

Richard Boyle & The East India Company: *bringing him to his knees*.

Joseph Nunan

After the Nine Years War, many regions of Munster experienced some semblance of British government administration; there was a gradual increase in the numbers of migrants crossing over from Britain and the southwest of England to settle in Munster. Nevertheless, by 1611, settler numbers were low relative to what the British Crown expected. Despite the low numbers many New English settlements sprang up within and alongside the original plantation seignories that had been established in the late 1580s.<sup>1</sup> While settler numbers were important; they were not as important as the individual New English who were committed to the region, the most prominent of which was Sir Richard Boyle. Boyle's wealth came from the rental income that rose from £4,000 per annum in 1614 to £18,250 per annum in 1641, he rented out over 1,200 individual lease agreements over the course of his life.<sup>2</sup> The re-establishment of plantation in Munster after the Nine Years War created the ideal environment, for adventurers like Boyle to earn fortunes and establish new settler families within the region. Boyle's commercial and economic accomplishments resulted in the success of the plantation as a whole and in the creation of a legacy for himself and his family. Opposition to the Church of Ireland interests grew within Gaelic Irish and Old English elite society during the seventeenth century. The legal system moved from a traditional Irish arrangement to one determined by common law. The political system changed from lordships

and septs shaped by extended ancestry to one of national representation symbolised by the New English planters and the established church.<sup>3</sup>

The new British establishment in Munster was comprised of three main elements: government administrators, army officers, and churchmen. All bound together by their close relationships, by their mutual goal of extending Protestantism through plantation, and by their interest in acquiring, owning, and settling lands in Munster.<sup>4</sup> The change in property ownership, the creation of British settlements, and the introduction of New English settlers into what were formerly lightly populated areas of Munster helped sustain this new establishment. Alongside this, came a growth in industrial production through the exploitation of Munster's raw materials. Timber processing and iron manufacturing were two such industries. A marked feature of this industrial growth was the establishment of farmsteads, nucleated and industrial settlements. All of this coincided with the clearance of the Provinces woodlands and the determination by New English settlers and Richard Boyle to remain a permanent fixture of the Munster landscape.<sup>5</sup> This paper introduces aspects of Sir Richard Boyle's early involvement with the timber and iron trades in Munster and the actions taken against William Burrell\The East India Company, on the Bandon and Bride River Valleys as Sir Richard acquired property, and competing interests within these regions.

## I

In Munster, between the years 1608 and 1625 there was rapid growth in iron and timber production. High international prices for iron resulted in the establishment of iron manufacturing units in County Cork and West Waterford. This industrial

infrastructure was located close to the Bandon, the Bride and the Blackwater Rivers. Timber, charcoal and labour were less expensive in Munster than they were in England or Wales.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the cost of Irish charcoal did not offset the cost of such expensive undertakings. In many instances, both English labour and ore had to be imported. According to Colin Rynne, it is too simplistic to believe that the availability of cheap charcoal encouraged English investment in Irish ironworks which were, mostly, unprofitable.<sup>7</sup> However, Richard Boyle was quick to realise that the acquisition of land and the development of settlements would enrich him, while at the same time recognising the importance of supplementing his rental income with investment in manufacturing and exports.<sup>8</sup>

Boyles involvement in Munster's lucrative timber trade<sup>9</sup> through the exploitation and management of woodlands on his own estates along with the purchase of timber on the estates of the New English, the Gaelic Irish and the Old English, achieved two main objectives: profits from the trade in timber and land clearance. In the long term, this process created agricultural land, previously unavailable, to lease. It facilitated the elimination of the hiding places of those displaced from the earlier wars and it destroyed natural woodland habitats. Despite being much further down Boyle's priority list, the latter were still important,<sup>10</sup> as, Fynes Moryson described the necessity of enclosing and securing cattle at night for fear of thieves 'or else for fear of wolves, the destruction whereof being neglected by the inhabitants, oppressed with greater mischiefs, they are so much grown in number as sometimes in winter nights they will come to prey in villages and the suburbs of cities.'<sup>11</sup> Roger Braban writing to William Carnsew in August 1611, also

