

Edenderry Community Development Association

Historic 'Derry Tour

Saturday, 10th May, 2008

Depart Portadown Fairgreen at 8.30 a.m



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Peace and Reconciliation
Programme

THE HISTORIC CITY WALLS



Among the many historic monuments in Derry, the massive city Walls on the west bank of the River Foyle are the most striking and memorable. Built between 1614 and 1619, the original Walls are almost perfectly preserved today, making Derry one of the finest examples of a walled city in Europe and *the only surviving complete series of city walls in Ireland*. Using earth, lime and local stone (some from ruined medieval monastery buildings) Peter Benson from London skilfully constructed the thick defensive ramparts and angular artillery bastions following closely the design of Sir Edward Dodington of Dungiven.

Built between 1613 and 1618, the entire cost of the building was met by the Irish Society comprising London businessmen who were responsible for the Plantation of Derry. It was their duty, under a Royal Charter of King James I, to build and maintain the Derry Walls to help control the local Irish rebels. In return they were given large parcels of land in the region for themselves. The walls underwent sieges in 1641, in 1648 and 1649, when the Parliamentarians held out against the Royalists and were relieved by General Owen Roe O'Neill, and in 1688-9 for 105 days against the forces of James II. Despite the sieges Derry's Walls were never breached - proof indeed of their careful planning and excellent construction, and reason for the title 'The Maiden City'.

An earthen rampart was faced with stone, producing a wall 6-7.7 m high and 4.3-9.1 m wide, with a broad external ditch, now filled in. Five of the original eight artillery bastions survive and two shallow gun platforms. One of the missing bastions, Water Bastion, which was once washed by the Foyle, was excavated in 1983. Originally there were only four entrances (or Gates) into the walled city i.e. Bishop's Gate, Shipquay Gate, Ferryquay Gate and Butcher's Gate - arranged in a cross pattern with the Diamond as its centre. Drawbridges and portcullises were used to protect some of the Gates when under attack. Two watch-towers are preserved near St Columb's Cathedral but all four original gates have been changed: Bishop's Gate in 1789, commemorating the raising of the 1689 siege, and Butcher's, Ferryquay and Shipquay Gates in the 19th century. Later were added New Gate (1789), Castle Gate (1803) and Magazine Gate (1865).

Many of the original cannons have recently been restored and can be seen dotted around the circuit of the walls on Steps and ramps lead to the wall-walk at several points inside the circuit. St Columb's Cathedral (1628-33) in the south angle of the walls is one of the most remarkable buildings of the Ulster Plantation. There are fine views from the walls, a reminder of their original important strategic function.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ST COLUMB'S CATHEDRAL LONDONDERRY



*If stones could speake
Then London's prayse
Should sounde who
Built this Church and
Cittie from the grounde".*

Standing on a prominent site within the far-famed "Derry's Walls", St Columb's Cathedral is the City of Londonderry's oldest building, having been completed in 1633.

It was in 1613 that James I formed, by Royal Charter, the new County of Londonderry and The Honourable The Irish Society was established to build the City. Paramount in their plans was the erection of the Cathedral and they immediately sent over from London a silver-gilt chalice (the 'Promised Chalice') and paten for the Church they hoped to build. The Chalice is still used during special services.

The Cathedral was built of stone from local quarries and skilled stone cutters and masons had to be procured. The old pillars and arches bear testimony to sound judgement and first-rate craftsmanship.

St Columb's is the first Cathedral built in the British 'Isles after the Reformation and is an example of 'Planter's Gothic'. The appearance of the building changed little from 1633 to 1776 when the Bishop of Derry (the 4th Earl of Bristol) added 21 feet to the tower, and added a tall graceful stone spire, making a total height of 221 feet, but about 20 years afterwards, this addition showed signs of giving way and was taken down and rebuilt, the tower being completed in 1802 and the spire being added about 20 years later.

The nave however remained exactly as it was until 1825 when the South Porch was removed. In 1827 the eastern turrets were either rebuilt or else surmounted by domes; before this they appear with battlements.

In 1861/2 the interior of the Cathedral was entirely remodelled, the old square pews were removed, and all the present oak work of the nave was provided, and the galleries in the aisles taken away. Many other improvements were made in the ornaments and furnishings of the building.

The addition of the chancel in 1887 completed the Cathedral on the plan of its founders - the foundations had actually been laid in 1633 and were discovered during building operations. The erection of the Chapter House in 1910 not only provided much needed accommodation for the clergy and choir, but also added greatly to the external appearance of the Cathedral.

