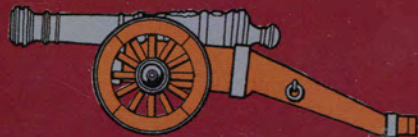




Inch Island in the Siege of Derry



Foreword

Newtowncunningham Apprentice Boys of Derry hope you enjoy this history of Inch Island, Co. Donegal in 1689 during the time of the Siege of Derry. The Newtown ABOD Club took the decision in 2008 to replace the Club's original but somewhat tattered Crimson Flag with a modern bannerette depicting an image of the Williamite soldiers landing at Inch. It was following this that the Inch booklet idea was born. We felt that the story of Inch during the Siege had been overlooked because of the much greater events taking place nearby, at Londonderry.

The role Inch played, though somewhat overlooked before now, had implications on the overall outcome of the war in Ireland between King William and King James. By far the most important result of the Inch expedition was that it forced King James to change his plan for the annihilation of Enniskillen. Rosen, commanding the besieging army at Londonderry feared an attack on his rear by the forces at Inch and he was nervous they might also combine with the Enniskillen men. King James was compelled to divert the Duke of Berwick's regiments, which were destined for the attack on Enniskillen, to guard against any such junction between Inch and the Enniskilliners. Hence James' force attacking Enniskillen was much reduced and roundly beaten at Newtownbultler. Had Enniskillen fallen then King James need only mop up Derry and the course of Irish, European and World history could have taken an entirely different path.

The club would like to thank Newtowncunningham Community Development Initiative who acquired funding to explore the Inch story. This allowed us to secure the services of famous military historian Mr. Richard Doherty. Mr Doherty is author of several excellent books on Irish Military History including "Clear The Way! A History of the 38th (Irish) Brigade, 1941-47" and "The Siege of Derry 1689, The Military History"

This excellent work, "Inch Island in the Siege of Derry", is a valuable piece which will interest locals, historians and scholars alike for years to come.

Billy Hamilton. (On behalf of Newtowncunningham Apprentice Boys of Derry.)

The NCDI committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the funders of this project, Peace III, managed by Donegal County Council. We would also like to thank the project co-ordinator James Kee who oversaw the preparation of this publication as well as delivering a wide range of highly successful community-based cultural activities as part of NCDI's PEACE III Grant.

The aims of the project included the promotion of mutual respect, cross-community cultural exploration, and good relations - both locally and across the border region of east Donegal. This booklet offers a rich tapestry of local history and culture and provides a comprehensive record of the important part played by Inch Island during the siege of Londonderry in 1689. Local military historian, Richard Doherty, has written a gripping narrative that recognises the pivotal role of Inch in events that shaped British, Irish and European history for centuries to come.

NCDI would also like to thank the Newtowncunningham Branch Club of the Apprentice Boys of Derry for their contribution to the project. In recommending this booklet it is hoped it will be read widely and wisely.



Introduction

The 1689 siege of the city of Londonderry was not only one of the most important events in the history of Ireland but also of the British Isles and mainland Europe. The defiance of the city and its successful defence against a Jacobite army marked the high tide of King James II's attempts to regain the English, Scottish and Irish thrones for the Stuart dynasty. In turn, James' defeat led to the accelerated development of parliamentary government in Britain, although not the civil and religious liberty that is traditionally held to have flowed from William's victory, since Presbyterians continued to suffer severe restrictions on their religious rights, alongside Roman Catholics, throughout the century that followed; neither denomination enjoyed democratic rights, although, generally, such rights were restricted to men of property for many decades to come. On the European canvass, the siege was an important element in the final defeat of the ambitions of King Louis XIV of France who had hoped to dominate the entire continent. Indeed, it may be argued that the stand taken by the defenders of Derry ensured that there would be no French empire controlling most of Europe.

Most accounts of the 1689 siege refer to the island of Inch and its role in the 105-day investment of the city. However, the full importance of the island, and its operational significance, is not always conveyed in those accounts. This brief look at Inch's role during the siege aims to emphasise its importance, its tactical and logistical value, and the part it played in the final defeat of Jacobite forces in Ulster.

Inch – History and Importance

To understand why Inch became important in 1689 it is worth looking at the island's geographical location and some of its history. Inch – a name meaning 'island' in Gaelic – is located in Lough Swilly, some fourteen miles south of the mouth of the lough and in the shadow of Grianan mountain and the range of mountains overlooking the southern boundary of Inishowen, stretching from west to east. Today two causeways connect the island to the mainland but in the seventeenth century it was truly an island, accessible only by boat except at low tide when it could be reached by horse or foot. Inch is highly fertile and, since it was included in the Plantation of Ulster, the majority of its inhabitants at the time of the siege would have been Protestant and supporters of the defenders of the city.

Lough Swilly is a deepwater inlet from the Atlantic Ocean that reaches deep into eastern Donegal and has been described as a mini-fjord, having some of the characteristics of the long Norwegian coastal inlets. Needless to say, the lough provided one of the routes by which Norse, or Viking, raiders made their way into north-west Ireland and, especially, Tir Conail (Tyrconnell), the land of Conail. One result of those Viking raids is the Norse ancestry of some of the people of the region with one of the common local surnames – McLaughlin – indicating Norse heritage. McLaughlin, or MacLochlainn, means ‘son of the long lake’, the ‘long lake’ referring to the fjords of Norway, or even the sea the Vikings traversed to reach Ireland (which, with Britain, they called West-Over-Sea).

Especially in the age of sail the Swilly provided a shelter from storms for ships, while it was also the departure route from Ireland of the Earls of Tyrone and Donegal, Hugh O’Neill and Hugh O’Donnell, who fled from Rathmullan in 1607 in the ‘Flight of the Earls’. Both were convicted of treason in their absence. The foreman of the jury that found them guilty was Sir Cahir O’Doherty, Lord of Inishowen, who rose in rebellion, following an insult by Sir George Pawlett, the Governor of Derry, in May 1608, attacked and destroyed the city but died in battle at Kilmacrenan in Donegal.

The Flight of the Earls and O’Doherty’s rebellion precipitated the Plantation of Ulster. Land across the province, which was increased to nine counties by the transfer of Cavan from Connacht, was confiscated from the Gaelic lords and given to ‘undertakers’ who undertook to ‘plant’ it with English or Scottish settlers. Much land in east Donegal, including Inch, passed to planter families in this way. In addition, the City of London Livery Companies were persuaded or, in some cases, coerced into developing the city, the name of which was changed to London-Derry in the new charter of 1613. Hitherto, Derry had been in County Donegal but part of Donegal was now removed from that county and added to Coleraine County, along with a barony from north Tyrone, to form a new county: Londonderry.

Lough Swilly continued to play a significant role in history. When Theobald Wolfe Tone, a leader of the United Irishmen’s rebellion in 1798, attempted to land in Ireland from the French frigate *La Hoche* his ship was captured by the Royal Navy and brought into the lough where Tone was put ashore at Bunrana to be taken as a prisoner to Londonderry. Much later still, in the early months of the Great War, the Royal Navy was so concerned about the safety of the Grand Fleet in its anchorage at Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands that part of the Fleet was moved to the safety of Lough Swilly

which could accommodate some of the largest battleships of the time. Forts that had been built along the Swilly following the fear of French invasion in the early years of the nineteenth century continued to provide defences for the anchorage in 1914. Those forts remained in British hands with Lough Swilly one of the Treaty Ports until these were handed over to the Irish Defence Forces in October 1938. Had Lough Swilly remained in British control it would have been the preferred westernmost escort base for the Battle of the Atlantic, a role that, instead, was performed by Londonderry, Lough Foyle and the river Foyle.

