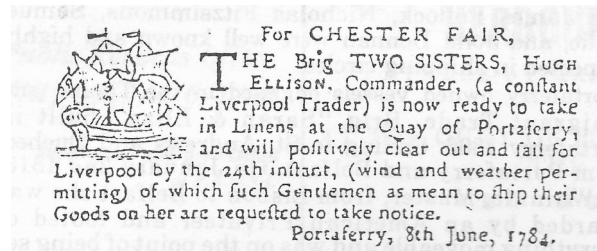


TRADE

During the War of Austrian Succession, 1740 -48, trade was drastically reduced, with French Privateering and the consequent high rate of insurance. There were some shipments of barley and wheat from Portaferry and Strangford. The Principle Merchant at this time was John Gallo-way. Harris, writing in 1744, states that 'in previous years Portaferry had between 30 and 40 ships but then had scarce two.' Things improved and in the early 1760s William Galway, owner of a large tan-yard and now the leading merchant, was engaged in importing timber and flax from Riga. The export of linen from Ireland to England increased throughout the 18th century. Some local vessels were involved in this trade: the *George* ran to Dublin and the *Two Sisters* carried linen to Chester Fair for many years,



The information in this leaflet was taken from an article written by Jim Blaney and the full article can be read in the Upper Ards Historical Journal of 1987. We thank UAHS for their permission.

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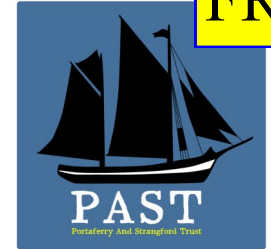


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A wee bit of maritime history... 18

FREE



Privateers in the 1700s

I R E L A N D.

1738

Dublin, July 8. We have a Report in Town, that there are Letters from Pontaferry, which say, that two Spanish Privateers had lately chas'd two Vessels into that Port, and taken 50 Sheep from the Ferry-Boat going to Strangford.

The 18th century stands out as one of long wars, particularly between the British and French, and also with the Americans. When war was declared in 1756, there were rumours of a French invasion of Ireland. This led to an increase in local patriotic fervour. In April of that year, the inhabitants of Ballywalter, Ballyhalbert and St. Andrew's Parishes 'roused by just sense of our apparent danger from our most treacherous enemies the French' drew up a petition in support of King and Constitution and requested the Lord Lieutenant to appoint Godfrey Echlin to be their captain. In 1760 the French Admiral Thurot landed at Kilroot, captured Carrickfergus and demanded food and drink which were prudently supplied. On this occasion Fr. James McTeggart, Parish Priest of the Ards, offered to march at the head of his people to fight the French troops. Fortunately the French only stayed a few days. During the wars at sea the French made use of Corsairs or Privateers to augment their Navy. These were armed trading ships which attacked enemy merchant ships to damage their trade, and to make a profit for themselves by selling captured prizes and their cargoes. In France they are remembered with pride. The British operated a similar fleet of Privateers, each being issued with 'Letters of Marque' giving them licence to capture enemy merchant ships and sell their cargoes. This official sanction raised them above the status of pirates!

A number of local entrepreneurs took up the challenge to fight the enemy and hopefully make a profit.

On 2nd January 1779 the Privateer *Amazon* left Belfast under captain Moore on her first cruise. She had 14 double fortified 6 and 4 pounder guns and was manned by 80 brave fellows. On Sunday 22nd August she sailed from Portaferry on her 2nd cruise for 6 months under Captain Colville 'to assist in subduing the haughty spirit of France and Spain' and to make fortunes. During this cruise, on 18th September, she fell in with an American vessel of superior force—22 guns 6 pounders. A very close action continued for 3 glasses and at daylight there was no sign of the enemy which almost certainly went to the bottom. This engagement is preserved in the song, *The Amazon Privateer*, collected by the late Sean O'Doyle from the singing of Robert Cinnamond, Aughagallon, for the BBC.

On the 18th of November last I very well mind the day
 Our rigged ship was launched brave boys from Portaferry Bay
 And set to the stormy ocean where the foaming billows roar
 Our friends are left in grief to mourn upon the Irish shore.
 Our ship was rigged both fore and aft, a gallant ship was she
 Our flag was at the top mast before we went to sea.
 Our Captain's name was Colville, and our ship the *Amazon*
 And the rest of our brave heroes were reared near Belfast town.

Unfortunately tragedy struck at the very end of this cruise. Most of the crew had already landed at Donaghadee—to avoid being impressed, when the vessel heading for Belfast Lough was caught in a storm and driven to pieces at Ballyholme Bay, the Captain and the rest of the crew lost.

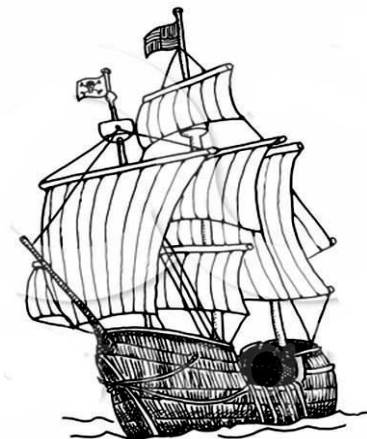


A monument to the Captain was erected in Bangor Old Churchyard. It reads:

Capt. George Colville of the Private Ship of
 War "Amazon"
 and only son of Robert Colville of Bangor
 was wrecked near this ground 25th February
 1780 in ye 29th year of his age.

On 8th June 1770 the Schooner Privateer *Ocean*, Captain Felix Magennis, sailed from Strangford but was captured by a French frigate soon after.

The last of the local Privateers was the *Irish Volunteer*, formerly the *Lord Bangor*. She sailed from Portaferry on 15th February 1781, the men in high spirits. On 21st February she put into Cork having sprung her mainmast after a chase by a French frigate. On 25th June 1781 she was put up for sale at Portaferry, having made little profit or impression on the French or Dutch.



Brave deeds were not, unfortunately, universal. For while many were bringing fame to the area other miscreants were bringing the whole Ards coast into disrepute by their 'unprincipled villainy' on the many occasions of shipwreck in the neighbourhood. For example, when the Schooner *Peggy*, from Liverpool to Belfast, was wrecked on the North Rock, 31st January 1780, a number of men in boats boarded her and carried off 'Teas, Hemp, Linen and hardware.'

In an attempt to stamp out this practice a group of Portaferry merchants subscribed to bring the guilty to justice:

'impressed with a just Abhorrence of the many Acts of private Theft and public Robbery committed against unfortunate Ship wrecks, upon our coast of Ards...and willing to contribute to the suppressing of Practices so disgraceful to a civilised Country, so repugnant to Humanity and injurious to general commerce will pay £70 for a conviction...'

In all, 27 merchants subscribed, the largest amount of £5/13/9 being paid by Pat Savage, Wm. Galway, John Reed, James McCleery and Wm. Dick.

Henry Adair, Hugh McCredy and James Shanks were convicted and given three years hard labour. Robert, the son of Henry Adair, and John Orr tried to obstruct their capture by force of arms and for this they were expelled forever from Captain Echlin's Independent Volunteers.