

Sir James Fitzgerald of Desmond

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The career of Sir James Fitzgerald, the half-brother of Gerald, the ill-fated last Earl of Desmond, is outlined and discussed. The main focus is on his role in the Desmond rebellion, in which, despite an earlier uneasy relationship with the Earl, he took a prominent part. Captured by the MacCarthys of Muskerry, he was handed over to the English authorities and executed at Cork in October 1580.

Sir James Fitzgerald of Desmond was born the son of James Fitzgerald, fourteenth Earl of Desmond and Eveleen, Countess of Desmond (she being the Earl's fourth wife, and a daughter of Donal MacCarthy Mór). The birthdate of Sir James is unknown, but his baptism in Limerick on 26 June 1558 was a notable event:

Sunday, the 26th of June, in the afternoon, at the Bishop's house of Limerick, was [baptised] James, the son of the Earl of Desmond. The Lord Deputy, being godfather, called the child's name James Sussex of Desmond. And the officers of arms... proclaimed the child James Sussex of Desmond three times. And my Lord Deputy gave to the said child a chain of gold.¹

Sir James's godfather, Thomas Radcliffe, was appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland by Queen Mary I in 1556, and became the third Earl of Sussex in 1557. Radcliffe's attendance at the baptism was a temporary aside to the quelling of a feud between the O'Briens of Thomond, coupled with the child's father being the Earl of Desmond. In addition to being named James Sussex of Desmond by his godfather, Sir James was to bear other titles in life, such as *Shemus-na-tinol* (James of the Assemblies).²

By the end of October 1558 the Earl of Desmond was dead, and the Annals of the Four Masters describe his loss as 'woful to his country, for there was no need to watch cattle, or close doors, from Dun-caoin, in Kerry, to the green-bordered meeting of the three waters'.³ We learn from the calendar of the Carew manuscripts, that in 1553 (the year Sir James's parents married) 'Munster, under the rule of such lords and captains as be there, and of the Earl of Desmond, [was] in good quiet, so that the Justices of the Peace [rode] their circuit in the counties of Limerick, Cork and Kerry ... and the sheriffs [were] obeyed.'⁴ This suggests Sir James was born into a period of relative calm, which would dramatically change after his elder half-brother Gerald (or Gerrott) Fitzgerald became the fifteenth Earl of Desmond in 1558. Queen Mary I died on 17 November

¹ A journey made by the Earl of Sussex, 25 July 1558 in J.S. Brewer & W. Bullen (eds), *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts Preserved in the Archbishop's Library at Lambeth*, 1515-74 (London, 1867) p. 276.

² Annals of Loch Cé (henceforth abbreviated to ALC), 1579.7, p. 427 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100010B/index.html> accessed 11 Feb. 2016).

³ Annals of the Four Masters (henceforth abbreviated to AFM), M1558.1, p. 1561 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100005E/index.html> accessed 11 Feb. 2016).

⁴ State of Ireland, 8 May 1553 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, p. 235).

1558, and was succeeded to the throne by her half-sister Elizabeth, which would have far-reaching and drastic consequences for the island as a whole.

Eveleen, Countess of Desmond subsequently married Conor O'Brien, third Earl of Thomond. Sir James resided north of the Shannon, as an infant, with his mother and stepfather, until her premature death in 1560⁵ left him orphaned at two years of age. Ironically, it was to the assistance of Conor O'Brien that Sir James's godfather, Thomas Radcliffe, had come to Limerick in 1558, and in 1559 Gerald (Gerrott) Fitzgerald was amongst the opposing forces that defeated O'Brien at the Battle of Spancil Hill.⁶

Sir James's place of residence between 1560 and 1569 is uncertain. As a MacCarthy Mór, his mother was buried with her ancestors at Muckcross friary, Killarney, and it is likely that he remained in her family's care for most of his childhood. In 1569 Elizabethan John Corbine disparagingly refers to 'the Earl of Clancarr [having] the charge of James Mac an Erle, the Earl of Desmond's brother, twelve years old, who would be better brought up by the Queen.'⁷ Donal MacCarthy Mór (Sir James's uncle) had surrendered his lands to the crown in 1565 and received a re-grant, with the titles Baron of Valentia and Earl of Clancare.⁸ He had also been knighted at Limerick in 1558, following the baptism of his nephew Sir James.⁹