Thus the naval value of Lough Swilly has been demonstrated over many centuries. One of the Lough’s coastal defence forts was situated on Inch, on the northernmost tip of the island, but there was an even older fortification which dates back to at least the fifteenth century. This is Inch castle, the remains of which may still be seen on the south side of the island, in the townland of Castlequarter. The castle may have been built by the O’Donnells, the lords of Tir Conail, but was later in the possession of the O’Dohertys and was used to defend both the island and the Inishowen peninsula. In the first record of its existence we learn of an incident that occurred in 1454 during a struggle for the leadership of Clan O’Donnell and the Lordship of Tir Conail.

Donal O’Donnell and Ruaraidh (Rory) O’Donnell were rivals for the lordship and Donal was arrested by Ruaraidh’s men and imprisoned in Inch castle. When Ruaraidh arrived at the castle, he ordered his men to burn it down. Donal, who was shackled inside, asked to be released from his irons. Believing that, even unshackled, Donal would still be burned, Ruaraidh ordered him to be freed from the irons. To Ruaraidh’s surprise, his rival escaped through the smoke and flames. Donal was able to reach the battlements where he dislodged a large stone from the walls. Taking careful aim, he hurled the stone at his rival who was standing below watching the blaze. Donal’s aim proved to be true and the piece of stone hit Ruaraidh on the head. With his skull cracked, Ruaraidh fell to the ground, mortally injured.

At that stage Ruaraidh’s men outside the castle were attacked by Donal’s followers and routed. Thus Donal’s aim had saved his own life, killed his rival and guaranteed for him the Lordship of Tir Conail.

In 1689 Inch castle was still standing and played a part in the story of the island in the Siege. Reading some accounts it becomes clear that the nearby Burt castle, also formerly an O’Doherty fort and less than two miles south as the crow flies, is confused with Inch castle as both played their part in operations in the area.

West. Had the French committed real naval support to James' army and deployed ships to anchorages around the Irish coast, such as the Swilly, it is unlikely that there would have been a siege. But the French failed to see the strategic opportunities awaiting their navy and seem never to have recognised the logistical value of Lough Swilly, and Inch, in the exploitation of such opportunities. Similar opportunities awaited the Williamites whose subsequent use of the Swilly and Inch illustrate the value that the lough and the island represented for both armies.

The Siege

The Siege of Derry began on 18 April 1689 when King James II, believing that his appearance at the city's gates would bring its citizens to their senses and accept him as their monarch, rode up to Bishop's Gate. James was unaware that he was breaking the terms of an agreement between the defenders and General Hamilton, the Jacobite commander, for Jacobite troops to remain away from the city. Thus James' appearance was seen as an act of Jacobite treachery and was met with a volley of fire, including rounds fired from guns on the tower of St Columb's Cathedral, as well as cries of 'No surrender!'.

Over the next few weeks, there were several engagements between the Jacobites and the city's Williamite defenders. Two occurred at Windmill Hill, south of the city, and another two north and north-by-north-west of the city at Pennyburn and Elagh More. In each case, the defenders triumphed, making them even more unlikely to agree to any terms with the Jacobites. Meanwhile the Jacobite army had begun digging in around the city, creating what was known as a circumvallation. Thus a ring of Jacobite positions was created encircling Londonderry. With a boom across the river at the narrows, between Pennyburn and Culmore, to prevent the approach of a relief fleet, the only real gap in the Jacobite lines was the river itself south of the city.

But the Jacobite positions west of the city had an inherent weakness. They were threatened by large numbers of Williamite supporters living in east Donegal. Had the French provided more support, especially in the form of ships, this threat would have been reduced considerably. Another problem faced by the Jacobites was the shortage of siege equipment. The two Jacobite forces that had marched north, the first led by Hamilton and the second by James, had deployed for a war of movement rather than a siege. There was insufficient heavy artillery, no siege stores, and few engineers. Rebuffed in its initial attacks, the combined Jacobite force could do no better than encircle the city

and hope to starve it out. Once again, the commitment of a French naval force would have made a tremendous difference to these operations and allowed continental-style siegework to have taken place.

As it was, the defenders awaited a relief fleet from England. This had been organised – although without the haste the people inside the walls would have preferred – and set sail from Hoylake (then called Highlake) in Cheshire and Liverpool on 30 May. Although the fleet had tried to sail earlier, contrary winds had forced it to turn back. Not until 15 June were its ships sighted in Lough Foyle. Commanding the soldiers aboard those ships was Major General Percy Kirke, a veteran officer who had served in Tangier and taken part in the suppression of the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion in 1685. Serving as Kirke's chief engineer was Captain Jacob Richards, who had been born in Ireland and had already carried out a reconnaissance voyage to Lough Foyle. It is almost entirely due to Richards that we have details of the use of Inch by Kirke's force in the weeks before the siege was lifted.

Jacob Richards, who later rose to the rank of colonel, was an engineer and gunner as both professions were closely linked at that time. Although he had served with the Jacobite train of artillery in Ireland, he considered that his true loyalty lay with the Williamite cause and changed his allegiance to King William. In 1688 Lord Dartmouth had sent Richards to Hungary to study Habsburg strategy and tactics, especially in siege operations. Needless to say, he paid particular attention to the roles of gunners and engineers. His sojourn in Hungary was rewarding financially as he was paid the generous sum of £1 per day. During his time in Ireland, both his reconnaissance and the deployment of the relief force, Richards wrote a journal that provides us with an eyewitness account of those events.

That reconnaissance undertaken by Richards had seen him sail from Liverpool in a merchant ketch, the *Edward and James*, from which he transferred to the frigate HMS *Greyhound* to sail into the Foyle where *Greyhound* came under bombardment from Culmore Fort. Although damaged badly, and with some men killed and others wounded, *Greyhound* escaped and Richards had obtained some valuable information. He did not return to Liverpool but transferred from the damaged frigate and eventually joined Kirke's force where he was able to appraise Kirke of the situation in and around the besieged city.

However, Kirke and his officers reached the conclusion that the city was in no immediate danger of falling to the Jacobites, that its defenders were in good heart and

that the boom was a real deterrent to ships sailing upriver to the city. This conclusion was reached by a Council of War, a meeting of all the senior Army officers – the rank of major and above – and the commanders of the naval vessels, on 19 June. As a result the fleet continued to lie in Lough Foyle from where senior officers observed events from a distance. Richards also recorded that people living close to the river provided information to Kirke's officers, some of which had come from within the city walls. Much of this information was, however, out of date by the time it reached Kirke.

For almost two weeks the fleet lay in Lough Foyle, although some men went ashore to Inishowen. Information continued to arrive and, on 2 July, Kirke learned that Derry's garrison lacked provisions and was 'weary of this siege; for there was nothing but hunger and slaughter in it'. That evening Kirke called another Council of War in which all the available field officers and ships' captains participated. At this meeting Kirke proposed that a small force – 500 or 600 men – should be sent to Inch 'to cause a diversion to the enemies'. This decision was a result, in part at least, of information from Captain Hobson of the frigate HMS *Bonadventure* which, some days earlier, had sailed into Lough Swilly as far as Inch. There 'several Protestants of the island came off to [Hobson] with information that one of the enemies' quarter-masters was there gathering up of provisions for the Irish army, this being a very fertile isle and abounding in all sorts of grain'.

On learning that a Jacobite quartermaster was then on the island, Hobson had sent *Bonadventure*'s first lieutenant ashore with one of the men from Inch who took the officer to the house where the quartermaster was staying. The Jacobite officer was relieved of his papers and £5 in cash by Hobson's lieutenant who then set off back to the ship's boat. En route the local man accompanying him told him that he should have taken the quartermaster into custody and so they returned to the house to make him prisoner. However, when they arrived there the quartermaster had mounted his horse and left, allegedly with a large sum of money on his person. It would seem that, in this instance at least, the Jacobites were paying local farmers for their produce.

