



# The Plantation of Ulster:

## The Story of Co. Fermanagh

Fermanagh County Museum  
Enniskillen Castle  
Castle Barracks  
Enniskillen  
Co. Fermanagh  
N. Ireland  
BT74 7HL

Tel: + 44 (0) 28 6632 5000  
Fax: +44 (0) 28 6632 7342  
Email: [castle@fermanagh.gov.uk](mailto:castle@fermanagh.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.enniskillencastle.co.uk](http://www.enniskillencastle.co.uk)

**A Teachers Aid produced by  
Fermanagh County Museum  
Education Service.**

**Suitable for Key Stage 3**

# The Plantation



*Crowning of a Maguire Chieftain at Cornashee, near Lisnaskea. Conjectural drawing by D Warner. Copyright of Fermanagh County Museum.*

## Medieval History

The Anglo-Normans conquered Ireland in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century and by 1250 controlled three-quarters of the country including all the towns. Despite strenuous efforts, they failed to conquer the north west of Ireland and this part of Ireland remained in Irish hands until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The O'Neills and O'Donnells controlled Tyrone and Donegal and, from about 1300, the Maguires became the dominant clan in an area similar to the present county of Fermanagh. In the rest of the country Anglo Norman influence had

declined considerably by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, their control at that time extending only to the walled towns and to a small area around Dublin, known as the Pale. However, from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century England gradually extended its control over the country until the only remaining Gaelic stronghold was in the central and western parts of the Province of Ulster.

## Gaelic Society

Gaelic Ireland was a patchwork of independent kingdoms, each ruled by a chieftain and bound by a common set of social, religious and legal traditions. The legal system was called the Brehon Law and differed considerably from English law. For example in English law, succession normally passed to the eldest son but when an Irish chieftain died, his successor was elected from among many members of his clan, those who were descended from a common grandfather.



*Maguire stronghold at Lisnaskea in 15<sup>th</sup> century. Conjectural drawing by D Warner. Copyright of Fermanagh County Museum.*

## The Annals of Ulster

The Annals of Ulster, written in Fermanagh, is the most important source for the early history of Ireland. It was begun by a remarkable church leader and scholar, Cathal MacManus Maguire in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and covers the history of Ireland from the arrival of St. Patrick in the 5<sup>th</sup> century until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is particularly informative about the MacManuses and about the ruling Maguire chieftains of Fermanagh.

# The Plantation



Maguire clan inauguration site Sciath Gabhra at Cornashee, Lisnaskea.  
Photograph courtesy of Stuart Moore.

## The Maguire Chieftains

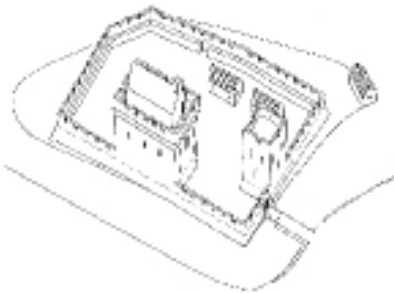
The Maguire chieftains originally ruled from their stronghold at Lisnaskea. Their traditional inauguration site is a large earthen mound known as Sciath Gabhra at Cornashee, Lisnaskea.

## Enniskillen Castle

The first castle in Enniskillen was built in the early 15th century by Hugh “the Hospitable” Maguire, younger brother of the ruling chieftain of Lisnaskea. The first mention of Enniskillen Castle is in 1439. The castle became the principal Maguire seat in 1484 when Sean Maguire was elected chieftain of the clan.



Maguire Castle, Enniskillen. Conjectural drawing by D Warner. Copyright of Fermanagh County Museum.



Maguire Castle, Enniskillen. Conjectural drawing by Richard Pierce.

Court life in Enniskillen Castle was both comfortable and convivial, probably much like medieval court life in London or Dublin. The poets, writing for the Maguires, describe the



The chieftain being entertained by harper and bard.  
From Derricke's Image of Ireland.

menfolk hunting with their dogs, ladies doing fine needlework and looking after herb gardens and evenings of feasting, music and poetry at Enniskillen Castle. At the close of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this privileged life came to an abrupt end.

