War and Society in County Meath, 1641-1654.

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On the evening of the 22 October, 1641, British officials foiled a plot by a group of Irish rebels to seize Dublin Castle. The rebels, in Dublin to partake in the plot, decided to frequent a local hostelry. After some time, Owen Connolly, foster brother of Hugh Oge MacMahon, one of the original plotters, left the tavern and betrayed the plot to William Parsons, one of the lord justices. British officials were quick to react, arresting the men who had gathered on suspicion of the plot. While many of the leaders, including Conor, Lord Maguire were arrested that night, others who had not travelled to Dublin continued with a contemporaneously planned assault in Ulster. Led by Sir Phelim O'Neill, these Ulster rebels captured strategic sites such as Charlemont and Dungannon, both simultaneously gathering weapons and, wiping out local colonial governance in the province. Over the ensuing days and months, the momentum set in train by the rebels spread to the rest of the country and rebellion took hold, with many disaffected Gaelic Irish turning against their settler neighbours and subjecting them to attacks.

No county in Ireland escaped the ravages of the rebellion. Both planted and unplanted areas experienced hardship, with witnesses in all counties later recounting what they had experienced, viewed, and heard, during the rebellion. These experiences included everything from robbery to physical violence, to murder, to the stripping of clothes, and less frequently, rape. Despite the size of Ireland, and the hazards of seventeenth century communications, the attacks became widespread within days. While they first erupted in Ulster, reports suggest the violence had reached Leinster and Connacht by 24 October, before reports of attacks in Munster in the following weeks. Amongst the earliest Leinster counties to experience the offshoots of rebellion was Meath, the subject of this chapter, with attacks starting as early as 25 October. Many of the initial attacks came from members of the O'Reilly/Reilly family from County Cavan, who attacked both settlements and British settlers' en-route to Dublin.

The experience of Meath during the rebellion was, however, different to other counties. While the county experienced its share of violence, it also became the hotbed of many of the most pivotal discussions between the Old English Catholic lords of the Pale, as they decided whether or not to throw their lot in with the Ulster rebels. These Old English lords were 'the descendants of those who had colonised Ireland from the period of the Norman invasion to, approximately, that of the Reformation'.[1] They included men such as Lords Gormanston, Fingal and Trimbleston; all of whom owned land in the Meath area.[2] While the involvement of the Pale gentry in the rebellion has been discussed at length by historians such as Brid McGrath, this chapter seeks to focus on society in County Meath both before, and during, the rebellion. Using the 1641 depositions as the primary source material, the chapter will begin with an overview of the material that survives for County Meath. The major focus will be on exploring the extent of British settlers and settlement in County Meath prior to the rebellion, focusing on aspects such as the numbers of British settlers; their geographic extent; the social interactions of these families and the economy of County Meath. The chapter will then discuss the experience of settlers during the rebellion, focusing on the depositions to explore the impact of the rebellion on their communities.

As the rebellion spread across Ireland, many dispossessed Protestant settlers began to flee from their homes for sanctuary in Ireland's towns and cities. Chief among the locations that they fled to was Dublin, where, alarmed by the numbers of refugees and by their stories,

[1] A. Clarke, *The Old English in Ireland* (Dublin, 2000), p. 15.
[2] B. McGrath, 'County Meath from the depositions' in *Riocht na Midhe*, 9: 1 (1994-5), p. 30.

the lords justices of Ireland commissioned an investigation of all aspects of the rebellion. The lords justices granted a commission to seven clergymen whom they charged with collecting statements from those arriving into Dublin, in which they would detail their experiences at the hands of the rebels.[3] The subsequent statements became the foundation stones of what became known as the 1641 Depositions. The commissioners took these statements over a period of six years from 28 December 1641 to the autumn of 1647, under three separate commissions.[4] The first commission, dated 23 December 1641, aimed to collect information about robberies, while the second from January 1642 'extended the scope of the inquiry to include murders and massacres'.[5] The third, from June 1642, 'replaced a deceased member and altered the legal status of the commissioners'.[6] The statements followed a similar format, described by Aidan Clarke as beginning:

> with the name, address and social status or occupation of the deponent; they briefly state the circumstances in which the deponent was robbed and spoiled; they list the value of the goods and chattels lost. They name those responsible; they furnish information about the identity of others in arms and they conclude by recounting what disloyal and traitorous words they have heard the rebels utter, and what miscellaneous information they possess.[7]

While these statements are by far the largest element of the 1641 depositions, the collection comprises a much wider range of documents. Aidan Clarke identified a further four categories of material within the depositions collection as a whole: Waring copies, Bysse depositions; sworn statements; and commonwealth material.[8] Clarke noted the Waring copies, as those made by Thomas Waring, clerk of the commission, who intended to publish them in England.[9] The Bysse depositions derived from a specific commission, granted to Archdeacon Phillip Bysse, to collect statements in Munster, while the

> sworn statements [were] made by individuals, captured Irish and Old English as well as refugee Protestants, by coercion as well as by choice, before an officer of state: most frequently, a judge, occasionally a Privy Councillor, sometimes a local garrison commander'.[10]

The final grouping of Commonwealth statements comprised testimonies taken from both witnesses to, and those indicted for, crimes during trials in the 1650s in the High Court of Justice.[11]

The Meath depositions correspond roughly to Clarke's breakdown. The Meath depositions' volume is located in Trinity College Dublin's Manuscript and Archives Research Library at TCD MS 816 and is 347 folios long. This roughly equates to 227 items, 216 of which are depositional material (see table 1).

Type of Deposition	**Total number**

[3] For more on the commission see: A. Clarke, 'The commission for the dispoiled subject, 1641-7' in: B. MacCuarta (ed.) *Reshaping Ireland, 1550-1700: colonisation and its consequences* (Dublin, 20011), pp 241-260.
[4] A. Clarke, 'The 1641 depositions' in P. Fox (ed.) *The Treasures of the library of Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin, 1986), p. 112.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 112.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 112.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 113.
[8] *Ibid*., pp 111-122.
[9] *Ibid.* , pp 113-114.
[10] *Ibid.*, pp 114-116
[11] *Ibid.*, pp 116-118.