reported that one of his mare's colts was killed by a wolf in Kinalmeaky, County Cork.<sup>12</sup> In essence, the countryside was tamed and the landscaped altered; these changes facilitated the landowner and the settlers to adopt British agriculture practice and an English settlement layout.<sup>13</sup> The hardwood forests of the Blackwater, the Bride and the Bandon river valleys satisfied Richard Boyles, the British and European demand for charcoal, ship timbers, and barrel-staves. The importance of the timber industry was evident in the correspondences from Philip Cottingham to Salisbury, formally Robert Cecil, the third chancellor of Trinity College Dublin. In 1608, Cottingham arrived into Munster on the Crowns behalf, to survey the regions woodlands. In September of that year he was at Mogeely, East Cork, with Sir Richard Boyle and Mr. Henry P[y]ine, inspecting woods. He noted that a great deal of Munster's timber and woodlands had been consumed in the manufacture of pipe-staves and that he, Boyle and Mr. Pine were going westward into Desmond's country [Limerick, North Cork and Kerry] to examine the state of the forests there.<sup>14</sup> In October 1608, Sir Geoffrey Fenton reported to Salisbury, that Richard Boyle had procured a bark to transport timber samples and planks from his and other woods for review.<sup>15</sup> Cottingham further commented that much of the best timber had already been used up for pipe- and barrel-staves.<sup>16</sup> He noted Boyle's ruthlessness in withholding wages from those employed in shipping the sample timbers out of the region.<sup>17</sup> Boyle's unscrupulousness defined his character throughout his life. Two decades later in 1628, an iron master involved in a legal dispute with Boyle was arrested at Youghal and upon his detention he was informed that, 'he had been a silly fool to think he could escape the earl's clutches

with a scurvy warrant, and that Cork [Boyle] had never yet come into conflict with any man without bringing him to his knees.’<sup>18</sup>

By 1610, Boyle was establishing ironworks along the Blackwater and the Bride Rivers. However, the situation on the ground was complicated and a delicate balancing act was necessary in order to establish New English and new Protestant settlements while navigating the good will of the Gaelic Irish and the Old English residents and elites. The dilemma Boyle faced during the erection of ironworks on the Blackwater in 1610 highlighted some of those complexities:

Sir Rich. Morison had, by conference with the officers and workmen of the iron work now upon the river of Youghall, learnt what will be the charge of erecting the like and the profit to be expected, Sir Rich[ard] Boyle being the best skilled and enabled to carry such a business of any man in this kingdom. [O]f this consideration the natives, as he conceives, will the more willingly remove at the time appointed, hoping thereby to overthrow the work even in the foundation. How to remedy this as yet he knows not; for to compel them to stay were contrary to the project of the plantation and the proclamation published, and to suffer them to depart will be the ruin of the undertakers that are to plant, unless they be otherwise supplied with victuals, towards which his care shall not be wanting; but he fears the want in that kind will be complained of, for the agents of London have already felt it, and sent unto him to redress it.<sup>19</sup>

Boyle was willing to cooperate and co-exist with the Old English and the Gaelic Irish if that collaboration helped develop and sustain economic opportunities for