The papers brought back to Hobson and, subsequently, passed to Kirke provided valuable intelligence on the Jacobite army. They included letters from some senior Jacobite commanders to the quartermaster – who may well have been the quartermaster-general of the Jacobite army – stressing that both soldiers and horses were suffering greatly from hunger. In fact, it was stressed that they were 'near starved'. Thus the quartermaster was told that 'he should take great care to preserve all sorts of provisions,

for their dependence was wholly on that island'. It would seem that Inch was the last storehouse for food for the Jacobites and that all other sources of provisions in the area had been exhausted.

Kirke realised that keeping the Jacobites off Inch would be 'of great consequence' as it would disrupt their logistical train, thereby causing more men to be sent farther afield on foraging expeditions. Moreover, the Protestants of east Donegal assured Hobson that, should a Williamite force land on Inch, 'several hundreds of Protestants will fly to us and take up arms'. Not only would landing troops on Inch cause logistical disruption to the Jacobites, it would also confer an operational advantage to the Williamites as well as providing them with local reinforcements.

It was decided that some 500 or 600 men would be despatched to Inch and the warships *Deptford*, *Portland* and *Antelope* were ordered to stand by to take the soldiers there as soon as HMS *Greyhound* returned from a further reconnaissance of Lough Swilly and the island. On the night of 4 July, *Greyhound* arrived back with the fleet in Lough Foyle and, early next morning, Kirke ordered Richards to join the detachment of 500 men who were to be transported to Inch. Richards' task was straightforward: he was 'to secure their landing, and then to fortify them'. In other words, having ensured that the soldiers arrived safely on Inch, Richards was to oversee the building of defence works to protect them against Jacobite attacks.

Richards boarded HMS *Greyhound* on the evening of 5 July and the ship made its way to Culmore where the merchant ships lay. The detachment of soldiers for Inch then transferred to *Greyhound* which, due to calm conditions, remained overnight at Culmore. Sailing from the Foyle to the Swilly was no straightforward task in the age of sail and, in this case, was complicated even more by rumour. *Greyhound* set sail with a westerly wind on the morning of the 6th, a Saturday, and reached Greencastle where both *Deptford* and *Portland* lay. The ships had to wait until the tide was right to leave the lough and during that time a boy came to them saying that 'this morning from the tops of the hills he had seen forty sail of ships lying in Lough Swilly'. If this was true, it was very bad news and indicated the possibility of a French fleet in the Swilly. But the ships' captains did not believe the boy as Richards wrote that they thought he might have been disoriented in the hills 'and so take our Fleet in Lough Foyle for his imaginary fleet'. As it turned out that was what had happened. The yacht *Henrietta* was sent to reconnoitre Lough Swilly while *Greyhound* remained at anchor off Greencastle; *Deptford* and *Portland* also lay at anchor some distance away. By now the soldiers had

transferred from *Greyhound* to a ketch which accompanied the warship, as did a small fly-boat.

Although the small flotilla set off again about noon on the 7th – all five ships came together again – the wind was unfavourable and the vessels ‘anchored again before night in thirty fathoms water, about four miles from [Inishowen] Head’. Next day there were more difficulties as the ships tried to sail between the mainland and Innistrhull Island but were forced by a strong, adverse current to put into Culdaff Bay. There the yacht *Henrietta* met them, confirming that there were no ships in Lough Swilly. Captain Rooke, commanding the flotilla, sent the *Henrietta* to Lough Foyle to let Kirke know this news.

Finally, on 9 July, the wind blew from the east and the ships were able to sail into Lough Swilly and up to Inch ‘over against Rathmullan where we anchored for this night’. As they dropped their anchors some local people came down to the shore to greet them and a boat was lowered from *Greyhound* to bring them out to the ship. From this group came some useful information about a large herd of cattle at Tully, some six miles from Rathmullan. These cattle were under the control of ‘country people’ who had no weapons and, with forty or fifty armed men to accompany the local people, it would be possible to seize them and, in doing so, surprise an Irish cavalry officer and his troop of twelve dragoons. The information and suggestion were considered and it was decided that three officers – Captain Echlin, Lieutenant Hart and Lieutenant Rigot – with sixty musketeers would carry out the enterprise. (This grouping of infantry soldiers constituted a company.) Arrangements were also made for Richards to go ashore early in the morning to begin planning and building defensive works, and for light field guns and pioneers to accompany him; the pioneers would begin the physical work. In all, some 200 or 300 men were to join Richards.

At midnight the company of soldiers was taken ashore and given instructions. Echlin and his men were successful in rounding up the cattle and driving them to the shore but transporting the cattle to Inch required all the available ships’ boats. This created a further problem which almost brought the entire enterprise to an end. Richards had landed from HMS *Greyhound* about 6 o’clock on the morning of the 10th with an escort of an ensign (second lieutenant) and twenty men. He describes the location of his landing as ‘a little above Burt Castle’ but in this he was mistaken as the landing took place close to Inch castle which he confirms as he then recounted marching ‘about a small mile’ before coming to the strand. This was at, or shortly after, high tide as he

noted that the strand ‘was overflowed with the tide’.

Richards then surveyed the ground before staking out the outline of a redoubt work that would protect the full fordable breadth of the strand. This was, of course, the direction from which attack by the Jacobites was most likely. By 11 o’clock, with the tide ebbing, the fordable part of the strand was drying out. Still, the guns and pioneers promised to Richards the night before had not appeared. This concerned Richards who sent a message to Colonel Stewart, who had made the arrangements with him, to send the promised men and artillery. With the strand drying out even more, ‘several poor Protestants with some few cattle forded over to us’. Inevitably, the attention of the Jacobites was drawn to this activity and some cavalry rode down to the opposite shore to harass the cattle herders.

Knowing that the enemy cavalry contingent would be reinforced, Richards sent another message asking for support. This time he appealed to Captain Collier of Kirke’s Regiment to come to his position with whatever soldiers he had available aboard HMS *Greyhound* and warned that, if support was not forthcoming, his party might have to withdraw. Emphasising the inherent danger, he told Collier that his withdrawal ‘might prove of ill consequence to us, and give room to the enemies to burn the island, and drive back these poor Protestants and their cattle again’. That warning proved effective as Collier arrived quickly on the scene.

Collier’s timing could not have been better as a group of some forty Jacobite dragoons had assembled on the far shore and were making their way across to the island. This presented a real danger to Richards and his men as dragoons were mounted infantry rather than cavalry and used their horses to ride into battle before dismounting to fight on foot. To protect the Protestants who were driving their cattle across to the island, Richards and Collier decided not to withdraw. As it transpired, withdrawal would have been a bad choice since there was no ground behind the Williamites that would give adequate protection and an effective field of fire. Instead, Richards and Collier led thirty of their men towards the dragoons, meeting them about midway on the strand. The Jacobites charged the Williamites who formed two lines of musketeers and fired at their attackers. At that the dragoons rode off. Richards believed that they did not engage in battle as they believed that an ambush awaited them and, indeed, the Williamite tactic, born out of desperation in this instance, bore the hallmarks of a feint intended to lead to an ambush, especially as other Williamite troops were visible in the distance.

‘I was very glad we came off so, for our whole number now was not above

sixty men; for Colonel Stewart did not send in the field-pieces and two or three hundred men, as was agreed to the night before,' wrote Richards but his frustration and anger were abated somewhat when he learned that this was because all the ships' boats were being used to transport the cattle that Echlin and his men had captured during the night. A short time later, Richards and Collier were joined by Colonel St John and about 200 men. It seems that St John had witnessed the events on the strand from the tops of the hills on Inch and had force-marched his men to Richards' relief. The latter believed that the Jacobites had seen St John's men in the distance which led them to withdraw in spite of their tactical advantage. Such a sighting would have confirmed suspicions of an ambush.

