County Donegal & the Plantation of Ulster
Introduction

Ulster’s rich tapestry of cultural diversity largely has its origins in the early seventeenth-century Plantation of Ulster with its influx of mainly Protestant English and Scottish settlers. Thus, the Plantation has proved, in the words of the historical geographer Philip Robinson, to be ‘one of the most politically significant mass migrations to have taken place in western Europe since medieval times’.

There had been earlier plantations in King’s and Queen’s Counties (Leix and Offaly) in 1556 and in Munster in 1586 and there were plantations in Leitrim, Longford and Wexford contemporaneous with the Plantation of Ulster. The Ulster Plantation was also contemporaneous with the Plantation of Virginia, the Jamestown settlement being established in 1607. Hence, the Lord Deputy Sir Arthur Chichester’s celebrated promotional spiel: ‘I had rather labour with my hands in the Plantation of Ulster than dance in that of Virginia’.

The Ulster Plantation proved to be the most significant and successful plantation in Irish history.

The Context

In the 1970s Dervla Murphy, the Irish cyclist and travel writer, aptly entitled her book about her travels in Ulster A Place Apart (London, 1978). Ulster has long been ‘a place apart’. In 1949 the historian Hugh Shearman wrote: ‘Ulster always has been one of the salty, stinging, unexpected elements in the life and flavour of this planet’. Shearman further explained that it was a place which has given ‘sleepless nights’ to ‘statesmen and generals, kings and dictators’ who have cursed ‘the place and its ingenious and irrepressible inhabitants’.

The idea of Ulster as ‘a place apart’ long pre-dated the Plantation of Ulster. Gaelic institutions survived in Ulster long after they had disappeared from the rest of the island. Ulster was the source of repeated attacks on the English settlement in Ireland until the province was finally subdued by the defeat of the great O’Neill rebellion at end of the Nine Years’ War in 1603.

However, even with the subjugation of the last bastion of Gaelic power, Ireland remained a strategic problem, a point which had been dramatically underscored by the arrival of a Spanish army at Kinsale in September 1601.

Rahan Castle, Killaghtee

Rahan Castle dates from the mid-fifteenth century. In 1610 the castle and its lands were originally granted to William Stewart, who failed to live up to his obligations, as did his immediate successor, George Murray of Broughton. By 1618 the property passed to John Murray, a favourite of James VI & I. He was raised to the peerage as 1st Earl of Annandale in 1625. In 1640 upon his death, his son James became the 2nd Earl who acquired further lands in south-west Donegal. James Murray died childless and his cousin, Robert Creighton, took over the estate and changed his own name to Murray.
The advisers of James VI (of Scots) & I (of England) differed as to the best way of dealing with this problem. Sir Arthur Chichester, Lord Deputy of Ireland from 1605 to 1615, favoured a slow and gradual policy of ‘Anglicization’. Sir John Davies, who was successively Solicitor-General (1603-6) and Attorney-General of Ireland (1606-19), preferred a much more radical and drastic policy of dismembering the existing Gaelic order root and branch. Gaelic intellectuals correctly recognised that men like Davies sought the creation of a ‘Sacsa nua darb anim Éire’ (‘a new England called Ireland’). This was to be achieved by replacing the Gaelic order with an English model of civilisation through the plantation of Ulster ‘with good English and Scottish corn’ (or ‘colonies of civil people of England and Scotland’). Thereby, the country would ‘ever after be happily settled’. With the ‘Flight of the Earls’ in September 1607, the latter strategy became possible and seemed a most attractive solution to an otherwise intractable problem.

To encourage Scots to settle in Ulster represented a remarkable volte-face for the Government in London. Normally policy had been directed at keeping the Scots out of Ulster because – in the words of S. J. Connolly in Contested Island: Ireland 1460-1630 (Oxford, 2007) – Gaelic Ulster and Gaelic Scotland represented ‘a single ungovernable hinterland’. However, because of Ulster’s close proximity to Scotland, this policy usually met with little success. Admittedly, Government planned to settle Lowland Scots rather than Gaelic-speaking Scots in Ulster.
The Plan

Two Plantations

There were two plantations of Ulster: an unofficial, and almost exclusively Scots, plantation in counties Antrim and Down (and, to some extent, Monaghan) and an official plantation in the remaining six Ulster counties. Hugh Montgomery, laird of Braidstane in Ayrshire, and James Hamilton, an adventurer and a university lecturer at Trinity College, Dublin, spearheaded the unofficial plantation in North Down and the Ards peninsula.

The Unofficial Plantation in Counties Antrim and Down

Hugh Montgomery, who was remarkably well informed about events in Ulster, knew that Con O’Neill of Clandeboye was imprisoned in Carrickfergus Castle on suspicion of treason. Montgomery undertook to secure a pardon for Con from James VI & I in return for a share of his lands. Somehow or other, James Hamilton muscled in on the action. Thus in 1605 James made a triple division of the Clandeboye estate: one-third to Con O’Neill, and one-third each to Montgomery and Hamilton. However, Con was no match for his new neighbours and within a few years they had got their hands on Con’s portion too. Montgomery and Hamilton may not have been overly scrupulous in their treatment of Con O’Neill but they were able and energetic settlers: ‘the prosperity of north Down, as well as its strongly Scottish character, had its origins in their labours’.

