



Heritage Carrickfergus



Castle under construction



King Henry II

King John

King John of England fears de Courcy is building his own kingdom in Ulster and encourages another Anglo-Norman knight, Hugh de Lacy, to overthrow him. De Courcy is defeated and de Lacy, now based in Carrickfergus, is made the first Earl of Ulster.

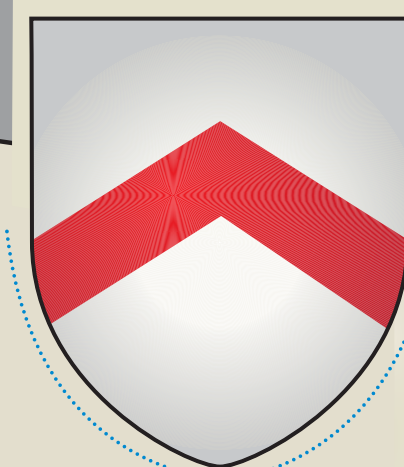


Reconstruction of castle keep

Now it's the turn of the ambitious de Lacy to anger his king. John brings an army to Ulster to wrest control of the earldom from de Lacy, besieging his former favourite in the castle. De Lacy is defeated and expelled from Ulster.



Reconstruction of the expansion of Carrickfergus Castle between the time of John de Courcy and Hugh de Lacy



Edward the Bruce Crest

The Scots of the Glens burn Carrickfergus to the ground, although the castle is unscathed.



Reconstruction of Carrickfergus Castle as developed by Hugh de Lacy

It's not just the increasingly powerful native Irish that threaten the garrison at Carrickfergus. An army of Highland Scots arrives to burn the town.

Highland Scots attack the town. It is reported that Carrickfergus is 'totally burnt by our enemies'. But the real problem for the Crown lies closer to home in Ireland. The Clancaboye branch of the powerful O'Neill clan now control the area to the south of the town.



Franciscan Friary circa 1560

A Scottish naval expedition plunders the town, setting it on fire.

The Franciscan friary, which has since been converted to a store house for arms, is marked on a map of this year as a 'palace'.

1177



The Anglo-Norman knight John de Courcy leads an army of 22 knights and 300 foot soldiers from Dublin to Ulster, aiming to gain control of the province from its Gaelic rulers.

Anglo Norman Knight

1178

De Courcy chooses Carrickfergus as his base and begins to build a castle on the great rock which juts out into Belfast Lough. Now he can control access to the lough, guard the coastal route from north Antrim and send ships to communicate with his allies in England and the Isle of Man (ruled by his father-in-law, King Godfred).

1185

King Henry II appoints de Courcy as Justiciar (Chief Official) of Ireland, even though the centre of government is far away in Dublin. Now unofficially known as the Prince of Ulster, de Courcy mints his own coins in Carrickfergus.



De Courcy Minted Coin

De Courcy also builds St Nicholas' Church and Woodburn Abbey. Carrickfergus will become the military and religious centre of Ulster. Woodburn Abbey no longer exists but you can see four large carved stones from the abbey at St Nicholas' Church.

1205

1210



Siege engine

1210-1220

It is believed Carrickfergus becomes a borough around this time. The middle ward of the castle is constructed. In the early years of the century a bank of earth topped with a wooden fence is built around the town. A ditch in front also deters invaders.

1226

Back in favour with the English monarchy, Hugh de Lacy becomes Earl of Ulster again. He begins to construct the outer ward of the castle.



Medieval Banquet circa 1220

1232

De Lacy builds a Franciscan friary on a site in the area where Carrickfergus Town Hall now stands. At his death, around ten years later, he is buried there.



The Friary

1274



Friar

1315

A Scottish army led by Edward the Bruce, brother of Scottish king Robert the Bruce, besieges the castle. Many of Ulster's Gaelic chieftains see his invasion as a chance to destroy the Anglo-Normans and join his cause. After a bitter year-long siege, the castle surrenders. It remains Edward the Bruce's base until his death three years later.



King Edward attacking the Castle

1333

William de Burgh, the Earl of Ulster, is murdered. Weakened by famine and outbreaks of plague, the Anglo-Normans hold on power in Ulster is loosening and the increasingly powerful Gaelic chieftains are trying to fill the vacuum. From now on the area is governed by agents of the Crown.

Goods unloading at the harbour

1384

The town is burned by the forces of Gaelic chieftain Niall O'Neill, demonstrating how the power of the Anglo-Normans is waning.



