

Rinuccini in Control – 1646/'47

Rinuccini



In November 1645 Archbishop Rinuccini arrived in Kilkenny, bringing money and weapons to support the Catholic Confederates. These supplies made it possible to equip the two major Confederate armies – the Leinster army commanded by General Thomas Preston, and the Ulster army commanded by General Eoghan Rua Ó Néill. Preston succeeded in capturing the castle of Roscommon and on June 5th 1646 Ó Néill had a great victory over the Scots and British forces at Benburb in County Tyrone.

The Ormonde Peace

Since 1643 the Confederates had a truce with the Royalists. The King's Lord Lieutenant in Ireland was the Marquis of Ormonde, who held Dublin and some of the territory around it on the East Coast, reaching north into County Louth and east into part of Kildare. During the truce there were peace talks between the representatives of the Confederate Supreme Council and Ormonde representing the King, who badly needed help in his war with the Parliament in England. In Ireland, the Parliament held Cork City and a large part of the surrounding County Cork.

In July 1646 the Confederate Supreme Council proclaimed a peace with the Royalists. This was known as the Ormonde Peace. In August the Catholic clergy of Ireland met at Waterford and denounced this peace because it didn't guarantee religious freedom for Catholics or an end to the Penal Laws against them.

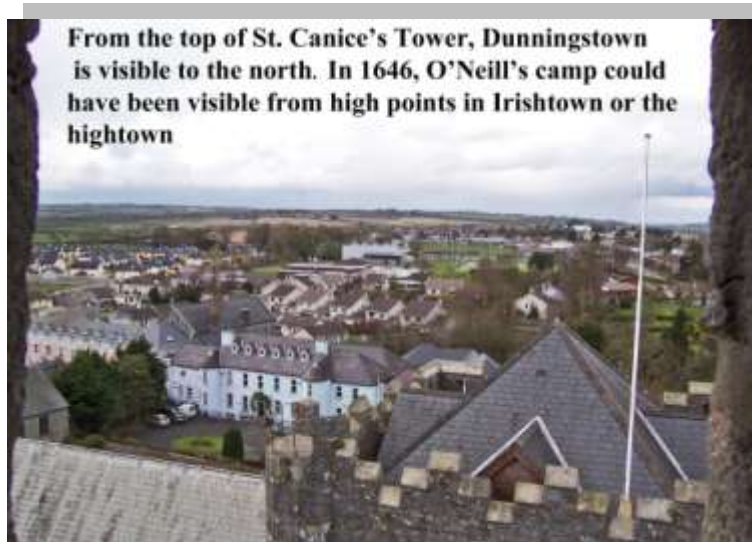
Rejection of the Ormonde Peace

Rinuccini summoned O'Neill and Preston, with their armies to come to Kilkenny, and support him against the members of the Supreme Council who had supported the peace. Their armies camped near Kilkenny. Rinuccini had the members who supported the peace imprisoned. A new Supreme Council was elected with Rinuccini as president and it rejected the Ormonde Peace.

O' Neill's army near Kilkenny

We can get some idea of the effect of the arrival of the Ulster army from entries in the First Book of The Corporation of Irishtown.

“The 18th of September 1646, the general Owen Roe O’Neyle did pitch his camp at Dunningstown in the County of the City of Kilkenny, which were in number thirteen thousand strong, besides twenty-five troops, which camp did put the city in great terror and wasted the whole county where they were.”



The reason for the “wasting” of the countryside was that the army supported itself by foraging – in other words taking what food and supplies were needed from the surrounding farms. Dunningstown was part of the out-parish of St. Canice – that part of the parish which lay outside Irishtown walls.. In January we read that “The inhabitants of the out parish of Saint Canice were devastated

and brought behindhand by the incursion of the Ulster and Leinster army.” The damage was so great that the out parish was allowed to pay less taxes than the part within the walls.

The March on Dublin

From mid September until late October, the two armies remained near Kilkenny. At last, on the orders of the Supreme Council, they moved towards Dublin with the aim of capturing the city. This was the largest army ever assembled by the Confederates. It was under the joint command of O’Neill and Preston. On 2nd November they arrived on the outskirts of Dublin, and called on the Marquis of Ormonde to surrender the city. He refused, and the O’Neill and Preston failed to agree on an attack. They returned to Kilkenny. O’Neill dispersed some of his army into winter quarters, but kept some near Kilkenny. In January 1647 the imprisoned members of the old Supreme Council were released. A new assembly was called and elected a new Supreme Council.