Great change took place in the earldom of Desmond during Sir James's childhood. In early 1567 the Elizabethan administration lost patience with Gerald, Earl of Desmond, due to continued feuding with the Butlers of Ormond, and ordered his imprisonment at Dublin Castle. In his absence, Cork, Limerick and Kerry were to be governed by the Earl's brother, Sir John Fitzgerald of Desmond.¹⁰ Sir John was to suffer a similar fate later that year, when detained while visiting the imprisoned Earl, and both were sent to England, where they remained in custody for some six years. James Fitzmaurice, a cousin of the Fitzgeralds, was appointed captain-general of Desmond by warrant of the absent Earl. Fitzmaurice, in attempting to further his own prospects, was at the helm of the first Desmond rebellion when it commenced shortly afterwards. It is likely that Sir James was exposed to the realities of conflict and rebellion from a young age, with his uncle and custodian Donal MacCarthy Mór proceeding to join with Fitzmaurice in June 1569, and attacking settlers upon the lands of Sir Warham St Leger at Kerrycurrihy, Co. Cork, and then proceeding to the walls of Cork with a force of thousands.¹¹ MacCarthy Mór submitted in December 1569, and the rebellion lingered on until 1573, when Fitzmaurice went into exile in Europe.

The Earl of Desmond and Sir John were both released in 1573, and sailed for Ireland. Sir John was allowed to return to Desmond, but the Earl was arrested and detained at Dublin. He subsequently escaped and made his way south.¹² Sir James was in England in 1574, attending upon his godfather the Earl of Sussex,¹³ but later that year was back in Ireland, with the Earl of Desmond forcing him to yield hostages.¹⁴ The relationship

⁵ AFM, M1560.1, p. 1577 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100005E/index.html> accessed 13 Feb. 2016).

⁶ Ibid., M1559.3, p. 1571 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100005E/index.html> accessed 13 Feb. 2016).

⁷ John Corbine to Cecill, 21 Mar. 1569 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1509-73*, p. 405).

⁸ [24] June 1565 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1509-73*, p. 264).

⁹ A journey made by the Earl of Sussex, 25 Jul. 1558 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1515-74*, p. 276).

¹⁰ Limerick, 31 Mar. 1567 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1509-73*, p. 329).

¹¹ Anthony M. McCormack, *The Earldom of Desmond 1463-1583: The decline and crisis of a Feudal Lordship* (Dublin, 2005) p. 114.

¹² AFM, M1573.7, p. 1665.

¹³ McCormack, *Earldom of Desmond*, p. 163.

¹⁴ Ibid.

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between the half-brothers appeared far from amicable, and in 1575 Queen Elizabeth directed that Sir James be put 'in possession of the lands given to him by his father and...withheld from him by his brother the Earl of Desmond'.¹⁵ Sir James continued in favour with the administration during 1575, accompanying Sir Henry Sidney on a southern journey with other nobles and gentlemen.¹⁶ Friendly relations were restored between the brothers by 1577, with the Earl of Desmond giving Sir James 'the castle called Porttrenawd, the Fort of the three enemies'.¹⁷ Sir James had reconciled with the Earl and engaged in the age-old practice of coyne and livery '[taking] meat in [Duhallow, Cork]...with a large force'.¹⁸

Coyne and livery was a practice well known to the Fitzgeralds of Desmond, and a fundamental element in a system of tributes and exactions, whereby subjects were required to give food, lodgings, etc. to the servants and followers of their lord. It could lead to oppression and racketeering. Composition had been introduced by the administration, with the intention that private armed forces be abolished. The event in Duhallow involving Sir James could be considered an early indicator of his future intentions. Having reached the age of majority, it suggests refusal to comply with authority, bolstered perhaps with impetuosity of youth, and enhanced by exposure from a young age to rebellious instincts of relations, and now proceeding to follow in their footsteps. *Shemus-na-tinol* (James of the Assemblies), as the Annals of Loch Cé describe Sir James, springs to mind. As Sir William Drury, Lord President of Munster wisely remarked 'the assembly of these young men of the Geraldines' would breed trouble.¹⁹