The Official Plantation

The official plantation in counties Armagh, Cavan, Coleraine, Donegal, Fermanagh and Tyrone was facilitated by the so-called ‘Flight of the Earls’. The departure of Hugh O’Neill and Hugh O’Donnell, the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell respectively, and some 90 of their followers, who sailed from Lough Swilly for the Continent on 3 or 4 September 1607, created a power vacuum and allowed the Crown to charge the Earls with high treason in their absence and to declare their lands to be forfeit.

Rathneeny (First Donegal) Presbyterian Church

Presbyterianism has deep roots in County Donegal. There has been a Presbyterian meeting house on this site since the late seventeenth century, although the current church was built in 1801. In 1674 Revd William Henry was appointed to this congregation. Revd Thomas Craighead, a Scot and the congregation’s second minister, emigrated to America in 1715. His son, the Revd Alexander Craighead was an influential patriot preacher, and is widely regarded as the spiritual father of the Mecklenburg Declaration of 1775, which anticipated the American Declaration of Independence of 1776.

The Walls of Londonderry

The walls of Londonderry, the last walled town to be built in western Europe, were built by the Honourable the Irish Society between 1613 and 1618. The Walls are approximately 1.5 km in circumference and vary in width between 12 and 35 feet and are the most complete in Ireland. Londonderry claims Europe’s largest collection of cannon whose origins are known precisely. The cannon are displayed around the Walls.
forfeit. Privately, the government was mystified by Tyrone’s conduct. Furthermore, in County Donegal Sir Cahir O’Doherty’s revolt in April 1608, when he seized Culmore and Derry, and his death at Kilmacrenan at the beginning of July 1608, ultimately had the effect of augmenting the amount of land available for plantation in the county.

As early as 17 September 1607 Chichester submitted to the English Privy Council proposals for the disposal of the fugitives’ lands. In March 1608 Chichester prepared ‘notes of remembrance’, which he further revised in October 1608, for a plantation in Ulster. In July 1608 a Commission was established to survey the six Ulster counties which were to constitute the official plantation. In January 1609 a detailed plan for a plantation of the six Ulster counties, including the conditions to be observed by the planters, was completed.

The Scottish settlers came from Lanarkshire, Ayrshire, the Borders and the Lothians. James VI & I thought that his fellow countrymen would be excellent material for the plantation because they ‘are a middle temper, between the English tender breeding and the Irish rude breeding and are a great deal more likely to adventure to plant Ulster than the English’.

However, because Scotland was incredibly poor compared to England and could not provide all the craftsmen, masons, carpenters and blacksmiths necessary to build new towns, new villages and fortifications, the Scottish settlers would need to be supplemented with English settlers. These came largely from Lancashire, Cheshire, East Anglia and Devon. In County Donegal some of the ‘English’ settlers were actually Welsh.

By January 1610 the English Privy Council succeeded in ‘persuading’...
the immensely wealthy City of London to assume responsibility for the
plantation of the city of Derry, the county of Coleraine and the barony
of Loughsholin in Tyrone. This territory was subsequently renamed
County Londonderry. Londonderry’s walls, built by the London
companies and completed in 1618, mark it out as the last fortified city
to be built in western Europe.

Land was divided into ‘proportions’ of 2,000, 1,500, and 1,000 acres,
with three categories of grantee.

English and Scottish chief planters (undertakers) had the heaviest
responsibilities as regards fortification and settlement. Those who were
granted 1,000 acres were required to
build a walled enclosure called a ‘bawn’.
The word ‘Bawn’ is derived from two
Gaelic words; ‘Ba’, Irish for cow (or
cattle), and ‘Dhun’, meaning ‘fort’,

translating roughly into ‘cow-fort’ or ‘cattle-fort’. So the anglicized
form of ‘badhun’ was ‘bawn’. Those who received 1,500 acres were
required to build a stone house within the bawn, and those with
2,000 acres a castle. The bawn was intended to offer protection to
the undertaker, his tenants and their animals in event of attack by
the native Irish. Undertakers were to ensure that the homes of their
British tenants were built close to the bawn.

Civil and military servants of the crown in Ireland (servitors) were
allowed to have Irish tenants, but could have lower rents if they settled
the required number of 24 adult English and Lowland Scots per
1,000 acres. Successful applicants for grants came from lists drawn
up in London and Edinburgh.

Local recipients (‘deserving Irish’) were to pay higher rents and to
abandon Gaelic methods of tillage, harvesting, and threshing.

Twenty-eight baronies or ‘precincts’ were established, eight for English
undertakers, eight for Scottish ones, and twelve for servitors and
‘deserving Irish’ jointly.

Land was also set aside for the financial support of the Church of
Ireland, Trinity College, Dublin, (which received 95,000 acres in
Counties Armagh, Donegal and Fermanagh), and the ‘Royal’ schools which were eventually established at Armagh, Cavan, Dungannon, Portora, and Raphoe.

There were five exceptional baronies in all, two of which, Inishowen and Tirhugh, were in County Donegal.

