



HOLMES REFERENCES

This document gathers up many of the references to John Holmes contained in Henry Joy's 1817 publication *Historical Collections relative to the Town of Belfast*.

The first reference below is to John Holmes (1703-1779), father of the man in whom I'm mainly pursuing here. Thereafter the references are all to John Holmes (1748-1824) who is sometimes referred to below as "John Holmes, jun."

To avoid confusion – or alert you to potential confusion! – please note that on the actual website page I have referred to the son of this particular John Holmes as John Holmes, jun. (c.1779-??)

1.

The following letter to which the eldest of those John Holmes signed his name, along with many other "free and independent inhabitants of Belfast", arose from a dispute about who had the right to dispose of the surplus money remaining after the collected tax monies had been used to defray the Government's expenses. The King insisted the money was his. Parliament rejected that.

The Belfast inhabitants had written to the Speaker of the House of Commons to support his stance and were unhappy with its reporting in *The Universal Advertiser* (Dublin). Reference is also made in the letter to the Belfast Sovereign having overstepped his mark in making some people freemen of the Corporation. Henry Joy clarified that in his footnote (also included here).

TO THE ADVERTISER.

SIR,

As a free and independent inhabitant of the Town of Belfast, I cannot avoid taking notice of the slovenly manner in which our address to the Speaker of the honourable House of Commons, was printed in your Advertiser of Tuesday last. As we entertained the justest sense of the unshaken loyalty and unbiassed patriotism of this truly great man, so I can assure you, that there never appeared greater unanimity in so large a body of men, than there was among us on this occasion.

The Address was subscribed by 125 of the principal inhabitants of the town. Had we been desirous to have more names, I am persuaded more than 5,000 would have been proud of the honour of subscribing it; and our letters to the worthy gentlemen entrusted with the delivery of our Address, were signed by Mr John Gordon, merchant, and agent to the Earl of Donegall, by order of the free and independent inhabitants, at a public meeting at the Market House, where there was the largest assembly that had ever been known on such an occasion.

It would have given us great pleasure, to have our names transmitted to posterity, as having approved of the Speaker's conduct upon so critical an occasion. Our duty and our loyalty have ever been such to his present Majesty, the best of Kings, and to his most illustrious house, as to make us abhor every measure that may have even the most distant tendency to alienate the affections of his subjects from him; for which reason, we shall take it as a particular favour, if you will, in your next, insert our names at length.

We are the more desirous of having this done, as it will convince the world, that we are in no wise consulted nor concerned in some late freedoms, which, were clandestinely granted by the magistrate of the town [i.e. the Sovereign of Belfast],* and published as the Act of the Corporation, though it was an absolute secret to every person of any consequence in the town, till the affair made its appearance in the public papers. Then, indeed, it was universally disavowed, but not in so public a manner as the gentlemen of Belfast ought to have done; and they take this opportunity of disavowing it in the most public manner.

I am, Sir, &c.

A FREE AND INDEPENDENT INHABITANT OF THE TOWN OF BELFAST.

P.S. We likewise take the liberty to send you the answer we received from Mr Ward and Mr Upton; which we beg you may insert in your next paper ... [omitted here].

* [footnote by Henry Joy] Alluding to the freedom of the Corporation presented (in 1752) to Lord George Sackville, son and principal secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, and to seven commissioners of the revenue, by Mr Saunders, Sovereign of the town. The conduct of the latter is severely reprehended in an anonymous pamphlet, entitled, *Letters from Belfast. — Belfast, printed in the year 1752.*

2.

4 November 1775

A general meeting of the inhabitants, and their address to the King on the present state of affairs, and the rupture with the American colonies.

... a motion was made and seconded, that an humble address be presented to his Majesty from the merchants, traders, and other principal inhabitants of the town of Belfast, stating their grievances and apprehensions resulting from the present unnatural state of things; their concern, as members of the British empire, for its present disturbed and endangered state: their feelings, as men, for the horrors of civil war now raging in America: their hopes in the royal mercy for a speedy termination of these: and their prayers for a restoration of the *old constitutional* system. Which being agreed to without a dissenting voice, a suitable address was produced, and signed by almost every person present, and after such as were not present have had an opportunity of signing it, it is to be transmitted to his Majesty.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

The humble Address and Petition of the Merchants, Traders, and other principal Inhabitants of the Town of Belfast.

