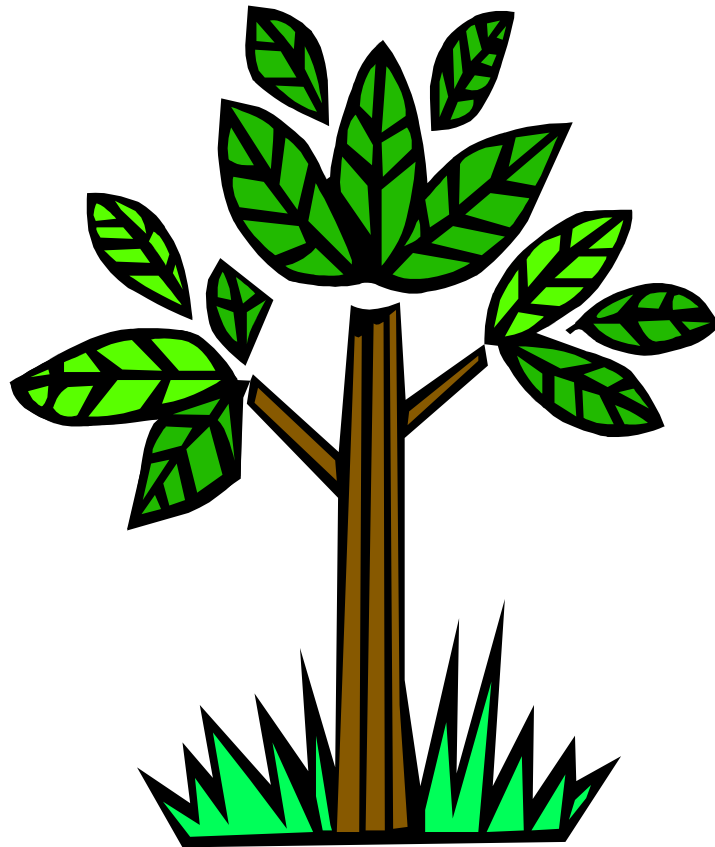


Teachers Booklet 3



Climb the Liberty Tree:

**An Exploration of the
Ulster-Scots' Role in
the United Irishmen's
Rebellion of 1798**

Climb the Liberty Tree: Third Branch – Meanwhile in Antrim...

This unit of work allows pupils opportunities to:

- Learn about the Battle of Antrim and the role of Henry Joy McCracken in the Rising of 1798
- Improve literacy through a Word Search activity
- Take part in a role play/interview to develop empathy with participants in the Rising
- Take part in a group discussion on the course of the Battle, its outcome and effects
- Consider the issue of bias in news reporting
- Determine and employ the genre features of a report from a news correspondent “in the field”
- Explore and reflect on eye-witness accounts of the battle and its aftermath, focusing on the human cost of conflict
- Reflect on wider issues of justice and human rights raised in the accounts of those who experienced the conflict
- Discuss and formulate a peaceful campaign for justice that might be mounted by victims of a conflict

KEY STAGE 3 CURRICULUM

The activities in this unit would fit into work on Citizenship and also into aspects of the General Learning Areas of English including Media Education and Drama; Environment and Society, particularly History.

The unit provides opportunities to teach, practise and assess some of the following skills and capabilities:

- Critical and Creative Thinking Skills—creativity; managing information; problem solving/decision making
- Personal and Interpersonal Skills—self management, working with others
- Communication

Notes to Individual Pages

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The Turn Out was the expression used in the Ulster-Scots communities to describe how they turned out in self-raised ranks to support McCracken's attempt to achieve a more democratic society in Ireland.

In the dating style he adopted, McCracken announced his democratic aims and his intention to bring about a society that had made a complete break with the past.

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Copies of the Teachers Notes page which details the course of the battle should be available for pupils—it could be accessed via school computer network.

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Students should be encouraged to research the genre characteristics of a news report from a correspondent “in the field” or with an outside broadcast unit. These would include:

- The formulaic opening and closing words between newsreader in the studio and correspondent
- The question and answer/interview format adopted which replaces uninterrupted news reading
- The less formal tone and style eg use of first names between newsreader and correspondent
- Use of a degree of speculation about the course of events and their implications in addition to hard facts
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Group Discussion

1. Pupils may need to be reminded that Ulster was under martial law at the time, and that the military, rather than the civil authorities were in control. In addition, the concept of human rights was in its infancy, and not accepted by most governments, which were not democratically elected in any case.
2. Factors that influenced the soldiers' behaviour may have included the deaths or wounding of some of their comrades during the Battle, and the knowledge that the Scotch quarter was a likely area of support for McCracken's troops.
3. Consider what peaceful methods might be employed to influence public opinion, eg posters, lobbying of MPs, protest rallies, canvassing “celebrities” for support and public statements.