Sir James fell foul of the authorities in 1578, and Lord Deputy Sidney in July wrote of the Earl of Desmond's fidelity in 'sending' his brother Sir James when required.²⁰ Following in the tradition of his ancestors, Sir James had committed spoils upon the Butlers of Ormond, for which he submitted in October, and was given over to the keeping of county sheriff William Apsly by the [now] Lord Justice William Drury.²¹ A pardon was granted in 1579 to Sir James and others, and a fine imposed of twenty shillings each, provided they appear before commissioners in their county within six months and give security to keep the peace and answer when called upon.²² It was all to be overshadowed, within months, by events directly involving Sir James at Tralee.

In July 1579, James Fitzmaurice returned to Ireland with papal legate Nicholas Sanders, and a small number of soldiers. They landed at Smerwick in County Kerry, proceeded to fortify the fort of Dún an Óir, and were subsequently reinforced by additional troops. Sir John and Sir James travelled westwards, with the intention of involving themselves, and lending support to this Catholic invasion force. On 1 August government officials Sir Henry Davells (Constable of Dungarvan) and Arthur Carter (Provost Marshal of Munster), while resting at an inn in Tralee, were murdered in their beds, along with their retinue. Various publications over the centuries have implicated both Sir John and Sir James in the murders but others Sir John only. The Calendar of

¹⁵ The Queen to the Lord Deputy, Manor of Hatfield, Jun. 1575 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 71).

¹⁶ Sir Henry Sydney to the Privy Council, [27] Feb. 1576 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, p. 39).

¹⁷ President Drury to Walsyngham, Cork, 5 May 1577 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 113).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ President Drury to Walsyngham, Apr. 1577 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 113). The Fitzgerald dynasty in Ireland was occasionally referred to as the Geraldines.

²⁰ Lord Deputy Sydney to the Privy Council, Dublin Castle, 1 Jul. 1578 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 137).

²¹ Lord Justice Drury and Sir Edward Fyton to the Privy Council, 20 Nov. 1578 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, pp 140, 143).

²² Éamonn de Búrca, *The Irish Fiants of the Tudor Sovereigns: 1558-86* (4 vols, Dublin, 1994), ii, 491.

State Papers for Ireland and the Annals of the Four Masters both contain entries implicating Sir James.²³ The impression is given that Sir James was involved, and had crossed a boundary from which there was no return.

Edward White wrote to Queen Elizabeth's secretary, Sir Francis Walsingham, from Limerick on 9 August, describing a 'stir' begun by Sir John and Sir James upon the arrival of Fitzmaurice.²⁴ It was no stir, but the beginnings of a rebellion. Fitzmaurice, having left Smerwick, died following a skirmish in August with the Burkes in Limerick, and leadership of the rebellion effectively fell upon Sir John, with Sir James playing a supportive role. The Earl of Desmond denied any involvement, appearing to denounce his brothers and the rebels, but also complained of the activities of Crown forces within his territory.²⁵ His motives and sympathies were suspiciously regarded however, with Drury reporting the Earl's camping within a mile of his brothers 'and no enmity'.²⁶

The first major encounter of the rebellion took place in September 1579 at *Gort na Tiobrad* (also named Springfield), County Limerick, when the rebels gained a notable victory. They emerged from the Wood of Kilmore, and attacked the English force in a clearing, killing many of the kerne and English, including three captains, with Sir James having his horse killed from under him.²⁷ Drury took ill following the defeat, died, and was replaced by Sir William Pelham. The next encounter took place on 3 October 1579 at *Aenagh Beg* (also named Monasternenagh) near the Maigue River. This time the rebels fought in the open, exposing their limitations, and the English force under Sir Nicholas Malby was victorious.²⁸ Malby triumphantly reported that 'in the conflict with the traitors, all their captains were slain, saving the two traitorous brethern, who carried away the Pope's standard through the woods and thorns in post haste' and also accused the Earl of Desmond of involvement, in joining 'his force of 600 galloglass with the 600 of his brethern'.²⁹