Dublin Original	97
Information (sworn statements)	38
Waring Copies	0
Other Copies	12
Bysse Depositions	0
Commonwealth	68
Supporting Statement	1
Other materials	11
Total	**227**

Table 1: Breakdown of depositions in the Meath volume

The Meath volume, however, is quite different in terms of its overall content. As Brid McGrath acknowledged, this stems from the 'unique positions and character of Meath' in early modern Ireland.[12] Unlike other counties, Meath was not planted and lands were not confiscated, making for fewer numbers of British settlers as a whole.[13] This uniqueness was even more pronounced due to the large number of Old English gentry in the county.[14] These families held significant wealth and were predominantly Roman Catholic, ensuring that the vast majority of Meath's lands remained in Catholic hands.[15] McGrath argued that even more extensive differences could be gauged due to Meath's geographic location. This, she described, as

> near to Dublin, close to Drogheda and to a lesser extent to Julianstown, the scene of the most significant military activity in the early part of the rebellion; close also to Cavan and therefore on the route which those fleeing Cavan and Monaghan must [have taken] to safety in Dublin.[16]

This unique geographic and social composition is reflected in the Meath depositions. The volume begins, as McGrath also identified, with eighty-four folios of sworn statements that sought to examine the entry of the Old English gentry into the rebellion in support of the Catholic rebels.[17] These statements gave an insight into the series of meetings that took place on the hills of County Meath – Crofty, Tara and Duleek – and into the discussions and arguments that pervaded Old English society in the county.[18] Thereafter, much of the volume comprises depositions taken between 1641 and 1647. In all, ninety-seven such depositions are found in the Meath volume, roughly between folios 85r and 237v. Further, sixty-eight Commonwealth statements are included, roughly between folios 238r and 347v. The volume also contains a number of incidental materials associated with the county, including letters to and from John Netterville; extracts from petitions to Sir John Netterville; a recognisance of Bryan Colgan; a list of names; an extra note; a cover note of examinations relating to Bryan Colgan, and a cover page.[19]

[12] B. McGrath, 'County Meath from the depositions', p. 25.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[14] *Ibid*., p. 25.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[17] MS 816 ff 1r-84v. For further discussions see McGrath, 'County Meath from the depositions' and B. McGrath, 'Mount Taragh's Triumph: commitment and organisation in the early stages of the 1641 rebellion in Meath' in E. Darcy, A. Margey and E. Murphy (eds) *The 1641 depositions and the Irish Rebellion* (London, 2012), pp 51-63.
[18] See: McGrath, 'County Meath from the depositions' and McGrath, 'Mount Taragh's Triumph'.
[19] TCD MS 816, ff 204r-205v, Letter to John Netterville; TCD MS 816, ff 200r-202v, Extracts of petitions to John Netterville; TCD MS 816, ff 206r-206v, Conclusion of extracts of the petition of Sir John Netterville; TCD MS 816, ff 335r-335v, Recognisance of Brien Colgan; TCD MS 816, ff 203r-203v, List of names; TCD MS

What becomes apparent through detailed examination of the Meath depositions is that despite, as McGrath argues, the low settler population in County Meath, there was a strong geographic spread of British settlers deposing from across the county. This, perhaps, suggests that while the settler population was low, they were quite dispersed. Modern day County Meath comprises eighteen baronies and deponents from all eighteen baronies are found in the depositions. Taking the combined total of all material in the Meath depositions, the highest cluster of deponents comes from the barony of Moyfenrath Lower, accounting for eighteen deponents in all. The lowest cluster is in Kells Lower, with just one deponent giving a testimony to the Dublin commission. Further high clusters of deponents can also be identified in Moyfenrath Upper, with thirteen deponents; Navan Lower with nineteen deponents; Skreen with thirteen deponents and Ratoath with eleven deponents. The vast majority of these deponents gave statements either under the Dublin commission or to the High Court of Justice in the 1650s.

Looking even further into the geographic distribution of statements from deponents within the individual baronies, further clusters of deponents emerge in both urban and rural locations. In Moyfenrath Lower, for example, five deponents stated their address as the townland of 'Trim', while in Navan Lower; ten deponents identified their address as 'Navan'. In rural areas several deponents with addresses in the same townland gave testimonies. Six deponents from Monktown, in the barony of Skreen, for example, all deposed, while five deponents from Ardbraccan, in the barony of Navan Lower, also deposed. Other townlands, such as Castlejordan in the barony of Moyfenrath Upper, also displayed similar numbers, with seven deponents listing their address in the townland. This suggests the predominance of strong individual communities of British settlers in County Meath prior to the outbreak of rebellion. Moreover, the high numbers of statements by deponents from individual townlands, towns, and indeed parishes, enables a more extensive and stronger analysis of individual settler societies in Meath before the rebellion.

Given that Meath did not form part of any formal plantation scheme, the make-up of British settlers and their descendants in the county was particularly diverse. While much scholarship on the depositions has focused on what they tell us about the actual rebellion, Nicholas Canny has argued that 'they are more evidently useful for the purpose of understanding the extent, location and character of the English settler presence in Ireland at the point when the insurrection occurred'.[20] So far academics have undertaken little work on these documents as sources for social history, and this is particularly true for Leinster.[21] Canny argued, in particular, that academic scholarship on Leinster in the early seventeenth century treats it 'as the bastion of the Old English and Roman Catholic interest in Ireland, and, in doing so, [does] not take sufficient account of the considerable Protestant settlement that had been gradually established there over the course of the seventeenth century'.[22] The dispersal of settlement of those that could be described as new settlers in County Meath supports this argument, with both Old English and new English settlement described throughout the depositions.

816, ff 299r-299v, Extra note; TCD MS 816, ff 336r-336v, Cover note of examinations concerning Bryan Colgan; TCD MS 816, ff ir-livvv.

[20] N. Canny, 'The 1641 depositions as a source for the writing of social history: County Cork as a case study' in P. O'Flanagan and C. Buttimer (eds) *Cork History and Society* (Dublin, 1993), p. 250.

[21] For work on the settler society as described in the 1641 depositions see: Canny, 'The 1641 depositions as a source for the writing of social history', pp 249-308; N. Canny. *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford, 2001), pp 461-550, A. Margey, ''Making the documents of conquest speak': plantation society in Armagh and the 1641 depositions' in P.J. Duffy and W. Nolan (eds) *At the anvil: essays in honour of William J. Smyth* (Dublin, 2013), pp 187-214 and J. Ohlmeyer, 'Anatomy of plantation: the 1641 depositions' in *History Ireland*, 17, 6 (2009), pp 54-6.

