

# THE IRISH WARS 1485-1603



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IAN HEATH DAVID SQUE

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# THE IRISH WARS

## 1485-1603

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**Author's Note:**

This book concentrates principally on Irish armies of the Tudor period. For fuller details of contemporary English armies the reader is referred to MAA 191 *Henry VIII's Army and Elite 15 The Armada Campaign 1588*.

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# THE IRISH WARS 1485-1603

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the passage of more than three centuries since the initial Anglo-Norman invasion, Ireland at the beginning of the Tudor era remained an alien land, differing from Renaissance England in customs, costume, language, law and land tenure alike. The original veneer of English feudal overlords who might have hoped to anglicise the native 'wild Irish' had long since degenerated to become themselves 'more Irish than the Irish', gaelicised to the point where some could no longer even speak English. Tudor monarchs, like their predecessors, made efforts to redress this decay by attempting, at various times and in assorted ways, to dismantle Irish society, right down to the suppression of native dress and hairstyles. Such efforts inevitably met with little success, and served only to nurture Irish resentment towards the English and to emphasise the cultural gulf that lay between them.

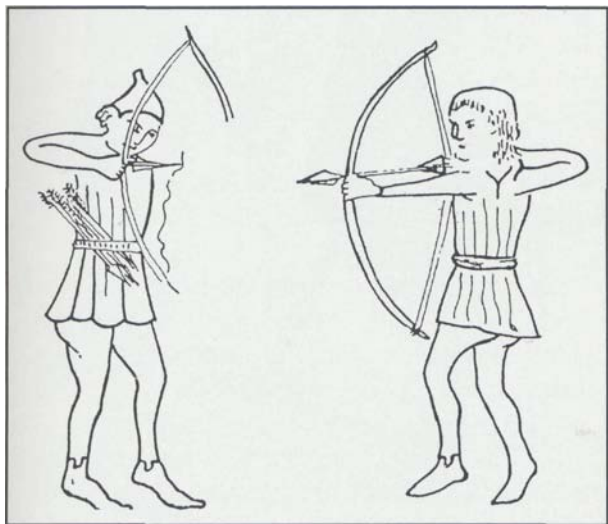
The Reformation in England distanced them further, as the majority of Irishmen adhered stubbornly to their Catholicism. Eventually, in Elizabeth's reign, both sides resorted to the use of force on a large scale in a series of bloody wars and

rebellions that were to culminate in the Earl of Tyrone's 'Great Rebellion' of 1595-1603, the suppression of which was ultimately to shape the geography of Ireland as we still see it today. It therefore needs little imagination to see that Tyrone's failure was, in the long term, disastrous for both countries.

## CHRONOLOGY

In a country where cattle represented the chief form of wealth and rustling was endemic, feuding and raiding were almost continuous throughout this period, especially in Ulster and Connaught; and this listing represents only the most significant military events.

- 1487** 5 May: John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, lands in pro-Yorkist Ireland with 2,000 mercenaries in support of pretender Lambert Simnel, who is crowned 'King Edward VI' in Dublin (24 May). Invading England with Irish support, they are defeated at the Battle of Stoke Field (16 June).
- 1491** Nov: Perkin Warbeck, claiming to be Richard, son of King Edward IV, lands at Cork, probably at the invitation of the rebellious Earl of Desmond. Receives insufficient support and sails for France.
- 1495** 23 July-3 Aug: Warbeck returns and, with Desmond, besieges Waterford. Retires to Scotland.
- 1497** 26 July: Warbeck again returns to Ireland. Invades England supported by Irish Yorkists (7 Sept), but is easily defeated and surrenders.



*Irish archers of the early Tudor period, from a fresco at Abbey Knockmoy, County Galway. Spenser recorded that the arrows from Irish*

*bows could 'enter into an armed man or horse most cruelly, notwithstanding that they are shot forth weakly'. (After G. A. Hayes-McCoy)*

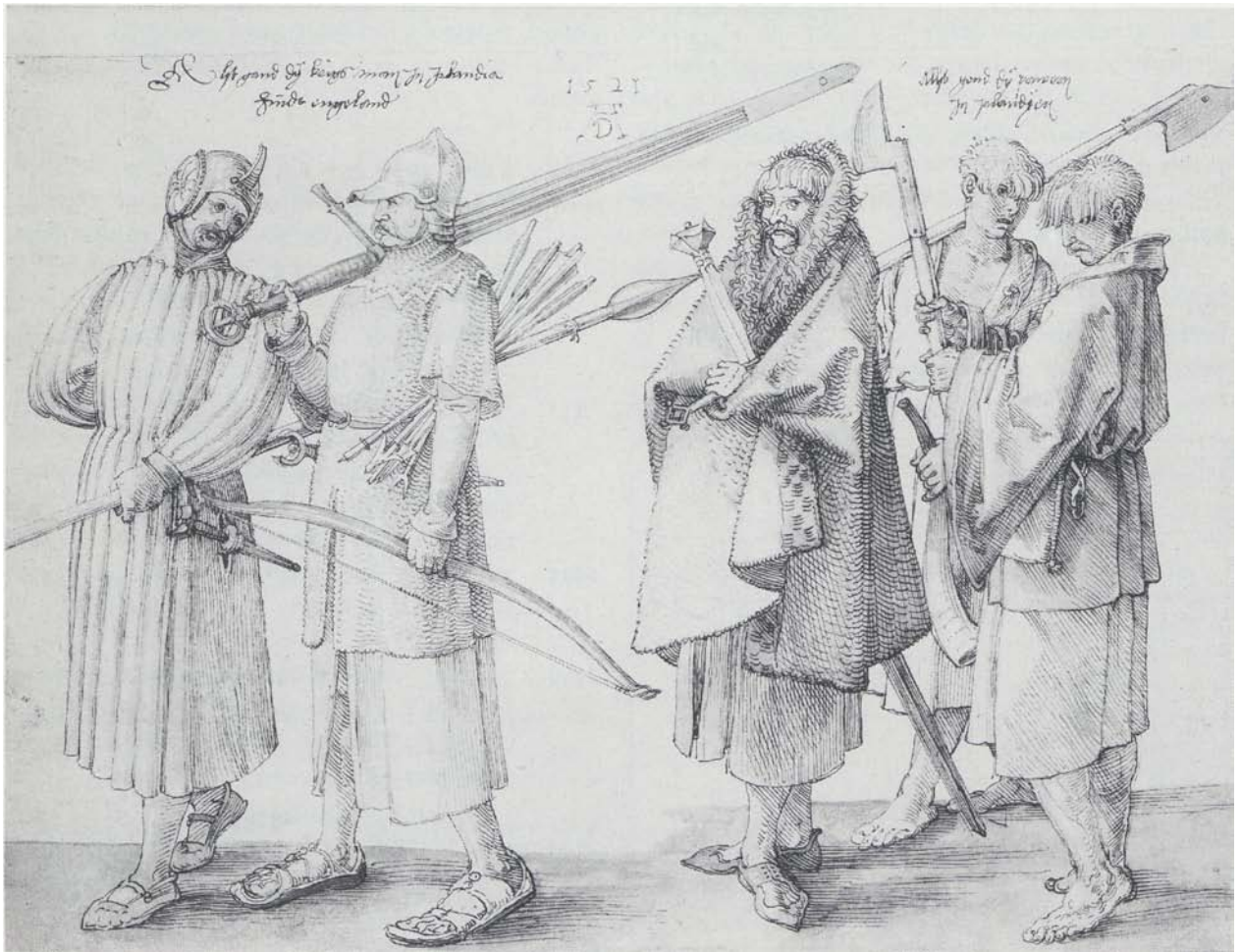
- 1504** 19 Aug: Battle of Knockdoe. Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare, defeats Ulick MacWilliam Burke.
- 1510** Kildare campaigns in Munster.
- 1534** 11 June: Thomas Fitzgerald ('Silken Thomas') rebels. Lays siege to Dublin (Aug-Oct). Surrenders in 1535 and is eventually executed. (*The Kildare War 1534-40*).
- 1539** Aug: Battle of Bellahoe. Leonard Grey, Lord Deputy, defeats Con Bacagh O'Neill and Manus O'Donnell.
- 1541** 28 Dec: O'Neill submits to Sir Anthony St. Leger, Lord Deputy.
- 1561** 18 July: Shane O'Neill defeats an English contingent in the Battle of the Red Sagums. Sept: Lord Lieutenant Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, campaigns as far north as Lough Foyle.
- 1562** 6 Jan: O'Neill submits to Queen Elizabeth,

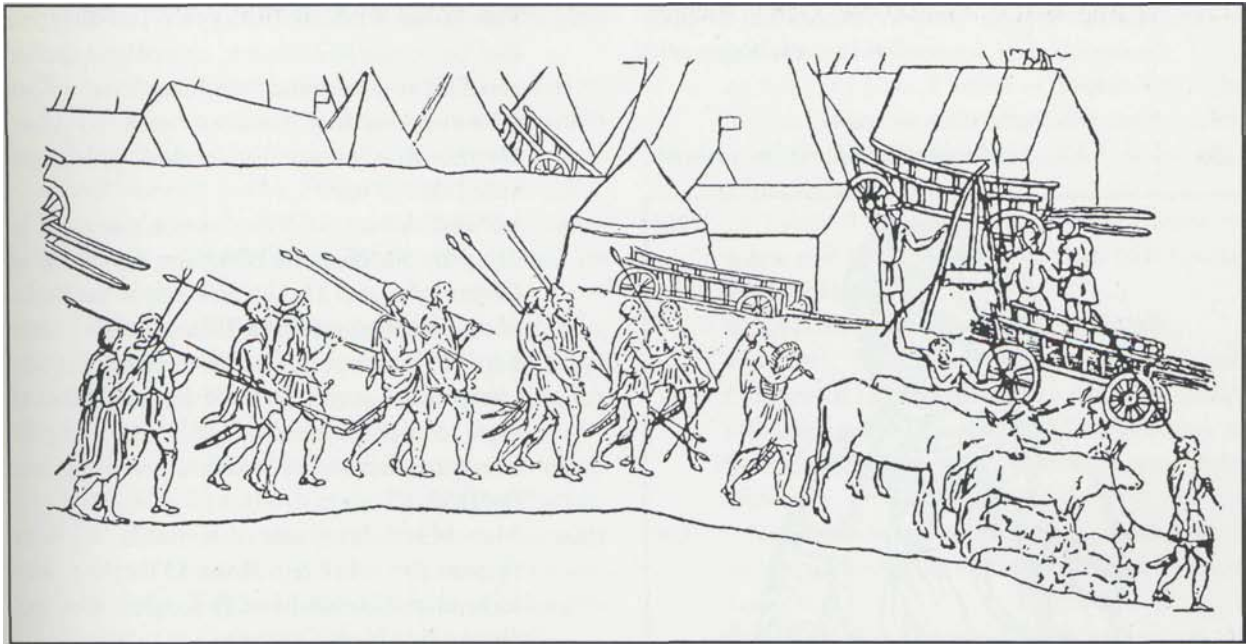
but within a few months is under arms once more.

- 1563** 11 Sept: O'Neill again submits.
- 1565** 1 Feb: Battle of Affane, a family dispute in which Thomas Butler, Earl of Ormond, captures Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Desmond.
- 2 May: Shane O'Neill, having invaded Antrim, defeats the MacDonalds at the Battle of Glenshesk, capturing most of their leaders.

*Irish warriors: drawing by Albrecht Dürer, 1521. The original caption in his handwriting reads, above the front two figures, 'soldiers of Ireland, beyond England', and above the hindmost three, 'thus go the poor of Ireland'. Clearly the front two figures represent*

*galloglasses while the others are their servants or kern. Various elements of the picture are more fanciful than entirely accurate. (Kupferstichka binett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Photograph by Jörg P. Anders)*





From engravings made in 1775 of the series of paintings once in Cowdray House, Sussex (burnt down in 1793), depicting King Henry VIII's siege of Boulogne in 1544. This detail represents some of the Irish kern who served in the English army.

Returning from a successful cattle-raid, they are each armed with two darts and a long knife; Holinshed's Chronicle records the effectiveness of the kern in keeping the army supplied with beef, for which they raided as far as 20 or 30 miles inland.

- 1566** 17 Sept—12 Nov: Sir Henry Sidney, Lord Deputy, campaigns against O'Neill in Ulster, restores Calvagh O'Donnell to his lands and establishes a shortlived garrison at Derry.
- 1567** 8 May: O'Neill is decisively beaten at the Battle of Farsetmore by Hugh O'Donnell, losing 1,300 men. He escapes to seek help from the MacDonalds, who murder him (2 June).
- 1568** James Fitzmaurice, cousin of the Earl of Desmond, rebels. (*The Fitzmaurice Rebellion* 1568-73).
- 1569** July-Sept: Sir Henry Sidney campaigns in Munster and Leinster.
- 1570** 24 June: Battle of Shrule. Sir Edward Fitton, Lord President of Connaught, defeats MacWilliams.
- 1572** Rory Oge O'Moore rebels.  
Nov: Fitzmaurice's much-reduced forces are surprised and dispersed by Sir Edward But-

ler, and he submits early the next year (23 Feb).

- 1574** Sept: Turlough Luineach O'Neill in revolt until June 1575, when he is defeated by Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex.
- 1575** 26 July: The infamous massacre of Scots on Rathlin Island by English troops.  
Dec: Rory Oge O'Moore submits but is again in revolt early the next year.
- 1579** 17 July: James Fitzmaurice, in exile since 1575, lands at Smerwick with a small force. He is killed soon after in an insignificant skirmish.  
Sept: Battle of Springfield. John of Desmond routs Sir William Drury, Lord Justice of Ireland.  
3 Oct: Battle of Monasternenagh. Sir Nicholas Malby, commander in Munster, defeats John of Desmond. John's brother Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Desmond, is effectively in rebellion from about this time. (*The Desmond Rebellion* 1579-83).
- 1580** July: Rebellion in Leinster led by James Eustace, Viscount Baltinglas, and Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne.  
25 Aug: O'Byrne defeats Arthur Lord Grey, Lord Deputy, at the Battle of Glenmalure.  
12-13 Sept: 700 papal-sponsored Italian and

Spanish troops land at Smerwick. Swiftly besieged, they surrender and are massacred (11 Nov).

**1581** Nov: Baltinglas flees to Spain.

**1582** Jan: John of Desmond is killed in an ambush.



**1583** Feb-June: Thomas Butler, Earl of Ormond and Governor of Munster, campaigns against the Earl of Desmond, whittling away at his following until it numbers only 80 men. Desmond is eventually tracked down and killed on 11 Nov.

**1586** 22 Sept: A body of New Scots is surprised in camp by Sir Richard Bingham, Governor of Connaught, and heavily defeated at the Battle of Ardanree, 1,400 being killed.

**1588** Sept: At least 17 ships of the Spanish Armada are wrecked on the coast of Ireland. Most of their complements who fall into English hands are executed. Numerous survivors join the Irish.

**1590** Mar-May: Bingham despatches a force against the rebel Sir Brian O'Rourke, who escapes to Scotland but is handed over and executed (3 Nov).

**1593** 10 Oct: Battle of the Erne Fords. Hugh Maguire is defeated by Sir Henry Bagnall.

**1594** 2 Feb: English capture Maguire's castle of Enniskillen.

7 Aug: An English supply column en route to Enniskillen (besieged by the Irish since June) is defeated by Maguire and Cormac O'Neill at the Arney Ford, renamed Ford of the Biscuits after the supplies scattered about in consequence of the battle.

**1595** 16 Feb: Irish under Art MacBaron capture the Blackwater Fort.

May: Maguire and Cormac O'Neill recover Enniskillen Castle.

27 May: Sir Henry Bagnall, returning from revictualling Newry, is attacked and defeated in a running fight at Clontibret by Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone. (*Tyrone's Rebellion 1595-1603*).

**1597** 14 July: Thomas Lord Burgh, Lord Deputy, storms the Blackwater Fort. An attempt by Tyrone to retake it is repulsed with loss (2 Oct).

2 Aug: Sir Conyers Clifford narrowly escapes Hugh O'Donnell's forces in a running battle

*Typical English plate armour of the mid-16th century, from the brass of Christopher Lytkott, 1554.*

*Compare with the Anglo-Irish armours of similar date in Plate D.*

after being repulsed from Ballyshannon Castle.

**1598** 14 Aug: Sir Henry Bagnall, en route to revictual the Blackwater Fort, is killed when his army is smashed by Tyrone and O'Donnell at the Yellow Ford. The English army appears to have lost not less than 1,800 men, probably many more—nearly half its strength.

**1599** Apr: Lord Lieutenant Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, arrives in Ireland. At his disposal are some 16,000 troops, the largest English army yet fielded in Ireland.

