

# A question of timing: Walter de Lacy's seisin of Meath 1189–94

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## Abstract

The Irish kingdom of Mide was granted by King Henry II to Hugh de Lacy in 1172. After Hugh's death in 1186, what had come to be known as the lordship of Meath passed, after a period of wardship, to Hugh's son, Walter. Until now, the transfer of the lordship to Walter was generally thought to have occurred in 1194; but this article examines a charter, the existence of which challenges that theory. The charter, which dates to before 1191, is an explicit example of Walter exercising lordship in Meath at least three years earlier than historians had, up to now, thought he had done. The resultant revised chronology depicts John, lord of Ireland (and future king of England), depriving Walter de Lacy of Meath in 1192; only to have this action overturned by King Richard the Lionheart upon the latter's return from crusade in 1194. This article therefore establishes and re-dates a key development in the history of the English community in Ireland, which has consequences for how we understand Irish politics in the early years of King Richard's reign.

## Introduction

In the aftermath of King Henry II's triumphant expedition to Ireland, in which he received the submissions of not only his Anglo-Norman barons, but also of a great number of Irish native kings, the ancient Irish kingdom of Mide was granted by Henry to the magnate Hugh de Lacy.<sup>1</sup> From 1066 the de Lacys had controlled territories in the west midlands of England, along the Welsh March and in Normandy.<sup>2</sup> The Irish midland kingdom, which was henceforth to be known as the lordship of Meath, was therefore simply one of a number of possessions in the de Lacys' territorial portfolio. What set Meath apart was that, although King Henry had granted the territory to Hugh to be held as fully as the last undisputed king of Mide—Murchad Ua Máel Sechlainn

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<sup>1</sup> The kingdom of Mide roughly comprised the modern counties of Meath, Westmeath and Longford, as well as portions of Offaly. For a useful map see: A.J. Otway-Ruthven, 'The partition of the de Verdon lands in Ireland in 1332', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 66C (1968), 401–55.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed study of the de Lacy lands in England and Normandy, see: W.E. Wightman, *The Lacy family in England and Normandy 1066–1194* (Oxford, 1966).

(d.1153)—had held it, the task of realising the grant still remained.<sup>3</sup> The grant of Meath was therefore a risky one, especially for a magnate who already held lands astride the English Channel. A great deal of time and attention would have to be spent on de Lacy's Irish acquisition, possibly to the detriment of his Anglo-Norman interests. Thus, in the case of the Meath lordship, the road to the realisation of the grant was conquest; and Hugh de Lacy, with his base at Trim, Co. Meath (Pl. I), was thereafter one of the main instruments of Anglo-Norman colonisation in Ireland. Indeed, one set of Anglo-Irish annals ends its account of de Lacy's death by recording: '*et ibi cessavit conquestus*'.<sup>4</sup> In many ways, Hugh de Lacy was too successful. His stature in Ireland sparked rumours of a pretension towards regality, which were further fanned by his unsanctioned marriage *c.* 1180 to the daughter of the high king of Ireland, Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair of Connacht.<sup>5</sup> When King Henry II's son, the future King John, returned

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<sup>3</sup> '*Tenendam et habendam a me et ab heredibus meis sicuti Murcardus Ha Mulachlyn melius eam tenuit vel aliquis alius ante illum vel postea*', James Mills and M.J. McEnery (eds), *Calendar of the Gormanston register, [c. 1175–1397]* (Dublin, 1916), 6, 177. For a more in-depth discussion of the grant, see: Colin Veach, 'Henry II's grant of Meath to Hugh de Lacy in 1172: a reassessment', *Ríocht na Míde* 18 (2007), 67–94. For the more general career of Hugh de Lacy in Ireland see G.H. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans 1169–1333* (Dublin, 2005), 171–86 (original edition: G.H. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans* (4 vols, Oxford, 1912–20), vol. 2, 51–90); M.T. Flanagan, *Irish society, Anglo-Norman settlers, Angevin kingship: interactions in Ireland in the late twelfth century* (Oxford, 1989), especially part iii: 'Angevin kingship and Ireland', 167–304; M.T. Flanagan, 'Lacy, Hugh de (d. 1186)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004); Robert Bartlett, 'Colonial aristocracies of the high middle ages', in Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay (eds), *Medieval frontier societies* (Oxford, 1989), 23–47; Wightman, *Lacy*, among others. Primary sources that are especially instructive include: A.B. Scott and F.X. Martin (eds), *Expugnatio Hibernica: the conquest of Ireland by Giraldus Cambrensis* (Dublin, 1978); G.H. Orpen (ed.), *The song of Dermot and the earl. An old French poem. From the Carew manuscript no. 596 in the archiepiscopal library at Lambeth palace* (Oxford, 1892); Evelyn Mullally (ed.), *The deeds of the Normans in Ireland* (Dublin, 2002); William Stubbs (ed.), *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi et gesta Regis Ricardi Benedicti abbatis, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, 49 (2 vols, London, 1867); William Stubbs (ed.), *Chronica magistri Rogeri de Hovedene, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, 51 (4 vols, London, 1868–1871).

<sup>4</sup> J.T. Gilbert (ed.), *Chartularies of St Mary's abbey, Dublin; with the register of its house at Dunbrody, and annals of Ireland, Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, 80 (2 vols, London, 1884), vol. 2, 305: 'and thereupon the conquest ceased'. See also: Seán Duffy, 'John and Ireland: the origins of England's Irish problem', in S.D. Church (ed.), *King John: new interpretations* (Woodbridge, 1999), 221–45: 233.

<sup>5</sup> '*Rois ingean Rughruidhe h Conchubhair do posad do Hugo de Lacy*', see Dublin annals of Inisfallen, Trinity College Dublin MS. 1281 *s.a.* 1180. This would seem to be the earliest instance of the name *Rois*, which is otherwise unknown in the native Irish community for this period. It is therefore most likely a later confusion with Rose of Monmouth, Hugh de Lacy's first wife. For commentaries on the 'Dublin' annals of Inisfallen, see: J.J. O'Farrelly, 'The Annals of Inisfallen', *Journal of the Ivernian Society* 1 (1908–9), 110–18; Cormac Ó Cuilleain, 'The Dublin Annals of Inisfallen', in Séamus Pender (ed.), *Féilscribhinn Torna* (Cork, 1947), 183–202; Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, 'Some observations on the "Dublin Annals of Inisfallen"', *Ériu* 57 (2007), 133–53. My thanks to Dr Freya Verstraten Veach for her assistance with Irish nomenclature.



Pl. I—The thirteenth-century stone keep of Trim Castle, Co. Meath. (Photo: Colin Veach.)

from an unsuccessful expedition to have himself acknowledged king of Ireland in 1185, many of the mission's failures were blamed on the intractable figure of the lord of Meath.<sup>6</sup> At the height of his power, and with enemies mounting, de Lacy was murdered in 1186, while overseeing the construction of a castle at Durrow (Co. Offaly), in the south-western extremity of his lordship. King Henry II is supposed to have rejoiced at the news.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For a succinct overview of the historiography of John's 1185 expedition, see: Duffy, 'John and Ireland', 221–5. Henry II ultimately gave up in his attempt to have his son crowned king of Ireland after the expedition's failure (though, as we shall see, de Lacy's death briefly revived his ambitions), and John is thereafter afforded the lesser title of 'lord of Ireland'.

<sup>7</sup> William of Newburgh, 'Historia Rerum Anglicarum', in Richard Howlett (ed.), *Chronicles of the reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard*, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* 82 (4 vols, London, 1885), vol. 1, 240.

The spectacular assassination of Hugh de Lacy is an event that ends the tale of one of the most successful agents of conquest in the early years of the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland. It is also the point at which the lordship of Meath loses its position at the forefront of historical consideration and is relegated, for a time, to a position of subsidiary importance to the general current of Irish history. Much of the blame for this meteoric drop in historiographical interest must be assigned to the minority of Hugh's heir, Walter, and the subsequent period of wardship into which Meath was ushered.<sup>8</sup> It had taken quite some time and an ambitious venture to Ireland for contemporary writers to take notice of Hugh de Lacy, and, just when he was a regular object of their attention, his unexpected death delivered his lordship into obscurity.<sup>9</sup> The figure of one who could in 1185 rival King Henry II's own son, John, supposed king of Ireland, was replaced after Hugh's death by an underage boy, and the long march towards notoriety for the head of the de Lacy honour had to begin once more. For the modern historian attempting to reconstruct the early years of Walter's career, this advance is at once hampered by King Richard's crusade and subsequent imprisonment. The absence of England's monarch, and the multifarious disputes that arose as a result, were met with corresponding disruptions to the records of royal government and the normal framework within which one might look for evidence of the king–magnate relationship, so vital for the study of the exploits of Walter's father Hugh de Lacy. What is more, while most contemporary chroniclers and annalists could be forgiven for ignoring the actions of the young and comparatively insignificant Walter de Lacy, the one to whom one might expect to turn for more detailed information on the Anglo-Norman colony in Ireland, Gerald of Wales, ends his *Expugnatio Hibernica* in 1189. Neither can the great series of diplomatic enrolments, which would eventually provide a new and excellent perspective on the history of this period, be of use. The *Plea/Curia Regis* Rolls did not commence until 1194, the Charter Rolls until 1199, the *Liberate/Close* Rolls until 1200 and the Patent Rolls until 1201.

It is little surprise, therefore, that there remains a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the history of Meath for the period 1186–94. The central issue, and one indicative of the degree of ambiguity involved, is the question of when Walter de Lacy received *seisin* (possession) of the lordship of Meath. This question, vital as it is to understanding the foundation upon which Walter's career was based, is also important to the general history of the vast assemblage of lands under the rule of Henry II and his sons, commonly referred to as the Angevin Empire. The actions of the individuals involved in the struggle for the lordship of Meath—King Richard I, his younger brother John, lord of Ireland, Chancellor William Longchamp, William

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<sup>8</sup> Hugh had five sons about whom we know: Walter, Hugh, Robert and Gilbert from his first wife, Rose of Monmouth; and William 'Gorm', from the daughter of the king of Connacht.

<sup>9</sup> Almost every major set of Irish annals, whether Gaelic or Latin, makes mention of Hugh de Lacy's exploits. Among Anglo-Norman chroniclers, he features most prominently in the works of Gerald of Wales, Roger of Howden, William of Newburgh, Gervase of Canterbury, and Ralph of Diss.

Marshal 'flower of chivalry'<sup>10</sup> and Walter himself—say much about them, imbuing the analysis with added significance. The task, therefore, is one that must be undertaken with the greater framework of Angevin politics firmly in mind. The great wealth of historical writing on the period should serve as an asset, and conclusions drawn must be congruent not only with the particular pieces of evidence involved, but also with what is known of the wider context.

Walter de Lacy's  
seisin of Meath:  
1189 or 1194?

King Henry II died on 6 July 1189. The essential problem then facing Walter de Lacy, and all Anglo-Norman magnates who held lands on both sides of the Irish Sea, was that of serving two masters: Henry's sons—Richard, king of England, and John, lord of Ireland. In Walter's particular case, it seems that by 1189 he was in a position to obtain his majority,<sup>11</sup> but while Richard may have been able to grant him seisin of his lands in England and Normandy, Ireland was a different matter. It is true that Henry II had exercised a great deal of control in Ireland, but he had also granted the lordship to John in 1177.<sup>12</sup> Although the exact relationship between the crown of England and the lordship of Ireland during Richard's reign remains unclear, Henry's grant theoretically placed Ireland outside the new king's direct inheritance. Realistically, King Richard could likely expect to exert a similar degree of hegemony over Ireland as his father had, due to his realm's proximity and his tenurial hold on John and the more important colonists; but the fact remained that in Ireland it was to John that homage was sworn and from him that seisin of lands must come.<sup>13</sup> Having been recently freed from paternal influence in his dealings within the island territory, it is not immediately certain that John, as lord of Ireland, would have been eager to recognise his brother's decision to allow Walter to succeed to the de Lacy inheritance in Ireland. The renowned knight and courtier William Marshal had, for

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<sup>10</sup> As described by one of his modern biographers: see Georges Duby, *William Marshal: the flower of chivalry (translated from the French by Richard Howard)* (London, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> The sheriff of Herefordshire ceased to account for Walter's English lands in the summer of 1189. See Joseph Hunter (ed.), *The great roll of the pipe for the first year of the reign of King Richard the First, 1189–1190* [hereafter cited as *Pipe Roll 1 Richard I*] (London, 1844), 145. Walter was also in possession of his Norman lands by the time of this grant later that year; see J.H. Round (ed.), *Calendar of documents preserved in France, illustrative of the history of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1889), no. 618. For a more detailed discussion of Walter's majority, see pages 173–6 below.