The Plantation scheme in County Donegal
Donegal was divided into seven ‘precincts’ and the lands were apportioned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precinct</th>
<th>Recipient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boylagh</td>
<td>assigned to Scottish undertakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doe</td>
<td>assigned to servitors and native Irish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanad</td>
<td>assigned to servitors and native Irish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inishowen</td>
<td>designated an exceptional area. Except for Church land, this precinct was granted to Sir Arthur Chichester, the Lord Deputy, in February 1610.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifford</td>
<td>assigned to English undertakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portlough</td>
<td>assigned to Scottish undertakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirhugh</td>
<td>designated an exceptional area. 25% (4,000 acres) of Tirhugh was assigned to Trinity College, Dublin. The remaining 75% was divided between the Church of Ireland, servitors and native Irish, the Royal School in the County (200 acres) and Ballyshannon fort.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Doe and Fanad together are known as Kilmacrenan.

Scottish undertakers in the Barony of Boylagh & Banagh
Eight Scottish undertakers were awarded land in the Barony of Boylagh & Banagh. All the undertakers awarded land in this precinct disengaged early. These lands initially came under the control of one man,Sir Robert Gordon of Lochinvar, Kirkcudbrightshire. Eventually the land passed into the control of the Murray family of Broughton, Wigtownshire, the family’s Scottish seat being at Cally, near Gatehouse of Fleet. The huge Murray of Broughton estate – including land round Donegal town, Ardara and Killybegs and large proportions of the parishes of Killaghte, Killymard, Killybegs, Kilcar and Inishkeel – was impressive in size but less obviously in terms of quality. The estate’s uplands were not very fertile but there was good land along the coast. The estate also possessed valuable herring and salmon fisheries. The estate’s remoteness seriously curtailed its economic potential.
Scottish Undertakers in the Barony of Portlough

Nine Scottish undertakers, four of whom were Stewarts and four of whom were Cunninghams from Ayrshire, were awarded land in the Barony of Portlough. Ludovic Stewart, Duke of Lennox, was a relation of James VI & I, a Privy Councillor and Lord High Steward of the King’s household in London. Unlike their counterparts in Boylagh & Banagh, these undertakers maintained a strong level of continuity in ownership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undertaker</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Name of Proportion</th>
<th>Estimated Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duke of Lennox</td>
<td>Stirlingshire</td>
<td>Magervlin, Lettergull &amp; Cashel</td>
<td>3,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir W. Stewart</td>
<td>Lanarkshire</td>
<td>Corkagh</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. McAulay</td>
<td>Dunbartonshire</td>
<td>Ballyneagh</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Cunningham</td>
<td>Ayrshire</td>
<td>Dunboy</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Stewart</td>
<td>Ayrshire</td>
<td>Cooleelaghy</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir J. Cunningham</td>
<td>Ayrshire</td>
<td>Dacastross &amp; Portlough</td>
<td>2,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Cunningham</td>
<td>Coolemacritreen</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Cunningham</td>
<td>Ayrshire</td>
<td>Ballyaghan</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Stewart</td>
<td>Ayrshire</td>
<td>Lismolmaoghan</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tully Castle, Co. Fermanagh

Tully Castle is situated on Blaney Bay on the southern shore of Lower Lough Erne, not very far from Monea Castle. The Blaney area takes its name from Sir Edward Blaney who was among the English advance party sent to Fermanagh to organise the Plantation. Tully Castle was a fortified house with a rectangular bawn and was built for Sir John Hume, a Scottish planter, in 1619. The bawn had four rectangular corner towers. The castle was captured by Rory Maguire in the 1641 Rebellion, burned and abandoned.
### English Undertakers in the Barony of Lifford

Nine English undertakers were awarded land in the Barony of Lifford. Unlike English undertakers elsewhere, many of these men had significant Irish experience as civil and military servants of the crown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undertaker</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Name of Proportion</th>
<th>Estimated Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H. Clare</td>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>Stranorlar</td>
<td>1,500 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Wilson</td>
<td>Suffolk</td>
<td>Aghagalla &amp; Convoy</td>
<td>2,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Russell</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Acharin</td>
<td>1,500 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir W. Barnes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monaster</td>
<td>1,500 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Mansfield</td>
<td>(Servitor)</td>
<td>Killygordon</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir T. Cornwall</td>
<td>Shropshire</td>
<td>Corlackey</td>
<td>2,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir R. Remington</td>
<td>(Servitor)</td>
<td>Tawnaforis</td>
<td>2,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir M. Barkeley</td>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>Dromore &amp; Lurga</td>
<td>2,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir T. Coach</td>
<td>(Servitor)</td>
<td>Lismongan</td>
<td>1,500 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Servitors in Doe & Fanad

(Also known as Kilmacrenan) Barony

Fourteen awards (one jointly) were made to servitors in Doe & Fanad (also known as Kilmacrenan) Barony. Sir Ralph Bingley and John Vaughan had been part of Sir Henry Docwra’s expedition to Lough Foyle. Captain Henry Harte had been at Culmore. Captain William Stewart had been sent to Ulster with 200 foot soldiers to suppress O’Doherty’s rising.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servitor</th>
<th>Name of Proportion</th>
<th>Estimated Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W. Stewart</td>
<td>Clonlary</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Crawford</td>
<td>Ballyrehan</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Vaughan</td>
<td>Carnagilly</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Kingsmill</td>
<td>Kingstown</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Brooke</td>
<td>Edencarn</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir R. Hansomd</td>
<td>Ramelton</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Perkins &amp; G. Hilton</td>
<td>Facker</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir T. Chichester</td>
<td>Radonnell</td>
<td>500 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Hart</td>
<td>Ballynass</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir R. Bingley</td>
<td>Rosguill, Castledoe &amp; Carrowreagh</td>
<td>1,100 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Ellis</td>
<td>Loughnemuck</td>
<td>400 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Brown</td>
<td>Crancasse</td>
<td>528 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Vaughan</td>
<td>Moyres</td>
<td>1,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Grimsditch</td>
<td>Legabrack</td>
<td>240 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Deserving Irish