[22] N. Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford, 2001), p. 501.

The evidence in the depositions for County Meath suggests strong communities of new English settlers, with evidence of strong familial bonds, agricultural communities, religious activities, gentry, and artisan communities. In the first instance, the Meath depositions contain a wide range of information about the family structures of these new settlers. Women, for example, are heavily represented among the deponents from the county with most describing themselves as either wives or widows. Of the ninety-seven Dublin original depositions, twenty-one were given by women.[23] Of these, eight women described themselves as wives, while a further seven described themselves as widows. One of these, Jane Keirton, deposed with her son-in-law, Richard Pierson, while two women, Katherin Kent and Margaret Owens deposed with Hugh Kent, Katherin's husband. Margaret was their servant.[24] In terms of the Commonwealth statements, of the thirteen women who were questioned, eight described themselves as wives, while a further three described themselves as widows.[25] Both male and female deponents were particularly forthright in distinguishing their families within the depositions, giving an indication of the size of the overall settler population in Meath. One deponent, Alexander Sharpe from Trubley in the barony of Deece Lower, described how during the rebellion he fled with four children to Dublin, leaving behind his wife with five of their younger children.[26] Large families like this were noted by other deponents. Roger Puttock, a clerk in Navan, and later one of the 1641 commissioners, noted his wife and three children, two of whom accompanied him to Dublin while the other child was left behind.[27] Thomas Johnson of Brownrath in the barony of Ratoath noted his wife and three small children.[28] Johnson's familial circle was widened by his siblings, with

[23] TCD MS 816, ff 88r-88v, Deposition of Jane Hanlon, 28 February 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 91r-91v, Deposition of Joane Balch, 25 February 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 96r-96v, Deposition of Barbara Commins, nd; TCD MS 816, ff 103r-103v, Deposition of Joane Fowles, 12 March 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 102r-102v, Deposition of Ann Duninstery, 4 January 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 106r-106v, Deposition of Katherin Graunt, 5 January 1642?; TCD MS 816, ff 121r-121v, Deposition of Margaret Maning, 10 January 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 122r-123v, Deposition of Jane Mansfield, 3 January 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 131r-131v, Deposition of Jane Pressick, 19 January 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 144r-144v, Deposition of Margery Sharpe, 29 January 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 159r-160v , Deposition of Alice Clarke, 28 March 1642 ; TCD MS 816, ff 161r-161v, Deposition of Maudlin Fisher, 21 January 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 162r-163v, Deposition of Mary Hall, 8 June1642; TCD MS 816, ff 167r-167v, Deposition of Jane Jones, 28 June1642; TCD MS 816, ff 171r-172v, Deposition of Hugh Kent, Katherin Kent and Margaret Owen, 26 July 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 173r-174v, Deposition of Ann Key, 2 April 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 175r-175v, Deposition of Elizabeth Lambert, 7 March 1643; TCD MS 816, ff 228r-228v, Deposition of Ann Painter, 7 April 1643; TCD MS 816, ff 209r-209v, Deposition of Elizabeth Williams, 7 May 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 229r-229v, Deposition of Richard Pierson and Jane Keirton, 15 May 1643, TCD MS 816, f. 232r Deposition of Jane Smith, 7 January 1644; TCD MS 816, ff 232r-232v, Deposition of Jane Smith, 7 January 1644.

[24] TCD MS 816, ff 229r-229v, Deposition of Richard Pierson and Jane Keirton, 15 May 1643 and TCD MS 816, ff 171r-172v, Deposition of Hugh Kent, Katherin Kent and Margaret Owen, 26 July 1642.

[25] TCD MS 816, ff 240r-241v, Examination of Winyfrid Field, 18 October 1652; TCD MS 816, ff 244r-245v, Examination of Winifride Field, 21 October 1652; TCD MS 816, ff 254r-255v, Examination of Margaret Carre, 25 January 1653; TCD MS 816, ff 258r-259v, Examination of Katherine Cusack, 27 January 1653; TCD MS 816, ff 272r-273v, Examination of Elianor Warren, 12 February 1653; TCD MS 816, ff 274r-275v, Examination of Rose mc awhy, 28 January 1653; TCD MS 816, ff 276r-277v, Examination of Anne Tute, 12 February 1653; TCD MS 816, ff 278r-279v, Examination of Elizabeth Fitzgerrald, 17 February 1653; TCD MS 816, ff 280r-281v, Examination of Mary Farrell, 17 February 1653; TCD MS 816, ff 290r-291v, Examination of Katheren Connar, 22 February 1653; TCD MS 816, ff 292r-293v, Examination of Any Nimarchy, 18 February 1653; TCD MS 816, ff 326r-326v, Examination of Grany Ny Killevy, 11 March 1654; TCD MS 816, f. 346r, Examination of Jane Elliott, 24 May 1654.

[26] TCD MS 816, ff 138r-138v, Deposition of Alexander Sharpe, 15 March 1642

[27] TCD MS 816, ff 132r-133v, Deposition of Roger Puttock, 1 March 1642.

[28] TCD MS 816, ff 117r-118v, Deposition of Thomas Johnson, 9 February 1642.

what appears to be his brother, Hugh Johnson, providing a statement on the same date and at the same time.[29]

Many of the settlers appear to have lived in close proximity to their wider families, if not within the same townland. John Calbecke from Monktown in the barony of Skreen, for example, described in his deposition how, at the outbreak of the rebellion, he 'was at his father, Alvery Calbecke's house'.[30] Anne Tute from Castletownmelough, possibly modern day Castle Moylagh, described an extensive family network in her 1653 examination, noting her father, Richard Geyner, who had recently died, her mother Rose, her husband, Edmund, her brothers Cornelius and Richard Geyner and her sister Eleanor; all of whom resided at Castle Moylagh before the rebellion.[31]