<sup>12</sup> For the council of Oxford, see *Expugnatio Hibernica*, 182–5; *Gesta Henrici Secundi*, vol. 1, 161–5; *Chronica Rogeri de Hovedene*, vol. 2, 133–5.

<sup>13</sup> No scholarly consensus has yet been established on these points, but see, for instance, the case of William Marshal discussed presently and on page 187 below. According to the thirteenth-century *History of William Marshal*, in the winter of 1189/90 Richard was able to pressure John into allowing William seisin of Leinster, though, importantly, John seems to have had to concede that seisin himself; see A.J. Holden, Stewart Gregory and David Crouch (eds), *History of William Marshal*, Anglo-Norman Text Society occasional publications, no. 4 (3 vols, London, 2002), vol. 1, ll 9581–622. Similarly, in 1194, the Marshal refused to render homage to Richard for lands he held of John, which would suggest Ireland's unique status; see Holden, Gregory and Crouch, *History of William Marshal*, vol. 2, ll 10295–320.

instance, acquired legal right to the lordships of Striguil and Leinster in July 1189, when King Richard allowed him to marry Isabel de Clare, daughter of the famous Earl Strongbow. However, according to the thirteenth-century *History of William Marshal*, John refused to part with the lucrative Leinster lands, forcing the Marshal to petition King Richard for seisin that winter. In a well-known incident, Richard demanded that John rectify the situation and, after John put on a brief show of defiance, the king got his way and William his Irish lordship.<sup>14</sup> This episode says much about the men involved, not least John's acquisitive nature and King Richard's determination to impose his will on his younger brother. Evidence of this exchange is entirely dependent upon William Marshal's near-contemporary biography, and it is interesting to speculate whether a similar situation might have transpired regarding Walter de Lacy's succession to the lordship of Meath.

The only direct evidence for Walter's seisin of Meath, however, has seemed to suggest a date of 1194. Marleburgh's chronicle states under 1194 that '*Walterus de Lacy recepit dominium de Media et Petrum Pipard justiciarium cum suis militibus deprehendit*'.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, two charters for Meath survive for this period in the *Gormanston register*, one from King Richard, and one from John, lord of Ireland.<sup>16</sup> It has therefore been generally theorised that, upon his return from captivity and on his subsequent assumption of direct lordship over Ireland, Richard issued a charter for

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<sup>14</sup> Holden, Gregory and Crouch, *History of William Marshal*, vol. 1, ll 9581–622; David Crouch, *William Marshal: knighthood, war and chivalry, 1147–1219* (London, 2002), 70; Sidney Painter, *William Marshal: knight-errant, baron, and regent of England* (Baltimore, 1933), 79–80. A charter in the *Red Book of Ormond*, in which John, count of Mortain, granted the lands of Tullach Chiaráin in Osraige and Tullach Ua Felmeda in Uí Felmeda (both in the lordship of Leinster) to Theobald Walter, plants a seed of doubt as to the exact chronology of events; see N.B. White (ed.), *The Red Book of Ormond. From the fourteenth-century original preserved at Kilkenny castle, with missing portions supplied from the fifteenth-century transcript in the Bodleian Library* (Dublin, 1932), 9. However, despite the editor of the *Red Book of Ormond* favouring a date of about 1192 (which was, in any event, based upon his interpretation of the grant's imperfect witness list), there seems little to suggest that Count John's charter to Theobald could not have occurred shortly after the death of Henry II, when the lack of paternal oversight paved the way for John to make several similar grants. See Duffy, 'John and Ireland', 234–5. These territories would therefore have been part of the agreement mentioned in the *History*, whereby Theobald was allowed to retain his lands in Leinster as long as he held them of William Marshal; see Holden, Gregory and Crouch, *History of William Marshal*, vol. 1, ll 9610–18. The Marshal's confirmation charter for the territories in question may be found in Edmund Curtis (ed.), *Calendar of Ormond deeds, 1172–1350* (Dublin, 1932), 17, no. 31. See Flanagan, *Irish society*, 132n, for a discussion of these charters to Theobald Walter and the identification of the territories granted.

<sup>15</sup> 'Walter de Lacy recovered the lordship of Meath and arrested Peter Pipard, justiciar, with his knights'. Bibliothèque Municipale de Troyes, MS. 1316, fol. 39; Quote from Orpen, *Normans*, 195n (vol. 2, 112n). My thanks to Dr Peter Crooks for his assistance with this source. Also, see Flanagan, *Irish society*, 282, who argues that Walter was aided in the removal of Pipard by John de Courcy, who then, with Walter, took over from Pipard as co-justiciars of Ireland.

<sup>16</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 6–7, 177–8.

Meath to Walter de Lacy, and sent him, along with the lord of Ulster, John de Courcy, to Ireland in order to remove John's agents and gain seisin of his lands.<sup>17</sup>

One problem with this view is that the language of Richard's 1194 charter makes it clear that it was a confirmatory charter, rather than an instance of initial seisin. It reads:

*Ricardus Dei Gratia Rex Anglie Dux Normannie Acquitannie Comes Andegavie, Archiepiscopis episcopis comitibus baronibus et omnibus fidelibus suis salutem. Sciatis nos concessisse et hac carta nostra confirmasse Waltero de Laci et heredibus suis pro homagio et seruicio suo omnes terras et tenementa sua de Hibernia tam illas quas habet de dono regis Henrici patris nostri quam alias quas habet de dono aliorum et de adquisicione Hugonis de Lacy patris sui sicut carte regis Henrici patris nostri et carte aliorum donatorum quas inde habet testantur. Quare volumus et firmiter precipimus quod prefatus Valterus de Lacy et heredes sui post ipsum habeant et teneant prefatas terras et tenementa cum omnibus pertinenciis suis in bosco et plano in pratis et pasturis in viis et semitis in aquis molendinis et in omnibus aliis rebus libere quiete et honorifice cum omnibus liberatibus et liberis consuetudinibus. Teste &c.*

(*Tertia carta.*)<sup>18</sup>

Compare this to Henry II's charter granting Meath to Walter's father Hugh in 1172, which reads:

*Henricus Rex Anglie et dux Normannie et Acquitannie et comes Andegavie, Archiepiscopis episcopis abbatibus comitibus baronibus justiciariis et omnibus ministris et fidelibus suis Francis et Anglis et Hiberniensibus totius terre sue salutem. Sciatis me **dedisse** et concessisse et presenti carta mea confirmasse Hugoni de Lacy pro servicio suo terram de Midia cum omnibus pertinenciis suis per servicium quinquaginta militum sibi et heredibus suis Tenendam et habendam a me et ab heredibus meis sicuti Murcardus Ha Mulachlyn melius eam tenuit vel aliquis alius ante illum vel postea. Et de incremento illi dono omnia feoda que prebuit vel que prebebit circa Duueliniam dum ballivus meus est. ad faciendum mihi seruicium apud ciuitatem meam Duuelinie. Quare volo et firmiter precipio ut ipse Hugo et heredes sui post eum predictam terram habeant et teneant et omnes*

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<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, Orpen, *Normans*, 195 (vol. 2, 112); A.J. Otway-Ruthven, *A history of medieval Ireland* (London, 1980), 73; Flanagan, *Irish society*, 282–3; Duffy, 'John and Ireland', 237; John Gillingham, *Richard I* (New Haven and London, 2002), 279.

<sup>18</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 177–8. '... Know that we have conceded and by this charter confirmed to Walter de Lacy and his heirs, for his homage and service, all his lands and tenements in Ireland, both those which he has of the gift of King Henry and of the gift of others, and of the acquisition of Hugh de Lacy, his father, as the charters of King Henry and other donors testify ... .'

*libertates et liberas consuetudines quas ibi habeo vel habere possum per prenomiatum seruicium a me et ab heredibus meis bene et in pace libere et quiete et honorifice in bosco et plano in pratis et pascuis in aquis et molendinis in viuariis et stangnis in piscacionibus et venacionibus in viis et semitis et portibus maris et in omnibus aliis locis et aliis rebus ad eam pertinentibus cum omnibus liberatibus quas ibi habeo vel illi dare possum et hac mea carta confirmaui. Teste &c.*<sup>19</sup>

Richard's charter does not include *dare* before *concedere* in the donative clause, as one might expect to find in an initial grant. Moreover, it lacks a holding clause, which would normally have been present to specify the conditions under which the grant was held.<sup>20</sup> This further suggests that the charter was merely a confirmation of an earlier grant to Walter de Lacy. It may also be significant that although Richard's charter is directly preceded in the *Gormanston register* by King Henry II's 1172 charter for Meath, it is labelled '*tertia carta*'.<sup>21</sup> Could this be in reference to Henry's 1172 charter and one from John in 1189 that has not been included in the register? John later asserted his status as lord of Ireland by issuing his own charter to Walter for Meath, labelled in the *Gormanston register* as '*quarta carta*';<sup>22</sup> and the language of that charter from John seems to suggest that Walter had been previously dispossessed of the lordship:

*Johannes Dominus Hibernie comes Morton' Archiepiscopus episcopis baronibus justiciariis vicecomitibus et omnibus ministris et fidelibus suis Francis Anglicis Hibernensibus totius Hibernie salutem. Sciatis me reddidisse et concessisse et hac presenti carta mea confirmasse Waltero de Lacy et heredibus suis pro homagio et seruicio suo totam terram Midie*

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<sup>19</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 177. '... Know that I [Henry II] have given, conceded and by this present charter of mine confirmed to Hugh de Lacy, for his service, the land of Meath with its appurtenances, by the services of 50 knights. To hold by him and his heirs from me and my heirs just as Murchad Ua Máel Sechlainn, or any other before or after him, held it. And for increase to the gift, all fees which he has or shall acquire about Dublin, while he is the King's bailiff, to do service to the King at his city of Dublin. He is to have all liberties and free customs which I have or may have there ...' (emphasis added). For a discussion of the circumstances surrounding this grant, see Orpen, *Normans*, 103–6 (vol. 1, 279–86); Seán Duffy, *Ireland in the middle ages* (New York, 1997), 86–7; W.L. Warren, *Henry II* (London, 2000), 200–1; Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, 58; F.X. Martin, 'Allies and an overlord, 1169–72', in Art Cosgrove (ed.), *A new history of Ireland II: medieval Ireland 1169–1534* (Oxford, 1987), 67–97: 96; Flanagan, *Irish society*, 224; Veach, 'Henry II's grant of Meath'.

<sup>20</sup> Such a holding clause is present in both King Henry's 1172 charter to Hugh de Lacy and Count John's subsequent charter to Walter (to be dealt with presently). For a recent discussion of the form and function of Latin charters, see M.T. Flanagan, *Irish royal charters: texts and contexts* (Oxford, 2006), 25–34.

<sup>21</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 178.

<sup>22</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 178.



