



**TIPPERARY HISTORICAL JOURNAL
1995**

© County Tipperary Historical Society

**www.tipperarylibraries.ie/thc
society@tipperarylibraries.ie**

ISSN 0791-0655

Appendix A

Dungarvan's Town Walls

By William Fraher

Dungarvan Castle is thought to have been built c.1200 and shortly afterwards the town may have been enclosed with a wall. However, there is no documentary evidence for the existence of a wall at this early date; perhaps initially there may have been a defensive ditch rather than a stone wall. The first recorded reference to the town defences is in 1463 when Edward IV re-incorporated the town and granted Thomas, 8th Earl of Desmond, the castle and town for a period of 60 years. This grant notes that Dungarvan "was from ancient times the greatest ancient honour belonging to the King in this land, which by war & trouble and for want of English government is for the greater part utterly destroyed".¹

The town was granted the Liberties of the honour of Clare in England with a daily market, the customs of which were to be spent on "the building & repairing of the walls of the said town" and "the making of walls & trenches and other defences". In 1536 the Earl of Ormond, Piers Butler, complained to the King that he had "been at great cost & charge in winning the castle, not only during the siege but at sundry times before, in making assaultis, roodis & obsydeallis to wynne the same & have repayred & made up the Wallis prosterated with the ordenaunce at the last wynnyng thereof".²

An account by the inhabitants of Dungarvan in 1537 of the customary dues relating to the building of the walls appears to indicate that they were still under construction. They stated "that the Constable of the Castel paieth the masons their wages for makeing the town walls or repairing thereof and the Burgesses of the towne fynde mete and drink to the masons during the reপরations upon the said walles and the Comons of the towne there fynde workmen at their costs & charges to make mortar & cary stone, and the Lorde to fynde a lighter or bote, and also horses to carry stones from the said lighter".³

By 1559 the walls were in bad repair as the Lord Deputy was instructed by the Queen to grant a licence "to import 200 quartors of wheat & malt from England and such liberties the town of Wexford had to the inhabitants of Dungarvan, who have promised to repair the walls of that town".⁴

In the summer of 1582 the insurgents attacked the town over a period of five weeks, many townspeople being killed and most of the houses burned. James Nagle, the Portreeve of Dungarvan, made the following statement to Lord Burghley to explain why the town was so easily destroyed:-

"The cheifest cause the said inhabitants were over runne, spoyled and burned by the said Traytours...was by reason the walles of the said Towne were ruynous & a great part thereof as yet unfinished".⁵

After the war an attempt was made to make the town defensible, The Burgesses had to "enter into recognizance in £1,000 to erect a stone wall 16 feet high and 4, or at least 3 feet thick, or a sufficient deep fosse with a high bank round the western part of the town where the Queen's castle is situate".⁶ The following year the town petitioned to import free of custom 3,000 quarters of wheat towards the re-edifying of their walls. The Charter of James I (1609) grants to



the “sovereign, brethren & free burgesses, all fines ameracements & forfeitvres in the said Court Leet, for the repair of the walls”.

The town defences seem to have been quite substantial, according to the accounts of Lord Inchiquin’s attack on Dungarvan. Inchiquin arrived in Dungarvan on 3 May 1647 from Cappoquin. For four days he pounded the walls with his cannon, but failed to make a breach in them. He did, however, manage to destroy one of the flanking towers, which was lined with earth and 14 feet high.⁷ A contemporary account of Inchiquin’s capture of Dungarvan refers to it as “a sea towne well walled & fortified”.

Position and Extent of Walls

The walls were roughly square in shape with the castle at the north east corner. The area comprised about 9 hectares. There appears to be no evidence of any later extension. The circuit of the walls was as follows:

It ran from the castle entrance gate towards the site (in Barrack Lane) of the present leather factory, to join the north-east corner tower. From there it ran south along by the present “lookout”, the area along the waterfront towards Abbeyside. Halfway along this stretch was a quay gate flanked by a tower. From here the wall turned up Jacknell Street, also called Park Terrace.

