

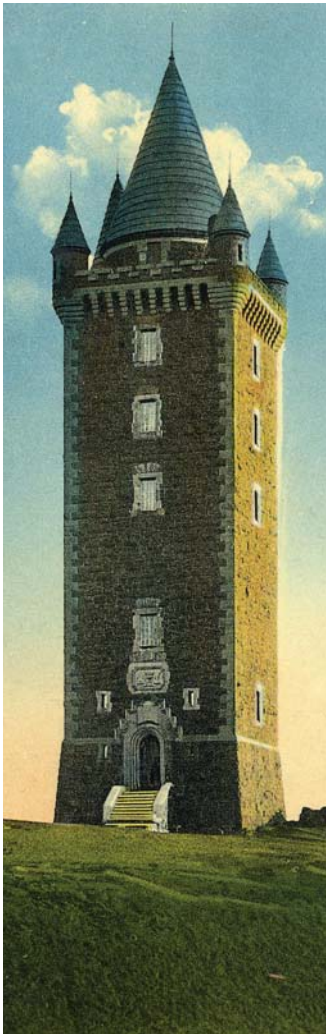
Londonderry still had tremendous power over his tenants, and under this pressure, the local Tenant Right Movement crumbled, never to recover. The prosperity of the 1850s masked the issue, and when the Tenant Right movement became more established in the south of Ireland, the sight of Catholic farmers marching on Protestant landlords stirred mixed emotions, and the Presbyterian farmers of Newtownards never again fully put their weight behind the movement. In the election of 1857 two Conservative landlord candidates were again returned, and held the seats continuously through to 1874.

Scrabo Tower

The third Marquess died in 1854, and in July of that year, a group of his admirers met in the Newtownards Rectory to discuss building a memorial to him in the square. He had been the proprietor of the town and parish since 1822 – a period which had seen many changes, and it was thought fitting that some permanent memorial should be made to him. In 1855, however, it was decided that the memorial should instead be erected on Scrabo, and that the design should be the subject of a competition, with the cost of the work not to exceed £2,000. The eventual designer of the Tower, Charles Lanyon, came fourth, but had his proposal adopted because it came within the price range. In the end, however, the 135 feet high monument actually cost £3,010.

The foundation stone was laid in a ceremony on March 6th, 1857. A special train was laid on from Belfast which stopped at the foot of the hill. Long lines of pedestrians made their way up from all directions. The marquee erected at the crest of the hill was not needed as it was a beautiful day; beside it, a flag pole and a platform were also in place. The new Marquess and Marchioness of Londonderry arrived just after two o'clock. A procession was formed and the distinguished party, which included the Bishop of Down and many of the county's gentry, made their way to the top of the hill, preceded by the Marquess's Highland piper. A jar containing an inscribed scroll to the late Marquess, copies of the national and local newspapers of the day, an Ordnance Survey map of County Down, the coins of the realm, and a list of the names of subscribers was cemented into the foundations. The Union Jack was then hoisted as a signal for the firing of a *feu de joie* from a nearby battery of guns. The band of the Royal North Down Rifles then struck up the National Anthem followed by 'Partant pour la Syrie' and the 'Royal North Down Quickstep'. The account of the proceedings in the *Illustrated London News* of March 28th, 1857 concluded with the band entering Newtownards:

...playing popular airs. The day being fine, and it being weekly market day, the town was crowded with the farmers of the surrounding district, whose respectable



Dedicated to the controversial Third Marquess: the Londonderry Monument or more popularly, Scrabo Tower.



appearance indicated the prosperity enjoyed by the inhabitants of this populous portion of the country, the Yorkshire of Ireland.

'Whenever the tenant farmer looked up, the Tower would be there, a gracious but stoney reminder of who was in charge.'

It has been said that the inspiration of the monument was the gratitude the tenantry felt for the concern shown to them by the third Marquess during the famine, and indeed 450 of the 600 subscribers were connected with the estate. However, there were about 1,200 tenant farmers on the estate and an urban population of many thousands in Newtownards and Comber, so that 450 was not a large proportion of the whole tenantry. In fact, given the hostility to the third Marquess in these years, it would probably be a misrepresentation to claim that the Tower was erected by a grateful tenantry. Two thirds of the cost was raised by 98 individuals (the list headed by the Emperor Napoleon III of France), most of whom were fellow gentry from Antrim and Down, and personal friends of the Marquess. One must wonder if the inspiration for the monument did not owe more to his victory in the recent Tenant Right 'war', than to the character of the man himself. If the Tower is a symbol of anything, it is surely a symbol of landlord power. Whether he was working on his farm or travelling through the parish, whenever the tenant farmer looked up, the Tower would be there, a gracious but stoney reminder of who was in charge.

But it would be an exaggeration to maintain that landlord-tenant relations in Newtownards were bad throughout the nineteenth century or that the third Marquess of Londonderry was hated. As with 1798, the situation