*cum omnibus pertinenciis suis Sicuti Hugo de Lacy pater ejus tenuit eam anno et die quo obiit. Et preterea omnia jura sua que in Hibernia habere debet tenenda sibi et heredibus suis de me et heredibus meis per seruicium quod dominus Henricus Rex pater meus Hugoni patri ejusdem Ualteri dedit et carta sua confirmauit. Quare volo et firmiter precipio quod predictus Ualterus et heredes ejus post eum habeant et teneant predictas terras de me et heredibus meis, bene et in pace libere et quiete honorifice et plenarie cum omnibus pertinenciis et liberatibus et liberis consuetudinibus suis secundum quod carta domini Henrici regis patris mei quam inde habet testatur Hiis testibus &c.*

*(Quarta carta.)*<sup>23</sup>

The use in John's charter of *reddere* 'to return/restore' instead of *dare* 'to give' connotes a period of prior custody. This is unlikely to refer to the period 1194–5 because, by referring back to the death of Walter's father, the final line of John's charter not only served to guarantee that John's illegal alienations within the lordship were not to be made permanent, but also preserved John's dignity by papering over King Richard's role in securing Walter's seisin in 1194. It is therefore to be doubted whether John would have inserted an explicit reference to Richard's embarrassing encroachment into his liberty as lord of Ireland in a charter meant to assert his prerogative by establishing a direct and independent link between himself and the lord of Meath. It is also interesting to note in analysing the language of the three charters for Meath, that in the entry from Marleburgh's chronicle mentioned above, in which Walter's seisin in 1194 is recorded, the word '*recepit*' is used.<sup>24</sup> *Recepit* may of course be translated as 'recovered'.

### The wider context: 1189–91

When one glances across the Irish Sea to the Anglo-Norman realm, the situation surrounding Walter's majority becomes clearer. A grant of land in Normandy by Walter de Lacy to Durand de Pinu, which can be dated to between 15 September and 31 December 1189, proves that he received his Norman inheritance shortly after Richard's succession to the duchy. That grant also provides evidence of a connection between Walter and the new king. The sole witness to the grant was King Richard's chancellor, William Longchamp, who is described in the document as bishop-elect, thus providing evidence for the dating of the charter.<sup>25</sup> If this admittedly isolated appearance in a de Lacy witness list can be taken as evidence of an acquaintance between the de Lacy heir and the new king, then perhaps Walter was better placed in the

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<sup>23</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 178. '... Know that I have *returned*, conceded and by this present charter of mine confirmed to Walter de Lacy and his heirs for their homage and service the whole land of Meath with all appurtenances just as Hugh de Lacy his father held it on the year and day that he died ...' (emphasis added).

<sup>24</sup> See above, page 170.

<sup>25</sup> Round, *Calendar of documents preserved in France*, no. 618.

early years of Richard's reign than one might expect. Longchamp had been Richard's chancellor while the latter was still count of Poitou, and he remained in this capacity after Richard's coronation. He was eventually to become effective viceroy of England in May 1190, when Richard added the office of chief-justiciar to that of chancellor.<sup>26</sup> At the opening of Richard's reign, therefore, William Longchamp was a very influential man. His connection to Walter de Lacy can be explained through a tenurial link. William's father, Hugh de Longchamp, held a knight's fee of the de Lacy honour in Herefordshire through the marriage portion of his wife, whose father was a tenant of the de Lacys.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, although this is hardly evidence of a comradeship bond between the two, Longchamp and de Lacy were not strangers. William's appearance as a witness in de Lacy's grant simply reinforces this, and makes it all the more likely that Walter might have found a receptive ear at the court of King Richard.

Interestingly, Walter seems to have entered into his English inheritance in the summer of 1189, that is, at about the time of Henry II's death and Richard's succession. In *Pipe Roll 1 Richard I*, which records the financial activities of the exchequer year Michaelmas 1188–Michaelmas 1189, a custodian accounts for the de Lacy honour for three-quarters of a year.<sup>28</sup> This would place the approximate date of Walter's seisin of his English and Welsh fiefs at the end of June/beginning of July 1189. As King Henry II died on 6 July, it is even enticing to speculate that it was the king's death, rather than Walter's coming of age, that allowed de Lacy to enter into his majority and receive seisin of his honour. For a tenant-in-chief holding directly of the crown, seisin had to come from the crown, which gave the king scope for exercising his discretion. The legacy of mistrust left by his father Hugh de Lacy may have been enough to hamper young Walter's attempts at obtaining recognition of his majority by Henry II. Conversely, the period following Richard's succession to the throne was one in which the new king was eager to ingratiate himself with those he sought to rule. There could hardly have been a better way to accomplish this than to draw a sharp distinction between the old and new reigns by placating those who might have

<sup>26</sup> Kate Norgate, *England under the Angevin kings* (2 vols, London, 1887), vol. 2, 277–9; Ralph Turner, 'Longchamp, William de (d. 1197)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004). William was elected bishop of Ely on 15 September 1189 (see *Gesta Henrici Secundi*, vol. 2, 85; William Stubbs (ed.), *Radulfi de Diceto Decani Landoniensis Opera Historica*, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, 68 (2 vols, London, 1876), vol. 2, 69; Norgate, *Angevin kings*, 277) and consecrated on 31 December 1189 (see Stubbs, *Radulfi de Diceto Opera Historica*, vol. 2, 75; Norgate, *Angevin kings*, 287).

<sup>27</sup> Turner, 'Longchamp, William de (d. 1197)'. On 11 March 1201, King John confirmed Walter de Lacy's grant of the vill of Frome, Herefordshire, to a Stephen Longchamp; see T.D. Hardy (ed.), *Rotuli Chartarum in Turri Londinensi asservati* (London, 1837), 90; D.M. Stenton (ed.), *The great roll of the pipe for the third year of the reign of King John, Michaelmas 1201* [hereafter cited as *Pipe Roll 3 John*], *Pipe Roll Society, new series*, 14 (Lincoln, 1936), 266, where it states that Stephen offered the king 30 marks for having seisin of the vill and two palfreys for the confirmation charter.

<sup>28</sup> *Pipe Roll 1 Richard I*, 145. For the dating of this pipe roll to 1188–9, see J.H. Round, 'The dating of the early pipe rolls', *English Historical Review* 36 (July 1921), 321–33: 321–2.

harboured grievances against his father. Roger of Howden reports that many who had been disinherited under King Henry found immediate redress under his son.<sup>29</sup> Famously, it was just after the old king's death that Henry II's trusted servant, William Marshal, received the heiress of Striguil and Leinster, whom he had long been promised by the newly deceased king. When members of Henry's household told Richard that Henry had given William the hand of Strongbow's daughter, Isabel de Clare, Richard is supposed to have rather uncouthly replied: 'Oh! by God's legs, he did not! ... rather, he *promised* her to him'. King Richard then took it on himself to be the one who bestowed the rich reward upon the Marshal.<sup>30</sup> This episode is preserved in the *History of William Marshal*, which also asserts that Richard likewise delivered on his father's unrealised promises to several others.<sup>31</sup> It is true that no specific mention is made of Walter de Lacy, but it may be more than coincidence that Walter received his inheritance in England, Wales and Normandy at about the time that Richard is said to have been making amends for his father's territorial parsimony.

In this light, it does not seem likely that William Marshal's status at the court of King Henry II, and his subsequent usefulness to Richard, would have prevented the new king from showing equal generosity in his dealings with Walter de Lacy. While it is not impossible, it seems unlikely that King Richard would have worked to secure Leinster for William Marshal in the winter of 1189–90 without doing, or having done, the same for Walter de Lacy regarding Meath. To have ignored Walter's plight would have run counter to the general trend at the beginning of Richard's reign, and would only have served to undermine the feeling of goodwill that the king was so eager to engender. Of course, Walter de Lacy's position in Meath was much different from William Marshal's in Leinster, and may have even precluded an attempt at extended wardship by John. While Walter was the recognised heir to Hugh de Lacy, who had died only recently in 1186, Leinster had been in wardship since the death of Strongbow in 1176. Thirteen years later, in 1189, William Marshal was a stranger to Ireland and had no claim to the loyalty of the barons of Leinster, except in the barest form through his marriage to Strongbow's daughter. In contrast, Walter, as eldest son of the man who had enfeoffed the barons of Meath, could reasonably expect to have the support of the settler community there. A few of the baronial families of Meath even held lands of Walter in England, the Welsh March and Normandy.<sup>32</sup> What is more, Walter's father had devoted a great deal of

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<sup>29</sup> *Gesta Henrici Secundi*, vol. 2, 75. 'Praeterea idem dux omnes quos rex pater suus exhaeredavit, in pristina jura restituit'.

<sup>30</sup> Holden, Gregory and Crouch, *History of William Marshal*, vol. 1, ll 9367–8 (emphasis added); Gillingham, *Richard I*, 101; Painter, *William Marshal*, 74.

<sup>31</sup> Holden, Gregory and Crouch, *History of William Marshal*, vol. 1, ll 9373–408; Crouch, *William Marshal*, 67.

<sup>32</sup> Little has been published on this topic, but for a look at the baronial families of Meath, see Jacqueline O'Halloran, 'The lordship of Meath, 1172–1309', unpublished MA dissertation, University College Dublin, 1984, and Keith Waters, 'The rise of the Meath gentry c.1172–1450', unpublished MPhil dissertation, Trinity College Dublin, 1999. For the British aspect, see Brock Holden, 'The aristocracy of western Herefordshire and the Middle March 1166–1246', unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2000.

time and energy to Meath, spending the latter part of his life cutting a monumental figure in the Irish lordship. Because of its place in his father's rise to prominence, Meath would have been of paramount importance to young Walter.<sup>33</sup> It is therefore to be expected that Walter would have quickly moved to secure his Irish lordship once Richard had granted him his majority in 1189.

## Seisin before 1191

Whether or not it required the intervention of the English king, the survival of a grant by Walter de Lacy to his brother Hugh II of lands in Meath prior to 1191 provides concrete evidence that Walter also received seisin of Meath at the beginning of Richard's reign. While examining the career of Walter de Lacy, Joe Hillaby noticed that the witness list for the grant to Hugh II is headed by Eugenius (Echthigern mac Máel Chiaráin), bishop of Clonard, who died in 1191.<sup>34</sup> This was something of a breakthrough, because historians had traditionally linked Walter's charter to a later grant by John, as count of Mortain, to Walter de Lacy of all of the land that Gilbert de Angulo had held beyond the lake of Tír Briúin (Lough Oughter, Co. Cavan). This grant by John can be dated to *c.* 1197.<sup>35</sup> The reason for linking Walter and John's actions had been that within Walter's pre-1191 charter, he granted the former de Angulo territory of Morgallion (and possibly upper and lower Navan) to his brother, Hugh, which means that Walter was in control of Gilbert's territory in Meath

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<sup>33</sup> The fact that the bodies of both Hugh de Lacy and Rose of Monmouth were in Ireland would have certainly added to the importance of Meath for their son Walter; see J.T. Gilbert (ed.), *Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin*, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, 94 (London, 1889), 13; James Grace and Richard Butler (eds), *Annales Hiberniae* [hereafter cited as *Grace's Annals*] (Dublin, 1842) 18–20, *s.a.* 1195; Gilbert, *Chartularies of St Mary's*, vol. 2, 307.

<sup>34</sup> Joe Hillaby, 'Colonisation, crisis-management and debt: Walter de Lacy and the lordship of Meath, 1189–1241', *Ríocht Na Midhe* 8 (1992–3), 1–50: 8; Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 142, 190. Somewhat surprisingly, Hillaby's is the most lengthy, and only free-standing, treatment of Walter de Lacy's career to date. For the death of Eugenius, see M.A. Freeman, 'The annals in Cotton MS Titus A. XXV' [hereafter cited as *Cottonian annals*], *Revue Celtique* (41 (1924) 301–30; 42 (1925) 281–305; 43 (1926) 358–84; 44 (1927) 336–61), 358–84, *s.a.* 1191; W.M. Hennessy (ed.), *The annals of Loch Cé: a chronicle of Irish affairs from A.D. 1014 to A.D. 1590. Edited, with a translation, by William M. Hennessy, M.R.I.A. Published by the authority of the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's treasury under the direction of the Master of the Rolls* [hereafter cited as *ALC*], *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, 54 (2 vols, Oxford, 1871), vol. 1, 185, *s.a.* 1191; Seán Mac Airt (ed.), *The annals of Inisfallen (MS, Rawlinson B. 503)* [hereafter cited as *AI*] (Dublin, 1951), 317, *s.a.* 1191.

