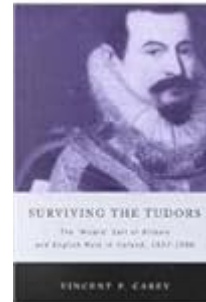


Vincent P. Carey. *Surviving the Tudors: The 'Wizard' Earl of Kildare and English Rule in Ireland, 1537-1586.* Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002. 240 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-85182-549-3.



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Vincent Carey has produced a major study of Gerald Fitzgerald, eleventh earl of Kildare and leading Catholic noble in the Pale, that not only tells us a great deal about this fascinating man, who was known as the “wizard” earl, but also contextualizes his life to present more information significant for those who study English as well as Irish history. If we truly wish to understand Tudor England and the reign of Elizabeth, we must also have an understanding of Anglo-Irish relations. Carey also informs his readers about the legends that surrounded Kildare and why the Irish needed to regard him as a master of the “black arts.” Carey admits the difficulty in understanding the “mental world” of Kildare because of the lack of personal evidence about most of the Irish figures of this period. The English-Irish humanist Richard Stanishurst, who served as tutor to Kildare’s children, provides some evidence that was published in Holinshed’s *Irish Chronicle*, which suggests that Kildare’s childhood was difficult. Carey argues, however, that we have to treat the evidence with caution because of Stanishurst’s efforts to present Kildare in a most positive light.

Carey argues that despite the strength of the forces against him, Kildare had the consummate political skills and impressive personality to face the various political challenges. Kildare had a strong local power base and also useful court connections, especially those that came

from his wife, Mabel Browne, who had been a gentlewoman of Mary I’s privy chamber. Mary I’s accession was most helpful to Kildare; after a difficult time in his youth when in Edward VI’s reign there was a strong attempt to pursue the Protestant Reformation in Ireland, he was restored to the title of earl in 1554. Another valuable resource for Kildare was his relationship with Shane O’Neill. Kildare worked with O’Neill and the Leicester faction at the English court to undermine the power of Thomas Radcliffe, earl of Sussex, and lord deputy. This English political alliance also aided Kildare when Sir Henry Sidney became Ireland’s governor and lord deputy. Kildare abandoned Shane O’Neill, cooperating with Sidney and his attempts to strengthen royal government in Ireland. As a result, Sidney was willing to allow Kildare a free hand in his assertion of local power. For his support of Sidney’s successful put down of the revolt led by the Butler family in 1569, Kildare received substantial rewards.

Unfortunately, Sidney’s departure in 1571 was eventually disastrous for Kildare. Sir William Fitzwilliam’s administration as lord deputy began to unravel, and Fitzwilliam accused Kildare of conspiring with the rebels. Fitzwilliam was convinced that Kildare was his enemy, and he used the gentry’s resentment of Kildare’s military practices to construct enough evidence to have Kildare

arrested and transported to London, where, in the Tower, he faced charges of treason. But the flimsiness of the evidence, combined with Elizabeth and her Privy Council's decision not to destroy the leading magnates in Ireland, allowed Kildare to survive this potentially deadly setback. By the time Kildare returned to Ireland in 1578, the politics of religious and ethnic conflict had terribly transformed the political situation there; it was a time of ferocious violence. In the late 1570s and early 1580s the Pale community became increasingly disaffected with English policy, particularly because of the increased military and financial demands and the brutality in the suppression of insurrections. Though Kildare did not participate in the Desmond and Baltinglass revolts, he was caught up in the wave of reaction that swamped Ireland. As the international situation for England worsened from 1576 onward, there was a deep dread of the Catholic and Spanish threat that could use Ireland against the English, and English government officials perceived Kildare as involved in a plot to destroy them. Sir Arthur Grey de Wilton, ap-

pointed lord deputy in 1580, decided he needed to eliminate all opposition, and arrested Kildare as a Catholic plotter in what Carey has characterized as a "witch-hunt" (p. 192), particularly since Carey describes Kildare as "a politique in matters of religion" (p. 195). Kildare's enemies continued their efforts until Kildare was committed to the Tower in June 1582. But Elizabeth did not want to destroy Kildare, though his power was gone. He was forced to abjectly submit and was released in June 1583, but bound to stay within a twenty-mile radius of London, and died in November 1585, a broken man both physically and politically.

Carey's study is thoughtful and well-written, and he demonstrates a meticulous knowledge of both primary sources and the secondary literature. The book is well-organized with chapters that are chronological but also provide needed context and it is thoroughly grounded in medieval/early modern Anglo-Irish historiography. It is essential reading for anyone with an interest in Tudor Anglo-Irish relations.

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