1386



Scottish highland soldier

1402



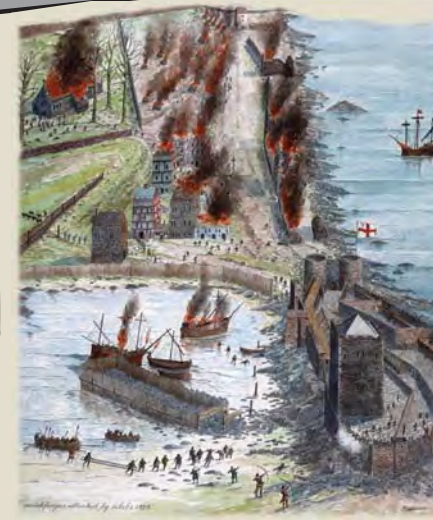
Map of Carrickfergus circa 1560 (BL Cotton Augustus I II 42)

1513

1567



Sir Brian McPhelim O'Neill



Burning of the town



Seafront stone walls are built to improve the defence of the town. The roads known today as West Street, Cheston Street, Castle Street and High Street are visible on maps of the time.



The powerful Sir Hugh O'Neill of Tyrone instigates a rebellion in Ulster that rapidly gathers support from his fellow Gaelic chieftains. Carrickfergus is the main stronghold of the Crown in Ulster. The rebellion spreads through Ireland and the conflict, known as the Nine Years War, lasts until 1603.



Dunluce Castle, Seat of MacDonnell clan



Sir Arthur Chichester

Probably the most important figure in the development of Carrickfergus after John de Courcy, Englishman Sir Arthur Chichester is also the most controversial. Replacing his brother as Governor of the town in 1599, he was responsible not just for improving the town's defences and restoring St Nicholas' but for settling many Scots and English in the town and area.

In 1600, during the Nine Years War, he was ordered by Lord Deputy Mountjoy to lay waste to Gaelic territories within 20 miles of Carrickfergus. Chichester went about his task with great brutality, boasting that he killed men, women and children to achieve his aims.

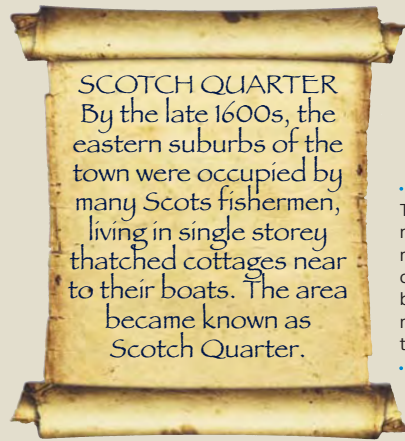
Having finally been given the resources the townspeople have been demanding for years to improve Carrickfergus's defences, Chichester orders the completion of the wall so it encircles the town. It takes seven years to complete. About half of the wall can still be seen today.



The Chichester Memorial, St. Nicholas Church



The Irish at war



SCOTCH QUARTER
By the late 1600s, the eastern suburbs of the town were occupied by many Scots fishermen, living in single storey thatched cottages near to their boats. The area became known as Scotch Quarter.

The garrison at Carrickfergus, not having been paid for three months, seize the town and castle. The mutiny is put down by the Earl of Arran. Nine mutineers are hung; the rest transported to the West Indies.

1568

The town is given a charter by Queen Elizabeth I, probably replacing an earlier one. Carrickfergus becomes an important centre of government and the place where the armies of the Crown are mustered. To the north, the MacDonnell clan of Dunluce Castle is becoming an increasing threat.



Map of Carrickfergus in 1567 by Robert Lythe (Trinity College, Dublin, MS 1209 (26))

Note the town streets and various types of houses

1573

Sir Brian McPhelim O'Neill of the Clandeboyne O'Neills, still the dominant Irish clan in this part of Ulster, burns Carrickfergus. This is in response to Queen Elizabeth's grant of much of their land to Thomas Smith as part of his failed attempt to plant English settlers in the area.

1575

The fearsome Sorley Boy MacDonnell captures the town and castle in revenge for a massacre of his followers on Rathlin Island. Instigated by Walter Devereux, First Earl of Essex, the victims of the massacre included hundreds of women and children.

1579-1600

The same year the new Lord Deputy of Ireland, Sir Henry Sidney, attempts to bolster the defences of the town he finds greatly 'impoverished' since his last visit. Four small bastions are constructed at the corners of the town circuit.



Walter Devereux, the first Earl of Essex

1594



Sir John Chichester

1597

Sir John Chichester is appointed Governor of Carrickfergus. After arranging a treaty with the MacDonnell clan, he decides to attack them instead. He is killed and his head cut off and sent to Sir Hugh O'Neill.