<sup>35</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 7, 179 (see below, page 193, for the dating of this grant). The two grants were presumably linked because Walter's grant includes the former de Angulo territory of Morgallion. Morgallion was held of the lord of Meath, however, not of the lord of Ireland, and could therefore have been granted away due, for instance, to Gilbert's actions in Connacht before John's 1197 grant to Walter. No grant to de Angulo of the territory beyond Tír Briúin survives, which suggests that he may have acquired it of his own volition.

by 1191.<sup>36</sup> John did not confiscate Gilbert de Angulo's Irish territories until 1196,<sup>37</sup> however, which would mean that Walter had expelled Gilbert from Meath at least five years before he was exiled by John. Walter's grant to his brother is the only direct evidence of Walter's action against de Angulo as early as 1191, and no clear motive for the confiscation is observable; the latter's subsequent activities, however, may suggest that he was no longer in the service of the lord of Meath. In 1193 some of the Irish annals record Gilbert's raid upon Iniscloghran (Inchcleraun) on Lough Ree, with the sons of Conchobar Máenmaige Ua Conchobair.<sup>38</sup> It seems that Gilbert had been tempted into Connacht by the supporters of one of Conchobar Máenmaige's sons in particular—Cathal Carrach. De Angulo soon changed allegiance to Cathal Carrach's rival, Cathal Crobderg Ua Conchobair, however, who rewarded him for his service with lands in Maenmag (about Lough Rea, Co. Galway).<sup>39</sup> Gilbert was subsequently in Ua Conchobair's army, rather than de Lacy's, when they each made their way to Munster in 1195.<sup>40</sup> If Gilbert had been deprived of one or a number of

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<sup>36</sup> The charter granted Hugh the lands of Ratoath (parish Ratoath, barony of Ratoath, Co. Meath), *Treuthd* (*Treóit*, parish Trevet, barony of Skreen, Co. Meath), *Mackergaling* (*Machaire Gaileang*, barony of Morgallion, Co. Meath), the tuath of *Fithdwinterwod* (?), land of *Knelene* (*Cenél n-Enda*, near hill of Uisnech, Kinalea, Co. Westmeath?), and the land of *Knelecwre* (*Cenél Láegaire*, baronies of Upper and Lower Navan, Co. Meath?), see Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 143, 190. The identification of this last territory as Navan is suggested because both Morgallion and Navan had been granted by the elder Hugh de Lacy to the de Angulos in the initial sub-infeudation of Meath, see Orpen, *Song*, ll 3142–5; Mullally, *Deeds*, ll 3144–7. Walter's dispossession of Gilbert de Angulo is implicit in the former's grant of Morgallion to Hugh II de Lacy, and a wholesale grant of the de Angulo territories in the lordship of Meath would therefore make sense.

<sup>37</sup> 'The Dublin Annals of Inisfallen', Trinity College Dublin MS. 1281, *s.a.* 1196; John O'Donovan (ed.), *Annala rioghachta Éireann: Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the four masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616. Edited from MSS in the library of the Royal Irish Academy and of Trinity College Dublin with a translation and copious notes* [hereafter cited as *AFM*] (7 vols, Dublin, 1848–51), vol. 3, 107n; Richard Butler, *Some notices of the castle and of the ecclesiastical buildings of Trim* (Naas, 1978), 10.

<sup>38</sup> *AFM*, 99, *s.a.* 1193 (the sons of Osdealv = the de Angulos); *ALC*, 189, *s.a.* 1193; Freeman, 'Cottonian annals', *s.a.* 1193.

<sup>39</sup> Orpen, *Normans*, 224 (vol. 2, 182–3); Edwards, 'Anglo-Norman relations with Connacht', 144. King John later confirmed Ua Conchobair's grant to de Angulo in 1207, see T.D. Hardy (ed.), *Rotuli litterarum clausarum in turri Londinensi asservati*, (2 vols, London, 1833–44), vol. 1, 78b; H.S. Sweetman and G.F. Handcock (eds), *Calendar of documents relating to Ireland preserved in Her Majesty's Public Record Office, London* [hereafter cited as *CDI*] (5 vols, London, 1875–86), vol. 1, no. 311.

<sup>40</sup> For Ua Conchobair's expedition, see: *AFM*, 101, *s.a.* 1195; *ALC*, 191, *s.a.* 1195; *AI*, 321, *s.a.* 1195; Séamus Ó hInnse (ed.), *Miscellaneous Irish annals, AD 1114–1437* [hereafter cited as *Misc. Irish Annals*] (Dundalk, 2004), 75, (Mac Carthaigh's Book, *s.a.* 1195). For de Lacy's expedition, see *AFM*, 100–1, *s.a.* 1195; *ALC*, 191, *s.a.* 1195; Bartholomew Mac Carthy (ed.), *Annala Uladh. Annals of Ulster, otherwise Annala Senait, Annals of Senait; a chronicle of Irish affairs A.D. 431–1131: 1155–1541* [hereafter cited as *AU*] (2 vols, Dublin, 1893), vol. 2, 223, *s.a.* 1195. For the situation surrounding both, see below, pages 190–1.

his holdings in Meath by 1191, and afterwards granted lands in Connacht by Cathal Crobderg, this should come as little surprise.

A certain degree of reticence is advisable if rewriting the chronology of Walter's early tenure in Meath, however, because the vital entry in the witness list of his charter to his brother Hugh, which dates it to before 1191, is not entirely straightforward. Instead of reading 'Eugenius, bishop of Clonard', as would have been customary, it reads 'Eugenius, bishop of *Meath*',<sup>41</sup> a title usually associated with Eugenius's successor, Simon Rochfort. Indeed, the actual manuscript presents another potential problem. The editor of the register rendered the entry as '*E[ugenio] Episcopo Midensi*', with the form '*Eun'co*' in a footnote to the name.<sup>42</sup> Though close, this is not a wholly faithful transcription. *Eûnco* may perhaps give a better impression of the name as written on the manuscript, and it is followed by the abbreviated '*eꝑcē Midi*', not *Episcopo Midensi*.<sup>43</sup> It is difficult to imagine where the 'c' in *Eûnco* came from, and *eꝑcē* would seem to indicate the vocative: *episcope*. The expanded entry would thus read something like: *Eugenico episcope Midensi*, a sloppy, but not unintelligible, rendering of Eugenius, bishop of Meath. One hesitates to retreat into the refuge of blaming the confusion on scribal error, but there seems little alternative. The entry was placed at the beginning of the witness list and was obviously for a prelate; and despite its odd form, '*eꝑcē*' would seem to designate a bishop. '*Midi*' indicates that that bishop was of Meath, and the only bishop in Meath (whether of Clonard, Kells or Duleek) that had a name beginning with 'E' from the death of Étrú Ua Miadacháin in 1173 to the end of the medieval period was Eugenius. It can therefore be stated with relative confidence that Eugenius, bishop of Meath headed the witness list of Walter de Lacy's charter to his brother Hugh.<sup>44</sup>

This does nothing to resolve the problem that the title 'bishop of Meath' did not become prevalent until Eugenius's successor, Simon Rochfort, moved his cathedral from Clonard to Newtown Trim in 1202, and was not given official sanction until Rochfort officially annexed the bishopric of Kells upon the death of its incumbent, Ua Dobhaelen, in 1211.<sup>45</sup> That said, there *is* reason to accept the *Gormanston* witness

<sup>41</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 142, 190.

<sup>42</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 190.

<sup>43</sup> National Library of Ireland, MS. 1646, fol. 188d.

<sup>44</sup> There is, however, a chance that the fourteenth-century scribe responsible for the compilation of the *Gormanston register* made another error and that the witness list entry might be amended to read '*Eun' coepce Midi*,' that is, 'Eun', co-bishop of Meath'. A *coepiscopus* was an associate or fellow bishop, and although the office was rare, it even had its corollary in pre-Norman Ireland, see Colmán Etchingham, *Church organisation in Ireland A.D. 650 to 1000* (Naas, 1999), 138.

<sup>45</sup> Brendan Smith, 'Rochfort, Simon (d. 1224)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004); John Brady, 'The kingdom and county of Meath', *Riocht na Mídhe* 1 (1956), 6–13. It should be noted, however, that Henry Cotton wrote in his *Fasti Ecclesiae Hibernicae* that Eugenius was the first to assume the title 'bishop of Meath', see Henry Cotton, *Fasti Ecclesiae Hibernicae; the succession of the prelates and members of the cathedral bodies in Ireland* (5 vols, Dublin, 1845–78), vol. 3, 111. Although he provides neither explanation nor evidence in support of his statement, Cotton's testimony should not be dismissed out of hand, because he would have had access to materials now lost or destroyed.

list as it is and consequently conclude that Eugenius, styling himself bishop of Meath, witnessed the grant by Walter before his death in 1191. The essential problem with the bishop of Clonard styling himself bishop of Meath in the twelfth century was that the territory of Meath encompassed several bishoprics, including those of Kells and Duleek. There is evidence, however, that Eugenius actively worked to suppress the rival dioceses and establish his authority over the entire midland lordship. In 1179 the bishop of Kells, Thaddeus (Túathal Ua Connachtaig), died.<sup>46</sup> From some rather imperfect extracts taken by James Ware from the (now lost) register of St Mary's Abbey, Dublin, it appears that about the year 1185 an unnamed Cistercian was chosen as successor to Thaddeus in Kells, only to be ejected by the bishop of Meath (*Midensis Episcopus*).<sup>47</sup> Both this act and the title afforded Eugenius in the lost St Mary's register are significant. If, as seems likely, ejecting Thaddeus was an attempt on the part of Eugenius to unite the dioceses of Kells and Clonard under himself, then it was perhaps the reason for the synod he held that year, which was recorded by Gerald of Wales in his *Topography of Ireland*.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Eugenius appears not to have waited for this synod to use the title bishop of Meath, being styled as such in the foundation charter of the abbey of St Thomas, Dublin, in 1177.<sup>49</sup> By 1190 Eugenius had clearly asserted his position as bishop of the entire territory of Meath. In a charter to the canons of St Thomas, Dublin, he announces that he has taken all of their possessions and tithes *throughout Meath (per Midiam)* under his protection. In the same document, he also makes reference to the fact that he had dedicated the church of St Michael at Duleek, at which time he ordered that tithes be paid throughout his diocese on pain of excommunication.<sup>50</sup> This suggests that the diocese of Duleek had also been absorbed by this point.<sup>51</sup> What is more, it looks as if the viability of Meath as an episcopal unit was further confirmed by the existence of the office of an archdeacon 'of Meath' about this time: included in the witness list of a grant by Christian, bishop of Louth, to St Thomas, Dublin, before 1191 is '*Radulpho archidiacono Midensi*'.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, it appears that before his death in 1191, Eugenius had

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<sup>46</sup> *AU*, 197, *s.a.* 1179, where he is styled 'bishop of Tír-Briúin'.

<sup>47</sup> The entry in the register is dated to *c.* 1185 in the margin of the manuscript, see Gilbert, *Chartularies of St Mary's*, vol. 2, 21–2. See also Aubrey Gwynn and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses: Ireland* (London, 1970), 82.

<sup>48</sup> J.S. Brewer, J.F. Dimock and G.F. Warner (eds), *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, 21 (8 vols, London, 1861–91), vol. 5, 104. The decision was, perhaps, finally set aside in 1192, after Eugenius's death, at the national council held at Dublin by the Cistercian archbishop Muirges Ua hÉnna of Cashel, as papal legate, see *AI*, 317, *s.a.* 1192. I owe much on this topic to the unpublished notes of the late Professor Aubrey Gwynn. I am grateful to Dr Katharine Simms for allowing me access.

<sup>49</sup> '*Eugen[i]o Mid[en]si ep[iscop]o*', Bodleian Library MS. Rawlinson B 499, fol. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Gilbert, *Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin*, 259. It should be pointed out, however, that in this instance Eugenius still styled himself bishop of Clonard in the charter.

<sup>51</sup> For more on the suppression of the episcopal see of Duleek, see: Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses: Ireland*, 75.

<sup>52</sup> Gilbert, *Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin*, 267–8. Although it should be noted that Eugenius was called bishop of Clonard in the same witness list.

managed to suppress the rival dioceses within Meath and was asserting both his authority throughout, and the ecclesiastical unity of, the region. He was consequently the only bishop in Meath by the time of Walter de Lacy's majority, and the only man who could have been indicated by the title 'bishop of Meath' in Walter's charter to his brother.