Most Gracious Sovereign.

We, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects, the Merchants, Traders, and other principal Inhabitants of the Town of Belfast, implore your Majesty to lend an attentive and favourable ear to these, our humble, though earnest supplications.

Universally interested in the fate of Trade, we cannot but lament the decay of it already occasioned by the present unnatural state of things; limited and restrained as the commerce of this country is by the policy of the British Legislature, any obstruction in the few channels, which have been left open to your industry, must be sensibly felt, and cannot by any efforts of ours be compensated; the injury done to our staple manufacture, by the cessation of all intercourse with America; the danger with which the remains of it are threatened, we conceive to be truly grievous ...

9 November 1775

Those signing included "John Holmes, jun."

3.

"At a meeting of the Freeholders of Belfast, on Monday the 6th of May [1776], ——

F. Hamilton, Esq. in the Chair;

Delegates were appointed to attend the meeting of the Delegates from the several parishes of the barony of Belfast, at the Donegall Arms on Friday the 10th inst."

"At a meeting of Delegates from several parishes in the barony of Belfast, at Belfast, the 10th of May, 1776. ——

John McCance, in the Chair,

The following resolutions were unanimously agreed to:—

1st. *Resolved*, —— That as the stability of the constitution depends on the *freedom* of Election, we are unanimously determined to support, this freedom, in opposition to every influence that may tend to weaken or destroy it; whether it proceeds from the *increasing power of the crown*, or the *unconstitutional interference of peers*. This we apprehend to be incumbent on us, as our duty to God, to our country, to ourselves, and to posterity.

2d. *Resolved*, —— That we will support James Willson, Esq. as the candidate who hath offered himself to this county on constitutional grounds, conducted himself by constitutional principles, and offered satisfactory assurances as to his future conduct in parliament; which have every possible degree of credit and stability given to them by our experience of his past conduct, as the steady friend of civil and religious liberty.

3d. *Resolved*, — That we approve the resolutions of the baronies of Toome, etc. ...

4th. *Resolved*, — That Mr John Holmes, Jun. be appointed treasurer of this barony.

JOHN McCANCE.”

“At a Meeting of the Delegates from the several baronies of the County of Antrim, at Ballymena, the 18th of May. —

Thomas Morris Jones, Esq. in the Chair.

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to sit at Carrickfergus during the election, to conduct the business, and to pay the expences [sic] of it, for which purpose they are hereby empowered to call on the treasurer for what sums they may want; and the said committee was appointed.

Resolved, That Mr John Holmes, Jun. be appointed general treasurer for the county, and that the treasurers for the several baronies shall pay to the general treasurer, as soon as possible, the several sums they have received.

Resolved, That the general committee do meet at Antrim on Wednesday the 22d inst. at 11 o’Clock, and that they do then fix the time and place of their subsequent meeting.

Resolved, That the convenience of the independent electors depends upon the regularity of our proceedings, and that it is of importance that the delegates of the baronies do make out lists of the freeholders of their several parishes, and send duplicates of them to the committee at Antrim, on Wednesday next.

Resolved, That the committee shall, before the day of election, prepare *a Test to be proposed to the Candidates*.

Resolved, That as the love of liberty, zeal for the constitution, and unbiassed integrity in the disposal of his vote, are the first virtues of an elector, and the great duties which he owes to his country, to his conscience, and to posterity: We therefore think ourselves called upon to take this public method of declaring the heartfelt pleasure we derive from the manly spirit of freedom and independence, which is so widely diffused through the different parts of this county, in opposition to the frowns or favours of the interested and great; and from the virtuous attachment to our venerable Constitution, which such numbers of all ranks discover upon this trying occasion, notwithstanding the venality and corruption which too clearly characterise the present age. These are circumstances which must give delight to every friend of Irish liberty, which will reflect the highest honour upon this long enslaved country; ad which in the mean time give us the most confident, assurance, that this glorious struggle shall be crowned with success.

Resolved, That these resolutions be printed in the Belfast News-Letter.

Thomas Morris Jones.”

4.

“To Travers Hartley, Esq. one of the Representatives in Parliament for the City of Dublin.