14 May: Essex successfully leads his army through an ambush at the Pass of the Plumes.

29 May: A small English force under Sir Henry Harington is badly beaten at Wicklow.

5 Aug: Battle of the Curlious. O'Donnell routs Sir Conyers Clifford, who is killed.

**1600** 1 Mar: Hugh Maguire is killed in a cavalry skirmish.

*Anonymous English woodcut of kern, probably dating to Henry VIII's reign. (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)*

15 May: Sir Henry Docwra establishes a garrison at Derry.

20 Sept-13 Oct: A series of actions is fought in the Moyry Pass between Tyrone and the Lord Deputy Henry Blount, Lord Mountjoy, who prevails.

**1601** 21 Sept: A Spanish expeditionary force of 3,800 infantry, under Don Juan del Aguila, lands at Kinsale.

26 Oct: Mountjoy lays siege to Kinsale.

24 Dec: Mountjoy defeats Tyrone and O'Donnell as they attempt to relieve Kinsale, inflicting 2,000 casualties. O'Donnell flees to Spain three days later, where he dies soon after.

**1602** 2 Jan: Kinsale capitulates. Its Spanish defenders are allowed to depart with their colours and guns.

Feb-Dec: Sir George Carew campaigns in Munster, storming Dunboy Castle on 17-18 June.

June-Sept: Mountjoy campaigns in Ulster.

Dec: O'Donnell's brother Rory submits.

**1603** 30 Mar: Tyrone submits, six days after Queen Elizabeth's death has brought the Tudor dynasty to an end.





# THE IRISH

At the beginning of the Tudor period Ireland was a patchwork of some 90 principal 'lordships' or 'countries' of which about a third were ruled by lords and captains of Anglo-Irish extraction and the rest by Gaelic chieftains, the so-called 'mere Irish' (i.e. full-blooded Irish, from the Latin *merus*, 'pure').

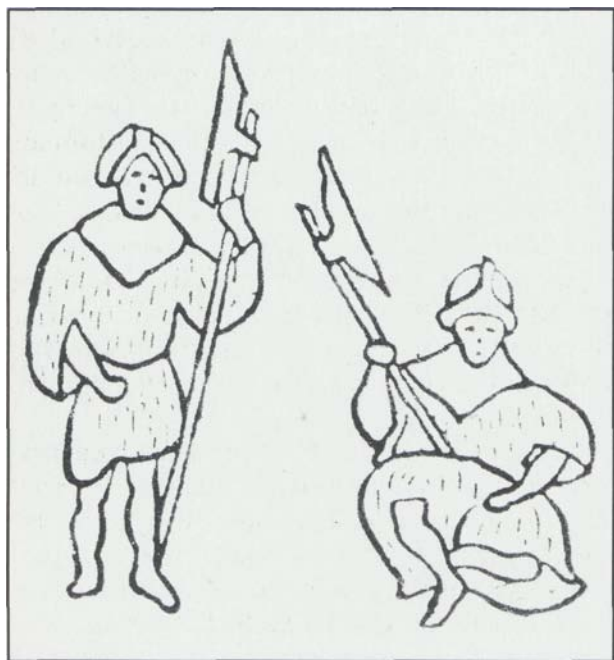
Irish armies consisted of three principal troop-types—cavalrymen, galloglasses, and kern—to which some contemporaries added a fourth category, horseboys or soldiers' servants. The cavalry element was much more important now than it had been in the medieval period, and usually constituted from an eighth to as much as a quarter of an Irish army (the proportion increasing as the 16th century progressed). It was provided mainly by members of the nobility, and in particular by a lord's own kinsmen, though the more affluent of the freemen called to arms in the 'rising out', or general muster, might also serve on horseback. The second category of soldier, the galloglasses (Gaelic *gallóglach*, meaning 'foreign warrior'), were heavily armed, permanently employed infantry of Hebridean descent who had constituted the backbone of most native Irish armies since the late 13th century. Lighter-armed infantry were provided by the javelin-, sword- and bow-

armed kern, who constituted the most numerous element of every Irish field army.

Some kern—the *ceitheirn tige* or 'household kern', with their own usually hereditary captains—were hired for pay (one cow and victuals per quarter-year); but most constituted the infantry element of each chieftain's 'rising out', and were generally described in English sources by such terms as 'naked men', 'loose kern' and 'woodkern'. Even the most sympathetic of English observers were happy to treat the word 'kern' as synonymous with 'rebel' or 'robber', and Barnaby Rich went so far as to call kern 'scum' and 'a generation not fit to live'. Despite such vilification, however, the kern were not the lowest stratum of Irish society; until the second half of the 16th century they included only freemen—'freeholder born' as Holinshed put it—but in Shane O'Neill's time (1559-67) they began to include unfree men, previously forbidden to carry arms. O'Neill, it was reported, armed 'all the peasants of his country' and was 'the first that ever so did'.

Every two kern were normally accompanied by a servant who carried their gear, each cavalryman and each galloglass having at least one and usually two or more such servants, most commonly referred to as 'horseboys'. On the battlefield these were mostly armed with javelins.

The army of an Irish lord chiefly comprised his own small retinue of horsemen and whatever professional elements he could afford. The latter, called collectively 'bonnaghts' (*buanadha*), were mostly galloglasses in the earlier part of this period, later supplemented by hired kern who played an increasingly important role during the second half of the 16th century as the importance of galloglasses waned. The anglicised term 'bonnaght' was derived from Gaelic *buannacht*, or 'billeted men', the name of the system by which such soldiers were maintained. Its principal elements were termed 'coyne' and 'livery', which in simple terms referred to the billeting of such soldiers on the lord's subjects (coyne) and the keeping and feeding of his horse if he had one (livery). Unsurprisingly the system was unpopular amongst the subjects of Gaelic and Anglo-Irish lords alike, since such soldiers were not noted for their good



Crude rendition of  
MacSweeneygalloglasses,

from Goghe's Map of 1567.  
(After G. A. Hayes-McCoy)

behaviour even in peacetime, so that it is also no surprise to find that the word *buanna* later came to mean 'a bully'.

Such professional troops were backed up when necessary by the *gairmsluaigh* or 'rising out', the obligatory military service required from all freemen except the clergy and the learned classes of Irish society (the latter comprising poets, harpers, physicians, scholars and lawyers). A survey of MacCarthy Mor's lordship in 1598 tells us that when the order for such a hosting went out each able-bodied freeman was expected to come with his weapons and enough victuals for three days; while a report sent to King Henry VIII in 1544 says that the required victuals might be for two, three or four days, doubtless varying according to local usage. A survey from Kerry tells us that each horseman who failed to respond to such a summons was fined three cows or 15 shillings, and each kern one cow or five shillings. Despite such obligations, however, most Irish lords would count themselves lucky indeed if the larger part of their subjects did not fail to appear on such occasions.

### Potential strength

An Anglo-Irish observer writing in 1515 reckoned that the largest of the Irish lordships at that date could not hope to raise more than 500 cavalry 'spears', 500 galloglasses and 1,000 kern, plus the common folk of the 'rising out'; and that 'commonly the army of every region exceed not 200 spears and 600 kern besides the common folk', with the smallest able to field no more than 40 horse, 200-300 kern and no galloglasses at all. This tallies well with L. Nowell's *Description of the Power of Irishmen* drawn up in the early 16th century (probably before 1519), which indicates that more than three-quarters of the Irish lordships could muster fewer than 250 men, excluding galloglasses, and a third could muster only 100 men or even less, the very smallest raising just four horsemen and 24 kern. The greater chieftains, however, could muster 500-700 men, some more, including up to 200 cavalry, with in addition one to four 'battles' of galloglasses. All but a handful could raise a contingent of horsemen but, with a few notable exceptions, rarely more than 40—60, well over half managing at best two dozen and nearly a quarter mustering less than ten.

The total number of troops available to the Irish and Anglo-Irish lords according to Nowell's figures was 4,204 horsemen, 20,386 kern and 59 battles of galloglasses; but this supposes that the improbable figures of 2,000 kern each given for MacCarthy Mor and MacCarthy Reagh of Desmond are not mistakes for 200. Prominent among the Ulster lords in the list is O'Neill (probably either Donal, d.1509, or his nephew Art Oge, d.1519) who 'with his blood and kinsmen' could raise 200 horse, 300 kern and three battles of galloglasses. A mid-century source gives Art Oge's brother and successor Conn Bacach (created Earl of Tyrone in 1542) 400 horse, 800 kern and 400 galloglasses; while Conn's son Shane, at the height of his power during his rebellion against the English crown, could field 1,000 horse and 4,000 foot according to one source, and 'of Scots and Irish 7,000 men' according to another.

In 1575 the English authorities estimated the combined strength of the Ulster lords as 8,356 men, the most powerful again being the O'Neill (this time Shane's kinsman and successor Turlough Luineach) with 200 cavalry, 1,000 kern, 400 galloglasses and 400 Scots mercenaries. In 1581 he had 700 cavalry, 'an infinity of kern', and as many as 1,500 galloglasses and 2,500 Scots.

### Scottish mercenaries

Scots were a common feature of Irish armies throughout the 16th century. Some were provided by the MacDonalds of Antrim, where they had begun to settle at the very end of the 14th century. As early as 1539 over 2,000 were said to be dwelling in Ireland; and in 1542 John Travers, Henry VIII's Master of the Ordnance in Ireland, recorded that 'a company of Irish Scots, otherwise called Redshanks, daily cometh into the north parts of Ireland, and purchaseth castles and piles upon the sea-coast there so as it is thought that there be at this present above the number of two or three thousand of them within this realm'.

Others were the so-called 'New Scots', an influx of seasonally hired mercenaries from the Western Isles which began to flow into Ulster from the commencement of Shane O'Neill's wars in 1561. Their potential strength is put at 7,000 men in a report prepared for Queen Elizabeth. Normally they were employed a few hundred at a time, but

contingents numbering in thousands were not unknown. In 1584 it was reported that as many as 4,000 were then in Ulster; in 1585 Sorley Boy MacDonald alone was leading 2,000, and 3,000 landed in Antrim in 1594. Antrim MacDonalds and 'New Scots' shared the same nickname—'Redshanks' (because they went barelegged)—and were armed alike, principally with bows and two-handed claymores. Some, however, constituted self-contained units of all arms; a body of about 600 in Connaught in 1580, for example, consisted of 180 horsemen, 180 targeteers, 100 'long

*French woodcuts of 1562 representing Scotsmen. The capitaine sauvage is armed with claymore and bow, typical weapons of the 'New Scots' serving in*

*Ireland. The other wears the enveloping 'shaggy mantle' that was common to both Highlanders and Irishmen.*

swords', and the rest armed with a mixture of darts, guns, bows and galloglass axes. The 4,000 in Ulster in 1584 even included 200 Lowland Scottish veterans of the Dutch wars.

From the mid-1590s the 'New Scots' were no longer available to the Ulster Irish in such great numbers. This was partly because the Earl of Tyrone, Hugh O'Neill, had offended a number of their clans (by repudiating his MacDonald mistress, for example, and for his mistreatment of Shane O'Neill's issue by a Maclean wife); and partly because King James VI of Scotland, who had previously turned a blind eye to the activities of the Redshanks, was by the close of the century actively attempting to halt the flow of Scottish mercenaries and supplies into Ulster. The majority of those that



*Woodcut of Scotsmen hunting, from Holinshed's Chronicle, 1577. In his text Holinshed describes such 'wild Scots' inhabiting the Highland region as being called 'the Redshanks, or roughfooted Scots, because they go barefooted and clad in mantles over their saffron shirts after the Irish manner'.*



did take service in the province in the late 1590s were hired by Hugh Roe O'Donnell, lord of Tyrconnell. It was presumably Scots in his service who fought at the Yellow Ford in 1598 and Kinsale in 1601.

Redshanks were reckoned by contemporaries to be at least as good as galloglasses (their pay, and their organisation, was the same by 1575). Indeed, as early as 1566 Sir Francis Knollys reported to the Queen that 300 such Scots were 'harder to be vanquished in battle than 600 Irishmen'.

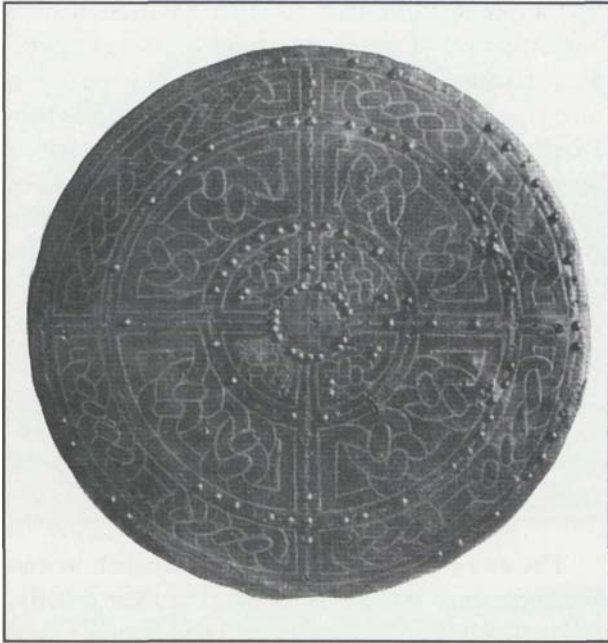
### The Galloglasses

As has already been mentioned, these armoured foot-soldiers constituted the core of native Irish armies until nearly the end of this period. They are described by 16th century English writers as mail-armoured and helmeted, and each armed with a fearsome axe six feet long with a blade a foot broad, 'the stroke whereof is deadly where it lighteth'. Originally from the Western Isles and the western seaboard of Scotland, they had begun to settle in Ireland in the 13th century—first in Ulster, later in Connaught and Munster, and in Leinster by the 16th century. Though by the late 15th century even a few of their chieftains were clearly Irishmen or even Anglo-Irishmen, the principal galloglass families remained the MacDonnells (in Ulster and Connaught), MacSweenys (Tyrconnell, Connaught and Munster), MacSheehys (Munster), MacDowells (Ulster and Connaught), MacCibes (Ulster) and MacRorys (Ulster and Connaught), each family generally comprising several septs or individual family groupings.

The awe in which contemporary English writers held these dour soldiers is apparent in their descriptions of galloglasses: 'valiant and hardy ... great endurers of cold, labour, and all hardness, very active and strong of hand, very swift of foot'; 'picked and selected men of great and mighty bodies'; 'men of great stature, of more than ordinary strength of limb'; 'grim of countenance, tall of stature, big of limb, burly of body, well and strongly timbered'; and so on. The last description adds that they fed chiefly on beef, pork and butter, an allusion to their pay which, in 1575, comprised three cattle per quarter-year—one for pay and two for food—plus victuals, which usually took the form of butter and corn-meal. Their captains were permitted 13 deadpays<sup>1</sup> per 100-man company, and also received the equivalent of six men's victual allowances, plus a warhorse and hack for each quarter-year they served. In addition many galloglass *consapals* ('constables', or captains) also began to hold considerable tracts of land during the 16th century, as had some MacSweenys and MacDonnells since a considerably earlier date. Captains of 'New Scots' and of 'gunners' received the same pay as galloglass constables.

Organisation of a galloglass *corrughadh* or company, usually called a 'battle' in English sources, was based on 'spars', each consisting of a galloglass and one or more armed servants (Holinshed says each galloglass had 'a number of boys and kern'). The name of this sub-unit derived originally from one of

<sup>1</sup>Deadpays' were the permitted number of soldiers by which a company was allowed to fall short of its official strength. The pay of such absentees went into the company captain's pocket.



*Irish shield, 16th century, made of embossed or tooled deerskin over two layers of wood and*

*decorated with brass nails. It measures 19 inches in diameter.*

the terms for the galloglass' main weapon, his axe or 'sparth'. Nowell reported that 'a battle of galloglass be 60 or 80 men harnessed on foot with spars, every one whereof hath his knave to bear his harness, whereof some have spears, some have bows'. At the end of the century John Dymmok wrote that each galloglass had two servants, being a man to carry his harness and a boy who carried his provisions, and that 80 such spars constituted a battle. But as we have already seen, in 1575 galloglass captains were being paid per 100-man company, though the allowance of 13 deadpays would have reduced this number to 87 men at most.

The raising of the company was the captain's responsibility alone, so he was fined for any shortfall in the unit's strength (at the rate of two cows per man—one for the man, and one for his armour). Likewise the galloglasses themselves were fined if any of their equipment was lacking; a list of fines written down in the 16th century (but allegedly referring to a galloglass contract of the early 15th century) includes a shilling for a missing axe and a groat for a missing spear, which went to the constable. It adds rather grimly that there should be no fine for a missing

helmet 'except the galloglass' brain'—clearly it was considered that if a galloglass were foolish enough to go into battle without a helmet it was his own fault if he got his head split open.

