

*The*  
CHARTER  
TOWNS  
*of Ulster*  
400  
1613-2013



Ulster Historical Foundation  
Charity Ref. No. XN48460

This project is supported by the  
Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG)

**Ulster-Scots Academy**



Department of  
**Culture, Arts  
and Leisure**

[www.dcalni.gov.uk](http://www.dcalni.gov.uk)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For assistance with the preparation of this exhibition, we would like to thank:  
Dr William Roulston, Dr Brendan Scott, Dr Philip Robinson, Dr John McCavitt, Mark Thompson,  
Ian Montgomery, Robert Corbett, Robert Heslip, Dr Brian Gurrin, Dr Bríd McGrath,  
Professor Raymond Gillespie, Professor Christopher Maginn, Dr Bernadette Cunningham,  
Gail Pollock, Tom Sullivan, Sharon Sutton and Janet Maxwell.

This booklet is produced in conjunction with an exhibition, 'The Charter Towns of Ulster 400'.

### COVER DESIGN:

Outside: John Speed's map of Ireland published in *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine*, 1612,  
courtesy of the Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive.

Inside front cover: 'A true description of the North part of Irelande', c. 1603  
(The Board of Trinity College Dublin, MS 1209/14).

Inside back cover: The town of Killyleagh by Thomas Raven, 1625 (North Down Museum).

First published 2013  
by Ulster Historical Foundation,  
supported by the DCAL Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) Ulster-Scots Academy  
49 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 6RY  
[www.ancestryireland.com](http://www.ancestryireland.com)  
[www.booksireland.org.uk](http://www.booksireland.org.uk)

Except as otherwise permitted under the Copyright, Designs  
and Patents Act 1988, this publication may only be  
reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any  
means with the prior permission in writing of the publisher  
or, in the case of reprographic reproduction, in accordance  
with the terms of a licence issued by The Copyright  
Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside  
those terms should be sent to the publisher.

© Ulster Historical Foundation  
and DCAL Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) Ulster-Scots Academy  
ISBN: 978-1-909556-08-9

Printed by Nicholson & Bass Ltd  
Design by Cheah Design

# The CHARTER TOWNS of Ulster 400 1613-2013

## CONTENTS

TOWNS IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD	4
TOWNS IN ULSTER BEFORE THE PLANTATION	6
THE CHARTERS CONFERRED	8
POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE	10
LOCATIONS OF THE ULSTER CHARTER TOWNS	12
MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT	14
THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CORPORATIONS	16
URBAN PLANNING	18
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE	20
LEGACY	22
Appendix: Ulster town charters, 1610-13	24



Map: John Speed, 'The Kingdome of Irland', 1610. Courtesy the Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive.

# TOWNS IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

‘Nothing doth sooner cause any civility in any country than many market towns’. These words were written by the poet and Munster settler Edmund Spenser in 1596 and, in many ways, capture the mindset of the Elizabethans on urbanisation. Towns were to be centres of trade and commerce, beacons of civilisation, and a focus for justice and administration.



1

The **England** of Spenser’s day had a well-developed network of towns which emerged over centuries. At the apex of the hierarchy of settlement, at least in terms of status and legal privileges, though not necessarily in size, was the borough town with a written charter guaranteeing its rights and liberties.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the granting of charters to towns in England was not part of any overall government strategy on incorporation. In **Scotland**, however, there are examples of urban development being promoted as a means of ‘improving’ society. For instance, in 1597 an act of parliament provided for the establishment of a number of burghs ‘for the better intertening and continuing civilitie and policie’ in the Highlands and Islands.



2

Much of **Ireland** was characterised by its lack of towns and this was especially apparent in Ulster. Their way of life was such that the Gaelic Irish often had no need to build lasting settlements. Many British political commentators, however, stressed the importance of towns. For officials of the Crown, if Ulster was to be transformed along the social and economic lines that they envisaged, a network of towns across the province was essential.



3



4



5

## ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1 Extract from John Speed's map of Scotland showing the Highlands and Islands and north coast of Ireland, 1610. The 1597 act of the Scottish parliament that provided for the establishment of burghs in Kintyre, Lochaber and Lewis was part of a drive to bring 'civility' to the Highlands and Islands and Borders during the reign of James VI.
- 2 Edmund Spenser, English poet and Irish planter (National Portrait Gallery, NPG D25477). Like many of his contemporaries, Spenser firmly believed in the civilising influence of towns, arguing in his work, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596), that 'People repairing often thither for their Needs daily see and learn civil Manners of the better sort'.
- 3 Liverpool in 1682 (National Museums Liverpool, E2013.310). In 1626, Liverpool received a royal charter of incorporation from Charles I. In 1572, Sir Thomas Smith's English colonists sailed from Liverpool to the Ards peninsula in a failed attempt to establish an English colony and a new town which was to be named 'Elizabetha'.
- 4 Culross in Fife is a beautifully preserved seventeenth-century Scottish town.
- 5 James VI and I by Paul Van Somer (Museo del Prado, Madrid). The king was an enthusiastic promoter of colonisation schemes in Scotland and Ireland.

# TOWNS IN ULSTER BEFORE THE PLANTATION

Prior to the 1600s Ulster was the least urbanised part of Ireland. However, there were a number of towns in Ulster that had existed for centuries before the Plantation. These included Gaelic settlements such as Cavan, ports such as Carrickfergus and ecclesiastical centres such as Armagh. The two most important towns founded by the Anglo-Normans were Carrickfergus and Downpatrick, both of which possessed charters of incorporation.

