



(Reconstruction of Dunluce, as it may have looked circa 1620)

A History of Dunluce

by

Hon, Hector McDonnell
Castle Kenbane Councillor, Council of Finlaggan

INTRODUCTION

Dunluce castle is one of the most dramatic and romantic ruins in Ireland, with cliffs isolating the crag on which it stands from the mainland on all sides. It must therefore have been an ideal site for a defensive position from the earliest times, but as its entire top surface was intensively cleared, flattened and built over during the 16th and 17th centuries that the only surviving object from earlier times is a souterrain, a subterranean tunnel used for hiding both goods and people at many Irish sites during the 9th and 10th centuries.

After the Normans arrived circa 1200 the land around Dunluce was developed as one of a string of manors which they established along the north Antrim coast, and by the early 16th century a family called MacQuillan held Dunluce as their chief fortress. They controlled a large part of north county Antrim until in the 1550s they were ousted by a Scottish clan, the MacDonnells, who had already established their control over the Glens of Antrim some time before.

It was under the MacDonnells, led by their wonderfully named leader, Sorley Boy MacDonnell, (Sorley the Fair Haired) that Dunluce achieved prominence, and became an important centre of resistance to English expansion into Ulster. The MacDonnells were

particularly significant in this struggle because they brought in large numbers of Highland fighting men for any Irish chieftains who needed them, and Dunluce was one of the strongest fortresses held by a native family anywhere in Ireland. It was besieged several times, both by the English and the O'Neills, who were equally jealous of the MacDonnells' power. Later still, in 1589, the survivors of an Armada wreck, the Girona, were given shelter here, and guns from it were later brought to the castle and mounted there for its defence.

The two round towers probably date from the MacQuillans' time, while the gatehouse, 'Buttery' and loggia were probably built in the late 1580s, when Sorley Boy came to terms with the English. All the other buildings date from the early seventeenth century when Sorley Boy's son and grandson, both called Randal, were in charge. They tried to turn the castle into an appropriate house for a noble family with a large estate, and therefore built ranges of domestic buildings on the mainland and inside the castle itself. A little town was also developed just outside its walls. The display of wealth and grandeur increased after the second earl of Antrim married one of the richest women in England, the widowed Duchess of Buckingham, in 1635, and brought her to Dunluce in 1638 with many of their London fineries and furniture. However the grand days of Dunluce did not last long. The MacDonnells were Catholics, and were involved both in the Irish rebellion of 1641 and the subsequent period of civil war in the 1640s. As a result they had to leave Dunluce, its village was burnt and in the 1650s the lands around Dunluce were divided amongst various Cromwellian settlers. They then stripped and dismantled the castle so that when second earl was given his lands back in the 1660s by Charles II, it was almost as ruinous as it is today.

THE PLACE NAME

The place name 'Dunluce' is something of a puzzle. 'Dun', the first element of the name, comes from the Irish word *Dún*, which means a fort, but the second half of the name appears in many guises, with older Irish language texts giving the name either as *Dún Lios* or *Dún Libhsi*. *Lios* is a word for a fort or court, which would make the name an unnecessary reduplication, while the possible meaning of *Libhsi* is unclear. It has been suggested that it might be an old proper name, but if so, then it seems to be that of an otherwise unrecorded figure. The nearest match to it is an obscure female Irish saint called *Lumsech* who had no known associations with north Antrim. A 1307 survey of the local parishes calls Dunluce '*Dunkelisp*', a text of 1609 refers to its church as '*de Sancto Cuthberto Dunlups*', another of 1615, calls Dunluce *Dunlippis*, and a fourth, of 1645, has '*Dunliffsia*'. These do all lean towards '*Dún Libhsi*', whose '*bh*' would often have been pronounced like a 'v', but this gets us no nearer to knowing what it means. Is it perhaps one of the handful of proper names of the region which seem to be survivals from a pre-Celtic language? And is it merely a coincidence that 'luce' also appears in the place name 'Glenluce' in Southwestern Scotland? We just do not know.¹

¹ Reeves, *Ecclesiastical Antiquities*, pp. 74-7, & 283; Rev. J. O'Laverty, *The Diocese of Down and Connor*, Dublin 1887, vol. IV pp. 273-286

EARLY DUNLUCE

Viking times and Norman Conquests

As already said, Dunluce's souterrain is the only certain remnant we have of early medieval occupation. Souterrains are quite common, on Irish sites, during the 9th or 10th centuries, and indeed a number of artifacts from this period were found in the Dunluce example. They were constructed as low passages, opening into roomier storage areas, and usually had several twists and turns in them, mainly to confuse intruders. The one at Dunluce is relatively simple, possibly because it was hollowed out of rock, rather than by the usual method of constructing them in a trench with dry stone walls and a roof of slabs in the earth.

The building of souterrains was a response to the constant warfare of the early medieval period. They are found elsewhere, both in other parts of the British Isles and also in France, but there are numerous examples in Ireland, and particularly in North Ulster. It was said that the standard price demanded by the professionals who built them was either five cows or three women! Important possessions and people could be hidden in them if a site were attacked; having covered over the souterrains' entrances the able-bodied could set fire to their houses and make their escape, hoping that the souterrains would not be found. They therefore had ventilation shafts, and at Dunluce there is one going through to the cliff face.

The Norman conquest of substantial areas of eastern Ulster took place in the late 12th century, and was largely the work of one man, John de Courcy. The Norman historian, Giraldus Cambrensis, called him "fair-haired and tall, with bony limbs and sinewy limbs. His frame was lanky and he had a very strong physique, immense bodily strength and an extraordinarily strong temperament." With only twenty-two knights, albeit very well equipped, and three hundred footmen de Courcy had to fight hard to establish himself against a determined native Irish opposition. De Courcy's conquest was mainly in county Down, and southern county Antrim, but also extended along the north Antrim coastline.

Henry II recognised de Courcy's conquests as the Earldom of Ulster, and he built two major stone castles from which to administer his lands, Carrickfergus and Dundrum, while his north Antrim territories were controlled from a large motte-and-bailey fort near Coleraine called Mount Sandel. Dunluce, at this stage, would probably have consisted of little more than the native Irish promontory stronghold, plus whatever rural communities sheltered in its vicinity. There were in fact many of these promontory strongholds on the Antrim coast, relying for their defence on coastal cliffs, with ditches and ramparts protecting the inland side, and they mainly acted as retreats of last resort for the local population.²

² F.X.Martin, *John Lord of Ireland in A New History of Ireland*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1987, vol. II pp 132-6; Giraldus Cambrensis, *The Conquest of Ireland*, ed. A. Scott & F. X. Martin, Dublin 1978

Dunluce appears in the first surviving set of accounts of the Norman earldom, written in 1259, as one of its north Antrim manors, alongside Coleraine, Portrush, “Portkaman” and “Stanton” (both near Bushmills), and Dunseverick. These manors, with their lands, made a fairly continuous belt of Norman settlements along the coast, and at least three of them, Dunluce, Dunseverick and Portrush were pre-existing promontory forts. Dunluce was initially the most profitable of them, bringing in over thirteen pounds a year in rents, as compared to eleven from Coleraine, and ten from Portrush (the other manors produced less). However, this must be put in perspective, for the earldom’s major sources of revenue were the mills (bringing in more than eighty-four pounds a year) and the fisheries on the Bann, worth over twenty pounds a year in rents.

Dunseverick



The Normans established their manorial system throughout the areas of Ireland that they conquered, as the focal points of agricultural communities, and initially these local innovations created an upsurge of rural prosperity. We do not know if the Normans ever made any use of the actual promontory fort, as the new manor of Dunluce, with its village and surrounding fields, must have been set up at a little distance inland. The ruined parish church, which is sited just to the south of the main road, near a little river, probably indicates where this settlement was. It is dedicated to the north English Saint Cuthbert, and “Dunkelisp” is listed in a valuation of the local diocese’s parishes in 1307 indicating it was then in use. However, it must have suffered badly over the following centuries, for the ecclesiastical visitation of 1622 described the church of Dunluce as ruinous.

This church seems to be the only one in Ireland dedicated to St Cuthbert. He had played an important role in bringing Irish Christian customs into line with those of the rest of the Catholic Church, so the fact that the Normans gave his name to the Dunluce church would have conveyed an important message to the local population. The present ruined church was probably built on the site of the original one and is surrounded by good agricultural land and beside a small river. This would have been of great importance, both for domestic uses and as a power source for a mill, an essential requirement of these communities.

By the time of the earldom's next surviving accounts, in 1353, Dunluce's fortunes seem to have declined. It was now amalgamated with Dunseverick, and its revenues had shrunk to two pounds eighteen shillings and two pence, whereas Dunseverick's had risen to more than eighteen pounds. In general the Norman settlements were not living up to expectations. Both Portrush and Portkaman had had burgesses in the 1260s, in other words they had pretensions to becoming towns, but by the 1350s only tenant farmers are listed. Nevertheless Portrush remained an active little port, with fishing boats and trading links to Scotland.

Five years later, in 1358, the accounts show a modest improvement, as Dunluce's revenues went up to four pounds six shillings and eight pence, though no farm tenants are listed. However, Dunluce's fortunes must have then got worse, as it is not mentioned at all in later accounts. A recent excavation in the field to the east of the present farm buildings found some thirteenth century pottery, but no building foundations, which is not surprising as the Norman settlement was probably close to the ruined parish church.³

Dunluce's Round Angle Towers



³ T. E. McNeill, *Anglo-Norman Ulster*, Donald Publishers Ltd., 1980 pp. 68-9, 81, 137, 138; Colin Breen, *Dunluce Castle, history and archaeology*, Four Courts Press, 2012, pp 29 – 31. There is one other County Antrim dedication to St Cuthbert, a holy well on the coast near Garron Point..

MACQUILLANS AND MACDONNELLS 1513-1558

Clan Chieftains and Gallowglasses; MacQuillan's House and Round Angle Towers

After the Norman earldom's accounts ceased to refer to Dunluce in the 1350s, there are no further mentions of the place until the early 1500s. However, the MacQuillan family, who were established in north Antrim as feudatories of the earls of Ulster in the 14th century, remained the dominant local power here until the 1550s. Presumably the Norman manorial settlements also continued in some form, as the scatter of pottery suggests.

The MacQuillans claimed to have come from Wales with the conquering Norman knights in the 12th century, and to descend from a certain William, who was presumably of Norman origin. This may be true, but it could just as well be that the MacQuillans were a purely Irish family who wanted to associate themselves closely with their Norman overlords, and therefore invented a Norman origin for themselves. The original Normans invaders of Ireland had indeed come from south Wales, so the MacQuillans' explanation is at least plausible. They are first mentioned in Connaught as feudatories of the Norman de Burgo family (de Burgo being the original form of the name Burke) and after they inherited the Ulster earldom in the early 1300s, the MacQuillans appeared here too and settled in north Antrim. They were extremely effective defenders of this northwestern flank of the earldom from external attack and their Antrim territory became known as the Route.⁴ It extended along the coast from Ballycastle to Coleraine, and inland as far as Ballymena and many castles in North Antrim are associated with them, but Dunluce was their main coastal stronghold.

The descendants of the original Norman invaders and settlers in all parts of Ireland became so thoroughly hibernicised over time, and identified themselves so strongly with Ireland, that in the end they were said to be "more Irish than the Irish". A good example of this process are the MacQuillans' eastern neighbours, a Norman family called Bisset who were given the lordship of the Glens of Antrim in the early 13th century. By the 15th century they were better known by the Irish name of MacEóin than as Norman Bissets, and were closely related through marriage and alliance with the O'Neills to the south of them, as well as with the Clandonald in Scotland.

It would therefore have been completely normal that the MacQuillans, even if they had originally arrived here as part of the Norman earldom, would have been virtually indistinguishable from other Irish families by 1500. The Norman earldom was anyway in terminal decline by then, and the native Irish once again dominated affairs in northern Ulster, with the result that the MacQuillans were in the middle of some complicated local power struggles. 1513 was a particularly violent year. First, the

⁴ The name "The Route" or "*Rúta*" seems to be a Gaelic version of the Norman-French word "Route", meaning road. It possibly refers to the ancient *slí*, or road, which supposedly started in Tara and ran through this area. It ended at Dunseverick on the Antrim north coast.

O'Neills slew MacQuillan in battle, took Dunluce and installed their own MacQuillan candidate as the new chieftain. After this the O'Donnells retaliated. They stormed Dunluce, evicted O'Neill's MacQuillan, and installed their own man instead, "Donal, son of Walter MacQuillan".⁵

The big players in these endless rounds of local feuding were the O'Donnells, with their power base in Donegal, the O'Neills of central Ulster, and the English, whose North Ulster stronghold was Carrickfergus. The O'Donnells wanted to control the north Ulster coastline probably mainly because they derived a large part of their revenue from the sale of fish and fishing rights to Spanish and French ships, and MacQuillan's territory covered two important salmon rivers, the Bush and the Bann. (In 1632 62 tons of salmon were caught on a single day from the Bann, which gives some idea of these rivers' value.) There were however other interested parties. The O'Cahans held the Bann's west bank, and the English crown claimed the river's whole fishery, as part of the old Norman earldom of Ulster. The O'Neills, meanwhile, regarded themselves as the rightful local territorial overlords, and deeply resented the expansionist efforts of the O'Donnells.

The English crown's chief representative in Ireland in the early 16th century, the Lord Deputy, Lord Kildare, was determined to maintain this fishery. He stationed an English garrison at Coleraine, and leased out the fishing rights for the handsome sum of sixty pounds a year in 1519. Kildare's fishery enterprise continued for about twenty-five years. However, in the meanwhile as a consequence of O'Donnell's intervention in 1513 the MacQuillans became close supporters of the O'Donnells, and fought alongside them in various campaigns, mostly directed against the O'Neills and O'Cahans.

At this time the O'Donnells like many other Irish chieftains had Scottish Highland mercenaries called gallowglasses. These were trained fighting men usually wearing chain mail, whose favourite weapons were two-handed swords and battleaxes, and who would be sent in to fight as the first stage of a set battle. The O'Donnells mainly used the MacSweeney clan from Kintyre as their gallowglasses, and gave them lands in northern Donegal. As a consequence of their alliance with the O'Donnells the MacQuillans acquired MacSweeney gallowglasses at Dunluce, but the O'Donnells then decided also to employ Clandonald gallowglasses. These Clandonald fighting men, or MacDonnells as they are locally known, were the new, rising power of the area. In the 1520s they had taken over the neighbouring territory of the Glens of Antrim from the MacEóin Bissets under their chieftain, Alastair Carrach MacDonnell. As a result of this decision the MacDonnells, MacSweenys and MacQuillans all worked together under the O'Donnells during their various military campaigns.

After twenty years of this arrangement, in 1542, the MacQuillans returned to their old alliance with Lord Kildare and the Ulster earldom. This had the immediate consequence that a joint force of O'Donnells, O'Cahans and O'Rourkes invaded the MacQuillans' lands, and forced them to submit once more to the O'Donnells. Revenge, however, was soon extracted. MacQuillan made an agreement with the MacDonnells,

⁵ Annals of the Four Masters, ed. O'Donovan, see year 1513.

launched a joint expedition with them across the Bann, took O’Cahan’s castle at Limavaddy and plundered his lands.

This triumph was also only brief, as the MacDonnells then decided to get rid of the MacQuillans’ MacSweeny gallowglasses, and ambushed them outside “MacQuillan’s house” (this is presumed to have been at Dunluce). The MacSweenys were duly slaughtered, so O’Donnell threatened another invasion of the area, and both the MacDonnells and MacQuillans submitted to him again. This power struggle dragged on remorselessly. In 1544 the O’Donnells again attacked the MacQuillans, taking several of their strongholds, and in particular a fortified island in the Bann that controlled the fishery, so once more the MacQuillans and the MacDonnells combined forces, and attacked the O’Cahans, the O’Donnells’ chief local allies, on the west side of the Bann. Several O’Cahan castles and considerable quantities of booty were taken, so the O’Cahans appealed to the MacSweenys for help. Their combined forces retook the forts, beat MacQuillan in battle, and even recovered much of the booty.

The costs of maintaining any effective military presence on the north Ulster coastline were very high, and some of the main protagonists gave up the struggle after 1545. The O’Donnells abandoned their attempts to dominate the area, the Kildare fishery interest disintegrated, the English garrison at Coleraine was withdrawn, and the MacQuillans found themselves severely weakened, as the MacDonnells were eager to take advantage of the power vacuum. They were determined to work their way deep into the MacQuillans’ territory.

Although the old Clandonald chieftain, Alastair Carrach MacDonnell, had recently died, he had several extremely able and ambitious sons. A younger one, Coll, looked after the family’s Antrim properties, while the eldest, James, the new clan chieftain, ruled from Dunyveg on Islay over their entire territory, which consisted of Islay, some surrounding Scottish islands, a large part of the Mull of Kintyre, and the Antrim Glens. The brothers worked as a team, and aggressively expanded their territories. In consequence, when an English expedition reached north Antrim in 1551 they found the MacDonnells established inside the MacQuillans’ territory, with their local headquarters in a castle which they had recently built on a promontory called Kenbane near Ballycastle. The English expedition besieged Kenbane, unsuccessfully, and reported back that the MacDonnells now held the entire Antrim coastline “betwixt M’Collyn’s howse and Bealfarst”.

Coll MacDonnell was married to MacQuillan’s daughter, and a tale preserved by local oral tradition gives us a vivid picture of the breakdown of the alliance between the two families. Soon after the marriage the two families joined forces to plunder O’Cahan’s country. They came back to Dunluce with much booty, and as winter was close MacQuillan offered the MacDonnells his hospitality until the following spring. Coll and his wife were entertained at Dunluce, and his clansmen were lodged with MacQuillan’s tenant farmers. This was a standard Irish method of supporting fighting men during wintertime. However the tenant farmers were not happy, as they were also obliged to give board and lodging to the MacQuillans’ MacSweeny gallowglasses.

“It so happened that the galloglach (the MacSweeny gallowglass), according to custom, besides his ordinary, was entitled to a meather of milk as a privilege. This the highlander (the MacDonnell clansman) esteemed to be a great affront; and at last one asked his landlord ‘why do you not give me milk as you do the other?’ The galloglach made answer ‘Would you, a highland beggar as you are, compare yourself to any of MacQuillan’s galloglachs?’ The poor honest tenant, who was heartily weary of them both, said ‘Pray gentlemen I’ll open the two doors and you may go and fight it out in the fair field, and he that has the victory let him take the milk and all to himself.’ The combat ended in the death of the galloglach, after which the highlander came in again and dined heartily.

“MacQuillan’s galloglachs immediately assembled to demand satisfaction; and in a council which was held, where the conduct of the Scots was debated, their great and dangerous power, and the disgrace arising from the seduction of MacQuillan’s daughter, it was agreed that each galloglach should kill his comrade highlander by night, and their lord and master with them; but Coll McDonnell’s wife discovered the plot, and told it to her husband. So the highlanders fled in the night time, and escaped to the island of Raghery (Rathlin).”

Letters written from two English expeditions to north Antrim in the 1550s reveal a little more. In the autumn of 1556 the new Lord Deputy, Lord Sussex, brought a military expedition into the area, and reported that the MacDonnells had taken over further large parts of the MacQuillans’ territory. A year later, in 1557, he came north again, and this time wrote that he had been obliged to offer his protection to MacQuillan, as he had recently been “banished from house and home” by the MacDonnells. We can therefore say with some confidence that the MacDonnells must have seized Dunluce not long before Sussex’s expedition of 1557.

The MacQuillans’ Buildings at Dunluce

None of the castle’s buildings can be dated with any precision, but probably the two round angle towers date back to the MacQuillans’ time. These are peculiar structures, as it was highly unusual to build round, rather than square, towers in the sixteenth century, though there are a couple of similar ones in the South of Ireland which probably date from the 1540s. Several gun loops are integral to the structure of the south-eastern tower and these indicate that it cannot much predate the early 16th century, when guns became generally available here. An O’Donnell has the questionable distinction of being the first recorded Irishman to kill someone with a gun, an O’Rourke, in the 1480s, and another O’Donnell received a shipload of guns in 1517. As this O’Donnell also installed “his” MacQuillan in Dunluce in 1513, it may even be that he supplied the guns that dictated the tower’s need for loopholes.⁶

I suspect that there are also the remains of an important one-storey hall in the Inner Ward dating from the MacQuillans’ time. The building on the eastern side of this

⁶ O. Kerrigan, *Castles and Fortifications in Ireland 1485-1943*, Cork

ward was originally a metre wider, and was an unusually tall one-storey structure, while its well preserved eastern wall uses Giant's Causeway blocks in the same way as the Inner Ward's outer wall, suggesting that it is contemporaneous with the original construction of this area of the castle. It would have been a matter of necessity to keep any domestic building as far away as possible from the most militarily active parts of the castle, so this Inner Ward would have been the best site for any such buildings.

Dunluce is referred to several times as 'MacQuillan's House' in the surviving early 16th century accounts. Gaelic households of any social significance placed a lot of importance on the maintenance of their feasting halls, so 'MacQuillan's House' would probably have had a substantial hall. As the inheritors of this part of the earldom the MacQuillans may also have wanted to preserve something of the manorial organisation at Dunluce. It would have been a source of some local power, even if the manor itself was by then more theoretical than real.