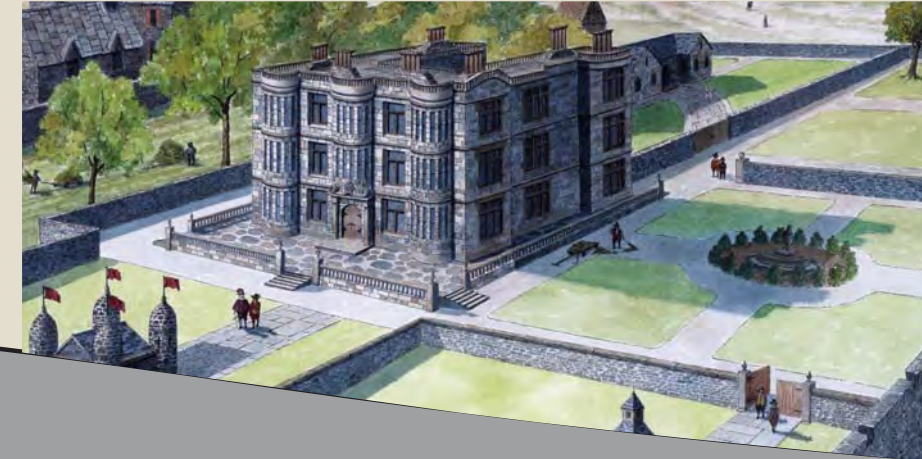
1599

Sir John's brother, Sir Arthur Chichester, is appointed Governor of Carrickfergus and takes command of the town. After John de Courcy, no other figure will be more important to the development of Carrickfergus than the controversial Chichester.

1605

Sir Arthur Chichester becomes Lord Deputy of Ireland.

Joymount Palace - mansion built by Sir Arthur Chichester 1610



1608

Chichester begins building his mansion, Joymount House, near the site of the old Franciscan friary which he completes in 1618. The house, which would be demolished in 1768, was described as a 'prince's palace'.

1610

St Nicholas' Church is rebuilt after a long period of decay. This is largely the church we see today.

1614



Carrickfergus, the major port in Ulster, sells its customs rights to Belfast. It will prove a costly mistake as Belfast increasingly becomes a competitor for trade.

1637

In the 1641 Rebellion, the native Irish rise against the Crown in a conflict that spreads through Ulster and eventually the whole of Ireland, becoming part of the English Civil War. Carrickfergus becomes a safe haven for Protestant settlers fleeing from the surrounding area.

1641

Major General Munro lands an army of 3,000 Scottish troops at Carrickfergus to protect the settlers from attack, becoming Commander-in-Chief of English and Scottish troops in Ulster. The chaplains in his regiment hold the first presbytery meeting in Ireland in the town, probably at St Nicholas' Church. It is the beginning of Irish Presbyterianism.

1642

The town changes hands several times as Scottish and English troops battle for control.



St Nicholas Church

1648-1649



IRISH QUARTER
developed outside the western walls after a 1678 decree banning Catholics from towns with forts.

1666



King William statue, Carrickfergus



King William arriving in Carrickfergus

The last witchcraft trial in Ireland takes place in Carrickfergus. Eight women are convicted of bewitching a young girl and sentenced to a year in prison.



French forces attack Carrickfergus Castle



French Soldiers



John Paul Jones attacks the HMS Drake

During the American Revolution, privateer John Paul Jones, skipper of the US ship the Ranger captures the British warship, the Drake, in Carrickfergus Bay. Jones, who will become known as the 'father of the American navy', takes the Drake to the French port of Brest as his prize.

John Paul Jones

The County of Antrim Courthouse and Gaol (now the Town Hall and Museum) is built.



Henry Joy McCracken



The former Carrick Court House, now the current Town Hall



Fisherman's Quay is built to serve the local fishing fleet.



Samuel McSkimin, who wrote the famous 'History of Carrickfergus', dies and is buried in the churchyard of St Nicholas' Church.

The David Legg, the first ship to be built in Carrickfergus, is launched.

The last public hanging at the County Gaol in Antrim Street 1844

The County Gaol in Antrim Street closes. 106 prisoners - men, women and children - are marched in chains around the coast to Belfast, to be incarcerated in the new County of Antrim Gaol on Belfast's Crumlin Road.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Like other important towns across Ireland, Carrickfergus saw the development of several industries through the 19th century. Several, like the Joy Mount Bleach and Dye Works and James Taylor Flax Spinning at Barn Mills, were connected to Ulster's thriving linen industry. The town's reputation as a leading centre for the textile industry also flourished briefly in the second half of the 20th century, with the arrival of Courtaulds and ICI.