The Battle of Antrim, June 7, 1798

Henry Joy McCracken Assumes Leadership in the North

Robert Simms, a Belfast businessman, was to have been responsible for giving the order that would rouse the Northern United Irishmen to rebel in June 1798. Simms opted for a cautious, "wait and see" approach and as this displeased many United Irish supporters, Simms resigned his command. In his place **Henry Joy McCracken** was elected adjutant-general for the county of Antrim. Aware that an assembly of magistrates had been called by Lord O'Neill in Antrim town for Thursday June 7, McCracken issued the following order:

"Army of Ulster, tomorrow we march on Antrim. Drive the garrison of Randalstown before you and haste to form a junction with your Commander-in-Chief. 1st year of Liberty, 6th day of June 1798."

McCracken's intention was to take control of the town and take the magistrates prisoner. It was a direct attack on the judicial system that had punished severely United Irishmen such as the hanged William Orr.

McCracken was unaware that his plans had been passed to **General Nugent** by informers who had infiltrated the United Irishmen's ranks. The garrison in Antrim was preparing to meet him and the following forces were either in position or on the way to the town.

Government Forces

Colonel James Durham, with around 400 men:-
250 Monaghan Militia
a troop of the 22nd Dragoons
the Belfast Yeomanry Cavalry

Colonel Clavering, with around 1000 men:-
the 64th Infantry Regiment
the 3rd Light Battalion

Colonel Lumley, with:-
two troops of 22nd Dragoons
a troop of Yeomanry Cavalry.

Arms

In addition to muskets, the troops were supplied with four six pounder canon and two howitzers.

Antrim Garrison's Preparations

The Garrison consisted of less than 200 men under Major Sneddon. On the morning of the Rising he arrested suspected sympathisers and set fire to their property.

McCracken's March on Antrim:

On the morning of June 7th McCracken's troops from the Belfast and south Antrim area raised their standard at Craigarogan Hill, Roughfort, in the neighbourhood of Mallusk and Glengormley. This area had been a centre of radical support for many years.

When news arrived of an apparently successful attack on the military forces at Larne, the decision to march on Antrim was confirmed. Three columns of United Irishmen marched off singing the *Marseillaise* and other revolutionary songs. They were led by McCracken, Hope and Jim McGladdery, McCracken's brother-in-law. William McCracken, an elder brother of Henry was also present.

The insurgents passed through Templepatrick where they stopped at the Old Presbyterian Church to recover canon hidden underneath it. They then continued through Muckmore. Along the way their ranks were swollen by columns of men from Carnmoney, Crumlin and a large troop from towns and villages in east Antrim and throughout the Six Mile Valley, which had assembled on Donegore Hill. Apart from the canon, the men were armed mainly with pikes and farming tools, but these could be quite effective against an enemy supplied with muskets or rifles that had to be reloaded after every shot.

The Course of the Battle:

See map in pupil Booklet

The rebels were to enter the town in three columns:-

McCracken's column, through Antrim's Scotch Quarter, where he hoped to find further support.

A column via Patie's Lane, now Railway Street.

A column from Ballyclare via Bow Lane, now Bow Street.

Colonel Lumley's men, positioned in the High Street, fired on the rebels approaching from Scotch Quarter. James (Jemmy) Hope and a small band of insurgents took up a sheltered position behind the wall of the Parish Church, giving cover while McCracken and the main column attempted to force their way down the High Street to the courthouse, a short distance from the entrance to Masserene Castle, the estate of Lord O'Neill.

The Ballyclare column managed to reach the grounds of Masserene Castle, surprising the soldiers on guard there. Lord O'Neill was fatally wounded at the entrance to his estate.

A column of United Irish reinforcements then arrived from Randalstown and mistook some Dragoons who were actually fleeing from the insurgents for an attacking force. The insurgents themselves then fled in confusion.

Colonel Durham arrived with his forces and began firing on Antrim from Sentry Hill.

McCracken was forced to evacuate his men. They were defended from the rear by Jemmy Hope and his "Spartan Band" who had remained in the churchyard until they were almost isolated. Hope then pretended to lead his men in an assault against the attacking soldiers, only to swing his troop around in a charge away from the conflict.

Ballymena and Randalstown were in United Irish hands for a further forty-eight hours. In the former, a Committee of Public Safety on the French Revolutionary model was set up, conducting trials and executions of government sympathisers. However, no effective United Irish force was able to provide back-up. McCracken and his surviving supporters, including Jemmy Hope and the poet James Orr, were forced into hiding on Slemish.

Following the insurgents' retreat from Antrim soldiers entered the homes in the Scotch Quarter looking for stragglers in hiding. Eye witness accounts record that the inhabitants were treated with great ferocity.

Sources:

Stewart, ATQ, *The Summer Soldiers*.

Wilsdon, Bill, *The Sites of the 1798 Rising in Antrim and Down*.

The March to Donegore Solution

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(Over, Down, Direction)
 BALLYCLARE (10, 12, W)
 BALLYEASTON (11, 1, SW)
 BALLYNURE (12, 9, N)
 CARNMONEY (12, 11, NW)
 CRUMLIN (4, 1, SE)
 LARNE (14, 6, S)
 MUCKAMORE (2, 11, E)
 SIXMILEWATER (13, 1, S)
 TEMPLEPATRICK (1, 1, SE)