Galloglasses were employed in sizeable numbers by such Irish and Anglo-Irish lords as could afford them. In 1512 Aedh Oge ('Black Hugh') O'Donnell, on the outbreak of his war with MacWilliam Burke, 'hired 1,500 axemen in Tyrconnell, Fermanagh and the province of Connaught, and billeted them on those places', and Nowell's *Description* assigns four battles of galloglasses to Aedh Oge or his son Manus. Nowell's list shows that at that time there were 59 battles of galloglasses employed throughout the country, of which as many as eight were in the employ of the Anglo-Irish Earl of Desmond and his kinsmen. A handful of other lords had three or four battles, but one or occasionally two battles were more usual, while as many as two-thirds of the country's principal chiefs employed none at all. Nevertheless, it is clear that many thousands of these soldiers were available in total throughout Ireland.

Modern authorities point out that by the time of Tyrone's rebellion at the end of the Tudor period the galloglasses were effectively obsolete, their medieval equipment and style of combat being totally unsuited to the needs and demands of late 16th century warfare. While this may be true, they nevertheless remained a key feature of Irish armies well into the 1590s; Maguire had many with him at the Battle of the Erne Fords in 1593, while Fynes Moryson (Lord Mountjoy's secretary) describes Tyrone's infantry as still comprising axe-armed galloglasses as well as kern and shot. Their last battlefield appearance did not take place until the disastrous fight at Kinsale at the beginning of the next century; but that was the end of them. In 1618 Gainsford was able to report that 'the name of Galloglass' was extinct.

#### Later improvements

When Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, came to power in Ulster in 1595 Ireland's armies were at best out-of-date, and at worst archaic. Having served under the Earl of Essex in 1572-74, during the Desmond Rebellion of 1579-83 and alongside his brother-in-law Henry Bagnall against Maguire in 1593, O'Neill was only too aware of the inferiority of Irish arms and tactics; and he and some of his contemporaries set

about introducing reforms designed to put their armies on a more equal footing with those of their English adversaries. In consequence English sources from the 1590s onwards make continual reference to the steadily improving standards of Irish equipment, training and fighting abilities.

The principal area in which the Irish had been found wanting throughout the first half of the Tudor period was in their relative lack of firearms. Before the appearance of arquebuses in an ambush in 1558 there are few references to their use by the 'mere Irish', despite the fact that in 1534 Connor O'Brien claimed his men were 'well armed with arquebuses, bows, arrows and swords'. Significantly, when the Dublin Lord Justice wrote to King Henry VIII a decade later regarding the contingents of kern to be supplied for service in France and Scotland in 1544, he observed that 'many of them be gunners, though they have no guns, whereof there is no provision here'. The report pointed out in addition that these same kern would undoubtedly be good gunners once trained—in other words, they were not yet good. The shortage of guns and powder in Ireland was the first problem Tyrone had to overcome, by importing them from Scotland and sometimes from Spain, from further afield (e.g. Poland) and, surreptitiously, even from England, where avaricious merchants in Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool were prepared to smuggle weapons to him for the right price. Later some firearms were actually manufactured in Ireland itself, and gunpowder was already being prepared thereby the 1580s.

By 1584, when Richard Stanihurst wrote, the Irish were already growing more accustomed to firearms: 'The use of firearms is at last becoming common among them. Once they were unable to bear the sound of gunfire without trembling ... Now they mix gunpowder and fire their bullets quite freely and skilfully.' Tyrone further promoted their use even before he began his rebellion, by making presents of guns to sundry Irishmen he met on his so-called hunting trips (more accurately, recruitment drives); and later by encouraging shooting contests and by giving men armed with shot a higher rate of pay—6d

*Anglo-Irish cavalryman, 1583, wearing Irish armour and riding in an Irish saddle without stirrups.*

*(TCD MS 1440 fol. 24r. The Board of Trinity College, Dublin)*

Irish a day in 1595, plus 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d a day for sustenance, compared to a total of at best 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d-8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d Irish (including sustenance allowance) for other foot-soldiers.

He also improved their training, immediately before his rebellion, with the help of six captains somewhat shortsightedly provided by the English government to train his men for alleged service against his kinsman Turlough Luineach O'Neill. These men were nicknamed by the English 'the Butter Captains' because they and their men lived upon cess in his country, having only victuals for their reward' ('cess' being the term applied by the English to the obligatory supply of a soldier's victuals at 'assessed' prices). Nominally six companies of shot (600 men) were trained by these officers, but Moryson records that 'he daily changed [them], putting new untrained men in the room of others' until all his men had been trained 'to perfect use of their arms'. The arquebusiers fielded during the Clontibret cam-



paign were undoubtedly an element of these, recorded on that occasion as 'marching in red coats, a matter not usually seen before that time amongst the mere Irishry'.

So many Irishmen had firearms and were able to handle them competently by the time Tyrone's rebellion actually began that the titular Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, Peter Lombard, reported how 'even the farmers, ploughmen, swineherds, shepherds and very boys have learned to use this weapon'. Englishmen stated that they were 'as good marksmen as France, Flanders or Spain can show', and most contemporaries agreed that they were generally better shots than the English, with either caliver or musket.

One of the other factors in the improving standard of Irish soldiers was the increased use by

Tyrone of native Irish *bonnaghts*, employed on a semi-permanent basis, to replace the outdated *galloglasses* and the 'New Scots'. Such *bonnaghts* were volunteers, not conscripts, being called for by proclamation in churches, markets and the like every February or March, when the terms of service and rates of pay for the forthcoming campaign were announced. Length of service was generally for the duration of a campaigning season; and pay, in 1595, was about 3d a day (6d for shot), though in 1601 an additional bounty of 4s twice a year (i.e. £20 per unit of 100 men) was proposed. However, in a country as poor as Ireland then was the pay was often in kind rather than in cash, usually in the form of milch cows valued at local market prices. In addition the soldiers were entitled to a third of loot or ransoms raised from their prisoners. They received victuals (the usual butter and corn-meal), either directly or from those on whom they were billeted; alternatively they received an additional cash payment to provide their own food (5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d per day in 1595).

Tyrone's intention from the outset was to equip and train such troops like those of the English, to which end he was greatly assisted by the misguided habit among English captains of employing large numbers of Irishmen in their own companies, thereby providing them with free training. Barnaby

*The best depictions of Irish warfare in the Tudor period are the series of 12 woodcuts to be found in Derricke's The Image of Ireland, published in 1581 but portraying events during Sir Henry Sidney's second viceroyalty, 1575-78 - probably his itinerary round Ireland from October 1575 to April 1576.*

*These are missing from almost every surviving copy of the book, and though some are frequently reproduced in modern books others appear less often. All 12 are therefore reproduced here. The first shows an Irish chieftain preparing to go on a raid. Note the pillion saddle of the horse.*



Rich observed of this practice that as soon as such a soldier was armed and trained 'away he went to the enemy'. Other trained soldiers were provided by Irishmen and Catholic Anglo-Irishmen who had served with the Spanish in the Low Countries, and the Spanish themselves provided some officers.

Considerable effort was also made to introduce the pike into Irish armies in the last decade of the century. It occurs in contemporary picture-maps of several battles and is mentioned in numerous English written sources, and quantities of pikemen are noted in several late 16th century army lists. Sir James Perrott believed that 'they provided themselves of a competent proportion of arms for pike and shot, that in the end they came as little short of the English for proportion and provision as they were for the skill and the use of [these] arms'; and Sir Walter Raleigh wrote that the Irish 'are furnished with as good pikes and muskets as England hath'.

Nevertheless, in reality it would seem that pikes never actually became available in large quantities (Barnaby Rich says that the Irish had neither pikes nor corselets 'in any convenient number nor in any able sort'). John Dowdall's claim in 1596, therefore, that the Irish had converted most of their galloglasses into pikemen, was particularly unlikely to be true—not least because there continued to be frequent

references to galloglass axemen after that date, but apparently none to galloglass pikemen. Fortunately pikemen were not as vital to Irish armies—which preferred ambushes and running battles—as they were to the English, and on most occasions the presence of only a few was sufficient to achieve a local tactical advantage, more by threat than by action. On the only occasion when Tyrone fielded them in strength on an open battlefield, at Kinsale in 1601, his pikemen let him down badly. Nevertheless, Sir George Carew deemed one body of Irish pikemen that he saw—Owney MacRory's 500-strong contingent in 1600—as 'the best furnished men for war and the best appointed that we have seen in this kingdom'.

Organisation in Tyrone's period was mainly into companies that had a paper strength of 100 men but were actually only something over 80 strong, each commanded by an officer called a constable, equivalent to an English captain. In 1601 Tyrone ordained that 'the constable of 100 men is obliged to have four-score and four men on foot, and he is allowed 16 deadpays', of which deadpays ten went to the

*Kern on a raid. Derricke's original caption observes that 'they spoil, and burn,*

*occasions serve, and think the greater ill they do, the greater praise deserve'.*





constable himself, five to the marshal of the country (i.e. the quartermaster) and one to 'the Lord's Galloglass' (one of the hereditary Ulster constables). Presumably these companies had several junior officers and NCOs much as English companies did.

Cavalry organisation was probably based on a 50-strong cornet, the nucleus of Tyrone's horse doubtless originating from his own 50-strong troop maintained in Queen Elizabeth's pay until 1594, suitably reinforced by deserters from the English (the majority of whose cavalry in Ireland were actually Irishmen). In fact Irish cavalry in the 1590s were acknowledged by the English as being in many regards their superiors, 'as well in numbers as in goodness of horses'.

### Military potential under Tyrone

The total of troops that Tyrone and his allies could muster was considerable. In November 1594, when the strength of the Ulster chiefs was estimated at 2,238 horse and 15,130 foot, Tyrone had, besides many other kern and the contingents of his allies, 540 horse and an elite body of 1,140 infantry—probably those trained by the Butter Captains, since they are

*Encampment of the chief of the MacSweenys. The meal of beef is prepared in*

*traditional fashion, being stewed in a cauldron made of its own hide.*

described as 'the chiefest force of his footmen, trained after the English manner, having many pikes among them so as all of them were not shot'. In 1595 he had 1,000 horse, 1,000 pikemen and 4,000 shot; and at Christmas 1596 he is said to have had 5,000 men with him at Newry. The so-called *Description of Ireland in 1598* gives the Ulster chiefs' forces at some indeterminate date between c.1593 and 1602 as 1,926 horse and 6,140 foot - which tallies reasonably closely with a report on rebel forces in April 1599, wherein the contingents of Tyrone and the other Ulster leaders are listed as comprising 1,632 horse and 6,940 foot, and the total rebel strength adds up to 2,684 horse and 18,510 foot. Fynes Moryson gives similar totals for the beginning of the same year, of 2,346 horse and 18,246 foot (though his individual figures add up to 2,242 and 17,818 respectively). Note how in all these sources the Ulster chiefs are recorded to have fielded over 60% of the available cavalry.

Another estimate of rebel forces in Ulster, drawn up at the end of 1599 by Thomas Barnwell, an English spy, gives them 862 cavalry, 3,870 shot and 1,340 kern 'in the fyld', and a further 412 cavalry and 5,780 infantry involved in siege and garrison duties elsewhere. Tyrone's own contingent, which on this occasion numbered 250 horse, 2,700 shot and 800 kern and constituted the bulk of the field army, is



recorded in July 1601 as consisting of 400 horse (100 of them being his guard), a 'Guard of Foot' consisting of two companies each of 200 men, and 3,260 other foot mostly organised in companies of 100 or 200 men.

In effect, there were no limitations on the potential size of an Irish field army in the late 16th century beyond its commander's ability to provide for it and to hold it together; but these were the principal remaining weaknesses of Irish military organisation. An army on the march was fed from the lords' *creaghts*, the herds of cattle and attendant drovers which accompanied it, and with corn-meal drawn from the lands through which it passed. Both sources of nourishment were subject to the vagaries of weather and terrain, and the English were only too well aware that if they could disperse, destroy or steal an Irish lord's cattle they could effectively neutralise his forces.

Barnaby Rich wrote that the Irish 'have no provision for carriages, but [have only] what themselves are able to carry upon their backs; neither are they able to levy new forces, nor have they means to supply their old'. He was also of the opinion that the Irish were unable to hold an army together for even a week before 'they must betake themselves to their woods, to their bogs, and to their starting holes'—

though this was presumably only true of the 'rising out', not of the chieftains' paid retainers.

Despite these weaknesses, however, Tyrone's forces at the close of the 16th century were, given the right circumstances, more than a match for those that England fielded against them; and the ordinary Irish soldier was considered 'in discipline and weapons' little inferior, and 'in body and courage equal, if not superior, to us'. Edmund Spenser wrote that the Irish soldier 'beareth himself very courageously, ... [and] put to a piece or a pike, he maketh as worthy soldier as any nation he meeteth with'. Fynes Moryson was of the same opinion, stating that 'men of more active bodies, more able to suffer cold, heat, hunger, and thirst, and whose minds are more void of fear, can hardly be found'.

What let the Irish down in the end, so their contemporaries concluded, was their inability to fight a pitched battle in the open; the distressing tendency of their chiefs to fall out among themselves; and their lack of experience in taking and holding strongpoints, where their major disadvantage was that they made hardly any use of artillery whatsoever.

*Raiders are repulsed by English troops, who recapture the rustled livestock.*





*Victorious English troops returning with 'liberated' livestock and Irish prisoners. Note the adoption of Irish practice in the taking of enemy heads.*

## ANGLO-IRISH ARMIES

### **Irish artillery**

Though 'Black Hugh' O'Donnell used some guns (sent to him from France) against Sligo as early as 1516, and his descendant and namesake 'Red Hugh' had one gun from Spain at the siege of Ballintober Castle in 1599, such instances were exceptional. Despite capturing English guns at Sligo in 1595, Ballyshannon in 1597, and the Yellow Ford in 1598, the Irish made no attempt to employ them, and invariably depended on the age-old siege techniques of blockade and frontal assault with scaling ladders. Despite, too, the fact that a few captured light guns had actually been used in the field as early as the 1530s, Fynes Moryson could still write c.1600 that the Irish were unable to use 'great ordnance, which they neither had nor knew [how] to use'. It is no surprise to find, therefore, that the few gunners available to Irish rebels in the latter part of the Tudor period are invariably described by contemporaries as Spaniards or Italians.

By the time Henry VII came to the throne the principal characteristic of those English families which had been settled in Ireland since medieval times was that many, if not most, had become all but Irish in their lifestyle, in their attitudes and politics, and even in their everyday dress. The repeated attempts of successive governments to restore or enforce English customs and even costume itself bears witness to the ineffectiveness of such efforts. Only within the Pale (the shires of Meath, Westmeath, Kildare, Louth and Dublin) did English traditions prevail with any kind of continuity; and only there because Dublin was, from the mid-16th century, the permanent seat of the government's viceroy in Ireland (the Lord Deputy or Lord Lieutenant) and his Council, as well as being the base of whatever garrison troops he could muster. Elsewhere throughout the country, as every contemporary English writer complained, 'the mere Irish, degenerate English, and Scot are grown into one faction ... by which means the Irishry grew to such strength that the English, for their own defence, were



glad to ally themselves with the Irish of contrary factions'.

The regular English garrison was nearly always small. Still amounting to only 300 men in 1535, it was increased to 380 horse and 160 foot in 1543, and under Queen Mary reached about 1,200 men. These figures all represent peacetime garrisons, however, which were inevitably strengthened during rebellions; in the closing decades of the Tudor era, when the Irish or Anglo-Irish were in almost perpetual revolt, numbers increased dramatically. In 1580 the garrison nominally totalled as many as 8,892 men, and in 1599 theoretically comprised perhaps 16,000 or 18,000—though the paper strength of English armies usually considerably outnumbered the reality. In 1593, for example, it was complained that there were 'but 750 foot and 200 horse' in Ireland when the Queen was paying for about 1,800; while late in 1595 Sir James Perrott recorded the English army in Ireland as totalling 4,040 foot and 657 horse, 'which perchance might want a full fourth part, if not a third, of their numbers had they been exactly and at one time mustered'.

Perrott's view is confirmed by the record of an actual muster taken in 1598, when an army of 8,719 men was found to be deficient by 2,137—a discrep-

*Sir Henry Sidney sets out on campaign from Dublin Castle, accompanied by mail-armoured light cavalry. Note impaled rebel heads above the gateway.*

ancy vastly in excess of the permitted deadpay allowances which stood, at their very highest (1600), at nine per 100 foot or four per 50 horse. Moryson reckoned that the very most a company of 150 men serving in Ireland could actually muster was 120; and in fact the detailed breakdown he gives of Lord Mountjoy's army at Dundalk in 1600 shows that the ten companies nominally of 150 men which it included could actually muster only 76 to 102 men each, while 11 companies allegedly of 100 men had only between 38 and 79 each. Sir Henry Docwra even claimed that the average English company in Ireland 'could bring to do service 25 or 30 able, at the most', while Edmund Spenser believed that a quarter of any company existed only on paper from the outset.