himself. At the same time, he was prepared to confront New English and British speculators and entrepreneur who threatened his position in the region.<sup>20</sup> The overt and covert actions undertaken by Boyle to protect his interests in Munster can be deciphered from the harassment of the East India Company at Downdaniel, County Cork, and of William Burrell their chief shipwright. Acting on William Burrell's advice the East India Company bought and leased lands in County Cork. In 1610, they established an ironworks, a timber processing facility and a ship building site at the confluence of the Bandon and the Brinny Rivers close to the town of Bandon-bridge within the Barony's of Kinalmeaky and Carbury.<sup>21</sup> The background to Burrell and the Company acquiring the location was as follows: on the 18 August 1611, Roger Braban writing from Kinalmeaky to William Carnsew, stated that 'William Burrell's [East India Company] progress with the work and enlargement of his holding; proposes grant to him of a fee farm [in Kinalmeaky] from Sir Barnard [Grenville].'<sup>22</sup> Two month later, Braban informs Carnsew from Kinsale that payments have been received from Burrell.<sup>23</sup> The payment Braban references were for the possible transfer of the Carnsew timber works site on the Bandon and Brinny Rivers to Burrell and the East India Company. Throughout 1608, the Carnsews of Bokelly, operated a timber works that harnessed water from the Bandon-Brinny Rivers through a weir system at Downdaniel. In February, 1609, William Carnsew wrote to Mathew Carnsew from Fermoy, County Cork, informing him of the repairs and construction taking place at Downdaniel; 'I am reforming my deformed Dundaneer before I goe hence and making up the weare if it raines.'<sup>24</sup> The East India Company ironworks site established by Burrell was located at the

Carsew timber works. The partial remains of the original infrastructure connected with the ironworks still survive within this current landscape. According to Colin Rynne this is one of the earliest known examples of its type to remain extant in Ireland.<sup>25</sup>

William Burrell was responsible for the Company's industrial complex on the Bandon and Brinny Rivers and he was also in charge of their commercial interests in Kinalmeaky and in the neighbouring Barony of Carbury. The Company under Burrell purchased woodlands and established three known settlements; the lands procured and leased were several thousand acres in size.<sup>26</sup> A section of those lands belonged to Sir Bernard Grenville; they comprised of three ploughlands leased to Burrell in 1610.<sup>27</sup> A second portion, belonged to the McCarthy's, this included Downdaniel Castle.<sup>28</sup>

Initially, their efforts were opposed by local fishermen, whose livelihoods were impacted by the damming of the rivers. The latter's cause was taken up by Walter Coppinger in 1614, and later by Peregrine Bannister in 1619.<sup>29</sup> Both Coppinger and Bannister may have been acting as agents of and at the behest of Sir Richard Boyle as he began to purchase land within this area. The Coppingers were an Old English merchant family from Cork city; they expanded into west Cork by offering mortgages to fellow compatriots. Peregrine Bannister, the Sherriff of Cork, was of Old English stock. In 1613, Boyle acquired Coolfadda, the north half of Bandon-bridge town situated within the Kinalmeaky barony.<sup>30</sup> Coppinger wanted the Company to remove their weirs and dams on the rivers as they hindered the movement of river transportation and fish.<sup>31</sup> There was, at this time, some difficulty

caused by forest weirs interfering with the commercial activity and traffic along rivers in County Cork.<sup>32</sup> The Company wished to minimise the impact the dams and weirs were having locally, while, maximising the negative consequence Coppingers actions were having on the Plantation within Grenville's seignory:

Walter Coppinger and other ill-disposed persons, who have lately combined themselves "to scatter the plantation and pervert those places to superstition and incivility"; and for this purpose endeavour to overthrow two dams built by the petitioners upon two small waters descending from the rocks and mountains for service of the iron-works, the waters running through the petitioners' own grounds on both sides and not being navigable.<sup>33</sup>

Removal of the dams and weirs meant the East India Company's industrial infrastructure would not function. Their works controlled and directed the flow of water off the Bandon and the Brinny Rivers to operate their blast furnaces, bellows, forge hammers and slitting mills.<sup>34</sup> Burrell built specialist instillations at the Dowladaniel ironworks, where the first recorded example in Ireland of a slitting mill was located.<sup>35</sup> In spite of this, by 1615, Coppinger managed to get the Company to modify their dams on the river thereby facilitating the districts fishermen.<sup>36</sup>

