

# Introduction

Hugh de Lacy was a dominant figure in the Anglo-Norman arrival and colonisation of Ireland. His Irish career was quite short yet his impact on Meath and Ireland was profound and enduring. His participation in the conquest of Ireland transformed Irish society and Ireland's history. This study traces the impact of this single individual on the history and land of Ireland but it also treats his English and Norman connections. De Lacy lived on an epic scale, being considered capable of becoming king of Ireland and throwing off the control of the king of England.

The challenge of a biographer is to bring his subject to life. I have shared a common physical place with Hugh de Lacy on numerous occasions when I have walked around Trim castle, climbed the Hill of Ward, visited his mottes or viewed his castles in the Welsh marches but with such a limited documentary trail to follow we have to suggest how he reacted to the various events in his life. Standing outside Trim Castle and imagining how Hugh laid down the foundations and constructed the largest building in Ireland at the time or crossing the summit of the Hill of Ward and imagining how de Lacy planned to assassinate the elderly Tigernán Ua Ruairc.

The work is a synthesis of available sources and research; drawing on diverse sources and diverse disciplines including history, archaeology, architecture and geography.

I would like to acknowledge all those learned people who have already studied this subject. It is on the work of these scholars that I have attempted to build the story of Hugh de Lacy but any errors or changes are due entirely to my own hand. It is an ambitious project to try and write the life of anyone and I am aware of my own shortcomings but I wanted to try and get to know this man. This biography was principally written in the period 2003-2008 while a student at Maynooth University, and lay at the side of my "I have to get back and finish that" list for more than ten years until Covid 19 hit in 2020 and so this book may yet see the light of day. As a result most of the research in this field from 2008 to 2020 has not made it to the book.

I am grateful to the following institutions for the use of their facilities and providing access to books and manuscripts: Meath County Library, NUI Maynooth Library, and Westmeath County Library. Thank you also to the many people who have helped me along the way.

# Abbreviations

*AFM Annala Rioghachta Eireann: Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616.* Annals of the Four Masters *Annals of the Four Masters* ed. and trans. John O'Donovan, 7 vols. (Dublin 1848-51; repr. Dublin, 1856; repr. Dublin, 1990)

*ALC The Annals of Loch Cé. A Chronicle of Irish Affairs from A.D. 1014 to A.D. 1590* (ed.) William M. Hennessy, 2 vols. (London, 1871)

*AT 'Annals of Tigernach'* ed. Whitley Stokes, *Revue Celtique* 16-18 (1895-1897), repr. 2 vols, Felinfach 1993)

*AU Annala Uladh. Annals of Ulster, otherwise Annala Senait, Annals of Senat; a chronicle of Irish affairs A.D. 431-1131, 1155-1541* ed. William M. Hennessy and B. Mac Carthy, 4 vols. (Dublin, 1887-1901, repr. Dublin, 1998)

*Chartul. St. Mary's, Dublin Chartularies of St. Mary's Abbey Dublin ... and the Annals of Ireland, 1162-1370*, ed. J.T. Gilbert, 2 vols. (London, 1884-6)

*Chronica* William Stubbs, (ed.) *Chronica magistri Roegeri de Hovedene*, 4 vols (London, 1868-71)

*Expugnatio* A.B. Scott and F.X. Martin. (eds and trans) Giraldus Cambrensis, *Expugnatio Hibernica: The conquest of Ireland* (Dublin, 1978)

*Gesta* Roger of Howden, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi et Gesta Regis Ricardi Benedicti abbatis* (ed. William Stubbs) (2 vols. Roll series, 1867)

*JRSAI* Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries

*MIA* *Miscellaneous Irish Annals - Miscellaneous Irish Annals A.D. 1114-1437. (Mac Carthaigh's book)* ed. Séamus Ó hInnse (Dublin, 1947)

*Monasticon Anglicanum* Dugdale, William, Sir; Dodsworth, Roger, John Stevens, John Caley, Sir Henry Ellis, Bulkeley Bandinel and Richard C. Taylor. *Monasticon Anglicanum: a History of the Abbies and other Monasteries, Hospitals, Frieries, and Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, with their Dependencies, in England and Wales* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1817-1830).

*Orpen* Goddard H. Orpen, *Ireland under the Normans 1169-1333* (Oxford, 1911), 4 vols

*PRIA* Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy

*Reg. St. Thomas, Dublin* *Register of St. Thomas the Martyr, Dublin*, ed. J. T. Gilbert (London, 1889)

*Song* Orpen, Goddard H. (ed.) *The Song of Dermot and the Earl* (Oxford, 1892)

*Topographia* O'Meara, John J. (ed.) Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topographia Hibernica: The History and Topography of Ireland* (Dundalk, 1951)