

British Library Additional MS 19869*Grant to MacHenry, undated*

This grant of lands cannot be precisely dated, nor do we know the exact identity of McHenry (though see note, below). It is not clear why Spenser made such a grant, but it may be that, unlike some of the other Munster undertakers, he recognised the claims of at least some of the Irish landowners already living in the area; this grant would thus represent a formal recognition of McHenry's claim, establishing him as one of Spenser's tenants, and would put its probable composition at about the middle of 1589. Spenser's agreement to repair the castle at Richardstown, in order to provide McHenry with a place of refuge in trouble, may suggest that the latter had been displaced. Further study of the provenance of this paper – especially some explanation as to how this grant came to reside in the London-based collections that formed the National Archives (to whom was it addressed, if 'from' McHenry?) – may suggest additional clues. The text of the document is in Spenser's characteristic secretary hand, here fairly rushed and the ink much faded. The signature is the usual autograph. The paper is worn at the edges (and repaired), but the seal is intact. The endorsement has been added in an italic hand, not Spenser's.

Endorsement

from {mac} Henry*

Text

Be it knowen to all men by these presentes that I Edmund Spenser of Kilcolman esquire doe giue vnto mac Henry the keeping of all the woodes which I haue in Balliganim & of the rushes & brakes without making any spoyle thereof & also doe covenant with him that he shall haue one house within the bawne of Richardston for him self & his cattell in tyme of warre. And also within the space of vij yeares to repayre the castle of Richardston afore sayd & in all other thinges to vse good neighbour hood to him & his

Edmund Spenser

Textual Notes

from {mac} Henry] There is some damage to the manuscript here, obscuring part of the endorsement; the supplied reading is based on the name/spelling supplied in the main text of the letter. The original size of the document suggests that no further text has been lost.

Annotations

{mac} Henry] The identity of Spenser's associate, like the date of this grant, has not been established. But note that Henry Billingsley, one of Spenser's fellow undertakers, attested in his 1589 answer to the Articles for Understakers that two or three Irishmen continued to press their claim to certain parts of his seignory; according to his agent, Robert Cooper, one of these was an Edmond McHenry (see SP 63/145/40 and 145/42).

by these presentes] The identity of these other people present (who have not signed the document) is another mystery.

Kilcolman] Spenser's estate, known by the name of its castle, near Buttevant.

esquire] The formal claim to gentlemanly status is typical of a document of this kind, but it also reflects Spenser's rising position in the service and plantation society of Elizabethan Ireland.

Balliganim] Unidentified.

rushes & brakes] Thickets of brushwood, rough wooded ground. *OED* cites **rush** as synonymous with **brake**, but gives its first usage in that context as 1796 ('Rush', *n.*³).

without . . . spoyle thereof] Unscrupulous donees occasionally 'spoiled' – or asset-stripped – their lands before making a grant; Spenser here makes a formal commitment to deliver the timber-rich woods in good order.

bawne of Richardston] Modern Richardstown lies just south of Kilcolman. The castle is said to have been destroyed during a storm in 1865, along with its bawn, or fortified enclosure. Only the mound now remains.