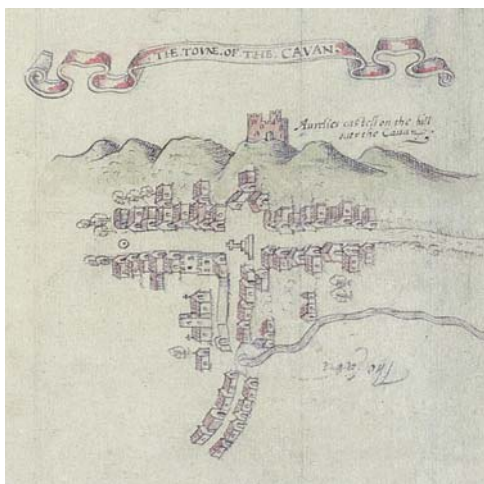
Late medieval **Carrickfergus** was a flourishing trading port, the regional capital in Ulster and the principal English stronghold in the province. Maps of the late sixteenth-century show the main features of the town – the castle, parish church of St Nicholas and (dissolved) Franciscan friary. The main street, with its market cross, was flanked by the tower houses in which the leading townsmen lived.

**Cavan** was the best established Gaelic market town in Ulster. Having originally built up around the Franciscan friary established there c. 1300, its proximity to the Pale was a factor in the expansion of the town. A map of c. 1593 shows a well-developed town containing around 50 houses and focused on a market-place.

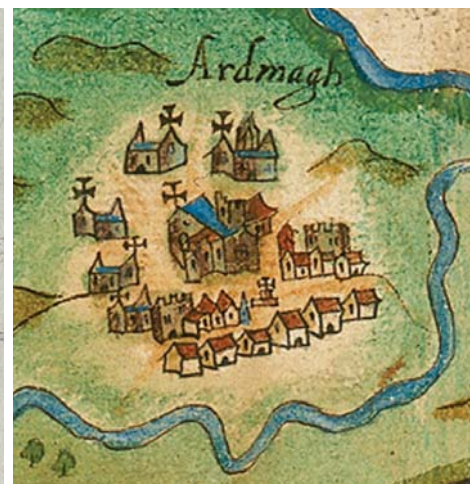
The most important town in south Ulster was **Newry** which controlled one of the major routes into the province. It expanded considerably from the mid sixteenth century under the Bagenal family. A map of c. 1570 shows a substantial settlement at Newry and in 1575 the town was described as well inhabited and ‘encreased in bewtye and buyldinge’.



1



2



3

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

- 1 Map of Newry, c. 1570 (The National Archives, MPF 1/82). Several distinct divisions to Newry are shown on this map. The section denoted 'The towne of Newrye' is defended by ramparts and includes representations of 'The new castell' and a church. North of this is another precinct with earthen defences called 'The Bayse Towne', and beyond that is a street lined with houses, some of which are in the beehive style.
- 2 The town of Cavan, c. 1593 (The National Archives, MPF 1/81). Overlooked by the O'Reilly castle, the main street runs from north to south, with another street at right angles to it where the Franciscan friary was located. The market cross is placed at the intersection of these streets.
- 3 Excerpt from Bodley map showing Armagh, 1609 (The National Archives, MPF1/63). The ecclesiastical capital of Ireland, Armagh suffered a great deal in the wars of the sixteenth-century. This pictorial representation shows the cathedral and several other ecclesiastical buildings, all apparently in ruins. The depiction of the market cross indicates its continued importance as a market centre.
- 4 Map of Carrickfergus, c. 1560 (The British Library Board, Cotton Augustus I ii 42). A view of the town looking along the main street from the castle to the friary. Note the contrast between the tower houses and the humbler beehive houses which are located mainly along the shoreline and on the landward side of the main street.
- 5 'Map of the north of Ireland, c. 1600' (National Maritime Museum, F2012) showing the Irish lordships.



# THE CHARTERS CONFERRED

The first charter to be issued following the implementation of the scheme of Plantation was granted to the town of Cavan on 15 November 1610. Over two years were to pass before the next charter was granted. During this period, there was a change in approach to establishing the corporate towns on a firm footing.



1

It was decided that in order to provide some initial impetus to the development of the towns that some 'principal gentlemen' should be made superintendents of the proposed corporate towns.

These individuals, usually the major landowner nearest the town, were expected to encourage tradesmen to settle, issuing leases to them, building houses for them, and setting aside land for a common. For example, Captain William Cole became patron of Enniskillen. Derry and Coleraine differed again in that their development was the responsibility of the City of London. Between 27 November 1612 and 28 June 1613 thirteen places in the six planted

counties received charters of incorporation. The first of these was Dungannon and the last was Coleraine.

In the remaining three counties of Ulster, another six charters of incorporation were issued in 1613. Four of these were in County Down. Bangor and Killyleagh were towns being developed by Sir James Hamilton, while Newtownards was similarly being promoted by his rival Sir Hugh Montgomery. The fourth town was Newry, the seat of the Bagenals. In County Antrim, Belfast, another of Chichester's towns, was incorporated. Finally, the town of Monaghan received a charter of incorporation in recognition of its importance in the county of that name.