Thomas Butler, tenth Earl of Ormond, a supporter of the Elizabethan administration, was commissioned 'to prosecute with fire and sword John of Desmond, and James of Desmond, knights, and their followers and abettors, with power to treat and to grant protections, except to said John and James'.³⁰ Butler, as a proponent of long-standing family feuds with the Fitzgeralds, was directed by Pelham to 'treat' with the Earl of Desmond.³¹ Correspondence was also exchanged between Pelham and the Earl of Desmond, to no avail. By November the administration had lost patience, and a proclamation issued from the Lord Justice and Council against the Earl and his 'adherents', denouncing them as traitors.³² The Earl proceeded to openly join the rebellion, and the Annals of the Four Masters describe the destruction that ensued. On 13 November Youghal was sacked by the Earl and his followers,³³ and Kinsale was sacked on 23 November by Donal

²³ Lord Justice and Earl of Kildare to the Privy Council, 3 Aug. 1579 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 178); AFM, M1579.10, p. 1715 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100005E/index.html> accessed 21 Feb. 2016).

²⁴ Edward Whyte to Walsyngham, Limerick, 9 Aug. 1579 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 179).

²⁵ AFM, M1579.11, p. 1717 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100005E/index.html> accessed 21 Feb. 2016).

²⁶ Lord Justice Drury to Walsyngham, Camp near Arlow, 17 Sept. 1579 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 188).

²⁷ AFM, M1579.12, p. 1719 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100005E/index.html> accessed 21 Feb. 2016).

²⁸ AFM, M1749.14, p. 1719 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100005E/index.html> accessed 22 Feb. 2016); ALC 1579.20, p. 431 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100010B/index.html> accessed 22 Feb. 2016); McCormack, *Earldom of Desmond*, p. 151.

²⁹ Sir N. Malbie to Walsyngham, Adare, 12 Oct. 1579 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 190).

³⁰ de Búrca, *Irish Fiants: 1558-86*, p. 500.

³¹ The Earl of Desmond, 28 Oct. 1579 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, p. 160).

³² Proclamation against the Earl of Desmond, 2 Nov. 1579, (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, p. 162).

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MacCarthy Mór,³⁴ with the assistance of his nephew Sir James.³⁵ The Earl, Sir John and Sir James, in a signed letter dated 29 November, appealed to various Irish lords, including the O'Connors, the O'Moores and Kavanaghs of Leinster, for support 'in defence of our Catholicke faith, and the ov[er]throwe of [our] Countrie by Englishe men, had ov[er]throwne the holie church and [go] about to ov[er]ronne our Countrie, and to make it their owne, and to make us their bond men.'³⁶ The rebellion was not destined to receive widespread Irish support. Religious approval was evident from the 'allotting' of the Barony of Kenry, north of Adare to Sir James, confirmed by papal legate Sanders and in recognition of services for the Catholic cause against the 'heretics'.³⁷

The administration was anxious to quell disturbances, with the Earl of Ormond by Memorandum dated 26 January 1580 urging the granting of pardons to offenders, except the Earl of Desmond and his brothers.³⁸ Pelham appeared conciliatory or hopeful, with his letter to Queen Elizabeth on 31 January contemplating rifts between the rebels, and seeking directions on the offering of terms, if the Earl of Desmond were to submit with delivery of his brothers, Sanders, or other principal rebels.³⁹ Continued efforts to track down the rebels were unsuccessful, with Sir William Morgan, journeying from Baltimore to Kinsale, Cork and Youghal, and subsequently reporting from Dungarvan that 'he could not find the traitors James and John [Desmond]'.⁴⁰

Continued papal support for the rebellion was forthcoming in the letter of Pope Gregory XIII written on 13 May and addressed to the Irish, urging assistance for Sir John of Desmond in his fight against the heretics, and granting and extending a plenary indulgence and remission of sins to those who did 'and after [Sir John's] death...to those who adhere to and support his brother [Sir] James'.⁴¹ Countrywide support of the cause did not follow, despite papal request. Later that month Sir John and Sir James took 4,000 cattle from Kerrycurrihy and Kinelea, County Cork. The report of Sir Warham St Leger to Cecil (Lord Burghley) contained a stinging rebuke directed at local lords:

The traitors John and James of Desmond, with 300 of their associates, relieved as friends in the Viscount Barry's country with meat and drink. They take a prey of 4,000 kine, &c., in Kiricurihie and Kynoley. Sir Cormac M'Teige let them pass quietly with the same. If three or four of such hollow subjects were to lose their heads for their treason, it would do more good than the execution of 10,000 mean persons.⁴²

³³ Colm Lennon, *Sixteenth-Century Ireland: the incomplete conquest* (Dublin, 1994) p. 225; John Hooker (ed.), *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (6 vols, 2nd ed., London, 1587), iii, 164.