In addition, many soldiers sent to Ireland were of a low standard (though probably no worse than those sent elsewhere), being predominantly conscripts who had often been enlisted by force. Sir John Norris complained in 1595 that 'in two of the companies last



*The English army forms up in front of its encampment, where*

*Sidney receives a despatch from a native courier.*

sent over, there are not 20 men like to prove soldiers; the rest are poor old ploughmen and rogues'. However, to stiffen the morale of such inexperienced troops contingents of veterans—drawn from the English forces serving in the Netherlands, in France or on the Scottish border—were occasionally added.

### **The Anglo-Irish**

Anglo-Irish lords preferred to raise their own troops by traditional Irish methods. In particular they were hiring kern and galloglasses as early as the 14th century, the Fitzgerald earls of Kildare in particular employing sizeable quantities of both. Gerald Fitzgerald ('Garret Mor'), Earl of Kildare 1477-1513 and Lord Deputy for much of the period 1486—1513, had 24 MacDonnell galloglasses in his employ at a very early date, this number later increasing to 120, plus a further 160 that the MacMahons had to support on his behalf. His son and successor 'Garret Oge', Lord Deputy three times between 1513 and 1534, hired even more: so many, in fact, that a report of 1515 complained bitterly about the replacement of the traditional Deputy's guard of men-at-arms and

archers by 'a multitude of Irish galloglass and a multitude of Irish kern and spears, with infinite number of horse-lads'.

It was the residue of these MacDonnell galloglasses who, after the rebellions and deaths in turn of Garret Oge in 1534 and his son 'Silken Thomas' in 1537, passed into the employ of the Crown, in whose loyal service they remained for the rest of the Tudor period. In 1549, for example, there is a reference to 'the captain of the King's galloglasses of the Clandonnells'; while 300 of the 'Queen Majesty's galloglasses' are ordered to be in readiness for service in 1560. The same number occurs again in 1566 and 1570, while in 1561 three septs of them are recorded—probably indicating three companies—originally under one 'Chief Captain' but thereafter each serving under its own individual commander, invariably an Irishman. A document of 1568 shows that they were organised in two-man spars; those in Leinster, Munster and Ulster received 5s 8d Irish per quarter plus daily sustenance—half in money (1d sterling per meal per man, 'which for the whole quarter amounteth unto 11s 6d Irish') and half in victuals, being the usual butter and corn-meal. Those in Connaught received 7s Irish more.

Nowell's *Description of the Power of Irishmen*



*English army on the march in Ireland: pikemen and shot in the foreground, demilances behind.*

contains details of the available forces of various Anglo-Irish lords in the early part of the 16th century, showing that the Earl of Desmond and his kin could raise 3,000 kern, a battle of crossbowmen and gunners, eight battles of galloglasses and 400 horse; the MacWilliam Burkes 600 kern, five battles of galloglasses and 320 horse; the Butlers of Tipperary 200 kern, two battles of galloglasses and 60 horse; and so on.

Further evidence of the potential military strength of Anglo-Irish lords may be seen in the forces of the rebel James Fitzmaurice in 1569, who fielded 1,400 galloglasses, 400 pikemen in mail shirts, 400 shot, 1,500 kern and, presumably, some cavalry too. The forces of his cousin Earl Gerald in the Desmond Rebellion (1579-83) fluctuated in strength in the course of the war, but at their greatest totalled 200 horse and 2,000 foot, over half of the latter being MacSheehy galloglasses. Occasional attempts by the Crown to reduce the size of such private armies by banning individual lords—notably the Fitzgeralds—from using coyne and livery to maintain them

predictably met with only limited success. In one instance in 1574 the Earl of Desmond simply sidestepped the issue by shuffling all of his galloglasses into the nominal service of his brother and uncle.

John Dymmok's treatise of c.1600 contains a succinct description of how such forces were maintained, in both the Crown's service and that of the Anglo-Irish lords. The 'rising out' he describes as 'a certain number of horsemen and kern, which the Irishry and Englishry are to find in Her Majesty's service at every general hosting, for defence of the country against any foreign enemy or other invaders, which numbers are also to be victualled by them [selves] for certain days, some more, some less'. This agrees with what we know of the practice among the Gaelic Irish. It is worth noting that this 'rising out' was summoned in the Pale during most years of the second half of the 16th century, though its soldiers rarely appeared in the field, and it was of little effective use except in providing what has been described as a sort of Home Guard, being mostly used to defend the Pale's borders. Details of a 'rising out' of the Pale counties in May 1601 demonstrate its military inadequacy by that date, showing that the five counties could muster only 477 kern, 372

mounted archers and 335 horse between them, even including loyal Irish chiefs.

### The 'cess'

Dymmok gives a full account of the victualling or cess system that was introduced by the Dublin authorities to maintain professional soldiers within the Pale. Imposed on a regular basis since 1537, this was intended to replace the old coyne and livery from which, in reality, it differed little, Dymmok even describing it as taking two forms called respectively 'bonnacht bonny' and 'bonnacht beg'. The former was 'a certain payment or allowance made unto Her Majesty's galloglass or kern by the Irishry only, who are severally bound to yield a yearly proportion of victuals and money, of their finding, every one according to his ability, so that the kern and galloglass are kept all year by the Irishry, and divided at times among them. Bonnacht beg, or little bonnacht, is a proportion of money, rateably charged upon every ploughland, towards the finding of the galloglass.' This was assessed at 13s 4d per ploughland at its introduction. Holinshed's *Chronicle* adds that the

victuals provided under the 'bonnacht bonny' were 'to be delivered at a reasonable price called the Queen's price ... which price is to be yearly rated and assessed by the Lord Deputy and the Council, with the assistance and assent of the nobility of the country, at such rates and prices as the soldiers may live of his wages'.

Dymmok also describes another exaction called 'soren', imposed on Irish tenants 'by way of spending money, viz 2s 8d for a day and a night, to be divided between three spars, for their meat, drink and lodging'. He adds that in addition to the cess required to maintain the Queen's forces 'every particular lord hath a certain number for their own defence, some more, some less', whom their tenants were likewise obliged to maintain.

Unsurprisingly, the use of cess prompted frequent criticism throughout the Tudor era. As early as 1515 it was complained that the 'extortion of coyne and livery consumeth and devoureth all the substance of the poor folk'; and in 1533 even the Council had to admit that the nobility of the Pale had given up maintaining retinues in their own homes and now relied instead on keeping 'horsemen and knaves, which live upon the King's subjects'. Nevertheless, in answer to an Elizabethan critic's condemnation of cess as 'an extortion and violent taking of meat and

*Spirited action between English and Irish cavalry. In the background mail-armoured galloglasses flee*

*into the woods to escape the withering fire of arquebusiers.*



drink and money by the warlike retainers of such as pretend to have captainry, rule, or charge of defence of countries', it was bluntly pointed out that until someone came up with a better one it was the *only* way of defending them.

Eventually, in 1577, a compromise was reached with the Crown by which the counties of Dublin, Meath, Westmeath, Louth, Kildare, Carlow, Wexford and Kilkenny acknowledged an obligation to provide victuals for as many of a total of 1,000 soldiers as the Lord Deputy should specify, in addition paying 1d per day for each man of the thousand whom they were not asked to victual.

### Composition of English armies in Ireland

One troop-type unique to the Crown's forces in Ireland was the mounted archer, who constituted a considerable element of musters drawn from the Pale even at the end of Elizabeth's reign. The Lord Deputy William Skeffington's garrison troops in 1535 contained many, and there were 50 among the royal element of the Anglo-Irish troops sent to Scotland from Dublin in 1545. Some were present at Shrule as

late as 1570; but this was their last recorded appearance in action, and the longbow with which they were armed had already been eclipsed in importance by the handgun some time before.

The Crown's garrison troops included some handgunners even in the first half of the 16th century, especially under the Kildare Deputies, and it was the training of their kern to use handguns by the Anglo-Irish lords that was responsible for the steady spread of firearms throughout the country. Holinshed records 700 Anglo-Irish kern going to France in 1544 as armed with darts and handguns; and other such musters of kern during Henry VIII's French war of 1544-46 also mention 'hackbuts', 'demi-hakes', and 'gonners' (as many as 300 out of 2,000 kern were so-armed in 1545)—though most were more traditionally equipped with swords, darts and shields.

The numerous kern in the Crown's employ had their own commander, usually an indentured Irish chieftain until the middle of the 16th century, but subsequently an English captain, glorying in the title of 'General of all the Kern in Ireland'. Most famous of these were Sir Francis Cosby, who was General from 1558 until his death at Glenmalure in 1580, and Sir Thomas Lee, who succeeded him. Additional kern, and galloglasses too, were provided by the contingents of allied Irish chieftains.

*Sir Henry Sidney's  
victorious return to  
Dublin, April 1576, where*

*he is met by the city's  
aldermen.*







*The rebel leader Rory Oge O'Moore hides in the woods after his defeat. He was eventually killed by*

*the kern of Barnaby Fitzpatrick, Lord of Upper Ossory, in June 1578.*

The continuing reliance on Irish troops and the contingents of Anglo-Irish lords of increasingly dubious loyalty inevitably posed security problems for the authorities. Uprisings were an inescapable feature of Anglo-Irish politics even in times of relative calm, and even with primitive arms such as axes and javelins the sizeable armies the lords could muster still made them a force to be reckoned with. But the real problems only began to surface during the last few decades of the Tudor period, when it became obvious to English observers that the principal reason for the improved quality of the Irish soldiers facing them was that many had actually been trained in English service.

As early as 1563 it had been agreed that Irishmen could serve in the English army, but no more than five or six of them were to be enlisted in any one company. How long this restriction had been successfully enforced, if it ever was, is unknown; but certainly Fynes Moryson was of the opinion that the policy of permitting 'certain Irishmen to raise companies, which they did of their own countrymen' began just two decades later under Lord Deputy Sir John Perrott (1584-88) and his successor, Sir William Fitzwilliam (1588-94), who thereby 'furnished the enemy with trained men'.

By the 1590s their numbers had multiplied

dangerously. Recording the period of Tyrone's rebellion, Barnaby Rich wrote that 'there were some companies that for every three of the English there were three and 20 of the Irish; and to speak truly, it might have been called a special and choice company that had not three Irish for one English'. Nor was he exaggerating—some companies really were three-quarters Irish by the late 1590s, Sir Thomas Norris complaining of encountering such proportions in 1597. Moryson explained that the reason for this was that English captains, more interested in making a profit than in securing the realm, preferred to hire Irishmen 'because they could make better shift for clothes and meat, with less pay from their captains'. In consequence these captains 'raked up all the Irish that were to be gotten,' observed Rich, 'that there was not a horseboy left in the country but he was armed and trained'.

This did not apply only to the infantry. Moryson noted that 'an English troop of horse sent out of England, commonly in a year's space was turned half into Irish (having worse horses and arms and no saddle ...) only because the Irish would serve with their own horses and could make better shift with less pay'. Indeed, several contemporaries were of the view that the majority of 'English' cavalry serving in Ireland were actually Irishmen. Certainly, of 23 cavalry companies serving there in 1598 only one was entirely composed of Englishmen, only one other had more Englishmen than Irishmen, seven were entirely

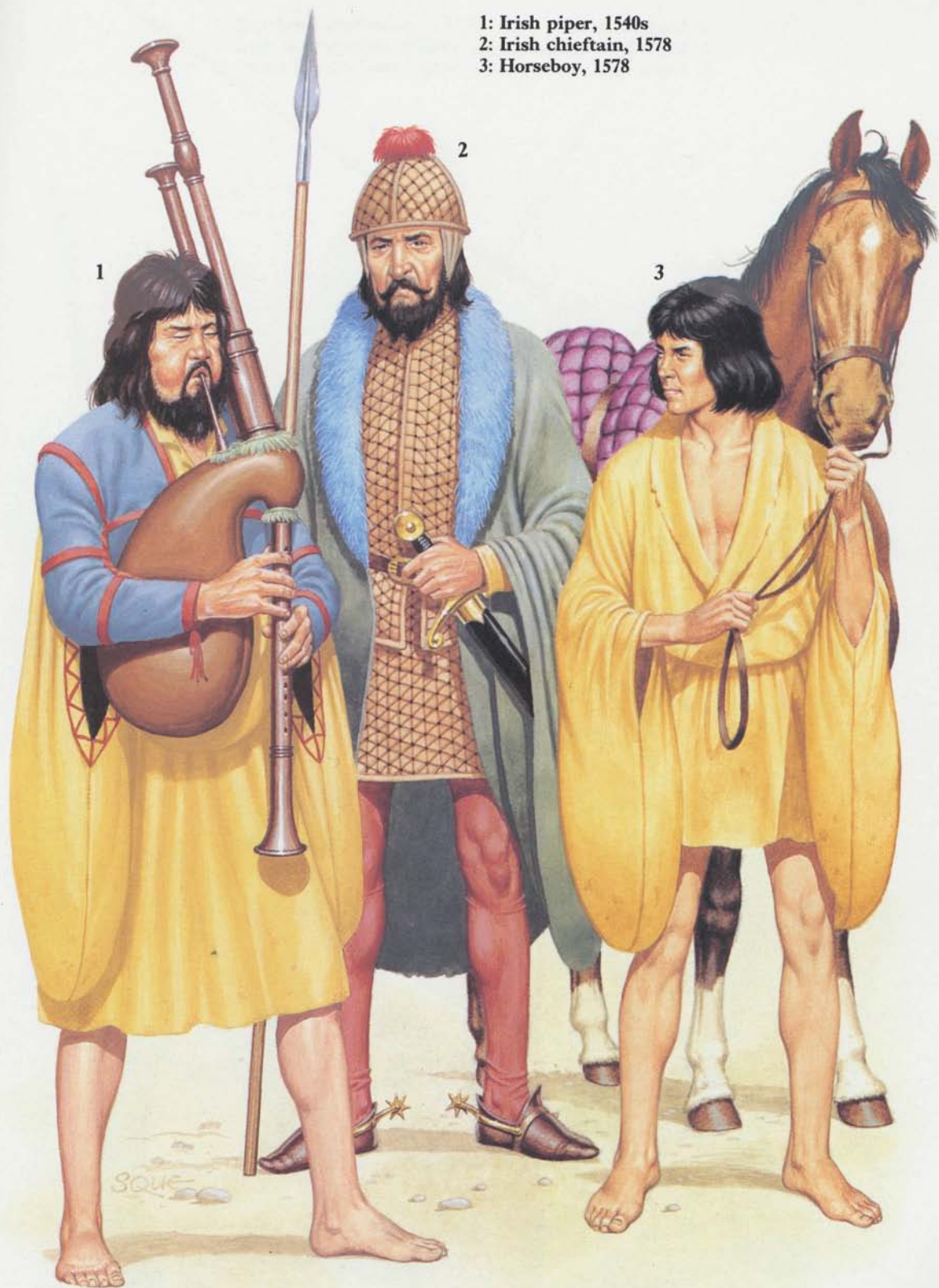
1, 2: Irish kern, 1540s  
3: Irish bonnaght, 1578



- 1: Galloglass, 15th c.  
2: Galloglass, 1521  
3: Queen Majesty's galloglass, 1583