2







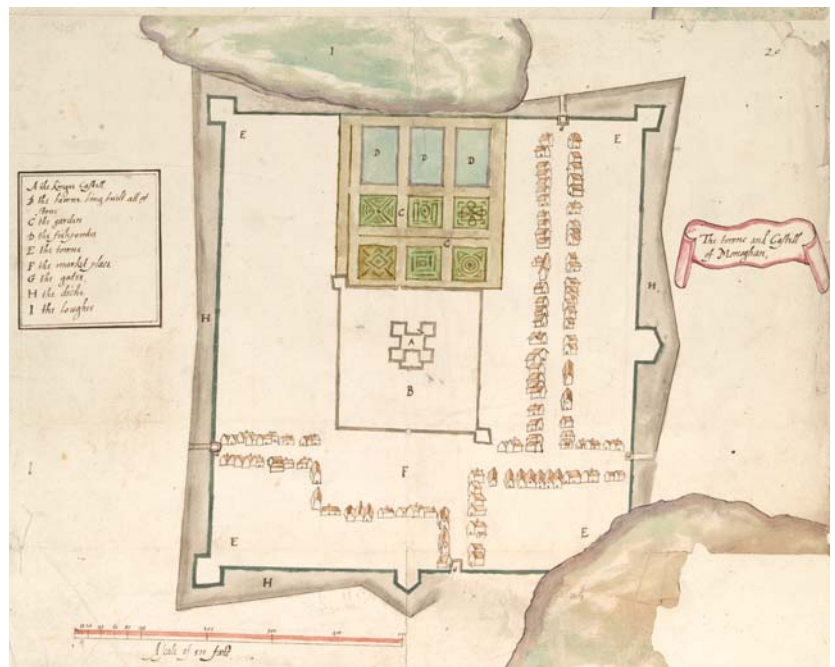
3

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

- 1 Sir Hugh Montgomery (d. 1636), 1st Viscount Ards. Montgomery, the laird of Braidstane in Scotland, was patron of the corporate town of Newtownards. Montgomery converted part of the former Dominican priory in Newtownards into his home.
- 2 The mural by John Luke in Belfast City Hall showing Sir Arthur Chichester reading the town charter in 1613 (Belfast City Council).
- 3 The fort of Enniskillen, c. 1611 (The Board of Trinity College Dublin, MS 1209/29). It possibly shows what was proposed rather than what was completed at this time. The seat of power of the ruling Maguire family in pre-Plantation times, Enniskillen was to be the only incorporated town in County Fermanagh.
- 4 Sir James Hamilton (d. 1643), 1st Viscount Claneboy (National Trust, Castle Ward). Hamilton, the son of the minister of Dunlop in Scotland, was patron of the corporate towns of Bangor and Killyleagh. Hamilton had residences at both places, the latter an impressive castle which is still the home of his descendants.
- 5 'The towne and castell of Monaghan', c. 1611 (The Board of Trinity College Dublin, MS 1209/32). Note the gardens and fishponds to the the rear of the castle and the market-place in front.



4



5

# POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

*'... the new corporate towns are to be made boroughs and to send burgesses to Parliament, which upon the new plantation will consist of Protestants, and strengthen the lower House very much.'*

'Particular Questions concerning the Plantation', March 1610



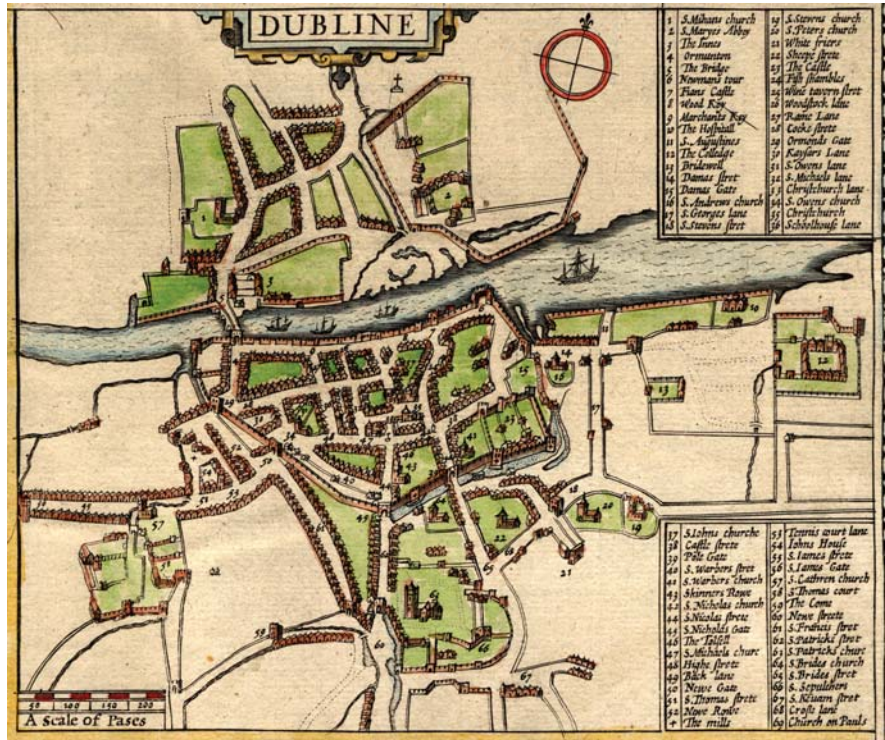
Corporate towns were parliamentary constituencies, and each was permitted to return two MPs to the Irish House of Commons. Part of the motivation in creating new corporations (not only in Ulster, but also in Munster, Leinster and Connacht where another 20 plus towns were incorporated in 1612–13) was the expectation that they would return Protestant MPs who, it was assumed, would support the king's programme of legislation. Many of those elected had no obvious link with the towns they represented in parliament.

When the Irish parliament opened in May 1613, the House of Commons had a Protestant majority of 132 to 100, and much ill-feeling was displayed by Catholic MPs, some of whom who had earlier attempted to prevent the creation of new boroughs and incorporated towns. However, the parliamentary elections did not run smoothly in all of the boroughs. Cavan borough was the only one of James I's new creations to return Catholic MPs to the 1613–15 parliament, although it took three elections and an appeal to the king for justice to be finally served.

The MPs returned for several Ulster towns were unable to play a full part in parliamentary proceedings. Those for Augher, Belfast and Charlemont did not sit after the first session because the boroughs they represented had not received charters till after the issue of the writs of summons in April 1613, while the MPs for Clogher were also disqualified as it had never received a charter of incorporation.

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

- 1 'A true description of the North part of Irelande', c. 1603 (The Board of Trinity College Dublin, MS 1209/14).
- 2 Inset plan of Dublin from John Speed's map of the province of Leinster, 1610 (Dublin City Library and Archive). The 1613 parliament met in Dublin Castle.



