

# Gateways Of The Walls Of Kilkenny

BY DORCAS BIRTHISTLE

**O**LD KILKENNY was a walled and fortified town. In these walls there were many gates to give entrance, to both Hightown and Irishtown. The names of some of these gates are with us still.

The building of the gateways and wall of Englishtown or Hightown of Kilkenny in 1400 are generally attributed to one Robert Talbot, described as a Worthee Gentleman, but probably were in existence before this, as there is a reference to **Walkins Gate** as early as 1302. These Walls consist of three sides of a rectangle, the Nore forming the east side. The area enclosed was about 2,600 ft. from North to South and 1,000 ft. from East to West. They were still nearly perfect 200 years ago in 1758, when Rocque's map was printed, but are now nearly a thing of the past. There were two gates in the North and South Walls and three in the West, and one on the East side.

Starting at the South Side, the first:- **CASTLE GATE** was situated on the Castle Road just beyond the Castle entrance. This gate was not actually part of the town which ended at the stables and there was no castle over it. But a small castle stood beside it, and for this in 1628 Richard Shea paid 6/8d. annually as rent, to the Corporation. This was not as little as it sounds now when compared with the rents, paid for, some of the other castles. When Cromwell marched on Kilkenny he commenced the attack here, but was successfully repulsed from this area.

The second gate:- **ST. PATRICKS GATE** situated between Upper and Lower Patrick Street. It was the last of the town gates to be removed, in the close of the last century by the late Mr Cleere, who had both gateway and the castle over it photographed before demolishing them.

In 1626 the Mayor granted to Richard Rothe Fitz. Edward the castle over the gate at a yearly rent of 10/-:- even a better residence than the previous one, or if not better, at least more expensive. The south west angle of the city wall had a tower

or bastion, which still stands with part of the wall in the Technical School yard. This is known as **Talbots Castle**. Here in 1854 an ancient cannon ball was found which was presented to the Archaeological Society Museum, and is now in possession of K. A. S.

In the West Side, the first gate was the important one — **WALKINS GATE** which was on the Cork road, leading to the city. This gate was probably taken down about 1788. It was situated across the street just above the Friary. For Rooms over this gate David Rothe paid the Corporation, in 1628, 8d. rent annually which certainly sounds a bargain! As well as leading to the Cork Road, this gateway was probably used by the citizens for egress to the “Walking Green” or Recreation ground outside this gate, described as a fine table-land, with invigorating breezes from an unbroken country side. This table land would have included a considerably larger area than is now covered by the Fair Green.

*(Walkin i.e. Wall Kenny i.e. Canice's Wall. T.P.L.)*

Second gate:- **ST. JAMES' GATE** was at the head of James' Street and was finally removed in 1860 when the Christian brothers establishment was erected there. In 1599, Walter Archer Fitz. Walker got the lease of this Castle for 101 years at yearly rent of 1/4d. In an extract from this lease - granting him this, it provides “That the Burgesses and Commons should have the use of the said castle in time of war or danger, for the defence of the town, as they have of other like castles built upon the walls or gates of the said town and the said Walter covenanted to build and make up roof of the said castle with oaken sclave and keep and mayntayne the same, stiffe, staunch and tenantable during the said term.”

There was another bastion between here and the next gate, called Kilberry, Tilberry or Jones' Tower and here the Corporation, still with an eye to business, collected, for a vault over this tower, 8d. annually. This was taken down about 1830.

The third gate **INNER FRIARS GATE**, is the only city gate now with any part still standing. One of its arches crosses Abbey Street which used to be called Lee's Lane and before that, its ancient title was Trinity Lane, - apparently derived from its proximity to the Black Abbey, which had been dedicated to the Blessed Trinity.

In 1633 Stephen Daniel rented the Upper Rooms over the Castle of Inner Friars Gate for 99 years at a yearly rent of 2/- and undertook to build the said Castle and cover same with Oaken Timbers and slate within 3 years.

On the North side of the wall - **HIGHTOWN GATE** or **Watergate** stood on Watergate bridge and connected Hightown and Irishtown. In 1609 Walter Lawless rented for 200 years the Castle over this gate for the yearly rent of 3/- and undertook to build a Corbel-tower for better defence within 4 years". The Mayor of Hightown when crossing through this gate into the borough of Irishtown showed, by dropping the point of the city sword that he left his authority behind. It was not until 1843, that the two parts of the city were united in one city, with one Corporation and one civic head.

**GRAY FRIEREN GATE** led from Chancellors Orchard to the Abbey grounds and was not a public highway and had no castle over or beside it.