'MacQuillan's House' could of course have been on the site of the manorial village rather than inside the fortress, but this would have been impractical, as the violence and instability of the 16th century made it impossible for domestic buildings to survive for long in an unprotected position. Moreover it has recently been suggested that the foundation-trench of a 14.8m x 11m rectangular building found under the Manor House might be an earlier hall house. Its foundation trenches are narrow, so it was probably wooden-framed, and must at least predate the rebuilding work which created the loggia and cleared the ground in front of it, where this earlier structure has been found, in the 1580s or 1590s.⁷

SORLEY BOY MACDONNELL 1558-1590

Both the MacQuillans and the English finally lose Dunluce; Sorley Boy, the Founding Father of the Antrim MacDonnells

As a result of its seizure by the MacDonnells Dunluce found itself once again at the centre of a local power struggle, with the MacQuillans, the O'Neills and the English all disputing the MacDonnells' right to their conquests in County Antrim. Coll, the MacDonnell responsible for taking Dunluce from the MacQuillans, died in 1558 and was replaced as the clan's representative on their Irish properties by his youngest brother, Sorley Boy ("Boy" being an English spelling of the Gaelic word *buidhe*, meaning fair haired). Tradition says that Sorley preferred to live at his birthplace, Dunineny near Ballycastle, which was another promontory fort built on a cliff edge. It was never considered as significant as Dunluce, but it did command the area around Ballycastle Bay, which was of great importance to the MacDonnells as it was opposite their island stronghold of Rathlin, and was the best landing place for galleys coming from Scotland.

⁷ Colin Breen op. cit. pp 56-62; H. McDonnell, *The Battle of Orra and the Fate of the MacQuillans*, in Familia, pub. Ulster Historical Society, 1996. The MacQuillans were active builders circa 1500. Apart from the work they did at Dunluce they also founded and built the friary of Bonamargy, near Ballycastle, at about this date.

The MacDonnells now dominated the entire coast between Larne and Coleraine, though only in the face of strong opposition. The first challenge came from the O'Neill chieftain, Shane O'Neill. Sorley Boy was married to his sister, doubtless in an attempt to forge an alliance between them, for Shane and his O'Neills, dominated Ulster, exercising overlordship over most of the province's other chieftains. Inevitably, Shane O'Neill had a tricky relationship with the English government, as he tried to keep from interfering with his local hegemony, but also needed to keep them on friendly terms.

In 1565 Shane announced to the English administration in Dublin that he intended to drive the MacDonnells out of Ireland, ostensibly to remove these Scottish infiltrators from Queen Elizabeth's realm, but primarily so as to extend his own area of control. He therefore supported the MacQuillans' bid to reacquire the coastal parts of their territory. That summer he invaded the Glens of Antrim and attacked and burnt Red Bay Castle, which the MacDonnells had recently fortified. Shane then moved up the coast to Ballycastle, where he roundly defeated the MacDonnells in Glentaisie. The three most important MacDonnell brothers, the sons of the previous Clandonald chieftain, fought at the head of their army. Angus was killed, and both Sorley Boy and his eldest brother James, the clan chieftain, were taken prisoner. James had been severely wounded in the battle, and died in O'Neill's custody at Armagh, "from the mortality of his wounds".

Dunseverick



Immediately after the battle Shane moved along the coast, taking Dunseverick without difficulty before going on to Dunluce. He described these two strongholds as Sorley Boy's "cheefe castles, and the cheefe defence and holt of these partes." Sorley's clansmen at Dunluce tried to hold out, but Shane had a trump card. He announced that Sorley Boy was his prisoner and he would starve to death, unless they surrendered.

“He could not wyn (Dunluce) in the space of thre days after till at laste, partly through fear of Sawairly Boy his dethe, who was kept without meat or drinke to this ende the castell might be sooner yielded, and partlye for saulfgarde of their own liffys, seeing the manifold and cruel skirmishes and assaults on every side, the ward were faine to yelde the castell into his handes, whiche alsoe he committed to the saulfe keepynge of such of his men as were most able to defende the same, and most true to hym.”

This account comes in a letter sent by Shane sent to a member of the English government, after which he handed Dunluce over to an English garrison, and returned the rest of the territory to the MacQuillans. This was an impressive move, as the English regarded Dunluce as the most important fortress outside their area of control on the North Ulster coastline.

Shane’s situation went badly wrong, however and just two years later, in 1567, he felt his power was so severely strained both by English attacks and by his Irish opponents that he appealed to the Clandonald for help. It was an act of desperation, as they held him personally responsible for the death of James, their clan chieftain, but he must have calculated that with Sorley Boy being his prisoner, they could not refuse to come to his aid. He was reckoning, however, without their thirst for revenge. Their galleys, with two thousand men on board, sailed first to Carrickfergus, to parley with the English, presumably about their wish to retain their Antrim coastal territories, and doubtless offering Shane’s head as their part of the deal. Therefore, when the two clans met at Cushendun, the new MacDonnell leaders tricked Shane into coming to talk to them privately, away from his own men. Having got him alone they murdered him.⁸

Shane had Sorley Boy with him at this meeting, which he had warned Shane against, but somehow Sorley survived this murderous fracas. After it was over he went back to Scotland with his family, gathered up more clansmen, and within a few weeks landed them at Ballycastle. There they met determined resistance from the MacQuillans, but after a series of hard fought battles Sorley pushed them out of the immediate area, and before the end of the year was in a strong enough position to make peace both with Rory Oge, the MacQuillan chief, and also with the new O’Neill, Turlough Luineach. To end the blood feud, and cement these new alliances, Turlough Luineach married James MacDonnell’s widow, while Rory Oge MacQuillan married the daughter of a leading O’Neill.

In spite of these new developments the English garrison at Dunluce held on, under the command of an officer called Cadogan. They largely depended on supplies brought in by boat from Carrickfergus, although one English military expedition managed to make its way to Dunluce over land soon after Sorley had re-established himself at Ballycastle. But the problems of maintaining the garrison were severe, and about a year later the

⁸ The MacDonnells went to Carrickfergus and negotiated with its English before their meeting with Shane O’Neill. Probably they hoped to secure a promise that the English would recognise their ownership of their Antrim territories in return for Shane’s head.

English abandoned the stronghold. There are no records of any fighting, so probably the English garrison left, presumably by boat, and Sorley then took possession of it again.

Sorley now commanded all his clan's old Irish territories, although the English were determined to subdue and colonise the region. In 1574 they seized and executed Rory Oge MacQuillan and his O'Neill brother-in-law, and in 1575 Lord Essex attacked the MacDonnells, as the first stage of his colonising plan. He sent two frigates along the coast, which landed on Rathlin and massacred about 600 people there, including all the women and children of the clan whom Sorley had placed on the island for their safety. During this massacre Sorley is said to have stood helplessly on Fair Head, weeping at the slaughter of his people, but in fact this disaster was the end of the immediate English threat. Essex had exhausted both his military and financial resources on this expedition into Ulster, and had to abandon his schemes. Dunluce was not even threatened.

The next attack on the MacDonnells' power came in 1583. This time a combined force of MacQuillans, O'Neills and some English soldiers armed with muskets invaded Sorley's lands. Once again the intention was to drive the MacDonnells out of Ireland. Sorley had been warned that they intended to cross over a pass into the Glens near Orra Mountain so as to join forces with a discontented group of his own people, so he prepared a trap. A local tale says that Sorley's men covered a bog near the pass with a scatter of cut rushes. The invaders were then tricked into believing that Sorley had firmed up the bog with bundles of rushes so that he could surprise them by charging across it, and in order to pre-empt this, the invaders charged across the bog themselves. The invading force was then stuck in the mire and was easily finished off. (This battle is locally famous because of vivid oral traditions about the event, but it is often wrongly dated to 1559).⁹

A year later, in September 1584, Perrot, Queen Elizabeth's new Lord Deputy for Ireland, determined to avenge his predecessor's humiliation. He advanced on Sorley with a stronger force, which again included some MacQuillans who were very anxious to get back their old lands, and invested Dunluce.

"Myself and the rest of the company are incamped before Dunluse, the strongest piece in this realm, situate upon a rocke hanging over the sea, divided from the main with a brod, deep rocky ditch, natural, not artificial, and having no way to it but a small neck of the same rocke, which is also cutt off very deep. It hath in it a strong ward, whereof the capten is a Scot, who when I sent to summon him to yielde, refused talke, and proudly answered speaking very good English, that they were appointed and would keep it to the last man for the King of Scots use, which made me draw thither. I have planted a battery of a culverin and two sacres before it."

The suggestion that the MacDonnells claimed that they were holding Dunluce for James VI, the Scottish king, is curious, to say the least. It would certainly have cut no ice with Perrot, Queen Elizabeth's representative, as she certainly would not tolerate any

⁹ The 1559 date was originally proposed by G. Hill in his *Macdonnells of Antrim*.

official Scottish interference in Ulster. Another Englishman described the subsequent siege.

“A battery of culverins and cannon....being brought by sea to the Skerries (Portrush) the Lord Deputy caused to be drawn thither (being two miles from Dunluce) by force of men, wherein he spared not the labour of his own servants: and when small shot played so thick out of the fort, that the common soldiers began to shrink in planting the artillery, the Lord Deputy made his own men fill the gabions with earth and make good his ground, until the ordnance was planted and the trenches made.

“This being done the Lord Deputy himself gave fire to the first piece of ordnance and discharged it, which did no great hurt; but soon after, it being better shaken, the next morning (after they had over night felt a little the force of the battery) they sent unto the Lord Deputy to be received into mercy, whereunto he condescended, the rather because he would save the charges of repairing again that place. Therefore he granted them life and liberty to depart.”

Sorley had in fact fled westwards across the Bann some days previously, after hearing that Perrot was approaching, and had only left forty men to defend Dunluce, so it fell to Perrot without any difficulty. He reported it to be a well constructed fortress, and might be useful as an English outpost, so he plundered the castle, without damaging its structure too much, and sent the best trophy he could find as a present to the English Secretary of State, Francis Walsingham: -

“For a token I have sent you holie Columkille’s cross, a god of great veneration, with Sarle Boy and all Ulster; for so great was his grace, so happy he thought himself that could get a kisse of the same crosse. I send him unto you that when you have made some sacrifice to him according to the disposition you beare, to Idolatrie, you maie if you please bestowe him upon my good lady Walsingham, or my lady Sidney, to wear as a jewell of weight and bigness and not of price and goodness, upon some solemn feast or triumph day at court.”

St Columkill’s cross was probably enshrined in an ancient reliquary, but sadly it has vanished without trace. Many relics and reliquaries were kept and venerated all over Ireland, some of them being objects of extraordinary beauty and antiquity. Pope Gregory was supposed to have sent St Columba a cross, which subsequently became a much revered relic, and in 1532 this cross was said to be preserved on Tory Island. From a contemporary description it would seem that it was cased in metal, and adorned with crystal bosses, like the cross of Cong. This may have been the Dunluce cross, which had for some reason been sent there from Tory. Perrot’s only other piece of valuable booty was a silver and gilt mazor, a two handled drinking bowl of a type much in vogue in Scotland, and which had Sorley Boy’s arms inscribed on the bottom. However Perrot’s triumph was fleeting. He could only leave a garrison of fourteen men, commanded by an officer called Peter Carie, and unfortunately, as Perrot later wrote, Carie was not “of the English Pale or race”, as he had presumed, but rather an Ulsterman.

“This constable, reposing trust in those of his country and kindred, had gotten some of them unto him, and discharged the English soldiers, unknown to the Deputy; two of these, having confederated with the enemy, drew up fifty of them by night, with ropes made of withies. Having surprised the castle, they assaulted a little tower, wherein the constable was, and a few with him. They at first offered their life, and put them in any place they would desire (for so had the traitors conditioned with them before); but the constable, willing to pay the price of his folly, chose rather to forgo his life in manly sort, than to yield unto any such conditions and was slain.”

Carie’s “manly death” consisted of being hanged from the castle walls.

Perrot led another English campaign against the MacDonnells the following year. Sorley’s eldest son, Alexander, was killed during this attack, but Sorley was not dislodged, and in 1586 it was decided that a more peaceful solution could be found to the problem. Sorley, who was now in his eighties, was invited to Dublin, and there he submitted to the authorities on the understanding that they would agree to let him have an official grant recognising his rightful ownership of all his lands, as a subject of the Queen. He ceremoniously knelt in front of a painting of Queen Elizabeth, kissed her feet and pledged his allegiance. In return he received an English patent, giving him the legal title to his territories that he had long requested. He was also made the Queen’s constable of Dunluce, and the keys of the castle were then presented to him by one of the queen’s representatives. (Presumably Sorley had brought the keys with him, and given them to the Dublin officials in advance of this ceremony!). Probably the ‘Buttery’ was built as a reception-room for important visitors after the 1586 accord with the English. It replaced an earlier hall, which stood where the Manor House now is.

This ceremony in Dublin Castle granted Sorley all his conquests from the MacQuillans – the “tuogh” from the Bush to the Bann, which included Dunluce, as well as the three further “tuoghs” of Dunseverick, Loughguile and Ballymoney. (“Tuogh” was an English transliteration of the Irish word *tuath* meaning a tribal territory.) However the drama of Sorley’s visit to Dublin was not yet over, for as Sorley was leaving Dublin Castle he was shown his son Alexander’s head stuck on a spike over the gateway. Sorley’s only outward reaction was to say, “My sons have many heads.”¹⁰

Two years later, in the early winter of 1588, Dunluce was witness to the consequences of the destruction of the Girona, one of the ships of the Spanish Armada. The Girona had broken her rudder off the west coast of Ireland, and after rigging up as good a repair as he could manage the captain had headed for Scotland. However they hit a storm off the Antrim coast, the rudder broke again, and the ship smashed onto the Giants’ Causeway’s rocks. Only five of the many hundreds of men on board made it to

¹⁰ To add to the bizarreness of this scene the interpreter misunderstood Sorley’s Gaelic and mistranslated his response as “My son has many heads.”

land alive. They were then given shelter at Dunluce, before being sent on to get passage home from Scotland.

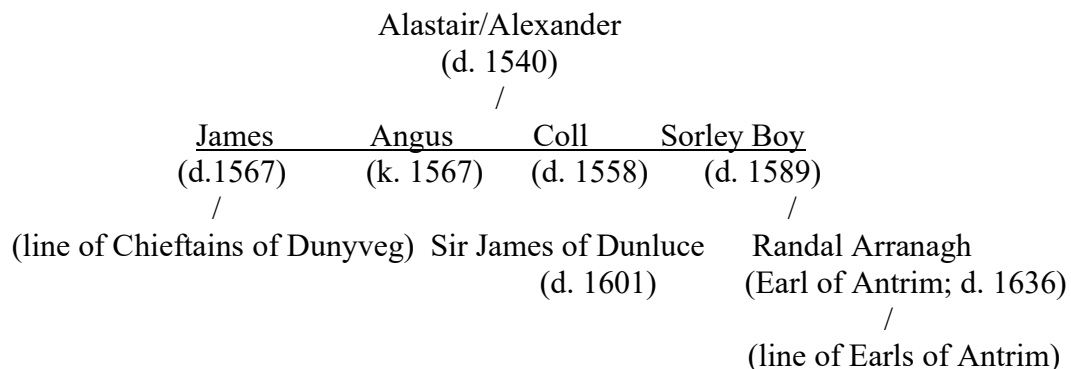
An English spy gave the following account of the wreck:

“The said gally departed from this harbour with as many of the Spaniards as she could carry, and sailing along the coast towards the Out Isles of Scotland, whither they were bound, struck against the rock of Bunboyes, where both ship and men perished, save only five who hardly got to shore; three of which five came the next day, being the 17th, in company with Sorley Boy MacDonnell unto O’Neill’s house of Strabane, where they certified of their late shipwreck.”

The spy also reported that the expedition to Strabane had been arranged so that Sorley could “*get O’Neill’s daughter to wife.*” (His first wife, Shane O’Neill’s sister, had died.) These poor Spaniards therefore had the peculiar experience of being hardly saved from drowning in the wildest of winter seas before they were obliged to journey across Ulster and be thrown into the middle of these Gaelic chieftains’ wedding celebrations. These must have seemed particularly bizarre to the Spaniards as Sorley was now well into his eighties, while O’Neill’s daughter was in her teens. It was not a very long marriage, however, for Sorley Boy died in 1589, aged about eighty-five.

Within a year or two of Sorley’s death the MacDonnells employed some Scottish engineers to raise guns from the Girona. “*The ordnance*” wrote another English spy, “*was assayed by some out of Scotland to be weighed, but still in the water.*” Several cannon were then pulled out of the sea, and mounted on the castle walls, making Dunluce one of the best-armed Irish castles in native hands. It was also rumoured that there was a considerable amount of gold and silver on board, and indeed many gold objects were found during the excavation of the wreck site in the 1960s. However, whether any great quantity of gold was rescued at the time we do not know.

MacDonnell Genealogy



JAMES MACDONNELL (d. 1601)

Dunluce's Last Days as a Fortress

Sorley Boy was succeeded by James, his eldest surviving son, commonly called James of Dunluce, as this was his main residence. He continued Sorley's policy of empire building, and fought several more battles against the MacQuillans, gradually driving them further and further back from the coast.

In 1597 James of Dunluce fought a pitched battle with Sir John Chichester, the governor of Carrickfergus and his fighting men. Sir John had previously come to the Route to demand that James should hand over the Girona's cannon and pay his taxes, but James had responded by gathering together his own men, and pursuing Sir John back to Carrickfergus. In a battle close to the town two musket shots and an arrow hit Sir John and killed him, after which his body was decapitated. James and his men then played a game of football with Sir John's head before sending it to Hugh O'Neill, the rebellious Earl of Tyrone. James then returned to Dunluce and hung up Sir John's battle standard in it as a trophy. It remained there until Cromwellian times.

James of Dunluce also wrote to Queen Elizabeth after this battle, declaring that "*if her Majestie desire me to be her subject, I will not have Sir Arthur Chichester (Sir John's brother) to be Governor of Carrickfergus.*" In spite of this, Sir Arthur was appointed, after which James joined Tyrone in rebellion. He is reported to have then strengthened the curtain wall and installed three cannon from the Girona in the castle. The wall runs between the gatehouse and the south-eastern round tower and has two large openings cut into it that are gun loops that were later enlarged and extended. The ground level inside the curtain wall was originally about four feet higher than it is today, so these gun loops started as applying only to this level's height. However the ground was then hacked down in the 1580s or early 1590s to make level ground for the loggia and so, when James remodelled the curtain wall as a defensive structure, circa 1597, he had the gun loops extended downwards so as to work for two cannon standing on the new ground level inside the loggia.

During the summer of 1597, soon after his victory over Sir John Chichester, James visited the Scottish king, James VI, bringing with him as his prize gift one of the Girona's cannons. (James VI, it should be remembered, later became James I of England.)

"The King received him very kindly; he rode a white horse and all his train together, the King was highly pleased to see James McSourl (son of Sorley) with their brave horses and armour.

"James has shown his Majesty and the nobility the ancient Irish pickering, or riding in their high pillions made all of pure velvet and scarlet to the imaginable satisfaction of King and court and at that time James presented the King with a

cannon piece which is extant to this day with the following inscription:

Jacobus filius Sorolinus McDonald mihi Jacobo sexto Rex Scotorum dono donavit."¹¹

He was then knighted by the king, though this was somewhat of a consolation prize, for James of Dunluce had hoped that the king would recognise him as the legitimate clan chief, and give him the family's Scottish lands as well as his Irish ones. To this end he tried to convince the king that the actual Scottish chieftain's parents were not properly married, and that therefore the Dunyveg line was illegitimate. King James, however, was extremely fond of the actual chieftain (who was called James of Dunyveg) and politely ignored James of Dunluce's tale.

On the 5th of April 1601 James of Dunluce died unexpectedly. He had been visited just before by a Scotsman called Thomas Douglas, who came with recommendations from the Duke of Lennox, a senior member of the Scottish court. Douglas stayed for less than two days at Dunluce, before going to Carrickfergus, where Sir Arthur Chichester put him on a boat to Chester with a further letter of recommendation. This letter remarks rather ominously that Douglas had "*tolde me his business was at an ende in this countrie*. The "*business*" the letter went on, was that Douglas had found Sir James of Dunluce "*siklie of ane byle, and ane Scottish surgeon of my ould acquaintance with him*." Douglas then talked to the surgeon in private, swearing him to secrecy about the matter they were going to discuss.

"Alake" said he, "what meinis al theis; ye kno I am yours," with an oth. Then said I: "You, having this man in your handis, may bothe inrich your self and doe me credit. If you will find some means to dispatch him, I will geyf you my bond with seissing for five pound sterling mony, efter his deth to be payit, and sumquhat in your hand."

He being silent for a quhyl: "but how" said he "shall I ascap?"

Said I "If ye ondertake it, I will geyf you fyf pound in hand, sense I haif bot small stor of mony heir, and ane letter to the Governor of Knockfargus (sens nothing can be provin against you) to see you saif sent hom."

"No," said he, "I will haif eyght pound, and your bil, and if he dy not before Eyster, I shall crave no more, and you shal haif your mony back again at meeting."