# The Plantation



King Hugh Maguire, the first of the Irish lords to rebel in 1593. Conjectural drawing by D. Warner. Copyright of Fermanagh County Museum.

## The Role of Fermanagh in the Nine Years War 1594 - 1603

Queen Elizabeth I always feared that King Philip of Spain would use Ireland as a base to launch an attack against England. To prevent this she determined to conquer the whole country - including its remote North. By 1590 Ulster had been divided into counties and in Fermanagh land which had previously belonged to the Maguire chieftain was 'granted' to him on the understanding that he would pay rent to the English Crown and obey English laws.

Predictably, the Ulster lords deeply resented this kind of interference and fought a war that was to last for nine years, to prevent the English taking control of their territory. The first to rebel was King Hugh Maguire of Fermanagh who in 1593 fought the English near the present town of Ballyshannon. In the months that followed, both sides realised that whoever held Enniskillen Castle held the key to ultimate control.

In January 1594, the English made hasty preparations to attack Enniskillen Castle. On the 26th January 1594 the castle came under siege and was continuously blasted by cannon. Six days later, the English launched a final assault across the water. The soldiers quickly breached the castle walls and poured inside. The Maguire forces surrendered.



Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594 by John Thomas. Original map is in the British Library.

The English held Enniskillen Castle for 15 months, and all that time the Maguires were close by, plotting to retake it. Their moment came in the spring of 1595. English troops were sent to bring food supplies to the Castle. The Maguires and their supporters made a surprise attack on them before dawn as they camped beside the Arney River. They routed them. The



English Soldiers from Derricke's Image of Ireland

# The Plantation



*Gaelic chieftain and followers from Derricke's Image of Ireland.*



*Fallen Irish soldier from Derricke's Image of Ireland.*

scene of this attack became known as “The Ford of the Biscuit” because of all these provisions (biscuit was a kind of crisp dry bread) left on the battlefield by the English. The Enniskillen garrison, with no fresh supplies, were faced with starvation and had to surrender.

The Maguires once more ruled from Enniskillen Castle but the war against England had now spread throughout the whole country, led by Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone. The Gaelic kings had succeeded in getting support from the Spanish and they fought the English in a last great battle at Kinsale in County Cork on Christmas Eve 1601. The English, under Lord Mountjoy, defeated Hugh O'Neill, the Maguires and the combined Irish and Spanish forces.

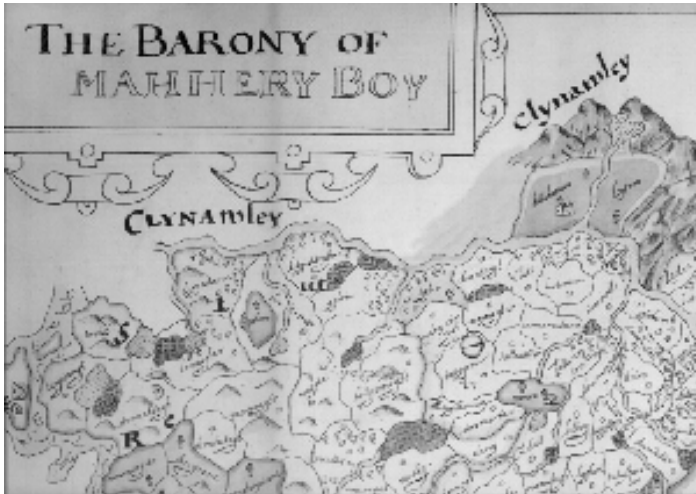
The defeat at Kinsale marked the final defeat of the Gaelic chieftains and in 1603 they made peace. Four years later, the leading Irish chieftains, humiliated by defeat and apprehensive for their future, decided to leave Ireland. In September 1607 they set sail for France with their families never to return. This event is known as the “Flight of the Earls”. Their lands were then seized by the Crown and were subsequently given to new English and Scottish settlers in the colonizing plan known as the Plantation of Ulster.

