

# Kilkenny's Medieval Walls

Kilkenny's city walls were built during the 13th century. The walls offered protection from attack and were a symbol of power.

The Anglo-Norman lord William Marshal built the first city walls in Kilkenny in approximately 1210 for colonists from England, Wales and Flanders. The first wall was built from oak timbers set on top of an earthen rampart, outside of which ran a ditch.

Sixty years later, William's grandson Gilbert De Clare replaced the earth-and-timber defences with a stone wall. The tower in front of you, built around 1270 and renamed after the 15th century Mayor of Kilkenny Robert Talbot, was part of this circuit of city wall. The city wall enclosed three separate boroughs: Hightown, Irishtown and St. John's on the opposite side of the River Nore. Measuring more than two miles in length, the walls were the longest in Ireland at that time.

Whilst the main purpose of the city walls was to defend the colonists living inside from attack, they were also used to collect taxes. People living outside the city walls who wished to sell their goods in the marketplace had to pay a toll as they went through any of the seven city gates. The walls were also a statement of Anglo-Norman power and authority over the native Irish, who were kept under constant surveillance from the nine towers on the city walls, one of which was Talbot's Tower.

# Ballaí Meánaoiseacha Chill Chainnigh

Tógadh ballaí Chill Chainnigh le linn an 13ú haois. Ba chosaint ar ionsaí agus siombail chumhachta araon iad.

Rinne an tiarna Angla-Normanach William Marshal na ballaí cathrach bunaidh i gCill Chainnigh a thógáil thart ar 1210 le haghaidh coilínigh ó Shasana, ón mBreatain Bheag agus ó Fhlóndras. Tógadh an balla bunaidh seo as adhmaid darach a leagadh ar bharr rampair chré nó ar mhullóg a raibh claí lasmuigh de.

Seasca bliain ina dhiaidh sin, chuir Gilbert de Clare, garmhac William, balla cloiche in áit na gcóiracha cosanta a bhí déanta as cré agus as adhmaid. Ba chuid de chuaird bhalla na cathrach é an túr os do chomhair amach, a tógadh thart ar 1270, túr arbh é Robert Talbot, méara ar Chill Chainnigh le linn an 15ú haois, a thug ainm air. D'fhoriaigh na ballaí trí bhuirg ar leith: An Baile Ard, An Baile Gaelach agus buirg San Eoin ar an taobh thall d'abhainn na Feoire. Shín siad fad dhá mhíle agus tuilleadh agus ní raibh cuaird mhúrtha ab fhaide ná í in Éirinn a linne.

Ba í príomh-aidhm bhallaí na cathrach ná na coilínigh taobh istigh a chosaint ar ionsaí ón taobh amuigh ach baineadh leas astu chomh maith le cáin a ghearradh. Dá mba mhian le tuathánaigh earraí a dhíol ar áit an mhargaidh ghearrfaí dola orthu agus iad ag dul trí cheann ar bith de sheacht ngeata na cathrach. Ina theannta sin dhearbhaigh na ballaí forlámhas agus údarás na nAngla-Normanach ar na Gaeil: bhítí ag faire orthu de shíor ó na naoi dtúr a bhí ar bhallaí na cathrach, ceann acu Túr an Talbóidigh.



Kilkenny City Walls, circa 1450, with Talbot's Tower in the foreground and Kilkenny Castle in the background.

Ballaí Chathair Chill Chainnigh, circa 1450, le Túr an Talbóidigh chun tosaigh agus Caisleán Chill Chainnigh ar an gcúl.





# Taxes and Tolls

The construction of the city walls in the 13th century was the largest civic project ever undertaken in Kilkenny. Taxes were imposed to raise funds to build the walls.

The walls were owned by the city community and they were responsible for their construction and maintenance. To pay for this, a tax called 'murage' was levied on all goods that were brought through the gates of the city for sale. Nothing escaped the tax collector, who was called the 'keeper of murage'. Meat, fish, wine, building materials, wool and cloth were all taxed, as were more unusual items such as badger skins, squirrel skins, coloured glass, gold cloth, almonds, cumin, figs, raisins, saffron, ginger and olive oil.

From the 14th century many of the gates and towers were converted into residences by the city authorities and rented out as a source of revenue. However, Talbot's Tower was never inhabited, which is why it has remained largely unchanged since the 1400s.

In the medieval period the ordinary person living in the countryside around Kilkenny had very few rights and could be bought and sold with the land by their lord. However, people living inside the city walls, known as 'burgesses' of the city, had many more freedoms. The city walls were an important symbol of the burgesses independence from the lord of the city.

# Cánacha agus Dolaí

Níor tugadh riamh i gCill Chainnigh faoi thionscadal sibhialta chomh huaillmhianach le tógáil bhallaí na cathrach sa 13ú haois. Gearradh cánacha le ciste tógála a chruthú.

