

The Streets of York

Do you live in Brunswick, Ulster or Osnaburg Roads?



Many streets in York seem to have been named with a theme. Brunswick, Osnaburg and Ulster all relate to Prince Frederick Augustus (1763-1827), the second son of George III (King of both Britain and Hanover) and Queen Charlotte.

At the age of six months he was declared Prince/Bishop of Osnaburg in the Holy Roman Empire. The Peace of Westphalia stipulated that the city of Osnaburg would alternate between Catholic and Protestant rulers, with the Protestant bishops to be elected from the cadets of the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg. Furthering this link Frederick married his cousin Princess Frederica Charlotte, the daughter of King Frederick William II of Prussia and Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick-Lüneburg in 1791.

George III decided that his second son would pursue an army career and had him made a colonel in 1780 at the age of 17. In 1784 he was created Duke of York and Albany and Earl of Ulster. By successive promotions he reached the position of Commander in Chief of the British Army by 1799, all without any substantial experience in the field. This resulted in a series of military disasters caused by his own lack of experience and the poor conditions in the British army at the time. Hence the penning of the particularly defaming poem "The Grand Old Duke of York".



The Grand old Duke of York
He had ten thousand men
He marched them up to the top of the hill
And he marched them down again
And when they were up they were up
And when they were down they were down.
And when they were only halfway up they were neither up nor down.

In the Avon Gazette and York Times of November 1919 a letter to the editor suggested that Osnaburg Road should be renamed Peace Street due to its German origins. Whilst Albany (which was originally called Frederick Town after Frederick Augustus) did indeed change its own Osnaburg to Bridges Road, nothing came of the suggestion in York.

