



King William of Orange after Kneller.
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The William & Jacobite War

The next flashpoint occurred in 1688 when Charles' successor, James II, was deposed. This time the Gaelic Order in Ulster came out for the King, who had restored Catholicism in England.

Only the plantation towns of Derry and Enniskillen closed their gates in time to hold back the flood of rebellion.

In Enniskillen there was panic as planter families from the rural hinterland and from the neighbouring counties of Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan sought refuge in the town, carrying rumours of massacre. A defence committee was elected with Gustavus Hamilton at its head. Catholics were expelled.

On March 11th 1689, Hamilton formally declared Enniskillen for William of Orange. A day later, James

II landed at Kinsale seeking to win, with victory in Ireland, the springboard for an assault on England. Throughout that month, the Enniskilleners harassed the rebels, sending out lightning raids from their island stronghold: 200 soldiers marched to relieve Captain Crichton at Crom Castle and they defeated Lord Galmoy's besieging army. After this defeat, Brian Maguire, who was released from captivity by Crichton, abandoned the rebel cause. Galmoy had hanged Captain Dixey, who should have been exchanged for Maguire's release.

A patriot parliament was set up in Dublin to legitimise the rebel cause. Planters were declared outlaws and orders were sent to confiscate their land. The rebels marched on Fermanagh: Sarsfield from Connacht, the Duke of Berwick from Omagh and Lord Mountcashel from Belturbet. On July 13th, they engaged the Enniskilleners at Cornagrade. It was a modest rebel victory, their last. Mountcashel attacked Crom Castle with 3,000 men, but lost too many men to press home the action. Then, 400 Enniskillen infantry disengaged from the defence of Ballyshannon to relieve Crom. They attacked the rebels at Lisnaskea and later annihilated them in the Battle of Newtownbutler. Mountcashel was injured and captured in a defeat which sealed the fate of James II's campaign in Ireland. It also opened an illustrious

William & Jacobite War:



Crest of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.



Florencecourt House in 1786 from a print by Malton. Photograph courtesy of Mr J Nawn.



Castlecoole, Enniskillen. Copyright of Fermanagh County Museum.

chapter in Enniskillen's military history. Out of this war the Inniskilling Dragoons and Fusiliers Regiments were born.

It is well to remember that Ireland was neither created nor destroyed in 1690. That year and the Battle of the Boyne has become a watershed in the sectarian hagiography of Northern Ireland. But, events in the 18th and 19th century made an equally strong impact on contemporary society. The friction caused by the shifting relationship between the natives of Fermanagh and the stream of incomers – English and Scots settlers – continued to spark conflict. But, the lines of that conflict were never drawn with absolute precision between Gael and Planter. The United Irishmen of the last years of the 18th century were endowed with many of the ironies and contradictions which litter Irish history. The movement was begun in Belfast by a coalition of Protestant and Catholic, enthused by the creed of the French Revolution. They sought to carry over the universalist and republican ideals of the French revolution into Irish politics.

In the 18th century, the Plantation aristocracy has revitalised by an injection of Georgian grandeur into its arteries. The Great Houses of Fermanagh which have been acquired by the National Trust, restored and opened to the public – Castlecoole and Florencecourt House – are relics of the political and cultural self-confidence they discovered in the 18th century. Meanwhile, in the aftermath of a century of failed rebellion, the Catholics of Fermanagh fought to sustain their faith and preserve their Church through a succeeding century of the Penal Laws. The poor – Catholic and Protestant – always faced a struggle to survive. Their nadir came with the famine of the 1840s.

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