Ba le pobal na cathrach iad na ballaí agus is orthu a thit freagracht na tógála agus na cothabhála. Gearradh cáin - ar a nglaoití 'cáin mhúrtha' - ar earraí a d'iompaítí thar gheataí na cathrach isteach lena reic. Ní bhíodh rud ar bith ag dul ón mbailitheoir cánach ar a dtugtaí 'coimeádaí na cánach múrtha'. Gearradh cáin ar fheoil, iasc, fíon, earraí tógála, olann agus éadach chomh maith le hearraí thar an gcoitiantacht, leithéidí craicne broic agus iora rua, gloine dhaite, éadach óir, almóinn, cuimín, figí, rísíní, cróch, sinséar agus ola olóige.

Ón 14ú haois ar aghaidh bhíodh údarais na cathrach ag lígean na ngeataí agus na dtúr ar cíós go tráthrialta mar árais chónaithe phríobháideacha. Ach níor mhair duine ar bith riamh i dTúr an Talbóidigh, rud a d'fhág beagnach neamh-athraithe é ón gcúigiú haois déag go dtí an lá inniu.

Le linn na meánaoiseanna ba bheag ceart a bhí ag an ngnáth-thuathánach a mhair gar do Chill Chainnigh agus bhí sé incheadaithe é a cheannach nó a reic i dteannta thalamh a thiarna. Ach bhí cuid mhór cearta breise ag cónaitheoirí na cathrach, 'buirgéisigh na cathrach', mar a tugadh orthu. Comharthaí sóirt ar an neamhspleáchas ó smacht an tiarna a bhí ag buirgéisigh na cathrach ab ea ballaí na cathrach agus níor bheag é a dtábhacht shiombalach.





# Defending the City

For the 500 years of the turbulent Middle Ages soldiers kept watch at each of the towers on the city walls, defending the city from attack.

One purpose of the tower was to make it very difficult for enemies attacking the city to breach the walls. Imagine that you were attacking the city. Soldiers on the walls shoot a hail of arrows and crossbow bolts at you. If you manage to survive this you still have the rubbish-filled ditch to wade through and a 25-foot high wall to climb. Tunnelling beneath the wall is impossible because of the stone wall that slopes down to the base of the ditch.

The tower's other purpose was as a watch tower. It was one of nine such towers on the city walls and was deliberately placed on a height to command the view over the surrounding countryside.

With such strong defences it is not surprising that the city walls were only breached twice: by the Earl of Desmond in 1461 and by Oliver Cromwell in 1650. Evidence of these fierce battles has been discovered during archaeological excavations at the tower. A medieval cannon, which is thought to have been mounted on the roof, was found hidden in the clay rampart at the foot of the tower, and lead musket balls and shrapnel from an early form of grenade were discovered in the town ditch.

With the introduction of gunpowder in the 16th century, town walls could no longer stand up to attack and they lost some of their importance. From the 1700s onwards Kilkenny enjoyed a sustained period of relative peace, and because the walls were no longer needed many sections were pulled down or fell into disrepair.

# Ag Cosaint na Cathrach

Le linn chúig chéad bliain na meánaoiseanna ceannairceacha bhí saighdiúirí ar faire ag gach aon cheann de thúir bhallaí na cathrach, ag cosaint na cathrach ar ionsaí.

Ceann de chuspóirí na dtúr ná é a bheith deacair d'ionsaitheoirí bearna a dhéanamh i mballaí na cathrach. Cuir i gcás go bhfuil an chathair á cur faoi ionsaí agat féin. Déanann saighdiúirí ar na ballaí cith saighead agus boltaí crosbhogha a radadh chugat. Má thagann tú slán as seo beidh ort ina dhiaidh sin claí dramhaíola a spágáladh agus balla 25 troigh ar airde a dhreapadh. De dheasca balla cloiche a bheith le fána anuas go bun an chlaí ní bheidh ar do chumas dul ag tochailt tolláin.

Cuspóir eile ná é a bheith ina thúir faire. Ba cheann é de naoi dtúr den chineál céanna a bhí ar bhallaí na cathrach agus bhí sé suite sa chaoi is go mbeadh léargas uaidh ar an tuath máguaird.

Agus an chosaint seo aige, ní haon ionadh é nár éirigh ach le beirt riamh bearna a chur ann: Iarla Deasumhan in 1461 agus Oilibhéar Cromail in 1650. Thángthas ar fhianaise ar na cathanna fíochmhara seo le linn thochailtí seandálaíochta ag an túr. Fuarthas canóin mheánaoiseach, a mbítí, síltear, á chur ar an díon, faoi cheilt i rampar cré ag bun an túir agus i gclaí na cathrach fuarthas liathróidí muscaeid chomh maith le srapnal ó bhunleagan den ghránáid.