Sir,

We, the merchants and other principal inhabitants of the town of Belfast, take this earliest opportunity to offer you our sincere congratulations on the happy event of your being elected a representative of the City of Dublin. We consider it as a proof of the freedom and independence of the electors of that city. We rejoice in it, as an addition to the wisdom and virtue of the senate; from the choice of such men we foresee the confirmation of all our national rights; and we behold it as a pledge, that the principles of trade, and facts regarding our commerce, shall be more clearly explained, and more fully stated to the commons of Ireland, than they ever can be, without the aid of men possessed of real commercial knowledge.

We most sincerely wish, that on every future occasion the rest of the kingdom may follow the illustrious example of the city of Dublin, both in the uninfluenced wisdom of their choice, and the incorruptible freedom and independency of their proceedings,

We have the honour to be,
SIR,
Your most obedient humble Servants,

Val. Jones, Chairman, etc.,

Those who signed included J. & J. Holmes [John and James Holmes].

5.

5 October 1782. — *Proceedings of the Inhabitants of Belfast on the subject of British Renunciation, and the Fencible Regiments.*

“BELFAST TOWN MEETING.

At a numerous meeting of the Inhabitants regularly convened by public notice, and held in the Town House the 5th of October 1782,

Thomas Lyons, Esq. in the Chair;

The requisition calling the meeting and stating the business proposed for deliberation being read by the Chairman, the following resolutions were agreed to :—

1. *Resolved, unanimously*, — That the Crown of Ireland being an Imperial Crown, and this kingdom a Free Sovereign Independent State, the rights and liberties of the people ought not to rest on the act or acts of any foreign legislature; none such having any power or authority of any kind

whatever, either externally or internally, over this realm; for which reasons, the interference of the British Parliament is extra-judicial, and of course inadequate.

2. *Resolved, unanimously*, — That we cannot therefore consider the repeal by the British Parliament of their act claiming a right to bind Ireland as any security for our liberties, but only as an apology for their former usurpation; which apology would have been still more complete and satisfactory, had a renunciation of the principle accompanied the repeal of the declaration, as that would have been the strongest proof of the sincerity of our sister kingdom — and on that principle only such a renunciation would still be pleasing and grateful to us.

3. *Resolved, unanimously*, — That it is our decided opinion, that an ample and comprehensive Irish Bill of Rights, passed by our Parliament and assented to by our King, is not only highly proper, but absolutely necessary, both as a solemn record to posterity of the restoration of Irish freedom, and as the best security thereof against future violation.

4. *Resolved, unanimously*, — That we highly approve of the liberality of our Representatives in granting 5,000 men of our establishment as an aid to our sister kingdom; convinced with them, that this country was, is, and will be sufficiently protected, by the spirit, number, and discipline of its Volunteer army.

5. *Resolved, unanimously*, — That no change has since happened to increase our danger from foreign enemies, or to lessen our security.

6. *Resolved, unanimously*, — That we cannot therefore consider the raising of Fencible Regiments, without the consent or sanction of Parliament, in any other light than as an insult to our Parliament, and as an Infamous Job, calculated to reward the supple Tools of administration, at the expence of a nation they had laboured to deceive; to seduce members of parliament from the duty they owe to their constituents; to defeat that scheme of retrenchment we were taught to expect, as the pay of the 5,000 men spared to Great Britain might have been better applied to lessen the expences of a nation already burthened by too many useless establishments; to prevent the enlisting of the 20,000 seamen promised by our parliament to Great Britain, though it must be evident that the manning of one ship of the line would be of more real service to the common defence and benefit of the empire, than the raising of fifty fencible regiments; to disunite, to weaken, and, were it possible, even to annihilate the Volunteer army, those glorious independent defenders of their country, and to introduce in their place a *mercenary force*, which the experience of ages has proved *baneful to the liberties of mankind* — and to increase the influence of the crown, already much too great; for even if an additional military force had been necessary, it had surely been much more regular and economical to have completed the regular regiments on this establishment, where no new commissions would have been, necessary, — but then, indeed, no new source of corruption would have arisen, which was no doubt deemed a sufficient reason not to adopt that measure.

7. *Resolved, unanimously*, — That we therefore think it a duty we owe to ourselves and to our country, to reprobate this invidious attempt in the strongest manner, and to express our detestation of it in the most unequivocal terms; to declare that we will, by every means in our power, discountenance and discourage the raising of fencibles in our district; that we will hold in contempt and abhorrence every man who shall engage in any fencible corps as officer or private, or who shall in any degree aid or abet the raising thereof; that we will hold no intercourse, or communication with such men, whom we shall deem unworthy the name of Irishmen, and enemies to their country.

