



# THE BUTLER SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

*April 2008 – No. 28*



## **FUTURE EVENTS**

The annual dinner in Spain, about which we wrote about in the last Newsletter, is taking place on Saturday 17th May in Madrid. There are going to be quite a few members from overseas attending. We are very grateful to David Butler for the hard work he puts into this occasion and the great welcome that everyone receives. It is always very successful. His e-mail in case anyone can come at this last minute is [butler\\_d\\_j@yahoo.es](mailto:butler_d_j@yahoo.es))

The 15th International Rally to be held in Kilkenny is provisionally set for Tuesday 25th – Sunday 30th August, 2009. We would meet in Kilkenny on the evening of the Tuesday.

The Journal should be out very soon – David Butler, the Journal editor, has it proof read and it is at the printers.

*Very sadly Frank Butler who has been Vice-Chairman of the Society for so many years died in February aged 86. We miss him very much, and our sympathy goes to his wife Nancy, his son Colm, our present Chairman and his other sons and daughters.*

## **WEBSITE**

The Society's website is [www.butler-soc.org](http://www.butler-soc.org). The "Desperately Seeking" page generates a remarkable number of replies from the general public. Your webmaster is Lord Dunboyne, ([johndunboyne@aol.com](mailto:johndunboyne@aol.com)). To enter the Members Only section of the website, USER NAME = aboo, PASSWORD = hudibras.

## **TALK IN PRAGUE**

*Our honorary secretary, Melo was asked by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin to give a talk in Prague to coincide with the Wallenstein Exhibition on Walter Butler who plotted the General's assassination during the Thirty Years War.*

In Prague in 1618, the Protestants citizens had tossed their Catholic Governors out of the window of the Castle. The Governors survived, which some attribute to a miracle while others to the dung heap that broke their fall! But this incident began the Thirty Years War. Though the Protestants were soon defeated and driven out of Bohemia, the war raged on and involved countries as far apart as Sweden and Spain, and caused the death of half the population of Central Europe. Wallenstein, a Czech and first of all a businessman, struck extremely lucrative deals for his services to the Emperor; he was a brilliant administrator running his enormous estates and armies with remarkable efficiency. He was also a victorious general. But his power and ambition frightened the emperor, who dismissed him at one stage, and then, owing to a series of defeats had to recall him. Wallenstein was suspected of conspiring with the enemy and was about to be sacked a second time when he was assassinated on the initiative of Colonel Walter Butler, an Irish mercenary who was certain that Wallenstein was planning to go over to the enemy.

In the eighteenth century, Friedrich Schiller, the German playwright, wrote a dramatic piece on the murder of Wallenstein in which he describes Butler as having been a stable boy in Ireland with hankering for titles, but Walter Butler, whose family came from the castle in Paulstown, County

Kilkenny, was the great, great grandson of the third earl of Ormond and had no need for such handles to his name. He had come from Ireland to fight for the Holy Roman Emperor with a regiment of Irish Dragoons. Luckily he had a much more appreciative biographer than Schiller in a Father Carew who described him as, "My most esteemed Butler with whom I had lived, passing a most delightful time." Father Carew came from Tipperary and became Chaplain General to all the English, Scottish and Irish forces of the Holy Roman Emperor.

In the winter of 1634, Butler was guarding the passes against the enemy when he received orders from his Generalissimo, Wallenstein, to march with him towards Prague. Butler was immediately suspicious for this would leave the way open for the enemy. With his fellow Irish and Scottish officers, he plotted to assassinate the Generalissimo. At the town of Eger, colonels loyal to Wallenstein were invited to an evening feast and when the diners had reached the drinking stage, Butler entered with twelve dragoons crying, "Who is for the Emperor?". The Irish and Scottish officers sprang up, drew their swords and, each taking up a candle from the table, cried, "Long live the House of Austria." Two of Wallenstein's lieutenants were cut down as they went for their weapons. Wallenstein's brother-in-law defended himself desperately. His doublet of elkskin protected him from so many thrusts that his attackers thought he bore a charmed life, but he fell at last, pierced through the body.

The dragoons went immediately to Wallenstein's castle nearby. On the way they could hear the wails of the wives of the murdered officers who had learnt of the death of their husbands. Wallenstein had left his bed and gone to the windows to ask the watch what the noise was. A dragoon, with his foot thrusting open the door, called out "Art thou the traitor who would deprive the emperor of his crown and kingdom?" Wallenstein stretched out his arms in silence: was pierced through his unflinching breast and he sank upon the ground without a groan.'

In the huge exhibition there was little about suspicions of Wallenstein's treachery and only some small sketches of his murder. There is no hint of the gratitude and rewards (which included a golden chain set with topazes that was last seen in the 1930's – see Journal Vol 3, No 3) that Walter Butler received from the Emperor for the deed, which as a priest said at the time: "made our country (Ireland) and our nation, otherwise quite unheard of here, most famous and well-known."

I wondered if my audience might turn on me for ascribing Butler's actions to loyalty and honour and throw me from the window. There was no dung heap outside. I looked! But no defenestration' occurred – it would have made it very cold if a window had had to be broken.

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**Membership subscriptions for January 1st - December 31st 2008 are due from those who have not already paid.**

€15 / Stg£10 / AUS\$25 / NZ\$25 / CAN\$25 / US\$20 to:

**The Butler Society, Lavistown, Kilkenny, IRELAND.**

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