## **Plantation of Ulster**

King James I believed that colonizing Ulster with loyal British subjects would quell rebellion and win over the ‘rude and barbarous Irish’ to ‘civility’ and Protestantism. This plan, known as the Plantation of Ulster, enticed Protestant landowners and minor gentry from England and Scotland to settle in Ulster. In return for grants of land they agreed to bring plenty of British workers with them to build strong houses and to create towns.

Cartographers played an indispensable role in the Plantation of Ulster by surveying the land confiscated by the Crown. The best known cartographers in Ulster during this period and whose maps still exist today, were Sir Thomas Raven and Sir Josias Bodley. In Fermanagh the maps made by Bodley in 1609 were used to allocate land to the new settlers. They were not very accurate mainly because Bodley, an engineer and fortification expert, unaware that the Irish land measure was larger than the

# The Plantation



Map of the Barony Of Magheryboy, Co. Fermanagh by Sir Josias Bodley, 1609.

English, recorded less land than actually existed.

By 1610 legal preparations for the plantation were completed and land throughout Ulster was distributed in the following way:

- \*Undertakers received c. 40%
- \*\*Servitors received c. 15%
- Native Irish received c. 20%
- The Church received c. 20%

\**Undertakers* – a landlord who was given a large estate of land at a low rent in exchange for an **undertaking** to settle ten English or

Scottish families on each 1000 acres of land received.

\*\**Servitors* – Those who had had **served** the monarch as an official or a soldier in the Irish campaign. Servitors were allowed to let land to Irish tenants.

## Plantation in Fermanagh

In Fermanagh, land was apportioned to Scottish and English undertakers and servitors. Land was also allocated to both the senior and junior branch of the Maguires and to a number of other Irish freeholders.

By 1609, Enniskillen Castle had become an English garrison fort in the charge of Captain William Cole the newly appointed constable. The castle, left in ruins by the Maguires was rebuilt by Cole and next to it

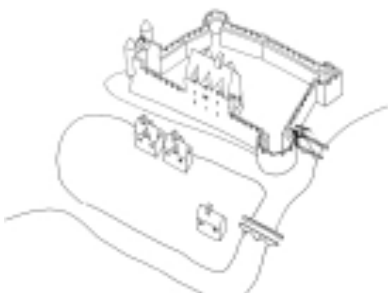
Cole built a house for his family. Cole was a Londoner of Devonshire stock who had served with the Crown forces in Ireland. He was granted land to establish the new town of Enniskillen and brought over English settlers with building skills. He provided them with the necessary timber and raw materials to erect houses



Sir William Cole, Constable of Enniskillen Castle. Photograph courtesy of John Cathcart and the National Trust.

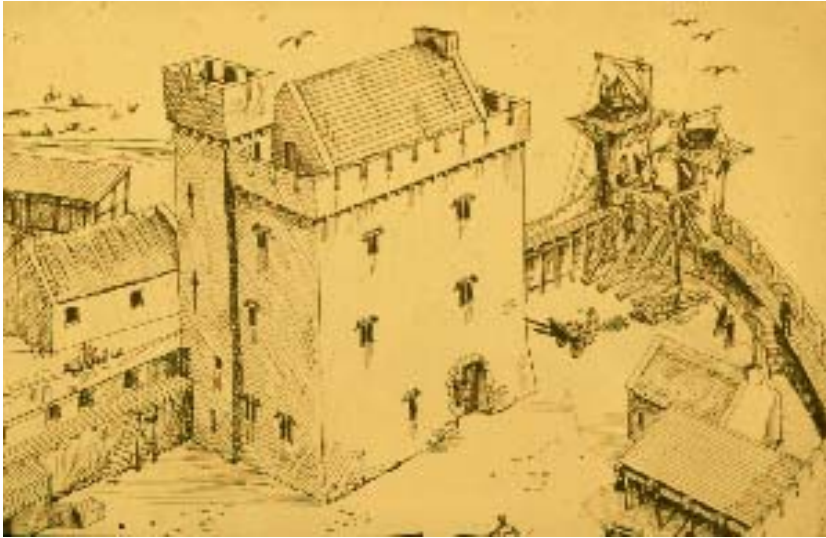


Illustration of Enniskillen Castle from map of Ulster by John Speede, published in 1610.