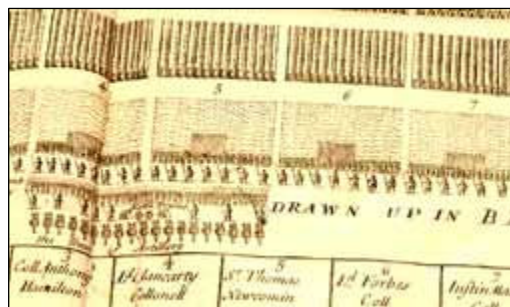
According to Tourist Board figures, the Cathedral has over 25,000 visitors a year making it the second most popular destination in the country

THE SIEGE OF LONDONDERRY - IRELAND - 1689

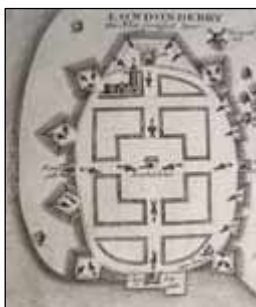
The Siege of Londonderry was a pivotal point in world history. The defence of that city and the events surrounding it marked the end of the era of absolutist Monarchy and bolstered the fledging concept of Parliamentary Democracy. Its story is fascinating.



Breaking the Boom



Army in Formation



Londonderry at time of Siege



Street during the Siege

Joseph Aikin, the local doctor who lived through the siege and penned the Homeric poem "**Londerias**", graphically describes the plight of those within the walls and, in so doing, lists some unusual victuals.

About this time a raging fever reign'd,
Which multitudes of the town's people drain'd,
It was occasioned by the want of food,
And uncouth diet which inflam'd the blood.
For some eat starch, others on tallow live,
At length for victuals the ox-hide they give.
And some eat dogs, others on horses fed,
The sprightly geldings to the slaughter led.
A cat's a lady's feast tho' ne'er so thin,
Though you might count all the ribs in her skin.
A swallow's sold for eighteen pence and more;
Then you may judge what became of the poor.

A brief summary of the Siege

It was the last great siege in British history. For 105 days in 1689 untrained soldiers and refugees held a tiny town in Northwest Ulster against vastly superior forces led by some of the most experienced commanders of the age. Cut off from supplies and out of contact with the outside world, the defenders were in turn threatened and cajoled, bombarded and blackmailed. They watched in disbelief as the expeditionary force sent to save them lay off the coast for six weeks making no attempt to intervene and disillusion turned to desperation as starvation and disease took an appalling death toll on soldiers and civilians alike.

Yet these simple country-folk and small traders, led by minor officers and local gentry, preferred to eat cats, dogs, vermin, candle grease and animal hides rather than betray an ideal: that a nation should be governed by the rule of law which even the Lord's anointed had no right to subvert. Their heroic defence frustrated a counter-revolution and ushered in a new era in which no king of England would ever reign again with arbitrary powers, or without the consent of a free parliament.

In the winter of 1688 King James II fled to France during a bloodless coup that placed his daughter Mary and son-in law William of Orange on the throne. In Ireland however Lord Deputy Tyrconnel, one of his closest friends, was rapidly raising an army of 50,000 men destined to head the counter-revolution. When that army invaded Ulster in March 1689 it drove all before it and it seemed only a matter of weeks before the old King would carry the war into the very heart of mainland Britain.

As Tyrconnel's host plundered its way northwards all those who could, including the Williamite aristocracy, fled to the safety of England or Scotland. The less fortunate abandoned their homes and struggled through driving snow and sleet towards the only walled city that might offer some protection: Londonderry.

As leaderless militia men and simple farming folk crowded into the town the Williamite military governor seemed to do everything he could to betray them. When the king himself appeared before the gates, in contravention of an agreement negotiated with the Jacobite high command, the reaction of the people was spontaneous. He was met with a hail of shot and a shout of 'No surrender!'

Within hours the junior officers had taken control, ousted the governor and elected their own commanders. Before they ran out of horse fodder they organized two daring attacks on the enemy in the open field, killing the French General Maumont and Brigadier Ramsay and several other high-ranking officers. After that they could only free their horses and hold their position by small-scale, commando-style actions which earned them a reputation for fearless daring.

Both within and without the walled city it was a race against time. As soon as Derry fell James would be free to invade Scotland and England. Time alone would allow William to rally his defences and reform the army.

The walls of Derry at their highest point were no more than 20 feet and considered easy to scale. Over 20,000 people were now crowded into a space normally inhabited by a couple of thousand and the main water supplies lay beyond the walls under heavy enemy fire. Only a few companies of the 9000 men regimented had any experience and those who manned the guns – old gifts of the London Guilds, founders the city – were local smiths and labourers. Yet they learned their trade rapidly.