In all, fifty Irish grantees were awarded land, of whom one was a woman, Grainne ny Donnell. Four of them were given more than 1,000 acres: Donald McSweeney, Sir Mulmory McSweeney, Donnell McSweeney and Turlough O’Boyle. Each was awarded 2,000 acres in Doe & Fanad.
Corporate towns & associated grants of town & fort land in County Donegal

Ultimately, there were to be five Boroughs in County Donegal. Ballyshannon, Donegal Town and Lifford were granted their charters in 1613. Killybegs was granted its charter in 1616 while St Johnston was granted its charter some time before 1619, possibly in 1618. Basil Brooke, Roger Jones and Sir Richard Hansard were the proprietors of Donegal, Killybegs and Lifford respectively. Donegal, Killybegs and Lifford were awarded 300, 224 and 500 acres respectively to support their progress and development. Sir Henry Folliott, who had responsibility for the fort at Ballyshannon, occupied a comparable position in that town. The fort at Ballyshannon was allocated 1,000 acres, a fact which underscores its perceived military importance. Doagh, Rathmullan and Raphoe were also considered for borough status but never achieved that status.

The Progress of the Plantation

The English response to the challenge of the Plantation fell significantly short of Government expectation. Revd Andrew Stewart, the minister of Donaghadee, County Down, from 1645 to 1671, opined that the English would not migrate ‘except to good land, such as they had known at home, or to good cities where they might trade, both of which in those days were scarce enough here’. However, the Scots readily took up the slack and spilled over into areas designated for English settlement. Thus, Scots influence in the Plantation was much greater than was ever intended.

For example, the City and County of Londonderry, East Donegal, West Tyrone and the Clogher Valley which were earmarked for English settlement are extremely Scottish in character.

Early seventeenth-century Londonderry was predominantly English rather than Scottish, with few Presbyterians and mostly English surnames. However, attempts by the London companies to ‘levy’ or ‘press’ artificers from London to be planted in Londonderry and Coleraine were not conspicuously successful. So much so, that by the 1630s, the Scots were dominant in the city. According to the customs report in 1637 the English were ‘weak and few in number … the Scots being many in number, and twenty to one for the English’.

Although the barony of Clogher was allocated to English undertakers, south Tyrone became more Scottish than English in settlement. In 1871 Presbyterians accounted for over 50% of the Protestant population of the Clogher valley and they invariably occupied the best farms.

Three factors in particular account for the strongly Scottish

The Bishop’s Palace, Raphoe

Raphoe Castle, or the Bishop’s Palace, was built in 1636 by John Leslie, Bishop of Raphoe. In 1633 Leslie, the Bishop of the Isles, was translated to Raphoe where he succeeded Bishop Knox. Shortly after its completion, the palace was besieged by Cromwellian forces. The palace was captured but Leslie was spared and allowed to remain until 1660 when he moved to Clogher. He was paid an annuity during the British Republic by Cromwell on condition that he remain peaceably in the palace, the Church of Ireland having been suppressed at that time. The Palace was extensively restored in the 1820s but destroyed by fire in 1838.
character of the Plantation. First, the fact that Ulster is separated from Scotland by the narrow North Channel which is at one point only 13 miles wide, meant that the Scots could easily transport men and livestock to Ulster. Geographical proximity also meant that the plantation could be constantly reinforced with new Scottish settlers. Secondly, as James fully appreciated, impoverished but adventurous Scots could not resist the prospect of good land on agreeable terms. Thirdly, the Scots came from a more a primitive society than the English and could more readily adapt to conditions not radically different from those with which they were familiar in Scotland.

What of the native Irish? The Gaelic bards lamented the Flight of the Earls because they had enjoyed their patronage:

Woe to the heart that meditated, woe to the mind that conceived, woe to the council that decided on, the project of setting out on this voyage, without knowing whether they should ever return to their native principalities or patrimonies to the end of the world.

Contrary to popular perception, in The Catholics of Ulster: A History (London, 2001), Marianne Elliott has observed:

The ‘churls’ [the under-tenants who actually worked the land] may well have fared a good deal better under the new dispensation than under the Gaelic land system. But the elite did not and it is their voice we hear.

However, some Gaelic families – the principal rivals of the Earls who had fled – did well out of the Plantation settlement which was implemented with considerable co-operation from the Ulster Irish. Furthermore, there is remarkably little contemporary evidence of resentment towards the settlers. Pynnar’s survey of 1619 found significant deficiencies in the building of fortifications, an indication that the settlers did not feel themselves to be under threat. However, it could be simply a case of people seeking to evade their responsibilities. The 1641 rebellion has traditionally been regarded as a revolt against the Plantation. However, the main conspirators were debt-ridden heirs of families who were originally beneficiaries rather than victims of the Plantation.

James VI & I took a very close interest in the Plantation. This is evidenced by the great many commissions and surveys which were established prior to the establishment of the plantation and subsequently to monitor its progress. He was also immensely pleased with the Plantation project which he regarded as one of his policy ‘masterpieces’. In 1612 James told Sir Arthur Chichester that he esteemed ‘the settling of religion, the introduction [of] civility, order and government amongst a barbarous and unsubdued people to be acts of piety and glory, and worthy always of a Christian prince to endeavour’.