³⁴ Lord Justice Pelham to the Queen, 23 Nov. 1579 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, p. 171).

³⁵ Ed. Waterhous to Burghley, Dublin, 26 Nov. 1579 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 196).

³⁶ Desmond and his Brethem to Various Persons, 29 Nov. 1579 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, p. 177); McCormack, *Earldom of Desmond*, p. 183.

³⁷ Pelham to Mr. Secretary Walsingham, 26 Nov. 1579 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, p. 175); James Golde, the attorney in Munster, to Sir N. Malbie, Dublin, 27 Nov. 1579 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 197).

³⁸ Memorandum from Ormonde [?] to Burghley], 26 Jan. 1580 (The National Archives of the UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO) SP 63/71/30, ff 60-1) (<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/details?uri=C10241969> accessed 23 Feb. 2016).

³⁹ Pelham to the Queen, 31 Jan. 1580 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, p. 210).

⁴⁰ Sir William Morgan to Burghley, 22 Feb. 1580 (TNA: PRO SP 63/71/59, ff 121-2) (<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/Details?uri=C10245700> accessed 23 Feb. 2016).

⁴¹ Don Philip O'Sullivan Bear, *Chapters towards a history of Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth being a portion of the history of catholic Ireland*, ed. Matthew J. Byrne (Dublin, 1903), p. 31 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100060/index.html>) (24 Feb. 2016).

⁴² Sir Warhame Sentleger to Burghley, Cork 29 May 1580 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 225).

Sir Cormac M'Teige MacCarthy of Muskerry was, at the time, Sheriff of the county of Cork. Pelham had expressed reservations in February 1580 to the English Council about Sir Cormac, describing him as 'reasonably well affected... if [he] may be trusted'.⁴³ On 12 May Sir Cormac attended an assembly of Lords and gentlemen, called by Pelham, and was delegated, along with Viscounts Barry and Roche, to deal with the rebels along the border of Cork and Limerick.⁴⁴ Pelham's discontent with regional affairs continued, and on 4 July he wrote 'I have drawn to me the noblemen and gentlemen whose names are enclosed, and who incline to the traitors. I take them all with me to Limerick.'⁴⁵ Included in the list of names was Sir Cormac, along with other principal lords and gentlemen of Cork, who were assembled, and at Limerick required to yield submissions and pledges, and make contributions towards the army in mitigation of charges, with some offering to serve at their own cost.⁴⁶

Áth Ridire (ford of the Knight) anglicised to Aughariddera, is the meeting point of townlands, civil parishes and catholic parishes in the barony of East Muskerry, in mid-Cork. The place name derives from an event on 4 August 1580, when the forces of Sir James Fitzgerald and the MacCarthy's of Muskerry engaged in conflict at this location. Locally it is referred to as the 'Battle of Aghavrin' or the 'Battle of Mullinhassig.' For centuries a ford crossing of the Glashagarriff River existed here, and only in the twentieth century was a bridge constructed. To the north-west is the wooded glen of Mullinhassig, and to the south-east boggy land adjoins the river. During the sixteenth century this area would have been heavily wooded, with trees including oak, ash, elm, hazel scrub on drier ground and at higher elevations, some birch.⁴⁷ It makes *Áth Ridire* an ideal crossing point, and a perfect ambush location.

