Preface

This book seeks to examine the process of conquest and colonisation in Ulster from the perspective of its indigenous population, acknowledging that this is only one aspect of the story, albeit one that is unduly neglected in existing work on the subject. The reasons for this neglect are often cited as the limitations of the primarily-literary Irish-language sources to which, it has often been assumed, any historian making such a study is limited. While specialists like Marc Caball and Breandán Ó Buachalla have ably used this material to explore Gaelic mentalities, this work will also demonstrate how English primary documents, such as the State Papers and 1641 depositions, can be read against their own rhetorical intentions in order to recover something approaching a native Irish history of the plantation. Given the nature of the sources involved, what transpires is, strictly-speaking, a story of interaction between native and colonist (with the effects on Gaelic society kept firmly in focus), rather than a history of events from a native point of view. I hope, however, to have shown that such a perspective is far from irretrievable, and to encourage other historians to attempt the same.

I would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of Dr. Micheál Ó Siochrú of Trinity College, Dublin, without whom this work would never have been completed or even attempted. For his patient assistance in explaining the more esoteric details of seventeenth-century landownership, my thanks go to Dave Brown. At Trinity library, special thanks go to Seán Hughes and all of those who worked to acquire the Stuart State Papers subscription for the library. I am also grateful

to Nicholas Canny and Jane Ohlmeyer, who acted as examiners for my doctoral thesis and whose insights and helpful suggestions contributed to the form this book has taken. I wish to thank Tom Murphy, whose thesis on Clandeboye (completed at the University of Limerick in 2011) he was kind enough to place at my disposal and, for stimulating discussion of early-modern American parallels, Prof. Frederick Fausz, of the University of Missouri-St. Louis. I would also like to acknowledge the funding provided by Trinity College Dublin's Non-Foundation scholarship from 2008 to 2015, and the Royal Irish Academy's kind assistance through the R.J. Hunter Postdoctoral Fellowship. I wish to thank my parents, John and Teresa, and sister and brother, Celine and Damien. Finally, I would not have been able to complete this book without the love and support of my wife Elin and the acquiescence of my three daughters, Méabh, Billie and Bronwen.

Dublin, 2017 Gerard Farrell

http://www.springer.com/978-3-319-59362-3

The 'Mere Irish' and the Colonisation of Ulster, 1570-1641

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2017, XX, 331 p. 27 illus., 11 illus. in color., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-3-319-59362-3