Later in the afternoon, at about 4 o'clock, Stewart arrived with tools and four pieces of field artillery. Richards then explained to both Stewart and St John his intended defensive design. Extending for no more than 500 paces, the works would be complete in three or four days. The group then discussed the width of the strand which would have allowed a sizeable force to deploy and was not as narrow as the Irish Protestants had led them to believe. This led to debate as to whether the force should remain on Inch or return to Lough Foyle. Stewart had orders from Kirke that he was not to land if he found that the situation there was not as it had been represented to them and if he could not 'with safety' make an immediate defence. But the landing had already changed the tactical situation on Inch by bringing 'some hundreds into the island', as well as providing an excellent store of fresh meat in the form of the cattle brought on to the island. Because of these factors, it was decided to stay and raise fortifications.

There now developed a disagreement in the ranks of the Williamite defenders of Inch with Stewart and St John expressing the view that Richards' proposed entrenchment was much larger than necessary. St John was especially critical. He thought himself an engineer or, as Richards wrote, 'pretends to be an engineer'. Although work began, it did not inspire confidence in the local Protestant people who started to doubt the soldiers' commitment. The first work undertaken was to be the construction of two redoubts, or small forts, as envisaged by Richards. With insufficient tools to work on both simultaneously, Richards set 109 men to work on building one redoubt. In addition he emplaced two field guns with which he opened fire into the temporary Jacobite camp that had sprung up on the mainland. This was intended as harassing fire to let the Jacobites know that those on Inch 'were prepared for them'.

However, Richards had no support for his policy of harassing fire and his

exasperation at the decision not only to cease fire but to remove the guns is clear when he writes

But it being nobody's opinion but mine to continue them [the guns firing] and the work they were drawn off, and at twelve o'clock at night all our men that were landed also retired to the other side of the island, distant from the strand about three miles, under the cannon of the men of war.

This also tells us that the majority of the Williamite ships lay off the north-east coast of Inch, possibly between the island and Fahan on the west coast of Inishowen. Only *Greyhound* lay nearby, off the west coast.

Not only were the guns and pioneers withdrawn, so too were all the Williamite troops, leaving neither sentinels nor a small patrol force to deter anyone crossing to the mainland to let the Jacobites know exactly what was happening on Inch. When everyone else had left, Richards returned to *Greyhound* which lay only half a mile from the strand. He did not enjoy a peaceful night's rest due to several false alarms, all caused by islanders who, having seen their protectors quit for the night, imagined that Jacobites were crossing to the island.

Stewart and St John, with their men, returned at 5 o'clock next morning to begin work on the second redoubt. No one could have been well rested as the march across the island would have taken over an hour in each direction, leaving very little time for sleep. The guns had also returned and Richards now had all four field pieces deployed on an area of rising ground from which they 'fired now and then at the several horse [cavalry] that appeared on the strand'. However, once again, the guns were withdrawn during the day, to be placed under the cover of HMS *Greyhound* while the other troops retired to the far side of the island. This occurred at low water, when it would have been possible for Jacobite troops to cross to the island.

This withdrawal had a detrimental effect on the morale of Inch's Protestants. Perceiving themselves open to the enemy, they took counsel of their fears and fled for the shelter of the hills. Nor did they hesitate to accuse the Williamite soldiery of not daring to face the enemy and of being prepared to let the Jacobites come on to the island and cut the throats of all the local Protestants. However, when the tide turned again and the soldiers returned to work at about 6 o'clock in the evening – with the tide rising and access to the island impossible – there was a temporary sense of relief among the

islanders but doubts about their protectors must have remained.

Work continued until about 1 o'clock next morning when it rained very hard. While Richards returned to the *Greyhound*, most Williamites retired to the far side of the island, a practice he criticised since 'marching backwards and hither again fatigued very much our men, besides the loss of half our time'. But Richards was outranked by Stewart and St John and any criticisms he made to them carried little weight.

On reaching *Greyhound* Richards met a man who told him that he had been in the Jacobite camp and learned that an attack on Inch was planned. At low tide the next day both Jacobite infantry and cavalry were to assault the Williamite defence works. Wasting no time, Richards sent a message to Stewart to let him know of the Jacobite plan and ask that 'we might get our guns into battery'. In addition, he recommended that the attackers be met with whatever force could be mustered since to allow them to take the redoubt would be a grave setback, especially as the first redoubt 'was now tenable against them'. Furthermore, if the Williamites were forced to withdraw to their ships this would be of 'extreme ill consequence' and could lead to news reaching the Derry garrison that the relief force had been beaten off at Inch. Richards was concerned that this might 'so discourage the city of Derry as to cause the loss of it'.

When Richards returned to the strand at 6 o'clock next morning he was surprised to find no one there. With no appearance of soldiers from the far side of the island, he gathered together about forty local volunteers whom he set to work on the second redoubt. Before finishing work the previous day, he had had his pioneers cut trenches to mark, or lock spit, the next phase. In spite of the urgency of the summons to Stewart the night before, Richards was left alone with his civilian workers throughout the morning. An hour before low water, he ordered them to withdraw with their tools and equipment as there was no armed support should Jacobite troops cross over to the island when the strand was dry. Returning to *Greyhound*, he was able to observe two troops of Jacobite heavy cavalry cross 'half way over the strand'.

However, the behaviour of the Jacobites led Richards to believe that the cavalrymen suspected that they might be riding into an ambush. After all, what sensible military man would leave partially built fortifications completely unguarded? The Jacobites could have had no idea that they were dealing with a pair of senior Williamite officers who seemed to have no tactical sense at all and no stomach for a fight. 'By their motion up and down from side to side and backward and forward [they hoped] to see, I suppose, if they could discover any body lying in ambush.' Since there were no

Williamite troops about, they were unlikely to find anyone in hiding but this faltering on the part of the Jacobites convinced Richards that they did not intend to penetrate deep into the island. It also inspired him to suggest to the commander of HMS *Greyhound* and Captain Collier a tactical ploy to exploit the Jacobite fear of ambushes.

Captain Gwillam, *Greyhound's* commander, detailed twenty-four crewmen to assist Richards in deploying two field guns to engage the Jacobites. Such was the lie of the land that Richards knew that he could have the guns drawn to the first redoubt unseen by the enemy. The guns were hauled by the sailors with some speed for, as Richards tells us, 'Never were two guns by men drawn so soon away, for had we had horses I do not believe it would have sooner been performed'. In fact, horse-drawn guns would probably have attracted the enemy's attention as the horse teams would inevitably have made more noise and the Jacobite horses would probably have sensed those drawing the guns.

And so it was that the guns were taken to the first redoubt from which the two troops of Jacobite horse were no more than 100 yards away. Not until then did the Jacobites see the approaching foe, which must have confirmed their apparent fear of ambush. However, the sailors were drawn up in front of the guns which thus remained hidden from view. Not until both guns were loaded and ready to fire were they exposed to the view of the Jacobites. Two round shot – solid balls – were fired and the cavalrymen turned about. As they rode off, two more rounds were fired, which encouraged them to quit the strand all the faster. Although none were seen to fall, Richards thought that the speedy retreat indicated casualties.

Soon after this the tide began to rise again and it was then that Colonel Stewart re-appeared. This time he had 300 men with him and had seen from the hills how Richards had dealt with the Jacobite cavalry. Nor could he have failed to realise that those Jacobite cavalry, had they penetrated further into the island, would have been followed by more and it would have been very difficult to drive them off again. Pressing his moral advantage, Richards urged Stewart and the other officers present 'to take those measures I [had] proposed at first', measures that, he stressed, should have the effect of deterring the enemy from attempting any incursions on to Inch. At last, he got his message across and achieved a commitment to march all the Williamite force to encamp by the strand, to emplace all the artillery ready for action and to continue the engineering and construction work without any break. Moreover, should the Jacobites attack again, there would be no retreat but rather the most robust defence possible.