8. *Resolved, unanimously*, — That it was with great pleasure and satisfaction we beheld the cordiality that subsisted between our armed citizens and the regular army — and were not a little surprised to find a new species of military force instituted under the name of fencible regiments, in

which the former regulation of honours is entirely inverted, and young unfledged soldiers invested with rank, without passing through the customary progress, to the prejudice of a number of veteran officers, whose standing and character in the regular army marked them out as much more eligible for such employments.

9. *Resolved, unanimously*, — That our abhorrence and /detestation of fencible regiments is in no degree lessened by their being now called provincial regiments.

10. That we will petition parliament, and in the most pointed terms instruct our own representatives, to exert their utmost endeavours to procure an ample and comprehensive Irish Bill of Rights, — to refuse any provision for fencible or provincial regiments, and to impeach the advisers of that unpopular, pernicious, and detested measure.

11. *Resolved, unanimously*, — That we shall consider such members of parliament, and only such, entitled to our support at future elections, as shall exert their utmost abilities to gratify the people of Ireland by procuring such Bill of Rights, by refusing such provision, and by impeaching such advisers.

12. *Resolved unanimously*, — That our Chairman, Messrs Waddell Cunningham, William Brown, Robert Thomson, Henry Joy, Jun., James Bryson, William Sinclair, and David Tomb, or any five of them, be a committee to prepare a petition or petitions to parliament, and instructions to our Representatives, agreeable to the resolution; the same to be reported at a town meeting previous to the next session of Parliament.

13. *Resolved unanimously*. — That it be, and it hereby is most respectfully, but at the same time most earnestly recommended to all the inhabitants of this province, to assemble without delay in their several counties, cities, towns, and parishes, to deliberate on these matters, and if they shall approve thereof to enter into similar associations; perhaps, at a moment so critical, and on an occasion so urgent, we may not be deemed too presumptuous should we extend bur respectful but earnest recommendation to all the inhabitants of Ireland.

THOS. LYONS, Chairman.

Mr Lyons having left the Chair:

Resolved unanimously. — That the thanks of this meeting be given to our worthy Chairman, for his very proper conduct in the Chair."

[This next comment is presumably Henry Joy's own.] Resolutions of a similar nature were entered into by the six corps of the Belfast Battalion, on the 7th of the same month, Colonel Banks, in the Chair. — But those of the 5th were far from being embraced with unanimity by all the inhabitants. — On the 11th, a protest against them was published, signed by George Black, John Holmes, Alexander Halliday, John Alexander, Charles Brett, Samuel McTier, Joseph Wallace, Richard Seed, James Ferguson, William Bristow, and 32 others. In a short time, two addresses were published, signed by a numerous body of the inhabitants, calling on the Protesters to declare their opinion on the subject, but it does not appear that the controversy proceeded any farther.

6.

PROCEEDINGS RELATIVE TO THE ERECTION OF THE WHITE-LINEN-HALL.

“Town.House, Belfast, November 15, 1782,

At a numerous Meeting of the Linen Drapers and other principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood of Belfast, called by public notice, for the purpose of taking under consideration the establishment of a market for White Linens, in the Town of Belfast,

George Black, Esq, Sov. in the Chair.

1st. *Resolved, unanimously.*— That it appears to us that the establishment of a White Linen Market in the North of Ireland would be attended with great advantages to the Linen Trade.

2d. *Resolved, unanimously.* — That the town of Belfast appears to us the most eligible situation for such a market.

3d. *Resolved, unanimously.* — That we will give every aid and encouragement in our power towards erecting a Linen-Hall amply sufficient for the comfortable accommodation of the White Linen Trade of the Kingdom, and towards providing every requisite for establishing such a market; and that we have every reason to be convinced that Lord Donegal will with his usual munificence, give very great encouragement to the same.

4th. *Resolved, unanimously.* — That a subscription be opened for the purpose of erecting a Linen-Hall in this town, and that every present or future subscriber shall have a vote in the expenditure of the money, in the appointment of such committees and officers as shall be found needful for carrying those resolutions into effect, and in every other business relative thereunto.