**INNER ST. JOHN'S GATE** was situated on the city side of Johns Bridge and had a castle. Castle and gate were swept away by a flood in 1544, but in 1580 Edmond Shortall rented the gate house and with a provision that they build up the walls of its castle to the same height as the old walls and embattlements. But in 1763 the flood again swept away Bridge, Castle and Gate together with 14 people who had expressed a wish to have the honour of washing their hands in the flood over the battlements of the bridge, but whose fate it was to be carried away with the bridge and castle. The Gate and castle were never rebuilt but the bridge was restored.

These gates or their repairs have frequent mention in the old records of the city e.g. John Archdekin in 1690 claimed £1.16.0. for iron supplied for the mending of the locks on the city gates after the rout of the Boyne or a petition from Gregory Marchalls widow for the payment of 2½ tons of timber at 24/- a ton supplied for repair of the gates in 1691. They played an important part in the defence of the town as in the 1641 rebellion. The Alderman on duty for the night interviewed the watch at 9 p.m. and appointed them to their respective stations. These were strictly set forth; 4 watchers at the Castle Gate, 2 at St. Patricks, 2 at Walkins, 2 at St James, 2 at Frieran, 4 Hightown and 4 Inner St. Johns.

Irishtown walls roughly formed a smaller square to the north side of English town and adjoining it. The Breagha dividing them and the Nore continuing to form the East side.

**DEANS GATE** situated in the West wall where it intersected Dean Street and formed the only entrance from the Western Suburbs, subsequently called the Butts, into Irishtown. In 1650 when Cromwell was repulsed at the Castle Gate and the south wall he marched around the city - down New Street, Flood Street and Blackmill Street and gained admittance to Irishtown through Deans Gate.

On the North Side **TROYS GATE** stood at the entrance to Vicar Street and gave entrance into Vicar Street of one of the primitive roadways which came through Troyswood from the Church of **Thornback**. Tradition says that the tower which originally stood over it fell in the time of Queen Elizabeth and was not rebuilt.

**GREENS GATE** stood on the town side of Greens Bridge which was called the Great Bridge. In 1618 porters were appointed to collect toll at these three gates of Irishtown.

On the East side of the Nore, there were walls which surrounded the Monastery of St. John. The Principle gate was the level of Michael Street and Maudlin Street. It gave **ST. JOHNS OUTER GATE** which stood across Johns Street at entrance first to the Priory grounds and then by Inner St. Johns Gate to the city. For rooms over this gate James Bruin paid 4d. rent annually to the Corporation in 1638. This gate had been removed by 1757.

**ST. MICHAELS GATE** was a back entrance into the Priory grounds from the road behind it. It was probably situated at the rear of Evans Home.

There was also a close or fortification called the **MAGDA**  $\frac{1}{2}$  **LENS** south of St. Johns Priory, which had three castles, 2 of which disappeared completely but Thomas Ley was tenant of the North Castle in 1628 and Lucas Shea for the Black Castle at the same time. The most important was the Magdalen Gate and Castle. This was situated across Maudlin Street at the level of the present Castle. The wall in which this gateway stood was bonded into the old Castle walls. This is still visible over the present entrance door showing the projecting bond stones to have been battered off when they could not be

removed by gentler means when the walls and gate were removed.

(This castle has this year been selected for preservation by the B.W.)

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## Rose Inn Street

### ITS HISTORY, BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS AND FAMILY LINKS

MRS RICHARD DE LOUGHRY

**R**ose Inn Street is situated today in the Cathedral parish of St Mary's in the townland of the Duke's Meadows. It forms the southern boundary of St Mary's parish. Up to the year 1849 the south side of the street was in the parish of St John, but was transferred to St Mary's. The street is of Norman origin.

Prior to the Norman occupation of Kilkenny, only one bridge spanned the river Nore at the city and this was situated where Greens Bridge — or the Great Bridge as it was then called — is now. With the building of St John's Abbey about 1200 by the Earl Mareschal, a bridge was constructed across the Nore in the vicinity of the present bridge. This necessitated a roadway to connect with *Castle Street* — now the *Parade*.

Subsequently, houses were built along this roadway and thus Rose Inn Street developed. The first footpath was contemplated in 1817 and was to extend merely from the corner of High Street to the stable gateway of the *Sheaf Inn*.

Much uncertainty prevails respecting the origin of the name *Rose Inn Street*. The popular idea has been that it derives from the *Rose Inn* which was situated on the site of the present Imperial. This appears to be erroneous as in a Corporation record dated 1637 it appears as Rosin Street, and in Rocques survey of the city, dated 1757, it is spelled Rozon Street.

In a grant under the Acts of Settlement and Explanation of forfeited property in Kilkenny, to James, Duke of Ormonde, 16th November, 1668, it is termed *Rosin Street*, and only when Mr Hewitson called his establishment the Rose Inn much later on did people begin to call it Rose Inn Street.