Booleying (or transhumance) has long been associated with this area of hills and ridges, and is reflected in local place names: Knockaunnamuacailly (*Cnocan na mBuachailli*) 'hillock of the [herd] boys',⁴⁸ Shanavagha (*Seana-Mhacha*) 'old cattle enclosure or milking field', Capanagraun (*Ceapach na gCrann*) 'clearance plot of the trees',⁴⁹ and Glenabooly (*Gleann na Buaile*) 'glen of the cattle enclosure'.⁵⁰ On the northern side of the ridge is a townland interestingly named Curraghanearla (*Creach-an-Iarla*) 'the raid or plunder of the Earl'.⁵¹ The exact location of Sir James's raid on 4 August is unknown, but probably occurred in close proximity to the ford of *Áth Ridire*, as there would have been other river crossing points in the area. Sir Cormac MacCarthy proceeded to gather his forces in opposition, mindful of the prior rebuke of Warham St Leger and subsequent action taken by Pelham against local lords. The raid also occurred in Sir Cormac's mensal lands,⁵² and he would have viewed Sir James's conduct as a direct attack upon himself. Conflict between the MacCarthy's and Fitzgeralds had ensued for centuries, with the MacCarthy's having the upper hand at Callan in 1261, and at Mourne Abbey in 1521.

⁴³ Pelham to the Council in England, 16 Feb. 1580 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, p. 219).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 20 May 1580 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, p. 256).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 Jul. 1580 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, p. 265).

⁴⁶ The Lord Justice and Council to the Privy Council in England, Limerick, 12 Jul. 1580 (*Cal. Carew MSS, 1575-88*, p. 269).

⁴⁷ Niall O'Carroll (ed.), *The forests of Ireland: history, distribution and silviculture* (Dublin, 1984), p. 33.

⁴⁸ Bruno O'Donoghue, *Parish Histories and Place Names of West Cork* (Kerry, 1986), p. 273.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Seán MacCárthaigh, *Topographical and General Survey: Aghinagh Parish* (Irish Tourist Association, 1943).

⁵² W. F. Butler, 'The Barony of Muskerry' in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, second series, xvi, 1910, p. 84. Mensal lands were directly retained by a local lord or chieftain for their own purposes.

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Maurice Dubh (Sir James's uncle and James Fitzmaurice's father) was beheaded by the MacCarthys during an excursion into Muskerry in 1564.⁵³

Records give a good account of the event and outcome. On 6 August 1580 Grante advised that Sir James took 2,000 cattle and garrans (ponies), leading Sir Cormac to gather his forces, including his brothers Donal MacCarthy, tánaiste of Muskerry, and Callaghan MacCarthy. Donal was first to the scene and attacked Sir James five times, until Sir Cormac arrived. Seventy-nine of Sir James's force were killed, and three prisoners taken. Sir James was seriously wounded and taken to nearby Carrigadrohid Castle. Donal MacCarthy was wounded by a 'dart' under his right ear,⁵⁴ and was taken to his residence at Carrignamuck Castle, some number of miles to the north-east, where he later died.⁵⁵ Warham St Leger advised Ormond on 6 August that Sir James wished to be beheaded rather than be brought to Cork,⁵⁶ no doubt aware of the fate that awaited him for perceived treason. Sir Cormac, by his capture of Sir James, was back in favour with the administration. Pelham advised of the 'service' done, and confirmed that fifteen of Sir James's principal horsemen were slain, and 'serviceable people' were put to the sword, with not all being executed during the conflict, and some later found hiding in bushes meaning to escape.⁵⁷ Local tradition holds that Sir James was captured by a blacksmith during the fight, and later handed over to Sir Cormac. It is of course possible that local persons, loyal to the MacCarthys, would have engaged in the fight as part of the 'rising out' against Sir James. The Annals of the Four Masters suggests Sir James was ambushed [at *Áth Ridire*] by Sir Cormac,⁵⁸ which is not identical to the version of events given by Grante. There is the possibility that Donal MacCarthy, in knowing the local topography and in continuing to attack Sir James, intentionally succeeded in driving him towards ambush at *Áth Ridire*, where the main MacCarthy contingent lay in wait under Sir Cormac.