While, Coppinger was harassing the Company on the Bandon River, Richard Boyle was renewing and issuing new leases on several parcels of land within the Mogeely and Tallow regions of East Cork and West Waterford. One of those parcels included land in Curryglass called the 'glasshouse'.<sup>37</sup> In 1614, Boyle made Walter Coppinger a new lease of Curryglass. Boyle, 'accepted a surrender of all

Walter Coppinger of Curreglasses ould leases and thereuppon made him a new lease of those lands, and of other acres that sometymes were Apley's, which I had purchased, and of the glyn and woods of both sydes therof never leased before, which I promised Hugh Croker his son in lawe,'<sup>38</sup> Boyle not only owned large tracts of land within the region of East Cork and West Waterford he had commercial interest in the area, including ironworks situated along the Bride River east of Tallow-bridge. In 1624, Richard Blacknall and Henry Wright built the second recorded slitting mill in Ireland for Boyle east of Tallow.<sup>39</sup> However, so too:

the said William Burrell and Thomas Ball, have in the milles of Mogelie, weares, water courses or wharfage belonging to the said ironworkes...And whereas wee understand the said William Burrell and Thomas Ball are interessed for divers yeares yet to come in the moyetie of the castle, landes and woodes of Killmaccow, in the counties Corke and Waterford, in the realme of Ireland, and other houses and landes lying neere to the said ironworkes, which are soe intermixed with the said Lord Boyle's landes belonging to his Lordship's moyetie of the ironworkes there...And further whereas likewise wee are informed the said William Burrell and Thomas Ball are interested in another iron worke neere to a place called Dondamere [Downdaniel], in the said county of Cork, in the province of Mounster, in the said kingdome of Ireland.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, it appeared Boyle and Burrell were on a collision course as their competing interests in Munster began to overlap. By 1619, the matter of the East India Company dams and weirs on the Bandon-Brinny Rivers was renewed by Peregrine

Bannister, the High Sheriff of Cork. He threatened to march on Downtaniel with an armed force to take down the Company's waterworks.<sup>41</sup> As in the case of Coppinger before the East India Company petitioned London for restraint.<sup>42</sup> That same year, the town of Bandon-bridge was purchased by Boyle;<sup>43</sup> when he 'delivered upon Mr. Henry Beechers letters to Mr. Richard Blacknoll, being the firste money [I] paid in part payment...[I] am to pay Mr. Beecher for the Redemcon of the ploughlands on the north syde of the Banden.'<sup>44</sup> By years end (1619) he completed his acquisition of one-half of the Barony of Kinalmeaky from Henry Becher. The second half of the Barony was still in the possession of Grenville.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, Bannister received two property leases situated in and around Bandon-bridge, Kinalmeaky and Carbury from Richard Boyle between the years 1618 to 1620.<sup>46</sup> In July, 1618, Bannister received a lease backdate to 1616 and on October, 1620, a tenant of Boyle's, Henry Hull received a new lease, for a ploughland at Bireagh in Ballymodin (Bandon) upon his surrender of a lease to Peregrine Bannister.<sup>47</sup>

During the intervening years 1616-1618, the Gaelic McCarthy's began to dispute the lease arrangements they made with Burrell and the Company, including the used of the castle at Downtaniel.<sup>48</sup> In March 1616, the Company's timber conveyes were being harassed as they transported their product out of Kinalmeaky and Carbury along the Bandon River Valley towards Kinsale.<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, on the 5 August, 1617, 'Callaghane McCarthie' entered into a lease agreement with Boyle for land within the Carbury-Kilameaky area, 'Donnogh McTeig Carthy' received a lease for three ploughlands in 1615, and finally, in November 1620, 'Owen Mc

Donnogh Carthy' leased property from Boyle.<sup>50</sup> During the summer of 1620, Boyle was outwardly involved in a legal dispute with William Burrell. The disagreement related to properties in West Waterford, East Cork and West Cork including Downdaniel. By winter of that year (1620) a legal compromise was formalised where:

[...] the said Lord Boyle shall give, pay and satisfie unto the said William Burrell and Thomas Ball, for all their estate and interrest, and for the estate and interrest of any person or persons claymeing by from or under them or any of them, in or unto the moytie of the ironworkes neere Tallough, in the province of Mounster, in the realme of Ireland, [...].<sup>51</sup>

Finally, it took Boyle up until 1623 to conclude his purchase of Grenville's Kinalmeaky lands. By which time, Bandon-bridge, Kinalmeaky and many parts of Carbury were in his ownership; except Castlemahon, which was held by Sir Vincent Gookin.<sup>52</sup> With the acquisition of these lands, Burrell became Boyle's tenant. It would be reasonable to presuppose that Boyle made every attempt to contribute to Burrell and the Company's decline. Thus, Sir Richard Boyle may have encouraged much of the opposition to Burrell and the Company in an effort to acquire the Barony of Kinalmeaky and to prevent the East India Company and William Burrell from gaining an established foothold within the Bandon and Bride River Valleys; in essence, giving rise to conflicting New English interests. The property leases entered into by Coppinger, Bannister and the McCarthie\McCarthy's may have been a reward for acting on behalf of, and as loyal tenants of Sir Richard

Boyle. Boyle could claim plausible deniability in relation to the actions taken against the East India Company on the Bandon-Brinny Rivers.

Consequently, the plantation period dramatically alter Ireland's social and political landscape and defined its immediate future. In Munster, Boyle used his position within the administration to increase his estate holdings by means of legal challenges to insecure titles, and through the transfer of property titles by an increase in mortgage based money lending. He began to acquire titles held by Gaelic Irish and Old English proprietors and he moved far beyond the confines of the plantation areas.<sup>53</sup> The diffusion into areas outside the official plantation was, in essence, a form of colonial spread, driven by economic expansion, but also facilitated by the protection afforded new settlers by the presence and supremacy of Sir Richard Boyle within the Munster region. This protection was supplement by the establishment and maintenance of organised and well-trained militias within Boyle's new British settlements.<sup>54</sup> Boyle's militias in Munster were at their strongest and most influential up until the end of the 1620s. The Irish Commission of 1622 identified Tallow and Bandon-bridge along with their hinterlands as localities where Richard Boyle had militias that totaled 250 horse and 1,250 foot, 'well armed with pikes, muskets, swords, horsemen's staves and pistols,'<sup>55</sup> and in the former locality there were 'many ancient captains, and lieutenants, with other officers and common soldiers.'<sup>56</sup> After this time the old vanguard of militiamen with military experience and loyalty to Boyle were passing away. John Downing was one such loyal lieutenant and on 3 June 1629 Boyle noted his passing, 'My honest tenant leftenant Downinge departed this lyfe.'<sup>57</sup>

## NOTES

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56 Ibid, at p. 498.

57 Grossart, *The Lismore Papers*, (5 vols, London, Chiswick Press, 1886-1887), *First Series*, at p.325.

The East India Company was established mainly because the Dutch controlled the entire spice trade with the East Indies (Indonesia). Spices were extremely important for making the winter salted meat tastier. The English were determined to have a share in this rich trade, but were unsuccessful. However, the East India Company did begin to operate in India, Persia and even in Japan, where it had a trading station from 1613-23. The quarrel over spices was England's first difficulty with the Dutch. Before the end of the seventeenth century trading competition with the Dutch had led to three wars. And his curiosity leading him to imitate divers of the old Greek Philosophers, who travelled through many Countries only to enrich themselves with what knowledge they could meet with in them, he went purposely to visit Monsieur de Bils, soon after he had left England; which he lately traversed, and in his passage honoured me with several of his. At a meeting of the Court of the East India Company on 29 October it was recorded that "Mr William Richards being recommended by the honourable Robert Boyle esquire as a person.