

**TNA: PRO SP 63/75/75**

*Copy of Hugh Magennis to Grey, 29 August 1580*

In his first weeks in Ireland, one of the duties in which Spenser seems to have been most involved was the copying of letters received by Grey, presumably for conveyance to England. A number of such letters survive, and a selection are printed here (see also, e.g., SP 63/75/84, 63/76/1, 63/76/9, *infra*). It is not inconceivable that the limited responsibility associated with such a task are a sign that Spenser was, at the time, an inexperienced or as yet untrusted secretary: certainly, as he gained experience and trust in Grey's service, his role appears to have shifted to a more diverse portfolio of duties, many bespeaking a higher level of access in the secretariat. However, it is equally the case that the task of copying made Spenser privy to important political and military information, much of it concerning Turlough Luineach O'Neill's threats to his neighbouring landowners in Ulster. Sir Hugh Magennis's appeal for Grey's assistance, after Turlough Luineach's attack on his lands and property in County Down, provides an account of the tactics typically used in such raids, and an indication of Turlough Luineach's strength at this time. His quarrel with Magennis is also described in Nicholas Bagenal's letter (SP 63/76/1, *infra*). Turlough Luineach well knew that Magennis was a proxy for the Dublin government, and his spoil of Magennis' lands a dare; it was English policy in Elizabethan Ireland that the Queen's loyal subjects had to be defended from predations by their neighbouring lords, and Grey knew that many Irish eyes would be watching Magennis' fortunes to see whether the English forces or the prince of Ulster were the more powerful.

The text of this copied letter, including the original letter's endorsement at its foot, is written in Spenser's characteristic secretary hand, here particularly hasty and cursive. The second line of the endorsement, 'To the L. Deputie', is in Spenser's compact secretary hand, while the first and third lines were added later in an italic hand, presumably during the filing process.

**Endorsement**

Hugh Magennesse  
To the Lord Deputie /  
29 August.

**Text**

The Copy of hugh Magennesse his lettre. /

My most humble Duetie promised vnto your honour yt is so right Honorable that the xxvij<sup>th</sup> of this present Moneth some of Terlagh Lennagh his men toke from me by pray iij<sup>c</sup> kyne iij<sup>xx</sup> mares ij<sup>c</sup> swyne iij<sup>c</sup> shepe & killed xvj of my poore followeres and also that within this iij wekes past the said malefactores came vnto the borderes of my Countrey

with Certain laboreres & hookes & Cutt all the greene corne that they fownd there  
beseeching your honour to Considre the same and to license me to be revenged and to  
compell Mr Marshall to ayde & assiste me Terlagh Meanes no goodnes & he is of great  
force. The Scottes are at Lough foyle with their shippes, beseeching thAlmight &c.  
Narrow water the xxix<sup>th</sup> of August 1580

To the right honorable  
& my very good Lord the  
Lord Deputie yeue this

## ▯ Annotations

**Hugh Magesse]** An Irish lord of Ulster, and traditionally a vassal of the O'Neill; see biographies.

**Terlagh Lennagh]** Turlough Luineach O'Neill; see biographies.

**pray ... kyne]** See glossary. O'Neill's attack on Magennis was clearly designed to be financially crippling: four hundred cattle, two hundred pigs, and three hundred sheep must have represented a substantial part, if not the whole, of Magennis' livestock, and the loss of sixty (breeding) mares would dealt him a serious blow in an age when the horse was essential to transport and communication.

**Mr Marshall]** Sir Nicholas Bagenal, Knight Marshal of Ireland; see biographies.

**The Scottes ... their shippes]** Lough Foyle is the estuary at the mouth of the River Foyle, directly north of O'Neill's lordship of Tyrone. Turlough Luineach had strengthened his alliance with the Scots by marrying Agnes Campbell, the widow of James McDonnell and sister to the Earl of Argyle, in 1569. Mercenaries from Scotland tended to appear in Ireland in the summer every year, supporting Turlough in some of his endeavours and establishing a colony of their own in the eastern land of the Ards. The English government had long found it impossible to intercept or impede communication between the Northern Irish lords and the Scots, and the fear of a Scots-Irish attempt on the English throne persisted until Mary Queen of Scots was executed in 1587.

**Narrow water]** Narrow Water Keep, held by Magennis, lies near to the present-day town of Warrenpoint, on the Co. Down bank of the Newry River, which enters Carlingford Lough a mile to the south.