

In 2008, the first substantial archaeological investigations of the lands around Dunluce began, continuing to 2015. Archaeologists only had to scratch the surface to reveal what had been hidden for nearly four hundred years: a beautifully preserved town of homes and businesses, gardens and cobbled streets; an archaeological site of international significance.

People such as:

Archibald McPhilip
(Merchant)

Families such as the Mathews, the Arthurs, the Hendersons, the Boyds and many more traders, workers and farmers whose lives were centred in the town of Dunluce.

THIS BY/OLEBY THE/AT 1621

Mid-17th century records show that as well as the Scottish settlers, local Irish and English people also made the town their home. By the 1620s, the town stretched from the Castle south to St Cuthbert's Church and west to the mill burn. At this stage the town had around 40 houses, with an estimated population of 250-300 people. It was carefully laid out with individual plots and cobbled roads, lined with footpaths and drains. However, the lack of a good harbour eventually limited the growth of Dunluce town. The nearby town of Coleraine was accessible from the River Bann, and this advantage led to it becoming the most significant town on the North Coast.

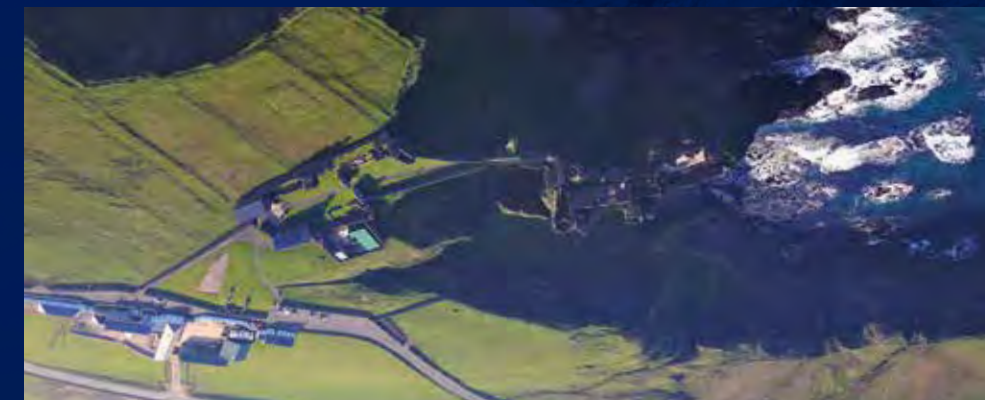
During the 1641/1642 Rebellion, the MacDonnells split into factions, with some siding with the Irish in rebellion and others fighting for King Charles I. An armed band of Scottish soldiers arrived at Dunluce in October 1641 but were unable to gain entry to the castle. In response, they set fire to a building in the town which rapidly spread. Many of the houses were destroyed by fire and inhabitants of the town of Dunluce were murdered. The town never really recovered and after this the MacDonnells moved to Glenarm, and as Dunluce lost its prestige the town fell into decay. By the 1680s the site was abandoned completely.



An artist's impression of Dunluce Town in the 1620s



Traces of the lost town of Dunluce are visible in the surface of the field beside the castle



granted some 330,000 acres in the plantation schemes. MacDonnell was for a small town. Founded in 1608 by Randal MacDonnell, who went on to become 1st Earl of Antrim, it was part of his strategy of modernisation and improvement of his estates. This town was established slightly in advance of the Ulster Plantation, as an independent enterprise by MacDonnell in County Antrim, separate from the official and Lower Clandeboye.

Dunluce Castle sits at the heart of a rich landscape of archaeological remains



The architecture of Dunluce Castle reflects its Irish origins and its later Scottish occupation and alterations

The story of Dunlune involves two families. The MacQuillans, a local Irish family, founded the castle around the 1490s. It formed the heart of their lordship, a territory centred on the north Antrim coastline, known as the Route. The MacDonnells were descendants of the powerful Scottish Clan Donald, from the Route.

The dramatic and defensive setting of Dunluce Castle on the Antrim Coast



Dunluc Castle is one of Northern Ireland's most iconic historic monuments whose history and archaeology displays close connections, both peaceful and bloody, between Ulster and Scotland.