Her large kinship network was further enhanced by a large number of servants at the castle, whom she did not name, but referred to.[32] The importance of servants within these family networks is attested to by the high number of servants who deposed in their own right, giving an insight into what happened to both them and their masters during the rebellion. One such servant was Jane Hanlan.[33] Hanlan described herself as the servant of William Meoles, the Dean of Clonmacnoise and parson of Ardbraccan. She recounted the attack on her master's property, and how he lost plate, hay, turf, corn thrashed and turned 'into bread and sent to the Rebels that besieged Drogheda', as well as studs, mares, colts, books, sheep and much more.[34]

While the depositions suggest this evolved familial structure in Meath, they also tell us about the wider social and economic contexts of British settlement in the county. These contexts are indicated in the diverse settler society of farmers, gentry, artisans and clergy described throughout the depositions. In terms of the agricultural community in Meath, twenty men whose statements form part of the collection described themselves as having a diverse range of agricultural occupations. These included husbandmen, yeomen, farmers, and cottiers, who stated their addresses right across the county. The testimonies of these men noted mixed agricultural practices on their holdings. This reinforces the argument made by Aidan Clarke that the agricultural system that developed in 'anglicised Ireland, outside the plantation areas' had distinctive characteristics. These areas, he noted, often combined traditional practices of subsistence farming, reflected in the continuance of a manorial-style system that displayed influences from both Irish and English perspectives, and 'more advanced development in which only the vestiges of economic feudalism remained'.[35] Meath, like other areas with British settlement, most likely continued to practice a system akin to the three-field crop rotation system, combined with livestock farming.[36] Hugh Cook, for example, described as a husbandman from Clonee in Moyfenrath Lower, noted a range of losses across both pastoral and livestock farming. These included beasts and cattle, horses, corn and hay in the haggard and corn in the ground. He valued his entire losses at £143 6*s.* 8*d.*[37] Similarly, Richard Davys, a yeoman from Patrickstown in Fore barony also described extensive losses of livestock including one horse valued at three pounds and beasts, cattle and swine worth £6 3*s.*[38]

[29] TCD MS 816, ff 117r-118v, Deposition of Hugh Johnson, 9 February 1642.
[30] TCD MS 816, ff 93r-93v, Deposition of John Calbecke, 23 February 1642.
[31] TCD MS 816, ff 276r-277v, Examination of Anne Tute, 12 February 1653.
[32] *Ibid.*
[33] TCD MS 816, ff 88r-88v, Deposition of Jane Hanlan, 28 February 1642.
[34] *Ibid.*, f. 88r.
[35] A. Clarke, 'The Irish economy, 1600-1660' in T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (ed.) *A New History of Ireland 111: early modern Ireland, 1534-1691* (Oxford, 2009), p. 172.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 172.
[37] TCD MS 816, f. 95r, Deposition of Hugh Cook, 12 March 1642.
[38] TCD MS 816, f. 101r, Deposition of Richard Davys, 16 February 1642.

While many of the losses described by the farming community appeared to be relatively small, some deponents within the community described very extensive losses that suggest the importance of farming in underpinning the economic life of the settler communities in Meath. The deposition of Nicholas Hudson, a yeoman, from Hilsfaughan, County Meath, again suggests widespread mixed farming through his claim for losses of beasts, cattle, sheep, horses, nags and mares and also highlighted the great value of his corn holdings, which he claimed were worth £300.[39] Moreover, Hudson suggested that many of the farming community in Meath were developing their holdings even further when he noted that he lost 'in new buildings, and spare time about his house worth 300 li'. Hudson also expanded his own holdings through the lease of other farms, increasing his landholdings in the county considerably.[40] He held a second farm under lease for seventeen years, which accrued a profit of five pounds a year.[41] By the time of deposing, he claimed he had so far lost ten pounds of this profit.[42] Hudson's statement, along with those of his co-deponents, indicated the probability that farmers in County Meath were rearing livestock for both local consumption and export to the British market. Gillespie has noted, for example, that in 1640 alone, 45,000 live cattle were exported from Ireland to England.[43]

The importance of agriculture in sustaining the settler population in Meath was further alluded to in the statements of many of the gentry. Thirteen of those that gave statements across the volume described themselves as 'esquire', while a further twenty-eight stated their occupation as 'gent'.[44] While much is known of the Old English gentry, their landholdings and wealth, the depositions display a strong community of new English gentry. As McGrath has acknowledged, there were 'few wealthy Protestants in Meath', yet, the depositions do offer a glimpse into what wealth they did possess and their interactions with the community as a whole.[45] Statements from those describing their occupation as gentry are to be found from both rural and urban locations across County Meath and indicate that they combined extensive land holdings and business interests with agriculture. All gentry engaged in some level of agriculture, most likely to help sustain their own families and servants, as well as to provide extra income for their families. Almost all the deponents who classed themselves as esquires or gentlemen accounted for losses of agricultural products and equipment. At the wealthier end of the gentry, Thomas Ashe, an esquire, from St. John's Rath in Meath, deposed that he had sustained significant losses in counties Cavan and Meath.[46] He stated that he lost lands and future inheritances to the value of £363.[47] Furthermore, his agricultural losses were exacerbated through the loss of goods including cows, sheep, riding horses and garrans, corn, hay, turf and corn in the ground, which had the combined value of £420.[48] Ashe appears to have been particularly wealthy, noting even more extensive losses of buildings in Trim and St. John's, valued at £1,000. as well as household goods such as bedding, linen, pewter and brasses valued at £250.[49] William Bradley, from Angistown, County Meath, who described himself as both a gentleman and a clerk of the peace, also deposed that he had

[39] TCD MS 816, f. 164r, Deposition of Nicholas Hudson, 20 April 1642.
[40] *Ibid.*, f. 164r.
[41] *Ibid.*, f. 164r.
[42] *Ibid.*, f. 164r.
[43] R. Gillespie, 'Explorers, Exploiters and Entrepreneurs, 1500-700', in B.J. Graham and L.J. Proudfoot (ed.) *An Historical Geography of Ireland* (London, 1993), p. 138.
[44] The term 'esquire' refers to a landed proprietor (www.oed.com) (7 March 2015).
[45] McGrath, 'County Meath from the depositions', p. 25.
[46] TCD MS 816, ff 90r-90v, Deposition of Thomas Ashe, 19 February 1642.
[47] *Ibid.*.f. 90r.
[48] *Ibid.*, f. 90r.
[49] *Ibid.*, f.90r.