This ended the first phase of Williamite operations on Inch. That phase had shown a lack of any sense of purpose on the part of some of the senior army officers, especially Stewart and St John, whose dilatory and weak approach to the entire enterprise threatened the Williamite objective. Only Richards' resolute stance and willingness to stand up to officers senior to him ensured that this phase ended without a Jacobite success. Moreover, the other officers had all but lost the trust of the local Protestant people whereas Richards must have seemed a more trustworthy and reliable character to them. Whether they felt any sense of impending defeat we do not know but those first days must have been days of great uncertainty.

Consolidation

With the resolve of Stewart and St John stiffened, Richards now ordered the four field pieces to be brought to the fortification and emplaced between the redoubts. He then ordered the construction of a battery, or gun position, with embrasures for eight guns. Work continued on the second redoubt which was tenable by midnight, by which time the remaining troops deployed to Inch had arrived. In the early hours – between 1.00 and 2.00am – the tide was out and the strand again lay dry. However, there was no Williamite withdrawal this time. Work on the fortifications was suspended and all the soldiers 'stood to their arms to be ready to receive our threatening enemies'. Now began the consolidation and development of the lodgement on Inch. From the island three messengers were despatched, by different routes, to let the garrison of Derry know that Williamite troops had landed on Inch and that more would follow.

Work continued on completing the defence works and Richards arranged for two more guns to be brought from *Greyhound* and emplaced. He also designed two lines of communication (trenches) from the artillery site to the redoubts but, once again, ran into problems with St John who considered himself a better engineer than Richards. Friction between officers of different arms – in this case engineering and infantry – are as old as warfare although, in modern times, the relationship is generally much better. However, St John held the advantage of higher rank and thus overruled Richards' plan. St John's work was begun and so 'contrary to all rule and method of defence' was it that Richards decided to have nothing to do with it and 'troubled myself no farther with the works, of which I am sure any one that pretends to be an engineer ought to be ashamed'.

About 3 o'clock on Saturday 13 July, two of the messengers sent to Derry returned. Both provided similar reports, although one also carried a letter from the assistant governor, the Reverend George Walker, who signed himself as governor. The gist of Walker's letter was that the relief force was taking an unconscionable time relieving the city. It also included an account of the city's situation.

Their provisions were now very short and could not hold out longer than fourteen days more; that the enemies had offered them very honourable terms; and hoped that before this time would be expired we would think of some way to relieve them, otherwise they will be forced to accept of their enemies' offers.

This painted a bleak picture of the situation in the besieged city. The troops on Inch were preparing to meet any further Jacobite attacks and all the professional soldiers were drawn up in battle lines with the newly-raised local companies joining them in a show of deterrence. A letter from the marine officer on board *Greyhound* raised the level of readiness. His opinion was that the enemy would attack 'in a tide or two' and push against both flanks on the strand, intending to penetrate the Williamite defence in that way. Intelligence reports, noted the marine officer, told that the Jacobites were making 'most terrible braggings of what they would do'. This was hardly the time for dissension in the defenders' ranks but still St John continued with his engineering works, ordering two traverses to be constructed from the right and left of the banks down to the low-water mark. He also had what he called 'epauliers' made but these, as Richards noted, were of no value since they did not flank any other part of the defence works but were flanked by them. (By epauliers, St John presumably meant epaulements, which are parapets or breastworks designed to protect a flank; the word is derived from the French word for shoulder.) Thus their value was all but nothing while their construction tired and harassed the soldiers much more than if they had been engaged on Richards' original design.

Although messengers had been sent to Derry to contact the garrison, no signal had yet been sent to Kirke to let him know that a firm lodgement had been made on Inch. That was rectified on the evening of the 13th when HMS *Greyhound* was ordered to fire thirteen guns 'to give notice to the Major General in Lough Foyle that we were well settled here'. Next day the strength of the defences was increased even more with the

emplacing of a further two guns. No fewer than eight field pieces were now deployed to meet any enemy approach across the strand. The guns were small: six were 3-pounders, or minions, while the other two were 6-pounders, or sakers. Although their rounds might not have been very effective against well-built fortifications they would have taken a heavy toll of Jacobite cavalry or infantry in any attempted assault, especially if used to fire case shot, a charge of assorted pieces of metal, including musket balls, or even stones. This was the forerunner of shrapnel.

Over the next few days the pace of events seemed to accelerate. On the 14th, as well as the additional guns being emplaced, Captain Hobson in HMS *Bonadventure* arrived in Lough Swilly. He was returning from a voyage to Killybegs in south-west Donegal to unload powder and ammunition for the garrison of Enniskillen and brought back a deputation of Enniskillen men with a plan to relieve Derry. Hobson had dropped this group at Greencastle before coming into Lough Swilly. Their plan was to march to Derry from Enniskillen and force the Jacobites to raise the siege. However, they required arms and ammunition, as well as some officers, to execute this plan. Demanding the supply of 1,500 weapons, they claimed that they could put in the field no fewer than 8,000 infantry and 1,200 cavalry while there were enough small horses to form a regiment of dragoons, provided there were weapons for them.

Kirke's reaction to this deputation was to send a despatch to Rooke to sail into Lough Foyle and join him with both *Portland* and *Bonadventure*. Thus, Richards noted, the Inch garrison expected Kirke to arrive very soon. The 14th also brought 'news' that the boom across the Foyle had been broken in several places and that the large Jacobite artillery pieces had been withdrawn. Of course, this was only rumour but a messenger was sent across the neck of Inishowen to acquaint Kirke of it. Early on the morning of 15 July that messenger returned, having been unable to deliver his message to Kirke as the entire relief fleet had sailed from Lough Foyle.

Other rumours reaching the garrison on Inch told of a Jacobite plan to attack the island while it was said that the Duke of Berwick, King James' illegitimate son, was en route to Enniskillen with 1,500 cavalry and 2,000 infantry to reduce the Fermanagh town. Moreover, it was said that this force had clashed with a Williamite force from Enniskillen that had put Berwick's men to flight, taking 300 prisoners and some 700 weapons together with powder and corn. It seems that this particular rumour referred to the Battle of Belturbet which had been fought as far back as 19 June. There were also reports of a French fleet being seen off Carrickfergus. The Jacobites claimed that

the fleet carried 20,000 French soldiers 'and a vast sum of money; which indeed King James wants, for a small piece of copper not worth the value of half a farthing goes for sixpence'.

But there was no doubting the facts that the Williamite party at Rathmullan had now sent over several hundred cattle as well as up to 600 'good lusty men able to bear arms'. These latter had been formed into companies, each commanded by a local gentleman. A typical infantry company of the time numbered sixty-two men and so there may have been as many as ten companies of locally-raised troops. While this militia may not have been as professional as the English soldiers in Kirke's force, their presence was a morale booster since the swelling of Williamite numbers would have been a further deterrent to the Jacobites. Although the Jacobites were probably unaware of it, King William and his Dutch commanders had grave doubts about the reliability of English soldiers at this time as many were raw recruits mustered into the army since the deposing of James and had still to learn the profession of arms. Many, it was suspected, might desert readily or change sides if it seemed that a Jacobite victory was imminent.

The rumour mill continued to turn over the next few days, perhaps because there was little activity at Inch, other than a few threats of Jacobite aggression. Derry's defenders were supposed to have sallied out of the city on 12 July and killed 500 Jacobites but this had not happened and there was no excursion by the garrison on that day. And there was yet another rumour that Berwick had been beaten at Enniskillen, that he had retreated and was now planning to deploy to beat the Williamite force from Rathmullan. (The Rathmullan force numbered no more than 120 men, commanded by Captains Echlin and Cunningham.) In fact, Berwick had inflicted a defeat on the Enniskillen men on 13 July.