- 1: Irish piper, 1540s  
2: Irish chieftain, 1578  
3: Horseboy, 1578



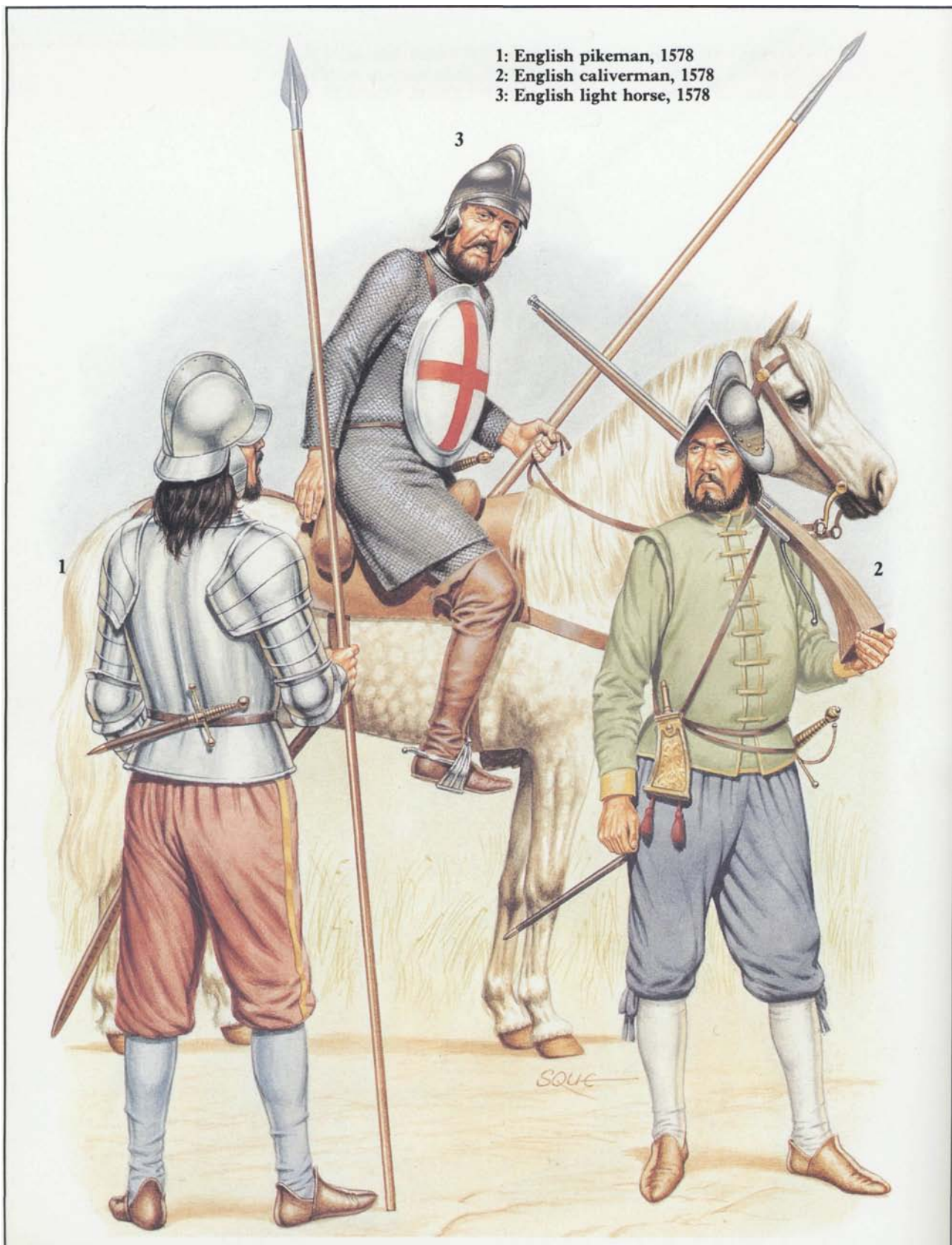
- 1: Anglo-Irish lord, 1539  
2: Anglo-Irish man-at-arms, 1583  
3: Anglo-Irish man-at-arms, 1552



1: Redshank mercenary, c.1576  
2: Irish cavalryman, 1578  
3: Ulster kern, c.1600



- 1: English pikeman, 1578  
2: English caliverman, 1578  
3: English light horse, 1578



- 1: Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, 1603
- 2: Captain Thomas Lee, 1594
- 3: Irishman in English service, 1590s

1



2

3



- 1: O'Moore pikeman, 1600  
2: O'Neill caliverman, c.1600  
3: Irish light horse, c.1600



Irish (either Palesmen or 'mere Irish'), and all but one of the rest were composed at least two-thirds of Irishmen.

Moryson's view was that 'English-Irish' troops often constituted a third of the army, while other sources indicate that on many occasions Irish and Anglo-Irish elements represented an even larger proportion. In his descriptions of the battles of Clontibret (1595) and the Yellow Ford (1598) Philip O'Sullivan Beare wrote that the English armies were 'more Irish than English' at the former and somewhat over half composed of Irishmen at the latter. Royal troops in Ireland in 1598 actually comprised 2,478 'mere Irish' and 1,785 Palesmen, but only 2,319 Englishmen; of 71 infantry companies as many as 12 were entirely of Irishmen and Palesmen, while another 25 each contained less than 20 Englishmen.

Inevitably, desertions by Irish soldiers occurred (as many as 300 of Bagnall's joined Tyrone's army at the Yellow Ford, while Spenser, Rich and others complain of the frequency with which Irish kern, once trained, fled to the enemy); but Moryson states that for the most part such 'English-Irish' served valiantly and loyally. Nevertheless, even he was of the opinion that many 'were kept in pay rather to prevent their fighting against us than for confidence in their fighting for us'; and that 'the death of such unpeace-

able swordsmen, though falling on our side, yet was rather gain than loss'. The privy council in England, on discovering the extent of Irish enlistment into English companies, expressed much the same view in their unwillingness to discharge so many Irish troops, the strong probability being that such a move would substantially swell the enemy's ranks.

The solution adopted was the simple expedient of natural wastage. Late in 1598 Queen Elizabeth wrote instructing the Council in Dublin to 'use all convenient means to clear our army of the Irish', and thenceforth Irish casualties were replaced only by English conscripts. The following year she ordered in addition that no more Irish captains were to be commissioned, while those already in her service were deliberately to be kept 'unsupplied' and, as their companies dwindled, they were to be cashiered, regardless of their past loyalty. It is unlikely, however, that this policy had made much impact on the composition of English armies before the conflict ended in 1603. Certainly, of 1,250 men mustered at Newry in June 1601 still only 593 were Englishmen.

*Turlough Luineach O'Neill submits to Sidney, October 1575. Note that he wears a native version of English costume and*

*sports an English haircut, though his entourage still wear distinctive Irish costume.*



# TACTICS

That the Irish made a very elusive enemy is apparent in the work of every Tudor writer. In the narrow 'passes' through Ireland's dense woodlands, or at fords across the many rivers and boggy morasses, they could appear as if from nowhere, fight for as long as suited them, and then disappear with the same suddenness. 'He is a flying enemy,' wrote Spenser, 'hiding himself in woods and bogs, from whence he will not draw forth but into some straight passage or perilous ford where he knows the army must needs pass. There will he lie in wait, and if he find advantage fit, will dangerously hazard the troubled soldier.' Such ambushes were the order of the day throughout Tudor times just as they had been in the past; and even when larger battles took place at the

end of this period these were still on the whole no more than ambushes on a grand scale. Bitter experience had taught the Irish that they stood little chance against the English in an open field of battle, and consequently they did all they could to avoid such a confrontation. 'Do what we can,' grumbled John Zouche in 1580, 'we shall never fight with them unless they have a will to fight with us.'

The English, similarly, knew to their own cost that in the bogs and woods it was the Irish who were hard to be beaten; but found such situations difficult to avoid since to get almost anywhere in 16th century Ireland involved traversing bogs, woods, or broken ground, enabling the Irish to select those fields of battle that gave them the best advantage. Indeed, so unusual was it to find Irishmen fighting in the open that when Shane O'Neill beat an English detachment in 1561 one writer was shocked into observing that this was 'three miles away from any wood'.

For most of this period, until Tyrone's attempts to modernise it at the very end of the century, Irish warfare centred on skirmishing, setting on and falling back as needs dictated, and only closing on the enemy if they saw an advantage. Fynes Moryson described how 'they dare not stand on a plain field, but always fight upon bogs and passes of skirts of woods, where the foot being very nimble come off and on at pleasure'. One English commander, Sir John Harington, wrote in 1599 that such tactics seemed to him more like 'a morris dance, by their tripping after their bagpipes, than any soldier-like exercise'. But if the Irish once saw a chance to close in it became a dance of death. Then they came on fast, with a hail of darts and loud shouts of 'Pharroh' and 'Abu' (whence the English word 'hubbub'). If their opponents flinched and began to fly then they were lost, for, in Moryson's words, the Irish were 'exceeding swift and terrible executioners', merciless in pursuit, never sparing anyone that pleaded for quarter and mutilating and beheading the fallen, 'never believing them to be fully dead till they have cut off their heads' (a practice which the English subsequently adopted from them).

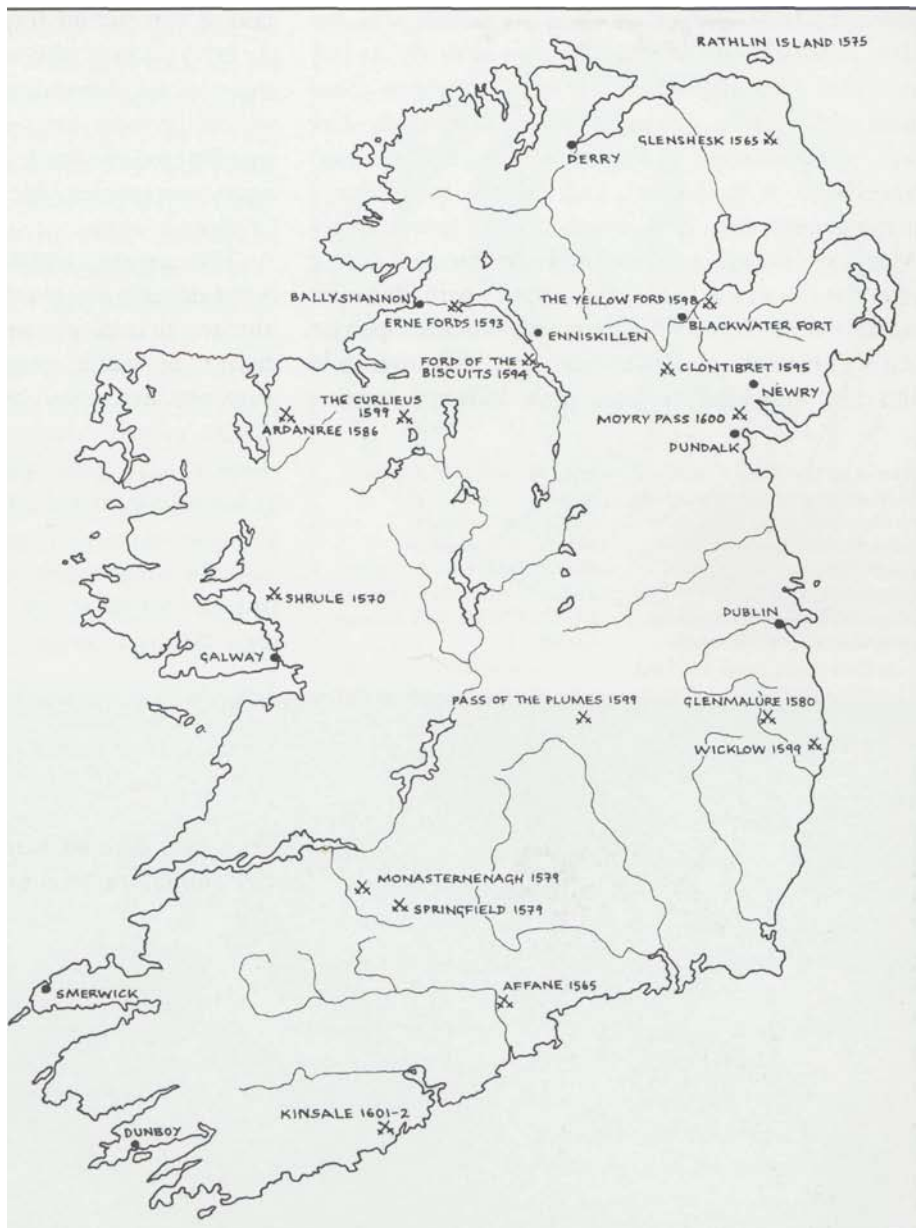
Moryson points out that only in such cases, where

*Woodcut of 1588 by Caspar Rutz of an Irish soldier serving on the continent, probably one of the Irish auxiliaries who accompanied the Earl of*

*Leicester's expedition to the Netherlands in 1586. The Irish bow was a considerably shorter weapon than the English longbow.*



*Sites of the principal actions of the period 1565-1603.*



they showed fear or began to run away, were the English normally beaten, and that if they firmly withstood the first assault any subsequent onrushes were launched with less enthusiasm. Then the Irish could easily be forced to give ground, and their attacks would slacken off until, after a few bravados had run forward 'to brawl and scold like women' (regarded by the English as an identifiable sign that a skirmish was about to end), they would disappear back into the undergrowth whence they had come. Pursuit was not recommended, since it was not

unknown for the Irish to double back and slay the unwary. Besides, observed Spenser, 'to seek him out that still flyeth, and follow him that can hardly be found, were vain and bootless'. Significantly, even Lord Mountjoy—the greatest Elizabethan soldier to serve in Ireland—was of the opinion that when it came to close combat it was the Irish who usually prevailed.

Prior to the general introduction of firearms among them in the second half of the 16th century, and remaining in widespread use even after that, the

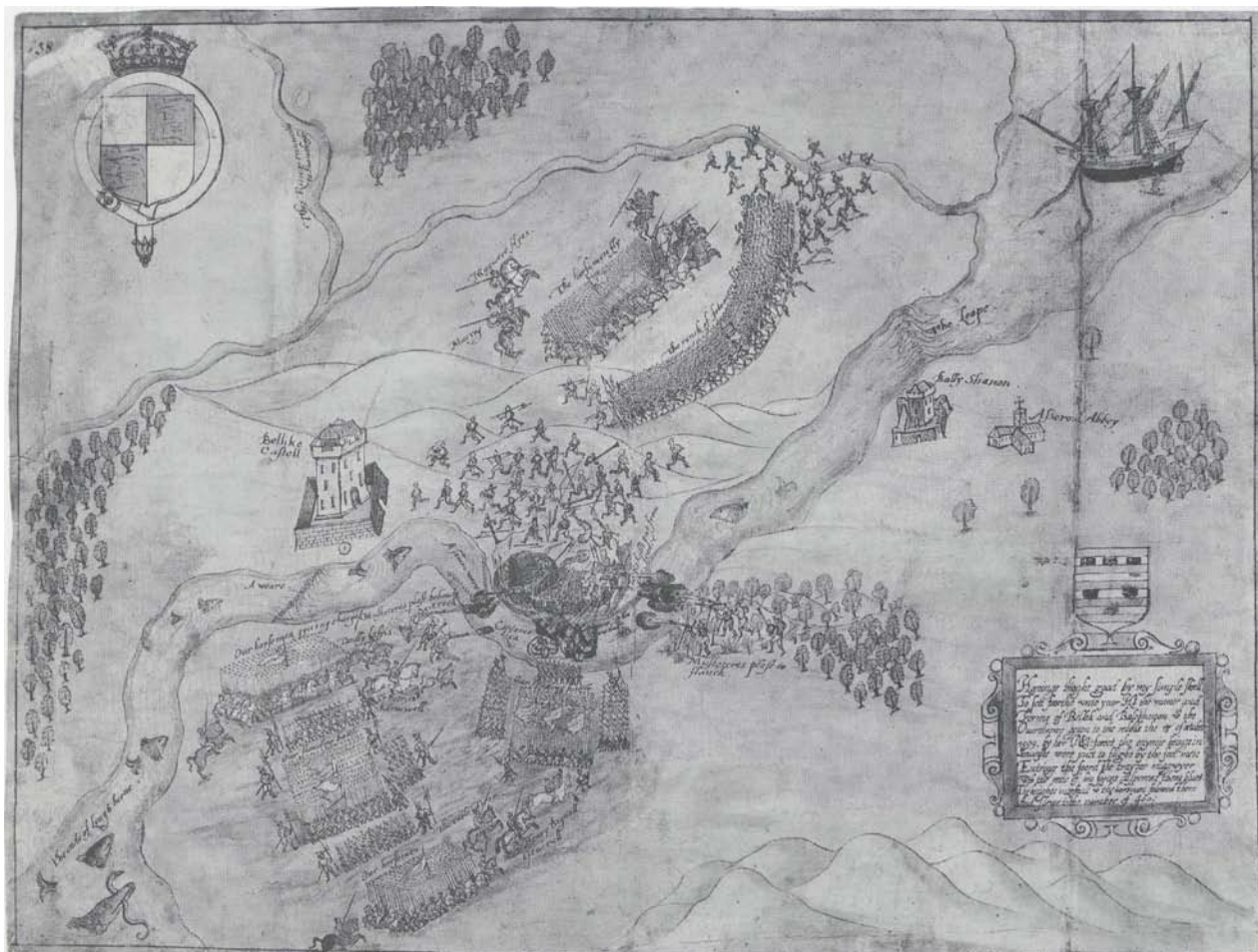
principal Irish weapon in their skirmishes was the dart, of which most kern carried two or three. As late as C.1600 Dymmok wrote that the Irish threw these with considerable accuracy, but as a weapon the dart was 'more noisome to the enemy, especially horsemen, than it is deadly', and tended to kill only unarmoured men if it killed at all. Interestingly Moryson, though mentioning the increased use of firearms elsewhere in his text, notes that in Tyrone's time Irish kern 'assail horsemen aloof with casting darts', not with guns, which implies that even then the dart was considered the more effective weapon

against horses. The Irish also used the bow (many of the Irish soldiers who served in the Netherlands were archers) but, though it is mentioned by many English writers in their lists of Irish weapons, it is rarely encountered in a battle context except in the hands of Scots mercenaries. One exception appears to be at the Curlicue in 1599.