5th. *Resolved, unanimously.* — That the Sovereign, Messrs Waddell Cunningham, John Holmes, John Alexander, and John Brown, — Waring-street; Robert Thomson, John Ewing, and Thomas Stewart,— Castle-street; John Campbell, James Patterson, and Henry Joy, or any five of them, be a committee to represent the merchants of Belfast at the meeting of Linen Drapers at Armagh, on the 2d of December next; and said committee are hereby instructed to consider of ways and Means for immediately establishing a Discounts-Office in the town, for the accommodation of the linen merchants who may attend the white linen market here.

6th. *Resolved, unanimously.* — That the committee be instructed to write to the neighbouring towns, to invite their attendance at the meeting in Armagh.

Adjourned till this day se’nnight, at same place, at noon.

GEORGE BLACK, Chairman,

The Sovereign having left the chair, and William Stewart, Esq. having taken the same :—

Resolved, unanimously. That the thanks of this meeting be given to the Sovereign of Belfast for calling us together, and for his very proper conduct, in the chair.

WILLIAM STEWART.

Subscriptions for building a Linen-Hall for the sale of white linens in the town of Belfast, pursuant to the resolutions entered into at the town-house on the 15th of November, 1732.

William Stewart £300
John Russell £300 ...

The extensive list continues and includes

John & James Holmes £300 etc.

7.

September 24. [1782] —

Approbation of the Dungannon Resolutions, by the Inhabitants of Belfast.

“To the Inhabitants of Belfast.

Gentlemen,

We request you may meet at the Town-House on Wednesday next, at 12 o’clock, to take under consideration the Resolutions of the Volunteer Army of Ulster assembled at Dungannon, by their delegates, on the 8th instant; to declare, your sentiments respecting the same; and, provided you shall approve thereof, to instruct your representatives to give the most decided support in parliament to a bill for a radical and substantial reform in the representation of the people, and, also, to instruct your representatives on such other points as you shall think necessary and proper. We are,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient Servants,

17th September, 1783.

Waddell Cunningham, James Patterson ... [the lengthy list, “signed by 46 of the principal inhabitants” continues and includes both John Holmes and his brother James Holmes].

[The subsequent meeting in the Town House on 24 September unanimously agreed all the Dungannon resolutions about parliamentary reform.]

8.

To the Principal Inhabitants of the Town of Belfast.

Gentlemen.— As men, and as Irishmen, we have long lamented the degrading state of slavery and oppression in which the great majority of our countrymen, the Roman Catholics, are held — nor have we lamented it in silence. We wish to see all distinctions on account of religion abolished — all narrow, partial maxims of policy done away. We anxiously wish to see the day when every Irishman shall be a citizen — when Catholics and Protestants, equally interested in their country’s

welfare, possessing equal freedom and equal privileges, shall be cordially united, and shall learn to look upon each other as brethren, the children of the same God, the natives of the same land — and when the only strife amongst them shall be, who shall serve their country best. These, Gentlemen, are our sentiments, and these we are convinced are yours.

We therefore request a general meeting of the principal inhabitants at the Town-house, on Saturday next, at noon, to consider of the propriety of a petition to parliament, in favour of our Roman Catholic brethren.

We are, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient Servants,

Belfast, Jan. 23, 1792.

Robert Thompson, Thomas Sinclair, Robert Simms ... [the list continues, though without any Holmes' names.]

January 28. [1792] —

BELFAST MEETING ON THE ROMAN CATHOLIC QUESTION.

In consequence of the requisition [see above] a numerous assembly of the inhabitants was held in the New Meeting House, and the Rev. Sinclair Kelburn [minister of the Third Presbyterian Church] being called to the chair) Mr John Holmes, after a prefatory speech in favour of a liberation of the Roman Catholics from the system of penal laws, moved for the appointment of a special committee in order to prepare a petition to parliament on behalf of their Roman Catholic brethren; — and further, that it should be an instruction to that committee, to make the following words *the prayer* of the petition, the preamble and body of the petition to be modelled according to the spirit and meaning of the prayer: —

“We therefore pray, that the legislature may be pleased to repeal, *from time to time, and as speedily as the circumstances of the whole kingdom will permit*, all penal and restrictive statutes at present in existence against the Roman Catholics of Ireland; and that they may thus be restored to the rank and consequence of citizens, *in every particular*.”