Antrim Royal Garrison Artillery marching to Saint Nicholas' Church for Divine Service, circa 1900

1689

1690

1711

1712

1760

1778

1779

1797

1798

1830s

1843

1845

1846

1848

1852

1854

General Frederick Schomberg



The struggle between King William III and his father-in-law King James II for control of the English Crown comes to Ireland. A Jacobite garrison holds the town and castle for the forces of James, though most of the population supports William.

General Frederick Schomberg, King William's military commander in Ireland, besieges the town, his heavy mortars inflicting terrible damage. After seven days the garrison commander, Colonel Charles McKarty Moore, is forced to surrender. To the east of the North Gate, you can still see where repairs were made to the damage caused by the mortar fire.

King William himself lands here on June 14th 1690, bringing thousands of extra troops. He soon begins what will become one of the most important military campaigns in Irish history, winning the Battle of the Boyne on July 1st. When the Julian calendar was replaced by the Gregorian Calendar in 1752, eleven days were added to the previous dates. Therefore, the Battle of the Boyne is celebrated on July 12th.

Richard Kane, a Carrickfergus man who fought for King William's troops in Ireland, is made Governor of Minorca. Over the next 20 years he greatly enhances the island, reforming its legal system, building roads and encouraging trade.



In one of the most dramatic events in its history, Carrickfergus becomes embroiled in the Seven Years War (1756-1763) between France and England. French troops under Commodore Francois Thurot land at Kilroot, two miles from Carrickfergus on February 21st 1760 before storming the castle.

Advancing into Scotch Quarter, the French first engaged with the Carrickfergus garrison, the 62nd Regiment of Foot, at Joy Mount before storming the walls and breaking into the town. The garrison retreated back into the castle, allowing the French to ransack Carrickfergus and set many of the prisoners in the gaol free.

With no cannon and little ammunition, the garrison was reduced to firing buttons taken from their uniforms. After desperate hand-to-hand fighting in which over 20 soldiers on both sides were killed, they were eventually forced to surrender. Fortunately, the French troops offered generous terms for the 197 officers and men of the garrison, who were allowed to march out of the castle with their arms and colours and return to their barracks as prisoners of war. The French spent six days in Carrickfergus gathering supplies. Soon afterwards, they were defeated in a battle with the British navy near the Isle of Man, in which Commodore Thurot was killed.

William Orr, a member of the United Irishmen, is accused of administering the oath of the organisation to a soldier. The trial, held in Carrickfergus, attracts international attention and much criticism when Orr is found guilty and condemned to hang at Gallows Green. When the United Irishmen rebel the following year, the cry 'Remember Orr' rings out across the battlefields.



The Battle of Antrim, 1798

The ghostly story of Button Cap

During the 1760s a soldier called Robert Rainey, who was stationed at the castle, fell in love with a local girl called Betsy Baird. She agreed to marry him but didn't tell him she had another admirer, the brother of his commanding officer. When the two men met, Robert stabbed his rival to death. Unfortunately, Timothy Lavery, another soldier who looked very like Robert, was mistaken for the murderer and convicted of the crime. As he was being hung he vowed to haunt the castle ever more. Nicknamed 'Button Cap' for his habit of wearing a button, a circular decoration, on his soldier's cap, his ghost is said to appear by a deep well in the castle.



Victorian shipyards in Carrickfergus

Original 'History of Carrickfergus' book

SHIPBUILDING

In the second half of the 19th century, a considerable shipbuilding industry developed in Carrickfergus, helped by the demand for ships to export locally mined salt and other goods as well as import coal. The most successful shipbuilder was Paul Rodgers who built wooden and then iron and steel ships. The most famous ship built by his company was the Result, a topsail schooner, used against German submarines in the First World War.



The Belfast and Ballymena Railway opens its main line between the two towns, including stops at Carrickfergus and Randalstown.

Salt mines are discovered at Carrickfergus about 600 feet beneath the surface. Four years later, a tramway is constructed from the Salt Mines to the Northern Counties Railway to transport the salt. In 1887 new works are built to dissolve the salt into brine, which is piped to Clipperstown, where it is boiled and the salt distributed throughout Ireland. Salt is still mined today in Carrickfergus.