4

## Members returned to the 1613 parliament from Ulster boroughs

**BOROUGH**

ARMAGH  
 AUGHER  
 BALLYSHANNON  
 BANGOR  
 BELFAST  
 BELTURBET  
 CARRICKFERGUS  
 CAVAN  
 CHARLEMONT  
 CLOGHER  
 COLERAINE  
 DERRY  
 DONEGAL  
 DOWNPATRICK  
 DUNGANNON  
 ENNISKILLEN  
 KILLYLEAGH  
 LIFFORD  
 LIMAVADY  
 MONAGHAN  
 NEWRY  
 NEWTOWNARDS  
 STRABANE

**MEMBERS RETURNED**

Marcus Usher, Christopher Conway  
 Ralph Birchenshaw, Edward Skory  
 Paul Gore, Edward Cherry  
 Sir Edward Brabazon, John Dallway  
 Sir John Blenerhassett, George Trevelyan  
 Sir Hugh Wirral, George Grimesditch  
 Thomas Hibbotts, Humphrey Johnson  
 Hugh Culme\*, George Sexton\*  
 Edward Moore, Faithful Fortescue  
 George Watkins, William Ferrar  
 Barnabas Bryan, John Wilkinson  
 George Carey, Thomas Crewe  
 William Crofton, Walter White  
 Sir Richard Wingfield, Richard West  
 Sir Gerald Moore, Sir Hugh Pollard  
 Roger Atkinson, Humphrey Fernham  
 Edward Trevor, John Hamilton  
 Francis Blundell, William Disney  
 Christopher Sibthorpe, Roger Downton  
 Thomas Reeves, Henry Cowley  
 Arthur Bassett, John Leigh  
 George Cunningham, James Cathcart  
 Daniel Molyneux, James Montgomery

The MPs returned for boroughs in italics ceased to sit after the first session, as the borough either did not receive its charter till after the issue of the writs of summons in April 1613 or was declared not to have the franchise.

\*Declared by the king, in August 1614, to have been 'falsely elected'. Walter and Thomas Brady, who had received a majority of votes at the election, took their places.

# LOCATIONS OF THE ULSTER CHARTER TOWNS



# TOWNS RECEIVING CHARTERS IN THE REST OF IRELAND, 1612-13



*The*  
**CHARTER TOWNS**  
*of Ulster*  
**400**  
 1613-2013

## Corporate Towns in the 'Plantation' counties

CORPORATE TOWN	YEAR OF PROPOSAL TO INCORPORATE	POPULATION CIRCA 1659	YEAR OF INCORPORATION
<b>COUNTY LONDONDERRY</b>			
Londonderry	1609	1,052	1604 (Derry); 1613 (L'derry)
Coleraine	1611	633	1613
Limavady	1609/1611	116	1613
(Dungiven)	1609	39	(not implemented)
(Loughinsholin)	1609	?	(not implemented)
<b>COUNTY DONEGAL</b>			
Ballyshannon	1609/1611	134	1613
(Doagh)	1609	?	(not implemented)
Donegal	1609/1611	95	1613
Killybegs	1609	31	1615
Lifford	1608/1609/1611	68	1613
(Raphoe)	1609	104	(not implemented)
(Rathmullan)	1609/1611	23	(not implemented)
St. Johnstown	-	37	?
<b>COUNTY ARMAGH</b>			
Armagh	1609/1611	409	1613
Charlemont	1609/1611	117	1613
(Mountnorris)	1609/1611	?	(not implemented)
(Tandragee)	1609	107	(not implemented)
<b>COUNTY CAVAN</b>			
Belturbet	1609/1611	?	1613
Cavan	1608/1609	?	1610
(Virginia)	1609/1611	?	(not implemented)
<b>COUNTY FERMANAGH</b>			
Enniskillen	1611	210	1613
(Lisgoole)	1609	?	(not implemented)
(Lisnaskea)	1609	38	(not implemented)
('Midway between Lisgoole and Ballyshannon')	1608/1609	?	(not implemented)
<b>COUNTY TYRONE</b>			
Augher	-	?	1613
Clogher	1609	?	1630
Dungannon	1609/1611	?	1612
(Mountjoy)	1609/1611	?	(not implemented)
(Omagh)	1609/1611	?	(not implemented)
Strabane	1611	?	1613

## Corporate Towns in counties not part of the 'official' Plantation

CORPORATE TOWN	YEAR OF PROPOSAL TO INCORPORATE	POPULATION CIRCA 1659	YEAR OF INCORPORATION
<b>COUNTY ANTRIM</b>			
Antrim	-	61	1665
Belfast	1611	589	1613
Lisburn	-	357	1662
Randalstown	-	?	1683
<b>COUNTY OF THE TOWN OF CARRICKFERGUS</b>			
Carrickfergus	'Ancient Borough'	962	Medieval (early 13th century); Elizabethan (1569); and 1613
<b>COUNTY DOWN</b>			
Downpatrick	'Ancient Borough'	308	Medieval (early 13th century)
Bangor	-	97	1613
Hillsborough	-	165	1662
Killyleagh	-	175	1613
Newry	1611	174	1613
Newtownards	1611	146	1613
(Ardglass)	(Former Borough)	?	Henry VI (15th century)
<b>COUNTY MONAGHAN</b>			
Monaghan	1611	133	1613

• Source: Philip Robinson, *The Plantation of Ulster* (1984) pp 225-7

• Population = number of poll tax payers

# MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Charters conferred a wide range of powers upon the governing bodies of the incorporated towns, known as the corporations. The corporations were empowered to dispense law and justice, hold fairs and markets, and regulate various aspects of urban life.

The chief officer of the corporation was known by a variety of different names – provost, mayor, sovereign, portreeve, warden and burgomaster. He was usually elected annually. Typically, there were twelve burgesses who were life appointments. When a burgess died, the others were given the power to choose a replacement from the ‘better or more worthy inhabitants of the borough’. The corporation was permitted to appoint various officials such as recorder, chamberlain, constable, beadle and sergeant-at-mace.