A photograph of the interior of the 'The First' exhibition. The room features wooden paneling and a large dark blue wall with the title 'EXPLORING THE FIRST' and the subtitle 'THE FIRST WINDWARD WALK'. Various informational panels, a television screen, and a glass display case are visible.

The Discovery Room at Dunluce

You can even experience Randal MacDonnell taking you on a tour of the castle using the App, which shows how the buildings would have looked and been used when the MacDonnells were living there.



The Discovery Room at Dunluce



Sword fighting at the Dunluce Fair



 www.instagram.com/LoveHeritageNI



Discover
Ulster-Scots

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Excavating Dunluce Town

Over the seasons of excavations archaeologists have targeted the well-preserved remains of buildings which have given us a unique insight into day to day life of the inhabitants of Dunluce town.



The remains of a large house, fronting onto the cobbled market place

A substantial stone built one and a half storey house excavated by archaeologists was evidently the home of a wealthy individual. It had thick, rendered stone walls, a slate roof, glazed windows and plastered internal walls. It also had an indoor toilet closet in the corner of the kitchen. The kitchen fireplace was tiled with expensive Dutch tiles, which shows the wealth of the original inhabitants. This house fronted onto a substantial 11 metre wide cobbled street, one of the main thoroughfares of Dunluce Town. A coin from Lithuania, which had been made into a pendant, was uncovered here, suggesting possible family ties for the occupants of this house to earlier episodes of Scottish migration to Eastern Europe. This house was later

(probably after the 1630s) subdivided to accommodate a byre for keeping farm animals. This shows a change in the local economy and a reduction in status and aspirations of the owner away from a mercantile economy, back to subsistence farming.

Another building fronting onto the wide cobbled street started off as a merchant's house with a paved flagstone floor. This house also displayed evidence of a change in use, probably during the mid-17th century, when an additional internal partition was added, and a new clay floor was laid, again indicating a drop in the social status of the inhabitants.

Immediately outside the castle gates another large house was investigated.



The 1547 coin from Lithuania, pierced to be worn as a pendant

The householders may also have owned the adjoining building, which was a warehouse or shop. Fronting onto the marketplace, this would have been a significant and high-status position within Dunluce Town. It was of stone and possibly timber construction, with a bay window, flagstone floor and a large hearth set in the gable. It seems to have been burnt in the January 1642 attack on the castle and town. Archaeologists can tell that the house was never re-occupied, as during the dig, a group of burnt cooking pots was uncovered sealed by the collapsed walls of the building.

The changes displayed in the architecture and archaeology of all the buildings investigated in Dunluce Town so far seem to tell the same story - a substantial downturn in fortunes, initially economically during the 1630s and then more catastrophically in the warfare and social upheaval of the 1640s, including the burning of Dunluce Town in January 1642.



A fragment of the Dutch tiles from the kitchen fireplace in one of the houses

Artefacts from Dunluce Town

The objects uncovered during the excavations give an insight into the lives of the people who lived in Dunluce Town 400 years ago.



This seal matrix was used to impress the wax seal on documents. It was perhaps used by one of the wealthy merchants in the town. The image appears to be of a castle with flags fluttering atop turrets.



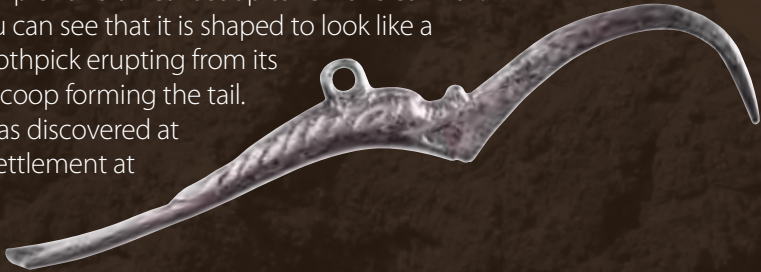
Careful excavation uncovered a number of pins and this beautiful little thimble, which shows the more domestic side of life at Dunluce.

Several buckles were found during the excavations, some of which were likely from the leather shoes of a 17th-century resident of Dunluce.



Quite a number of Scottish coins were found during the excavation, including this Charles I 'Turner' or 'Bodle' worth two Scots pence, dating from 1642 - 50.