*So then I tuk his oth upon a buk, no ownlie for secresie, as alsoe to dou that he had taken in hand. Al this in won day and ane half I did.*¹²

Whether Douglas and the surgeon were actually responsible for James of Dunluce's death we cannot be sure, but Sir Arthur Chichester probably felt it was eight pounds very well spent.¹³

¹¹ Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) ms *History of the MacDonnells* D358

¹² Ulster Journal of Archaeology vol. V, *The Death of Sir James Macdonnell of Dunluce*, pp. 207-8

¹³ Hill, op. cit. pp. 187-193; O'Laverty, op. cit., vol. IV pp 273-286

curtain wall and tower


RANDAL ARRANAGH MACDONNELL, first Earl of Antrim, (d. 1636)
Dunluce reaches its Zenith

James of Dunluce left behind a large family – six sons and several daughters. They were, however, all young, and so James's next oldest brother Randal became the new leader of this Irish branch of the clan. In full he was called Randal Arranagh mac Sorley MacDonnell, to give him his usual Gaelic epithets, indicating that he had been fostered out to the Stewart family of Arran, and that he was the famous Sorley Boy's son. The Scottish clan chief was not consulted, for the Irish MacDonnells were determined to demonstrate their independence, and superiority. They had good reasons for this show of independence. While they had been enriching themselves and increasing their territories, their Scottish cousins had been reduced to penury. Their lands were taken from them piece by piece, both by the Scottish king and by local rivals, and the chieftain's eldest son, Sir James of Dunyveg, was for many years a hostage at the royal court in Edinburgh.

Randal Arranagh was staying with his foster family, the Stewarts, on Arran, when James died, but once he heard he came back to Dunluce and declared himself the new chieftain. However a younger brother, Eneas Ultagh (Gaelic for Angus the Ulsterman) also wanted to become the head of the family, and had the support of many clansmen. They were preparing to march on Dunluce when a holy man called O'Dornan, who is described as the "*clerk of St. Patrick's Bell*", stepped in front of them, rang the ancient bell and cursed them. Eneas demanded to know what O'Dornan thought he was doing, to

which he retorted, “*The ringing is to curse you and your army for your unlawful insurrection against your older brother Rannell.*”¹⁴

This fearsome curse is said to have stopped Eneas, but Sir James of Dunyveg, the son of the legitimate Scottish clan chieftain, was determined to assert his rights. He came over to the Antrim Glens, and was gathering together his supporters when Randal Arranagh caught up with him, took Sir James of Dunyveg prisoner, and incarcerated him in Dunluce.

Hardly were these problems dealt with than the rebel leader, Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, asked for Randal Arranagh's help, as a Spanish force had landed at Kinsale in County Cork. Tyrone needed to join up with them if his rebellion was to succeed. So, in November 1601 Randal set out from Dunluce with two hundred of his best men. Luckily for Randal, an English attempt to oust him from Dunluce also failed. Having heard that he had left with Tyrone, an English force from Carrickfergus attempted to take Dunluce, but were driven back by a violent snowstorm. This was not the end of the matter, for Sir James of Dunyveg managed to persuade the clansmen who were holding him at Dunluce that he was their rightful leader, and so they set him free and held Dunluce in his name.

Meanwhile, Tyrone's Irish army was devastatingly defeated at Kinsale, and Randal Arranagh MacDonnell came back with about thirty or forty of the men he had set out with. Reaching Dunluce he found its gates had been firmly closed by Sir James of Dunyveg's supporters. However Randal then had some luck, for Sir James was rebuffed in his advances to the English at Carrickfergus, and so after some weeks he fled from Dunluce to join the Earl of Tyrone with eighty men. This was not nearly enough to save Tyrone, and meanwhile Randal Arranagh ensured his own survival by surrendering to the English. As a result Randal got his Antrim lands back in what was technically known as a surrender and regrant. In this procedure, if the chieftain surrendered to the English he would be offered the entire clan territory as his personal estate under the English crown. In Randal's case the estate he then got covered 333, 907 acres between Larne and Coleraine, in return for a promise of good behaviour, and an undertaking to transform the old clan territory into an English-style estate.

This “regrant” happened only just in time. Sir James of Dunyveg fled back to Scotland, and begged King James VI to intervene so that he and his father Angus, the clan chief, could recover the family's Irish lands. King James then had a crisis of conscience. He felt he had treated Sir James and his father harshly, but although he had some personal regrets about this, he knew he could not afford to have them bothering him again in Scotland, so he appealed to Lord Mountjoy, Queen Elizabeth's Lord Deputy in Dublin, to reverse his grant to Randal Arranagh, and give everything in Antrim to Sir James instead. Mountjoy replied that this could not be done, for Randal Arranagh was now the proud possessor of a brand new document with the Queen's seal on it giving him legal title to the whole territory. If this grant were rescinded Randal would probably again

¹⁴ PRONI ms D358; St. Patrick's Bell was associated with the O'Mulhallan family (Mulholland), who were its hereditary keepers; both they and the O'Dornans provided priors to Muckamore Abbey near Antrim.

join the Earl of Tyrone, who was still in rebellion, so King James's intercession on behalf of Sir James of Dunyveg was in vain.

After Queen Elizabeth died the following year, King James VI of Scotland became King James I of England and Ireland, and one of his first acts was to confirm the entire grant to Randal Arranagh MacDonnell. However Randal Arranagh's succession problems did not completely end there. Several people made proposals to James I's government suggesting that Randal Arranagh should lose some or all of his estates, usually because they wanted to get hold of the lands for themselves. Perhaps inevitably, considering what the MacDonnells had done to his brother, Sir Arthur Chichester was one of those proposing a break-up of the MacDonnell estates. He suggested that granting smaller amounts of land to the old proprietors, people like the MacQuillans, interspersed amongst a good number of new English and Scottish settlers, would make a much more reliable situation.

These attempts also failed, but some thirteen years later another perilous moment threatened Randal Arranagh. In 1615, several of the sons of Randal Arranagh's dead elder brother, James of Dunluce, combined with several other discontented offspring of former Ulster chieftains and some of the Scottish Clandonald led by Sir James of Dunyveg, to try to start a large scale rebellion. The conspiracy was quickly squashed, but Randal Arranagh was wise enough to appreciate that there were good reasons for his nephews' anger, and appeased them with generous land grants. Fifteen thousand acres went to James of Dunluce's eldest son, and lesser amounts to his brothers. This seems to have ended the quarrel, although Sir James of Dunyveg, the Scottish chieftain, lost everything, and went into exile.

Within a year of their defeat at Kinsale all the other rebellious Ulster chieftains had surrendered, and their lands were also re-granted to them, but Randal was the only one to make a success of the transition they had to make from the role of traditional chieftain to that of a modern landowner. Only a few years after their surrender, in 1607, Tyrone and most of the other leading Ulster chieftains fled into exile (the so-called Flight of the Earls) while most of the rest gradually lost much or all of their lands through financial mismanagement. Randal however made his new position work, and Dunluce was transformed. When Sir George Carew's surveyors visited the castle in 1611, on their tour of investigation into the condition of Ulster for James I, they remarked that Randal's castle had *"a fayre stone Wall about the whole Work, within which he hath erected a good howse of stone with many Lodgingis and other rooms."*¹⁵

Carew's "howse of stone" must be the present 'Manor House'. It is in a standard English Jacobean style, and closely resembles the drawings of the manor houses that were built on the London City Company Londonderry estates between 1615 and 1618. Carew's 1611 survey also describes a manor house at Coleraine that was built in 1607 by English craftsmen by its developer, Sir Thomas Phillips. It measured 22m x 8.2m, a little larger than Dunluce's 20.6m x 6.7m and had an upper storey with an attic above, so the

¹⁵ Hector McDonnell, *Sir Randal MacDonnell*, in New Dictionary of National Biography, to be published; Hill, op. cit. pp. 194-251, PRONI T811/3, folio 13 'A report on the voluntary works done by servitors.'

two houses were remarkably similar in size and layout. Moreover, Randal Arranagh provided building materials for Phillips's use at Coleraine so it is very likely that his English builders also put up the house at Dunluce. The Londonderry Plantation manor houses are so similar that it is also highly probable that the same team then went on to erect these houses. Their bay windows were a statement of modernity and wealth, as glass, lead, and cut stonework were all very expensive.¹⁶

The section of the castle where the manor house now stands was altered and rebuilt several times. An important remnant of these earlier schemes is the bottom half of the row of columns that were originally formed part of a loggia inside the southern wall of the fortress and had a roofed gallery above it with views towards the mainland from its windows. The columns are in a distinctive late sixteenth century Scottish style, and resemble in particular the loggia at Crichton Castle, the seat of the Earl of Boswell, one of the most powerful men in Scotland in the 1580s. The Crichton Castle loggia was part of an impressive Renaissance-style wing constructed inside the old castle in the 1580s. Dunluce's loggia also had rooms above, and required the quarrying out of large amounts of bedrock behind the curtain wall. Most probably both the loggia and the gatehouse were built in the 1580s or early 1590s by Scottish builders during a period of reasonably good relations with the English and Scottish governments.¹⁷

The "Buttery" is another late sixteenth-century structure. It is immediately to the north of the manor house, and was probably originally designed to stand on the other side of the open courtyard to the loggia. Its social importance is indicated by its main entrance, which was designed for double doors and opened onto a large room. It must therefore have been intended for the reception of significant people, and there was another well-lit reception room above it. I suspect that it was erected at the same time as the loggia, in the late 1580s or early 1590s. After the Manor House was built the Buttery ceased to be used as a reception area so its double door was narrowed. A recent excavation inside the manor house has revealed yet another feature - the foundation trench of an earlier building on this site, which has much the same orientation as the Buttery. Its date is unknown, but unless it was a 'trial run' at the Manor House of circa 1610 it must be an older building that was removed before the loggia was installed. The 'Buttery' could therefore have been its replacement along with the elaborate kitchen on its eastern side.¹⁸

Scottish masons probably also rebuilt and heightened the castle's gatehouse, at about this time. Its half towers are a particularly Scottish feature. Such half towers were

¹⁶ James Stevens Curl, *the Londonderry Plantation 1609-1914*, Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 1986 pp 43-44

¹⁷ Colin Breen op cit pp 88 – 117. Technically the house at Dunluce was not a manor house, as it was not used for the usual manorial purposes, but it is generally referred to as such, and it anyway closely resembles the genuine manor houses erected by the London City Companies on their Londonderry estates.

¹⁸ James Stevens Curl, op. cit. pp 40-41; Colin Breen, op. cit. pp. 130-164; Kevin Quinn M.A. Thesis *Archaeological Study of Dunluce Castle*, Queen's University Belfast, 2002; Lucy Gent, ed. *Albion's Classicism, The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660*, Paula Henderson, *The Loggia in Tudor and Early Stuart England*, pp. 109-145. It is important to note that all dating of the 'Buttery' and the subsequent 'Manor House' is highly tenuous as no actual dates can be proved. If English builders did put up the Manor House before 1611 then Randal Arranagh's building works at Dunluce are even more astonishing and innovative.

called “studies” in Scotland, and give the entrance an appearance reminiscent of the fortified houses of Ballygally and Ballycastle, which were built in the mid-1620s. However the detail of the gatehouse at Dunluce is different and suggests that it was the work of an earlier, team of Scottish masons. The corner towers are uncomfortably squashed into the body of the structure, while the entrance and the windows above it are off-centre as the builders had to build this new façade onto an already existing structure.

Dunluce gatehouse



Randal Arranagh also developed a small town beside the castle. The foundations of this town are still visible, in the fields to the west of the castle buildings on the mainland. It must have grown up soon after Randal Arranagh was granted his estates in 1603, for Carew’s survey described it in 1611 as being well established, with “many tenements, after the fashion of the Pale, peopled for the most part with Scotsmen”.¹⁹

Excavation of this town in 2009-2012 has revealed a great deal. The town’s layout was created by laying out broad cobbled roads with demarcated plots beside them upon which houses were built. The excavated foundations were mainly of stone rubble and mortar, probably with dormers for an upper storey. Many roof slates have been found, but some houses were probably thatched and a wooden-framed building was also found. One of the excavated houses tells an interesting tale. It was a substantial house, externally 16.4m long by 8.2m wide, with diamond-paned glass in the windows and stone and mortar gable ends,. Three Scottish coins of 1614 were found as well as pieces of early seventeenth century clay pipes, some of which had the initials of a well-known Bristol pipe maker on their bowls, as well as ceramic pottery fragments from North Devon. A coin was also found that had been minted in Lithuania in 1547 and used as a pendant and there was a fragment of a glazed coloured tile from the Netherlands. These objects must have been rarities at the time, and indicate that the inhabitants were people of some

¹⁹ Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, T811/3, folio 13: ‘A report on the voluntary works done by servitors...within the counties of Downe, Antrim and Monahan.’

substance. However, their merchant-class lifestyle did not last long. Twenty years after the house was built an internal wall was built across it, and the northern half was turned into a cattle byre. Right beside the cooking hearth there was an internal privy, with a wooden seat and partition around it, but it was simply a hole in the ground and would have been emptied by hand, which shows how basic life was here even for the more well-to-do.

Another remarkable find of this excavation was the town's smithy on a street corner. Iron tools, nails, horseshoes and quantities of clinker were found here, as well as pipe fragments and some stone gaming pieces, suggesting that it was a much frequented and popular social venue. Other domestic items were found, including bone combs and thimbles as well as a harper's bronze tuning pin. The MacDonnells had their own Irish harpers, but this one may have belonged to a musician who was entertaining people in the town.

This town had many drawbacks, as although it was beside the MacDonnells' main residence it suffered from being built on an exposed headland with no access to a good port. It was developed at the same time as the Ulster Plantation towns and also several others on Randal Arranagh's estates including at Dunineny, Ballycastle, Clough, Glenarm and Larne. However, Dunluce's town is remarkably important as it was burnt and abandoned in 1641 and so its remains give us a unique insight into urban development in Ulster in the early seventeenth century.²⁰

The very first of the Ulster Plantation towns was an 'infant city' at Derry, built entirely in wood, which was started by Sir Henry Docwra, the governor of Loughfoyle, in 1603 and completely burnt down during O'Doherty's rebellion in 1608. However, Sir Thomas Phillips purchased Coleraine in 1605 and soon began his 'plantation of my own Endeavour, where I set up thirty thatched houses' as well as a mill. He attracted settlers to it by letting them have properties in Coleraine rent free for four years. At the beginning of 1610 an agreement was drawn up for the building of a more substantial town there by the London City companies,²¹ and a survey of Coleraine only a year later, in 1611, depicts a brand new town in the process of construction. Most of the houses were half-timbered constructions.

The town at Coleraine must have been built almost simultaneously to the one at Dunluce, so Randal Arranagh was one of the earliest creators of new town development in North Ulster. There was clearly very close cooperation between Randal Arranagh and the first settlers at Coleraine, and this alliance between an old chieftain and the new developers is remarkable.²² The actual method he used to create the town was simple and effective. Plots were marked out on the ground, along a street grid, and prospective tenants undertook to build houses on them. There must have been teams of

²⁰ Colin Breen, op. cit. pp 139-159

²¹ 21 January 1609/10. (The 17th century English way of writing the year date looks confusing, but the modern date would be January 1610.)

²² Rolf Loeber, *The Geography and Practice of English Colonisation in Ireland from 1534 to 1609*, pub. by The Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement, 1991

craftsmen on hand, to produce the required buildings, so all the tenants had to do was to order and pay for the housing, and watch the buildings being put up.

Randal Arranagh made many visits to areas of the Pale around Dublin during these years, not to mention his visits to the royal courts at Edinburgh and London, so he had ample opportunity to see new building developments being undertaken elsewhere. He may even have found the craftsmen he needed while he was making these trips, and have invited some to come to Antrim to work on his projects.

One architectural fragment from Dunluce's town shows how closely its development was related to activities at the castle. It is a sandstone lintel, which must have been part of a house that was built fifteen or more years after the town was founded as it bears the date, 1623, and the initials MH[^]BT. These are probably those of Michael Henderson, who is listed on the Dunluce muster rolls, along with those of his wife and were probably carved into this sandstone block when it was re-employed as the lintel of his newly built front door. Good pieces of sandstone were hard to come by, as the nearest source was a quarry at Fair Head, over twenty miles away, but most of the window and door surrounds of Dunluce Castle were made from this sandstone as it was easily carved and shaped. Basalt, the most widely used building stone, was very brittle and impossible to carve, so although all the walls of the castle are made from basalt, any carved detail was done in sandstone.²³

As any redundant pieces of sandstone were therefore rapidly recycled, we must imagine that this piece was not long out of the window it had been part of before it was reused. It probably indicates that some significant alterations were being made to the castle in the early 1620s. Randal Arranagh bought his earldom for £5,000 in 1620 and this elevation in social rank could well have led to some impressive new improvements being made to the buildings at Dunluce.

It seems that a master builder and carpenter called William Parrat who was a leading citizen of Coleraine and was heavily involved in building works on the Londonderry Plantation seems to have been also very active at Dunluce and other places on the MacDonnell lands in the 1620s and 1630s. Most importantly he was probably responsible for the design and building of Dunluce's Manor House, which closely resembles the other Plantation manor houses. Indeed he and his team of workmen were probably also involved in producing houses for the tenants of the new towns that sprung up around the manor houses.²⁴

From 1615 onwards William Parrat appears in the surviving records as an important Plantation builder. He must have also had close connections with Randal Arranagh, as he asked the Dublin authorities for a pass for Parrat to visit England in 1627, and this was not the sort of favour that the earl would have done without good reason. Parrat is best known for building St. Columb's Cathedral in Derry city, between

²³ Colin Breen op cit, pp 130-1

²⁴ Nothing is known about Parrat's background, but a minor landowner with his rare English surname was found in the Pale, in Queen's County, in the 1659 census.

1628 and 1633. It is a fine Jacobean Gothic stone church, and shows his considerable building skills. He was paid the large sum of £3,400 for this work. It also appears that he was involved in the creation of the manor houses that were built both for the Plantation towns and at Dunluce but there is unfortunately a very little documentary evidence to confirm this idea. However, he is the only named master builder working on the Plantation sites and there is at least a direct connection between Parrat and the building of at least one of the London City Companies' manor houses. Circa 1615-16 Parrat was working on the development of the Merchant Taylors' Company settlement at Macosquin, five miles west of Coleraine and provided the necessary carpentry for the settlement's houses, roof structures, doorframes and windows. Undoubtedly the most important project undertaken here was the manor house. It would have been largely built from stone and mortar, with sandstone window and door dressings, and a drawing of it at the time shows it looked remarkably like the house at Dunluce. Indeed, it also closely resembles the manor houses built for: the Fishmongers' Company at Ballykelly, and the Haberdashers' at Ballecaslan so it is reasonable to suggest that the same team built all four of them. Moreover, Parrat had probably started his building careers in Ulster with the very similar manor house at Coleraine in 1607 as well as the one at Dunluce.²⁵

Parrat must also have been involved with the second earl in the late 1630s, as he owed Parrat eighteen hundred pounds in 1638. This is all the evidence we have, but the probability is that the first two earls of Antrim employed Parrat several times on their various building projects. He was clearly a person of considerable standing and wealth at Coleraine by 1622, as he then appears on the town's muster roll as being obliged to put a company of pikemen in the field when required. Randal Arranagh was also deeply involved in Coleraine, as in 1610 he handed over about two thousand acres of his land to the east of the town to facilitate its development, and supplied the settlers with lime for their building activities from his own quarries. In recognition of his support and generosity he was given a house in Coleraine for his lifetime, and also made an alderman, so it is not entirely surprising to find that he employed the town's master builder for his own building projects.

The activities of the Plantation brought it remarkably close to Dunluce. Coleraine's easternmost boundary was near Portrush, which had been leased in 1605 from Randal Arranagh by Sir Thomas Phillips, the original developer of Coleraine. As a result Dunluce was effectively only five miles away from the Ulster Plantation's area of control, which must have had a considerable influence upon the situation at Dunluce, particularly as it was also developing its own substantial settler community.²⁶

²⁵ Technically the house at Dunluce was not a manor house, as it was not used for the usual manorial purposes, but it is generally referred to as such, and it anyway closely resembles the genuine manor houses erected by the London City Companies on their Londonderry estates. G. Hill *Macdonnells of Antrim* p.476; J. S. Curl *The Londonderry Plantation*, London 1986, pp.310, & 338 & figs 143, 227 & 232; P.R.O.N.I documents T 615 p. 56, T 724/1 & D 572/21/101; various London city companies, or guilds, were granted estates in the new county of Londonderry in 1610. Consequently they all built little towns and manor houses at this time.

²⁶Curl, op. cit. pp. 42-3; Phillips acquired lands at Coleraine shortly before Portrush, and wanted to develop both as towns, but does not seem to have had the resources to do so.