sustained heavy losses in agriculture at the hands of the rebels.[50] Like other gentry, he recounted his agricultural property and goods including English sheep, sheep wool, hacking horses, mares, garrons, cattle, butter, cheese, corn in the haggard, three ricks of hay, turf, green corn and wheat.[51] Moreover, his agricultural bent went further, as he noted that he had lost the thirty year lease of a farm at Angistown and the lease of guild land in Trim[52]. His total losses amounted to £1309 18*s.* 4*d.*[53]

Many of the gentry's statements elucidated their economic prowess and their integration into Meath's wider life and society prior to the rebellion. Robert Ovington, from Navan, for example, deposed about his extensive land holdings in the town of Navan. He testified that he had lost the lease of a castle and thirty-eight houses and lands 'in and about Novan, which cost [him] in building, repayring and improving of the somme of Twoe hundred and fourty pounds'.[54] Moreover, Ovington's network in Navan appears to have been extensive, as he recounted numerous unspecified, unpaid and forfeited debts that were due to him from men now out in rebellion. Such references to unpaid debts are frequent throughout the depositions, and, as has been argued elsewhere, provide evidence of strong social bonds and interactions within, and between, the Gaelic Irish and settler communities across the country.[55] In most cases, the deponent acknowledged that the loss of these debts was probably permanent, as they were generally owed by men or women out in rebellion. The high losses experienced by Ovington at Navan was not unusual for the time since, as McGrath acknowledged, 'the whole town seems to have turned out in support of the rebels'.[56] Most of the depositions from the town mention the especial severity of attacks on the Protestant residents in the town, who listed numerous losses at the hand of the rebels.

The commercial world of pre-rebellion Meath is evoked by several depositions from urban and rural based artisans and merchants. Five men specifically described their occupations within this artisan community including John Worsley, a tanner from Diamor in Fore barony; Henry Smith, a weaver from Dowth; Arthur Wollgar, a barber from Dowth; Richard Pierson, a chapman from Stackallen; and Phelim McBryan, a carpenter from Proudstown in Skreen barony.[57] Further occupations were alluded to by wives of artisans who deposed. Joane Balch, from Kilmainham near Kells, noted her husband Gregory as a butcher; Joane Fowles, from Dunboyne, described her husband Richard as a victualer and Jane Pressick, from Longwood, noted her husband as a sadler.[58] Interestingly, none of the depositions by the artisan men note particular losses attached to their trade. Reasons for this are hard to adjudge, but the lack of trade losses detailed in the depositions from Meath may

[50] TCD MS 816, ff 92r-92v, Deposition of William Bradley, 5 March 1642.
[51] *Ibid.*, f. 92r.
[52] *Ibid.*, f. 92r. In referring to the loss of his leases, the deponent either meant that he had lost the use of the land during the term of the rebellion or that his lease had been nullified by the rebellion. This might have been due to the fact that the land was rented from a Catholic, now out in rebellion, or indeed that the land had been taken over by a rebellious Catholic. It was not uncommon for leases, for example, to be ripped up by rebels on the move across Ireland.
[53] *Ibid.*, f. 92r.
[54] TCD MS 816, ff 148r-148v, Deposition of Robert Ovington, 19 March 1642.
[55] A. Margey, 'Making the Documents of Conquest Speak', p. 202; P. Stapleton, ''In Monies and Other Requisities': The social role of credit in early seventeenth-century Ireland', in E. Darcy, A. Margey and E. Murphy (eds) *The 1641 Depositions and the Irish Rebellion* (London, 2012), pp 65-78.
[56] McGrath, p.38.
[57] TCD MS 816, ff 149r-149v, Deposition of John Worsley, 9 February 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 207r-208v, Deposition of Henry Smith, 23 May 1643; TCD MS 816, ff 215r-219r, Deposition of Arthur Wollgar, 27 May 1643; TCD MS 816, ff 294r-295v, Examination of Phelim McBryan, 3 March 1653.
[58] TCD MS 816, ff 91r-91v, Deposition of Joane Balch, 25 February 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 103r-103v, Deposition of Joane Fowles, 12 March 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 131r-131v, Deposition of Jane Pressick, 19 January 1642.

mean that some deponents included these losses in their totals for household wares or general stolen goods. Jane Pressick, however, described the losses 'of wares belonging to the trade of a Sadler worth thirty pounds sterling'.[59] The commercial world of pre-rebellion Meath is also evoked by several depositions from merchants, while several others refer to merchants. Patrick Begg from Navan, for example, described his occupation as a merchant in his 1650s examination at the High Court of Justice.[60] John Calbecke from Monkstown, referred to an attack on his father's house, in which the chief perpetrator was Michael Marley, a merchant.[61]

By far the most significant evidence of the extent of new British settlers in County Meath comes in the form of the large number of depositions given by, and examinations of, the clergy. In the volume as a whole, one archbishop, one dean, four vicars, five ministers and eleven clerks all deposed.[62] They provided addresses across the county, suggesting there was a strong need for clergy to tend to a significant British population. Attacks against Protestant clergy were reported frequently throughout the depositions, with both physical violence and robbery inflicted. These attacks were often symbolic, with, as Canny has suggested, their goal being to aid the rebels in proposing 'Catholicism [to take the place] of Protestantism as the official religion of the country'.[63] Prior to the rebellion, relations between both religious groups appeared strong, with both communities attempting to accommodate the other. As Canny noted, Protestants often accepted Catholic practices in areas where their own community were small in number. As such they 'were less ready to invoke the law to enforce the official religion'.[64] At the outbreak of the rebellion in Meath, however, this accommodation between the religions broke down irretrievably. While the depositions tell us something of the violence meted out to the clergy, they also tell us about both the wealth and the role of the Protestant clergy prior to the rebellion. The Archbishop of Meath, for example, deposed twice, giving a list of extensive losses in the first instance. These give an indication of the material wealth of the Archbishop, as they included books and manuscripts worth £400; household furniture valued at £200; 'horses for coach, saddle horses and plowgarrons and colts £200' and arms valued at thirty pounds.[65] Similar to the gentry, the Archbishop also engaged in agriculture, deposing that he lost 700 sheep, as well as cows, ox, young breeds of