The entry in the *Gormanston register* was, therefore, neither unprecedented nor unlikely given the circumstances of the opening years of the 1190s. Subsequent evidence may also be found in support of the title 'bishop of Meath' at this early date. Perhaps the most striking such evidence is contained within a charter of the archbishop of Armagh, Tomaltach Ua Conchobair, confirming an earlier grant to the monks of St Mary's, Dublin, in 1192. Six bishops witness the grant, with the last being 'Symone, Electo de Mide'.<sup>53</sup> That Simon Rochfort should be described as 'elect of Meath' before his consecration strongly suggests the title's currency for his predecessor. There are, of course, other instances of Simon Rochfort using the title 'bishop of Meath' before the establishment of his cathedral at Newtown Trim in 1202,<sup>54</sup> and it appears that both this title and the title 'bishop of Clonard' could be used interchangeably until then.<sup>55</sup> One final piece of evidence in favour of the appellation of 'bishop of Meath' to Eugenius may be found in the register of the abbey of St Thomas, Dublin, where a charter issued by the prior of Clonard and chapter of Meath refers to Eugenius and Simon together as 'bishops of Meath'.<sup>56</sup> The title, though still relatively rare, was therefore not as uncommon as has been supposed, and so there is no reason to think that Eugenius, bishop of Meath, did not head the witness list of Walter's charter before his death in 1191. When combined with the circumstantial evidence presented above, this explicit example of Walter exercising his lordship of Meath pre-1191 makes it almost certain that Walter enjoyed seisin of Meath at least three years earlier than has previously been thought to be the case.

It also seems apparent from the witness list of Walter's grant to his brother that the grant was made while they were both in Ireland.<sup>57</sup> In addition to receiving

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<sup>53</sup> Gilbert, *Chartularies of St Mary's*, vol. 1, 143. His name is followed by that of 'Radulfo, Archidiacono de Mide'.

<sup>54</sup> See Gilbert, *Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin*, 7–9; Gilbert, *Chartularies of St Mary's*, vol. 1, 147; Hardy, *Rot. chart.*, 75; William Stubbs (ed.), *Chronica magistri Rogeri de Hovedene* (4 vols, London, 1868–71), vol. 4, 141.

<sup>55</sup> See, for instance, two nearly identical confirmation charters, probably issued in the same year (1192), to the abbey of St Thomas, Dublin, in which Simon in the first instance styles himself 'bishop of Clonard' and in the second 'bishop of Meath'; see Gilbert, *Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin*, 269–72.

<sup>56</sup> Gilbert, *Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin*, 241–2. 'Eugenii et Simonis, Dei gracia Midensium episcoporum'.

<sup>57</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 142, 190: 'Testibus: Eugenius, bishop of Meath, Robert de Lacy, William de Lacy, Roger Pipard, Richard de Tuit, Richard Tyrell, William le Petit, Hugh Hose, Richard de Capella, John fitz Leonisus, Matthew de Tuit, William de Alton, William Talbot, Hugh de Fai, Peter the chaplain, Alexander the clerk'.



seisin of his Irish lordship, therefore, Walter visited Meath shortly after succeeding his father. Such a visit would have been an occasion to receive the homage of his tenants, personally oversee the administration of the lordship (including settling any disputes arising from the period of wardship) and generally assert his position as lord of Meath. Given John's evident disregard for the tenurial integrity of lands held in wardship,<sup>58</sup> Walter may have felt compelled to make the trip as soon as possible. Indeed, the period surrounding Richard's first coronation on 3 September 1189 suggests itself as a likely instance. Walter's name is absent from a list provided by Roger of Howden of those present at the coronation.<sup>59</sup> While this could simply have been indicative of de Lacy's political insignificance at the beginning of his career, because Walter's presence in England is otherwise unattested, it also provides scope for speculation. The coronation was meticulously planned to deliver the grandest impression, and had Walter been in England his nonattendance would have been a bold political statement.<sup>60</sup> The coronation was followed two days later by a general rendering of homage to Richard by the magnates and prelates of the realm, attendance at which would have been compulsory.<sup>61</sup> It is obvious from the *Pipe Roll 1 Richard I* that Walter had received his inheritance by this point, so even if he could have avoided attending Richard's display of regal splendour, it is very unlikely that, were he in England, he would have been excused from both it and the general oath.

This does not necessarily mean that Walter was in Ireland, however, because his Norman lands would have also demanded his attention at this early date. There is no record in the Irish annals of de Lacy's whereabouts in this period, but as these records tend to ignore the arrival and departure of the lord of Meath, including his otherwise documented journey to Ireland in 1194, there is little that can be garnered from their silence. A clue to de Lacy's location during the coronation may perhaps be found in the charter witnessed by Chancellor Longchamp mentioned above. Although the grant pertained to lands in Normandy, it must have been issued in England, because at no point between his election and consecration as bishop of Ely (the *termini post* and *ante quem* for the charter) was Longchamp absent from England.<sup>62</sup> Once again, the absence of definitive records makes speculation necessary, but it seems more likely that if he had been in Normandy at the beginning of September, Walter would have made the grant to his Norman tenant then, rather than waiting until he was once again in England. Conversely, had Walter been in Ireland in September 1189 and made the return journey to England soon thereafter, the prospect of a late-year crossing of the English Channel after just traversing the Irish Sea would have been quite unattractive. In this light, the issuing of a grant of Norman lands while in England would have made much more sense.

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<sup>58</sup> As witnessed by his treatment of the lordship of Leinster mentioned above, see page 170.

<sup>59</sup> *Gesta Henrici Secundi*, vol. 2, 80–3; *Chronica Rogeri de Hovedene*, vol. 3, 9–12.

<sup>60</sup> Norgate, *Angevin kings*, 276–7.

<sup>61</sup> Norgate, *Angevin kings*, 277.

<sup>62</sup> See the discussion of the chancellor's activities in Norgate, *Angevin kings*, 285–8.

Meath in wardship  
1186–9

Having tentatively established the approximate timing of Walter's seisin of Meath, it is perhaps useful to examine the situation into which he then stepped. The Ireland that Walter encountered in 1189 was much changed from the country that had witnessed his father's death three years earlier. It is well known that upon hearing of Hugh de Lacy's death in 1186, King Henry II immediately dispatched his son John to Ireland (though, as we shall see, the journey was never completed), while also making arrangements for John's eventual coronation in Ireland. Because John had ostensibly cited de Lacy as the cause of his expedition's failure in 1185, Hugh's assassination at Durrow provided the perfect opportunity for the king's son to finish his task of being acknowledged king in Ireland. The removal of Hugh de Lacy, who had initially been enfeoffed in order to provide stability to the midlands of Ireland and protection to the royal demesne around Dublin, might also have threatened the delicate balance of power between native Irish and settler, which the royal government could so readily exploit. As Seán Duffy succinctly puts it, 'de Lacy's removal either cleared any obstacles in the way of John's return to Ireland, and his coronation, or, most probably, the instability it was likely to generate necessitated it'.<sup>63</sup> This assessment seems to be accurate, but there is also a hint of a personal motive behind the journey. The well-positioned court chronicler, Roger of Howden, records that this expedition was so that John might personally take possession of Hugh's Irish lands and castles.<sup>64</sup> This was by no means necessary, as the actual course of events was to show; but the symbolic significance of John's triumphal entry into Meath in order to receive the homage of its barons as both king of Ireland and their immediate lord (while Meath was in wardship) should not be underestimated. As it turned out, the death of John's elder brother, Geoffrey, brought an abrupt end to these plans. John received the news of his brother's death, and his father's decision that the expedition to Ireland be cancelled, while waiting for a favourable wind at the port of Chester. King Henry then sent the royal servant Philip of Worcester 'with a very few others' to Ireland in John's stead.<sup>65</sup>

That said, the cancellation of his mission to Ireland in 1186 did not stop John from immediately utilising Walter de Lacy's minority to assert his position in the midland lordship. As any new lord might, John issued a general charter protecting the freedoms and possessions in Ireland of the priories of Llanthony prima and secunda, which were heavily patronised by the de Lacy family.<sup>66</sup> He also issued specific charters for grants in *Okadesy* (Saithne, land of *Ua Cathasaig*, Balrothery parish, barony of Balrothery West, Co. Dublin—c.1186), Drogheda (c.1186), Duleek

<sup>63</sup> Duffy, 'John and Ireland', 233–4.

<sup>64</sup> *Gesta Henrici Secundi*, vol. 1, 350. 'His ita gestis, rex misit Johannem filium suum ad transfretandum in Hiberniam, ad saaiandam terram et castella Hugonis in manu sua'.

<sup>65</sup> R.C. Christie (ed.), *Annales Cestrienses; or, chronicle of the abbey of St Werburg at Chester*, Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 14 (London, 1887), 34–5; Duffy, 'John and Ireland', 234.

<sup>66</sup> E. St John Brooks (ed.), *The Irish cartularies of Llanthony prima and secunda* (Dublin, 1953), 80–1, no. lxiii, 213, no. 2; Arlene Hogan, *The priory of Llanthony prima and secunda in Ireland, 1172–1541: Lands, patronage and politics* (Dublin, 2008), 85, 238.

(c.1186) and *Balbryn* (greater Ballybin, Cookestown parish, barony of Ratoath, Co. Meath—1186–9) to these same priories.<sup>67</sup> It is clear that the grants in *Okadesy* and Drogheda were confirmations of ones made by the elder Hugh de Lacy,<sup>68</sup> but for those in Duleek and *Balbryn*, the situation is less obvious. Lord John's grant of the church of St Cianán, Duleek to Llanthony secunda survives in two forms in the cartulary of Llanthony secunda: in a transcription of the charter and in an *inspeximus* of Henry IV.<sup>69</sup> What is interesting, however, is that a charter of Eugenius, bishop of Clonard, confirming the grant makes no mention of a previous grant by Hugh de Lacy, as would have been expected.<sup>70</sup> The grant of *Balbryn* also seems to have been a novel one. Hugh de Lacy had granted the tithes of Ratoath (in which *Balbryn* is situated) to St Thomas's, Dublin, in or before 1183.<sup>71</sup> His son Hugh II (who, as we have seen, had received the territory from Walter before 1191 in the charter mentioned above) essentially made the same grant to Llanthony prima in 1200–5 that John had made over a decade earlier, but the new charter failed to mention a previous grant.<sup>72</sup> That the younger Hugh de Lacy might choose to ignore John's grant is unsurprising, made, as it had been, while Meath was in wardship; but Hugh II would surely have made reference to a grant by his father, had one been made. If these two grants by John were indeed new, that of *Balbryn* would have constituted a permanent, and therefore illegal, alienation of land held in wardship.<sup>73</sup> One is immediately reminded

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<sup>67</sup> Brooks, *Irish cartularies of Llanthony*, 78–9, no. lx, 79, no. lxi, 79, no. lxii, 213, no. 5, 286, no. 94; Hogan, *Priory of Llanthony*, 81–5, 236–7, 239, 368 Arlene Hogan dates the Duleek charter to John's 1185 expedition (see Hogan, *Priory of Llanthony*, 81, 236, 368), but Hugh de Lacy's prominence at the time, highlighted by his supposed role in the expedition's failure, makes it unlikely that John would have been able to make a grant in the de Lacy demesne until after Hugh's death the following year. See above, pages 166–7. If the dating of the other charters is correct, it is interesting to note that John also waited until after de Lacy's death to confirm the latter's grant in Saithne (*Okadesy*), which had supposedly been restored to the royal demesne in 1184; see *Expugnatio Hibernica*, 199.

<sup>68</sup> Brooks, *Irish cartularies of Llanthony*, 219, no. 17; 79, no. lxi; Hogan, *Priory of Llanthony*, 238–9.

<sup>69</sup> Brooks, *Irish cartularies of Llanthony*, 213, no. 1; 286, no. 94; Hogan, *Priory of Llanthony*, 81, 236, 368.