The three Londonderry manor houses all had two or three storey bay windows similar to those at Dunluce, however the Londonderry houses had central doorways and symmetrical facades, which was not the case at Dunluce. There was a strong Jacobean desire to create symmetry, but at Dunluce the builder broke away from this formula because there was another, overriding need. For reasons of social status it was essential to create an impressively large and imposing hall on the ground floor of this building, and only by placing the doorway at one end could enough space be made to satisfy this requirement. Clearly, Parrat was always ingenious and adapted his Manor House formula as the particular needs of the client demanded. Macosquin's manor house, for example, had prominent Scottish-looking corner towers at roof level, with a crenellated walkway running between them. The building is therefore curiously hybrid in style, and was presumably done to satisfy the wishes of this client. By contrast Dunluce's manor house follows a purely English form. It is anyway particularly significant as all the other Plantation manor houses have vanished, so Dunluce's is the only surviving domestic building that is closely related to the manor houses produced for the Londonderry Plantation.²⁷

Randal Arranagh's letters patent of 1603 obliged him to divide his estate into manors and to "build a castle or mansion house upon each within seven years". These were intended to be administrative, legal and commercial centres. As a result, he created manors at Dunluce, Clough, Ballycastle and Glenarm, and lesser settlements were developed at Red Bay, Ballymoney and Larne.²⁸ He was therefore in great need of competent builders and town developers. The architecture of the fortified houses of his tenants at Ballygalley, Kilwaughter and Ballycastle reveals that several Scottish masons must have been active on Randal Arranagh's lands in the 1620s, working in these instances for Scottish incomers, while other developments, including the house at Dunluce, and probably the churches put up at Dunluce, Clough and Ballymoney look as though they were done by Sir Thomas Phillips' English builders.²⁹

It is fascinating to find such close connections between the building activities at Dunluce, the seat of an Irish lord of Gaelic background who was trying to adapt to the new order, and that of the nearby English Plantation. It is equally revealing to look at the various influences reflected in the architecture of Bonamargy, the friary near Ballycastle, founded circa 1500, that Randal Arranagh had rebuilt for the Irish Franciscans in 1621, as it parallels the complexity of Dunluce's own development. The friary's early seventeenth century Gothic east window is typical of the style favoured by many Irish masons at this time.

²⁷ The inclusion of Scottish features into the fabric of otherwise English-looking houses happens throughout Ireland in the early 17th century, for example at Donegal Castle, and at Menlough in Galway. Parrat is usually an English name, but there was a Parrat family in Roxburghshire in the early 17th century, so he could have been a Scot.

²⁸ The stipulation of his grant to build manors on his lands is considered important because it was the model of the formula followed for the Plantation settlers' grants a few years later.

²⁹ The remarkable distinctness between Scottish and English building styles was a consequence of the two countries isolation from each other, and their very separate histories, before the 17th century.

In particular there are noteworthy similarities between the rebuilding work at Bonamargy friary in the early 1620s and that at Carrickfergus parish church, which the local settlers had remodelled and reroofed slightly earlier, for use as an Anglican church. In particular, it has a mortuary chapel built onto one side for the Chichester family with a vault below it, as is the case at Bonamargy, where a mortuary chapel with a vault below it was added onto one side of the church. Moreover, the architecture of Bonamargy's mortuary chapel closely resembles the work of Plantation builders, with a considerable amount of brick used in its construction, and windows of a Scottish type. Indeed the concept of building a mortuary chapel and vault as a transept to a church is a product of the Scottish sixteenth century Reformation, and was a solution to the demand by important families to have chapels dedicated to them in spite of the prohibition on chantry chapels. Thus the reconstructed friary of Bonamargy, like Dunluce itself, is an amalgam of Scottish, English and Irish architectural styles.³⁰

Bonamargy



The most significant literary relic of Dunluce's little town is the will of William Boyd. It was written a year later than the inscription on the reused mullion, in 1624, and gives a remarkable insight into the life, and circumstances, of a Dunluce merchant. He left his houses and gardens in Dunluce to his wife, together with their contents, and "ffowre off my best kowis." His land and fishing rights went to his eldest son Adam, who

³⁰ Rolf Loeber *Dictionary of Architects in Ireland 1600-1720*, J. Murray, 1981 pp. 83-4. Randal Arranagh built several towns on his estates, and it has been observed that their layout and methods of house construction may have been inspired by the Plantation developments in co. Londonderry. Towns were being developed at Dunluce, Portrush, Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Clogh, Larne and Glenarm, so there was plenty of opportunity for a master builder like Parrat. The layout of Bonamargy's transept, with a mortuary chapel above and a vault below, projecting from one side of the church, is very similar to the arrangement at Carrickfergus church which was reroofed in 1614 by an English master mason called Nicholas Paps.

was a minor, so he also appointed two trustees to “keip him att schooles and to breed him according as they schall in yr discretion think fitt.” Adam also got his father’s “furnished fether bedd wth the apportunances necessarily belonging, my brewing kettill”, and “my aquavitae pott” (except that he had to lend them to his mother whenever she needed them).³¹

Boyd left sixty pounds to each of his other children, boys and girls alike, two townlands to his second son John, with his education left in the hands of Archibald Stewart, Lord Antrim’s agent, and the youngest, William, was to be sent to a friend in Scotland, with more money to be sent over for his “breeding and aducatione.” More provisions were made for the “aducation” of his three daughters. After that came a long list of things he willed to his friends: - a “gray stoned horse” (a gelding) to Lord Antrim, “my pasing naig” to Mr Monypenny, “all my waring apparel” and “thirtie bolles of oats owing me in Larne” to R. Thomson, “my grogram suit, my best black cloak, and the next best cloak” to David Thomson, along with “my rapier and all the books off my office”; to Thomas Boyd “my best silver piece and my best saddell and Bryddell”; Wm Dunlapp “my grein worsted stockings, wch are new, and aine pair of taffeta garters”; Wm Fentowne “my best black cloak”; Wm Wallace “my blak turbrie grogram suit, ane pair of russet worse stockings, ane pair of blak towris silk garters, wt ane pair of schooes”; John Logan, “ane new cloak off browne Inglisch cloath...and ane schooting peac”; Sir Wm Kennedie “my best sword”; Boyd’s sister “thrie milk kowes”; Robert Longmure a “thowsand marck Scottische money...which are bunt together into ane bunche wt ane linninge rag in my quhyt (white) box”, and “one silver gobblett” to Mr Moore.

As something of an afterthought he also left a “long fowling piece qch I brought out of Knokffergy” to Archibald Stewart, “ane young browne cowlte, qch I have off the Earle off Antrim for his food” to Archibald Boyd, a “litell silver goblet” to his sister Margaret, and “to John Wallace that schooting piece wch he hath of myne.”

To put it mildly, William Boyd was a man of some property. I do not imagine that many of the inhabitants of the town of Dunluce can have been his financial equals, but at least it tells us that it had some impressively prosperous inhabitants. Several of the Lowland Scots families mentioned in the will, Boyd’s own included, produced many generations of affluent inhabitants in north county Antrim. Amongst these were the Stewarts, who were Randal’s foster-kindred on Arran, and are said to have advanced Randal a sizeable amount of money when he took over his lands, so as to help him get started with the process of “improving” them. Their investment paid handsome dividends, as they became Randal’s land agents, and acquired substantial land holdings themselves, in particular around Ballintoy and Glenariff. They also became the proud inhabitants of three of Randal’s castles. Of these Ballintoy has completely vanished, and only fragments of Ballylough survive, but Red Bay castle still dominates the Glenariff coastline.

Randal paid the enormous sum of five thousand pounds for the title of Earl of Antrim in 1620. James I had already praised him in 1613 for his “reformation and

³¹ Hill op. cit. pp. 389-392

civilising of those rude parts” of Ulster, and clearly he did transform his territory dramatically. He also brought considerable prosperity to the region by the simple method of encouraging Lowland Scots entrepreneurs like the Boyds and Stewarts to settle on his lands. Inside Dunluce castle an extraordinary juxtaposition of his two worlds – the Gaelic and the English – was played out. He maintained a proper Gaelic retinue, with harpers, bards and Irish poets in attendance, his sons were “bred the highland way”, wearing “neither hat nor shoe, nor stocking” until they were about eight, Gaelic was their first language, and Catholicism their religion. (Randal’s wife was a daughter of Hugh O’Neill, the Earl of Tyrone who had led the rebellion of the 1590s, and Randal himself was the first member of his family to be able to speak English at all). At the same time he was a determinedly loyal subject of the Stuart monarchy, and a vigorous developer of his estates, so he was quite deliberately moving north Antrim into a new, and much less Gaelic, world. His building schemes made Dunluce a model example of modernisation.³²

By the early 1630s Randal was aging, and unwell. In 1632 a famous physician called Thomas Arthur visited him at Dunluce, and treated him for “dropsy”, a term which referred to conditions causing a swelling of the lower leg, usually a failing heart. Arthur was paid seventeen pounds for this visit, but the dropsy persisted, and so he returned the next year, though this time he was only paid five pounds. In spite of his failing health Randal journeyed to Dublin in July 1634 to attend Parliament, but then had to leave early because of his dropsy and return to Dunluce. He died there two years later, with “Dropsy” given as the cause of his death. He was buried at Bonamargy friary in the vault which he had specially created as a family mausoleum, and in which he had already placed a leaden casket containing Sorley Boy’s bones. He had in fact rebuilt the entire friary so that the Franciscans could use it as a base for missionary work in the Clandonald territories in Scotland in the 1620s and 1630s. This mission was therefore a curious by-product of Randal Arranagh’s persistent efforts to increase his influence in the Clandonald heartland, and to establish himself as the head of the family in Scotland, as in Ireland.³³

Dunluce Castle Today



³² Hill op. cit. pp. 194-251

³³ Hill op. cit. p. 246

Dunluce had been totally transformed during Randal Arranagh's time. The "good house of stone" (the Manor House), as well as various other lodgings in the castle were all built by 1611, as well as the stables and the brewhouse on the mainland. The curtain wall had a roofed long gallery joining the south-eastern round tower to the gatehouse. There was also a walkway running along the curtain wall between the two round towers. The north-eastern round tower's upper parts were completely rebuilt, creating two square rooms, one above the other, comfortably equipped with well-sized windows, doors and fireplaces. Dunluce had thus been transformed into a modernised landowner's country house. Randal Arranagh probably also erected the long building running along the western side of the Outer Ward that fronted onto a terraced formal garden, and provided additional lodgings for guests and also for their entertainment.³⁴

RANDAL ÓG MACDONNELL, Second Earl and first Marquess of Antrim (1609-83)

Dunluce's last Great Days, and its Destruction

When his father died in 1636 his eldest legitimate son, Randal Óg (Randal the Younger) became the new Lord Antrim. He had been living at the Stuart court in London for several years, and was much in favour with Charles I. His father had wanted him to find a wife from an important family at the royal court, and indeed he had married the richest available woman in England, Catherine Manners, the widowed Duchess of Buckingham.

Catherine Manners came from a Roman Catholic family, but had conformed to the Anglican faith while she was Buckingham's wife, and reverted to her native Catholicism after marrying Randal Óg. Interestingly, the parish church at Dunluce reflected the considerable cross-over that existed between the followers of Catholicism and High Church Anglicanism during Charles I's reign. The church was apparently decorated at her behest, circa 1638, in the Laudian High Church manner favoured at the royal court, so her interest in that aspect of the Anglican faith survived her second marriage. Catherine's first husband, the Duke of Buckingham, had been an extremely powerful, but politically disastrous figure at the royal court. Buckingham had been both James I's favourite, and Charles I's close friend. He maintained an extremely rich and fashionable lifestyle, and apart from having a very negative influence on Stuart policies in Ireland he caused a series of embarrassingly unsuccessful foreign ventures, from the "Spanish Match" (which led to a desultory war between the two countries) to a catastrophic military expedition against the French army besieging the Huguenot town of La Rochelle. This directly led to his assassination in 1628.

After their marriage Randal Óg and his wife lived for a time in Buckingham's great houses and even bought more English estates, but it required an enormous financial outlay to maintain a proper fashionable lifestyle at Charles I's court, and the Antrims

³⁴ Colin Breen, *op. cit.* pp 102-110

soon built up such vast debts (Antrim's alone amounted to more than £40,000), that in September 1638 they abandoned London, and after a lengthy journey (which included using ships from Charles I's navy for the sea crossing) they settled at Dunluce.³⁵

The two years before the Antrims arrived were very busy ones at Dunluce. Soon after Randal Arranagh's death the family's agents were told to call in all the leases which had been granted over the previous thirty years, and issue new ones with more rigorous conditions attached to them. The castle must therefore have been often full of anxious tenants and their men, trying to bargain with Antrim's agents, and his Dublin lawyer, about the nature of the new leases. We imagine that virtually all the castle's buildings that we now see were in operation at this stage, although Randal Óg may have commissioned some of them, in the brief period between his father's death in 1636 and the outbreak of warfare in 1641.

The intriguing fact that young Antrim owed William Parrat £1800 in 1638 certainly suggests they were involved in some important building works. This sum indeed suggests that Parrat must have been doing something significant, as good gentry houses could be built in England in the early seventeenth century for less than two thousand pounds. At the very least the life that revolved around these buildings would have been at its zenith during this period. Apart from the money he paid Parrat the only other certain evidence of second earl's improvements at Dunluce is a fire back from the gatehouse with the date 1641 on it. It must have been made only months before the Irish Rebellion of October 1641 and most probably was brought over from Britain. The lion of England prances across it, with the Scottish thistle, a crowned fleur-de-lys and a crowned Tudor Rose above the lion, but no Irish harp is to be seen.

The Outer Ward, the courtyard of buildings on the mainland, and the formal gardens laid out to the west of them, must have been a major focus of interest during the young Antrims' time here. The only clue about their dating comes in a description of events at the beginning of the 1641 rebellion, in which reference is made to the "new pavement" of this ward. This suggests that a new pavement had been put in by the young Antrim to improve the appearance of the approach to the castle. Presumably, therefore, the Outer Ward's buildings were at the very least smartened up by the young Antrims.³⁶

The block overlooking the garden contained, on its two floors, nine rooms of varying sizes, mostly connected by corridors. Many of the rooms on both floors of the more southern half of the block were probably intended either for the more important members of the Antrims' staff or else for guests. Each room was well lit, with a sizeable window looking into the gardens, and had its own fireplace, while the corridors ensured some privacy. The entire block was furnished with wooden floors on both the ground and upper storeys, another indication that these rooms were of superior status.

³⁵ Jane Ohlmeyer, *Civil War and Restoration in the Three Kingdoms*, CUP 1993, pp. 49-77. He was known, in Gaelic, as Randal Óg, young Randal, to distinguish himself from his father. Like his father his mother tongue was Gaelic, and he employed Gaelic poets and musicians at Dunluce. When he died an inscription in Gaelic, English and Latin was put on his coffin to show that he stood astride these three cultural worlds.

³⁶ Malcolm Airs, *The Tudor and Jacobean Country House*, Sutton Publishing, 1995, pp. 94-104

In the middle of the block, on the ground floor, there was a passageway running through the building to a doorway leading into a formally laid out garden. The social status of the rooms to the north of the passageway was particularly high. On the ground floor there were two large rooms with good fireplaces accessed through a doorway opening onto the Outer Ward. The upper floor at this northern end of the block contained a large, symmetrically designed room, with a window on either side of a centrally placed fireplace on its western wall and a high ceiling. This long room or “gallery” (as such rooms were usually named) must have been designed for the use of the MacDonnell family and their guests, and must have been closely connected with their use of the garden. Such gallery rooms overlooking gardens or fine views were an important feature of fashionable houses in the 17th century. In this instance the north gable wall has a door in it which opened out onto a wooden balcony that ran around two sides of the outside corner of this block, under the windows of the long room looking into the garden, with the beams supporting the floor running through the walls so as to support the balcony as well. Just outside the door the balcony also had support from the top of a tall wall on the cliff’s edge.

A long balcony going round a corner like this is highly unusual for the British Isles. Indeed the Italian word “balcone” only came into the English language circa 1613, but these “viewing platforms” or “galleries” were popular features of grand Scottish and English buildings in the 16th and 17th centuries, and indeed the manor house at Macosquin had just such a “viewing platform” running between its corner towers, so Parrat was seemingly using a fashionable and innovative idea on these buildings.

Only one other Irish example is known, at Burncourt in county Tipperary, which was built in 1641 with its viewing platform running between corner towers across the main façade at roof level as at Macosquin. These viewing platforms were designed to impress. The company invited to some great occasion might repair, at the end of a formal meal, to such a viewing platform, where they would be entertained, with music or some dramatic or skillful performance such as fencing or archery, that was being performed in the grounds below. A “banquet”, (at this time this word had its original meaning of light delicacies and a sweet course of puddings, desserts and candied confections with sweet or fortified wines) would then be presented to the onlookers.

The garden’s layout includes a broad flat area of the central terrace to the south of a slight mound and this could well have been a bowling green, with a garden building on the mound overlooking it. The northernmost terrace still has a visible grid of raised flowerbeds, while the upper, southernmost area may have been a formal orchard. A wall or palisade to its south cut off the gardens from the little town. Gardens of this period were laid out with intricate patterns of alleys, walks, carefully shaped small trees, and neatly hedged flowerbeds with orchestrated patterns of different colour combinations, while a green for sporting activities was also a necessity. A set of bowls was listed amongst the second earl’s effects, and he is known to have played many such fashionable games, losing on one occasion nearly £2,000 in the early 1630s, playing ninepins against another nobleman at the Stuart court. A letter written by the lord deputy, Wentworth, to

Archbishop Laud in 1639 says “*it is reported that the duchess expressth much satisfaction in her present condition, and that they contract themselves into a narrow room.*” This could well be the gallery room of this block. The Manor House and the rooms around it would mainly have been used for formal entertainment when there were important people gathered at Dunluce, while other parts of the castle were mainly used as rooms for guests or servants.

At the northern end of this “garden block” there is a little building abutting it which must have been a kitchen, as its ground floor room had two fireplaces. It would indeed have been convenient to have a kitchen here, with all the activity that must have been going on around it, but the two fireplaces are too narrow to accommodate good spits, and there is also no sign of an oven, so was this a subsidiary kitchen designed for the preparation of light meals, or for keeping warm food which had been sent over from the main kitchen of the castle?

The other building which we can date with some confidence to the period when the second earl lived here with his duchess is the Church of Ireland parish church for Dunluce, the ruin of which stands on the south side of the main road. The old church here was described as “ruynous” in 1622, so the present structure was put up to replace it, presumably on the same site. As already mentioned, the church was decorated in the best High Church fashion favoured by Charles I’s Court, its ceiling painted dark blue, with a scatter of glittering gold stars.³⁷

Dunluce Parish church



The church at Dunluce is a simple barn construction, and its basic materials should not have cost more than half the price of Derry cathedral, so the £1800 owed by the second earl to Parrat in 1638 must relate in part to other building works he undertook for the Antrims. The work on the block overlooking the garden might account for some or all of this sum, but if Parrat built Dunluce church then he probably also built the old parish church at Clough, another of the manors on the Antrims’ lands, as the two churches are virtually identical in both shape and build. We also know that the parish

³⁷ This decoration of the church’s ceiling is typical of the High Church Anglican style encouraged by Charles I and Archbishop Laud. It reflects the young Antrims’ close association with, and support for, the Stuart court.

church of Ballymoney was erected at in 1637 at the earl's expense. Even so, eighteen hundred pounds was a large sum of money in early Stuart times.

Not only was Parrat seemingly employed to carry out several schemes for the young Antrims, but he was also paid all but £200 of the money he was owed by the time the list of his debts was drawn up in 1638. This was highly unusual. Few of Antrim's debts were paid promptly, so I suspect the money was quickly found because Parrat's building works could not be completed unless the cash was handed over.³⁸

The Antrims must have also transformed the castle interiors, as they had brought with them quantities of extremely valuable furnishing from their English homes. We have detailed information about them because the Antrims sent a boatload of their better household fittings for safe keeping to Chester at the beginning of the civil war, and in 1651 the Cromwellian authorities drew up an inventory before auctioning them. Although they cannot represent Dunluce's entire contents, they make a highly impressive list. There were sixty-six pairs of curtains (mostly for four-poster beds, though some are window curtains, which was a highly fashionable innovation in 1640), thirty-seven cushions, twelve armchairs, sixty-three chairs and stools, and so many tapestries that they would have stretched out for more than two thirds of a mile if laid out end to end.

One particularly good set of tapestries had originally belonged to Cardinal Wolsey, and the chairs were upholstered in the costliest fabrics – silks, velvets, gold and silver lace, damasks and satins. There were also more than thirty oriental carpets, which were very expensive, many paintings in gilded frames (the Duchess had been painted by both Rubens and van Dyck), folding screens, fifty-nine damask tablecloths, a library of books, some large mirrors in carved gilt frames, celestial and terrestrial globes and a telescope (these last represent the cutting edge of fashionable contemporary science). There were also superb ornamental cabinets, looking like miniature chests of drawers on elaborate carved stands, inlaid with exotic woods, silver, brass and ivory, and often intensively carved. Some had probably been made by the highly skilled cabinetmakers of Augsburg and Paris.

No Irish house exists today with furnishings of this date and quality, but they can still be seen in some of the grandest English houses, such as Knole, or Hatfield. In another, Ham House, there is a little ivory cabinet similar to the ones at Dunluce, and the words of a leading furniture historian (Peter Thornton), give an idea of its significance. "It is entirely faced with short lengths of ivory decorated with wave moulding. To us it may seem rather a dull object, but if one considers how many elephants had to be sacrificed in order to clad this piece of furniture with ivory one may start to appreciate why it was so highly rated, and placed in the most important room in the house."