[59] TCD MS 816, f. 131r, Deposition of Jane Pressick, 19 January 1642.
[60] TCD MS 816, ff 242r-243v, Examination of Patrick Begg, 19 October 1652.
[61] TCD MS 816, f. 93r, Deposition of John Calbecke, 23 February 1642.
[62] TCD MS 816, f. 85r, Deposition of the Archbishop of Meath, 18 October 1643; TCD MS 816, ff 85v-86v, Deposition of Anthony, Lord Bishop of Meath, 18 October 1643; TCD MS 816, ff 87r-87v, Deposition of William Meoles, 28 February 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 111r-112v, Deposition of William Howard, 29 January 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 145r-145v, Deposition of John Wilson, 28 February 1642; TCD MS 816, f. 167r, Deposition of Adam Jones, 28 June 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 176r-176v, Deposition of Audley Lloyd, 6 May 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 139r-139v, Deposition of John Sterling, 4 January 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 139v-140v, Deposition of John Sterling, 2 November 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 177r-177v, Deposition of Robert Leckei, 21 February 1643; TCD MS 816, ff 178r-178v, Deposition of William Metcalfe, 31 October 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 179r-179v, Deposition of William Metcalfe, 28 October 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 225r-225v, Deposition of Thomas Kilvy, 4 May 1643; TCD MS 816, ff 226r-227v, Deposition of Robert Nicoll, 9 March 1644; TCD MS 816, ff 92r-92v, Deposition of William Bradley, 5 March 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 100r-100v, Deposition of John Cranford, 14 March 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 105r-105v, Deposition of George Gonne nd; TCD MS 816, ff 109r-110v, Deposition of John Hoskins, 8 January 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 132r-133v, Deposition of Roger Puttock, 1 March 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 134r-135v, Deposition of William Robinson, 7 January 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 136r-137v, Deposition of William Robinson, 5 February 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 138r-138v, Deposition of Alexander Sharpe,15 March 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 141r-142v, Deposition of Jocelin Vsher, 24 March 1642; TCD MS 816, ff 155r-155v, Deposition of Robert Bonynge, 25 February 1643; TCD MS 816, ff 180r-180v, Deposition of Hugh Morison, 8 July 1642.
[63] Canny, *Making Ireland British*, p. 523.
[64] Canny, *Making Ireland British*, p. 446.
[65] TCD MS 816, f. 85r, Deposition of the Archbishop of Meath, 18 October 1643.

cattle and corn, hay, furze, coals and turf.[66] The Archbishop also had significant property, with a house at Ardbraccan and another at Trim mentioned in his deposition.[67] Furthermore, he held a lease of land at Liscarten, which he estimated to be worth £159.[68]

The Dean of Clonmacnoise and parson of Ardbraccan, William Meoles, also suggested significant wealth amongst some of the religious, when he deposed that he had lost material goods such as household items valued at eighty pounds, books worth fifty pounds, a clock and a watch worth eight pounds, and gold rings, jewels and some coins valued at twelve pounds.[69] He had also engaged in money lending to the local community, giving forty pounds to Henry Plunckett, which he believed was lost.[70] Roger Puttock, one of the 1641 commissioners, and a clerk himself in Navan, gave an even more impressive list of losses.[71] These included books, manuscripts, apparel, household goods, ready money (which he hid during the rebellion, and which was later found by the rebels), farms, leases, buildings and debts. He gave an estimate of his total losses as £3332 1*s*.[72] The wealth of the clergy and their connections in their local parishes through money-lending, property rental and church livings, all point to their importance in seventeenth-century Meath. They became the capstone of what appears to be a much evolved society of British settlers in the community, who slowly spread throughout the county, integrating with the Gaelic Irish and Old English in the decades prior to the outbreak of rebellion.

At the outbreak of rebellion, the situation that had evolved in Meath was quite different to the rest of the country. As a county whose wealthiest landowners were predominantly Catholic, Meath experienced little trauma in the opening weeks of the rebellion. Nicholas Canny has argued that the

> landowners in County Meath seem to have been in a position to defend their county from raiding parties from Ulster until mid- or late November and what attacks on Protestants occurred before that date were perpetrated by residents of the county and several of whom were described as younger sons of landowners or tenants in the county.[73]

After that, even when the lords entered the rebellion in support of the Catholic Ulster rebels, many 'who had taken to arms could be depicted as 'the poorer sort of parish dwellers and others'', with many of the attacks confined to rural areas.[74]

In Meath, the position adopted by the Old English community appeared to be the central influence in the early weeks of the rebellion. Torn between loyalty to the Crown and to their co-religionists, they remained outside of the rebellion, until it became clear that they would either be attacked from Ulster or pushed to the fringes of governance by an unsympathetic Dublin administration.[75] McGrath, in her extensive work on the subject, points to the turning point in the position of the Old English, as being Nicholas Preston, Viscount Gormanston's reaction to the administration's ignoring his warning that the government troops being sent to Drogheda, under an inexperienced officer, to relieve the rebel's siege, might be 'attacked en route'.[76] When, on 29 November 1641, the rebels attacked these troops at Julianstown, McGrath noted that Gormanston called the other Meath lords to a meeting at

[66] *Ibid.*, f. 85r.
[67] *Ibid.*, f. 85r.
[68] *Ibid.*, f. 85r.
[69] TCD MS 816, f. 87r, Deposition of William Meoles, 28 February 1642.
[70] *Ibid.*, f. 87r.
[71] TCD MS 816, ff 132r-133v, Deposition of Roger Puttock, 1 March 1642
[72] *Ibid.*, ff 132r-132v.
[73] Canny, *Making Ireland British*, p. 505.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 505.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 501 and McGrath, 'Mount Taragh's Triumph', p. 51.
[76] McGrath, 'Mount Taragh's Triumph', p. 51.

