare'. He had been joint executor of the 14th earl.

¹⁸ Lady Frances Howard, (c. 1572–1628) widow of the 12th Earl of Kildare.

¹⁹ Sir William Power of Kilbolane, Cork's neighbour with whom he had previously had disputes (P. Little, 'The Geraldine ambitions of the first Earl of Cork', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxiii, no. 103 (2002), pp 151–168.

²⁰ Catherine, Duchess of Lennox. only daughter and heir of Gervase, Lord Clifton of Leighton Bromswold, Huntingdonshire (Burke's *Peerage*).

²¹ Sir William Talbot of Carton, Co Kildare, a prominent Old English lawyer and politician (*DIB*). With Aungier, he had been joint executor of the 14th earl.

duty and service to your Lordship, assuring you I will never omit any occasion wherein any endeavour of mine may stead your honour in anything, and in the mean my good wishes and prayers shall not be wanting. Your friends here think the time too long that they do not enjoy your presence. But thanks be to God it shortens every day. And I hope God will recompense this short time of absence with many happy years of your continuance among them. Thus loathe to trouble your Lordship any further at this present, I humbly take leave and remain your Lordship's most faithful and affectionate servant.

15. / 28–9 **SIR WILLIAM TALBOT TO KILDARE**

5 SEPTEMBER 1628

My very good Lord, albeit I did write of late unto your honour yet this bearer Walter Harowld²² being to go to be a suitor to your Lordship and my Lady Duchess for his farms, I thought fit to give that testimony of him which he merits. He is an ancient follower of your house, and his parents were sent of special trust into Munster from the county of Kildare, where they lived, to look to your lands in Munster and they continued faithful unto your house. This man defends the land he holds with great charges against others that would encroach upon it, and I doubt not but your Lordship will find him a faithful servant, but perhaps he will seek to get a pennyworth in his farm. I will not entreat your Lordship's loss, but that he may be preferred in it giving as much as it is worth. Thus with all my best wishes and services to your Lordship I take leave and remain your Lordship's most humble at command to serve you.

16. / 31 **ROBERT FITZGERALD²³ TO KILDARE**

5 SEPTEMBER 1628

Right honourable and my singular good Lord and Master, your Lordship's many favours unto me by your often remembrance and letters has not a little encouraged me to labour to the uttermost of my powers in your Lordship's affairs, which I will never neglect. I have according to your Lordship's commands to me by your last letter remembered you very kindly to the divers gentlemen of your name, friends and followers, and they have received great comfort thereby. And your Lordship may do well to write often in that kind, for it will be a means to endear your wellwishers unto you. According to your Lordship's desire, I have provided a nag for you and god willing will send him over by the first conveniency I can, the nag is not very tall, but of his bigness a very good one. I shall humbly give your Lordship thanks to entreat this gentlemen kindly, Mr Holmes, for his love to me assuring your Lordship he wishes your good as much as any and has taken much pains in your Lordship's affairs in this kingdom since his coming, which will tend to your good hereafter. I hope if there be cause your Lordship will entreat the Duchess's favour and good opinion of me, who never to my knowledge deserved the contrary. Now craving pardon for troubling your Lordship with so long a letter, I commit you to the protection of the Almighty, with

²² Walter Harrold of Garrylind, Co. Limerick. Depositions of Gamaliel Warter (TCD, MS 829, ff 246r–247v, 297r–297v).

²³ Possibly of Laragh, Westmeath, son and heir of James, or of Newtown, Meath.

a remembrance of my humblest service to your Lordship and my hopeful Lady and Mistress the Lady Frances, I shall ever rest your Lordship's true and faithful servant to command.

Dublin

1629

17. / 30-1 **ROBERT FITZGERALD TO KILDARE**

20 MARCH 1629

Right honourable My very good Lord and Master, I received before Christmas last a kind and comfortable letter from your Lordship which I account no small honour unto me. And although I have since that time [not] rendered your Lordship thanks, yet do I make bold to assure your Lordship it proceeded not of any neglect, or want of due observance of my duty, but having about 2 months since fallen into a great and misfortunate trouble by the killing of a gentleman who much abused me by giving me the lie and a box, was through that occasion so perplexed in mind and otherwise busied in labouring for my best pawn as I had not any leisure to write. And now that my troubles are past and that I am acquit upon my trial, I am bold to let your Lordship understand of this disaster, which before I was loathe to do (not apprehending any great danger) lest it should procure any discontent in your honour's mind. It were tedious to your lordship if I should make a full relation of the cause of my trouble (which chanced merely through defence of your Lordship's land as I can certify by Mr. Holmes) who I doubt not will impart all the passages to your Lordship and therefore I do forbear troubling your Lordship with any particulars. And so assuring your Lordship I am not unmindful of your nagge, I conclude with the remembrance of my unfeigned service to your honour, beseeching the Almighty to bless and prosper you, I take my leave and will ever remain your Lordship's faithful servant. Dublin