Deception has long been a feature of war and, on the 18th, a piece of Jacobite deception was uncovered when a spy was captured 'with a sham letter written by my Lord Dungan'. This letter was not addressed to anyone in particular but seemed to be intended for Kirke's attention. According to Richards it was 'a very silly letter' and was written so as to appear that it came from a Protestant seeking assurance. 'Uneasy where he was', the alleged writer wanted the messenger to return with orders from Kirke at which stage he would join the Williamites and bring 'about twenty more horses with him'. However, the assurances he sought included a desire to know the strength of the Williamite cavalry on Inch which, he stated, would be of little use if they were not in considerable strength. The writer went on to claim that he had been with Berwick at

Enniskillen and had witnessed the Protestant defeat there.

But the letter was suspicious and the messenger, a boy, admitted, following a few threats, that he had been sent by Lord Dungan, one of the senior Jacobite commanders, who had given him half a crown (12.5p) and promised to bring this up to twenty-four shillings (£1.20) on his return. He also admitted that he had been instructed to observe the numbers of cavalry and infantry in the Williamite camp, the number of artillery pieces and the nature of the fortifications. It seemed that the letter was also intended to convince the Williamites that Enniskillen was not as strong as they believed it to be. This deception did not work due, in very large part, to the clumsiness of the Jacobite plan.

Following the uncovering of this maladroit Jacobite attempt at espionage came a major attack on the Williamite detachment in Rathmullan. The 120 men of the detachment had barricaded the town's streets as a deterrent to any attacker and this proved to have been a valuable precaution as a much larger Jacobite force, estimated at some 1,500 cavalry and infantry, launched an attack in the afternoon. Observers on Inch had spotted several troops of enemy horse approaching Rathmullan at about noon and had sent a messenger to warn Echlin and Cunningham but the attack had begun before the messenger arrived. One Williamite source tells us that a small ketch off Rathmullan, which may have been carrying the messenger, 'fired among the horse and killed a cornet¹ and 3 troopers with its first shot'.

The barricades proved their worth when the Jacobites were unable to push into Rathmullan. With many dead or wounded, the attackers withdrew. According to Richards, about 150 dead Jacobites were left behind but the defenders had suffered only two casualties: Cunningham had been killed and his ensign, or second lieutenant, had received a head wound. However, the *London Gazette*, the official government newspaper, subsequently reported that two or three Williamite soldiers had also been killed. That only one man was wounded is also doubtful and it must be assumed that there were perhaps ten or twelve others who suffered wounds of varying degrees.

Although their first assault had been unsuccessful there was little doubt that the Jacobites, believed to be commanded by the Duke of Berwick, would try again. Thus Echlin was ordered to evacuate his men from Rathmullan which he did that night. About 100 cattle had to be left behind as there was no means of transporting them to Inch in the limited time available. It seemed that at least some Jacobite soldiers would dine on fresh meat over the next few days. Subsequently, a Jacobite deserter confirmed that Berwick

¹ A cavalry second lieutenant.

had led the Rathmullan attack and had claimed to have killed 200 Williamites, a figure substantially greater than the strength of the detachment there. This led Richards to believe that reports of Jacobite successes at Enniskillen were much exaggerated and that the enemy may have been defeated there instead.

The Fight Continues

Echlin's men had returned to Inch by daylight on the 19th. Later in the morning some troops were sent back to Rathmullan to bring away the cattle and some inhabitants who had taken refuge in nearby woods but had returned to the town after daybreak. Although Richards wrote that all the cattle were brought away this seems unlikely and some must have been left behind. Nonetheless, it is obvious that the Jacobites had failed to secure the town.

According to Richards there was concern among the Inch garrison that nothing had been heard of Kirke who had sailed from Lough Foyle on the 15th. It was generally believed that the delay in his arrival was attributable to adverse winds on the journey but some thought that he had sailed for Ballyshannon instead. This would have allowed him to join up with the Williamite force at Enniskillen but, if true, would mean that he had abandoned the objective of the relief fleet, which was to raise the siege.

Whatever discussion about Kirke's plans and movements may have occurred that day were brought to an end at midnight when the discharge of thirteen guns announced that 'the Major General was arrived in this our Lough'. The garrison answered with a salute of nine guns and, not long afterwards, Captain Withers arrived to confirm that Kirke was in Lough Swilly. Early the next morning, Kirke came ashore after giving orders for the disembarkation of the entire force. He inspected the work carried out on the island and 'seemed well pleased' with what the garrison had achieved. Of course he also brought news, both good and bad. The good news was that a major Williamite force was being assembled in the north-west of England, at Chester, Liverpool and Whitehaven 'and that all possible means were being used to despatch them hither'. The bad news was that of the capture by the three French vessels of the small ship, the *James* of Derry, which he had sent to Scotland to buy supplies, including wine, for the fleet; the French had also taken two Scottish privateers. Four ships of the fleet had been sent to track down the French warships: these were Rooke's *Deptford*, Hobson's *Bonadventure*, Lee's *Portland* and Leake's *Dartmouth*, all under Rooke's command.

Much of the day was spent in raising camps for the soldiers who had disembarked, unloading ammunition and stores and securing these in the magazine that Richards had built for that purpose. Mindful of the request from Enniskillen, Kirke also ordered two ships to carry 500 muskets and some officers there; the officers included Wolseley who was to command a regiment of Enniskillen Horse and Major Tiffin who would command a regiment of Enniskillen Foot. Then, at 5.00pm, a letter was received from Walker in Derry, telling Kirke that the boom had been broken and that the Jacobite artillery had been drawn away from the river. This was not true but Kirke had no means of verifying it and 'with a great deal of privacy' ordered that three merchant ships be loaded with provisions for the garrison of the city and that forty musketeers should travel on each ship. Then, at night, he boarded HMS *Swallow* which was to escort the three vessels to Lough Foyle. There Kirke intended to relieve Derry or to lie by it.

Although the information from Walker was false, it set in motion the series of events that led to the relief of Derry at the end of the month. The ships that had been loaded with supplies were the *Mountjoy*, the *Phoenix* and the *Jerusalem* while HMS *Swallow*'s longboat was to carry the party of sailors that broke the boom.

With Kirke en route for the Foyle, Inch was a hubbub of activity as huts were built to accommodate the soldiers of the relief force. This work carried on over the next two days – 21 and 22 July – while information was also received that the Jacobites planned three attacks on the island. The locations for two of these assaults were said to be over by Captain Sweetman's house and by Burt castle, but although both places were narrow they were not fordable. Presumably the third attack was to be made over the strand. Not only were guards mounted at the first two locations but a ship was also stationed at each point to deter any attempts at swimming across.

Around midnight there was the sound of much musket fire from the north-west part of the island. Initially, it was believed that this came from a party of thirty men, commanded by Lieutenant Hart, which had been sent to Paul Binson's (on the mainland of Inishowen) where, the garrison had learned, there was corn and cattle. The patrol's intention was to bring back the cattle and corn. Subsequently it was thought that the firing might be some of the advanced guard at Sweetman's but then the sight of flames from across the lough alerted them to the fact that the Jacobites were setting fire to Rathmullan. There can be little doubt that this was being carried out by Berwick's men; the Duke gained a reputation for executing a ruthless 'scorched earth' policy throughout the campaign in Ireland. One Williamite ship lying off Rathmullan fired at the town in

an effort to distract the Jacobites from their purpose.

On the 23rd all available soldiers of the garrison stood to in case of a Jacobite attack across the strand which, because of tidal conditions, was dry from side to side. The fortifications were manned fully and the artillery stood ready should the Jacobites, as they had threatened so often, make a foray against the island. But no attack came and the garrison was able to stand down when the threat had disappeared. During the day Lieutenant Hart and his men returned from Inishowen with 'some small plunder from his wife's own relations' but without the cattle and corn that he had been sent for; he seemed to have regarded the 'small plunder', which is not described, as more important than the corn and cattle. As a result, Captain Echlin, with fifty men, was sent to the same area to secure the cattle and corn but he arrived too late. A guard of Jacobite dragoons had descended on the area and taken away about a hundred horse-loads of corn, leaving Echlin with no more than a hundred bushels.