Peter Thornton's comment on the Dunluce inventory is as follows: -

³⁸Rolf Loeber op. cit. pp. 83-4; James Stevens Curl, *Londonderry Plantation*, Phillimore & Co. 1986, pp. 310 & 398

“My impression is that almost everything in this inventory is quite exceptionally splendid (viz the two large crystal mirrors, the mass of linen damask, the ebony and ivory cabinets, the Persian carpets) and that they could well have come from York House (the Duchess’s London palace), or be of the ‘London quality’. If a lot of this was rigged up at Dunluce it must have impressed the locals no end.”

Here are a few items from the inventory as they are described in the list

1 Couch bed, scarlet with black silk fringe

1 Cushion, 2 Armed Chaires & 3 back stooles
And 5 other stooles of the same.

1 Red Armed Chaire wth silke & gold lace

1 Armed Chaire of blew damaske with gold lace
and silke fringe

1 Couch Bed of Crymson Velvett with gold lace
and 4 back stooles of ye same, 2 high stooles
& 2 low nursing stooles of ye same.

1 Ebeeny Cabbinet wth one pare of Cissers, a silver
bodkin, 1 silver seale, and 1 small peece of silver plate.

4 black velvet Cushions wth gold lace.

1 saddled Cloth of black velvet, bridle & trappings
richly wrought wth silver lace.

The most expensive objects on the list were some richly embroidered vestments and altar cloths, which were designed for use in Catholic worship, while the only identifiably Irish objects were a large number of thick Irish cloaks, called caddows, and an Irish harp. However, both of these were considered *de rigueur* amongst fashionable people of the time, and the caddows were used as rugs.

None of these objects is known to survive, as they were sold at Chester after they were confiscated. Only a handful of items remain which are said to have come from the castle. At Glenarm there are two “Armada chests”, which are in fact 17th century chests made in Nuremberg; there is also a chair in a church in Portrush, and a brass lantern clock. The clock was made in London, probably in the 1660s, and is a good, “honest”, if not exceptional, example, of an English version of a Dutch timepiece. Much the same can be said for the chests and the chair, which certainly dates from the period after 1660, when Randal Óg returned to Dunluce. There are also two paintings which must have been kept safe nearby during the Cromwellian years and given back to Antrim on his return in

the 1660s. These are a portrait of Mary Queen of Scots and a portrait of the duchess and her children made by Van Dyck before she married Antrim.³⁹

Dunluce's Decline

The castle's period of grandeur was short lived. It is usually said that the decline began in 1639, about a year after the young Antrims' arrival, when part of the range of buildings on the northernmost edge of the castle collapsed into the sea. This disaster is a romantic fiction, if a persistent one. It is often related that it was the castle kitchens that fell, taking a number of the Antrims' cooks and servants with it, but the ruins of the castle kitchen still stand, sandwiched between the "Buttery", the northern round tower and the domestic buildings to the north of it, so whatever else it was that fell it was not the kitchen. In fact the building that is supposed to have collapsed into the sea, the north range of the Inner Ward, was a high status one, with a porch and a grand double-doored entrance, which could even have provided apartments for the duchess.

There are also tales about a survivor of this horror, found huddled by the fireplace of a remaining gable end of the otherwise vanished building. In one story it is a serving girl who survives, and that her ghost still sweeps clean the fireplace, in another it was a tinker mending the pots and pans, in a third an itinerant cobbler, who was found surrounded by a pile of shoes he had been mending for the now vanished kitchen staff. In fact early nineteenth century drawings in fact show that both gable ends of this building were still standing then, so the collapse happened several hundred years after the castle was abandoned.⁴⁰

It has further been suggested that the new buildings on the mainland accommodated the duchess after this disaster. If they were mainly erected by Parrat on Randal Óg's instructions, then this does make sense.⁴¹

There may be some grains of truth in this story. This range contained rooms of some importance. Upstairs there were probably good bedrooms, possibly also a gallery, and downstairs there were well laid out reception rooms with wooden floors. It would be understandable even if only a partial collapse of the outer wall of this block occurred that it made the duchess leave the castle, particularly if these rooms were part of her own quarters.

The story is also told that after the collapse, which inevitably happened on the wildest of stormy nights, the Duchess sought refuge with Antrim's agent and cousin, Daniel MacNaghten, who lived a mile away at Ballymagarry, and swore she would never sleep in the castle again. It is certainly true that at some time in the mid 17th century the

³⁹ Hector McDonnell, *An Inventory from Dunluce Castle*, JRSAI vol. 122 pp. 109-114. The paintings were kept by the family until they were sold in a Sotheby's auction in the 1850s.

⁴⁰ O'Lavery, op. cit. p. 273; the stories of this collapse comes from local oral traditions. They are both persistent and varied, but the central feature is always the same, that it happened during the duchess's time in the castle, and that she was not prepared to live in the building thereafter.

⁴¹ O'Lavery, op. cit. p. 273; C.L.Adams, *Castles of Ireland*, London 1904, pp. 158-60

Antrims did take over the MacNaghtens' house at Ballymagarry and uses it as a hunting lodge. This could even have happened before 1639, as Daniel MacNaghten was given a leasehold for another property, Benvarden, in 1636. The Antrims may also have decided that the MacNaghten's old home should become an integral part of Dunluce.

Ballymagarry means "Garden Townland", perhaps because this agreeably fertile area grew produce for Dunluce, as well as providing a deer park.

Antrim was heavily involved in the plotting that preceded the outbreak of the Civil War. He had the same ambition as his father and his uncle James – to revive the Southern Clan Donald with himself at its head. He suggested several times to Charles I that he could put together a little army from his tenants and clansmen, with which to invade the west of Scotland, in order to support Charles in his conflicts against the Scottish covenanters, and he even built thirty galleys in which to transport them. However, his own people were terrified that the Earl of Argyll, the Campbell chieftain, who had seized much of the Clan Donald lands in Scotland, would organise an invasion of the Antrim coast to prevent such an attack, and this is exactly what did happen.

When rumours of the outbreak of the Irish Rebellion reached Dunluce there was an immediate panic. One neighbour, Gilladuffe O'Cahan of Dunseverick, described the scene. It was Sunday the 24th of October 1641, and he had come to Dunluce hoping to hear Mass, but as there was no priest in residence he went to his son-in-law's house, and they "drank three or four bottles of wine." (The Antrims were away in Dublin, which may account for the absence of the priest.) That afternoon Archibald Boyd, a cousin of the William who wrote the will, and "ten or twelve horsemen with swords and pistols" arrived announcing that "Sir Phelemy Roe O'Neill, and the Irish in Tyrone, were all risen in rebellion." They "then made the Scotch in Dunluce (the Lowland Scotch Protestants of the town) arm themselves, and draw down into the new pavement in the inner court, next the drawbridge and the outer gate of the castle."

Although the castle was completely empty nobody dared go across the bridge into Lord Antrim's private property. But then "Doole McSporran, a Highland Scotchman who dwelt at Bushmills" came to where O'Cahan and his son-in-law "were drinking wine", and told them that "five hundred of Argyle's men were coming over the Bush bridge, near a mile distant from Dunluce, to take Dunluce and command the country." At this O'Cahan and his friends also came down to where the group were standing beside the drawbridge, and started arguing with the Lowlanders as to what was, or was not, probably happening. "Whereupon" O'Cahan announced "that he rather believed the (Highland) Scots and that the said five hundred men intended to join together to take the castle of Dunluce", upon which he marched across the bridge into the unoccupied castle, drew up the drawbridge behind himself, "bolted the outer gate, and stayed there alone." He did then let in some of Antrim's own men, but continued to refuse to allow any of the townsmen into the castle.

About ten that night Antrim's brother, Alexander, turned up with O'Cahan's own son as well as the trusted family agent, Archibald Stewart, and shouted loudly, demanding to be let in. O'Cahan "went up into an upper room over the castle gate, and

thrusting out his head asked who they were and what they wanted.” After they had established their identity and promised that “none would enter but themselves, the drawbridge was let down and the gate was opened.” The drawbridge was quickly raised again, and eventually the crowd of townsmen dispersed. This was the end of the immediate panic, but in fact it was only the prelude to ten years of vicious civil war. Shortly after this the most movable valuables must have been sent across the sea to Chester, and in January 1642 Antrim’s native Irish and Highland Scots tenantry joined the rebellion. They attacked their Lowland Scots fellow tenants, and marched on Dunluce, where they tried to force Antrim’s constable to hand the castle over to them. As he refused to do so the rebels expressed their frustration by burning the little town to the ground.

An eyewitness said they only set fire to one house, but that the conflagration swiftly spread to the rest. The houses were certainly huddled close together, so a fire could have spread easily, and if many of them had been largely built of wood they would have burnt particularly well. It was not an isolated incident; the half-timbered buildings of Duninenny near Ballycastle were all burnt at about this time, and there were similar attacks on the other settler towns on the Antrim lands. Once Dunluce town was razed the rebels ordered the Lowland Scots inhabitants to sail back home to Scotland.⁴²

Antrim remained near Dublin until the following spring, negotiating with various factions on Charles I’s behalf. He only reached Dunluce in May 1642, and by then his people’s worst nightmares had been realised. In April a Covenanting army had landed from Scotland, burnt the family’s other big house, at Glenarm, and occupied a large part of the MacDonnell estates. Antrim then invited Major-General Monroe, the commanding officer of this Covenanting army, to a “mighty feast” at Dunluce. Doubtless he hoped he could charm his way out of trouble, but Monroe’s response to the invitation was to declare that Antrim was “joined strong with the rebels” and “doth what he can to cut our throats.” He then marched on Dunluce with a thousand men, and “sent a trumpet to the gate to summon him, having all things in readiness to assault the castle.” Antrim surrendered, Monroe “took an inventory of all he had” in the castle, left a heavy guard on the place and made Antrim his prisoner.⁴³

A recently discovered eyewitness account describes Lord Antrim’s last days at Dunluce and gives us a vivid picture of the end of this castle’s existence as a great house:

His lordship being att his owne house, the Castle of Dunluce, Generall Major Monroe Coming unto the Earles Countrie with 6000 foote, and 500 horse came uppon a Sunday morning unto the towne of Dunluce, where the Major Generall sent, and desired to parley with him. Being early in the morning, this mesager finding him abed hee returned answear that hee would make ready himselfe with all speed to meet him, but the impatient Generall sent a triumphet the second time to hasten his coming, whereuppon my Lord returned answear, that if his haste was soe great, that he might come into the castle with all his

⁴² O’Lavery op. cit. pp. 281-2

⁴³ Ohlmeyer, op. cit. pp. 111-3; the furnishings sent to Chester must have gone before Antrim’s arrest.

company, but before any returne was made hereof the Earle came forth, accompanied only with two horsemen and came towards the Generall Major whoe stood in the head of his troopes.

He singly marched towards him in a verry civell manner, which he receaved in all manner of affability and after they both saluted one another verry curtously they rode aparte together out of the Company and discoursed halfe an hours time aloan, and att length the Generall Major was by him invited into the castle to dinner, with all his company, whereafter they had dined the Generall Major being retired with a few chiefe officers, he presently againe came back to the Earle, and walking with him a little while aside, the Generall Major left two things to his choice: the one whether he would march along with the Scotch army, the other to be contented, to remaine a prisoner in his owne Castle. Whereuppon he gave severall sufficient reasons to alter that resolution, but noe excuse would be accepted, but to continue there in the quallity of a prisoner.

There he remained the space of six weekes and then uppon severall letters of importunity he procured from the Generall Major, being then att his Garrison of Carrickfergus, as a singular favour, to be removed theither, and being mistrustfull to venter him by land, sent a great shippe of 400 tunes to carry him by sea, and orders to deliver the Castle of Dunluce into the hands of Sir Duncan Campbell, which was noe small affliction to him.

Whereuppon his Lordshipe was convoied to Portrush two miles from the castle and leaving behind him, the rocks, and hills couered with the lamentation and cries of his poore followers, and goeing aboard with a guard of 50 muscateeres and the wind being faire, sett saile towards Carickfergus, and after four and twenty hours Saile landed att Island Magee, and from thence with the aforesaid guard ride by night to Carickfergus where he was prisoner in my Lord Chichesters house, for the space of eight months.⁴⁴

Dunluce's Disintegration

Antrim's arrest brought Dunluce's best days to an end. Under Cromwell's rule in the 1650s, in other words after a decade of civil wars and the collapse of Irish resistance to the new English order, much of the Dunluce estate was given to Cromwellian soldiers and "adventurers", but Lord Antrim's own political manoeuverings saved the situation to some extent. Having escaped from captivity in Carrickfergus Antrim fought for the royalists, and succeeded in raising and sending three regiments to Scotland in 1644 under the generalship of his cousin Alastair MacColla MacDonnell. Many of the men in these regiments were clansmen or tenants from the Antrim estates. These regiments made it possible for Montrose to hold a large area of Scotland for Charles I, and for several years

⁴⁴ A breife relation of the Earle of Antrimes first Escape out of carrickfergus, ms in Glenarm Catle archive.

Alastair's troops controlled the Clan Donald Scottish heartlands, until in 1647 they were forced to retreat back to Ireland. Charles I made Randal Óg a marquess in recognition of his achievements, but by the late 1640's he was disillusioned with the Stuart cause and changed sides, believing that the Parliamentarians would treat Irish Catholics with greater fairness than did Charles I. On this basis he helped persuade several towns and garrisons in the south of Ireland to surrender to Cromwell. As a reward he was allowed to continue administering his estates, and to live from the rents he collected, though he was not allowed to live at Dunluce. Antrim set up house in Belfast, and left his agent, Archibald Stewart, to look after the estate on the spot.⁴⁵

Charles II's restoration, in 1660, brought Antrim further trouble. He was accused of being a Cromwellian collaborator, and spent some time incarcerated in the Tower of London. However Charles II relented, under pressure both from his mother and Antrim's creditors, and the decision was taken in October 1663 to give Antrim back his estates. His duchess had died in 1649, but he had found a new wife in the 1650s, Rose O'Neill of Shane's Castle, near Antrim town, heiress to a large part of southern county Antrim. To help her husband Rose had written a petition to Charles a little earlier in 1663 describing the sad state of Dunluce as a result of the Cromwellian settlers' occupation and exploitation of the property.

*"They have made no improvement on the estate save one small house, but, on the contrary, several improvements which were made before their coming, and especially to the Marquis's house of Dunluce, have run to decay. Dunluce House they have pulled down and sold the materials."*⁴⁶

From this we can infer that by 1663 the main castle buildings were little more intact than they are today, with the roof, floors, panelling and other woodwork removed, and the dressed sandstone of the windows and doorways pulled out and sold. Apparently the bottom halves of the loggia's pillars survived the activities of the dismantlers because they were already buried in rubble. The loggia's upper storey must therefore have collapsed long before the dismantling process started, probably during the twenty years of the Civil War and Cromwellian periods. The manor house seems also to have been in an advanced state of decay before it was dismantled, and its back wall had partially collapsed.

In fact, the Antrims were not living in too much discomfort. It seems that some of the buildings on the mainland at Dunluce must have been repaired for their use and Rose O'Neill had her own seat, at Shane's Castle near Antrim town, where they spent a large period of the year. They were however short of ready money, and this would have inhibited them from any major schemes to restore the castle. The few furnishings that are said to have come from Dunluce, the good but "unexceptional" chair, clock and chests, probably give us a little insight into how Antrim and his wife did their best, in straitened financial circumstances. They also had use of the hunting lodge of Ballymagarry a mile

⁴⁵ Ohlmeyer, op. cit. pp. 258-70

⁴⁶ Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, vol. 1663-5, pp. 338-9, *Petition of Rose, Marchioness of Antrim, to the Lord Lieutenant*

away, and Antrim is said to have built a new house there “about 1668, after Dunluce had, through wars and neglect, become unsuited.”⁴⁷

Dunluce, however, remained the Antrims’ administrative centre and therefore an essential residence. There was a court house here as well, and it appears that there must have been quite an active little community living here.

Antrim’s brother, Alexander MacDonnell, fared no better. He was restored to his portion, the Glenarm half of their father’s estate, but “Lord Antrim’s fine house at Glenarm”, as a contemporary had described it, had been gutted by the invading Covenanting army in 1642, and because of his lack of funds Alexander could no more restore his mansion at Glenarm than his brother could rebuild Dunluce. Instead he seems to have lived in a subsidiary wing attached to the east side of the ruined house.

A Fracas at Dunluce Fair, November 1663

There was a weekly Saturday market and an annual fair held at Dunluce by royal licence of James I’s time on flat ground near the parish church on the 2nd of November. Markets and fairs must have been held here during the days of Dunluce’s existence as a Norman manor, so this was an ancient survival. As it happens this fair gives us our one vignette of life at here during the early 1660s. This curious incident concerns the efforts of the Cromwellian settlers to hang onto their authority here. Fairs were an important, indeed essential, part of country life, as not only were beasts and other farm produce bought and sold at them, but also many other essential activities took place. The hiring of servants and labourers for the year, the arrangement of marriages, the letting of land and the settling of legal disputes were all businesses that were settled at these fairs, and set fees were payable for all transactions to whoever had authority to hold a fair.

In November 1663, about a month after they had heard that Lord Antrim was to be given back his estates, the Cromwellian settlers made their stand. Cromwell had given about a hundred of his old soldiers and five “adventurers” (speculators who lent the government money in return for a stake in the Cromwellian Irish land settlement) portions of the Antrim lands so as to repay them for the money Cromwell owed them. The Dunluce fair was a lucrative part of the landowners’ authority, and thanks to Charles II’s decision of that October the settlers now stood to lose everything, and without any compensation. On political grounds too they must have been particularly unhappy at the prospect of their lands being returned to their original owner, as he was both a Catholic and of Gaelic stock. They may indeed have dismantled and sold off the valuable parts of Dunluce Castle very shortly before Rose’s petition to express their disgust at the prospect

⁴⁷ O’Lavery, *History of the Diocese of Down and Connor*, pp. 272-3. Antrim was not in full possession of Dunluce until 1666, so the rebuilding at Ballymagarry was very immediate. His agent, John Dhu Macnaghten, had previously lived there so there may have been a substantial house there already. The two paintings remained in the possession of the Antrim family until they were sold off in a Sotheby’s auction in the 1850s. Many aristocratic families acquired portraits of Mary Queen of Scots after James I’s accession as an indication of their loyalty to the Stewarts.

of the Antrims' return. The settlers also organised other demonstrations, so-called "riots", on the Antrim lands at about the same time.⁴⁸

The ringleader of these Cromwellian settlers at Dunluce was a determined figure called Tristram Beresford. His father had been the original manager for the "Corporation of Londoners" who oversaw the administration of the County Londonderry estates of the London City companies. He had settled at Coleraine, and was the town's first mayor in 1610. Tristram had been an M.P. in Cromwell's Irish parliament of 1656-8 for the area, and was the serving M.P. for Co. Londonderry in the early 1660s. Most intriguingly his elder brother, who was born in the 1630s, was named Randal. This must have arisen because one or other of the first two earls of Antrim was his godfather. Probably it was the first earl, as he had been so involved with the settlers at Coleraine from the town's beginning, and was in consequence given a house there for his life and made an alderman. There had clearly been a very involved relationship between the Beresfords and the Antrims spanning many years.⁴⁹

On the appointed market day the Cromwellian settlers put up "a pole set with a white paper upon it", which was part of the necessary legal formula for declaring a market to be open for business, and who was to get the dues for any trading that happened. They then placed about twenty men around their pole to forestall any opposition. However Antrim's agent, Archibald Stewart, as well as his "fair-keeper", Alexander MacAuley, intervened. Stewart had received a letter beforehand warning him that "Mr. Beresford was making preparations to take up the customs of the said fair by force, notwithstanding my Lord Marquis of Antrim's decree". Stewart got off his horse at the fair and announced that the settler's actions were illegal, while Alexander MacAuley "put forth his hand to take down the pole and to set up another in my Lord Antrim's name" upon which one of the settlers "took up a club and offered to beat him." Then the local royal officer, the Constable of Dunluce, "called for assistance in His Majesty's name to see the peace kept", and Antrim's men pulled out their swords. This threat of cold steel won the day.⁵⁰

Dunluce town never recovered from the destruction of the 1640s, and the Cromwellian settlers all lost their portions of the Antrim estate, with the exception of one old soldier called Galland who resolutely refused to move off his holding.⁵¹

Although Dunluce never properly recovered from its destruction in 1641, and no later houses arose on the site of Randal Arranagh's new town there clearly was an active

⁴⁸ Hill, *Macdonnells of Antrim*, pp.343-5

⁴⁹ Tristram Beresford did extremely well, as did his descendants, who through judicious business deals and marriages acquired enormous holdings in the south of Ireland and ultimately became the Marquesses of Waterford. It is noteworthy that both William Parrat and the Beresfords were inhabitants of Coleraine, illustrating the close relationship between Dunluce and this Plantation town. The "adventurers" were people who had advanced the Cromwellian regime credit of one type or another, on the understanding that they would be repaid by one means or another once the Civil War ended.

