

*Calendar of State Papers, Ireland: Tudor Period 1566–1567.*

Bernadette Cunningham, ed.

Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2009. xxiii + 344 pp. €65.

*Calendar of State Papers, Ireland: Tudor Period 1568–1571.*

Bernadette Cunningham, ed.

Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2010. xviii + 366 pp. €65.

*Calendar of State Papers, Ireland: Tudor Period 1547–1553.*

Colm Lennon, ed.

Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2015. xvii + 262 pp. €50.

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The official archives of the secretaries of state are better known to students of the history of early modern Britain and Ireland simply as the State Papers. The collection contains material dating from the start of the reign of Henry VIII to the late eighteenth century. Presently housed in the National Archives at Kew, the State Papers is far and away the

largest and most important source for the study of English government and society in Ireland in Tudor times. For nearly a century and a half anyone interested in exploring the Tudor portion of this remarkably diverse collection of contemporary manuscripts had to make use of the *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland* as their primary guide. The first volume of the *Calendar*, edited by Hans Claude Hamilton, was published in 1860 and covered the years 1509–73: from Henry VIII's accession to a wholly arbitrary year in the first half of the reign of his daughter, Elizabeth I. The three volumes under review here, published by the Irish Manuscripts Commission with the permission of the National Archives, form the early installments in a longer-term project that, when complete, is intended to replace Hamilton's work. Two of them, edited by Bernadette Cunningham, are dedicated to the early Elizabethan period: one covering the years 1566–67, and the other 1568–71. These two volumes calendar a small part of the record class known as SP 63, which contains a massive amount of official material pertaining to Ireland stretching from the beginning of Elizabeth's reign in 1558 until 1782. The third and more recently published volume, edited by Colm Lennon, calendars the reign of the boy-king Edward VI, whose reign, 1547–53, forms the entire but much smaller record class of Irish material known as SP 61.

Hamilton's original calendar was a successful endeavor, in so far as it arranged, in the editor's own words, an "exceedingly large mass of often undated, and sometimes almost illegible, historical materials" into a chronologically ordered work that identified, where possible, the authors and recipients of manuscripts and offered summaries of the contents of each entry. It also boasted an effective index that allowed readers to navigate the contents of a volume that was over 600-pages long. But despite its length, Hamilton could not, in a single volume, offer more than the briefest of summaries of material from nearly six-and-a-half decades (more than half of the entire period of Tudor rule). As anyone who has looked at the original manuscripts behind the calendar immediately discovered, there was more (often much more) contained in the manuscripts than Hamilton indicated. It is the inadequacy of the summaries of documents in Hamilton's work that the new calendars, dedicated to much more manageable expanses of time, seek to remedy.

And remedy the inadequacy of the nineteenth-century calendar Cunningham and Lennon most certainly have. Both have produced calendars that offer the reader more accurate, more extensive, and more detailed summaries of all of the documents within the chronological time frames that they themselves chose to work in. Where a decade ago the reader looking for information on, say, the royal mining operation underway in Wexford in 1551 had no other choice but to turn to Hamilton's calendar, which offered only nine lines of summary on the subject over three entries, that reader can now look to Lennon's calendar, which devotes four-and-a-quarter pages to the same entries, detailing the precise wages and names of each of the men working the mines. Similarly, Cunningham gives readers a detailed account of the information contained in documents called "memorials" or "memoranda" for Ireland — these were notes on a range of matters public and private compiled by men, most often Sir William

Cecil, usually for use in discussions with the queen and her council — where Hamilton offered no comment on them at all (see, for example, *1566–57*: 28, 189; *1568–71*: 35).

It can be argued, however, that these fine new calendars have arrived too late. Hamilton's calendar is now out of copyright and so is available (for free) on Google Books; it is also readily available in a searchable-PDF form online through libraries that subscribe to British History Online (BHO) or Medieval and Early Modern Sources Online (MEMSO). Of greater importance, however, has been the appearance of State Papers Online, 1509–1707. Since it came on stream in 2008 it has revolutionized the study of early modern Britain and Ireland. Now anyone with access to this source (an institutional subscription is necessary) is in a position to view the digitized versions of the original manuscript material at Kew. No longer are researchers bound by the limitations of their library or country of residence, and no longer are researchers as reliant on calendars, no matter how accurate and fulsome they may be. What is more, each manuscript available for viewing through State Papers Online is digitally linked to its entry in the older series of *Calendar of State Papers*. So if, for instance, a student looking at one of the original manuscripts generated by the mining operation in Wexford referenced above encounters difficulty reading the sixteenth-century hand that penned it, and seeks professional assistance from the calendared version of the entry, that student can easily click on a tab that calls up a summary — but the summary that will appear is still Hamilton's. The calendar entries in Cunningham's volumes have been linked to the primary sources through State Papers Online; hopefully, Lennon's efforts will, before long, be linked up as well.

One might lament what seems to have been a deliberate decision by the editors of the new calendars to offer only very short introductions — each a little over a page — to their volumes. This decision stands in sharp contrast to Hamilton, who wrote a forty-six-page preface to his calendar. Hamilton's introductory remarks, supported by liberal quotations from documents drawn from the material he had calendared, make for fascinating reading in the twenty-first century. They were, of course, of their time — very much a product of the Victorian world in which they were written and so of historical value simply for that. But those subjects that Hamilton chose to focus on (and equally those that he chose not to focus on) in his wide-ranging and selective preface tells us a good deal about Victorian preoccupations and attitudes toward history. It can be argued that by choosing not to engage with or highlight the material in their respective volumes Cunningham and Lennon are, to an extent, depriving future historians of insight into the preoccupations of historians looking at Tudor material at the start of the twenty-first century. Hamilton began his preface, "The history of the inhabitants of the whole of the United Kingdom . . . is, and always has been from earliest times, so intimately connected, that it is impossible to study the progress of any one portion without that of the rest; but still the details of the great events and leading historical catastrophes of several grander sections of the Empire . . . are well classed and studied in separate division of the same whole." In a way, these new calendars devoted to Tudor Ireland preserve this tradition even as technology now affords

researchers the ability to more easily surmount the artificial national barriers imposed on the archival materials by the Victorians. Cunningham and Lennon are both excellent historians who have been immersed in these sources for decades — we are left largely to wonder what in the material they have so painstakingly calendared was most significant to them and how this body of evidence from Tudor Ireland fits into wider historical contexts.

Still, Cunningham and Lennon have by producing these new calendars performed an important service to the field. In their introductions, the editors point readers in the direction of recent significant secondary literature relevant to the period that their calendar covers. They also both take the necessary step following their introductory remarks to set out, in a comprehensive “note on other sources,” those documents in their calendars that have appeared in print elsewhere. Finally, all three volumes have comprehensive indexes, which is important in light of all of the rich detail that now appears in the new calendars.

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