Paying for the army

Inhabitants of the part of the country under Confederate control had to pay their taxes to the Supreme Council, and additional charges were made for the support of the army. We can see how this affected the Irishtown of Kilkenny:

“The sessors shall applot within the Irishtown for the major officers, clergymen and six troops’ means for fifty days amounting to thirty three pounds, three shillings, sevenpence halfpenny.” The sessors were the men whose duty it was to decide how much of this money

was to be paid by each householder. The money was to go to pay the wages of the chief officers, the clergy attached to the army, and some cavalry. Three more appotments were made over the winter and early spring. The total amount of the four collections was over one hundred and eighty pounds, a huge sum of money in 1646.

Walls

Bishop French of Ferns wrote at the time that Kilkenny was like a city under siege. The people of Kilkenny obviously felt much the same, judging by the decision that “The inhabitants of the Irishtown shall work in making the sconses (city walls) in the Hightown and St. John’s , dividing this quarter into two squadrons, one squadron a day, the other the next day, and so taking their turns after the other quarter of the city.”

Kilkenny had three walled areas.



The Hightown

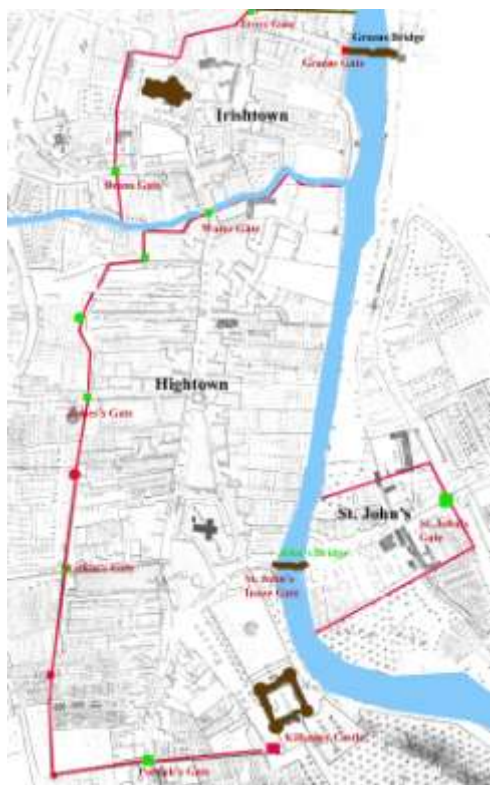
had a wall running from the Castle to Talbot’s tower and from there to the River Bregagh, and along the Bregagh to the Nore. In this photograph you can see a section of wall near the Market Cross Shopping Centre

Irishtown

had a wall enclosing the area around St. Canices’s Cathedral. Here you can see an earthen bank with a low wall visible on top. The wall is higher on the far side, and would have been higher still in the past. The earthen bank was probably built up behind the Irishtown wall at the time of the Confederation. The old



medieval wall would not have been able to withstand cannon fire, and the earthen bank would have strengthened it greatly.



St. John's

St. John's on the east bank of the Nore was the smallest walled area. Here you can see a turret which protected the corner where the east wall met the south. You can make out part of one of these walls to the right of the building.



All these walls were in need of strengthening if there were to be an attack. There was no such attack in 1647, but when Cromwell laid siege to Kilkenny in 1650, the walls were certainly needed.

Defeat of Confederate Armies

1647 was a disastrous year for the Confederation. In July The Earl of Ormonde surrendered Dublin to the Parliamentary forces. On August 8th General Thomas Preston marched on Dublin with the Confederate Army of Leinster. The Parliamentary Commander, Colonel Michael Jones cut him off at Dungan's Hill near Trim in County Meath. The Leinster Army was destroyed in the battle. In November the Confederate Army in Munster was defeated at Knocknauus by the Parliamentary general, Lord Inchiquin.

The Inchiquin Truce

In 1648, King Charles reached an agreement with the Scots, even though he was still a prisoner of Parliament. In Ireland, Lord Inchiquin agreed to change sides and joined the Royalists. He started negotiations with the Confederates and a peace was agreed. Rinuccini condemned the peace. The Confederates were deeply divided with some supporting the peace with Inchiquin and the Royalists, and others, including some bishops, supporting Rinuccini.

Rinuccini flees from Kilkenny

On the night of 9th May the Nuncio fled from Kilkenny to Owen Roe O'Neill's camp at Maryborough, now called Port Laoise. O'Neill supported him and this led to civil war between the two Confederate factions. In 1649 Rinuccini finally left Ireland.

Ormonde had returned to Ireland and took command of what was now the Royalist army. He tried to recapture Dublin, which he had surrendered to Parliament three years before. He was defeated at the Battle of Rathmines by Colonel Michael Jones on 2nd August. Oliver Cromwell landed in Ireland with a huge army a week later, and later in the month Owen Roe O'Neill died on his way south to confront the Parliamentarians.