<sup>70</sup> Brooks, *Irish cartularies of Llanthony*, 219, no. 16; Hogan, *Priory of Llanthony*, 238. See, for instance, the similar confirmation charter for *Okadesy* in which the elder Hugh's grant is mentioned: Brooks, *Irish cartularies of Llanthony*, 219, no. 17; Hogan, *Priory of Llanthony*, 238.

<sup>71</sup> Gilbert, *Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin*, 280–1; Orpen, *Normans*, 180 (vol. 2, 76).

<sup>72</sup> Brooks, *Irish cartularies of Llanthony*, 81, no. lxiv; Hogan, *Priory of Llanthony*, 247–8. His brother Walter's confirmation of the grant similarly makes no mention of a grant before Hugh II's, see Brooks, *Irish cartularies of Llanthony*, 84, no. lxix; Hogan, *Priory of Llanthony*, 248.

<sup>73</sup> For the law against the permanent alienation of lands held in wardship, see G.D.G. Hall (ed.), *The treatise on the laws and customs of the realm of England commonly called Glanvill* (Oxford, 1993), 82. As the treatise was most likely written between 1187–9 (Hall, *Glanvill*, xi), it is contemporary with the incidents in question.

of the situation of Leinster mentioned above, in which John illegally enfeoffed so many of his men while he held that lordship in wardship. In the case of *Balbyn*, because the grantee was a priory already heavily patronised by the de Lacys, Walter and Hugh had little alternative but to allow the grant to stand.

The cultivation of the bond of patronage established between the de Lacy lords of Meath and the priories of Llanthony prima and secunda would have been an excellent way for John to assert his position as direct lord of Meath, while also befriending two institutions with vast territorial wealth and prestige in the lordship. Hugh II's charter and his brother Walter's confirmation were merely means of reasserting their rights within the territory, while essentially confirming John's previous grant. What is more, there is evidence that John permanently alienated lands in Meath through secular patronage. Between 1186 and 1191, Robert le Poer made grants in Ratoath and Dunshaughlin to the abbey of St Thomas, Dublin.<sup>74</sup> As we have seen, the elder Hugh de Lacy had already granted the ecclesiastical benefices in Ratoath and Dunshaughlin to St Thomas's in or before 1183, while his son Hugh II was to do the same for Ratoath subsequent to his reception of the territory from his brother Walter before 1191.<sup>75</sup> It therefore looks as though Robert le Poer had been enfeoffed in Meath by John after the death of the elder Hugh de Lacy, only to have his seisin overturned by Walter upon his assumption of lordship.

### Walter's rights ignored: c.1192

It is clear, therefore, that Meath could not prove impervious to John's encroachments as it waited for its heir to mature, and after Walter's accession it soon fell once again to the lord of Ireland. Two grants that can be dated to 1192 prove that John was by then in possession of Meath, and consequently that Walter de Lacy had been disseised. In addition to granting lands from the de Lacy demesne of Durrow to the monastic community of Kells on 13 May,<sup>76</sup> John also bestowed a carucate of land within the lordship of Meath in *Molloghune* (*Mag Cuillinn*, Moygullen, now Cooksborough, parish of Rathconnell, barony of Moycashel, Co. Westmeath?) and the sergeancy of county Dublin upon his own household sergeant, Henry Tyrell,

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<sup>74</sup> Gilbert, *Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin*, 224, 254, 270, 273. See also M.T. Flanagan, 'Poer, Robert (d. 1178?)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004). It should be pointed out that since three of the confirmation charters use the singular in referring to the grant of Hugh de Lacy and Robert le Poer ('*de dono Hugonis de Laci et Roberti Poer*'), a joint grant could have been made by the pair before Hugh's death in 1186 (see Gilbert, *Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin*, 224, 270, 273). From two charters of Eugenius, bishop of Clonard, however, it would seem that Hugh and Robert made separate grants. In one, Eugenius confirmed Robert's grant of the church of Dunshaughlin to St Thomas, while in the other he confirmed Hugh de Lacy's grant of the church of Dunshaughlin, with the chapel of Ratoath and their tithes (see Gilbert, *Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin*, 254–5).

<sup>75</sup> Gilbert, *Register of the Abbey of St Thomas, Dublin*, 7–9.

<sup>76</sup> Gearóid Mac Niocaill, *Notitiae as Leabhar Cheanannais, 1033–1161* (Dublin, 1961), 38–9; *Calendar of the patent rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, Richard II, vol. iv, 1388–1392* (London, 1902), 300; Flanagan, *Irish society*, 282–3, where this is cited as evidence that Walter had not yet received seisin of Meath.

on 21 July 1192.<sup>77</sup> The reasons behind John's new position of strength and its manifestation in Ireland are multifarious and ought ideally to command more space than can be afforded them here. A brief account is necessary, however, in order to understand how a magnate could have been simply pushed aside in Ireland, and how he eventually found redress with King Richard.

Although King Richard left William Longchamp as chief justiciar and chancellor of England upon his departure on crusade in May 1190, he soon complicated matters by appointing, in July that year, four co-justiciars to act as a check on his chief justiciar.<sup>78</sup> Before leaving, Richard had also bestowed rich gifts on his brother John, including, among others, the county of Mortain in south-west Normandy, the heiress and earldom of Gloucester and a concentration of lands in the west of England.<sup>79</sup> As a safeguard against rebellion in England, Richard had first decided to restrict Count John to the continent during the king's absence. That requirement was soon lifted, however, adding another ambitious personality to the kingdom.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, by early 1191 politics in England had turned violent in a political duel between John and Longchamp. In October that year the tide turned against Longchamp, as England's co-justiciars chose to support the heir to the throne, Count John, against Richard's administrator. Bloodshed was averted later that month by a royal mandate that removed Longchamp from the justiciarship and installed the archbishop of Rouen, Walter de Coutances, in his stead.<sup>81</sup> This placed Walter de Lacy in a very vulnerable position in Ireland. While his English and Norman estates remained relatively safe, due to the oversight of the co-justiciars and the expectation of Richard's eventual return, no such checks stayed John's hand in Ireland. Longchamp's replacement as justiciar, Archbishop Walter of Rouen, may have balked at moving to constrain John's activities in the lordship of Ireland, especially since any move in that direction would have only added to the disorder that the archbishop had been installed to alleviate.

So great was Count John's ambition, that in February 1192, having just been formally acknowledged by the English nobility as heir apparent,<sup>82</sup> he had to be prevented from intriguing against the absent King Richard with King Philip Augustus of France in Paris by his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and the new justiciar, Archbishop Walter. The pair threatened to confiscate all of John's extensive English and Norman lands if he made the trip to France, thus forestalling John's

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<sup>77</sup> The charter is preserved in an inspeimus of Edward III. *Calendar of the patent rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, Edward III, vol. iii, 1334–1338* (London, 1895), 415–16; Duffy, 'John and Ireland', 235.

<sup>78</sup> Crouch, *William Marshal*, 66–7; Painter, *William Marshal*, 82–4. The four were: William Marshal, Geoffrey fitz Peter, Hugh Bardolf and William Briwerre.

<sup>79</sup> Painter, *William Marshal*, 84–5; John Gillingham, 'John (1167–1216)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>80</sup> *Gesta Henrici Secundi*, vol. 2, 106; Gillingham, *Richard I*, 120.

<sup>81</sup> Crouch, *William Marshal*, 78; Painter, *William Marshal*, 86–9; Norgate, *Angevin kings*, 297.

<sup>82</sup> Norgate, *Angevin kings*, 314–6.

treachery for a time.<sup>83</sup> The seeds of rebellion were already sown, however, and while he would have been unable to make any movements in England and Normandy, for fear of this threatened confiscation, until news of Richard's capture arrived at the turn of the year, no such impediment stayed his hand in Ireland. This same year—the year in which he alienated lands in Meath to the monastery of Kells and Henry Tyrell—Count John removed John de Courcy from the Irish justiciarship and replaced him with Peter Pipard. De Courcy's later role in King Richard's assumption of direct lordship in Ireland in 1194 might suggest that this was a move against one of the king's men;<sup>84</sup> de Courcy's inclusion in the witness list of John's subsequent charter to Henry Tyrell, however, suggests that it may instead have simply been a case of administrative reorganisation.<sup>85</sup>

This period also saw the resumption of castle building in Meath, which appears to have had all but halted upon the death of the elder Hugh de Lacy in 1186. In 1192 the Irish annals mention the construction of the castles of Ardnurcher and Kilbixy,<sup>86</sup> while they record the completion of Rathconrath the previous year.<sup>87</sup> This building programme was likely related to an Anglo-Norman offensive in Munster, where John had enfeoffed many of his own men.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the extreme south-west of the lordship of Meath even witnessed a battle between native and settler forces at 'Rath-Aedha' (Rahugh, barony of Moycashel, Co. Westmeath).<sup>89</sup> To the east of Meath, John issued a fresh charter of liberties to Dublin.<sup>90</sup> These events of 1192 show John's increased ability and desire to make manifest his will in Ireland. Whatever relationship had existed regarding Ireland before Richard departed on crusade, in the absence of the king and Chancellor Longchamp, John was exerting his position as lord of Ireland in his own right.

William Marshal had also been a victim of John's acquisitiveness in Ireland at the beginning of his tenure, but it is not surprising that Leinster seems to have escaped Meath's fate in 1192.<sup>91</sup> Much had changed in a short period of time. The Marshal was afforded a degree of protection by his status as a co-justiciar in England,

<sup>83</sup> *Gesta Henrici Secundi*, vol. 2, 236; Norgate, *Angevin kings*, 314; Gillingham, *Richard I*, 229.

<sup>84</sup> Duffy argues as much. Duffy, 'John and Ireland', 236. Also see pages 189–91 below.

<sup>85</sup> *Calendar of the patent rolls, 1334–1338*, 415.

<sup>86</sup> *AFM*, 93, s.a. 1192; *ALC*, 187, s.a. 1192.

<sup>87</sup> *ALC*, 185, s.a. 1191.

<sup>88</sup> *AI*, 317, s.a. 1192; *Misc. Irish annals*, 73, ('Mac Carthaigh's Book', s.a. 1192); Orpen, *Normans*, 209 (vol. 2, 145–6); Duffy, 'John and Ireland', 235–6; F.X. Martin, 'John, Lord of Ireland, 1185–1216', in Art Cosgrove (ed.), *A new history of Ireland II: medieval Ireland 1169–1534* (Oxford, 1987), 127–55: 129.

<sup>89</sup> *ALC*, 195–7, s.a. 1192.

<sup>90</sup> Orpen, *Normans*, 202, (vol. 2, 129–31); Seán Duffy, 'Town and crown: the kings of England and their city of Dublin', in Michael Prestwich, Robin Frame and Richard Britnell (eds), *Thirteenth Century England X* (Woodbridge, 2005), 95–117.

<sup>91</sup> Alternatively, Count John's charter to Theobald Walter for lands in Leinster, which White dated to *circa* 1192, might suggest that William Marshal suffered a similar disinheritance in Ireland at about this time. See above, page 170, n. 14.

and he had already shown his loyalty to John by answering his call to arms against Longchamp in 1191.<sup>92</sup> In comparison to the Marshal, or indeed to his own father Hugh de Lacy, who had had years to forge a virtually unassailable military and political position in Meath, the young Walter de Lacy would have had a difficult time resisting the lord of Ireland, and heir to the English throne, during this period from 1192. On 11 December 1192 King Richard was captured near Vienna and spent over a year in captivity.<sup>93</sup> During that time, Count John and King Philip Augustus orchestrated an unsuccessful rebellion in the Angevin Empire that sought to overthrow the captive king. Very little is known of Walter de Lacy during this period, which is perhaps indicative of his political insignificance during John's ascendancy.