⁵⁰ O'Lavery op. cit. pp. 285-6

⁵¹ His name was John Galland; unlike the others he was actually living on and working his portion, which was near Ballymoney.

community here in the Restoration period. The best evidence for the continuance of a community at Dunluce town is to be found in the graveyard. A tombstone of 1674 in the graveyard is dedicated to the wife of “Archibald McPhilip of Dunluce, Merchant”, and many of the other graves are marked with pieces of mullions presumably taken from Dunluce castle after it was taken apart in the 1650s. They must indicate that an active community continued at Dunluce after that time. Where exactly these people were living is unclear, for Randal Arranagh’s Plantation-style little town was not rebuilt, and no other remains have so far been found but most probably their community had its centre nearer to the parish church. Indeed, as the fair and market also continued to flourish it remained an important centre of local life for a long time, and only finally faded away in the early nineteenth century.⁵² A brief entry in the diary of John Tennent, the son of a local Presbyterian minister, mentions the fair in its latter days, when it was still a memorable event.

“12 November 1789 Went to Dunluce to buy a fat cow. Having never been there before I was the more willing to go, as it really is worth going to see.”⁵³

The fair was held on level ground close to St Cuthbert’s church, until, some years after John Tennent’s visit, it was moved to a new site at Bushmills.

Dunluce in Ruins

Apart from the 1663 incident there is just one other brief description of Dunluce during the Restoration period. In 1671 Antrim was visited by the Catholic archbishop of Armagh, Saint Oliver Plunkett, as he is now. He described his time there as follows: -

“I was with him for three days at his house at Dunluce; it is a noble place; the castle is perched on a high rock lashed on all sides by the sea; it is twelve miles distant from the largest of the Hebrides.”⁵⁴

Oliver Plunkett was trying, unsuccessfully, to win Antrim’s support for a revival of the Franciscan mission to the Western Isles that his father had backed in the 1620s. Antrim, however, prevaricated, and the mission was not revived. Even so Plunkett must have been impressed, to call Dunluce a “noble place”, but sadly Antrim’s actual residence is not described.⁵⁵

⁵² O’Lavery op. cit. p. 284

⁵³ M. Lennox-Conyngham, *Diaries of Ireland*, Dublin 1998, p. 75

⁵⁴ The Rev. George Hill was convinced that Lord Antrim did not live at Dunluce after 1660, and that his home was Ballymagarry (see his *Macdonnells of Antrim* p. 346). However several documents indicate that the Antrim family kept a residence at Dunluce until the eighteenth century. Hill also misquoted Plunkett, saying that Dunluce was a “noble palace” rather than a “noble place” and this error has been generally followed, leading to much confusion.

⁵⁵ Hill op. cit. p. 346

DUNLUCE IN THE 18TH & 19TH CENTURIES

The Romantic Ruin

Drawing of the ruin



Randal Óg, the second earl, died in 1683 leaving no offspring, so his brother Alexander inherited the estates and became the third earl. Five years later the political upheavals that caused James II to lose his throne obliged Alexander to raise a regiment from his tenantry for king James. They fought at the Boyne, Aughrim and Limerick, but after the surrender at Limerick he acknowledged William III as his lawful king, which meant that he could stay in Ireland, and hold onto his estates, while many of his relations, and much of the family regiment, went into exile and remained supporters of James II. It was a pragmatic solution, as they hoped thus to come out on top, whichever side finally won. Alexander was by then in his late seventies, and the last great Catholic landowner of Gaelic stock left in Ireland. Although he still had his estates, he had to spend much of the last years of his life in London arguing both his case and that of the other remaining Irish Catholic landowners at William and Mary's court. He died near London in 1696, and was buried at Holywell, in Wales, not far from Chester. Holywell was the most important surviving Catholic shrine in Britain at this time, and so I suspect that as it was impossible to get Alexander's body back home, it was decided to bury him there.

Alexander's widow, Helena Burke, apparently brought up their little family, a boy and a girl, at Dunluce, presumably in the establishment the family had been using since

the 1660s. She was a Burke of DerrymacLaughney, an old county Galway family, and their son, who was 18 when his father died, had grown up not only speaking Irish, but also having a small retinue of harpers and poets just as his family had always done. He even composed poetry in Irish himself.

Helena, however, also wanted her boy to fit in properly with Ireland's new ascendancy. She wrote two letters from Dunluce to the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Rochester, the English administration's most senior representative in Dublin in 1701 and 1702. They describe how she had been in Dublin with her son for 'The Season', its most socially important period of the year, when the wealthy of the land assembled in the capital for parliamentary sessions, state occasions and private social events. An attachment seems to have grown up during their time in Dublin between Helena's son and the Viceroy's daughter. Helena's letters are full of observations about how one should not stand in the way of the young, and how it would be perfectly easy to find an accommodation for their different religious beliefs.⁵⁶

The romance came to nothing, but as Helena's letters are addressed from Dunluce they are useful evidence that she was living there. Moreover, one of the poems in Irish addressed to Helena's son also says that he was brought up in Dunluce, so there can be little doubt about this. We have no further information, but it is easy to imagine Helena's young son, another Randal, wandering around the decaying castle, and speculating both on his family's past and his own prospects for the future. Helena died in 1710. About two years later her son was visited at Dunluce by two Scottish MacDonald chieftains. The MacDonalds came over in their galleys, drew them up on the beach below, and spent several days discussing plans for an insurrection to restore James III, the exiled and disinherited son of James II, to the throne when Queen Anne died. Doubtless these chieftains caroused, and warmed by wine and whiskey they must have dreamed that great days for Clandonald would soon return. Many Scottish MacDonalds did duly join the 1715 rebellion, but young Randal, who also planned to do so, was arrested before he could do anything, and English soldiers once again camped at Dunluce, searching for weapons and conspirators.⁵⁷

Having failed to win the hand of the Lord Deputy's offspring young Randal had married in 1712 the daughter of an Anglo-Irish peer called Lord Masserene, whose estate lay between that of his aunt Rose Antrim's family seat at Shane's Castle and Antrim town. Randal died in 1720, and after that his eight-year-old son was brought up in Antrim Castle, the Masserene's house.

The family's links with the Gaelic world were now dissolving. After the young earl came of age, he lived at Ballymagarry and devoted much of his time to the fashionable activity of breeding and racing race horses. There is no further mention of any of the family living at Dunluce, and no plans or pictures of Ballymagarry survive other than a sketch of some outbuildings done in the early nineteenth century, but the

⁵⁶ Hector McDonnell, *Jacobitism and the third and fourth earls of Antrim*, The Glynnns, vol. 8 (1985) pp. 87-104

⁵⁷ Hector McDonnell, *Jacobitism and the Third and Fourth Earls of Antrim*, Glynnns vol 13 pp. 50-4

walls and gates that are still standing, as well as an inventory of the furnishings saved from it in 1750, indicate that it was grandly furnished and had generously laid out grounds.

It was burnt to the ground in 1750, “by the carelessness of servants,”⁵⁸ and after that the family moved to Glenarm. The old Jacobean mansion there, which the first earl had built in 1636, had been a roofless ruin since it had been burnt by the Scottish Covenanting army in 1641, but it was now transformed into a fine Palladian house. This process was completed in 1756, but sixty years later a younger, more romantic generation transformed it once again, turning it into a Regency vision of what a Jacobean house should look like, with mock towers on the corners, castellations around the roof, and mullioned Gothic windows. As a result of this romantic remodelling it probably now more closely resembles the original appearance of the house than it did after the Palladian rebuilding.⁵⁹

Glenarm Castle



Dunluce was not forgotten. Three paintings of it were displayed, probably in the Antrims' grand town house in Merrion Square, Dublin, and in the 1840s a MacDonnell heiress of part of the family's estates, who had become Lady Londonderry by marriage, considered rebuilding it as her Antrim residence, before legal and practical complications

⁵⁸ Ironically the only old building that survives there now has a fine roof made from timbers taken from Dunluce church, when it was dismantled in the early nineteenth century.

⁵⁹ Sir Charles Brett, *Buildings of County Antrim*, Belfast 1996, pp. 100-2

obliged her to abandon the project. (The other heirs objected to losing their shares of the ruin, and getting water to the castle was anyway a major problem. In the old days they must have depended on water butts.) Instead she built a completely new castle at Garron Point, near Carnlough. This was the only occasion when a reoccupation of the castle was seriously contemplated, and the earliest pictures of Dunluce, which date from the late eighteenth century, show it as ruinous as it is now.

RECENT INVESTIGATIONS OF DUNLUCE

History is Unearthed

After the ruin came into State care in the 1920s the site was excavated, and cleared of rubble. The report of this clearance is extremely useful, as it does give us some indication of the stages by which the castle met its end: -⁶⁰

In the Outer Ward, on the mainland, only a few fragments of the original sandstone paving were found (the “new pavement” described in 1641?). *“The absence of filling in the hollows of the rock would seem to indicate that the paving had been removedbefore the roofs had shed their slates.”* *“A coin of 1639 (Louis XIII) was found amongst the cobbles”* of the northern end of the yard.⁶¹

By contrast the remains of the castle proper indicate that they had suffered a long decline. A large part of the gatehouse must have collapsed before the stripping took place. It was clogged with quantities of broken stone and mortar, underneath which was found another French coin of 1639, two cast iron fire backs with the Stuart arms on them, “presumably fallen from an upper chamber”, and also two ships’ pumps and “a quantity of iron spikes.”

In the manor house “an immense quantity of slate was found; many of the slates being unbroken and showing the large peg holes. Several pieces of green glazed ridge tile were also found and a quantity of window glass in tinted diamond panes. At the East end, in a maze of fallen masonry, some plaster ribs (of ceiling or chimney ornament?) and several carved stones of chimney piece.” Also some floor tiles, broken delft pottery and a brass candlestick. This suggests that, at least part of the missing part of the east wall had already collapsed before the stripping started.

The kitchen was also full of broken masonry and slates, as were the yards and other buildings, with a considerable scatter of decayed and burnt wood. In the eastern block of the Inner Ward a few more early 17th century French coins and one of Charles I were found under copious rubble. Because of the disruption caused by the civil wars of the British Isles there was a great shortage of either English or Irish coins in the 1640s in

⁶⁰ May, *Dunluce Castle, Interim Report on work during September-December 1929*, Meeting of the Advisory Committee, Works Branch, Belfast, 9/1/1929, no. 53503

⁶¹ Because of the severe shortage of English and Irish coinage in the 1640s in Ireland foreign coins were in circulation as normal currency instead.

Ireland, and as a result a high proportion of French and Spanish coins were in circulation as normal currency.

The general impression is that during the dismantling of Dunluce anything that could be reused was taken. Some of the buildings were clearly in very bad condition before this happened, and in particular the main house must have been disintegrating before it was stripped in the Cromwellian period. The maze of fallen masonry that was found under the slates, mixed with bits of plasterwork and chimneypieces suggests this, as does the survival of one window with its cut sandstone on the northern gable, although nearly all the other sandstone blocks were removed. Probably the floors near the surviving window had become too dangerous to allow the dismantlers to get to it safely so it was left. The gatehouse also seems to have fallen down before the stripping, and the survival of the lower halves of the loggia's columns probably indicates that its upper parts, and the structure above it, had already collapsed, and that the resultant piles of rubble were too great to allow the dismantlers to dig down far enough to remove these precious sandstone blocks. The debris here was between two and three meters high.

In the ground floor room of the more northern tower a little museum was set up, exhibiting a selection of objects found during the clearance: the fire backs, some tiles, pottery, the coins, the ships' pumps, and some objects found in the souterrain. There was also one considerable oddity – a breech-loading culverin which looked identical to one which was raised from the Girona wreck in the 1960s. Here, surely, must be one of the cannon that James of Dunluce raised from the wreck and mounted on the castle walls in defiance of the English authorities. However it was not listed amongst the finds in the clearance report. There is no indication of what it was doing in the museum, and there is no other information to tell us where or when it was found. Not only that, but after the museum was closed in the early 1960s, most of its contents, including the cannon, the ships' pumps and the armorial fire backs, vanished. We can only hope that one day they will be found again, and put back on display in Dunluce.

The Outer Ward

Stables, Brewhouse, Guest Rooms and Gardens

The buildings on the mainland, in the "Outer Ward," were erected in two stages, the earlier ones being the most southerly group. These were working buildings. The western block was for stables; the space available and the row of holes in the western wall, which presumably give us the position of the tethering points or stall divisions, suggest there was stabling for between eight and ten horses. The eastern block contained workshops including a brewhouse in which there is the base of a boiling vat for beer or whiskey production, while above there were two big rooms with fireplaces. Probably servants were quartered here, in dormitory-like conditions. Above the stables was a long attic-like room, which could have provided accommodation for stable hands, or a loft for the horses' fodder, or both.⁶²

⁶² Kevin Quinn, *op. cit.*

These two blocks were probably built very soon after 1603. They were a response to the demands placed on Sir Randal Arranagh MacDonnell after he had received the grant of his lands to develop more efficient communications and organisation as he transformed his territory into a modern, working estate. Similar buildings are shown on the very earliest seventeenth century maps of Derry and Coleraine; these necessities of life were given priority. There were other buildings nearby which could also belong to this period of expansion, as part of the working complex: the southernmost building on the eastern side of this area, which has now been reroofed, and the foundations of another building further south, close to the present car park. The farm buildings on the south side of the car park may also possibly originate from this period, as it is on approximately the same alignment as the streets of the little town. All these buildings were separated from the castle's mainland buildings by the line of the original road, which ran east-west past its entrance.

The long block running northwards from the stables, on the west and north sides of the Outer Ward, was probably put up in the 1620s or 1630s. These rooms were agreeable ones, well lit, with windows looking out into the gardens, and with wooden floors and good fireplaces, while the corridors ensured privacy. Above all else these rooms reflect the developing nature of the MacDonnells' vast estates, which centred on Dunluce, and the increasing need both to have people of greater social standing employed in the household (i.e. secretaries, agents and lawyers), and also to entertain guests in an effective way, while the gallery room, with its balcony at the northern end, and the garden beyond, with its bowling green and intricate flower beds, show the high importance that this block had, for the Antrim family.

At the northern end of this block there is a small building attached to its eastern side. This, as I have already said, appears to have been a kitchen, as it has a fireplace at each end. Above this room there was a second floor, presumably for staff bedrooms. The presence of a kitchen here could have been very useful. Food would have been carried through the kitchen doors into the courtyard before being brought back through another door into the main building. This arrangement would have kept smells and the danger of fire away from the living quarters. An unusually wide north-facing window would have provided the kitchen both with light and ventilation,⁶³ and originally this room seems to have had two doorways side by side (an "in" door and an "out" door?) suggesting that it could be extremely busy. The fireplaces were not wide enough for large spits, and there is no oven, so any elaborate meals must have been prepared in the kitchen by the Buttery.

We must now look at the main block again. The area of the upper floor at the northern end, and immediately above the room downstairs (which could have been either

⁶³ There is a 19th century drawing of the castle seen through this window which shows that the window had exactly the shape it has now before any restoration work was undertaken. Nor is there any sign of a lintel, or a keyed arch above it to strengthen the wall. The probable explanation is that the wall was built around an already constructed wooden window frame of this shape, which itself supported the wall above it. In other words the wall was deliberately built to contain this wide window. (the drawing is now in the Armagh Museum.)

a parlour or a dining room) has no fireplace, probably because it was the northern end of a large, symmetrically designed room, with a window on either side of a centrally placed fireplace on its west wall. Such gallery rooms overlooking gardens and fine views were an important feature of fashionable houses in the early 17th century. In the north gable a door gave out onto the viewing platform or balcony, and the existing joist holes show how this structure was supported by the beams holding up the upper floor, which also ran through the walls so as to support the balcony as well. Just outside the door the balcony also had support from the top of a tall wall on the cliff's edge.⁶⁴

The garden was laid out symmetrically on its three broad terraces and the pergola or gazebo that stood on the mound. This garden scheme was no idle whim; it was an integral element of the modernising of the castle, because it allowed space for some essential domestic and social activities which were previously completely lacking. The garden remains are of great importance today, as they have not been touched since they were in operation in the seventeenth century, and therefore give us a unique insight into the appearance of an important Irish garden layout of the time.

Unlike the higher status buildings of the castle proper the long block overlooking the garden was built without the use of carved sandstone to frame doors, walls and windows with architraves, stringcourses and cornices. Instead its rubble basalt masonry ran right up to the edge of the wooden door and window frames. However the block would most probably have had other embellishments. The walls here, as throughout the castle, were covered in whitewashed or coloured harling, while the upper windows of this block could possibly have been topped by some carved detail on dormer pediments. There is no actual evidence for this, but one would expect some elegance of architectural form to be given to a building of social importance situated close to the entrance to the castle, and this type of detail would be the most obvious solution available. In this case, the block would have had a typically Scottish appearance, and this would imply that Scottish masons built it. This leaves open the question of when this complex was built, but a date in the 1620s or early 1630s seems most likely. As its courtyard paving was referred to as being new in 1641, improvements must have been being made to this area right up to the beginning of the 1640s.

The Upper Ward

Fortifications, Fine Houses and Reception Chambers

The Gatehouse

⁶⁴ I must point out a potential source of confusion here. The word "gallery" was used both to describe a long chamber and also an external balcony-like structure, probably because they were both used as walking areas of the house, and could also be used to describe an internal balcony overlooking a hall at a higher level.

Going over the bridge, which used to be a drawbridge, resting on the thin stone arch built below it, we come to the gatehouse. The defensive arrangements at the entrance have a complex history. Before the present building was erected there was a lower structure as a gatehouse, and it seems that at a still earlier stage there was no gateway facing towards the drawbridge. Instead the defences at this point left a space for a pathway on the western cliff edge, so that anyone who crossed the bridge who was trying to enter the fort had to walk along this narrow and exposed path outside and below the fortifications before reaching a gateway further back. However, the only evidence there is for this earlier stage of the entrance's defences which has been found is a cobbled pathway which was discovered during the clearance and partial excavation of the site carried out in 1928. This pathway was below the present layer of cobblestones and led north westwards from the bridge before disappearing under the western corner of the present gateway.

The next building phase took place in the sixteenth century. The entrance gate and tower which were associated with the cobbled pathway must have been completely demolished, and the first stage of the present structure was built. Its entrance was where the present one is, but it was much lower, so that anyone arriving on a horse would have had to dismount. The only surviving gun loop in this building probably dates from this phase, and covered the way in from the bridge.⁶⁵ Later, the height of the entrance and its passageway through to the castle's interior was raised to a height appropriate for mounted horsemen. This must have happened when the whole structure was both heightened and extended further back into the castle, probably by the team of Scottish masons who also created the loggia circa 1586-1695. The Scottish style "studies", or corner turrets, were added during this last phase, and the walls were strengthened, to take the weight of the extra upper floor. The front façade was entirely rebuilt at this stage, and a new spiral staircase was added in the northern extension. Scottish masons were also responsible for the tower houses built at Ballygalley, Kilwaughter and Ballycastle, for Randal Arranagh's Scottish tenants. These, however, were later buildings. Ballygalley and Ballycastle were built in the mid 1620s, Kilwaughter probably a few years earlier.

The Curtain Wall and the Angle Towers

The castle's curtain wall and two round angle towers are modified remnants of the castle's more military days, and have been the objects of much inaccurate speculation. They have been attributed to the Normans, and romantic reconstructions show a Norman fortress with four round towers, but this is pure fantasy. The southern tower's walls have integral loopholes specifically designed for guns, so the tower must have been built after the arrival of the gun in north Ulster, during the first half of the 16th century, and some further support for this attribution comes from the fact that the southern one was traditionally called "MacQuillan's Tower". However any precise dating remains extremely tenuous.

⁶⁵ There must have been other gun loops as well, but later rebuilding has obscured them. The surviving loop is only visible now from within, in the southern wall of the room inside the gatehouse.

What evidence we have suggests a mid-sixteenth century date for the round towers. Another of these round towers with similar gun loops is to be found at Poulinalong castle near Kinsale in the far south of Ireland, and it is dated to the 1540s. There are also a few other round towers of about this date at other sites in southern Ireland. The firearms used in loops of this type were normally small breech loaded cannons, and would have fired a type of grape shot. This meant no great accuracy of aiming was needed, for they were intended as anti-personnel weapons. It is therefore highly interesting that the only gun apparently found on this site was a breechloader. However the two gun loops protecting the doorway into this tower were designed for smaller, hand held firearms, so we must conclude that the tower was built at a time when smaller bore firearms of different sizes and types were available to a Gaelic chieftain's forces in Ulster. This also suggests a mid sixteenth century date, and as these towers are unlike any defensive constructions put up by the Clondonald elsewhere on the Antrim coast, or, indeed, in Scotland, (they seem to have generally favoured building square towers without mural stairways) also argues in favour of dating them to the MacQuillans' time.

The "small shot" Perrot describes as coming from the castle during his siege in 1583 suggests precisely the sort of anti-personnel shot that this tower seems to have been designed for. The fact that the northern tower has no gun loops may reflect its isolated position, though as the upper floor was completely rebuilt in the early 17th century, it is possible that the original loops here have simply vanished. However the northern tower did have one peculiar defensive feature. The third step from the top of its flight of stairs to its upper room was a "trip step", which meant it was twice the normal height, with the purpose of tripping up any unwary attackers who rushed up them. (Modern sandstone steps of a regular height have been inserted for safety reasons, replacing the original ones, so the trip step is no longer visible.)