Some of the corporate towns hosted law courts, which normally took place in their local ‘session-house’. County jails were to be found in a number of the corporate towns, including Dungannon, Londonderry, Enniskillen and Armagh.

Unfortunately, very little in the way of original corporation records survive, meaning that it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness or otherwise of the corporation at work. In some towns there is evidence that men were appointed to various corporation offices. For example, the monument to Sir Richard Hansard refers to the deceased’s bequests to the warden, the recorder and the two sergeants of Lifford.

It is possible to observe that the Scottish norms of local government were transplanted to Bangor in the early seventeenth century for two men, William Barclay and Thomas Bradshaw, are known to have held the position of ‘bailie’, a Scottish term for a municipal magistrate.



1



2



3

**ILLUSTRATIONS**

- 1 Hansard monument, Clonleigh Parish Church, Lifford, County Donegal. The detailed inscription behind the effigies of Sir Richard and his wife Dame Anne (both d. 1619) records Sir Richard's numerous bequests, including money for corporation officials and for building a church and school.
- 2 Tombstone of Thomas Bradeshaw (d. 1620), 'some tyme baillie of Bangour', Bangor Abbey, County Down (Courtesy Bob Torrens and Friends of Bangor Abbey). Three figures dressed in contemporary costume and with hands clasped in prayer are represented, below which are the familiar skull and crossed bones that can be found on many gravestones of this period.
- 3 The charter of Belfast, 1613 (Belfast City Council). Surprisingly plain in appearance, the Belfast charter is one of the very few Irish town charters to survive from this period. The chief officer of the corporation of Belfast was known as the sovereign.
- 4 The Belfast mace (with seal), 1639 (Belfast City Council). Symbolising the authority of the corporation, this would have been carried before the sovereign during official business. The mace and seal together cost £26.
- 5 Proposed townhouse in Derry by Thomas Raven, 1622 (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, T510/1). This was intended to be the seat of municipal government and a place of 'greate strength to the Cittie'. Though not built, it gives an idea of the influence of the Renaissance on architecture in this period.



4



5

*This is a plan of a fortification designed to have been a house of that is now made in the market place of London. It is a house which would have served for the same purpose they have it, and other such purposes and in a greate strength to the Cittie.*

# THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CORPORATIONS

The corporation was a small, self-perpetuating oligarchy. To a large extent the membership of the corporations reflected the personal contacts and relationships of the patrons. Kinsmen of the patron can often be identified. For example, William Hamilton, the first provost of Killyleagh, was probably the brother of the town's landlord, Sir James Hamilton.

The sovereign of the original corporation of Armagh was Mark Ussher, while the burgesses included John, Mathew and Richard Ussher, relatives of the archbishop, Henry Ussher. Six of the proposed burgesses of Clogher were called Montgomery, including the bishop of Clogher, George Montgomery. Elsewhere the position of chief officer was held by an employee of the patron. At Augher, for instance, Emmanuel Ley, Sir Thomas Ridgeway's agent, was 'boroughmaster'.

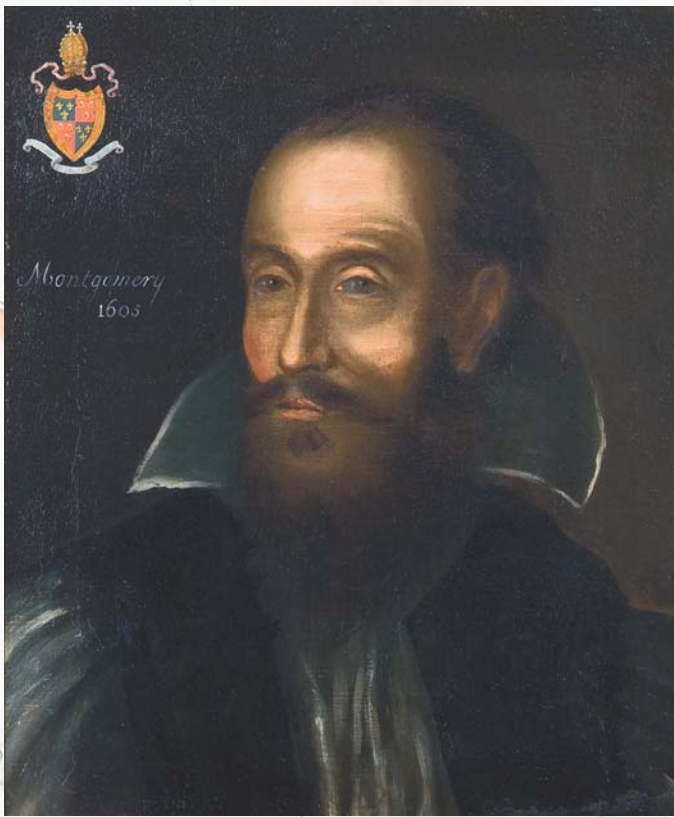
The nationality of the patron of the town had a strong bearing on the membership of the corporations. In Strabane, all of the burgesses, like the town's landlord, the Earl of Abercorn, were Scots. However, this was unusual and it was more common for a corporation to have a mix of Englishmen and Scots even if the majority of members were of the same background as the patron.



The town of Cavan was alone in having an original set of burgesses who were predominantly Irish rather than British. Its ethnic composition reflected the fact that Cavan was an already established town that was incorporated before the Plantation was properly underway. Elsewhere, Irish burgesses were much rarer, though the charter of Dungannon included two Irishmen.

The limited development of some towns at the time of incorporation is reflected in the fact that the original burgesses were sometimes local landowners, grantees of land under the Plantation scheme, with no real connection to the town or stake in its development.