### The lordship of Meath restored: 1194–5

The silence of the sources regarding Walter's actions and whereabouts ends, appropriately, with the return of King Richard to England. The English king was finally set free from his imprisonment on 4 February 1194, and he arrived in England on 14 March.<sup>94</sup> Of all the strongholds that had declared for John, only Nottingham remained defiant upon Richard's return, and Walter de Lacy may be found in the royal army that invested the castle at Nottingham in a siege lasting from 25–28 March. This in itself is not very significant, as all but the most ardent of John's supporters flocked to King Richard on his return to show their loyalty—steadfast or newly found. For instance, the shrewd courtier, and erstwhile comital partisan, William Marshal eschewed fraternal piety, leaving his rebellious brother's funeral in order to join Richard as soon as news of the king's landing reached him.<sup>95</sup> Looming, as he does, much larger in the pages of history—due in no small part to the survival of the near contemporary *History of William Marshal*—the Marshal provides a very useful and informative juxtapositional personality during a few of the more momentous points in the career of Walter de Lacy. The case of the Marshal has already been utilised above to argue that King Richard would not have allowed Walter to be denied entry to his Irish inheritance *c.* 1189,<sup>96</sup> and would prove convenient throughout

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<sup>92</sup> Crouch, *William Marshal*, 78. Indeed, as David Crouch displays, William and John seem to have maintained a mutually beneficial affiliation; Crouch, *William Marshal*, 71–2, 76, 79, 85, 89–90, 116.

<sup>93</sup> Norgate, *Angevin kings*, 323.

<sup>94</sup> *Chronica Rogeri de Hovedene*, vol. 3, 236–8; *Radulphi de Diceto opera historica*, vol. 2, 112–3; Joseph Stevenson (ed.), *Radulphi de Coggeshall Chronicon Anglicanum*, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*, 66 (London, 1875), 62 (where his release is dated to 2 February).

<sup>95</sup> David Crouch makes much of the fact that John Marshal may have died from wounds received in defending Count John's stronghold of Marlborough against the forces of Richard's co-justiciars. He sees the Marshal's hasty departure from the funeral proceedings as an unnecessary and thinly veiled attempt to distance himself from his rebellious brother (and with him, from his own relationship with Count John) and ingratiate himself with the king; see Crouch, *William Marshal*, 81–2.

<sup>96</sup> See above, pages 174–5.

their respective careers. For the present, the two magnates' actions after the siege of Nottingham imply much about their political dispositions.

Whereas attending the king on his triumphal march to crush the last vestiges of rebellion might be an attractive way to display one's allegiance to the crown, the homage for their Irish lands that Richard then demanded from both William and Walter was an outright affront to John's prerogative as lord of Ireland and a much stronger statement of loyalty to the English king.<sup>97</sup> William famously refused, asserting that he could not perform homage to Richard for lands that he held of John.<sup>98</sup> Of course, in 1194 William had the luxury of not only enjoying a reputation for military prowess and a position of trust within the English administration, but also seisin of his Irish lordship of Leinster. Walter, disseised as he had been by his rightful lord in Ireland, was equally bereft of any desire to feign allegiance to that lord. Although he might try later in his career, Walter was never to match the Marshal for courtliness. For the moment, Richard was the one who could give him Meath, and who had perhaps initially secured it for him in 1189; so it was to Richard that Walter rendered homage.

The issue was ultimately made academic by Richard's prompt sequestration of John's estates as punishment for his rebellion. On 31 March 1194 proceedings were begun, at which time John was ordered to appear before 10 May, or suffer banishment.<sup>99</sup> On 8 April, the homage Walter rendered Richard for Meath was rewarded with a charter for the Irish lordship.<sup>100</sup> Count John eventually relented and admitted the legitimacy of Walter's seisin with his own charter, as we have seen.<sup>101</sup> Both charters for Meath are preserved in the *Gormanston register*, but lack their dating clauses. The date for Richard's charter may be found in the seemingly independent British Library Hargrave MS. 313, which retains its dating clause. Although the charter states that it was issued at Nottingham, in his *Itinerary of King Richard*, Lionel Landon has argued that this is most likely a mistake for Northampton, where it is otherwise attested that the king held his Easter court from 9–11 April.<sup>102</sup> Richard's presence at Nottingham until 2 April makes a scribal error for the date of the charter just as possible, but it is not unlikely that Walter would have followed the royal court south and attended his king's Easter court at Northampton. It is interesting that while British Library Hargrave MS. 313 contains both Henry

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<sup>97</sup> Lionel Landon, *The itinerary of King Richard I, with studies of certain matters of interest connected with his reign* (London, 1935), 86, places this on 29 March.

<sup>98</sup> Holden, Gregory and Crouch, *History of William Marshal*, vol. 2, II 10295–320. For discussions of this episode, see Crouch, *William Marshal*, 79; Painter, *William Marshal*, 106–7.

<sup>99</sup> Landon, *Itinerary of King Richard I*, 86. That trial never took place, however, because John eventually humbled himself before Richard and was personally absolved of his crimes; see Norgate, *Angevin kings*, 334.

<sup>100</sup> British Library Hargrave MS. 313; Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register* 6, 177–8. And see above, pages 170–2.

<sup>101</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 178; and see above, pages 172–3.

<sup>102</sup> Landon, *Itinerary of King Richard I*, 86.



II's initial grant of Meath to Hugh de Lacy and Richard's confirmation to Walter, it does not contain John's charter. The dating clause for that grant is preserved in British Library Harley 1240, where the charter states that it was given on the fifteenth day of June 1195 (*anno sexto regni regis Ricardi*).<sup>103</sup> The delay of over a year between Richard's charter (and Walter's seisin of Meath) and John's subsequent charter demands explanation. John's charter would certainly not have been issued until after Richard and John were reconciled at Lisieux in May 1194,<sup>104</sup> and it may have been further delayed by John's attendance at Richard's court in France for nearly a year.<sup>105</sup> However, it was perhaps de Lacy's actions on behalf of King Richard in Ireland in 1194–5 that served as the strongest barrier to reconciliation between Walter and John.

### Walter in Ireland 1194–5

Walter de Lacy was given a sufficient amount of time to re-establish his authority in Ireland as lord of Meath during John's period on the continent. His position in Ireland was further strengthened by his apparent royal commission as co-justiciar along with the lord of Ulster, John de Courcy. Once he had Richard's confirmatory charter for Meath, de Lacy wasted little time in crossing to Ireland, where, on 5 July 1194, he granted a charter of liberties to his town of Drogheda.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, because Walter's attested presence at the royal court, and in England, ends with his charter from Richard, it is possible that the ink was not yet dry before de Lacy sought to make good Richard's confirmatory grant.<sup>107</sup> Another of Walter's initial actions in Ireland was that recorded by Marleburgh's chronicle mentioned above; that is, his apprehension of Peter Pipard.<sup>108</sup> This seems to have been an official act: one of the new royal representatives removing John's justiciar. Moreover, it is quite tempting to read Pipard's apprehension as an instance of royally imposed factionalism in Ireland. Otway-Ruthven takes a step in that direction, depicting de Lacy and de Courcy as the 'heads of the party in Ireland which supported the king against John'.<sup>109</sup> Peter Crooks gives voice to the sentiment by introducing the idea that the factionalism in Ireland might have been royally imposed, or at least royally facilitated. Crooks offers this qualification of Otway-Ruthven's statement:

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<sup>103</sup> British Library Harley MS. 1240, fol. 27, no 26. Calendared in: Herbert Wood, 'The muniments of Edmund de Mortimer, third earl of March, concerning his liberty of Trim', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 40C (1932), 312–55: 330.

<sup>104</sup> Maurice Powicke, *The loss of Normandy, 1189–1204: studies in the history of the Angevin Empire* (Manchester, 1961), 100; Holden, Gregory and Crouch, *History of William Marshal*, vol. 2, II 10363–419.

<sup>105</sup> Norgate, *Angevin kings*, 334.

<sup>106</sup> Gearóid Mac Niocaill, *Na buirgéisí, xii–xv* (2 vols, Dublin, 1964), vol. 1, 172–3.

<sup>107</sup> Such arguments are, of course, problematic at best, but one might otherwise expect to find Walter attending King Richard's second coronation, which took place on 17 April, see Landon, *Itinerary of King Richard I*, 88.

<sup>108</sup> Bibliothèque Municipale de Troyes, MS. 1316, fol. 39. See above, page 170.

<sup>109</sup> Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, 73.

This should not be taken to mean that de Courcy and de Lacy were necessarily ardent Ricardians determined to undermine John's supporters in Ireland during his rebellion of 1193–94 ... However, even after John's submission in England, the task of tackling his agents in Ireland remained. The obvious men for the job were those who had a vested interest in seeing it completed successfully.<sup>110</sup>

John de Courcy's complaisance with Count John's interventionist approach to lordship in Ireland, proved by his appearance in the witness list of John's charter to Henry Tyrell in 1192 mentioned above, certainly confirms that he was neither an ardent Ricardian nor a stranger to the evils that he and de Lacy were sent to correct. As it had been a generation earlier, so it remained that the most cost-effective method for the king to assert his hegemony over Ireland was to find magnates whose self-interest was in the royal interest, and to invest them with the authority of a governmental commission. However, instead of being aimed at the native Irish, as the elder Hugh de Lacy had been,<sup>111</sup> the lords of Meath and Ulster were sent by Richard against their fellow Anglo-Normans: Count John's men.

The Irish annals record under 1195 that de Lacy and de Courcy made a circuit of Leinster and Munster in order to bring the settlers there to heel.<sup>112</sup> Seán Duffy concludes that the targets of these assaults were John's henchmen, 'whose successes at land-grabbing in the south-west of Ireland were beginning to challenge the older ascendancy'.<sup>113</sup> The recent destabilisation of the region brought about by Count John's grant of the province of Connacht to his favourite, William de Burgh, c.1194, and the king of Connacht, Cathal Crobderg's, subsequent retaliatory raid, should not, however, be overlooked as immediate causes of the intervention by de Courcy and de Lacy.<sup>114</sup> The situation regarding Connacht was presumably addressed soon thereafter, when Richard's justiciars met and made peace with Cathal Crobderg at Athlone.<sup>115</sup> That same year the body of the elder Hugh de Lacy was finally recov-

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<sup>110</sup> Peter Crooks, "'Divide and rule": factionalism as royal policy in the Lordship of Ireland, 1171–1265', *Peritia* 19 (2005), 263–307: 278.

<sup>111</sup> For a recent analysis of Henry II's motives for the placement of Hugh de Lacy in Meath, see Veach, 'Henry II's grant of Meath'.

<sup>112</sup> *AFM*, 100–1, *s.a.* 1195; *ALC*, 191, *s.a.* 1195; *AU*, 223, *s.a.* 1195.

<sup>113</sup> Duffy, 'John and Ireland', 237.

<sup>114</sup> For more on the Grant of Connacht, see Helen Perros, 'Crossing the Shannon frontier: Connacht and the Anglo-Normans, 1170–1224', in Terence Barry, Robin Frame and Katharine Simms (eds), *Colony and frontier in medieval Ireland: essays presented to J.F. Lydon* (London and Rio Grande, 1995), 117–38: 126; R.D. Edwards, 'Anglo-Norman relations with Connacht, 1169–1224', *Irish Historical Studies* 1 (1938), 135–53: 145; W.L. Warren, 'John in Ireland, 1185', in John Bossy and Peter Jupp (eds), *Essays presented to Michael Roberts* (Belfast, 1976), 11–123: 30. Details relating to the retaliatory raid can be found in *AFM*, 101, *s.a.* 1195; *ALC*, 191, *s.a.* 1195; *AI*, 321, *s.a.* 1195; *Misc. Irish Annals*, 75, (Mac Carthaigh's Book, *s.a.* 1195). Cathal Crobderg's failure to return, recorded in the annals of Inisfallen, may have been down to the intervention of de Lacy and de Courcy.

<sup>115</sup> *ALC*, 191, *s.a.* 1195.

ered from the Irish by the papal legate, Archbishop Muirges Ua hÉnna of Cashel, and Archbishop John Cumin of Dublin.<sup>116</sup> There exists no definitive evidence either way, but given the personalities involved in the recovery of Hugh's body—the archbishops of Cashel and Dublin—it is perhaps to the circuit of Munster and Leinster, culminating in the peace of Athlone, that one should look for a catalyst.

