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Review of John Bradley, C oil n   Drisceoil, and Michael Potterton (eds), 'William Marshal and Ireland' (Dublin, 2017)

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JOHN BRADLEY, CÓILÍN Ó DRISCEOIL, AND MICHAEL POTTERTON, EDS. *William Marshal and Ireland*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2017. Pp. 352. \$50.50 (hardback).

This collection of 10 essays examines William Marshal's activities in and impact upon Ireland. It arose from a conference commemorating the 800th (or rather, as John Bradley's essay informs us and the editors note, the 801st) anniversary of the Marshal's charter to the city of Kilkenny. Such productions can sometimes have a rather jumbled, miscellaneous quality to them, but the clear focus throughout these essays on settlement patterns and on archaeological and architectural evidence make this an unusually coherent volume of conference proceedings. A brief but informative preface that introduces the Marshal and one of the key historical sources for his life—an extended, French biographical poem—helps to situate the reader and adds to the effectiveness of the collection. Several of the essays are rather more historical in approach, while most are primarily archaeological, but they all show an admirable proficiency in working with both types of evidence to give a rounded picture of the Marshal's settlement strategies and the early histories of the towns, castles, manors, and religious houses he founded.

The opening essay by David Crouch examines the wider political framework of the Marshal's career in Ireland and, in so doing, enriches the reader's understanding of the each of the other, thematically narrower, contributions. Crouch's analysis highlights the influence and successes of the Marshal's wife, Isabel, through whom his Irish lands came and who was, as Crouch argues, “a political operator of determination and subtlety.” This attention to Isabel's achievements and her contribution to the family's successes is notable in other parts of the collection, most of all in Gillian Kenny's essay on the countess, and is, perhaps, unsurprising given Isabel's centrality to her husband's Irish affairs. Still, the awareness shown of Isabel's importance is a strength of the volume overall and offers one avenue through which the Irish lens of this collection can be used to enrich our understanding of the

Marshal more broadly. Kenny's essay outlines what is known about Isabel's biography, and also contains a very interesting explication of Irish inheritance law as it concerns heiresses. Some further comment about the extent to which the Marshal, Richard de Clare, or any of the English in Ireland actually took these Irish conventions into account would be useful, however, since Isabel's grandfather, father, and husband, as well as her royal guardian, appear to have ignored Irish inheritance customs entirely, thereby allowing Aífe, Isabel's mother, and then Isabel herself to inherit.

One of the most substantial contributions in the volume is the late John Bradley's discussion of the Marshal's charter to Kilkenny (completed after Bradley's death by Ben Murtagh). It is an impressively wide-ranging essay, examining the pre-invasion political climate of Kilkenny as well as the earliest English incursions there and the Marshal's activities in the town. Most importantly, it argues for a date of 1207 for the Marshal's charter to the city and contains a valuable biographical sketch of each of the charter's witnesses and an English translation of the charter. This looser, more fluid translation is a useful update of A. J. Otway-Ruthven's 1961 work, but a glossary of legal terms used within it would help to make it even more accessible.

A number of articles provide detailed and convincing analyses of the Marshal's settlement strategies in Leinster: Adrian Empey's discussion of his demesne lands, Billy Colfer's examination of his use of subinfeudation, castle-building, and the foundation of boroughs to consolidate his lordship in Wexford, and Colin Ó Drisceoil's account of the foundation and growth of his town of New Ross. Miriam Clyne's in-depth examination of the town, manor and priory at Kells, founded by a trusted retainer of the Marshal on lands granted by him, illustrates that similar strategies of settlement were employed further down the social scale. These essays shed a great deal of light on the exact mechanisms by which the English colonization of much of Ireland proceeded in the late twelfth and early thirteenth

centuries. In combination, they allow us to better understand how Leinster compared to other regions of English Ireland and why this area was, relatively, so successful and so durable.

The focus in these essays on different types of settlement—whether manorial, urban, military, or ecclesiastical—but all within the lordship of Leinster and largely directed by the Marshal, facilitates an integrated understanding of his seigniorial strategies overall.

Ben Murtagh's exhaustively researched and interesting contribution uses Irish castle architecture in this period to illuminate the Marshal's castle designs and the influences upon and exemplars for his castles in both Wales and Ireland. The Marshal's extensive travels and links across England, Wales, Ireland and France are examined to explain his awareness of the most up-to-date military technologies, and this essay supplies a powerful reminder that he, like many of his contemporaries, was very much a creature of the wider Anglo-Norman world.

This is an attractive volume, with many black and white and color images, including maps, reconstructions, photographs, drawings, and figures. Daniel Tietzsch-Tyler's wonderful reconstructions of Kells priory and Kilkenny Castle are particularly well-illustrated and appealing. His articles contain not only images of the reconstructions themselves but also a range of other fascinating images that help to explain the decisions made when drafting these reconstructions. The essay that accompanies the reconstruction of Kilkenny Castle in *c.* 1395 reveals the depth of research that underpins such endeavors, but also highlights the difficulties of getting an entirely clear picture of these medieval structures at any one moment in time.

Any reader with an interest in the Marshal and his family or in the history and archaeology of Leinster, particularly Kilkenny or Wexford, should make sure to get this volume for their bookshelves, but it has a much wider relevance, and should be read by anyone who is interested in the history of English settlement in Ireland. Although the level of

archaeological detail in some of these essays may deter non-specialist readers, these essays, and the volume as a whole, contains fascinating and significant conclusions about the processes by which the English built their colony in medieval Ireland.

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