Duleek.[77] The meeting at Duleek on 3 December 1641 sparked a series of meetings across Meath at the Hills of Crofty and Tara. It was at these, particularly at the final meeting, that the lords committed to the rebel campaign, planning, as McGrath remarks 'for the conduct of the military campaign, including personnel and supplies, and also maintaining order in the county at a time of national upheaval'.[78] Jane Ohlmeyer has further elucidated the reasons for the entry of the lords into the rebellion, noting that:

> As the risings gathered momentum and 'the common sorts' and 'meaner sort of people' seized the initiative, the Catholic lords of the Pale had no alternative but to join the Ulster insurgents if they were to regain control over their followers and secure their estates.[79]

Thereafter, Meath's Old English lords continued to administer the campaign in Meath, and in the province more generally, and as McGrath has argued they created 'administrative and legal systems which were to endure throughout the period of the Confederation of Kilkenny, with key personnel involved in these meetings playing leading roles in the 1640s'.[80]

The Old English and their subsequent entry into the rebellion did not, however, protect Meath against some of the horrors of the rebellion. The depositions point to the widespread destruction of property belonging to the new settlers and to their social dislocation throughout the rebellion. While the lists of losses in the depositions provide evidence that is useful to understand pre-rebellion society in Meath, they are also a reminder of the extent to which robberies were committed in the opening weeks of the rebellion. While some of the robberies appear to have been opportunistic looting by the poorer elements of society, the depositions present evidence of structured robbery to help the rebel cause. Guns, such as those taken from the Archbishop of Meath, undoubtedly aided the war effort. Other items that many deponents signaled had been taken, included corn, which as Jane Hanlon, servant to William Meoles, Dean of Clonmacnoise, noted had been 'thrashed, and turned into bread for rebels at Drogheda'.[81] Money became a prime target in Meath during the early weeks of the rebellion. Barbara Commins from Kentstown in the barony of Duleek Lower, for example, named Andrew Kent of Kentstown as the leader of a group of thirty rebels who robbed her.[82] She stated that Kent robbed her of fourteen shillings in ready money and fourteen shillings in debts and 'made her give him an accompt of her debts owing to her that he might tak the mony to mainteine his souldieres withall'.[83] The wider looting of farm animals and horses probably fed, and transported, the rebels respectively.

The new settlers in Meath did experience significant personal hardships as a result of the rebellion. The stripping of the settlers' clothes seems to have been commonplace in Meath, leaving them to fend against the weather conditions during a particularly harsh October. Richard Dayvs from Patrickstown in Fore noted how his wife and children had been stripped of their clothing by the rebels and were left to languish in Dublin 'in great want and misery'.[84] Other deponents were terrorised by threats. Nathaniell Nanskone, a clergyman, for example, recounted, how:

[77] *Ibid.*, pp 51-52.
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[79] J. Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English: the Irish aristocracy in the seventeenth century* (London, 2012), p. 259.
[80] McGrath, 'Mount Taragh's Triumph', p. 63.
[81] TCD MS 816, ff 88r-88v, Deposition of Jane Hanlon, 28 February 1642.
[82] TCD MS 816, ff 96r-96v, Deposition of Barbara Commins, nd.
[83] *Ibid.*, f. 96r.
[84] TCD MS 816, ff 101r, Deposition of Richard Davys, 16 February 1642.

one of my Parishioners of Armulchan a Taylor whose name I cannot remember came to me and told me, if I fled not presently, 26 men would be at my house that night, and would mince me and cut me into small pieces, whereby my wife and twoe children, were forced to fly to Drogheda by night, where they still remayne.[85]

Dennis Kelly, from Castletownkilpatrick, similarly described how three rebels, James Fitzjones, Laurence Netterville and Oliver Fleming threatened and stripped both Kelly and his wife 'to the naked skinne'.[86] Kelly continued to recount the experience of other settlers in his statement. He noted the escalation of violence to incidents of murder. In one case, he reported that he had been credibly informed about the killing of four people from his locale, all of whom had refused to turn apostate. Their failure 'to goe to Masse' resulted not just in their death, but in their non-Christian burial in a ditch, after the rebels refused to permit them to be buried in a churchyard.[87] Such anti-Protestant activities were recorded elsewhere in the Meath depositions. William Metcalfe, Minister of the parish church of Siddan, Slane Lower, testified how:

one Walter Evers of Bengerstowne aforesaid a civilian sayd to this deponent that his (meaning the protestant profession) was nawght and [that] they [were] *the protestants* hereticks: & [he] forceibly brought him [William Metcalfe] into the Church yard at Siddan to show him where & howe many English were there buried for xxty yeres then last past, [and informed him] that they might be turned out of their graves church and Churchyard.[88]

Incidents of murders are recounted across the Meath depositions, but in the main these were isolated, with no evidence of any multiple killings on the scale claimed in other counties.[89] Several female deponents testified that their husbands had been murdered. Ann Key, from Corstown in the barony of Fore, for example, described how her 'husband was murthered by some rebells neare the Navan'.[90] Similarly, Elizabeth Lambert of Banestown in Navan Lower deposed that her husband was murdered 'nere Kilcock by the Rebells' as he fled for protection to Dublin.[91] By far the most gruesome murder recorded in Meath was that of Sir James Ware. This has already been noted by Brid McGrath in her seminal work on the county. This particular murder is recounted by several deponents, and serves as evidence of the splintering of Meath's society, when even apparent friends turned on each other. Ware's murder featured heavily in the later examinations at the High Court of Justice. One of those questioned was Elizabeth Fitzgerrald of Tristernagh, County Westmeath, who had been at Ware's castle at Castletownmoylagh on the night he was murdered.[92] She recounted how Captain Christopher Hollywood, who had been a friend of Ware's before the rebellion, along with Captain Andrew Whight and Colonel Dowde had come to the castle 'pretending at first to the said John Ware that that [they] had come to see him'.[93] She continued to recount how, at first, Ware entertained them with great civility, but after about an hour, Whight and Hollywood 'began to picke quarrells with the said John Ware'.[94] Fitzgerrald reported that she had personally advised Ware to leave the house, as she was uncomfortable at how the evening was progressing. Ware, however, was so confident in his friendship with Hollywood

[85] TCD MS 816, f. 124r, Deposition of Nathaniell Nanskone, 13 January 1642.
[86] TCD MS 816, f. 184r, Deposition of Dennis Kelly, 23 May 1642.
[87] *Ibid.*, f. 184r-184v.
[88] TCD MS 816, f. 178r, Deposition of William Metcalfe, 31 October 1642.
[89] For example, multiple killings are recorded at Portadown, Co. Armagh (TCD MS 836) and at Shrule, Co. Mayo (TCD MS 831).
[90] TCD MS 816, ff 173r, Deposition of Ann Key, 2 April 1642.
[91] TCD MS 816, f. 175r, Deposition of Elizabeth Lambert, 7 March 1643.
[92] TCD MS 816, ff 278r-279v, Examination of Elizabeth Fitzgerrald, 17 February 1653.
[93] *Ibid.*, f. 278r.
[94] *Ibid.*, f. 278r.

that he replied 'Thou foolish woman I would trust them had I a thousand liues'.[95] His trust, however, proved his downfall as, on accompanying the men out into the courtyard, 'the said John Ware was shott and killed, by *one* Hugh Dun; according to the direccions of the said Whight *or* Hollywood, as this deponent was Informed'.[96] While the incident at Castletownmoylough is undoubtedly a disturbing portrayal of how societal norms had been disrupted during the rebellion, turning on neighbours and friends was not uncommon across Ireland. The depositions record the often systematic robbery and attack on Protestant settlers by their Catholic neighbours; neighbours whom they had presumably lived beside in relative peace during the previous decades.