If it came to a stand-up battle, pride of place went to the galloglasses; in fact, if an army contained a large number of galloglasses then a pitched battle was almost inevitable, since their arms and equipment were not well suited to any other kind of fighting. Where present they were normally drawn up en masse in a single division along with the other foot—at Knockdoe in 1504 Ulick Burke's nine battles of galloglasses were drawn up together in one block—with the unarmoured kern presumably forming the rear ranks and, at the beginning of the period, with their cavalry customarily drawn up on the left flank.

*Battle of the Erne Fords, at Belleek near Ballyshannon, 10 October 1593: a picture-map by the soldier-artist John Thomas. English musketeers enfilade Maguire's positions while sword-and-bucklermen*

*lead the assault across the ford. Maguire's forces included many galloglasses, distinguishable by their axes. (Cotton MS Augustus I ii 38. The British Library, London)*

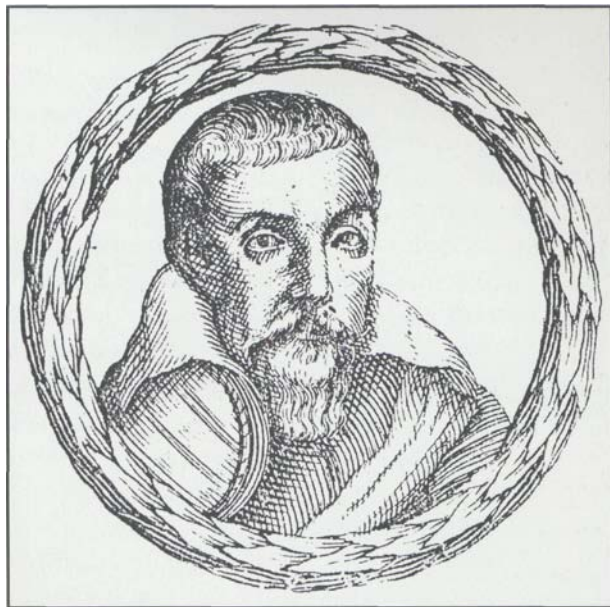


The Irish *Four Masters* speaks of the galloglasses forming the van of an army when approaching the enemy (and the rearguard when retreating); and a picture-map of the Battle of the Erne Fords in 1593 shows axe-armed galloglasses in the first four ranks, followed by gunners, archers, pikemen, and so forth.

Contemporary English writers are unanimous regarding the grim determination of galloglasses once battle was joined. 'These sort of men be those that do not lightly quit the field, but bide the brunt to the death,' observed Nowell. 'The greatest force of the battle consisteth in them,' wrote Dymmok, 'choosing rather to die than to yield, so that when it cometh to handy blows they are quickly slain or win the field.' Stanihurst described them in 1584 as 'altogether sanguinary and by no means inclined to give quarter', elsewhere adding that 'should they come to close fighting, they either soon kill, or are killed'. This he puts down to the fact that upon recruitment each galloglass swore a great oath that he would never turn his back on the enemy, whatever the circumstances. Certainly, of the nine battles of galloglasses fielded by Burke at the Battle of Knockdoe there escaped 'but one thin battalion'.

Only Barnaby Rich, writing in 1610 when it was safe to be dismissive, was critical of the galloglass, claiming that 'his service in the field is neither good against horsemen, nor able to endure an encounter of pikes, yet the Irish do make great account of them'. Like English pikemen they were also an easy target for archers or shot unless supported by such troops of their own; the heavy galloglass losses at Knockdoe were principally the result of the showers of arrows rained down on them by the Lord Deputy's longbowmen.

The introduction of firearms and pikes added new dimensions to Irish warfare, but only slowly. Moryson insists that at first the Irish did not take to handguns readily, and that at the beginning of Tyrone's rebellion they were so inexperienced in their use that 'to shoot off a musket, one had it laid on his shoulders, another aimed it at the mark, and a third gave fire, and that not without fear and trembling'; but he conceded that by his own time 'they were grown ready in managing their pieces'. Nevertheless, though he acknowledges their skill in skirmishing, he goes on to point out that the Irish remained unable to march in an orderly fashion, or to



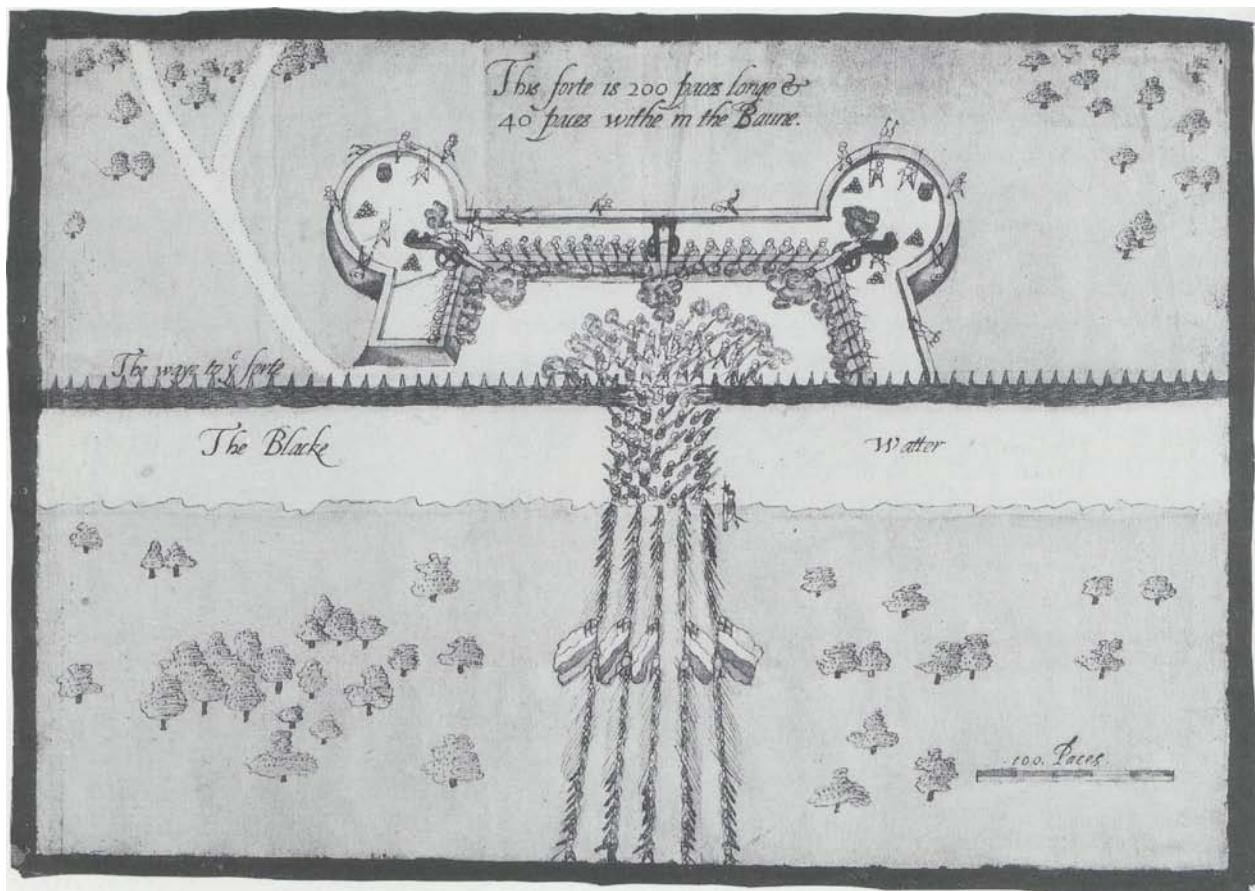
*17th century depiction of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone 1593-1616. Note the pauldron indicating that he wears plate armour,*

*and the large shirt collar which confirms the reports of contemporaries that he and his family favoured English dress.*

successfully assault fortified places, or to fight on an open plain.

Other veterans of the Irish wars openly contradict him, however. Sir Henry Wallop in 1596, for example, was of the opinion that whereas previously the Irish had only been able to confront the English in defiles and woodlands they were now capable of standing up to them in the open; and James Perrott too was of the view that under Tyrone and O'Donnell the Irish had overcome their previous inability to either embattle their troops or to withdraw them from the field in good order.

The true situation seems to have lain somewhere between these two opposing viewpoints. There is good evidence that the Irish had indeed begun to organise themselves in more formal arrays on the battlefield under Tyrone, with blocks of pike and sleeves of shot; but in the absence of sufficient practical experience and enough of the requisite equipment they were still unable to face up to English pikemen or 'to make a stand upon any firm ground'. The disastrous battle at Kinsale (1601) underlined this only too well, where Tyrone's army, drawn up in formal pike-blocks, was methodically broken and scattered by a considerably smaller English force. It



*Picture-map of Lord Burgh's assault on the Blackwater Fort, 14 July 1597. Burgh subsequently dismantled this fort and*

*replaced it with a stronger one. (TCDMSS1209/34. The Board of Trinity College, Dublin)*

is therefore hardly surprising to find that even in Tyrone's time the Irish continued to depend on their traditional ambushes and skirmishes. An English captain still described Irish tactics at the end of the 16th century as being 'skirmishing in passes, bogs, woods, fords, and in all places of advantage. And they hold it no dishonour to run away; for the best sconce and castle for their security is their feet.'

Their ambushes, incidentally, should not be understood as static affairs. They most often took the form of a running battle, with the more mobile Irish keeping pace with and constantly dogging the flanks and rear of a marching English column as they shepherded it towards some sort of obstacle, usually a ford or a narrow woodland pass. Here the undergrowth to either side of the road was frequently 'plashed' together beforehand, or in the case of a ford

an entrenchment was often thrown up beyond the river or across the road. If the English, having got thus far relatively intact, still proved determined, the Irish might decide to call it a day and draw off. However, should the continual harassment of the English column have resulted in disarray and demoralisation, as it did at the Yellow Ford in 1598 and Wicklow in 1599, then there was a good chance the Irish would overwhelm it.

## THE CAVALRY

Despite Sir John Norris' disparaging view that Irish cavalry were only fit to catch cows (a reference to their predilection for cattle-raiding), it is apparent from other contemporaries that, from the 1540s at the latest, most English soldiers in Ireland considered native horsemen superior to their own. In 1543 Sir Anthony St. Leger wrote that there were 'no properer

horsemen in Christian ground, nor more hardy, nor yet that can endure hardness' than the Irish, and he acknowledged their talent as 'light scourers' or skirmishers. However, the problem was—and continued to be—that skirmishers is what most of them remained, and as such they were unable to stand up against the English horse unless numbers or terrain favoured them.

English observers unanimously put this down to two specific features of the way they fought: firstly, that they rode without stirrups, which meant that, secondly, they could not couch their lances but could

only thrust with them overarm. The absence of both stirrups and proper saddles meant that they were easily unhorsed in a collision with English cavalry (though Moryson points out that 'being very nimble' they could remount just as easily); so they rarely charged home and, though happy to encounter other Irish horse, they tended to wheel away if counter-charged by English cavalry.

Moryson justifiably considered Irish cavalry 'more fit to make a bravado and to offer light skirmishes than for a sound encounter. Neither did I ever see them perform anything with bold resolution. They assail not in a joint body but scattered, and are cruel executioners upon flying enemies; but otherwise, howsoever they make a great noise and clamour in the assault, yet, when they come near, they suddenly and ridiculously wheel about, never daring to abide the shock.' Elsewhere he accuses them of 'basely withdrawing from danger' when threatened,

*Siege of Enniskillen Castle, February 1594: another picture-map by John Thomas. This picture is full of interesting details, among them Captain Dowdall's Irish horseboy carrying his shield (centre foreground); the mobile*

*'sow' designed to cover the advance of '30 men; the entrenched artillery positions; and the boats fitted with scaling ladders. (Cotton MS Augustus I ii 39. The British Library, London)*





# PACATA HIBERNIA

and of giving little help to their infantry, citing the Battle of Kinsale where they broke their own foot in their haste to get away. By contrast he observes that 'our English horsemen, having deep war saddles and using pistols as well as spears and swords, and many of them having corselets and like defensive arms, and being bold and strong for encounters and long marches, and of greater stature than the Irish, our troops must needs have great advantage over theirs'. His view is prejudiced but fundamentally accurate. This is why, as Harington remarked, the Irish 'dread of our horse causeth them to observe diligently all their motions'.

Tyrone and a few other chiefs certainly made some effort to improve the quality of their cavalry. The fact that O'Neill himself and one of Maguire's horsemen shivered their lances on each other's armour at the Battle of the Erne Fords in 1593 tells us that both must have been riding with stirrups, wearing plate armour and, probably, had their lances couched. Certainly in 1594 Tyrone had over 400 horse 'armed after the English manner', which must indicate they had saddles, stirrups and plate armour; and O'Sullivan Beare in the 17th century wrote that armoured Irish horsemen at the Yellow Ford in 1598 held their lances 'resting on their thigh' (i.e. ready to be couched), while lighter cavalry there wielded longer lances overarm and hurled javelins.

*Panorama of the disastrous Battle of the Yellow Ford, 14 August 1598, by John Thomas. The doomed English column is shadowed on both flanks*

*by Tyrone's and O'Donnell's forces. (TCD MSS 1209/35. The Board of Trinity College, Dublin)*

Despite numerous forays into English-held territory, Tyrone's strategy at the end of the 16th century was almost entirely defensive. He was just as aware of England's military potential as he was of Irish inability to fight a conventional war, and had decided that his one real hope was to prolong the conflict until it became just too expensive for the Crown to prosecute it any further. His plan, however, was defective on two counts: it failed to recognise Queen Elizabeth's determination; and it reckoned without a commander of Lord Mountjoy's calibre.

Mountjoy formulated and put into effect a programme of measures designed to frustrate and exhaust Tyrone's forces, drawing heavily on the experiences of every earlier Tudor commander in Ireland. Firstly, he set out to restore the battered morale of the average soldier, by 'leading them warily' and by putting his own life at risk as often as he did theirs. He therefore boosted their confidence by concentrating on winning minor engagements rather than hazarding the entire army - the movements of which were impossible to conceal - by giving the Irish the opportunity to lure it into one of their prepared ambushes. Instead, 'by reason of his singular secrecy in keeping his purposes unknown', he was able to fall suddenly on individual rebel chiefs 'while he kept all the rest like dared larks in continual fear'. He even curtailed Irish opportunities to ambush him by clearing many of the more difficult passages, thereby enabling his troops to march in



relative safety and to reinforce outlying garrisons more easily.

Strong garrisons were established where necessary to pen Tyrone in, while at least 200 horse and 1,000 foot were kept in the field all year round. Moryson observed that while earlier Deputies 'used to assail the rebels only in summertime', Mountjoy campaigned with his greatest strength in the *winter* months, 'being commonly five days at least in the week on horseback, all the winter long'. This meant that as well as preventing the Irish from sowing their crops in the spring or harvesting them in the summer, Mountjoy was able to seize or burn their winter stores too, taking advantage of the fact that the Irish were not geared to cope with winter campaigning, when the cattle on which their armies depended were at their weakest.