The Antrim Artillery, a locally based volunteer force, is formed. Soldiers, initially based in the castle, later serve with distinction in the Boer War. One of just 32 such regiments in the UK they number a thousand men by 1900.



Famous schooner the Result was the last ship to be built in Carrick



Medal commemorating the opening of the new harbour

Carrickfergus Harbour is improved and a new pier extension greatly helps the local shipbuilding industry.



The old North Gate 19th Century

John Hilditch establishes his successful yacht building firm in the town.



WWI guns unloading at Carrickfergus harbour

Titanic

The people of the town gather in their thousands to cheer RMS Titanic as she sails up Belfast Lough. The famous White Star liner anchors overnight just off the coast here before continuing to Southampton.



WWI soldiers at the Castle

After 750 years of continuous military occupation, the longest of any castle in Ireland, Carrickfergus Castle is transferred by the War Department to the Ministry of Finance for preservation as an ancient monument.



The US Rangers in Carrickfergus

US Rangers and Carrickfergus

In the grounds of the Andrew Jackson Centre is a museum dedicated to the men of the First Battalion of the elite US Rangers, formed by volunteers from various American regiments stationed in Northern Ireland during the Second World War. Featuring documents, photographs and uniforms and other material relating to this famous combat unit, it reflects the fact that they were based at Sunnyslands Camp in Carrickfergus for their initial training and induction. Modelled on the British Commandos, they were the first American soldiers to see combat in Europe, fighting in Italy and North Africa.

Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) open a factory manufacturing man-made fibres at Kilroot. The area is becoming an important centre for the textile industry.

Carreras/Rothmans establish a factory manufacturing cigarettes and tobacco products in Carrickfergus.



The Andrew Jackson Centre

Did you know?

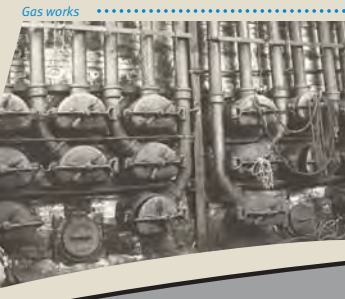
The BBC Proms in the Park is held in Carrickfergus for the first time ever in 2007. Staged before the spectacular backdrop of Carrickfergus Castle it was linked to simultaneous Proms in the Park events in London, Glasgow, Swansea and the Tees Valley.



Baron Carrickfergus is a title in the Peerage of the United Kingdom. Its current holder, since its creation on 29 April 2011, is Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, who was granted the title as a personal gift, by Queen Elizabeth II, on the day of his wedding to Catherine Middleton.

1855

Carrickfergus Gasworks opens in Irish Quarter West. Gas, created by baking as opposed to burning coal, is supplied to fuel the street lamps of the area and to domestic houses for cooking. The Gasworks supplies the town until 1965. It closes in 1987.



Gas works

1862

The Carrickfergus and Larne Railway opens. Visitors from Scotland arriving at the Port of Larne now have easy access to the town.



1874

Paul Rodgers, the town's most renowned shipbuilder, launches his first ship, the schooner Accrington Lass.



Carrickfergus High Street

1885



Carrickfergus Castle and Harbour

1890s



Town Hall, and 'Big Lamp,' Carrickfergus at the end of the 19th Century

1912

1928

1939-1945

During the Second World War, the basement of Carrickfergus Castle keep is used as an air raid shelter.



Photo taken of air raid shelters in Carrickfergus Castle during WWII

1942

The elite First Ranger Battalion is formed by volunteers from various American regiments stationed in Northern Ireland. It is based at Sunnyslands Camp in Carrickfergus for training before heading for Europe and North Africa. There is a war memorial located at Joy Mount in Carrickfergus town centre



Colonel Bill Darby (El Darbo), founder of the US Rangers

1951



Carrickfergus promenade before the Marine Highway

1963

1964

1960s

The A2 Marine Highway is constructed to relieve pressure on the historic streets of the old town. It connects the eastern part of Carrickfergus, as well as Whitehead and Islandmagee, to Belfast but separates the castle from the town.



Statue of King William III at Carrickfergus Castle

1990

A statue of King William III, who landed here 300 years previously to begin the campaign that changed modern Irish history, is unveiled in the grounds of Carrickfergus Castle.

2002

Gasworks Flame, one of only three preserved gasworks in Britain and Ireland, is opened to the public as a visitor attraction. Housed in the original 1855 Gasworks building, it boasts Western Europe's largest set of retorts (in which the gas was made).



The old Gasworks

2011



The Royal Wedding

QR Code