

Ware, Robert

by John Bergin

Ware, Robert (1639–96), protestant polemicist and forger of historical documents, was born in Dublin, the second son of Sir James Ware (qv). Robert Ware's learning was of a sufficiently high order to deceive scholars for more than two centuries, yet nothing is known of his education. No university attendance is recorded, and it seems probable that he was educated in London under the supervision of his father. According to Walter Harris (qv), Robert Ware's health as a child was so poor that Sir James at first made no provision for him, but in the last six or seven years of his life put aside £1,000 a year for him. This fund was probably used by Robert to provide an income through moneylending, for he appears regularly on the Dublin statute staple in the restoration period. His appointment for life in June 1660 as *custos brevium* and chirographer in the court of common pleas in Ireland was doubtless made through his father's influence.

On the death of Sir James Ware in 1666 his manuscripts passed to Robert, remaining in his custody until they were purchased in 1686 by the lord lieutenant, the earl of Clarendon (qv). During this period it appears that Robert Ware interpolated in them many spurious documents and fictitious historical episodes. These he published in a series of works, most of which appeared between 1678 and 1682 against the backdrop of the popish plot. Ware was married to a niece of Bishop Henry Jones (qv), one of the prime Irish instigators of the plot, and his publications were not his sole contribution to intensifying that controversy. In 1681 the primate, Archbishop Michael Boyle (qv), and the lord lieutenant, the duke of Ormond (qv), monitored Ware's prison visits to one William Smith, an Irish informer, for they believed he was passing on allegations to an English whig politician, Sir Robert Clayton, for use in London.

Ware went into exile in England in the reign of James II (qv). According to Harris: 'he had by his writings appeared so adverse to the Roman catholic interest of Ireland in the reign of King Charles II that, fearing the resentment of that party, which he had reason to believe would be severe enough, and being advised to it by the earl of Clarendon, then lord lieutenant, he removed with his family into England on the same day [6 February 1687] that the Lord Tyrconnell landed in Ireland to take on him the government'.

He married, 24 December 1666, Elizabeth, daughter of his cousin Sir Henry Piers, 1st baronet, of Tristernagh, Co. Westmeath, and his wife, Mary Piers (née Jones). Sir Henry was a member of the Irish house of commons, 1661–6, and the author of an unpublished description of Westmeath. Ware died in March 1696, leaving one surviving son.

Ware's method of forgery was to insert material in blank pages of the manuscripts of his father, whose high reputation (as well as that of James Ussher (qv)) he exploited to give credibility to these inventions when he published them. Sir James Ware's notably ecumenical spirit in dealing with other Irish scholars left no mark on his son, who was a bitter opponent of Catholics and nonconforming Protestants alike. Indeed, in works such as *The hunting of the Romish fox* (1683) and *Foxes and fire-brands* (1682, 1689) one of his themes was the alleged willingness of papal agents to pretend, in order to divide the Protestant interest, to be Protestant dissenters, whom in turn he denounced as tools of Rome. The greatest damage to scholarship was done by his forgeries concerning Archbishop George Browne (qv), which appeared in *The reformation of the church of Ireland* (1681). Ware was exposed by Father Thomas Edward Bridgett (1829–99) in 1890, and some further decades passed before historians dealt fully with the implications. Manuscripts by, or attributed to, Ware are listed in Hayes, *MS sources*.

CSPI, 1660–62; HMC, *Ormonde MSS*, n.s., vi; Walter Harris (ed.), *The whole works of Sir James Ware concerning Ireland* (3 vols in 2, 1739–46), iii, 156, 199, 256; T. E. Bridgett, *Blunders and forgeries* (1890); G.E.C., *Baronetage* (under Piers); R. D. Edwards, *IHR Bull.*, xi (1933–4), 54–6; id., *Church and state in Tudor Ireland* (1935; repr. 1972); B. Bradshaw, 'George Browne, first reformation archbishop of Dublin', *Jn. Ecc. Hist.*, xxi (1970), 301–26; Phil Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy in Ireland, 1660–1714* (1994); W. O'Sullivan, 'A finding list of Sir James Ware's manuscripts', *RIA Proc.*, xcvi, C (1997), no. 2, 69–99; J. Ohlmeyer and E. Ó Ciardha (ed.), *The Irish statute staple books, 1596–1687* (1998); T. C. Barnard and Jane Fenlon (ed.), *The dukes of Ormonde, 1610–1745* (2000)