Within weeks the Franco-Irish army had baptized Derry “King James’s slaughterhouse” for the accuracy of the defenders aim and the awfulness of the weather which spread sickness and death. The Jacobite commander Hamilton offered surrender conditions but the ruthless killing of Williamite officers after quarter had been granted sapped any trust the defenders might have had in the enemy’s promises.

When General Kirke’s relief force of over 50 ships was sighted the defenders thought their ordeal was over but as they looked on helpless, the fleet merely anchored and made no attempt at landing. Unable to get messages out, they heard rumours, inflated by the enemy, that Scotland had risen and that Kirke was about to change sides. In Dublin bets were placed not on “if” but on “when” the man who had quelled the Monmouth Rebellion would do a deal with his old master.

Meanwhile John Michelburne, a former Lieutenant now elevated to military governor of Derry, proved so inventive in organizing patrols and involving the citizen population in the defence that the Jacobites began to lose hope of scaling the walls or mining them. This left open the strategies of persuasion and starvation. Michelburne was offered the sum of £10,000 and politely but steadfastly refused, saying that such a generous offer merely confirmed that Derry was the key to mainland Britain.

Anxious to see a rapid capitulation, James posted north a man with a terrifying reputation: Marshal Rozen, a Franco-Lithuanian who had distinguished himself for his merciless persecution of the French Huguenots. Contrary to the conventions of 17th century warfare, he ordered all Protestants in the north - including those with Royal protections - to be round-up, stripped and driven before the walls where the defenders could either feed them or let them die.

The sight of friends and family, including old people, pregnant women and tiny children, ashamed of their nakedness, marched without food, forced to spend the night in pig-sties and then herded in their hundreds under the walls, only stiffened the resistance of the garrison. Michelburn decided it was time for him to play dirty too and he erected a huge gallows on which he threatened to hang aristocratic enemy prisoners, including the Lord Deputy's nephew and brother-in-law. Aware of the value of espionage, he also stimulated a near mutiny in the Irish camp where many officers were horrified by the "bloody Russian's" methods. Within 3 days Rozen's project had failed and the people were allowed to return home.

Over the next three weeks the defenders sought desperately to inform the relief force that supplies were exhausted and surrender almost inevitable. One hapless swimmer drowned and was strung up for all to see, but a courageous little boy managed to get in with a message hidden in a button and out with another concealed in a suppository. Precious time was bought by merchant James Roe Cunningham who discovered he could make pancakes with starch and tallow and turned over the contents of his warehouse to the garrison.

As news of the desperation within the town filtered out Kirke's stalling tactics were overcome by the near mutiny of his own relief force, peremptory orders from London and the bravery of a few individuals. Lt. John Leake offered to take a frigate up the Folye to withstand the enemy battery at Culmore Fort while cargo ships attempted breaking the boom drawn across the river. When the Mountjoy rebounded and her captain was shot dead, Boatswain Wordsworth in a navy longboat braved a hail of musket fire to cut through the massive boom with an axe.

For seven agonizing hours the tiny relief ships struggled against wind, tide and enemy fire to cover the two miles that separated them from the Derry Quay - and the Derry defenders from salvation.

Two days later King James's army, beaten and decimated, left his "slaughterhouse", destroying the countryside as they went. Upwards of 9000 men, women and children had died in the siege of Derry, of whom only about 165 were killed by enemy fire. With their homes in rubble and ashes many more would die in the ensuing winter of hunger and exposure.

The courage of these ordinary people consolidated the rights and freedoms of British citizens and averted an internecine war on mainland Britain. The principles for which they so steadfastly stood remain to this day enshrined in the British Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

ITINERARY

8.30 am Depart Portadown Fairgreen

10.00am Arrive Mid Ulster Garden Centre, Maghera

10.00 – 11.00am Tea / coffee & scones (Included in ticket price)

11.00am Depart for 'Derry

11.45am Arrive in "The Maiden City"

12 noon – 2.45 / 3.00pm Tour of Apprentice Boys Memorial Hall

(It may be necessary to split the group into two parties to make the tour more manageable)

Walking part of the famous walls on way to visit St Columb's Cathedral

Visit to Cathedral - *see background information*

2.45 – 3.00pm Free time to do some sightseeing / shopping in the Diamond or Foyle side centre or do your own thing.

(Our guide, Mr. Billy Moore, General Secretary of The A.B.O.D. has invited anyone who wishes to spend some time in The Memorial Hall where you will be made most welcome)

4.30pm Depart 'Derry on route to Corick House Hotel in Clougher

5.45pm Arrive at hotel for evening meal

6.00pm – 8.00pm Dinner

8.00pm Depart Corick House on homeward journey

9.00pm Arrive at Fairgreen

We will endeavour to keep as close to the stated timings as possible