Enniskillen Castle, Enniskillen c. 1620. Conjectural drawing by Richard Pierce.

# The Plantation



*The building of the Watergate between 1615 and 1620. Reproduced with the*

and all the required public buildings. None of these early town buildings have survived.

In 1611, Sir George Carew reported to the government on the work done by William Cole at Enniskillen Castle. As well as rebuilding the castle, Cole had raised the parapet wall from 14 feet to 26 feet, added new flankers and built a wall-walk inside the parapets.

The Watergate was built between 1615-1620 and beside it on the inside is a well. The Castle remained

the Cole family residence until 1710 when as a result of a fire, they moved to nearby Portora Castle and later to a new country residence at Florencecourt.

## The Town of Enniskillen

The town of Enniskillen was established by a charter of King James I in 1612, one of the eighteen new Ulster boroughs with representation in the Dublin Parliament. Its founder, Captain William Cole was the

town's first provost or 'sovereign'. The town began with all the obligated buildings. There was a small church where the Cathedral now stands. An earlier courthouse on the site of the present building contained a gaol. There was a simple Market House on the site of the present Town Hall. Within 20 years, the population of Enniskillen had grown to around 180, just about half the size of New York in those days. It soon became a thriving Market and island town approached from the west by a fine wooden bridge, later replaced by stone. Merchants had to pay a toll here when bringing their produce to the Thursday Market on the "Diamond".



*Enniskillen Castle and town c. 1620. Conjectural*

# The Plantation



Castle Balfour, Lisnaskea. Photograph courtesy of Fermanagh District Council.

## Other Plantation Castles in Fermanagh.

### Tully Castle

Sir John Hume from Berwickshire, Scotland was granted 2000 acres at Tully, on the western shore of Lower Lough Erne in 1610 and a few years later built a three-storey strong house there and a defensive bawn of 100 square feet. When the interior of the bawn was excavated, stone pathways were uncovered and with intervening spaces probably designed for a formal garden. Hume built a village for twenty four families close to the castle

On Christmas Eve during the Rebellion of 1641, Rory Maguire with a large following attacked Tully Castle, intent on recapturing his family's lands. Large numbers had gathered within the castle for safety but on the following day the castle was burnt and as many as fifteen men and sixty women and children were killed. Only the Humes were spared but afterwards they never returned to live in the castle.

### Castle Balfour, Lisnaskea

Sir James Balfour, a Plantation undertaker from Fifeshire, Scotland, built Castle Balfour about 1619 on the edge of a low limestone cliff and the present town of Lisnaskea began as a village adjacent to the castle. The architecture is Scottish in style and the building is thought to be the work of Lowland Scots masons.

### Portora Castle, Enniskillen

Captain William Cole, founder of Enniskillen purchased the land of Portora from the original grantee in 1612 and built Portora Castle soon afterwards on a site overlooking the narrow exit of the River Erne into Lower Lough Erne. It originally consisted of a three-storey house and a square bawn with four flanker towers. Cole later leased the castle to the Lord Bishop of Clogher, James Spottiswood.

### Monea Castle

Monea Castle, situated five kilometers south east of Derrygonnelly was built in 1618 for the Rector of Devenish, the Reverend Malcolm Hamilton, a Scottish planter, who in 1623 became Archbishop of Cashel. An impressive building with



Monea Castle. Photograph courtesy of Dr Marie Maguire.

# The Plantation



Old Castle Archdale. Photograph courtesy of Fermanagh District Council.