18. / 29 **SIR WILLIAM TALBOT TO KILDARE**

28 MAY 1629

My very good Lord, notwithstanding all the persuasions and reasons I could yield to the Duchess of Lennox for holding your Lordship's wardship in her hand, yet her Grace continued still resolute in her determination in passing the same away. And having received several letters from her to further her agent in that, and other things, I thought fit to labour to have your match to an honourable house, by which you might have great alliance in this country, than that you should be transferred to others unequal to you everyway. And therefore finding the Earl of Antrim²⁴ very desirous to

²⁴ Randal McDonnell, see J. H. Ohlmeyer, *Civil war and restoration in the three Stuart Kingdoms: the career of Randal MacDonnell, marquis of Antrim, 1609-1693* (Cambridge, 1993).

compass the matching of one of his daughters to your Lordship, I did what I could to draw the same to a good conclusion. The sum he is to pay shows his respect and love to your house, whereof himself is descended by his grandmother, and I doubt not his Lordship will make good demonstration to yourself. He hath daughters of several years amongst whom your Lordship may choose. I have seen but one of them and she in my opinion is to be very well liked of both for beauty and good condition. Your Lordship need not to doubt that any will attempt to alter your opinion in religion, and I hope your Lordship will not force whosoever shall be your wife from hers. You both may live contentedly and each one use their own conscience, for which (thanks be to God) you want not an excellent precedent. Pardon me my Lord for I protest before God my only end in this is (as in other your affairs) to work to your honour and profit. If your Lordship shall so conceive I hold myself and my travail very well rewarded, if I be misconceived I shall think myself unfortunate, yet will I still remain your Lordship's most humble servant. Dublin

19. / 24-5 COUNTESS OF KILDARE TO KILDARE

1 JUNE 1629

My noble and dear nephew, I have received your letter sent by Mr. Hodges,²⁵ but I have not seen the gentleman himself as yet, who shall find for your Lordship's sake all the kind entertainment I can afford him. I had been unnatural if I had not continued my dearest (and as it pleaseth your Lordship justly to term it) motherlike affection unto you, having never deserved the contrary at my hand, which mutual love and union I hope shall ever continue between us. I thought good to acquaint your Lordship that I wrought the Earl of Antrim to get your wardship into his hands, assuring myself that nobody will deal more nobly and liberally with you or have a greater care of your estate and prosperity having the power and affection to effect the same. He hath at this present 4 daughters unmarried, 2 maidens under the age of 11 years old and 2 widows, the one at the age of 21,²⁶ the other at 18,²⁷ of which 4 he is pleased to give your Lordship your choice. If it did please your Lordship to let me have a stroke in your choice, I would commend the eldest to you, whose virtue, wisdom spirit and comeliness far surpasses the rest. I say not this (believe me dear nephew) because by her former marriage she is my niece, being married to my nephew of Delvin, but in my love to you assuring myself that you will think yourself happy hereafter in making this choice. Your difference in age is but 2 or 3 years which is nothing, and no question can be made but she will be a good mother of children, as having one goodly boy which is now Lord of Delvin and my brother of Westmeath's heir. Howsoever I beseech God direct you for the best, as wishes from her heart that will never fail to continue your Lordship's faithful and affectionate aunt. Kilkea.

²⁵ Owen Hodges, steward to the Duchess of Lennox (A. B. Grosart (ed.), *The Lismore papers* (10 vols, 2 series, London, 1886-8), 1st series, iii, 6.

²⁶ Lady Anne MacDonnell, widow of Christopher Nugent, Viscount Delvin. She later married William Fleming, Lord Slane.

²⁷ Lady Sarah MacDonnell, widow of Neal Oge O'Neill of Killelagh. She later married Donough O'Connor Sligo and Donal MacCarthy More.