

COLERAINE FORTIFIED TOWN



The 17th-century Plantation introduced European-style medieval town planning into Ulster as evidenced in the surviving street pattern in Coleraine.

In the early 17th century a fortified Coleraine town was built by The Honourable The Irish Society. Surrounded by earthen ramparts, timber palisades and a shallow ditch the town was laid over an existing medieval settlement. The houses were built of timber frames from logs floated down the River Bann. Long gardens, possibly medieval in origin, stretched to the ramparts. Two gates in the ramparts - the Kingsgate and Blindgate-controlled access in and out of the town. Other methods of control included the curfew bell and the use of ferries to cross the Bann, as there was no bridge. These earthen ramparts survived the 1641 Rebellion but not the attack in 1689.

'GATEWAY TO THE WORLD'

The River Bann with Coleraine port, Larne and Carrickfergus were key to the trading route between America and Britain. The difficulty with the port at Coleraine lay at the Barmouth, which could be extremely dangerous to cross. The River gave access to the great woods at Glenconkeyn and timber was a valuable asset needed to replenish the sailing fleets. A natural basalt slab at the Salmon Leap near Mountsandel was first cut in the early 17th century to allow logs to be floated down to Coleraine. When the timber was exhausted, the Cutts were converted into traps for salmon.

`...and the rivers great stores of fresh fish, more than any of the rivers of England.'

Motives and reasons to induce the City of London to undertake plantation in the north of Ireland, 1609



The Book of Coleraine

The Book of Coleraine, 1816, recorded the town centre architecture, and shows the original buildings still surviving at that time. Much of that 17th-century build was swept away by 19th- and 20th-century developments, but elements of it are still there to be discovered. The main streets are narrower now since the wooden walkways, a useful way of avoiding the 'pollution' on the streets, have been absorbed into the buildings.











Celebrating 400 years of Coleraine's town charter