In the short term, however, the Plantation did not have the impact...
hoped for by James VI & I and his policy advisers. Settlers did not arrive in their expected numbers and the poor social backgrounds of some of the landlords meant that they had difficulty raising the money needed to improve their estates. The responsibilities were considerable and required substantial capital to meet.

Apart from the Finn and Foyle river valleys much of County Donegal was mountainous and infertile. The wilderness and inaccessibility of the greater part of Donegal appalled many of the planters, some of whom, after one terrified glance at their holdings, returned home. All the undertakers awarded land in Boylagh & Banagh, as has already been noted, disengaged early. Others undertakers made no attempt to bring over English or Scottish tenants.

Surveys into the plantation held in 1611 (Sir George Carew), 1614 (Sir Josias Bodley), 1619 (Nicholas Pynnar) and 1622 (Sir Thomas Phillips and Richard Hasdor) demonstrate the extent to which settlers were neither fulfilling their building obligations, nor removing the native Irish from their lands as required.

On 23 August 1610 a proclamation was issued permitting the native Irish to remain on land assigned to British undertakers until the following May. The removal date was subsequently deferred until 1 May 1612. Thereafter, to all intents and purposes, the date became permanently postponable. So, for example, on 1 October 1618 the native Irish were ordered to leave the lands of British undertakers by 1 May 1619 or pay fines. The result of all this was that the native population was never fully ‘removed’. Instead, they remained intermingled with the new population to a much greater extent than was ever envisaged. Although the articles of plantation required settlers to live in towns or villages, many plantation estates contained neither. Many of the undertakers arrived to find more land than they had bargained for. Even when villages were built, many other British tenants lived elsewhere on the estate, with some villages consisting of less than twelve houses. Most of the plantation settlers did not live in nucleated settlements of any kind, but were scattered among the townlands they leased and farmed, a situation permitted by the undertakers. It also took many years for some of the undertakers to provide churches for the new Protestant population. Likewise, many of the schools which were supposed to be provided for the planters’ children had not been built by 1622 as required.

On estate after estate Pynnar recorded (in 1619) that there was nothing built and not a British tenant. It was only in the areas adjoining Counties Londonderry, Tyrone and Fermanagh that the Plantation in Donegal had any real impact. For example, Sir George Marbury had built at Letterkenny a market town of 40 houses, all inhabited by British. Peter Benson, near Lifford, had erected a good house, a water-mill, and had settled 24 families with 68 armed men who had taken
the oath ‘and not one Irish family on the lands’. There were a few other estates of this type, but none of them were in the more remote districts of the county.

A survey of the six counties of the official plantation in 1622 suggests a minimum of 3,700 British families – an adult population of 13,000. The unofficial plantation of Antrim and Down was more densely populated with British families than the official plantation, with Antrim and Down having a British population of perhaps 7,500 in the early 1620s.

In Portlough by 1630 there were some 540 adult male British settlers, approximately 180 of whom were on the estates of the Duke of Lennox and another 250 on the various Cunningham estates. These figures come close to double the minimum requirement of 288 to which the undertakers had agreed when they had obtained their estates. East

Donegal was one of the most effectively settled regions of the entire Plantation.

By 1633 it has been estimated that there were between 40,000 and 50,000 British settlers in Ulster, of whom 13,000 were adult males capable of bearing arms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of British Adult Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1611</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1613</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>1,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1619</td>
<td>1,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1622</td>
<td>1,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1630</td>
<td>1,093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modest though these numbers may appear to us today, because early seventeenth-century Ulster was sparsely populated, they had a huge demographic impact. Militarily too, they had a significant impact. In the early 1640s Sir William and Sir Robert Stewart were able to organize Donegal settlers into the Laggan Army, one of the most formidable forces operating in Ireland during that turbulent decade. Originally formed to protect the settlers of County Donegal during the 1641 rebellion, the Lagganeers’ field of operations ultimately extended beyond Donegal to Counties Fermanagh, Londonderry, Monaghan and Tyrone. In the early eighteenth century, before the exodus of between 250,000 and 300,000 Presbyterians to the New World, six of the nine counties of Ulster, including County Donegal, had Protestant majorities. 57% of the population of the County was Protestant.
### Protestant Population of Ulster by County, c. 1732

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Percentage of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armagh</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermanagh</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Londonderry</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaghan</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrone</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1911 Census illustrates the uneven impact of the plantation in County Donegal. Between 1885 and 1922 the County was represented in the House of Commons by four MPs representing four single-member constituencies: East, North, South and West Donegal.