This motion was seconded by Dr Haliday. Mr John Thomson, moved that the words in the prayer of the petition, marked in *Italics*, should be expunged, in which he was seconded by Dr White, Robert Getty, Merchantt, and Dr McDonnell. This motion was, on the other side, opposed by Dr Bruce and Dr Haliday, who contended that “the influence of the priesthood over the minds of the laity must be considerably reduced, before we could with truth say, that an extension to all their body, of elective franchise, would increase the virtual basis of election.”

On the question for *expunging* being put, it was carried by a very considerable majority. A motion was then made by Mr Joy, that “it was the duty, as well as the interest of the Roman Catholic clergy and laity to make a solemn declaration of their religious principles, as far as they were connected with civil and political liberty,” which passed unanimously. Feeling some apprehensions that their real sentiments should be misunderstood, the minority at the above meeting published a declaration on the 30th of January, in which they state that the only point of difference between them and the

majority, was, whether the entire enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics, including suffrage at elections, should be *immediate* or *progressive* — “from time to time, and as speedily as the circumstances of the country, and the general welfare of the whole kingdom will permit.” —

Signed by William Bristow, Sovereign; Waddell Cunningham, Henry Joy, John Ashmore, Cunningham Gregg, Narcissus Batt, Samuel H. Batt, James Ferguson, Charles Brett, Christopher Hudson, James McAdam, John Gregg, Joseph Stevenson, Thomas Lyle, James Suffern, and nearly 250 others.

9.

TOWN MEETING.

December 26 [1792] — A general meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast was this day held in Mr [Patrick] Vance’s Meeting-House, for the purpose of “expressing their sentiments on the present state of public affairs; and to enter into such other measures as may be deemed expedient for the accomplishing that great object, an equal Representation of the People in Parliament.”

Charles Rankin, Esq. of Richmond Lodge, being called to the Chair, the business was opened by Mr Robert Thomson. After dwelling particularly on the words Liberty and Equality, and shewing how miserably these terms had been abused to the worst of purposes, he declared that “he had preferred our government to every other, with an improved representation, but without it, any other was as good.

Impressed with such ideas, he moved a declaration, which was seconded by William Sinclair, and carried. Mr Robert Getty said, that a Reform in Parliament was the utmost bound of his wishes, and urged with ability the wisdom of rallying round one point, *round the Constitution*.

Mr James Munfod recommended “the *strong and able* men of the community,” to come forward and enrol themselves among their armed brethren, and those who were in an advanced state of life to contribute to the cause in a pecuniary way, for the purpose of purchasing *arms, ammunition, and accoutrements*. —

“The cause, he declared, required the union and force of the whole people.” Rev. S[inclair] Kelburne said, “he did not prefer our much boasted constitution, he did not know whether there was really any such thing, he could not approve of hereditary legislation (in the House of Lords,) because wisdom is not hereditary, — yet he concurred in the present declaration, and preferred a *Reformed* parliament, though he might esteem another government more perfect.”

DECLARATION.

At a period when the public mind is so much agitated; when the nation seems to be in a state of smothered war; we deem it the duty of every man who is a friend to his country, to peace, and good order, to come forward and publicly avow his sentiments. —

We, therefore, declare, that after all we have heard and read about our glorious and happy constitution, we are so ignorant as not to be able to find what it is. We cannot, however, conceive,

that if in any nation three-fourths of the inhabitants are absolutely excluded from all share in the legislature and only a very small part of the other fourth represented; if the great majority, of what are called representatives, be appointed arbitrary, by a few individuals, for a long term of years, and not accountable to the people; if places and pensions be multiplied for the purposes of corruption; if no responsibility be annexed to the great offices of state; if taxes without end be levied off the people, and the nation involved in debt, for the purpose of purchasing votes to impose more taxes; if the honours of the peerage be brought to sale to raise funds for the same purposes; if the surplus of the revenue, instead of being applied to lessen the national debt, be carried to another country, whether to bribe the representatives of the people there, or to pay German *butchers* for massacring the friends of freedom in France; if the subject be deprived of trial by jury, whether by penal statutes, by *revenue*, or *game laws*, by *fiats* or by *attachments*:

We say, if any nation labours under those and innumerable other grievances, practised under colour of law; we are yet to learn what is the *glorious* and *happy* constitution of that nation; We do not hesitate to say — *they are a nation of Slaves!*

We declare, that a government by King, Lords, and Commons, the Commons being a real representation of all the people, is the government which, if attainable without violence, we wish for and prefer; that we do not wish for a revolution, deeming it the last measure of dire necessity; a measure to which no wise or good man would resort until every other means had been tried in vain; and being convinced that our present form of Government, however defective, possesses the power, if it had the will, of reforming all abuses and remedying all defects without violence or commotion, and that such reform *must* take place whenever the united voice of the people shall call for it.