**ILLUSTRATIONS**

- 1 Archbishop Henry Ussher (© Representative Church Body 2013). Ussher died less than a week after Armagh received its charter, but his influence on its conferral can be seen in the number of his relatives who were members of the corporation.
- 2 Bishop George Montgomery (Clogher Cathedral). Montgomery, bishop of the dioceses of Derry, Raphoe and Clogher from 1605, was the brother of Sir Hugh Montgomery of County Down. Clogher was one of the locations that went through a number of stages in the process of incorporation, but without receiving its charter in 1613. It was eventually incorporated c. 1630.
- 3 The town of Killyleagh by Thomas Raven, 1625 (North Down Museum). Raven's map shows it to have contained some 90 houses in several intersecting streets close to the western shore of Strangford Lough. North of the town was Sir James Hamilton's castle.

RKE,

3



# URBAN PLANNING

While almost all of the corporate towns in Ulster were established at places of significance in the Gaelic world, at only a handful was there anything like a pre-existing urban infrastructure of streets, market-place, etc. The town of Cavan, for example, had developed a streetscape by the end of the sixteenth century. Elsewhere topographical features dictated the spatial development of a town.



1

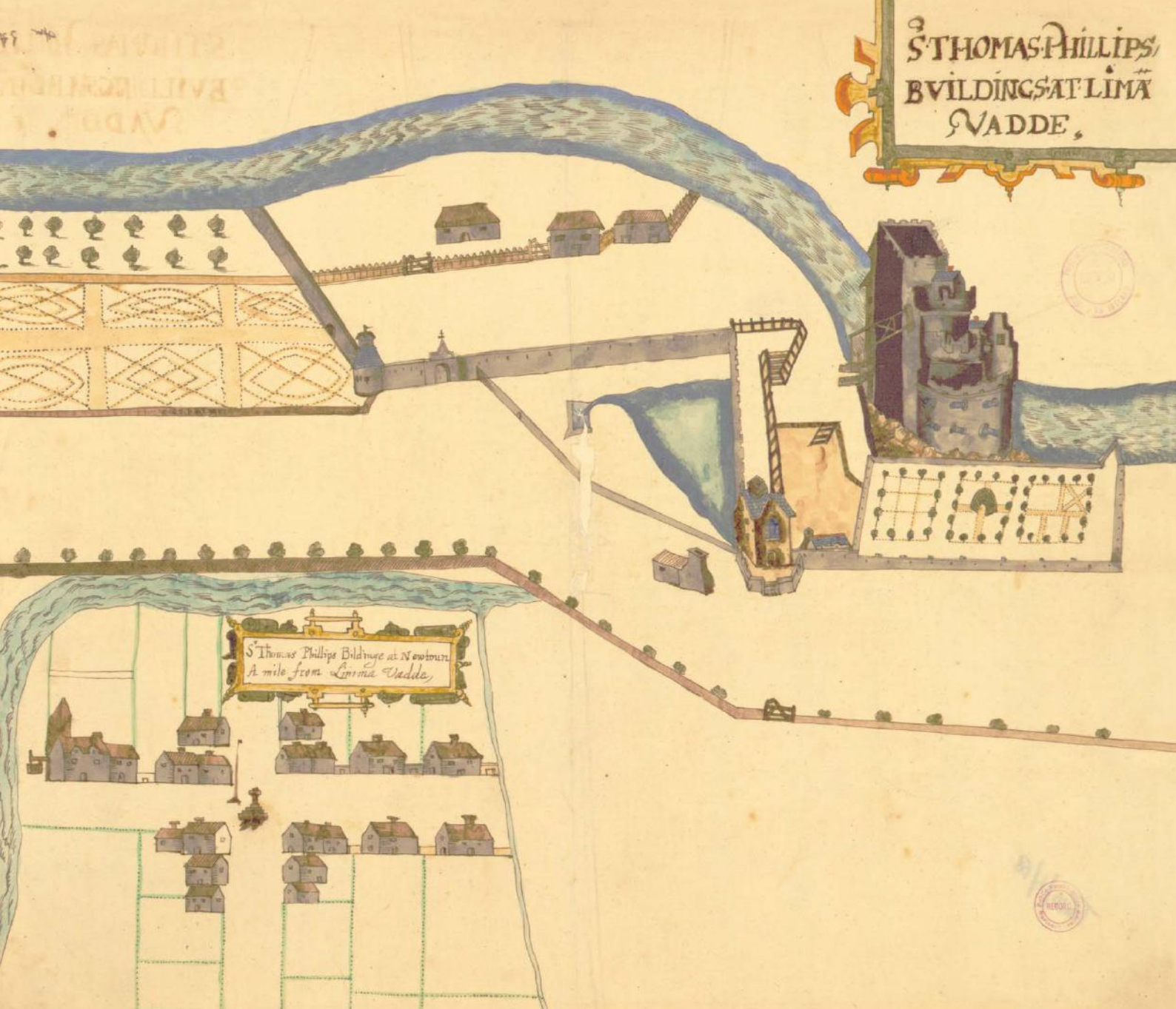
For the most part, the layout of the town was created by the towns' patrons and inhabitants. In the grants to the town patrons there are some guiding principles as to how spaces should be allocated in the town. Ground was to be set aside for a market-place, church, cemetery and school, and in some cases a jail. In a few known instances there was space for recreational activities in or adjoining a town. Thomas Raven's 1625 map of Bangor shows a 'Ball Greene' to the north-east of the town.

Several of the corporate towns were protected by defences erected in the early 1600s. Between 1608 and 1615 an area of 27 acres was enclosed at Carrickfergus by stone walls. Derry's famous walls were erected between 1613 and 1618. In contrast, at Coleraine the new town was enclosed by earthen ramparts which needed constant maintenance.



2

The best examples of formal urban planning can be seen at Derry and Coleraine. Derry comprised four principal streets which met in a central diamond. Coleraine was similarly laid out on a grid-iron pattern with a large market-place roughly in the centre of the town. The more sophisticated layout of these towns owed much to the resources and vision of the City of London.