### Census of Population and Religion of the four Donegal Parliamentary Constituencies, 1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of constituency</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
<th>Non-Catholic</th>
<th>% Non-Catholic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Donegal</td>
<td>39,643</td>
<td>24,658</td>
<td>14,985</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Donegal</td>
<td>41,065</td>
<td>33,511</td>
<td>7,554</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Donegal</td>
<td>41,490</td>
<td>32,687</td>
<td>8,803</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Donegal</td>
<td>46,339</td>
<td>42,165</td>
<td>4,174</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Impact and Legacy

The Ulster Plantation proved to be the most significant and successful plantation in Irish history. In The Plantation of Ulster (Belfast, 2000), Philip Robinson has succinctly described its wide-ranging impact:

*The Plantation brought innovation: a radical transformation of the lowland landscape had begun, even if influenced by pre-plantation precedent. Spread of a market-based rural economy resulted in a quite spectacular growth in urbanisation. Permanent dwellings of a more sophisticated construction became commonplace, and around the towns new field patterns emerged. The spread of hedged enclosure heralded innovations in agricultural methods, tools, livestock and systems of land tenure. In less tangible form, the settlers also brought with them a new language, new surnames, new religion and, of course, a change in politicohistorical allegiance.*

### Urbanisation

The native Irish were not urban dwellers and, as a result, early seventeenth-century Ulster had very few urban centres. However, towns and the creation of ‘an urban network’ were central to the Plantation project. Towns were to be centres of trade and commerce. Thus, Undertakers and servitors wanted them for profit and security. Towns were also to be centres for administration and locations for churches and schools. Government wanted them for administrative coherence and to serve a market economy. Five boroughs were created in County Donegal. Ballyshannon, Donegal Town and Lifford were granted charters (and the right to representation in the Irish Parliament) in 1613. Killybegs was granted its charter in 1616 and St Johnston received its charter some time before 1619. Although it was considered, curiously, Raphoe, the ecclesiastical capital of the county, was never accorded borough status. One possible explanation for this is Raphoe’s close proximity to St Johnston but this argument did not prevent Clogher and Augher
both becoming boroughs in County Tyrone. Nevertheless, Raphoe’s
townscape – with its ‘Diamond’ (like Londonderry and Donegal) at
the centre – reveals its debt to the Plantation. It was proposed that
Doagh and Rathmullan should also become boroughs but this never
happened. Many towns in the County – including Letterkenny,
Ramelton, Moville and Malin – have their origins in the Plantation. So
too do many of the villages: Convoy, Castlefin, Killygordon, Stranorlar
and Carrigans. Mannorcunningham and Newtowncunningham, take
their name from John Cunningham, a Scottish planter from Killbirnie
in Ayrshire.

New buildings
Scattered throughout this publication are photographs of buildings and
sites relating to the Plantation, mostly but not exclusively in County
Donegal. These castles, bawns, manor houses and churches remain an
important visual legacy of the Plantation. In many respects it is a great
pity that more of the domestic architecture has not survived. What
has survived tends to be vestiges and fragments rather than complete
structures because there is a strong local tradition of ‘tumbling’
demolishing and replacing old buildings rather than repairing them.

New modes of agriculture
The native Irish were not great exponents of tillage and the Nine Years’
War provided no incentive to arable farming. Instead, they lived by
creaghting or seasonal migration with their cattle. The native Irish were,
effect, ranchers who accompanied herds of cattle from one pasture
to another, with never any more than a temporary shelter of sods for
their own habitation. The English regarded the absence of hedgerows
and fences and ‘ploughing by tail’ (the attaching of horses to ploughs
by the hairs of their tails) as primitive and barbarous respectively.
The planters introduced new crops,
improved agricultural methods and
better quality livestock. The spread of

Rathmullan Friary
The Carmelite Friary was originally granted to Sir
James Fullerton, who assigned the buildings to Sir
Ralph Bingley for use as a barracks. In 1617 the
Friary was occupied by
Andrew Knox, the Church of Ireland Bishop of
Raphoe, who converted it into a fortified house,
with the chancel as his private chapel. Later in
the seventeenth century it was used as the parish
church. It was only abandoned in 1814 with the
building of St Columb, Killygarvan.

Enniskillen Castle,
Co. Fermanagh
The first castle on this site was built by
Hugh Maguire (who died in 1428) in the
fifteenth century. In 1607 it was remodelled and refurbished by Captain
William Cole, the servitor who laid the foundations of modern Enniskillen
and ancestor of the Earls of Enniskillen. The riverside tower at the south,
known as the Watergate, was supposedly built by Chonnacht O’Maguire
who owned the castle between 1566 and 1589. However, significantly
the Watergate does not feature in depictions of Dowdall’s siege, although
something approximating to the Watergate is depicted in John Speed’s view
of Enniskillen Castle in his Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain (1610). In
the 18th century the castle was remodelled as the Castle Barracks which now
houses the Regimental Museum of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.
hedged enclosure was one of their most obvious visual legacies.

However, there were clearly limits to the extent of agricultural progress in the County. In 1665 the agent of one Donegal landlord complained that he and his fellow Protestants ‘have estates and are easily found’ whereas the Roman Catholic tenantry, ‘snail-like, carry their houses on their heads and will easily so abscond themselves as never more to be seen by us’. This observation suggests that old habits – specifically creaghting – died hard.

In 1739 in a letter to Archbishop Wake of Canterbury, Bishop Nicolson of Derry –

Inishowen was in the diocese of Derry rather than Raphoe – observed that the typical farmer in County Donegal ‘generally contents himself with no more land than is necessary to feed his family, which he diligently tills, and depends on the industry of his wife and daughters to pay by their spinning the rent, and lay up riches’. This suggests little more than subsistence farming rather capitalist enterprise.