Le teacht chun cinn an phúdair ghunna san 16ú haois níorbh fhéidir le ballaí cathrach ionsaí a sheasamh feasta agus thit a dtábhacht i léig cuid mhaith. Ba ghnách don tsíocháin a bheith i réim go leanúnach i gCill Chainnigh ó 1700 ar aghaidh agus ó tharla nár ghá na ballaí níos mó leagadh cuid díobh, é sin nó chuadar chun raice.

The attack on Kilkenny City by Oliver Cromwell's army, 1650

Fogha thrúpaí Oilibhéir Cromail faoi Chill Chainnigh, 1650





# A Soldier's Life

Defending the city, avoiding getting shot and getting out of the weather were the main preoccupations for the soldiers who guarded the city walls for over 500 years.

In quiet times the inside of the tower was a sheltered place in which to take a break during long watches. When under attack it offered the safety of good thick walls and a strong stone roof.

The original 13th century tower was approximately three-quarters of its current size and had a timber roof. In the 1400s its height was raised by placing a stone-vaulted roof over the old battlements. If you look up at the ceiling you can see the hazel basketwork panels, called 'wickerwork centring', which were left behind from the timbers used to support the stone vault during its construction. Usually the twigs from these panels rot away, but here they have survived.

The square holes in the wall are called 'put-logs'. These holes held timber beams that acted as scaffolding during the construction of the tower. The three narrow windows are arrow loops. A soldier with a bow or a musket could shoot out of these whilst being protected from return fire. If you look out through the loops you can see they are positioned to allow the soldiers to shoot all around the tower and especially into the ditch.

Outside, the parapets at the top of the walls gave some protection from attack to the defenders.

# Saol Saighdiúra

Ba iad na cúraimí ba mhó a bhíodh ag déanamh scime do na saighdiúirí - a chaith os cionn 500 bliain ag gardáil na cathrach - ná í a chosaint, fanacht ó bhaol lámhaigh agus dul ón tsíon.

Nuair a bheadh an tsíocháin i réim d'fhéadfaí sos cluthar a ghlacadh ar an taobh istigh den túr le linn faire fhada. Dá mbeifí faoi ionsaí d'fhágfadh na ballaí tiubha agus an díon tréan cloiche go mbeifí in ann a bheith sábháilte taobh istigh ann.

Bhí thart ar thrí cheathrú de mhéid thúr an lae inniu i dtúr bunaidh an 13ú haois agus is díon adhmaid a bhí air. Sa 15ú haois ardaíodh é trí dhíon bogtach cloiche a chur os cionn na sean-fhorbhallaí. Is léir ach féachaint ar an tsíleáil go bhfuil na painéil de chaoladóireacht choill ar a dtugtar 'lárú caoladóireachta' fágtha ann ón adhmaid a bhí mar thaca leis an mbogtha le linn a thógála. Is gnách leis na painéil seo críonadh ach tháinig siad slán anseo.

'Puilteoga' a thugtar ar na poill bheaga sa bhalla. Bhíodh saileanna scafalra i bhfostú iontu le linn thógáil an túir. Is lúba saighde iad na trí fhuinneog chaola. D'fhéadfadh saighdiúir le bogha nó muscaed a bheith ag scaoileadh tríothu seo agus san am céanna cosaint a bheith aige ó ais-scaoileadh. Má fhéachann tú trí na lúba feicfidh tú go bhfuil siad leagtha amach le ligean do shaighdiúir scaoileadh ar fud an túir agus, thar aon ní eile, isteach sa chlaí.

Ar an imeall, bhí na huchtbhallaí lasmuigh ag tabhairt cosaint áirithe do na cosantóirí ó ionsaitheoirí.



A view inside the 15th century tower

Radharc ar thaobh istigh thúr an 15ú haois.





# The Seeds of History

Analysis of ancient seeds found during archaeological excavations at Talbot's Tower show us how the landscape around the tower looked before and after the city walls were built.

Studies of the seeds found during archaeological excavations show that 400 years before the Anglo-Normans built the city walls this area was laid out in fields bounded by hedgerows or small open woodlands of cherry, sloe and hazel trees and lined with a variety of weeds such as fat hen, dock and daisy. The fields probably belonged to the nearby monastery of Domhnach Mór, now the site of St. Patrick's graveyard, and were used to graze cattle and to grow barley, oats and wheat. One of these grains was radiocarbon dated to 710 – 890 AD.

Once the city walls were built, the area immediately outside the walls was no longer used for cultivation and became a 'no-man's land' where only weeds grew. In the wider countryside the cereals that fed the Anglo-Norman colonists were grown in abundance. The Anglo-Normans brought great agricultural improvements, including the introduction of the plough-horse.