3

#### ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1 The town of Bangor by Thomas Raven, 1625 (North Down Museum). At this time Bangor contained some 70 houses and was divided into two sections, separated by a stream. Note the rabbit warren which provided the townspeople with a source of food.
- 2 Vitry-le-Francois in 1634. It has been suggested that Derry's ground plan may have been influenced by the design of this French city which was completed around 1560.
- 3 The town of Newtownlimavady by Thomas Raven, 1622 (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, T510/1). Developed by Sir Thomas Phillips, Newtownlimavady (now simply Limavady) was around a mile from the former O'Cahan castle which Phillips had made his home. The inn, at 1½ storeys high, was the only building of more than one storey. At the intersection of the streets were a maypole, cross and stocks.
- 4 'The Platt of the Cittie of London Derrie' by Thomas Raven, 1622 (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, T510/1). A proposed new church (what would become St Columb's Cathedral) is shown near the Diamond, but it was actually constructed on a site in the bottom left corner.



4

# ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE

The economic role of towns as centres of trade and commerce was considered vital to the overall success of the Plantation, and safeguards were introduced to ensure that this would not be undermined. Most of the charters of incorporation included a grant to hold markets and fairs. These facilitated the exchange or sale of commodities in a competitive environment.



1

An established merchant community emerged in a number of the larger towns. These merchants tended not to specialise, but rather dealt in a broad range of goods.

The main trading centres were seaports. Carrickfergus traded extensively with ports on the west coast of Britain and also with Continental Europe. The same was true for Coleraine and Derry, while even some minor ports had international links. Derry's importance as a port is reflected in the fact that its economic hinterland extended as far as Dungannon and Fermanagh.

The population of most of the corporate towns was ethnically mixed. For example, in 1611 Charlemont was reported to be 'replenished with many inhabitants both English and Irish'. In 1611 it was noted that Belfast was inhabited by 'many famelyes of English, Scotch and some Manxmen'. Strabane, on the other hand, seems to have been overwhelmingly Scottish at this time.

In terms of social structure, we find a broad spectrum of society represented among the inhabitants of the corporate towns. The presence of a resident landlord added prestige to a town. In the larger towns there were a few professionals, such as doctors, teachers, and lawyers. Overall, however, the occupational structure of these towns was fairly limited in the early 1600s.

ILLUSTRATIONS



- 1 Carrickfergus in 1620 (Northern Ireland Environment Agency). This reconstruction shows that Carrickfergus' appearance still owed much to its medieval inheritance. However, by this time it had been enclosed with stone walls and Sir Arthur Chichester had built his mansion of Joymount (far right of illustration). Carrickfergus was the largest town in Ulster in the 1600s.
- 2 Illustration of Charlemont fort and town from 'The State of the Fortes of Ireland in 1624' by Nicholas Pynnar (The British Library Board, Add. Ms 24,200, ff. 38v-39). The fort of Charlemont was a typical star-shaped artillery fortification, but the house inside its ramparts, erected by Sir Toby Caulfeild, was a remarkable Renaissance-style dwelling. The corporate town grew up in the shadow of the fort and this drawing shows it focused on a maypole denoting the market-place.
- 3 Map of Carlingford Lough from 'The State of the Fortes of Ireland in 1624' by Nicholas Pynnar (The British Library Board, Add. Ms 24,200, ff. 41v-42). At this time, goods from large ships were unloaded at Carlingford and transported in smaller boats to Newry, the most important market centre in south Ulster.

2

3



THE MOUNTAINES OF MORNE  
 THE MOUNTAINES OF MORNE  
 HIS CVNTRIE

# LEGACY

In some respects the towns established in the early 1600s fell far short of what was expected. Some did prosper, but others remained little more than hamlets as government surveys carried out through the 1610s and early 1620s demonstrate.



The town of Killybegs, 1622 (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, T510/1). Killybegs was the first town to be incorporated post 1613, receiving its charter in 1615. It was the smallest of the incorporated towns in early seventeenth-century Ulster with only 17 inhabitants in 1622.

In the officially planted counties the three largest settlements were Derry, Coleraine and Strabane with approximate adult male populations of respectively 500, 300 and 200 by 1630. The populations of most of the other corporate towns were considerably smaller than this. Some estate villages, such as Letterkenny and Lurgan, would develop into more substantial settlements than many of the corporate towns.

There were various flaws in the creation of corporate towns in Ulster. The process itself was rushed into operation, largely for political reasons, before most of the towns had become properly established. Ineffective patronage and the fact that few of the towns possessed lands of their own were factors working against successful urban development.

Nevertheless, despite the setbacks and difficulties, the corporate town system persisted and can be regarded as one of the enduring legacies of the Ulster Plantation. The charters provided the legal framework for a new system of town planning and governance and established property and market rights.

Though now shorn of their corporate status, these towns, to a greater or lesser extent, still exist, with most of them continuing to provide a focus for local government, the administration of justice, and commercial activity. The cores of these towns are still laid out in much the same way as when they were originally established four centuries ago. These charter towns have retained to this day much of their physical, corporate and cultural identities, testament to the long-term success of the ventures begun there 400 years ago.

## Explore the legacy of Ulster's early seventeenth-century urban history at first hand



### St Columb's Cathedral, Derry

The most impressive of all the churches built in Ulster in the early seventeenth century is St Columb's Cathedral in Derry, the first purpose-built Protestant cathedral to be constructed after the Reformation. Work on the new cathedral began in 1628 and was completed in 1633.



### Market cross, Newtownards

The best example of a seventeenth-century market cross in Ulster is that in Newtownards. This is actually the second on the site, the first having been built under Sir Hugh Montgomery's direction as a replica of the market cross in Edinburgh.



### Walls of Derry

Completed in 1618, Derry's walls, the most important Irish fortifications surviving from the 1600s, have withstood several sieges. It is possible today to walk their full circumference and take in excellent views of the city, River Foyle, and surrounding countryside. (Photograph courtesy Derry City Council.)