New languages

The Planters brought with them two new languages to County Donegal with contrasting fortunes: English and Scots. At the beginning of the seventeenth century English was still the language of a remote, modest-sized kingdom on the periphery of north-west Europe but in the course of the next three centuries the language of Tyndale, Cranmer and Shakespeare would become, in the words of the Tyrone poet W. F. Marshall, ‘the most useful language in the world’, a global language and a lingua franca in which billions would communicate. In the nineteenth century English would prove a great boon to Irish emigrants throughout the English-speaking world and especially the United States.

Admittedly, as W. R. Rogers acknowledged in The Ulstermen and Their Country (London, 1952), Ulster people, and this observation has special force in Donegal, speak ‘an English which is salted and flavoured by the poetical idiom of the Celt’. It is a form of English which retains ‘rich or rare words or phrases which belonged to the England of four hundred years ago’. Rogers observed: ‘Ulster people also have the gift of imagination, instantly seeing “likeness” in the most different things, and putting it into startlingly apt metaphor’.

Scots at the beginning of the seventeenth century was still the official or Court language of Scotland. However, given the Protestant Reformer John Knox’s marked distaste for of Scots as ‘the language of Popery’ (because the highest register of writing in Scots was religious and
thereby ‘Catholic’ and unreformed in content) and his preference for the Geneva Bible of 1560 (a translation in the English of London and south-east England) and the Union of the Crowns in March 1603, Scots lost prestige and status quite rapidly. Nevertheless, Scots continued to have a lively existence as a spoken, if not as a written, language in both Scotland and Ulster. As Ulster-Scots, the language is still widely spoken in the Laggan area of east Donegal, one of the language’s remaining rural heartlands in modern Ulster. Until recently many native speakers would have referred to their way of speaking as ‘Scots’ or ‘Braid Scots’ rather than Ulster-Scots. In the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century young people from west Donegal would come to east Donegal to gather potatoes in the autumn. They colloquially referred to this experience as ‘lifting the Scotch’ because they were working in what was recognized to be a strongly Ulster-Scots-speaking area and they would return home with the rudiments of a new language and new vocabulary.

There is also a modest Ulster-Scots literary tradition based in east Donegal. The section entitled ‘Scotch Poems’ in the Ulster Miscellany (Belfast, 1753) appears to be written by, or about, the Presbyterian communities of east Donegal. Sarah Leech (1809 - c.1830), the daughter of a linen weaver, was born near Raphoe and is one of the few published women writers in the Ulster-Scots tradition. Beyond the biographical account contained in her only published collection, Poems on Various Subjects (Dublin, 1828), very little more is known about her. Her staunch unionism and Protestantism are evidenced by poems such as ‘The Brunswick Clubs’ and ‘Progress of the Reformation’. ‘On the Killing of a Mouse in Harvest’ compares very favourably with Burns’ ‘To a Mouse’. Sarah’s ‘weaver poetry’ is genuinely impressive and unfortunately undervalued.

New surnames

To ancient and traditional Irish surnames in County Donegal, such as O’Doherty, O’Donnell and MacSweeney, the Plantation added new English and Scottish surnames. We have already encountered the surnames of the English and Scottish undertakers and servitors. Between 1692 and 1800 County Donegal, as distinct from the County’s five borough constituencies, was represented in the Irish Parliament by MPs with the following surnames: Brooke, Clements, Conyngham, Gore, Hamilton, Knox, McCausland, Montgomery and Stewart. These were the surnames of the County’s new political, social and economic elite. Other documents, such as muster and rental rolls, provide us with the surnames of less privileged families lower down the pecking order: Graham, Maxwell, Wilson, Morrow, Boyd, Scott, Ingram, Duncan, Johnston, Adair, Smyth, Lowry, Buchanan etc.
New religion

The Reformation and the Church of Ireland, the official state church in Ireland since 1536, were not conspicuously successful. Some Irish chieftains had renounced Rome and embraced the Reformation but not many. By the early seventeenth century the Church of Ireland was represented by little more than a handful of bishops and clergy who rarely spoke the Gaelic language of their flocks. In Ulster no Protestant bishop was in possession of a see, so the Plantation did involve the introduction of Protestantism into Ulster.

It is normally assumed that the Planters brought with them to County Donegal two very distinct forms of Protestantism: Anglicanism and Presbyterianism. This is a rather unsatisfactory way of viewing matters because in the early seventeenth century there was remarkably little by way of clear cut distinction between the two.

In Scotland church government was not exclusively Presbyterian at this stage. Episcopacy and Presbyterianism existed side by side, prompting the description of Scotland’s then ecclesiastical arrangements as ‘congregationalism with a dash of episcopacy’. It is only with the Glorious Revolution of 1688/9 and the ecclesiastical settlement of 1690, when bishops were abolished, prelacy condemned as ‘a great and insupportable grievance’, Presbyterianism achieved the pre-eminent position in Scotland which many people have fondly imagined it has always enjoyed.

Doctrinally, however, the Scottish Church was Calvinist in outlook but so too was the Church of Ireland.