This object reveals a concern for personal hygiene among the residents at Dunluce. This is an 'ear picker', a decorative object with a functional use, incorporating a toothpick and an ear scoop to remove ear wax. Look closely and you can see that it is shaped to look like a dolphin, with the toothpick erupting from its mouth and the ear scoop forming the tail. A similar example was discovered at the contemporary settlement at Jamestown, Virginia.



This is a fragment of a Bellarmine jar. These were stoneware jugs manufactured in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries and often used for holding wine or beer. They have an image of a bearded face which is said to represent Cardinal Robert Bellarmine.

This fragment was found, carefully placed face up at the bottom of the footings for one of the houses. The way it was deposited suggests that it had been deliberately put there, in the superstitious tradition of placing items in house foundations to ensure luck and ward off evil or a curse.

Some of the fragments of wine bottles, found during the excavations, revealing some of the appetites of the townsfolk of Dunluce.



Important social centres

The Marketplace

This triangular cobbled area near the Castle entrance would have been the site of a bustling market place, with people buying and selling wares. There is evidence of a variety of businesses and temporary booths located around it.



Artists impression of marketplace around 1620

The Ulster Port Books of 1612 – 1615 show that William Gault imported a variety of goods from Irvine in Ayrshire to Coleraine. Ships landing at the port carried tons of coal, barrels of herring, many 'Scotch' gallons of Aquavite (Whisky), barrels of salt, varieties of woollen cloth, brass kettles, knives and even fine hats!

The Blacksmith's

The Smithy would have been one of the most important buildings in Dunluce town and was located where the two main cobbled streets met. It had a furnace and chimney, and two wooden doors opening into a small yard. Inside the building the stony residue from the fuel burnt in the furnace, known as clinker, was discovered, and also a bench area with chisel and nails, the base stone for an anvil and unused horseshoes discarded on the floor. The forge would have been a social area for the men of the town, and during the excavation gaming pieces for two separate board games were uncovered, along with the remains of tobacco pipes, suggesting people gathering to while away some time.



The remains of the Blacksmith's



Clay pipes found during the excavations



Stone gaming pieces found during the excavation of the Smithy

Dunluce Castle Gardens



Traces of the garden terraces are still visible from the air

The terraced castle gardens are another important aspect of the Dunluce castle complex. These were the private gardens of Randal MacDonnell, the 1st Earl of Antrim, which were laid out following his elevation to the title during the 1620s.

The gardens comprise three main rectangular terraces, separated by sturdy basalt retaining walls, taking in a total area of 1.5 acres. A substantial masonry wall at the south boundary of the gardens provided privacy from the town beyond.

The gardens were laid out at the same time and were linked to the castle lodgings block in the Outer Ward.

The main access to the gardens passed through this building and the Earl's guests were afforded fine views of his garden from their lodging rooms.

Eight raised vegetable beds serving the castle kitchens can be seen in the northernmost terrace. The central terrace likely contained a formal arrangement of knots with paths for strolling, while the southern terrace was sub-divided into two enclosures and may have contained a formal arrangement of orchard trees. Randal made sure that Dunluce was at the cutting edge of contemporary garden design.

St Cuthbert's Church



Artist's impression of how St Cuthbert's Church would have looked around 1620

The ruins of St Cuthbert's church today



St Cuthbert's Church began life as the site of a parish church in the Anglo-Norman period, hundreds of years before the MacDonnell expansion of Dunluce town. As a result of the influx of predominantly Scottish settlers, the MacDonnells rebuilt and refurbished St Cuthbert's church to accommodate the

worship of the Protestant townspeople. The MacDonnells also maintained their own private chapel in Dunluce Castle where they practiced their Roman Catholic faith. The graveyard that surrounds St Cuthbert's is a beautiful and fascinating place. Several early gravestones and markers from the early 1600s still survive here, some testifying to the presence of Scots merchants from Troon and Ayrshire who died in the town. Early grave markers include those of Florence McPhilip and the remarkably well-preserved slab commemorating the family of Walter Kid.



The gravestone of the family of Walter Kid

Heir lyeth the children of Walter Kid Marchant in Dunluce Burges of Irvin he made this stone the 12 March in Anno Domm 1630



An artist's impression of how the lodgings and gardens would have looked