Large quantities of grain excavated amongst the rubbish thrown into the town ditch came from the brewing of beer. The Anglo-Norman monks in Kilkenny were given an allowance of eight pints of beer a day!

# Síolta na Staire

Nochtar trí anailís ar shíolta ársa a fuarthas le linn thochailt seandálaíochta ag Túr an Talbóidigh deilbh an tírdhreacha roimh thógáil bhallaí na cathrach agus ina dhiaidh sin.

Léiríonn staidéar ar na síolta a fuarthas le linn thochailtí seandálaíochta go raibh 400 bliain ann – an tréimhse sular thóg na hAngla-Normanaigh ballaí na cathrach - ina mbíodh an limistéar leagtha amach ina pháirceanna a bhí foriata ag fála sceanh nó ina choilleoga oscailte sílín, airne agus coll agus an blonagán bán, an chopóg, an nóinín agus fiailí eile ar a mbruach.

Gach seans gur bhain na páirceanna le Domhnach Mór, mainistir áitiúil a bhí mar a bhfuil Eaglais agus Reilig Phádraig inniu agus bhaintí leas astu mar fhéarach eallach agus le heorna, coirce agus cruithneacht a fhás. Tugadh dáta radacarbónach 710-890AD do cheann de na gráinní sin.

Ón uair a tógadh ballaí na cathrach níor baineadh tuilleadh leasa as an limistéar taobh amuigh de na ballaí le haghaidh curaíochta agus is fiailí a bhíodh ag fás ann: is idirthalamh a bhíodh ann. Faoin tuath, níos faide ó láthair, bhíodh fás ar an raidhse ghránach a bheathaíodh na coilínigh Angla-Normanacha. Tháinig forás suntasach ar an talmhaíocht faoi thionchar na nAngla-Normanach, cuir i gcás teacht an treafaí.

Is ó ghrúdu beorach a tháinig lear mór gráin a toclaíodh ón dramhaíl a bhí caite i ndíog an bhaile. Ceadaíodh liúntas ocht bpionta beorach in aghaidh an lae do mhanaigh Angla-Normanacha Chill Chainnigh!

Ploughing the land and reaping the corn outside Kilkenny's walls

Ag treabhadh na talún agus ag baint an arbhair taobh amuigh de bhallaí Chill Chainnigh





# From Watchtower to Garden Tower

By the 19th century Talbot's Tower had become a relic of a more violent past. The once intimidating tower was now crowned with a small pleasure garden for the nearby dwelling house 'Rose cottage'.

As the city walls were no longer needed for defensive purposes the town ditch was built over with sheds and outhouses which formed part of an ornamental garden at the rear of the adjacent 'Rose Cottage'.

In the 19th century several tonnes of soil were carried up the tower's steps to create a secluded garden high above the city streets. Fragments of wine bottles, clay tobacco-pipes, buttons and hairpins found in the garden during excavations show that it was well-used. A pet cat was also buried amongst the flowers.

A number of .303 bullets and cases found on the roof of the tower during excavations suggest that the tower was used by snipers firing at Kilkenny Castle, a short distance to the North East, which was occupied by Republican soldiers directly before the Irish Civil War (1922-1923).

# Ó Thúr Faire go Túr Gairdín

Faoi 19ú haois ní raibh i dTúr an Talbóidigh ach iarsma ó thréimhse fhoréigneach a bhí caite. In áit a bheith scanrúil is amhlaidh a bhí an túr anois ina ghairdín aeraíochta don teach cónaithe in aice láimhe, 'Iostán an Róis'.

Ó tharla nach mbeadh feidhm chosanta feasta ag ballaí na cathrach tógadh botháin agus cróitíní thar dhíog an bhaile agus ba chuid iad seo de ghairdín maiseach a bhí ar chúl 'Iostán an Róis'.

Sa 19ú haois iompaíodh na tonnaí méadracha de chre suas céimeanna an túir le gairdín cúlanta a chruthú go hard os cionn shráideanna na cathrach. Is léir ó bhlúirí de bhuidéil fhíona, de phíopaí cré tobac, de chnaipí agus de bhioráin a fuarthas sa ghairdín le linn tochairtí gur baineadh dea-úsáid as. Fuarthas cat baile curtha i measc na mbláthanna.

Is léir ar roinnt cásanna agus piléar .303 a fuarthas ar dhíon an túir le linn tochairt go raibh an túr á úsáid ag naoscáirí a bhí ag lámhach faoi Chaisleán Chill Chainnigh tamall gearr soir ó thuaidh, áit a raibh seilbh ag saighdiúirí Poblachtacha air díreach roimh Chogadh Cathartha na hÉireann (1922-1923).



The roof-top garden at Talbot's Tower, and adjacent ornamental garden, c.1850

An gairdín ar leibhéal dín ag Túr an Talbóidigh agus gairdín maiseach in aice láimhe, 1850