The opening into Church Street may be the site of the South Gate. At the corner of Emmett Street and St. Augustine Street was the site of the south-west corner tower. From here the wall turned north down St. Augustine Street to join with the west gate. It continued down Carbery’s Lane on to a small quay area (called George’s Quay in 1746) to join the north-west corner tower. From here the wall continued east to join with the castle. There was probably a quay gate along this section. There is a reference to the “North West Gate” in a document of 1680.⁸

The Visual Record

There are two pictures which depict the town walls. Both views are sketched from Abbeyside, showing the town from the south and east. Both need to be approached with caution as to their accuracy. The earlier one is a water-colour which is unsigned and undated and thought to be painted c. 1700.⁹

It shows a substantial castle, the north-east corner tower, the east section of the walls with a tower and quay gate, and the south west corner tower. To the right of the castle is the north west corner tower. A gate is shown on the short stretch of the wall which joined the castle to the north-east corner tower.

The second picture is an engraving from a drawing by Anthony Chearnly, which appeared as a plate in Charles Smith’s *Antient and Present State of the Country and City of Waterford*, published in 1746. This view depicts the walls in a similar position but shows how sections had been removed to make way for new buildings.

The north east tower is reduced in size and a quay (Roderick’s Quay) has been constructed against it. The wall joining it to the quay gate has been almost levelled and the tower flanking the gate has been replaced by houses. The remainder of the wall is well preserved, as is the south west corner tower.

Smith made the following observation about the walls. “Each angle of the town wall was defended with towers and bastions, and the gates with guard houses, many of which still



remain".¹⁰ The Rev R.H. Ryland, writing in 1824, observed that "some of the towers which protected the gates and the angles of the wall, still remain, where they are joined to modern buildings".¹¹ By 1870 all that remained of the walls and towers was a small section in Church Street.

Joseph Hansard noted in 1870 that "The walls and towers are long since removed ... None of the town wall now remains, except a small portion to the rear of the house now occupied by Mr. Richard Byrne, at the upper part of Church Street".¹² Commenting on the west gate, he states that "the arch was standing until a few years ago". This means it was removed around 1865 along with other buildings joined to it.

Until this period the west gate had been incorporated into a short row of buildings which were sited in the centre of the present St. Augustine Street. This row of buildings appear on a map of 1760, 1775 and on the 1841 Ordnance Survey map.^{13 & 14} Edmond Keohan makes a reference to the unearthing of the foundations of the south west tower around 1900. "Some years ago when building a new house at the top of Friary Street, the foundation of one of these circular towers was come upon. It consisted of huge stones, and the walls were from three to four feet in thickness".¹⁵ Unfortunately no other record appears to have been made of this discovery.

SOURCES

1. Statute Rolls of the Parliament of Ireland, III, pp. 57-59.
2. State Papers, Henry VIII, II (i), 303-4.
3. Hore & Graves: *The Social State of the Southern & Eastern Counties of Ireland in the sixteenth century* (Dublin, 1870), p. 217.
4. Cal. Carew mss. p. 284.
5. State Papers, Ireland, cix. 77.
6. Fiant Elizabeth 4115.
7. Julian Walton, *Dungarvan Castle*, unpublished typescript.
8. *Osborne Mss, Newtown Anner, Co. Tipperary*, unpublished notes by J. Walton & K. Nicholls (Dublin, 1985).
9. King's Topographical Collection, Vol. L LV. 7 (i), British Library.
10. Charles Smith: *The Antient & Present State of the County & City of Waterford* (Dublin, 1746), p. 83.
11. Rev. R. H. Ryland: *The History, Topography & Antiquities of the County & City of Waterford* (London, 1824), pp. 306, 311.
12. J. Hansard: *History of Waterford City & County, etc.* (Dungarvan, 1870), pp. 313, 314.
13. Map of the estate of Sir Patrick Bellew, Bart; Dame Mary his wife, John Donelan Esq. and Mable his wife and Honor Hore, spinster, by Charles Arrelby & Charles Frizel Junr. 1760 (in the collection of Dungarvan Museum).
14. The town and gardens of Dungarvan by Bernard Scale 1775 (in the collection of Chatsworth House, Derbyshire).
15. Edmond Keohan: *An Illustrated History of Dungarvan* (Waterford, 1929), p. 19.