The conference at Athlone may have been the final instance of Richard's direct rule of Ireland through Walter de Lacy and John de Courcy. Count John had by then been reconciled with his brother the king and soon began exercising his authority in his Irish lordship once more. That same year, 1195, Henry II's trusted administrator Philip of Worcester was once again sent to Ireland.<sup>117</sup> Although Otway-Ruthven concludes that his role was to reinforce the Anglo-Norman community in Munster by organising what was later to be the barony of Knockgraffon, Philip's history of overseeing administrative change in Ireland may suggest a wider scope to his commission.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, the supersession of Richard's justiciars the following year could indicate that, as in 1184, Philip was charged with preparing the way for John's resumption of power in Ireland.

## Reconciliation with John: 1195

A mandate from Count John to his men in Ireland from about this time provides a further clue as to the delay in John's charter for Meath to Walter de Lacy, and sheds a degree of light on the relationship that existed between the pair at the time. Preserved in a seventeenth-century loose leaf transcription included among the pages of the register of the Hospital of St John the Baptist, Dublin,<sup>119</sup> the order was originally translated by Charles MacNeill in 1923.<sup>120</sup> The eventual editor of the hospital's register, Eric St John Brooks, drew heavily from MacNeill in his description of the manuscript, and presumably thought the mandate's inclusion in his published text to be superfluous to his task, thanks in part to this existing translation.<sup>121</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that the mandate has seemed to elude the attention of modern histori-

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<sup>116</sup> *Grace's Annals*, 18–20, *s.a.* 1195; Gilbert, *Chartularies of St Mary's*, vol. 2, 307.

<sup>117</sup> *AI*, 321, *s.a.* 1195.

<sup>118</sup> Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, 72. He had already been sent to Ireland in 1184 in order to replace Hugh de Lacy in his capacity as royal representative, to reverse the inroads Hugh had supposedly made into the royal prerogative and to pave the way for John's expedition of 1185; and in 1186 again, Philip was sent to administer Meath in John's stead, see *Expugnatio Hibernica*, 199; *Annales Cestrienses*, 34–5; Duffy, 'John and Ireland', 234, and see above, page 182.

<sup>119</sup> Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS. B 498, fol. 63, loose leaf. The mandate is preceded by the claim of its seventeenth-century transcriber that it was copied word for word from the book or register of instruments and charters belonging to the lords of Platten.

<sup>120</sup> Charles MacNeill, 'The de Verdons and the Draycots', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society* 5 (1923), 166–72: 170.

<sup>121</sup> He did, however, make mention of the existence of several de Lacy charters and evidences (among other things) at the appropriate place in his edition, see E. St John Brooks (ed.), *Register of the hospital of S. John the Baptist without the new gate, Dublin* (Dublin, 1936), xiv, 96.

ans. Its importance for the study of the de Lacy honour is such that the full inclusion of MacNeill's rather faithful translation is warranted:

John, lord of Ireland and count of Mortain, to all his justices, barons and faithful people, English and Irish, greeting:

Know ye that at the instance of King Richard, my brother, I have remitted to Walter de Lacy and all his heirs the jeopardy, anger and indignation which I had conceived against them, and all the transgressions which they have committed against me up till the present time; and I have received the aforesaid Walter and all his men to favour, and have restored (*reddidi*) to the aforesaid Walter all his rights in Ireland for 2,500 marks, which the same Walter has given me therefore.

Wherefore I command you that you have him and all his men for my faithful people, and that you maintain, protect and defend them, and that you do no hurt or grievance to them or theirs nor suffer it be done ; and if any one do that to him or his in any thing, without delay you shall, etc.<sup>122</sup>

Here, then, is the missing piece that connects Richard's charter to John's, and helps to explain the extended period of over a year between the two. It would seem that after his reconciliation with his brother John, King Richard had once again acted on Walter's behalf: this time compelling Count John to accept de Lacy's seisin of Meath while also accepting the baron into his favour. Since de Lacy had been acting as Richard's representative in Ireland as he and John de Courcy harassed Count John's men in Munster that year (perhaps some of the 'transgressions' of John's mandate?), it is little wonder that Richard would have forced the reconciliation. Ireland was to be returned to John's rule, and the king ensured that Walter was not disinherited for his fidelity to the crown. It is fascinating to note, however, that the return—and here, once again, *reddere* is preferred—of Walter's rights in Ireland

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<sup>122</sup> MacNeill, 'The de Verdons and the Draycots', 170. The Latin text reads: '*Iohannes dominus Hibernie comes Morton omnibus iusticiariis et baronibus et fidelibus suis Anglis et Hibernis salutem. Sciatis me ad instantiam domini Ricardi regis fratris mei remississe Waltero de Lacy et omnibus heredibus suis occasionem iram et malignationem quas versus eos consc[e]peram, et omnes excessos quas huc usque erga me fecerunt et predictum Walterum et omnes homines suos ad gratiam recepi et predicto Waltero omnia iura sua in Hibernia reddidi per MM. et D. marcas argenti quas idem Walterus pro inde dedit. Quare precipio vobis quod eum et omnes suos sicut fideles meos habeatis et eos manuteneatis, protegatis et defendetis, nec eius nec suis mollestiam aut grauamen faciatis vel fieri permittatis, et si quis ei vell suis in aliquo fecerit, id ei sine delatione facietis. T(este) etc'*, see Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS. B 498, fol. 63, loose leaf. I am grateful to Professor Nicholas Vincent for allowing me to consult his unpublished acta of John, count of Mortain, for an edited version of this text.

was only accomplished after a massive fine of 2,500 marks was agreed.<sup>123</sup> Clearly, Richard was willing to allow for the financial realities of feudal prerogative while dictating terms to his brother. This is the first mention of any relief being paid by the de Lacys for seisin of Meath, or any of their other lands, during this period; and for that alone it provides a fascinating glimpse of another aspect of the lord–vassal dynamic.<sup>124</sup>

Just as Count John's mandate states, his charter to de Lacy for Meath appears to have acted as a watershed in their relationship. Walter's promised fine of 2,500 marks no doubt helped, but John seems to have genuinely softened his stance towards the de Lacys and acted as a courteous, if not overly beneficent, lord to Walter and his family for over a decade thereafter.<sup>125</sup> An explicit example of the reality of their reconciliation followed about two years later. The annals collected by James Ware and the so-called 'Dublin' annals of Inisfallen record under 1196 that the erstwhile baron of Meath and contemporary partisan of Cathal Crobderg of Connacht, Gilbert de Angulo, disturbed the peace of Ireland to the extent that he was driven from Ireland and his lands confiscated by the justiciar, Hamo de Valognes.<sup>126</sup> This brought those of de Angulo's lands that had been held in chief into the hands of the lord of Ireland. Count John then decided to grant these forfeited lands, which extended beyond the lake of Tír Briúin (Lough Oughter, Co. Cavan) into Bréifne proper, to Gilbert's former lord, Walter de Lacy. What is more, in the same letter to the justiciar that informed him of the grant, John also bestowed upon de Lacy a messuage in the town of Limerick and three knights' fees in a neighbouring cantred.<sup>127</sup> These grants can be roughly dated to about the year 1197, when John granted the town of Limerick a charter of liberties based upon those granted to Dublin, and when his justiciar, Hamo de Valognes, began granting burgages within the town and lands in the surrounding territories to the established Anglo-Norman powers in the region.<sup>128</sup> This reconciliation was to eventually turn into genuine favour, with a marriage to the daughter of a favoured magnate and extensive co-operation in Ireland being the

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<sup>123</sup> This perhaps lends credence to Flanagan's theory that John's reluctance to grant seisin of Meath and Leinster could have been due to his unmet demands for large reliefs, see Flanagan, *Irish society*, 283.

<sup>124</sup> It certainly places in context the fine of 3,100 marks that Walter had to pay King Richard in 1198 for the restoration of his English and Norman lands; see D.M. Stenton (ed.), *The great roll of the pipe for the tenth year of the reign of King Richard the first, Michaelmas 1198*, Pipe Roll Society new series, 9 (London, 1932), 213.

<sup>125</sup> I hope to explore this further in a future publication, but for the present a brief example must suffice.

<sup>126</sup> Trinity College Dublin MS. 1281, *s.a.* 1196; *AFM*, 107n; Richard Butler, *Some notices of the castle and of the ecclesiastical buildings of Trim* (Naas, 1978), 10.

<sup>127</sup> Mills and McEnery, *Gormanston register*, 7, 179. Although the editors of the *Gormanston register* favour a date of *c.* 1196, the dating of this letter is problematical due to the deterioration of the dating clause. All that is clear is that it was granted on the twenty-second day of a certain month between the years 1196–8 at Verneuil; see Orpen, *Normans*, 214, (vol. 2, 156–8) for more on the grants around Limerick.

<sup>128</sup> Orpen, *Normans*, 214, (vol. 2, 157); Otway-Ruthven, *Medieval Ireland*, 73.

distinctive features of the relationship between John and Walter in the early years of John's reign as king of England.<sup>129</sup> From John's charter in 1195, it therefore appears that a process of authentic reconciliation between the pair was begun.<sup>130</sup>

## Conclusion

The arguments that have been marshalled here in order to reconstruct the first six years of Walter de Lacy's tenure in the lordship of Meath are, on the whole, perhaps more circumstantial than definitive. That said, they paint a fascinating picture of the effect that the early upheavals of King Richard's reign had on the lordship of Ireland. It has been reasoned that de Lacy likely received seisin of Meath in 1189, due to the general situation at the beginning of Richard's reign, combined with Walter's reception of seisin in England and Normandy and the king's concurrent assertion of William Marshal's lawful tenure in Leinster. A charter issued by Walter to his brother Hugh, which can now be dated with relative confidence to before 1191, seemingly confirms this hypothesis by displaying Walter's exercise of lordship in Meath three years earlier than has often been thought the case. His tenure was to be short-lived, however, for it seems that by 1192 Count John was ignoring Walter's prerogative in Meath and granting out lands from the de Lacy demesne himself. Although little is known of the concomitant political circumstances in Ireland, John's overriding of de Lacy sheds new light on the role that the lord of Ireland played in Ireland before 1194. The homage for Meath that Walter de Lacy paid to the English king upon Richard's return in 1194 is equally instructive, especially considering the praise that the *History of William Marshal* claims was given to William Marshal by the king and barons upon Marshal's refusal to do likewise for Leinster.<sup>131</sup> It is not clear what would have happened to de Lacy had he decided to champion feudal right as well, but in the event he seems to have been rewarded for his fidelity to the crown with an official commission in Ireland.

The existence of a mandate from Count John to his men in Ireland shows that Richard also made sure that Walter would retain his position in Meath when the king returned control of Ireland to his brother John in 1195. These events did not play out in a vacuum, and speak to the character of the men involved. It is therefore hoped that this examination of the narrowest of topics—the timing of Walter de Lacy's seisin of Meath—does more than merely re-date a key moment in the history of the Anglo-Norman community of Ireland, but also affects our understanding of the complex political milieu that existed in the first half of King Richard's reign.

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<sup>129</sup> For more on Walter's marriage to Margaret de Braose, see Hardy, *Rot. Chart.*, 80; T.D. Hardy (ed.), *Rotuli de Oblatis et Finibus in Turri Londinensi asservati* (London, 1835), 81. More on co-operation between the two in Ireland can be found in *ALC*, 229–31, *s.a.* 1203; Hardy, *Rot. Chart.*, 133–4, 1 36–7, 139; T.D. Hardy (ed.), *Rotuli litterarum patentium in Turri Londinensi asservati* (London, 1835), 39–41, 45; Hardy, *Rot. litt. claus.*, vol. 1, 40; and *CDI*, nos. 199, 201, 205, 209, 213–15, 224, 229, 240, 268.

<sup>130</sup> The burning of Count John's castle of Louth in 1196 by John de Courcy and Niall Mac Mathghamhna may indicate that at least one partisan of 1194–5 remained unrepentant, see *Misc. Irish Annals*, 77, (Mac Carthaigh's book, *s.a.* 1196).

<sup>131</sup> Holden, Gregory and Crouch, *History of William Marshal*, vol. 2, ll 10312–24.