The position of the early seventeenth century Church of Ireland was an anomalous one. It was an Episcopal church but it was able to accommodate within its ranks many Scottish Presbyterian ministers. This gave rise to few theological problems because – unlike the Church of England – the Church of Ireland was doctrinally Calvinist rather than Arminian, Arminius being a Dutch theologian who had repudiated Calvin’s doctrine of predestination. The early seventeenth-century Church of Ireland was Episcopal in terms of Church government but Calvinist in doctrine. The Church of Ireland’s 104 Articles of Religion, adopted in 1615, was a Calvinist document. For the greater part of the first half of the seventeenth century the Church of Ireland was presided over by a Calvinist Archbishop of Armagh: James Ussher. When Ussher died in 1656, at Oliver Cromwell’s insistence, he was given a state funeral and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The Diocese of Raphoe was served by a succession of Scottish-born bishops in the first half of the century: George Montgomery (1605-9), Andrew Knox (1611-33) and John Leslie (1633-61). In 1625 five out of twenty-three Church of Ireland bishops were Scots. Their Scottish...
experience was within a Church which had been governed by both Presbyterian and Episcopal structures. They were instinctively sensitive to the scruples of Scottish Presbyterian ministers, even to the extent of omitting from the ordination service passages which offended the sensibilities of such ordinands. Scottish-born bishops were happy to have such men within the Church because there was a shortage of good ministers. Sixty-four Scottish ministers took up residence in Ulster during the reign of James VI & I. The Scottish-born bishops also appreciated that many of these Scottish Presbyterian ministers were men of outstanding ability.

So early seventeenth-century Presbyterians were not subjected to discrimination or persecution by Anglicans but were readily accommodated within the Church of Ireland. Indeed, this is the principal reason why a formal and distinct Presbyterian ecclesiastical structure in Ireland dates from the 1640s rather than earlier.

**New politico-historical allegiance**

As was the intention, the plantation introduced a strong and vigorous element into County Donegal’s population which was firmly attached to the British connection. This is not to suggest that these people did not develop a strong love and deep affection for Ireland. Quite the contrary, but these people were patriots who did not subscribe to the narrow tenets of Irish nationalism. For these newcomers and their descendants a sense of Britishness and of Irishness were not mutually exclusive identities but complementary ones.

However, not all the descendants of the Donegal Planters shared this perspective. Richard Montgomery of Convoy (1738-75), a former British soldier who became brigadier-general in the Continental Army in the rebellious American colonies, and Revd James Porter of Ballindrait (1753-98), the radical Presbyterian minister of Greyabbey, County Down, spring to mind as interesting examples of this phenomenon.

Although he insisted that he had taken no part in the 1798 rebellion, Porter was hanged at the rear of his own Meeting House at Greyabbey for his alleged United Irish sympathies. Montgomery led the American invasion of Canada but was killed during an attack on Montreal. Isaac Butt (1813 –1879), the founder of the Home Rule movement, was born in Glenfin, County Donegal. Butt, unlike Montgomery and Porter, was not anti-British but sought to reconcile differing traditions by securing devolution for Ireland within a British framework.

Unionism, however, remained the dominant ideology among most of the descendants of Donegal planters well into the twentieth century. Almost 18,000 men and women signed the Ulster Covenant and the parallel Women’s Declaration in County Donegal on 28 September 1912. In the General Election of 1918 Major R. L. Moore, the Unionist candidate in East Donegal, polled 38.5% of the valid vote.
In November 1934 a petition was sent to the Northern Ireland Cabinet requesting that east Donegal and the Laggan district be transferred to Northern Ireland. Less than a month later a similar petition, signed by 7,368 ‘loyal subjects of the King’ residing in east Donegal, was forwarded to J. H. Thomas, Secretary of State for the Dominions, in London.

In the election to the fourth Dáil in August 1923 Major James Sproule Myles (of Ballyshannon), topped the poll in the Donegal constituency, a feat which he replicated in five successive elections until 1943. The Major served in the 11th Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, won the Military Cross at the Battle of the Somme and was a former Unionist. Between 1943 and 1961 W. A. W. (Willie) Sheldon (from Raphoe) cornered this vote. Sheldon may have been originally elected as a Clann na Talmhan (Farmers’ Party) TD but he soon reverted to being a TD very much in the mould of the Major.

The Ulster tartan was discovered by William Dixon on a farm near Dungiven, Co. Londonderry in 1956. Several garments were uncovered in a ditch, including a cloak, a jacket and a pair of trews. Analysis carried out on the finds by the Ulster Museum concluded that the tartan cloth was woven sometime between 1590 and 1650, probably in Co. Donegal where the striking red dye originated. The Ulster tartan has many shared characteristics with the Lennox tartan. The 2nd Duke of Lennox was granted lands in nearby Portlough in 1610.

Throughout this publication two versions of the Ulster tartan are depicted. The Red Ulster tartan is a modern interpretation of what the original may have looked like. The muted version is closer to the appearance of the actual tartan unearthed in 1956.

Mongavlin Castle, St Johnston

The remains of the keep of Mongavlin Castle are located on the banks of the River Foyle, about seven miles upstream from the city of Londonderry and a mile south of the town of St Johnston. In 1610 the manor of Mongavlin was granted to the 2nd Duke of Lennox. Both the Duke of Lennox and his brother, who inherited the property from him, died under suspicious circumstances, reputedly of poisoning, but no-one was ever charged with any wrongdoing. The manor then passed by marriage to James Hamilton, the 2nd Earl of Abercorn who had a seat at Baronscourt, just outside Newtownstewart in County Tyrone. Baronscourt remained the Hamilton family seat in Ulster, and Mongavlin fell into disrepair.

Suggested further reading


Donegal Annual (1951- )

Brian Lacey, Archeological Survey of Donegal (Lifford, 1983).


William Nolan, Liam Ronayne & Mairead Dunleavy, Donegal History & Society (Dublin, 1995).