That evening the sight of fires from Inishowen indicated that the Jacobites were burning several villages. This was taken as a sign that they were withdrawing from Inishowen and information was received that Jacobite troops had withdrawn from their trenches before Derry to positions about a mile and a half from the city. There was also a report that Berwick was again on his way to Enniskillen, this time to secure some passes so as to prevent the Enniskillen troops marching on Derry. However, there was no way of verifying these reports.

When the tide was fully out on the 24th several troops of Jacobite cavalry and some infantry were observed on the high ground across from Inch, apparently preparing an attack. The garrison made ready to repel any assault but it seemed that the Jacobites were more concerned about a foray from the island than assaulting the Williamites since, as soon as the tide once again covered the strand and it was no longer fordable, they withdrew from sight. There were also reports of Williamite ships reaching Derry, to which Richards gave little credence as he knew that the winds had not been favourable.

Dawn on the following day was accompanied by the sounds of cannon fire and musketry which it was thought came from Lough Foyle, Derry or the Jacobite camp. Those on Inch and the ships lying off the island were hopeful that this, at last, meant that the relief ships had reached Derry; the winds had become more favourable. By 8 o'clock a small ship was spotted coming up Lough Swilly. This was the *James* of Derry which had been rescued from the French by Rooke's squadron. The ship carried a letter from Kirke to Colonel Stewart, the most senior officer on the island, with orders for the

bulk of the relief force to abandon Inch, leaving it manned only by a small detachment of about 600 men. Stewart showed the letter to Richards and asked for his opinion. Richards told him that if they followed Kirke's orders they would ruin the Williamite cause in this area, leave thousands of their supporters to the mercy of the Jacobites and lose the island. This reflected Stewart's own view and so he called a council of war of the field officers and captains of the regiments present. The letter was read to them and their opinions sought.

On 22 July, Kirke had written:

Since I have left you, I have had time to consider of our island, and find it not tenable, if ever the enemy brings down cannon against us. I should be very loath to be beat out of it in a confusion, [and] therefore, I think the best way is to be in readiness to make a handsome retreat in case we are pushed; which I propose according to this method I here send you. Another great reason I have to put our old men on ship-board is the want of cover for them in the island, the scarcity of provisions, especially that of bread, makes me leave the new men² that are used to live upon oat-meal by themselves; for soldiers if they don't fare all alike are apt to grumble, and our men not being used to that diet will grow more sickly than they were already. Besides, when they are on shipboard they are readier to be carried in our boats to an assistance of any part of the island, or to make any attempt on the main [land], than if they were ashore. These reasons induce me to desire you to order it according to the enclosed detailment I send you.

Kirke went on to confirm that Captain Rooke's squadron had retaken the ships captured by du Quesne Mosnier's squadron while he also informed Stewart that adverse winds had prevented him entering Lough Foyle but that he hoped to do so on the next tide. In addition, he said that all was in order and that the ships' commanders were ready and willing to make the run up the lough and river to Derry.

Kirke's proposals included the majority of the English soldiers going back on board their ships save for 600 to guard Inch, another 200 to deploy to Rathmullan – and be relieved on a weekly basis – while the great fly-boat, with a detachment of regular

² By 'old men' in this case, Kirke meant the soldiers of the fleet who had come from England whereas the 'new men' were those recruited locally.

soldiers, was to relieve the *George* which would rejoin the fleet.³The men on the fly-boat would also be relieved on a weekly rota. Encamped about Captain Sweetman's house, to protect the easternmost passage of the island, were to be three companies under Captains Hart, Cunningham Senior and Sweetman while at Burt castle (really Inch castle) the companies under Captains Sampson Senior and Sampson Junior would cover the westernmost passage. Near the great ford five companies – those of Captains Newberry, Daniel Cunningham, the late Captain Cunningham, Montgomery and Stuart, would ensure the integrity of this approach to the island.

From Kirke's orders we also learn of the plan to build a hospital on the island as he wrote that this 'must be as near the waterside on the northernmost part of the island as the houses will permit'. In overall command were to be a Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel and Major. Another 100 regular soldiers, or more if Stewart felt this necessary, would remain to cover the road over the hill between the northern and southern parts of the island. Finally, all the ships lying at the ford were to be manned by regular soldiers. Kirke also included a letter to be sent to General Conrad de Rosen, the Jacobite commander at Derry (he was Marshal General of James' army), from King William and Queen Mary. (This letter informed Rosen that his treatment of Protestants living close to Derry could, if continued, lead to reprisals against Catholics in England. At the end of June Rosen had had many local Protestants marched to the city in an effort to have them taken in, thus increasing the strain on the garrison's resources and leading to an early end to the siege. The garrison had retaliated by threatening to hang Jacobite prisoners and a stand-off resulted with the unhappy episode ending when General Hamilton brought King James' influence to bear on Rosen and had him release his captives.)

Kirke's planned dispositions show that much thought had gone into defending the island and it is clear that, although he had spent less than twenty-four hours on Inch, he had made a thorough appreciation of the ground and the threats against the island. Nonetheless, the officers on the island, led by Stewart and Richards, felt it right to countermand these orders lest, as we have seen, they would so damage Williamite morale in the area as to destroy the Protestant cause. Thus all the officers of the garrison were resolved to remain ashore on the island and a letter was sent to Kirke explaining their decision.

³ The *George* was not a Royal Navy ship as no contemporary RN vessel bore that name.

The letter told Kirke that his officers on Inch had decided to desist from putting these orders into execution till your more positive directions, and the consideration of these reasons hereafter mentioned.

As to our enemies bringing cannon down upon us, it is our opinion that heavy cannon cannot well be brought over the strand; which if they should attempt, it will be executed with great slowness by reason of the bad ways and their heaviness, which will give us all the opportunity and time imaginable to dismount them. Their bringing artillery into battery on the opposite shore will be of little or no damage to us by reason of the distance. It will be very easy for us to mount so many guns, as to hinder them from ever drawing any against us over the island.

Kirke's proposal to embark all the regulars, save those detachments on guard duties, was also questioned as it would leave the bulk of the force unable to respond quickly to any attack on the strand as ships' boats could not reach there easily and any attacker might make considerable inroads before the regulars could join the affray. It was noted that the Jacobites had good intelligence of what was happening on Inch and that any such redeployment would be known to them quickly; they would undoubtedly attack in such circumstances.

Stewart informed Kirke that, since the arrival of the Williamites at Inch, some 12,000 souls had taken refuge on the island and that these people could expect no mercy from the Jacobites. He further questioned how '300 undisciplined men will retreat three miles with eight pieces of artillery from nimble horse (not having either advantageous ground or defile to favour their embarking) without being in great danger of all being cut off?'. Details were given of Berwick's scorched-earth attack on Rathmullan and on the Inishowen side of the lough: from Captain Sweetman's house as far as the ketch *Fisher*, a distance of some two miles, 'the Irish have put in flames'. The burnings had been accompanied by the deaths of several Protestants and it was believed that this pattern would be repeated should Inch fall into Jacobite hands.

The arguments presented by Stewart seem to have convinced Kirke as the garrison remained on the island. Stewart had also sent two messengers to Derry 'to acquaint them of your [Kirke's] designs' which all at Inch hoped would be successful.

It was also intended to strengthen the defences at Inch with Richards – referred to as 'Colonel' by Stewart in his letter – emplacing yet more artillery and securing the

works already in place so that they could not easily be forced. For the next few days the tides would also work to the advantage of the Williamite garrison and allow them time to improve their defences.