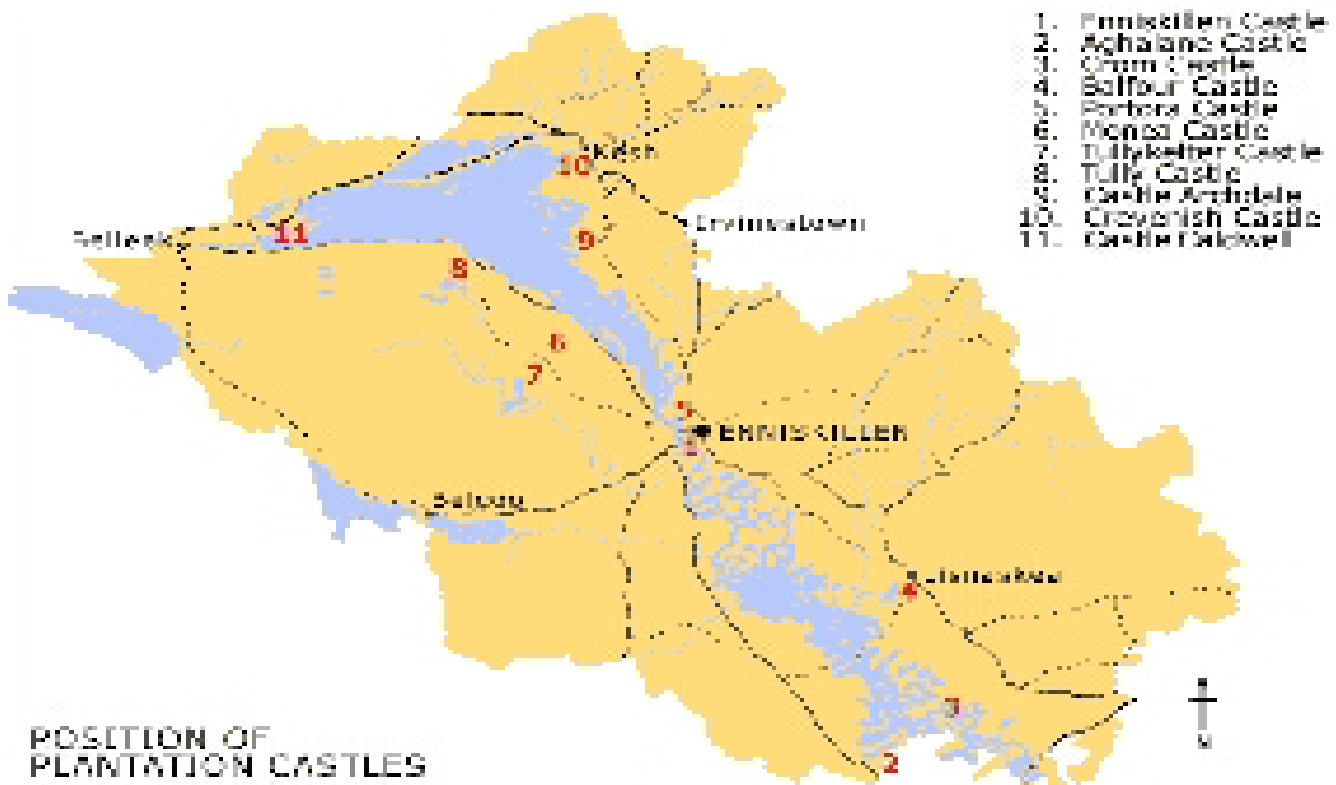
distinctive Scottish-style corbelling, it has a bawn with flanker towers, one of which served as a dove-cote. Doves were a popular source of food in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the Rebellion of 1641, the Irish insurgents seized the castle but the Crown forces subsequently recaptured it.

## Castle Archdale

This castle was built in 1615 by John Archdale, a Plantation undertaker from Suffolk, on the eastern shore of Lower Lough Erne. Its defensive bawn was 66 foot by 64 foot and 15 foot high with flanker towers at each corner.

It was destroyed by Rory Maguire during the Rebellion of 1641 as was the nearby village of Lisnarick, once known as Archdalestown.

There is a tradition that all but one of the Archdale children died when the castle was set on fire, the youngest boy being saved by a faithful nurse who thrust him out of the window.



Map of Plantation Castles of Co. Fermanagh. Courtesy of Dr Marie Maguire, from her website [www.castlesbytheerne.co.uk](http://www.castlesbytheerne.co.uk)