Sir James was held for a number of weeks by the MacCarthys, firstly at Carrigadrohid Castle and then taken to Blarney Castle. On 25 August Pelham wrote to Sir Cormac requesting he deliver Sir James to Warham St Leger,⁵⁹ and on the same day an Order for the trial and execution of Sir James was signed by Pelham and the Council at Limerick.⁶⁰ This was followed on 26 August by their letter to the Commissioners at Cork, requesting they proceed, upon delivery of Sir James, to his examination, indictment and execution.⁶¹ Sir Cormac complied with Pelham's request, and Sir James was taken by the Earl of Ormond from Blarney Castle,⁶² to be imprisoned at Shandon Castle outside the gates of Cork and there to await his fate. By 31 August he had been condemned, but 'reprieved'⁶³ and on 6 September St Leger wrote to Lord High Treasurer Burghley advising Sir James was still alive.⁶⁴ The Annals of the Four Masters tell us that Sir James was confined for nearly a month and that a writ arrived from Dublin from the Lord Justice and Council,

⁵³ AFM, M1564.5, p. 1603 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100005E/index.html> accessed 28 Feb. 2016).

⁵⁴ Grante to my Lord of Ormond, Cork 6 August 1580 (TNA: PRO SP 63/75).

⁵⁵ AFM, M1581.9, p. 1755 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100005E/index.html> accessed 29 Feb. 2016).

⁵⁶ Sir Warhame Sentleger to the Earl of Ormond, Cork, 6 Aug. 1580 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 241).

⁵⁷ Sir William Pelham to Lord Burghley, 14 Aug. 1580 (TNA: PRO SP 63/75).

⁵⁸ AFM, M1580.11, p. 1727 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100005E/index.html> accessed 29 Feb. 2016).

⁵⁹ Pelham to Sir Cormack McTeige, 25 Aug. 1580, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 597, p. 427a.

⁶⁰ Sir James of Desmond, 25 Aug. 1580, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 597, p. 428a.

⁶¹ Pelham to the Commissioners at Cork, 26 Aug. 1580, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 597, p. 429.

⁶² Earl of Ormond to Lord Deputy Grey, 28 Aug. 1580 (TNA: PRO SP 63/75).

⁶³ Chancellor Gerrarde to Walsingham, Dublin 31 Aug. 1580 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 247).

⁶⁴ Sir Warhame Sentleger to Burghley, Cork, 6 Sept. 1580 (*Cal. S.P. Ire., 1574-85*, p. 249).

ordering the mayor to put him to death.⁶⁵ Sir James was executed at Cork on 3 October 1580, with St Leger writing to Lord Burghley on 9 October to advise that 'Sir James of Desmond, who by direction from the Lord Deputy, [he] caused to be hanged drawn and quartered at the gates of this Town on Monday last ... [had] yielded to God'.⁶⁶

The rebellion had continued during Sir James's imprisonment, with English forces being routed at Glenmalur in Wicklow on 25 August 1580 by the forces of O'Byrne and Viscount Baltinglass. On 10 September a papal invasion-force of approximately 600 men landed at Smerwick, Co. Kerry, but were besieged and ultimately massacred by English forces. The war dragged on for two years, dominated by guerrilla type fighting, with the civilian population suffering greatly from ensuing destruction, famine and disease. In 1582 Sir John of Desmond was killed following a skirmish north of Cork City. The rebellion finally came to an end in 1583, when the Earl of Desmond was killed by the Moriartys near Tralee, and confiscation of the vast estates of the Desmonds and the lands of their allies followed, and the Munster plantations began in earnest.

Sir James was one of many caught up in the tumultuous events of the time, but does not seem to have received much historical notice, despite the importance of his contribution. A personal bond with his half-brother Sir John is evident, as the two acted together during much of the Second Desmond Rebellion. It could be argued that Sir James rebelled for many reasons: as a means of flouting authority, for potential material gain, for religious belief, from impetuosity of youth; from exposure to conflict and rebellion in younger years, and it being natural to rebel in turn and follow his ancestors. In short, Sir James was a significant figure of the time, who has been largely forgotten during ensuing centuries, and perhaps merits greater historical recognition.

⁶⁵ AFM, M1580.11, p. 1727 (<http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100005E/index.html> accessed 29 Feb. 2016).

⁶⁶ Sir Warham Sentleger to Lord Burghley, Cork, 9 Oct. 1580 (TNA: PRO SP 63/77).