

The Countess of Ormond's help for the English Protestants in Kilkenny in the early days of the rebellion.

The following account was given by Thomas Davis, Jan 1, 1652/3. He is describing the situation in Kilkenny in December 1641, when the Irish rebels took over the city.

"...almost all the pillaged and stripped English came to the Castle of Kilkenny, some of them naked, others hiding their nakedness with thumb ropes of straw or hay, some in old rags which the Irish in derision had thrown to them, in which condition they were by her ladyship received into the castle, and provision made for them with all the care and speed that possibly could be."

There was a constant flow of 'poor distressed persons' coming to the castle to the countess, looking for help. She looked after them all.

"..her ladyship commanding her servants to be as observant and careful of them as of herself and children and providing food for them daily in a plentiful manner, some of them with her at her own table, others at tables on purpose for them, and the rest with her servants. Such apparel as her ladyship and her servants could get hold of, she distributed amongst them according to their necessities and commanded her own servants out of their own chambers and beds to accommodate the distressed English. I am confident the number of persons relieved as above was more than one hundred men, women and children."

The countess arranged for some of the people she had helped to be escorted to Waterford. Later, she feared for her own and her children's safety and went to Carrick-on-Suir to her husband's other great house.

"During her ladyship's stay at Carrick, which was till about ten days before Easter following, many more distressed, pillaged English, I believe to the number of four score and upwards, came to her for help, whom she relieved and provided for during the space of six weeks or thereabouts in the same manner as for others in the castle of Kilkenny, only some of the said persons were by her ladyship provided for in the town of Carrick and not all in her own house."

With the permission of the rebels, Lady Ormond was able to hire boats and bring the people she had helped to Waterford. She stayed there two days, and not only provided for the people she had brought with her, but also helped many others who came to her. She hired a ship to take some of them to Dublin, and brought some with her in Captain Bartlett's ship which had been sent to bring her to Dublin. Some were left behind at Duncannon fort which was held by the King's forces. These people hoped to get ship from there to England. The countess continued on her voyage, which took five days, and

arrived safely at Dublin, which was in the hands of the King's men. There she rejoined her husband.

The following account is given by Sir Richard Butler, Viscount Mountgarret, the local leader of the rebels. He was a great-uncle of James Butler, the Countess of Ormond's husband.

"The Countess of Ormond in the first year of the Rebellion hath relieved many distressed English that were plundered at Kilkenny, and elsewhere. She arrived with divers others of all sorts, both men and women, to the number of two hundred at least into my house at Knocktopher, on their way to Waterford. She also arranged to send a convoy with them to Waterford, which according to the uttermost of my power, I have performed. I also state that I waited upon the said lady from Kilkenny to Carrick and from thence to Waterford and Passage, until her honour was shipped to go with all her family towards Dublin"

1. Look up the following words in a dictionary and write their meaning:

pillaged, derision, convoy, apparel

2. Why do you think that the Protestants came to the countess for help when the rebels took over Kilkenny?

3. Name three ways in which the countess looked after the refugees.

4. Do you think that Thomas Davis was on the side of the rebels or the English? Give two reasons for your answer.

5. Do you think that Mountgarret's account is

a. To praise the countess for what she did

b. To show his own actions in helping the countess in a favourable light

Give a reason for your answer.

6. Creative Writing *Choose one of the following*

a. You are a child that the countess took into Kilkenny Castle. You travelled down to Duncannon Fort and eventually went by ship to Bristol to join relations over there. Write a letter to the countess thanking her for her kindness and giving her an update on your situation.

b. You are a servant in Kilkenny Castle and you are forced to give up your room because of all of the people flocking to the castle for help from the countess. You are asked to sleep in the stables. Write a letter to your family describing the situation in the castle.