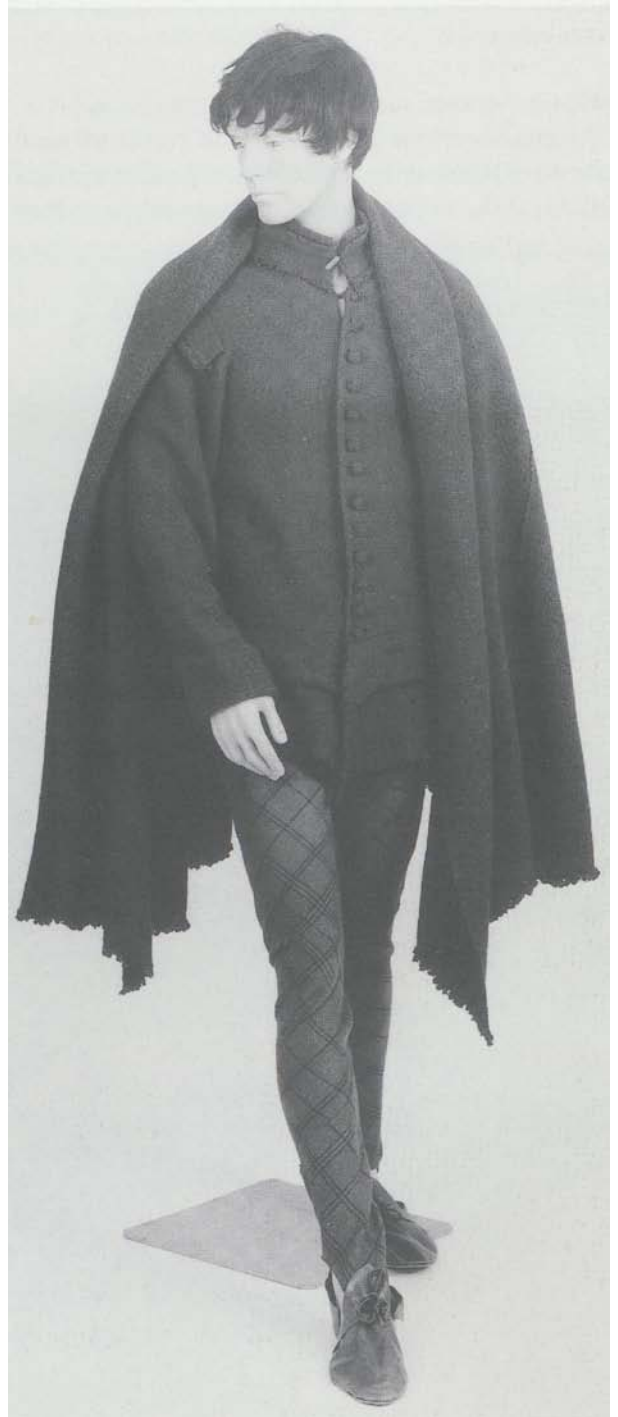
Consequently, it was Tyrone's ability to wage war that waned with the passage of time, not Elizabeth's; and as England poured ever more men and materiel into Ireland the outcome became inevitable. Hugh O'Neill's final submission in March 1603 was indeed the end of an era, if not the end of a dream.

## THE PLATES

### *A1, A2: Irish kern, 1540s*

These wear the traditional voluminous, baggy-sleeved, saffron-dyed *leine* under embroidered, fringed jackets, and the characteristic shaggy woollen mantle, the *brat* (not usually worn in battle). The hair is worn long, often hanging over the face, the English regularly attempting to ban such 'glibbs' as being a disguise 'to hide their thievish countenances'. Though A2 has an apparently leather helmet, most kern relied instead for protection on 'the thickness of their glibbs, the which they say will sometimes bear a

good stroke'. Typical weapons were the sword, dagger (*sgian* or 'skein') and two to four darts, bow or axe. The darts were often fletched. Note that A2 wears an iron gauntlet on his left arm, used in place of a shield to parry blows; others wrapped their cloak around the arm instead.



*Reconstruction of the Dungiven Costume, a set of clothes discovered in a bog in the 1960s and thought to date to c.1600, the period of Tyrone's rebellion. It was perhaps originally the property of one of his O'Cahan soldiers. The trousers are*

*of a tartan cloth cut on the bias, while the jacket resembles that of Turlough Luineach O'Neill in Derricke's print. The semi-circular woollen mantle is 8½ feet wide by 4 feet deep. (The Ulster Museum, Belfast)*

### A3: Irish bonnacht, 1578

The *leine* is now shorter than before and heavily pleated - Edmund Campion described such shirts in 1569 as 'not reaching past the thigh, with pleats on pleats they pleated are as thick as pleats may lie'. His axe is of the traditional galloglass type, in whose imitation many native Irish hired soldiers appear to have adopted it.

### B1: Galloglass, 15th century

The armour of the galloglasses had remained virtually unchanged since their introduction into Ireland in the 13th century, comprising usually a helmet,

mail *pisane*, and quilted *cotun* or mail hauberk (later usually both). Though the Hebridean tomb-slab on which this figure is based shows only a sword, galloglasses were invariably axe-armed in battle.

### B2: Galloglass, 1521

From Dürer's drawing. Note the curious upturned nasal of his helmet, an early appearance of similar nasals to be found in later prints (see D2 and E2). The huge sword and bow which Dürer's original gives him instead of an axe are improbable weapons, and tend to confirm the theory that the picture was drawn from hearsay or based on the sketches of others.



*Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. His unauthorised return to England after a disastrous and colossally expensive campaign in Ireland in 1599 led to his downfall. (Cockson engraving. Trustees of the British Museum)*

### B3: *Queen Majesty's galloglass, 1583*

From Queen Elizabeth's charter to Dublin, his appearance confirms that galloglasses in English service were identical to those in Irish employ. Note the curved axe-blade whereas Derricke's woodcuts portray them almost straight-edged. In fact written sources indicate that they never adhered to any one particular shape; St.Leger (1543) describes galloglass axes as 'much like the axe of the Tower', while Dymmok (c.1600) says its blade was shaped 'some-what like a shoemaker's knife'.

### C1: *Irish piper, 1540s*

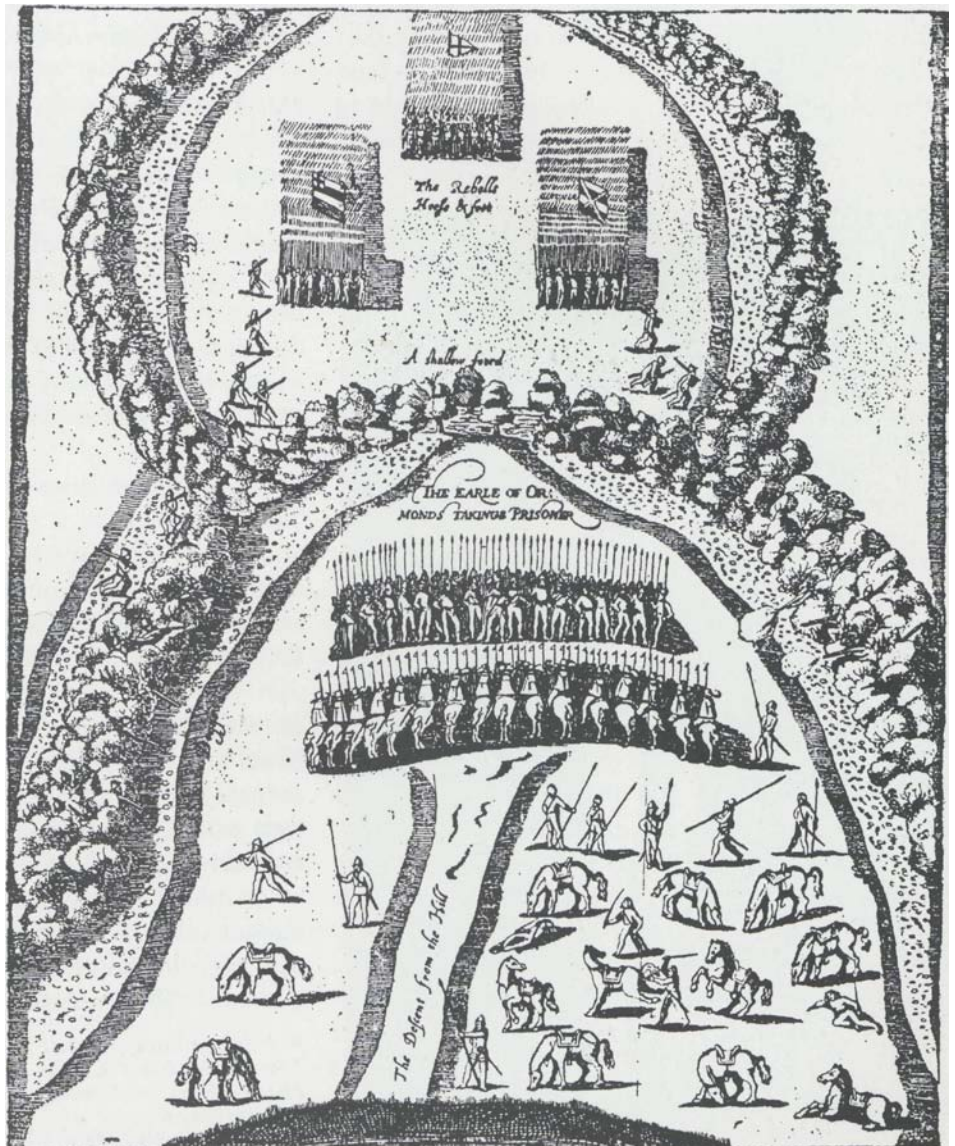
Based on pictures by Lucas de Heere drawn

c.1576-77 but captioned 'Irish as they went attired in the reign of the late King Henry'. The equivalent of English drummers, pipers were considered important enough to be noted separately by English writers when lists of battle casualties were drawn up. Though Tyrone introduced drums into his infantry companies bagpipes remained in use alongside them right up to the end of his rebellion.

### C2: *Irish chieftain, 1578*

From Derricke's woodcuts, his four-sided helmet is of a type called a *cathbharr* and appears to be of similar construction to his brigandine or jack. His overall appearance demonstrates considerable Eng-

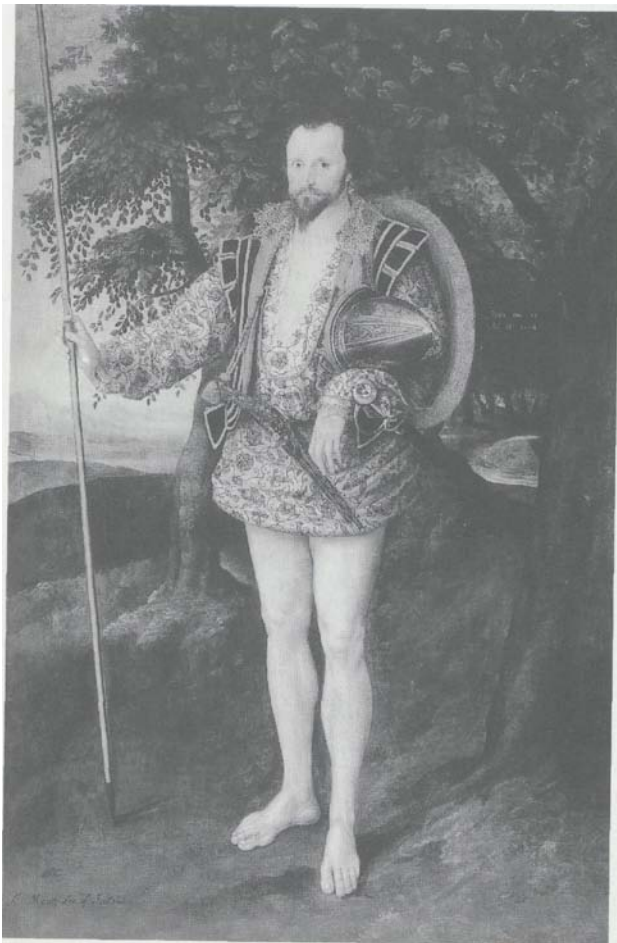
*The capture in 1600 of Thomas Butler, Earl of Ormond: from George Carew's Pacata Hibernia (1633). Note that all the Irish infantry are shown equipped with either pikes or calivers, and that some of the pikemen wear helmets. Of particular interest, however, are their flags, of which two are clearly captured English ones. The use of captured flags by the Irish is attested on other occasions, Moryson recording that troops confronting Lord Mountjoy in July 1601 were using ensigns which had been captured from Bagnall's army defeated at the Yellow Ford in 1598.*



lish influence, and it seems to have been about this time that some chieftains actually began to adopt English dress. Note, however, the traditional Irish horse-harness, which remained unchanged throughout this period, comprising a pillion saddle secured by a breast-strap, a surcingle and a crupper, but having no stirrups.

**C3: Horseboy, 1578**

Confusingly, these were neither boys nor did they serve on horseback, actually being youths or young men employed as servants by most categories of Irish and, indeed, English soldiers serving in Ireland. Some admittedly rode their master's spare mount on the march, but when they fought—as all the sources agree they did—it was on foot with javelins or, less frequently, bows. Late in the century some at least were taught how to use firearms and graduated to become kern. Note that he is characteristically barelegged.



**D1: Anglo-Irish lord, 1539**

This is Piers Butler, Earl of Ormond, from his effigy in Kilkenny Cathedral. Surviving monuments confirm that archaic armour of this type predominated amongst the 'degenerate English' of Ireland until the 1550s, reflecting the general abandonment of English armour and weapons in favour of Irish that was being complained of by the Dublin government as early as 1498. His corselet comprises horizontal lames secured to a canvas or leather foundation by sliding rivets, and is worn in conjunction with plate arm and leg harness, a mail haubergeon and a mail pisane to which circular pauldrons are attached. Such effigies as do show more conventional mid-16th century English styles of plate harness are, significantly, all within the confines of the Dublin Pale.

**D2: Anglo-Irishman-at-arms, 1583**

This is a MacWilliam Burke, a descendant of the younger brother of the first Earl of Ulster. His dress and armour are entirely Irish, and he rides a pillion saddle and without stirrups. The adoption of the Irish style of riding seems to have become almost universal among those Anglo-Irish beyond the Pale during the early part of the 16th century. The spear was therefore wielded overarm, a practice necessitated by the absence of stirrups.

**D3: Anglo-Irishman-at-arms, 1552**

This demonstrates a variant of the old-fashioned armour prevalent among the Anglo-Irish, from the tomb of John Grace of Courtstown. The only plate armour in evidence is the anime corselet along with the knee-cops and the sabatons. All else is of mail.

**E1: Redshank mercenary, c. 1576**

From another painting by Lucas de Heere, this is probably a chieftain. Others wore costumes that were little or no different from those of the native Irish, or else early versions of the belted plaid—a description of Redshank dress in Ireland in 1594 probably intends such when it describes how 'their belts were over their loins outside their cloaks'. Characteristic weapons of Scots mercenaries serving in Ireland were

*Portrait of Thomas Lee by Marcus Gheeraerts, 1594. His Gaelic style of dress reflects his office of Captain-General of the*

*Queen's Kern. He served in Ireland continuously from 1575 to 1599. (The Tate Gallery, London)*

the two-handed claymore and the bow, but firearms were also in use among them by the 1550s.

### **E2: Irish cavalryman, 1578**

Derricke's woodcuts indicate that at this date Irish horse were exclusively mail-armoured and fought with a lance wielded overarm. Shields were still in use, these being circular, smallish, and slung by a shoulder-strap when both hands were needed, to hang over the chest or back depending on which direction the rider was going. It seems likely that shields were abandoned soon afterwards and had certainly disappeared among cavalry by the 1590s.

### **E3: Ulster kern, c.1600**

This figure comes from a map of Ulster drawn during Tyrone's rebellion, so is presumably typical of the traditional kern still fielded at that date alongside the Earl's more up-to-date calivermen and pikemen. Clearly shields were still in use among kern even at this late date, as is confirmed by English writers. Dymmok described them as wooden targets; but Spenser in 1596 recorded the Ulster Irish using long, broad wicker shields which he only saw in use 'amongst those northern people and Irish Scots'. Elsewhere he also records leather shields 'which in Ireland they also use in many places coloured after their rude fashion'.

### **F1: English pikeman, 1578**

This man's armour and dress are typical of the last quarter of the 16th century. In accordance with prevailing custom among pikemen he has discarded the tassets of his corselet. During the 1580s it became common practice to abandon the arm harness too, while Sir John Smythe records that pikemen serving in Ireland often discarded their breast- and back-plates. Mountjoy found it necessary to insist that his men always wore their helmets, which implies that many had abandoned even these. Moryson recorded of the army at Dundalk in 1600 that 'the greatest part ... have neither armours nor morions'. The English pike varied in length, and though 17-18 feet was officially favoured most probably averaged around 15-16 feet.

### **F2: English caliverman, 1578**

Full equipment of a caliverman at this date com-



*Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, Lord Deputy and later Lord Lieutenant of Ireland from January*

*1600 until his death in April 1606. (Cockson engraving. Trustees of the British Museum)*

prised a caliver and ramrod; flask of powder; a smaller flask, the 'touch', containing priming powder; bullet bag (though the English favoured carrying their bullets in the mouth in action); three or four yards of spare match cut into yard lengths; tinderbox; 'priming iron' to clear the caliver's touchhole; bullet-mould; sword and dagger; and, usually, a helmet, often abandoned in favour of a soft hat by the close of the period. Note that he wears no uniform: though these were issued, mostly in the form of red or blue cassocks (sleeveless jackets worn over civilian dress), they were often in short supply - only 2,500 were available for 9,000 men on one occasion. They could actually be a liability, it being recognised that the Irish were able to identify soldiers fresh out of England by the brightness of their uniforms, thereby enabling them to concentrate their attentions on the army's most inexperienced troops.