As far as the massive southern curtain wall is concerned, in September 1597 a report was sent to England saying that Sir James MacDonnell was improving the fortifications at Dunluce in preparation to joining Hugh O'Neill in open rebellion, and that he had "planted three pieces of ordnance" in the castle.⁶⁶ The two large openings that now exist in this wall are far too big and exposed to be conventional gun loops, and it can be seen that they were largely broken through the curtain wall rather crudely at some time after it had been built.⁶⁷

The two round towers are therefore the only surviving defensive structures which probably predate Perrot's siege of 1583, and may well date back to the first half of the 16th century. Perrot reported back how he was careful not to damage the castle too much with his own cannon because he wanted to avoid the costs of repairing it once he had installed an English garrison there. In other words he reckoned that the existing castle was a strong enough fortress to give adequate protection to an English garrison. When the

⁶⁶ These cannon had been salvaged from the Girona, the Armada wreck off the Giant's Causeway, by engineers from Glasgow employed by James MacDonnell.

⁶⁷ These apertures are also interesting because they have brick arches inserted over them. This is an unusually early use of brick in northern Ulster.

MacDonnells retook the castle the following year they found the officer whom Perrot had left in charge of the castle sheltering inside a tower with several other men, a drama which could well have unfolded in either of the surviving round towers.

The Loggia

The most peculiar architectural feature of this area of the castle is the “loggia”. All that we see today are the bottom halves of a row of columns, but originally these would have supported an arcade, with arches joining each column to its neighbour, the earliest known attempt at creating a building in a Renaissance style in the north of Ireland. Clearly this feature must have predated the erection of the present manor house, which caused the archways of the loggia to be filled in, and the area behind them used as an enclosed passageway or storeroom. In order to create the place for the loggia a substantial amount of the rock upon which the castle is built had to be excavated away, and the ground levelled. The loggia supported a broad walkway, which in fact seems to have probably been part of a roofed upper floor, a gallery running the length of the southern battlement, with fine views to the south over the ramparts, as well as northwards over the courtyard towards the sea.

This loggia is a curiously sophisticated concept for such a remote place, and indeed there is nothing like it in the rest of Ireland. However loggias were very much in vogue both in England and Scotland at the time, and appear frequently as an architectural feature of grander Elizabethan and Jacobean houses. The peculiar design of the Dunluce loggia column bases is much more reminiscent of Scottish examples than English ones. The most remarkable Scottish loggia was erected at Crichton Castle in Scotland by the 5th earl of Bothwell in the mid 1580s, in imitation of some adventurous contemporary Italian architecture, and above it was a two-storey façade covered in boldly faceted masonry that looked like rows of projecting pyramids. There were also several less elaborate Scottish loggias which could have been the models for Dunluce, such as those at St Andrews Castle and Castle Campbell.⁶⁸

In brief, the Dunluce loggia and the walkway above it appear to be Scottish-inspired architectural statements of the owner’s importance, and that some fairly accomplished masons must have been brought here to execute this scheme. However, apart from the bottom half of the loggia columns the only other significant clue for this structure’s appearance is found in the upper parts of the curtain wall. The viewing platform above the loggia must have been slightly higher than the original curtain wall walk, as most of the existing “weepers”, the drainage holes which went from the walkway through the curtain wall to remove rainwater, had to be filled in when the viewing platform was built. Moreover the surviving plaster on the wall immediately above this walkway is of a type used on the inside of a building, so there must have been

⁶⁸ Charles McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, Sutton Publishers 2001 pp. 162-4; English loggias are well described in N. Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480-1689*, New Haven & London, Paul Mellon Center 1999 pp. 155-5 & 160. The most extravagant and influential was that of Holland House, of circa 1606-7, which Randal Arranagh could easily have seen as he visited London at this time. However the Dunluce loggia is undoubtedly the work of Scottish masons, and a Scottish precedent is therefore more obvious.

a roofed upper floor to the loggia. This would have created a long, enclosed gallery. There is also an outline in slates of a little roof stuck into the wall of the manor house above the doorway that lead from its staircase to the southeastern round tower. This is further evidence that the loggia must have had a roofed upper floor above it, creating a long gallery. The whole ensemble must have given a remarkably impressive and distinguished-looking façade to Dunluce, though it is unlikely to have been as elaborate as the Crichton Castle example. Early nineteenth century drawings show the upper part of the curtain wall a little more intact than it is now, and appear to show the bottom of some window openings for this gallery.

There must also have been a courtyard laid out to the north of the loggia, when it was built, and apparently with another walkway running along the wall connecting the two round towers: a fine, formal architectural arrangement for the castle's interior. This courtyard might have contained a carefully planned garden, as a garden was a social necessity, and until the development of the complex on the mainland there would have been nowhere else appropriate to put it. As far as putting a date on this arrangement we can at least say that it is unlikely to predate Sorley Boy's surrender to the English in 1586 and must be earlier than 1595 as Sir James's concerns, in the later 1590s, were overwhelmingly military. Once the loggia and its viewing platform had been created it would have been impossible to use the old gun loops of the curtain wall. The probable explanation of the present crudely shaped openings in the curtain wall is that the gun loops were enlarged and lowered when cannon from the Armada wreck were placed in the loggia in the late 1590s. A little later the openings were reused as windows, as the loggia became a corridor after the Manor House was built.

Carew's survey of Ulster of 1611 tells us that Randal Arranagh had recently built a "fayre stone walle about the whole Work, within which he hath erected a good howse of stone with many Lodgingis and other Roomes." All this required a considerable amount of labour. This flood of activity was primarily a political statement, visual proof that Sir Randal Arranagh MacDonnell had committed himself wholeheartedly to peace, reconstruction, and the new Stuart order. Interestingly there is at least one other Irish example, at Cahir in county Cork, where a castle held by a native family had large openings inserted into its curtain wall so as to visibly eliminate its usefulness as a military defence, and to give it an air of domesticity.⁶⁹

This rebuilding scheme was undertaken during a particularly difficult period for Sir Randal (as Randal Arranagh was now called, in a more English fashion). He may have been regranted his family's lands, but the events of the following years showed that his position was extremely insecure. The Flight of the Earls in 1607, O'Doherty's rebellion a year later, the ambivalent attitudes of important members of the Stuart administration towards him, the arrest and forfeiture of his neighbour and brother-in-law, Sir Donnell Ballagh O'Cahan in 1609, (who had held virtually all of what subsequently became the county of Londonderry) must all have given him much concern. Indeed the Stuart government took the legal ownership of Dunluce away from him in 1606 (though they did allow him to continue residing there, and finally regranted it to him in

⁶⁹ Hill, *op. cit.* pp. 216-8

1615). Sir Randal's first rebuilding scheme could therefore be seen as part of his efforts to convince the authorities that he was a loyal, committed, and modernising landlord. Another important part of this building scheme was the creation of an imposing room in which to entertain and receive any people of importance who might appear at Dunluce. This room was in the building now referred to as the 'Buttery', which we will discuss little later.⁷⁰

It may be a help, at this stage, to try and describe how Dunluce may have looked at the time of the Carew Survey. Sir Randal probably only had a few working buildings on the mainland then, surrounded by a good wall. The little town, however, which was situated just outside this enclosed area, was already well developed. The gatehouse had reached its final form, and inside the castle the present Manor House had just been built. The loggia built alongside the curtain wall had become a passage, but the roofed and windowed gallery or walkway above it still connected the domestic rooms in the gatehouse and the upper levels of the southern round tower. Another walkway ran along the wall between the two round towers, and roofed entrances into the Manor House went off from them too, so they gave sheltered access to rooms on the upper floors of the various buildings. Dunluce must have looked like a big Scottish house of the period, which was in keeping with Sir Randal's own culture and outlook.

The Manor House

This building, as I have already said, was not a manor house in the proper sense of the term, but its close relationship to the Londonderry Plantation manor houses gives this name considerable meaning. It is typically early Stuart in design, with a strong emphasis on symmetry and regularity, with its most striking feature being the three mullioned bay windows, but the restrictions of the available site forced the builders to cram the house into an awkwardly confining space. As a result the front door was not placed centrally, so the symmetry that was the hallmark of this style of architecture is missing. However by placing the door at one end of this building the space was created for a large hall on the ground floor. This was important because the hall played a vital role in formal entertaining. At the southern end of the hall, against the wall dividing the hall from the parlour, there would have been a dais on which would have stood the head of the household's table, where he and his important guests would have sat to be served their formal meal.

Neighbouring buildings were joined onto this house to provide essential services, and the door placed immediately opposite the entrance gave immediate access to the kitchen. It would have been normal at this period to have a wooden pannelled screen running across the building so as to cut off these doors from the hall, but there are no marks of a wooden partition in the surviving plasterwork. It would have been surprising, however, if there was no partition. As Nicholas Cooper, author of 'the Houses of the Gentry,' wrote, "the principal entrance to the house lay at the end of the hall. A porch

⁷⁰ Hector McDonnell *Sir Randal MacDonnell*, New Dictionary of National Biography, OUP to be published

would open into a cross passage with another external door on the hall's other side. This passage would generally be divided from the body of the hall by a light screen.”⁷¹

This building was designed to look impressive, and to be for formal entertainment. It was the objective to create the correct environment for receiving members of the new social order and ruling class in Ireland, the early Stuart officials, chief tenants, landowners and administrators, rather than to maintain the more traditionally Gaelic household which we know that Randal Arranagh also had at Dunluce. This is an important point to remember, because we are looking at a castle where these two contrasting worlds – the old Gaelic one and the new early Stuart one – were provided for generously. However the form of these buildings, and most particularly that of this house, was deliberately organised for the sort of entertainment that was required of a man of Randal Arranagh's status in the early Stuart social hierarchy. At the same time it is surprisingly unostentatious in comparison not only to the houses of people of equivalent rank in England (such as Hardwick or Montacute House), but also to the greater houses of the settler nobility that had already been built in Ulster at such places as Joymount at Carrickfergus (1610-13) or Belfast Castle (1611-12).

The manor house seems to have been closely modelled on the one erected for Sir Thomas Phillips at Coleraine in 1607. It was a response to the social requirements which came with Randal Arranagh's position as a major Irish landowner.⁷² Moreover its design is so similar to the manor houses built by the London city companies circa 1615-18 on their estates in the new county of Londonderry, that it seems likely that the builders who put up Sir Thomas Phillips' house at Coleraine in 1607, erected this building at Dunluce for Sir Randal Arranagh and then moved on to make manor houses for the Londonderry Plantation. On the model of these houses we would expect there to have been large dormers above the Dunluce bay windows, providing windows for a third storey. The Londonderry dormers were set slightly back from the main façade, which may explain why any such dormers at Dunluce would have collapsed without leaving any physical traces.

As I have already suggested, William Parrat is the probable candidate for the construction of this building. He fits into the story remarkably easily. He is the only Plantation builder whom we know for certain was involved with the Antrims, and we also know that he worked on the construction of the very similar manor at Macosquin. Therefore it is very plausible indeed that he could have used that building scheme as a template for the house at Dunluce.⁷³

⁷¹ Nicholas Cooper, op. cit. pp 274-6. An oriel or bay window by the dais was also important as a semi-informal family area.

⁷² Some argue that it might have been put up later, possibly after Randal Arranagh died in 1636, in preparation for the arrival of the young Antrims from London in 1638, but this seems very unlikely. Randal Arranagh would definitely have needed an imposing residence once he became an earl. The existing buildings at Dunluce would not have been adequate, and the house at Glenarm was not built for another ten years. Moreover the hall house would have looked a strangely archaic building if it had been built in the late 1630s.

⁷³ Curl op. cit. pp. 224-8, 310, 398; E. M. Jope, *Scottish Influences in the North of Ireland, Castles with Scottish Features 1580-1640*, Ulster Journal of Archaeology vol. XIV pp. 31-47

The manor house was not primarily intended for the accommodation of Randal Arranagh and his family. It was rather a show building for people who had to be treated impressively. Immediately inside the front door was the hall itself. Fragments still remain of the carved stone fireplace that was situated in the middle of the eastern wall, and two of the three bay windows would have lit this room. Against southern wall of the hall, which would have been between the middle bay window and the southernmost one, there would have been a dais for the earl's table, stretching into the middle bay window, which would have been used as an area for his family. A door in this wall gave access to a parlour lit by the third bay window as well as the staircase. A large fireplace in the gable wall heated this parlour, while the staircase would have been an elaborate wooden construction running round the three sides of the southeast projection of the house. It probably had a considerable amount of carved detail, and a doorway from its lowest landing led to more stairs down to the serving passageway that had been made out of the now closed in loggia and also to the round tower.

On the first floor there would have been a Great Chamber, where the family and guests would have eaten, and also a Withdrawing Room. There would probably also have been a Bed Chamber for important guests. The southern gable has traces of the left hand side of a grand fireplace, as well as its flue, at first floor level. This must have been the fireplace of the Great Chamber, but the robbing of its sandstone dressings has completely obliterated the right hand side of this fireplace. These dressings narrowly separated it from the door that stood between it and the southwest corner of the building. This door led from the Great Chamber to the long gallery that ran along the outer wall above the old loggia between the round corner tower and the gatehouse. This in turn gave access to the upper floors of the two towers, where there were either guest rooms or else rooms for members of the household. Above this principal upper floor of the house, with its Great Chamber, there would have been a second upper floor lit by dormer windows. This floor would have provided more bedrooms, either for important guests and their entourage or else for members of the family. On the southern gable wall can be seen the marks of the scissor tresses that supported the roof. These left enough space below them for a comparatively low second floor.⁷⁴

One can easily envisage the main rooms of this house containing the costly chairs of state, with matching sets of fine upholstered chairs and stools, paintings, valuable cabinets, canopied beds and tapestries which were listed in the Cromwellian inventory. The ceilings would have had elaborate decorative plasterwork, while the fireplaces and the obligatory wainscoting would have been elaborately carved. All this has, of course, disappeared, though we can still easily see that the building was designed as a showpiece. The quality of the carving of the surviving sandstone window as well as the remnants of a fireplace, as well as the stringcourses and gable courses, is evidence of the care that was taken to see that the building came up to a high standard.

⁷⁴ N. Cooper op. cit pp. 294-5 gives circa 1620 plans of a house with the Great Chamber and Withdrawing Room on the 1st Floor above the Parlour and Hall. (See p. 262 for another plan.)

The ‘Buttery’ and the Kitchen

The “Buttery” obviously predates the manor house. I suspect it was built for the reception of important visitors fairly soon after Sorley Boy went to Dublin in 1586. Its doorway has been reduced in width, but the surviving sandstone architraves indicate that originally it was a remarkably wide and imposing entrance, designed for generously proportioned double doors. Further examination of the “Buttery” reveals that a few sandstone corner blocks survive at the southern corners of the building, where its southern gable is now embedded in the north gable of the later house. This suggests that the Buttery was never any larger. The main living quarters must have been in the Inner Ward.

When the manor house was built this earlier building was retained, the width of the doorway was reduced, and its ground floor became two unheated storerooms. The more southern of these seems to have been a “Buttery”, a word describing the storage room of a grand establishment for wine and other alcoholic drinks, as well as the necessary wine glasses and decanters. The buttery was usually placed close to the hall in a seventeenth century grand house, so the position of this room is exactly where it would be expected. Moreover the finds made here in 1928 were of broken wine bottles and glasses, exactly what one would expect to find in the ruins of a buttery. In its original form the Buttery had one large room on the ground floor and an upper floor above it. However after the manor house was built abutting onto it a staircase was created leading into its upper floor from the Buttery, creating a useful means of access for servants.

To the east of the Buttery, sandwiched between it, the north tower and the cliff’s edge, was the kitchen, equipped with a great broad fireplace and chimney in which spits would have been installed, as well as other fireplaces, chimneys and ovens. It was a tall room, to allow the heat created by its many fires to dissipate, and running along its western wall was a fixed work surface or dresser, to judge by the regularly spaced holes in the wall. The northern tower, onto which it abuts, had a square upper chamber on its upper floor, with a bedroom in the roof space above it. When this tower was originally fitted out with these rooms, during Randal Arranagh’s first rebuilding efforts, it could have provided high status guest rooms, but after the next building phase the proximity of the kitchen, and the partial dismantling of the viewing platform between the round towers must have made these tower rooms useless for their original purpose.

I would imagine therefore that during this later stage of the castle’s development, these tower rooms were used for the accommodation of some more important members of the household staff such as the Clerk of the Kitchen or a butler rather than for guests. The upper tower chamber still had a door giving out onto a wall walk running along the now vanished eastern defensive wall towards the southern round tower. It could now only run as far as the staircase wall of the manor house, where a door opened onto a landing of the stairs and thus gave a means of access from the walkway into the house.

The Inner Ward

The Castle's Domestic Heart; MacQuillan's House and Lord Antrim's Private Chambers

We now come to the northernmost part of the castle, the Inner Ward. As already mentioned some walls of the buildings here are older than the other domestic ranges, and it may well be that the older parts of this ward date back to the early 16th century. It would have been essential, when the castle was in active military use, to keep any domestic buildings as far away as possible from any action. The wall which encloses the Inner Ward has both its surfaces formed by rows of polygonal blocks of the Giant's Causeway type. These were most probably quarried from the Causeway itself because they made such conveniently sized and shaped building material, and could be brought with relative ease to Dunluce in boats. They gave as impressively smooth a finish to the Inner Ward's walls as was possible, though the blocks had no decorative value, as all the castle walls were finished with a layer of white or coloured lime-washed harling which would have rendered the underlying stones invisible. This use of Giant's Causeway stones to create a smooth finish was not unique to the castle, the other most striking example being at Templastragh church near Portbradden. There is no way of dating any of the buildings of this courtyard, but the probability is that they took their present form in the late sixteenth century. ⁷⁵

The South Wall and West Range

The entire ground floor of the range on the western side of the courtyard was a working area. It had flagged working rooms and a bakery on the ground floor, as well as two openings onto the cliff. These would presumably have been hatchways through which rubbish could have been disposed of. Above these working rooms were three well-lit and heated chambers, with chimneystacks similar to those of the Outer Ward. These would presumably have been intended for family members or guests, if not for members of the inner household.

The Eastern Range

On the ground floor of the opposite block, on the east side of the courtyard, were further functional rooms with flagged floors. However its outer eastern here shows a masonry line, indicating that the original height of the building ran along at the level of the sills of the upper storey windows. This shows that in the first instance this building did not have an upper floor, but was a high, one-storey structure. It was also wider than it now is, as its original outer western wall stood about two feet further into the central courtyard than the present western wall of this block. The eastern wall uses Giant's Causeway blocks in the same way as the Inner Ward's outer wall. All this probably

⁷⁵ Unfortunately there is no certain dating of the Templastragh church.

indicates that the building was part of the ward's original structure, and we may well have here the remains of an old 'long hall'.

At the very least this building must be earlier than Sir Randal Arranagh's improvements, and quite probably it predates the MacDonnells' presence here, as this type of one-storey hall building was not favoured in Scotland, where it was normal to have the important rooms on an upper floor. We may well therefore be looking at the MacQuillans' main domestic building. Dunluce is generally referred to as 'MacQuillan's House' in the surviving early 16th century accounts, and it was a social imperative of great Gaelic establishments to have a feasting hall, so this may be the remains of the MacQuillans' hall. It was undoubtedly an impressively large domestic structure for Gaelic Ulster. The slope of the land meant that the people at its northern end were inevitably standing or sitting much lower than those at southern end. This may have been used to emphasise differing social statuses, in much the same way as the dais functioned in Randal Arranagh's manor house!

After this building was reconstructed as a narrower, two-storey structure, the ground floor became a lower grade area. The more northern ground floor room was unheated and had several drains running across its flagged floor, while the most southern room had a large fireplace, a doorway leading to a passageway to the kitchen, and probably some stairs leading to the upper floor. The build of the fireplace and its flue are substantially different to any others in the castle, as the fireplace has a slightly forward-projecting hood, and the flue is sloped backward. Presumably this chimney is a survival from the original one-storey hall. Between this room and the most northern one of this block there was another flagged and unheated room. This one had two doors, one opening into the courtyard, while the other, which was immediately opposite it, gave access to a privy or latrine perched on the cliff's edge, the only such convenience surviving in the castle.

The marks are still visible in the privy's plasterwork of its wooden seat and backrest running along the outer wall. By the late sixteenth century the use of a privy was not considered appropriate for members of an upper class family. Instead "close stools" or chamber pots were used, which would be emptied and cleaned by servants. Presumably this was the practice at Dunluce but the survival of this privy as a functioning part of an early 17th century establishment may simply be because Randal kept to some rather archaic social attitudes and customs.

When this building was heightened an upper floor was created with a long, undivided room running the entire length of the building, with a central fireplace to warm it. Probably a staircase led up to it from somewhere near the downstairs fireplace, and it would seem that the upper floor both of this block and the other buildings in this ward had Scottish-style dormer windows. Possibly this long upper room, or gallery, was a personal chamber for the MacDonnell family. The entire building has one particularly awkward feature, as the slope of the land is such that the upper floor had to stop short of the southern gable, as otherwise the lower floor's rooms would have had no headroom, and the fireplace and the door beside it would have been completely unusable.

