

Abstract

Thesis title: 'The impact on Ireland of French maritime warfare, 1692-1713'

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The thesis re-assesses how two French wars (the war of the League of Augsburg (1692-97) and the Spanish Succession war (1702-13)) affected Ireland at sea. It focuses in particular on four interwoven aspects: the role of Ireland in the defence of maritime trade; Kinsale as a naval base; regional differences in the economic impact of French naval war; and the role of Irish merchants and shipowners in military transportation.

The thesis firstly points out the considerable damage inflicted by French privateering on Irish maritime trade and those involved in it between 1692 and 1713. Then a case study employing State papers and mercantile letterbooks reveals that the Irish government took a strong initiative in maritime security in Irish waters with strong economic interest. North-western English ports relied on cruisers and escort ships provided by Dublin Castle, which implies a significant contribution by Ireland to the defence of imperial commercial networks. In addition, it discovered that this close Anglo-Irish network excluded Scottish and Ulster ports from maritime protection.

The thesis also investigates the active petitioning of Protestant gentry in South Munster for better protection of trade during the Spanish Succession war. It demonstrates that as their Tory patron, the second duke of Ormonde, became the Lord Lieutenant in 1703, and as powerful English merchants enthusiastically supported the plans, their local cries reached the arena of national politics. In the end, no fortification was carried out because of the weakness of Irish revenues. This phenomenon indicates that they faced a problem: who should pay for the maritime security in Irish waters?

The analysis of freshly discovered Admiralty papers illuminates the creation and development of the naval base at Kinsale. The yard there maintained cruisers and escort vessels operating against French privateers in Irish waters, and supplied Irish timber to the English Navy. The combination of Admiralty sources and Customs ledgers reveals how the pattern of enemy privateering and the counter-measures taken against it led to different patterns of economic recovery by port in the 1690s.

The investigation of military transportation between 1692 and 1713 shows that Irish merchants and their commercial networks played an important role in arranging transport vessels from Ireland to Continental battlefields. These merchants were well-placed in the political world in Dublin. This led to bitter disputes arising from the ferrying of Jacobite soldiers that divided the Revenue Office in Dublin.

The research leads to the conclusion that Ireland and its waters were one of the key theatres of French maritime warfare between 1692 and 1713, and that this conflict greatly affected Irish maritime communities. The thesis demonstrates that the Protestant networks, both in Ireland and between Ireland and the world outside, supported the wars behind-the-scenes by sustaining the protection of maritime trade and supported various critical logistical services.