Further disturbing incidents in County Meath came to light in the statements given at the High Court of Justice in the early 1650s. Eight deponents, for example, testified regarding an incident of infanticide, and subsequent punishment for the act, at Castlejordan. This is the only reference to infanticide in the depositions collection as a whole. In his examination, Owin McGuyre testified that a woman named Elyn ni Kelwey from Castle Jordan had given birth to a child outside of wedlock.[97] The child's father was named as Tirlogh O'Doran, who McGuyre stated was already married.[98] McGuyre reported that on giving birth, Elyn had murdered her child and 'buried [it] in a Dunghill'.[99] The child's body was 'afterwards digged out of the said Dunghill by a Mastiffe dogg of one Rochford a Tanner of Castle Jordan'.[100] McGuyre reported that the local governor of Tecroghan, Captain George Cusacke, on hearing the report had tied Elyn to a post and burned her Elyn at Knockinagoly. At the end of his account, McGuyre informed the commissioners that his knowledge had come from the fact 'that he was present & saw the woman burnt'.[101]

The case of infanticide here is further evidence of the breakdown of societal norms during the rebellion. Raymond Gillespie has previously argued that while punishment for infanticide was not uncommon, 'the manner of [Elyn's] death' was.[102] He suggested that 'burning of women was usually reserved for either heresy or, more commonly, treason'.[103] He argued that the reason for the severity of the punishment was related to Elyn's attempt to cover up her child's birth and death. Not only did she commit a criminal act, but she also committed a religious crime, as she failed to repent of her sins of illegitimate birth and infanticide.[104] This, as Gillespie further distinguished meant that 'Ellen's crime was not simply that she had murdered a child but that she had deprived it of baptism and hence consigned it to limbo'.[105] These beliefs were further compounded by the Irish folklore tradition that noted 'the child murderess ... in religious terms … as having diabolical associations'.[106] In this context, Gillespie noted that Elyn would probably have been regarded as a witch, and therefore the punishment of burning would have been appropriate.[107] The statements relating to the trial and execution of Elyn ni Kelwey all describe the events in a similar manner, suggesting that it did most likely occur. Moreover, the event seems to have

[95] *Ibid.*, f. 278r.
[96] *Ibid.*, f. 278r-278v.
[97] TCD MS 816, f. 327r, Examination of Owin McGuyre, 14 February 1653.
[98] *Ibid.*, f. 327r.
[99] *Ibid.*, f. 327r.
[100] *Ibid.*, f. 327r.
[101] *Ibid.*, f. 327r.
[102] R. Gillespie, 'The burning of Ellen Ni Gilwey, 1647: a sidelight on popular belief' in *Riocht na Midhe*, 10, 1999, p. 74.
[103] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[104] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[106] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[107] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

formed a particular line of questioning by the commissioners of the High Court, as they sought evidence against a rebel, named Brien Colgan. The eight men who reported on the case of infanticide, including Colgan himself, testified that he had not been involved in Elyn's execution, but had merely been a spectator like everyone else. In his own statement, Colgan added to knowledge of the case stating that it occurred in 1647.[108]

There is little doubt that the 1641 rebellion had a significant impact in County Meath. The depositions from the new British settlers in the county all attest to the multiple horrors experienced. These settlers, however, were not alone. The range of crimes – robbery, physical attacks, stripping and murder – described in the volume were commonplace throughout the country in the immediate months after the outbreak of violence. What is different about these attacks in Meath, though, is the fact that Meath's Old English population helped to fend off much of the violence until late 1641. Local skirmishes and attacks by the residents of the county proved the most common features described by many of the deponents in the early months of the rebellion. Once the Old English joined the rebellion, as others have noted, the attacks continued to be rural in location and undertaken by the poorer elements of the Gaelic society.

While the depositions aid our understanding of the nature of the rebellion in the county in the main, they do offer us much more than this, particularly in their descriptions of the settler society in Meath. The pre-rebellion society described in the depositions suggests one in which Old English, New English and Gaelic Irish; all lived side-by-side in relative peace. This peace, however, might be acknowledged to have been in place along continuing and potentially growing resentments among the communities, especially in terms of debt payments, lease arrangement and religious differences. The New English society, in particular, is elucidated in the descriptions of the settlers and appears to have been large in size and well distributed throughout the county. These settlers had significantly altered Meath's cultural landscape. Their depositions attest to significant British agricultural practices. They noted their roles in urban governance; their extensive urban and rural landholdings and their attempts to improve these holdings. These settlers appear to have been intent on making Meath their home for the years and decades ahead. The advanced nature of the British society comes to light further in the number of artisan workers who evidently had enough employment in the pre-rebellion communities to sustain them and their families. Furthermore, the presence of a large number of all ranks of clergy is indicative of both the wide geographical spread of the settlers and indeed the size of their community.

In sum, the Meath depositions are worthy of attention for the multiple ways in which they can help us understand a tumultuous period in Irish history. Their value as a tool to comprehend the challenges faced by the settlers during the rebellion is undisputed. Furthermore, their descriptions about the entry of the Old English into the rebellion have been seminal in our understanding of this particular historical event and its narrative. Importantly, however, these depositions are a source for social historians intending to embark on studies of early modern society in Ireland, and, in particular, on the British communities within this society.

[108] TCD MS 816, f. 329r, Examination of Bryan Colgan, 14 February 1654.