And we further declare our opinion, that if any persons in this kingdom be endeavouring to promote a revolution, it can only be those, who determined to preserve till the last moment their system of corruption, their borough influence, their places, and their pensions, pertinaciously oppose every attempt towards a reform, thereby doing their utmost to produce public commotion and overthrow the government, by driving the nation to despair. Infatuated mortals! wilfully and wickedly blind to future consequences! and of whom it may be justly said, — *Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.* — Whom God determines to destroy, he first makes mad.

We declare, that a radical reform in the representation of the people has long been, and still is, the great object to which all our wishes, all our endeavours tend, the object which we have pursued, and which we shall never cease to pursue until it is attained; that to attain it we shall think no sacrifice too much, no risk too great; and that NO reform can ever be adequate or useful, satisfactory or JUST, unless ALL IRISHMEN, of every description, shall be equally and fairly represented.

Resolved, — That, with the utmost deference for our countrymen in general, we would most respectfully suggest the propriety of county meetings and of Provincial Conventions, by delegations from parishes, cities, and great towns; a measure by which the united voice of all the men of Ireland would be drawn to a focus, all wild ideas exploded, a permanent chain of national communication formed, and the important business of the kingdom conducted with that dignity and energy which become a great nation, peaceably, but firmly demanding their rights.

Resolved, That a committee of twenty-one be now appointed, with full powers to correspond, in our name, with our fellow citizens in all parts of this country, in all parts of this province, and in all parts of the other provinces; and in concert with them to pursue such measures as shall be deemed expedient for procuring such meetings and conventions, — that said committee have full power, (when they shall deem the time proper) to call, in our name, a general meeting of the inhabitants of this parish, to appoint delegates to such meeting and convention, and also to call us together for the same purpose.

Resolved. — That C. Ranken, Robert Thomson, John Holmes, James Holmes, Doctor White, James Ferguson, William Sinclair, Samuel Neilson, Rev. S. Kelburne, Rev. P. Vance, Hugh Montgomery, Henry Haslett, Robert Getty, Samuel McTier, William Tennent, Robert Simms, Dr. McDonnell, George Joy, Hugh Crawford, Samuel Brown, John Boyle, be, and they hereby are, appointed a committee, for the above purposes.

Resolved. — That our warmest thanks are justly due to the volunteers of Ireland — to the old associations, and to the new corps formed and forming: — Soldiers of Liberty! we thank you. — Be Firm! — increase your numbers — perfect your discipline — despise the fulminations of placed and pensioned courtiers, and of guzzling corporations. Great is your merit! You preserved internal peace — you aided and supported the civil magistrate in the execution of the laws — Unite and Persevere. You saved your country from foreign invasion and rescued her from foreign legislation — and should a contest for liberty ever become necessary, (which God avert) we trust you will rescue her from internal oppression.

Resolved.— That a voluntary contribution be received from the inhabitants of this town, who, from age, infirmity, or other causes, are prevented from enrolling themselves among the volunteers, for the purpose of creating a military fund, to supply with ammunition, and other necessaries, the volunteers already embodied and embodying in Belfast; and that the committee this day appointed be requested to take the trouble of receiving the same.

And with great deference to our countrymen, we beg leave to recommend the adoption of a similar measure.

CHARLES RANKEN, Chairman

Mr Ranken having left the Chair, Mr William Sinclair was unanimously called to it; and it was then resolved — that the unanimous thanks of this meeting be given to the chairman, for his readiness in taking the chair, and for the strict propriety of his conduct in it.

WILLIAM SINCLAIRE; Chairman.

SAMUEL NEILSON, Secretary,

10.