Having despatched the letter, Stewart ordered all the local people to go next morning to the strand to assist the soldiers working on the fortifications. Another eight guns were to be brought ashore with four to be emplaced on the right of the defences and four on the left. Then came a rumour, from some women who came over to Inch, that they had seen 'three ships at Derry quay, which, if true, [meant] that place is relieved by the Major General'. Once again, it was not true but the final relief of the city was not far off.

Over the next two days work on the defences went on apace. Both redoubts were joined by a protected line of communication while the guns were brought ashore and carpenters set to work to construct platforms for them. By the end of the second day all eight new guns were in place and two ships were ordered to lie dry on the right and left of the strand with forty musketeers on each as well as three guns. This brought to twenty-two the number of guns that could engage any attack across the strand. In addition, the *George* and the *Fisher* also mounted guns that could be used, as could those of *Greyhound*, which lay a greater distance away. A supply of hand grenades was also provided for the musketeers on board the two ships at either flank of the strand.

When information was received that about a dozen Jacobite dragoons were stationed on the Inishowen side, near the ketch *Fisher*, to prevent the local Protestants reaching boats that could convey them to the island, a half company of infantry was sent, under cover of darkness, to surprise the dragoons and chase them off. However, their crossing was detected and, as they landed, the dragoons engaged them. The Williamite infantry were forced to take to their two boats and return to Inch. Another expedition, led by Dr Leslie with fifteen infantry, had more success and returned next day with news, albeit much exaggerated, of a sally from Derry by members of the garrison. Meanwhile, the Jacobites made no attempts to cross to the island while the news from Derry was that the besiegers were concerned that the Enniskillen Protestants were about to appear. The Jacobite army, it was said, was reduced to 1,000 cavalry and 4,000 infantry while Berwick, at Castlefin, had no more than 2,000 cavalry and dragoons and a force of infantry.

Although the garrison was not to know it at the time, the last Jacobite attacks on Inch were made on Sunday 28 July. Early in the morning, with the strand dry, a group

of four or five Jacobite cavalymen rode on to the strand, hoping, it appeared, to draw the advance guard into action. However, the Williamites already knew that two troops of Jacobite cavalry were concealed behind a nearby hill. Their ruse failing to attract any reaction, the cavalymen began withdrawing, their pace quickened by the discharge of two cannon balls 'which made them go faster than they came'. Not long after this, the two cavalry troops emerged from their cover and approached the island. They, too, were engaged by artillery fire which killed one of their men. This episode was followed by another in the afternoon when about ten cavalymen appeared on top of the hill that earlier had concealed the two troops. These men were within range of the new battery on the right, of which it seemed they were unaware. They beat a quick retreat when two of the guns opened fire at them.

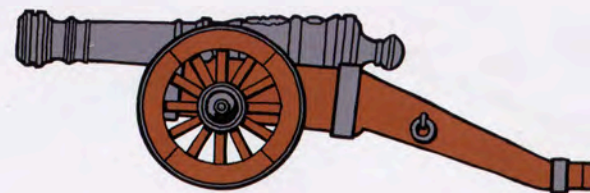
That afternoon, at about 4 o'clock, a man was seen running over the strand and a sergeant was sent with two files of musketeers to 'favour his coming' as it seemed that he was a Williamite since he was being pursued by two or three horsemen. One of the horsemen overtook the man, fired his carbine at him but missed and then rode in to attack with his sword. Although the fugitive had only a stick with which he defend himself, he managed to keep the horseman off until the Williamite infantry were within musket range, at which point the Jacobite trooper retired. When he was brought into the camp, the fugitive said that he had left Derry eight days earlier and that the city had then not more than ten days' provisions. Moreover, he said that many Jacobite infantrymen were ill with fevers and fluxes and that the defenders had made a sally from the city, although he claimed that they had killed 2,000 Jacobites in that sally, 'most basely murder[ing] them when they had not three matches lighted in the trenches'. (These matches were lengths of matchcord that had to be kept alight to allow matchlock muskets to be fired; this indicates that the Jacobite infantry had obsolescent weaponry.)

Later in the evening, between 8 and 9 o'clock, the sound of heavy guns was heard from the direction of Derry or Culmore. This gave hope that the city was being relieved as the wind had been favourable for ships sailing upriver all day. This later proved to be the case, the fire being that of the engagement between HMS *Dartmouth* and the Jacobite gunners in Culmore Fort, as well as the gunners along the river engaging the relief ships. Next day, more gunfire was heard on Inch and that evening a company of infantry deployed to Inishowen to try to surprise the Jacobite guard there. Their orders were to land two miles away from the Jacobite location, move into the hills and take the foe from the rear.

On the Tuesday came 'several people ... from the Irish camp' who assured the garrison that they had seen the relief ships dock at Derry on the Sunday night and that HMS *Dartmouth* had battered Culmore Fort. Soon there was further confirmation that the city had been relieved and that the siege was over. A deserter told how Berwick, at his camp at Castlefin, had heard of the relief ships and had flung his hat on the ground, exclaiming 'The rogues have broken the siege and we are all undone'. The deserter also said that the Jacobites had decided to withdraw, but had sought permission from King James in Dublin before doing so.

James' permission was not waited for. That night fires were seen in the direction of Letterkenny: the Jacobites were again engaging in Berwick's scorched earth tactic. From Inch, Captain Billing was sent with an infantry company to drive off a small party of Jacobite dragoons near Burt and 'secure the retreat of several Protestant families to us'. The burning continued next day, increasing hopes that the Jacobites were intending to quit the region completely. Then, at 10 o'clock came HMS *Swallow* with Kirke on board and the news that Derry had been relieved, thanks to the courage of Captain Leake and HMS *Dartmouth*.

The siege was indeed over and within days there were reports of the Jacobites moving off towards Dublin, although some made their way to Coleraine instead. Richards was ordered to the city to assess the damage and give orders for repairs to the walls. By the end of the week HMS *Dartmouth* had been sent to Liverpool with news of the Williamite victory. Detachments from every regiment on Inch were ordered to march to Derry where a permanent camp was to be built on Windmill Hill, outside the walls. Most of the remainder of the troops on Inch would follow when sufficient huts were built on Windmill Hill, leaving Inch with a garrison of 200 men and six artillery pieces; the hospital would remain on the island. By 6 August most of the transfer was underway and Captain Barber was appointed Governor of Inch. The fleet sailed from Lough Swilly arriving at Derry on 10 August.



Epilogue

The story of Inch in the siege ends here. We do not know when the hospital on the island closed nor when the final small garrison was withdrawn. What we do know is that the island played a significant part in the siege. It might have been more significant had Kirke exploited to the utmost the tactical advantage that Inch gave him and which the Jacobites and their French allies had thrown away. As the crow flies, Inch is only a little over six miles from the walls of the besieged city and it would have been possible for the Williamites, once secure on the island, to have marched to the city in less than a day. A road runs almost in a straight line over the shoulder of Grianan Hill towards the city and rises to no more than 500 feet. Although undulations in the terrain would have made the march one of about eight miles, this was still a practical proposition for Kirke's men. Even marching along the flat land between Foyle and Swilly would have been feasible and would have added less than two miles – the fact that the ground was largely flat would have reduced the time taken compared to the Grianan route.

Why did Kirke not attack the besiegers from the rear? We will never know, although there were some at the time who believed that he retained sympathies for his old master, King James II, and would have changed sides had conditions been right. That may be so, but what is also likely is that he had little faith in Stewart or St John, both of whom prevaricated in the early days on Inch. Alternatively, Kirke may have considered that, since he believed the city's garrison to be in no immediate danger of defeat, that such a move was unnecessary.

The Siege of Derry was one of the most important events in Irish, British and European history. In those 105 days in the spring and summer of 1689, not only was Ireland's fate decided but so too was the future of British parliamentary democracy while the plans of Louis XIV of France to dominate Europe came to naught. The part played by Inch in those events has been little acknowledged but it was a part worthy of being remembered alongside the other events in the island's history.





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