### ***F3: English lighthorse, 1578***

This cavalryman from Derricke's woodcuts is unusually equipped with mail corselet and shield, differing very little from light horse of Henry VIII's reign. Such light equipment was ideally suited to Irish warfare, which may explain its retention at such a late date. As far as the author is aware this is the last appearance of a shield being used by an English cavalryman. Note that it carries a cross of St. George, doubtless to distinguish him from the otherwise very similarly equipped Irish cavalry.

### ***G1: Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, 1603***

Dashing as Cockson's print makes him look, written sources reveal that this is a glorified portrait. Mountjoy was actually a fussy hypochondriac, and on campaign wore up to four pairs of stockings, three waistcoats and a scarf to protect himself from the damp climate....

### ***G2: Captain Thomas Lee, 1594***

Marcus Gheeraerts' painting shows Lee attired as Captain-General of the Queen's Kern, in a hybrid combination of English and Irish dress. Though it

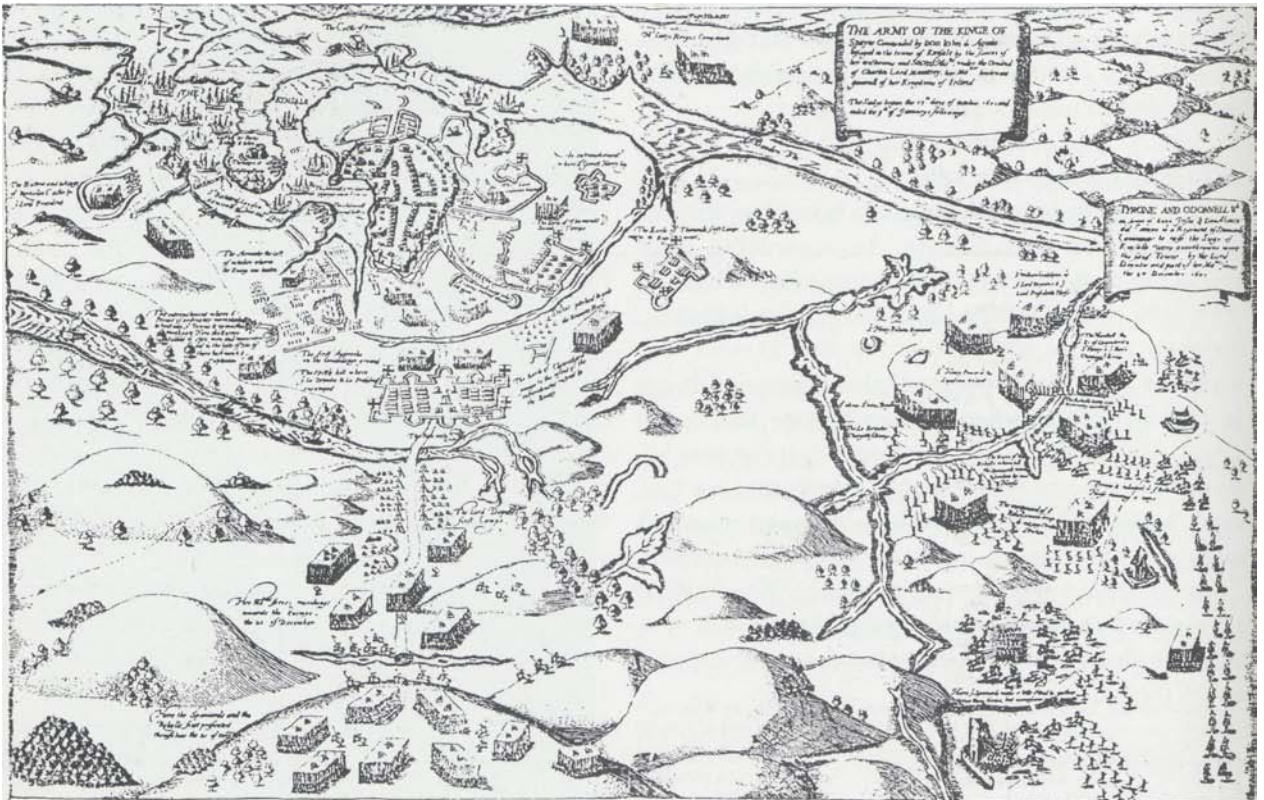
has been suggested that his costume is fanciful rather than realistic, it is on record that some Englishmen genuinely did adopt Irish dress. John Vowell, for instance, records in 1586 of George Bouchier (Sir John Perrott's military adviser) that 'if he served upon foot he was apparelled in the manner of a kern ... and was so light of foot as no kern swifter'. Note the characteristically Irish way he holds his javelin, with one finger through a leather loop which enabled it to be twisted and spun in the hand.

### ***G3. Irishman in English service, 1590s***

Irish soldiers serving in English companies appear often to have continued to wear their own costume, not least because officials and captains pocketed most of the money that should have been used to clothe them. Moryson observed that they 'were content to serve without any clothes so good as the allowance

*Picture-map of (top left) the siege of Kinsale, 17 October 1601-2 January 1602, and (bottom right) the defeat of Tyrone's relief forces, 24 December 1601. The last stand of his*

*Spanish contingent, surrounded by cavalry, can be seen towards the bottom right hand corner. From Carew's Pacata Hibernia.*



price required' and were content instead 'with a little drinking money, which the Irish desired rather than clothes, not caring about going half-naked'. The Irish mantle they wore was anyway a practical campaign item, so much so that it was even being supplied to English soldiers by 1600.

### H1: O'Moore pikeman, 1600

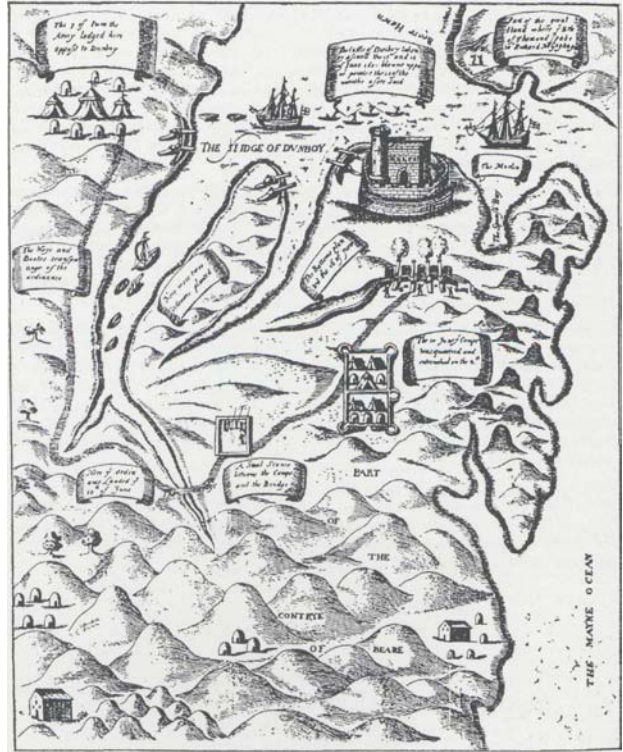
Based on pictures of Owney MacRory's troops at the capture of the Earl of Ormond. Most wore helmets, but they appear to have been otherwise unarmoured. Irish pikes' were described by Sir Walter Raleigh as being 'as good ... as England hath', which is hardly surprising since a great many had probably been captured from the English.

### H2: O'Neill caliverman, c.1600

The costume worn here is based on a picture of an 'Irish lackey' drawn c.1603-6, with the addition of a morion, caliver and accoutrements. He wears a blue cassock of a type also worn by English soldiers, some of Tyrone's shot being recorded as uniformed (in red) as early as 1595. Though probably not all wore helmets some at least certainly did.

### H3: Irish lighthorse, c.1600

This reconstruction is based on contemporary accounts, picture-maps and the Dungiven Costume. Such cavalry were armed with a lance (usually called a 'javelin') which was still wielded overarm, plus darts and long sword. A proportion of Irish cavalry



*The siege of Dunboy, taken by assault 17-18 June 1602. Note the rare appearance of two Irish cannon among the castle's defences.*

by this late date probably rode with stirrups, but such as did were small in number and would have been amongst those wearing armour. These last predominantly still wore mail, but some plate armour was probably in use by the 1590s.

#### Notes sur les planches en couleur

A1, A2 Costume local traditionnel, et coiffures caractéristiques. Notez le casque en cuir, bien que la plupart se battaient tête nue; l'épée, le poignard, l'arc, la hache et particulièrement les fléchettes étaient des armes typiques. Notez que A2 a un gantelet au bras gauche à la place d'un bouclier. A3 La chemise est plus courte que 40 ans auparavant; et notez la hache typique de l'infanterie lourde galloglass, beaucoup copiée et adoptée par d'autres troupes.

B1 Basé sur une pierre tombale, montre l'armure typique du galloglass durant 300 ans. B2 Notez le curieux nez du casque, apparaissant sur une estampe de Dürer et dans d'autres sources. Dürer montre aussi une énorme épée et un immense arc qui sont moins convaincants. B3 Ces hommes au service des anglais portaient des costumes identiques à ceux au service de lords irlandais. La forme de la hache variait énormément.

C1 Dessin de Lucas de Heere, c.1576 mais décrit comme illustrant un costume plus ancien; les cornemuses remplissaient les fonctions des tambours dans d'autres armées. C2 Tiré d'une estampe; notez le casque à quatre pans, probablement de construction brigandine. L'influence anglaise se remarque dans le costume, mais le harnais de cheval, sans étriers, est typiquement irlandais. C3 Serviteur de soldat; ils utilisaient traditionnellement des javelins s'ils se battaient avec les soldats.

D1 Copie d'une effigie tombale du Comte d'Ormond; l'armure archaïque était caractéristique des lords 'dégénérés' de la campagne. D2 Le style irlandais de monte sans étriers, et du lancement du javelin au dessus du bras était adopté par de nombreux anglo-irlandais. D3 Encore une fois, une combinaison très ancienne d'armure et de cotte de mailles, provenant de la tombe d'un certain John Grace.

#### Farbtafeln

A1, A2 Traditionelle irische Kleidung mit typischer Haartracht. Siehe Lederhelm – aber die meisten kämpften ohne Kopfbedeckung; Schwert, Dolch, Bogen, Axt und besonders die Wurfpeile waren typische Waffen. Siehe A2 mit linkem Panzerhandschuh anstelle eines Schildes. A3: Das Hemd ist kürzer als vor 40 Jahren; siehe typische Axt der schweren Galloglass-Infanterie, von andern Einheiten häufig kopiert und getragen.

B1 Beruhend auf einer Grabplatte – eine durch 300 Jahre typische Rüstung der Galloglass-Infanterie. B2: siehe seltsames Nasenstück des Helms, gezeigt in einer Zeichnung von Dürer und in anderen Quellen. Dürer zeigt auch ein riesiges Schwert und einen Bogen, die weniger überzeugend sind. B3: Diese Männer in englischem Dienst trugen ähnliche Kostüme wie jene im Dienst irischer Lords. Die Axt-Formate waren sehr unterschiedlich.

C1 Zeichnung von Lucas de Heere, ca. 1576, soll aber frühere Kleidung darstellen; Dudelsackspieler übten die Funktionen der Trommler in anderen Armeen aus. C2 Nach einem Holzschnitt; siehe vierseitigen Helm, wahrscheinlich in Schuppenpanzer-Konstruktion. Obwohl englischer Einfluß in der Kleidung zu sehen ist, ist die Pferdebeschirung – ohne Steigbügel – rein irischer Art. C3 Soldaten-Diener; sie trugen traditionellermaßen Lanzen, wenn sie Seite an Seite mit den Soldaten kämpften.

D1 Nach einer Grabmal-Statue des Earls von Ormond; die archaische Rüstung war typisch für den "degenerierten" Landadel. D2 Die irische Art des Reitens ohne Steigbügel und der Haltung des Speeres wurde von vielen Anglo-Iren kopiert. D3 Wieder eine sehr alttümliche Kombination von Ketten- und Plattenpanzer nach dem Grabmal eines gewissen John Grace.



**E1** 'A jambes rouges' à cause de leur habitude de garder les jambes nue par tous les temps. La plupart des mercenaires écossais portaient des costumes impossibles à distinguer de ceux des irlandais; le dessin de de Heere montre sans doute un chef. Les fusils rejoignirent les épées à deux poignées dans l'armoire mercenaire à partir de 1550. **E2** Tiré d'une estampe; notez la cotte de mailles archaïque, et le petit bouclier rond, quelquefois porté en travers de la poitrine ou sur le dos. **E3** Tiré d'une carte illustrée de l'époque; l'Irlande était la dernière région de la Grande-Bretagne où de grands boucliers étaient encore utilisés à cette date, un témoin de 1596 les décrivant comme étant en vannerie.

**F1** Typique de cette période. Il a rejeté ses cuissardes; beaucoup abandonnaient complètement leur armure, et même leur casque. **F2** L'équipement complet comprenait deux flasques à poudre, un sac à balles, une allumette de rechange, un briquet à silex, un fil à curer, une épée, un poignard, et même un moule à balles individuel. Des chapeaux remplacèrent les casques à la fin de cette période. **F3** Tiré d'un woodcut; il est très peu différent de la cavalerie légère locale; c'est la dernière utilisation connue de boucliers par les troupes anglaises.

**G1** Mountjoy, bien que bon général, n'était pas un héros aussi intrépide que son portrait le suggère; il était préoccupé de sa santé, et portait toujours plusieurs épaisseurs de vêtements pour se protéger de l'humidité. **G2** Un portrait montre ce costume hybride irlandais/anglais pour le général de l'infanterie légère engagée sur place pour la Reine; il a même le javelin irlandais avec sa boucle pour doigt. **G3** Les irlandais servant chez les anglais étaient souvent sans uniforme; ils préféraient être payés en espèces pour pouvoir acheter de l'alcool, et la lourde cape irlandaise était un vêtement pratique.

**H1** L'utilisation du casque et de la pique souligne les tentatives de la fin du 16<sup>ème</sup> siècle (réussies dans certains cas) pour moderniser les armées irlandaises. **H2** On rapporte que certaines des troupes de Tyrone portaient un uniforme en 1595. **H3** Fondé sur des témoignages contemporains, et sur le 'Dungiven Costume' trouvé dans une tourbière et remontant à c.1600.

**E1** "Rotbeinig" aufgrund ihrer Gewohnheit, bei jedem Watter mit bloßen Beinen zu gehen, unterschied sich die Kleidung der meisten schottischen Söldner nicht von der der Iren; die Zeichnung von de Heere zeigt wahrscheinlich einen Befehlshaber. Nach 1550 stießen Flinten zu den Beidhändern und Bogen der Söldner. **E2** Nach einem Holzschnitt; siehe archaische Rüstung und kleinen Rundschild, manchmal über Brust oder Rücken geschnallt. **E3** Nach einer illustrierten Landkarte jener Zeit; Irland war der letzte Teil der britischen Inseln, wo zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch große Schilde getragen wurden; einem Augenzeugenbericht von 1596 zufolge bestanden sie aus Korbgeflecht.

**F1** Typisch für diese Periode – er hat auf seine Schenkelpanzerung verzichtet; Viele verzichteten auf die gesamte Rüstung, sogar auf die Helme. **F2** Volle Ausrüstung mit zwei Pulverflaschen, Kugelbeutel, extra Lunte, Zunderbüchse, Putzdraht, Schwert, Dolch und sogar eigene Kugelbüchse. Helme wurden gegen Ende dieser Periode durch Hüte ersetzt. **F3** Nach einem Holzschnitt; er unterscheidet sich kaum von der lokalen leichten Kavallerie; dies ist die letzte bekannte Verwendung von Schilden bei englischen Truppen.

**G1** Mountjoy war zwar ein höchst erfolgreicher General, nicht aber ein so verwegener Draufgänger wie es dieses Bild andeutet; er war sehr auf seine Gesundheit bedacht und trug stets mehrere Lagen von Kleidungsstücken zum Schutz gegen das feuchte Wetter. **G2** Ein Portrait zeigt diese Mischung aus irischer und englischer Kleidung für den General für die lokal angeworbene leichte Infanterie der Königin; er trägt sogar die irische Lanze mit Fingerschlinge. **G3** Iren im englischen Dienst trugen selten Uniformen; sie bevorzugten Barbezahlung, um Alkohol kaufen zu können, und der schwere irische Umhang war ein praktisches Kleidungsstück.

**H1** Die Verwendung von Helm und Pike betont die einigermaßen erfolgreichen Versuche im späten 16. Jahrhundert, die irischen Armeen zu modernisieren. **H2** Manche der Truppen von Tyrone trugen 1595 Uniformen. **H3** Nach zeitgenössischen Berichten und nach dem "Dungiven Costume", aufgefunden in einem Moor und wohl etwa aus ca. 1600 stammend.

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**Avec annotations en français sur les  
planches en couleur.  
Mit Aufzeichnungen auf Deutsch über den  
Farbtafeln.**