January 14. [1793] — In conformity to the resolutions of the town meeting, (Dec. 26, 1793,) a meeting of Delegates from the respective parishes of the county of Antrim assembled at Ballymena on the 14th of January. From the town of Belfast there were present Rev. Sinclair Kelburne, and John Holmes, and from the parish, William Sinclair.

Alexander McManus was called to the chair, and it was recommended, that the eight other counties of Ulster should hold meetings for the purpose of appointing 26 delegates each, to represent them in a provincial convention to be assembled at Dungannon on the 15th of February; 26 persons (including the two government representatives for the county,) were then returned from the 8 baronies of the county of Antrim to attend the convention, of whom W. Sinclair, John Holmes, and Henry Joy were elected for the barony of Belfast.

11.

CELEBRATION OF THE KING'S BIRTHDAY

To the Rev. William Bristow, Sovereign of Belfast.

SIR. — As unfounded imputations of disloyalty have been held out against the Town of Belfast, for some time past; and as we are confident there does not exist throughout the empire a community more attached to the person of the King, or to the principles that established his family on the throne. We request that you may give notice of a general illumination tomorrow, in honour of his Majesty's birth-day, in order that the town may have an opportunity of testifying that its love of liberty is perfectly compatible with its attachment to the King.

Belfast, 3d June, 1793,

[There follows a list of 40 names which includes those of Robert Holmes and John Holmes.]

12.

7 June 1798

... Upon receipt of the intelligence of the assemblages of rebels at Larne, Glenarm, &c. the utmost exertion was used by General Nugent, not only to frustrate and defeat their designs, but to prevent any communication with any disaffected persons that might be in Belfast: sentinels were placed at all the outlets from town, with orders to let no person pass, those coming to and from market only excepted.

In the evening, a number of the inhabitants received arms, and formed a Supplementary Corps.

Belfast, June 8, 1798.

We, whose names are underwritten, considering ourselves called upon, as loyal subjects, at this momentous crisis, to stand forward in defence of our king and country, and of the properties of ourselves and fellow-subjects in this town and neighbourhood — have this day, with the approbation of General Nugent, enrolled ourselves as a supplementary division of the corps of yeoman infantry, under the command of Captain Wallace; agreeably to an act of parliament — to clothe ourselves, and serve without pay. (Signed,)

John Holmes, James T. Kennedy, Henry Joy, William Bruce, Patrick Vance, etc. [42 actual names plus a note stating: "And seventeen others."]

13.

DECLARATION OF THE YEOMAN CAVALRY.

June 18.[1798] — At this awful period, when a most savage and unnatural rebellion has broken out in some parts of this kingdom, the Belfast Troop of Yeoman Cavalry think a general declaration of loyalty and fidelity to his Majesty and the constitution absolutely necessary.

Resolved, therefore, — That every member of the troop, and all persons who may hereafter be admitted, shall subscribe the following declaration: —

We, whose names are, hereunto subscribed, in the presence of God, do solemnly declare our utter abhorrence and detestation of all foreign interference in the affairs of this kingdom, of the atrocious insurrection now existing, and of all secret cabals and private conspiracies to subvert or new-model the constitution, without the joint consent of King, Lords and Commons in parliament; and that we will use our utmost endeavours to defeat the designs of all seditious and disaffected persons, whether existing under the denomination of United Irishmen, or other traitorous association.
(Signed)

W. Rainey, Captain,
C. Skinner, Lieut.
S. Smith, Lieut.
J.H. Houston, Sergeant
J Dickson, Sergeant

[Plus many others – a total of 39 names, “and nineteen others” not named.]

One listing is for “John Holmes, Jun.” Question: Is that our John Holmes or is it his son who was born c.1779? Could be either. One listing is for T.L. Stewart (Thomas Ludford Stewart who we’ll meet later as a Sovereign).

14.

A meeting was held to appoint a treasurer and committee, and transact other business relative to the disposal of the money subscribed for clothing, &c. for the Belfast yeoman infantry. Mr Samuel Brown was appointed treasurer, and the Hon. C. Skeffington, Val. Jones, Jun., John Ewing, Thomas Lyons, John Robinson, Hugh Crawford, and Charles Ranken, a committee.

The following additional subscriptions were received: ...

[Amongst the names is that of James Holmes, subscribing £11. 7s. 6d. No sign of John Holmes, though the list ends with “And others.”]