Sir Randal may have conducted his personal life here, in the comparative privacy of this inner sanctum or indeed his son, the second earl, after he returned here with his wife in 1637. It is probably an indication of the importance of this part of the castle that most of the early 17th century coins found on the site came from this area.

The North Range

The remnants of the building on the north side of this courtyard are intriguing. It was a late addition to the Inner Ward, and its southern wall, facing into the courtyard, was the old northern perimeter wall of the castle. In other words this northernmost block was built later than the East and West Ranges, on land on the cliff edge which had previously not been used. It was clearly a high-grade building, as in the centre of this range there was a porch (the only porch in the castle), which gave access to the building through wide double doors. This double-doored entrance is similar to the one into the Buttery so this range may also date from the late 1580s. Presumably these doors opened onto an entrance hall and somewhere nearby there must have been a staircase to the upper floor. The superior status of the ground floor rooms is revealed by evidence that they had plastered walls and wooden floors, and that the only other door into this building had cut sandstone architraves, even though it opened into a workroom of the eastern range. The western room had a large fireplace, which is still in situ in its gable wall, and early nineteenth century drawings, made before the eastern gable collapsed, indicate that there were similar chimney flues in it. This means that there were two generously proportioned and heated rooms downstairs, with an entrance hall between them, and with their main windows looking out over the sea. The corner chimney for an upper floor room is still visible on the surviving western gable. This indicates that upstairs there must have been several rooms, as this corner chimney was obviously designed for a smallish chamber, probably a bedroom. The other rooms on this floor may also have been small, but it would have been usual to take advantage of a spectacular situation like this one, with its commanding view over the sea towards the Scottish islands. It is tempting therefore to imagine that part of this floor could have been used to house either another long gallery, or else a very imposing bedroom.

Conclusion

It would seem, therefore, that in spite of Dunluce's long history, there is virtually nothing here older than the sixteenth century, apart from the souterrain and the possible remains of a MacQuillan-period hall in the Inner Courtyard. All the other buildings were altered or built to fulfill the wishes and ambitions of Sorley Boy and his two sons, Sir James and Sir Randal Arranagh MacDonnell, the first earl, between 1580 and 1636, with the last improvements being added by his son, Randal Óg MacDonnell, the second earl, between 1636 and 1641. The Normans' manorial settlement was probably close to the ruined church, but possibly the earliest surviving fragments of domestic building are the remaining walls of the MacQuillans' hall or 'house' in the inner ward. It is also possible that part of the MacQuillans' purpose in building their 'House' was not only to have a feasting hall but also to preserve some of the authority of the Norman manor that had

probably stood somewhere near the ruins of Dunluce parish church. The two round towers are the only other parts of the castle that certainly date from the MacQuillans' time. These were much altered during the 17th century rebuilding, though many of the original gun loops survive in the southern round tower.⁷⁶

We must envisage Dunluce as a busy construction site for much of the early 17th century. Space was then at such a premium that every last scrap of room was exploited, and nothing demonstrates this more clearly than the erection of the northern range of the Inner Ward on the cliff edge. There is, however, one curious puzzle. The MacDonnells were Catholics and people came to the castle to hear mass, but there is no evidence of a chapel. They did erect buildings for Catholic worship elsewhere and maintained priests and personal chaplains, while the most expensive items listed amongst the items from Dunluce were Catholic vestments, but I suspect it was considered politically dangerous to have a chapel, so mass was said in whichever room seemed appropriate.

The family's attitude to religion was tempered by political expediency. The first earl promised to build or repair places of worship for the Stuart administration's official Anglican Church in Ireland, though there is no evidence that he actually did so, and it seems to have been his son, the second earl, who fulfilled this obligation, building parish churches for the Anglican Church of Ireland both at Dunluce and at least at two other sites. By contrast the first earl actively erected buildings for his own faith. He not only rebuilt Bonamargy friary for the Franciscans, but also chapels at two important Irish Catholic holy sites, Lough Derg in Donegal and Brideswell near Athlone, after he and his wife had made pilgrimages to them.

The first earl also built two other houses for his own use. One was at Clough, which has almost completely vanished. Its gatehouse still exists, and diamond-shaped leaded glass has been found, but little more is known, as the actual site of the house has been quarried away. The other house, at Glenarm, was only completed in 1636, the year of his death. Its Jacobean domestic form indicates a considerable change in social attitudes from those which must have predominated at Dunluce. Glenarm is a house which any Anglo-Irish family of the period could have been proud of, whereas Dunluce represents the social world of a wealthy, Gaelic, and Catholic, upper class family uneasily coming to terms with the requirements of the new, early Stuart order. In later life the second earl gave a thumbnail sketch of his upbringing in Dunluce circa 1610-20, saying "that he wore neither hat, cap nor shoe, nor stocking, till 7 or 8 years old, being bred in the Highland way." Gaelic was the first language, and there were bards, pipers and harpers maintained here too.⁷⁷

An extremely interesting aspect of Sir Randal Arranagh, the first earl's, building activities, is the extent to which he relied upon master builders who came to Ulster from Scotland and England to work for the incoming settlers. Scottish masons seem to have also been involved in the rebuilding of Dunluce castle in Sorley Boy's time, while the

⁷⁶ Colin Breen op. cit. pp 72-3

⁷⁷ Hill, op. cit. pp. 194-251; Hector McDonnell, *Sir Randal MacDonnell*, New Dictionary of National Biography to be published

surrounding little town was very similar to the nearby Coleraine and County Londonderry Plantation schemes.⁷⁸

After the original building spurt at Dunluce, circa 1603-11, there was apparently a pause in building activities. One could well imagine, that after the initial, and probably rather frantic, modernising effort was over, there was a period of uncertain adjustment, during which old Gaelic ways still predominated inside the castle, in stark contrast to the transformations going on outside its gates. The shock of the disappearance of nearly all the other great Gaelic lords from the Ulster scene must have given a bitter edge to this period, particularly as the great influx of non-Gaelic settlers arrived, and took over large swathes of the countryside. Dunluce was further improved after Sir Randal Arranagh MacDonnell paid for his commitment to James I by buying the title of viscount in 1618, and then an earldom in 1620. The well-carved mullion from a large window that was reused as a lintel for a house in the town in 1624 indicates that some ambitious remodelling of the castle was going on. Possibly the the Outer Ward's accommodation block and gardens reached its final phase. Beyond the castle's gates Dunluce's small town prospered. Most of its inhabitants were Lowland Scots, though some native Irish families lived there too. Even so, Dunluce probably continued to have much of the flavour of an old Gaelic establishment, and the MacDonnells were always looking, both emotionally and literally, towards the Clandonald's Scottish heartlands.

The development of Glenarm, the most important centre for the MacDonnells in the south-eastern half of their property, was somewhat different. Its own small town must have been fairly similar to the one at Dunluce, with a largely Lowland Scots population, but the old castle was not transformed in the way that Dunluce was. Instead it was handed over to an important tenant, a Protestant clan member called Donaldson, who must have formed a useful cultural bridge between the old Gaelic and the new settler communities. Probably this tenancy held the proviso that the first earl could lodge in the castle when came to Glenarm.

Then, in the mid-1630s, a new, very English-looking mansion was built at Glenarm on the other side of the river to the old castle, with two fine deer parks, and presumably with the obligatory formal gardens as well. It was designed as a house that would be on a par with the grandest houses of the new order in Ulster, or indeed with those of the first earl's daughters' relations by marriage in the Pale. Equally significantly, it was almost as important an administrative centre for his large estate as was Dunluce, and when the first earl died he left Glenarm, and its half of his lands, the Antrim glens, to Alexander, his second legitimate son, while his eldest, Randal Óg MacDonnell, who then became the second earl, and had already married the Duchess of Buckingham, inherited Dunluce, and its enormous estates. It was only the accidental fact that Randal Óg had no children, that caused Alexander, his younger brother, to inherit not only Glenarm but also

⁷⁸ The area of the Irish Pale was already so anglicised, that apparently "English" masons could well be in fact Irish masons who had learnt their trade in the Pale.

his brother's title of earl as well as the Dunluce property itself, thus bringing the two halves of Randal Arranagh's lands back together again.⁷⁹

For lack of hard evidence about its architectural details we can only presume that Glenarm was a typical Jacobean house, with many mullioned windows. It was described as 'Lord Antrim's pleasant house', when the invading Covenanters burnt it in 1642, before advancing to capture the second earl at Dunluce. Subsequent rebuildings have left us very little apart from its outside walls, which now form the central block of the present Glenarm Castle. These at least give us the dimensions and basic plan, which are now those of a large double pile house. On the ground floor, as it is now laid out, there is a large entrance hall, dining room, drawing room and two smaller rooms. Below there is a basement for kitchens and other services, while above are two upper floors.

Essentially the building at Glenarm must reflect the first earl's response to the social developments and changes he was experiencing in early Stuart Ireland. He must have been observing constantly how the old clan-oriented, bartering, chieftainly society of Gaelic Ireland and Scotland was dissolving in the face of the more modern world of James I and Charles I, where the use of money to define obligations, and the relationships between king, landlord, taxman, tenant, magistrate and servant were fundamentally different from those of the old Gaelic world from which Randal Arranagh came.

At Dunluce the buildings are intensely crammed together, in a way that reflects this older, Gaelic world, and there would have been little privacy, for apart from a large staff the castle would also have been populated with numerous retainers, relations and dependents. The first earl had at least three illegitimate sons and a daughter, all of whom were brought up at Dunluce, as were, presumably, their mothers, while a cousin, the son of one of the exiled MacDonnell conspirators of 1615, is also known to have been raised here as part of the first earl's family.

During the last years of the 1630s Dunluce reached its zenith, when the second earl, Randal Óg MacDonnell, and his wife, the Duchess of Buckingham, lived here until the Irish rebellion broke out. The only detailed insight that we have of life at Dunluce comes in the account of events connected with the outbreak of the Irish rebellion in 1641. On hearing rumours about the start of the rebellion the leading Protestant and Catholic inhabitants of Dunluce's little town gathered near the drawbridge, and argued about what to do next. It is clear from the account that not only were Lord and Lady Antrim away, in Dublin, but that the castle itself was completely empty. There were no servants, no castle constable, no gatekeeper, steward, housekeeper or butler to talk to them, or to prevent them entering the building.

We must conclude that the Antrims took a large part of their personal staff with them when they travelled (as was quite normal at the time), but that very few of their employees or servants resided in the castle proper when they were not there. There was, admittedly, a legal obligation to have a castle constable in constant residence at all their

⁷⁹ The finest Irish houses of the period were built after English models, i.e. Naas, Rathfarnham and Portumna. See N. Cooper, *op. cit.* pp. 155-6

castles, but he clearly was not there on this particular occasion. And of course, if any remaining employees had, for whatever reason, abandoned their posts, this would explain why the drawbridge was down. To state the obvious, a drawbridge cannot be raised if there is no one inside the building to raise it.

Dunluce must have sprung into vigorous life when the family was in residence, but it would seem that otherwise it could be so quiet that there would not even have been a chaplain in residence. This fits in with two other little details that we have about Sir Randal, the first earl's, houses. He had tenants both at his castle at Clough and at Dunineny, Sorley's old fortress near Ballycastle. At Clough one of the tenant's duties was to keep Sir Randal, the first earl's, house dry and aired, while at Dunineny the tenant was obliged to vacate the house, when required, to allow Sir Randal to take up residence in it. Probably there was a similar arrangement with his tenants in the old castles at Red Bay and also at Glenarm, at least until he built his own house there in 1636. In other words the first earl had set up a system which allowed himself to have houses in which he could live at all the major places on his estates, without the need to maintain them, or indeed to keep a staff at them when he was not there. When he visited these different houses his own staff would have come with him.

In spite of the turmoil wrought by wars and rebellions in the 1640s and the destruction wrought by the Cromwellian settlers in the 1650s, Dunluce continued to be regarded as the main family seat, even though the Antrims mostly lived at the nearby house of Ballymagarry after the 1660s. The social context of Dunluce remained so important to the MacDonnell family that they did not contemplate having their main residence at any distance from here before Ballymagarry burned down in 1750.

It is significant too that the young fourth earl who then moved away to Glenarm belonged to a new breed. He had been brought up from the age of eight by his mother's Protestant, Anglo-Irish family at Antrim Castle, and had become a member of the official Anglican Church of Ireland. In consequence his life was that of a typical Anglo-Irish aristocrat, with a fine house in Dublin as well as his Palladian mansion at Glenarm. The old clan-conscious world that had centred on Dunluce was finally laid to rest. When a tenant from the Dunluce estate later came to Glenarm to have his lease renewed, and this earl's wife discovered that his name was also MacDonnell, she asked, with feigned horror, if there were not far too many MacDonnells up there on the Dunluce estate. To this the farmer replied "Aye maybe, but we were not one too many on the day at Orra." Such continuing pride, and awareness, of clan solidarity and history could by then only seem a curious anachronistic oddity to Anglo-Irish society.

It is remarkable too that the line of Sir Randal Arranagh MacDonnell, the first Earl of Antrim, not only continues to the present day as a significant local family, but that the present Lord Antrim still lives at Glenarm. Such continuity is very rare in Ireland. The dispossessions of landed estates, of both the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries, have generally led to the disappearance of such families from their old lands. Moreover the family seat is still Glenarm Castle, which, though much altered, remains, in essence, one of the first earl's greatest building ventures.

It is particularly interesting that the first earl seems to have had such a close association with William Parrat, the most notable builder involved in developing the settlements of the Londonderry Plantation. This shows how directly the earl was both involved, and in competition, with the Plantation. He was even godfather to the first mayor of Coleraine's eldest son. Indeed the first earl's development of Dunluce, along with all the other lands and towns of his estate, was exactly parallel to the way as the settlers were developing their own properties. Like them the earl's intentions were to improve his social standing, and make a profit. Indeed, Randal Arranagh, the first earl, was a pioneer in this process of bringing Ulster into the modern world, developing his towns at Dunluce and elsewhere with houses like those of the Pale just as the first Plantation settlers were building Coleraine.

This period was never a comfortable one. The leading Plantation settlers of the area, including the Beresfords and Thomas Phillips. They were tough opportunists, and were also ruthless and corrupt, and Phillips had been scheming to develop Coleraine and expand into Randal Arranagh's territory from 1603 onwards. However Randal's steely determination to make a success of any opportunities that came his way explains why this Catholic and Gaelic chieftain, and his family, survived and flourished in early Stuart Plantation Ulster, whereas nearly all the other Gaelic lords of the province failed. Above all else, Dunluce is a memorial to his extraordinary career.

Nevertheless, we should always remember that Dunluce was at the outer edge of civilised Europe, whatever the pretensions of its inhabitants might be. No better proof of this is to be found than in the little sixteenth century engraving of a galley incised into a stone of the entrance gateway. It may have been removed from somewhere else and put into its present, obscure, position by the labour force working on one of the first earl's rebuilding schemes, but in any case it memorializes the boats that were for several centuries the backbone of Clondonald power. The galley was close in form to its ancestor, the Viking longboat, and was still being used to great effect in the waters between Ulster and Scotland until the mid 17th century. Only on the remote fringes of Europe could this type of boat survive as a weapon of power, at a time when guns and galleons had already dominated most European seas for several centuries.⁸⁰

Further Reading

Brett, Sir Charles, *Buildings of County Antrim*, Belfast 1996
 Curl, James Stevens, *The Londonderry Plantation*, Phillimore & Co. 1986
 Breen, Colin, *Dunluce Castle, archaeology and history*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2012
 Hill, The Rev. George, *An Historical Account of the MacDonnells of Antrim*, pub. Belfast 1873

⁸⁰ This engraving is on a stone which was built into the entrance passageway of the gateway when it was given its final form in the early seventeenth century. The galley continued to be locally important throughout the 17th century. Presumably the engraving had been more prominently displayed before this, and I suspect it only survived because the workmen, for their own reasons, built it into the new wall they were constructing, placing it so low down that hardly anyone would notice it.

McDonnell, Hector, *A Seventeenth Century Inventory from Dunluce Castle*, pub. 1992 in *the Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries*, vol. 122

McDonnell, Hector, *The Wild Geese of the Antrim MacDonnells*, pub. I.A.P, Dublin 1998

McNeill, T. E. *Anglo-Norman Ulster*, Donald Publishers Ltd. 1980

McNeill, T. E. *Castles in Ireland*, pub. Routledge, London and New York 1997

New Dictionary of National Biography, *Sorley Boy MacDonnell, Sir Randal MacDonnell, first Earl of Antrim; Randal MacDonnell, second Earl and first Marquess of Antrim; Shane O'Neill; Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone; Rose O'Neill, Marchioness of Antrim*, to be published

Ohlmeyer, Jane, *Civil War and Restoration in the Three Stuart Kingdoms, the Career of Randal MacDonnell, Marquis of Antrim 1609-1683* pub. C.U.P. Cambridge 1993

O'Laverty, Rev. J. *Diocese of Down and Connor*, Dublin 1887, vol IV

Quinn, Kevin, *Archaeological Study of Dunluce Castle*, unpublished M.A. dissertation for Queens University, Belfast, 2002

Dunluce Timeline

circa 800-1,000 A.D. souterrain built

circa 1200 Dunluce established as a manor inside the Norman earldom of Ulster (Dunluce was mentioned in subsequent earldom accounts as a manor until 1358)

circa 1500, or earlier, MacQuillans established at Dunluce

1513 O'Donnells take Dunluce, eject the O'Neills' nominee MacQuillan, and establish their own chieftain, 'Donal, son of Walter MacQuillan.'

circa 1557 MacQuillans ejected from Dunluce by the MacDonnells

1558 Coll MacDonnell died, and command of the family's Irish territories given to Sorley Boy

1565 Dunluce taken by Shane O'Neill, and given over to an English garrison.

1567 Shane O'Neill killed by the MacDonnells, who subsequently reoccupy Dunluce

1575 Massacre of the MacDonnell women and children on Rathlin by Essex

1584 Perrot, Queen Elizabeth's Lord Deputy, captured Dunluce after a siege. The MacDonnells retook the castle soon afterwards, and the English officer commanding the garrison hanged from its walls.

1586 Sorley Boy MacDonnell, aged about 80, submitted to English authority at Dublin Castle, received a grant of his lands, and made Queen Elizabeth's constable of Dunluce

1589 Sorley Boy died. His eldest son, James, called 'James of Dunluce,' succeeded him

1597 James MacDonnell prepared to join Hugh O'Neill's rebellion; four cannon from an Armada wreck, the Girona, mounted in Dunluce, and the castle's fortifications rebuilt and improved

1601 James MacDonnell died & was replaced by his younger brother Randal Arranagh, who then fought at the Battle of Kinsale with Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, against the English army

1602 Randal Arranagh MacDonnell surrendered to English authority, and was subsequently granted his family's entire county Antrim territory as his private estate by Queen Elizabeth

circa 1603-9 Randal Arranagh rebuilt and altered Dunluce, putting up a "good howse of stone" and probably also the gatehouse. He also [start](#)ed the development of a town outside the castle gates during this period

1615-1616 Attempted rebellion by discontented clansmen both in Antrim and Scotland

1618 Randal Arranagh given the title of Viscount Dunluce by James I.

1620 Randal Arranagh bought the title of Earl of Antrim for £5,000

1620s, or 1630s the long block with a balcony built in the Outer Ward to overlook the recently created formal gardens

1636 Randal Arranagh, 1st Earl of Antrim died; his eldest son Randal succeeded, and returned to Dunluce with his 1st wife, Catherine, Duchess of Buckingham. They brought many fine pieces of furniture, paintings and tapestries with them

1639 supposed date for collapse of the northernmost range of the castle, after which Lady Antrim (the Duchess of Buckingham) is said to have sworn she would never live in the castle again

circa 1641 many of the best possessions of the Antrim family were taken from Dunluce by boat and put in store in Chester, where they were subsequently sold by the Cromwellian government in the 1650s

1642 January the town of Dunluce burnt by Irish and Highland tenants on the Dunluce estate who had joined the Irish Rebellion

May The 2nd Earl of Antrim taken prisoner by an invading Scottish Covenanting army from Dunluce, and the remaining contents impounded

1663 a letter from Rose, Lady Antrim, (2nd wife of the 2nd Earl) describes that the Cromwellian settlers had recently dismantled the buildings of Dunluce and sold any of the materials of the castle that had any value.

October, a royal proclamation is read declaring that Lord Antrim is to be restored to his estate, including Dunluce

Nov. 2 Lord Antrim's agent foiled an attempt made by the Cromwellian settlers to retain control of Dunluce fair

1671 the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, Oliver Plunkett, visited the 2nd Lord Antrim at Dunluce

1683 the 2nd Earl of Antrim died, and as he had no children the family titles and Dunluce was inherited by his brother Alexander, who then became the 3rd Earl

1690 3rd Lord Antrim fought for James II at the Battle of the Boyne against William II (William of Orange)

1692 At Limerick the 3rd Lord Antrim surrendered to William II and was granted back his estates

1701-2 Helena, widow of the 3rd Lord Antrim, wrote two letters from Dunluce about her son, the 4th Earl to Lord Rochester, the Irish Viceroy

1712 the 4th Earl of Antrim visited by Scottish Clandonald chieftains at Dunluce

1789 last recorded mention of Dunluce fair