### Bangor custom house

The most important port building surviving in Ulster from the early 1600s is the custom house in Bangor. It was described by a visitor to Bangor in 1637 as a 'fair customhouse built but not finished by the Lord of Clanneboy'.



### Enniskillen Castle

The Watergate of Enniskillen Castle, completed by 1611, continues to overlook the River Erne as it has done for over 400 years. Today the Enniskillen Castle site hosts two museums, Fermanagh County Museum and The Inniskillings Museum. (Photograph courtesy NITB.)

## Appendix: Ulster town charters, 1610–13

CPR, James I – Calendar of the Patent Rolls of James I  
CSPI, Calendar of the State Papers, Ireland  
NAI – National Archives of Ireland  
NLI – National Library of Ireland  
PRONI – Public Record Office of Northern Ireland  
RIA – Royal Irish Academy

### Armagh, County Armagh

Charter issued on 26 March 1613.  
Handwritten transcripts in RIA (24 Q 7) and PRONI (D889/6/1).

### Aughur, County Tyrone

Charter issued on 15 April 1613.  
Handwritten transcript in RIA (24 Q 7).

### Ballyshannon, County Donegal

Charter issued on 23 March 1613.  
Some details regarding the charter can be found at:  
*CPR, James I*, p. 244, no. 25; Hugh Allingham,  
*Ballyshannon, its history and antiquities* (Londonderry,  
1879), p. 53.

### Bangor, County Down

Charter issued on 18 March 1613.  
Photostat of original in PRONI (T1128/1–2) and  
handwritten transcript (D2092/5/1E).  
Printed in T.K. Lowry (ed.), *The Hamilton manuscripts*  
(Belfast, 1867), pp lxxvi–lxxxiii.

### Belfast, County Antrim

Charter issued on 27 April 1613.  
Original on display in Belfast City Hall.  
Printed copy in PRONI (LA/7/1/A/1).  
Printed in Robert Young (ed.), *The town book of the  
Corporation of Belfast, 1613–1816* (Belfast, 1892),  
pp 172–8.

### Belturbet, County Cavan

Charter issued on 30 March 1613.  
Order for incorporation printed in: *Cal. S.P. Ire., 1611–14*,  
p. 299.

### Cavan, County Cavan

Charter issued on 15 November 1610.  
A photostat copy of the original charter is held in NLI  
(D22,955) and a photocopy of the original charter is held  
by Johnston Central Library, Cavan.  
Handwritten transcript in RIA (24 Q 10).  
Printed in Jonathan Cherry (ed.), 'The 1610 Cavan town  
charter: an introduction and transcription' in *Breifne*, 45  
(2009–2010), pp 1–12.

### Charlemont, County Armagh

Charter issued on 29 April 1613.  
Handwritten transcript in RIA (24 Q 10).

### Coleraine, County Londonderry

Charters issued on 25 March 1613 and 28 June 1613.<sup>1</sup>  
Handwritten transcripts in NAI, RC 3/2 (both charters).

### Donegal, County Donegal

Charter issued on 27 February 1613.  
Some details regarding the charter's content can be found at:  
*CSPI, 1611–14*, p. 295; *Cal. Patent Rolls James I*, p. 243.

### Dungannon, County Tyrone

Charter issued on 27 November 1612.  
Handwritten transcripts in RIA (24 Q 11).  
Near contemporary copy in PRONI (D1932/8/11).  
Printed in Peter Gale, *An inquiry into the ancient corporate  
system of Ireland* (London, 1834), pp cix–cxx.

### Enniskillen, County Fermanagh

Charter issued on 27 February 1613.  
Handwritten transcripts in PRONI (D1702/1/1/2–3)  
and translation (D2469/1).  
Printed in W.C. Trimble, *The history of Enniskillen*  
(3 vols, Enniskillen, 1919–21), Vol. I, pp 171–8.

### Killyleagh, County Down

Charter issued on 10 March 1613.  
Handwritten transcript in RIA (24 Q 12).  
Printed in T.K. Lowry (ed.), *The Hamilton manuscripts*  
(Belfast, 1867), pp lxiii–lxx.

### Lifford, County Donegal

Charter issued on 27 February 1613.  
Handwritten transcript in RIA (24 Q 13).

### Limavady, County Londonderry

Charter issued on 30 March 1613.  
Handwritten transcripts in NAI (RC 3/7) and PRONI  
(D663/1).  
Printed in E.M. Boyle (ed.), *Records of the town of Limavady,  
1609–1808* (Londonderry, 1912), pp 136–49.

### Londonderry, County Londonderry<sup>2</sup>

Charter issued on 29 March 1613.  
Handwritten transcript in NAI (RC 3/5).

### Monaghan, County Monaghan

Charter issued on 26 March 1613.  
Handwritten transcripts in NAI (RC 3/6) and  
PRONI (T2519/4/246).

### Newry, County Down

Charter issued on 27 February 1613.  
Handwritten transcripts in PRONI (T618/10 – English)  
and NAI (RC 3/7 – Latin).

### Newtownards, County Down

Charter issued on 25 March 1613.  
Handwritten transcript in NAI (RC 3/7).  
Typed transcript in PRONI (T749/1)

### Strabane, County Tyrone

Charter issued on 18 March 1613.  
Handwritten transcripts in NAI (RC 3/8).  
Copy of above in PRONI (D4446/B/5/2).  
Typescript translation in PRONI (D3466/3/1).

For more information on each of the charter towns of  
Ulster, 1610–13, see the accompanying pocket history.

<sup>1</sup> Coleraine was in County Antrim when the first charter was issued.  
A new charter was issued when it was merged into County  
Londonderry.

<sup>2</sup> The First Jacobean charter was issued on 11 July 1604 as a grant  
to Sir Henry Docwra (copy in RIA, 24 Q 130).