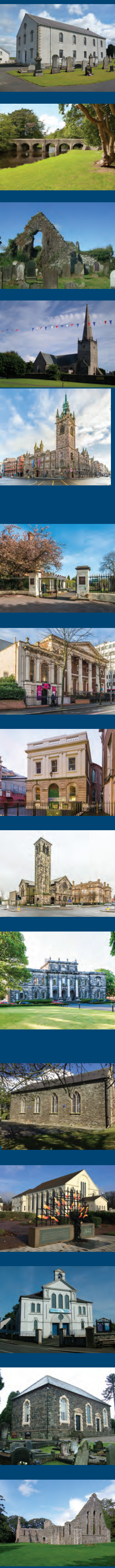
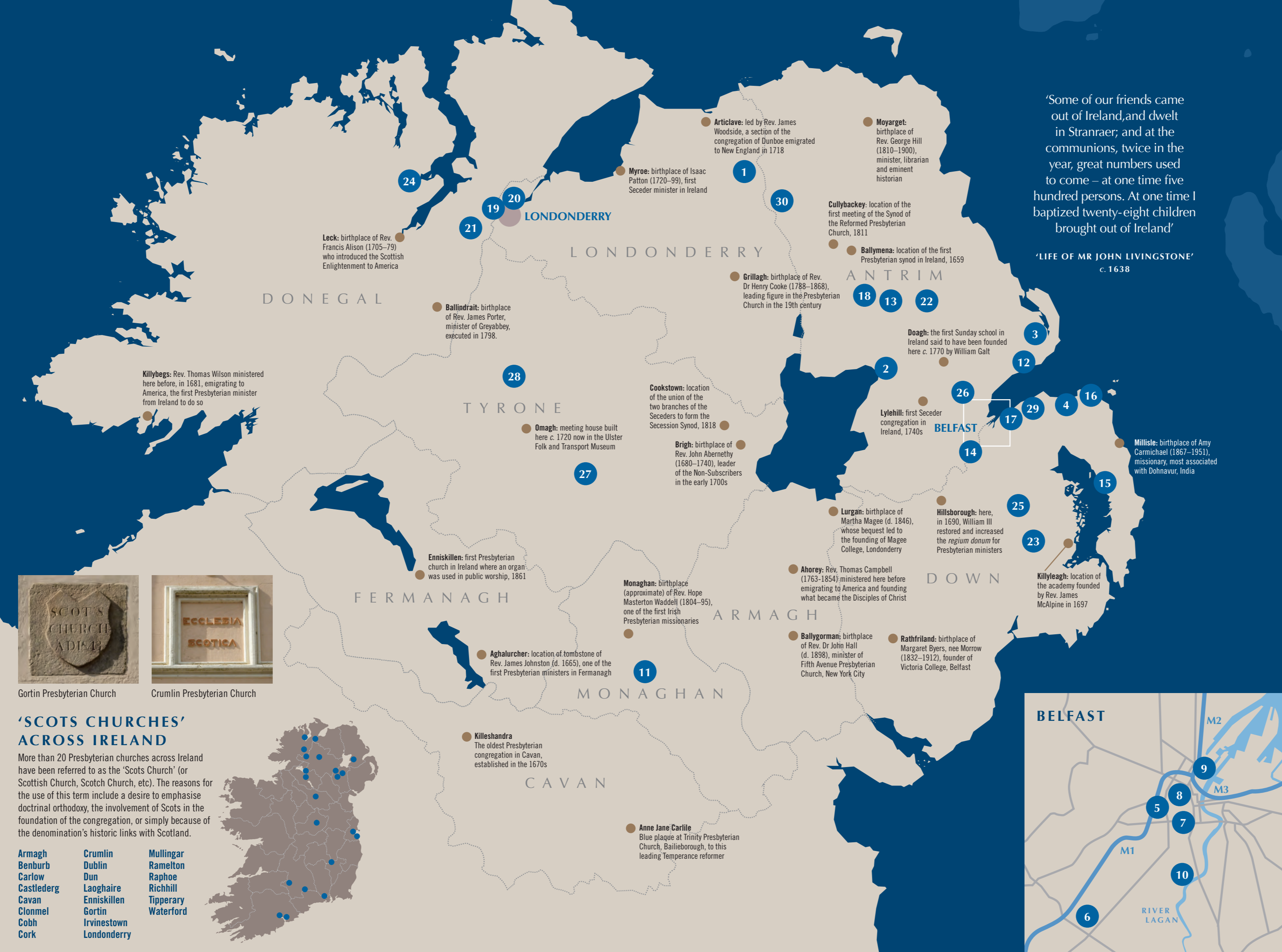


# THE PRESBYTERIANS IN ULSTER

## HERITAGE TRAIL



- 1. AGHADOWEY, COUNTY LONDONDERRY**  
The congregation of Aghadowey dates back to the 1650s. In 1701 Rev. James McGregor was ordained minister. In 1718 he led part of his congregation to New England in what is considered to be the first organised migration from Ulster to the New World. McGregor and many of those who travelled with him settled in New Hampshire, founding a town they renamed Londonderry. In 2014 a blue plaque was placed on Aghadowey Presbyterian Church in memory of McGregor.  
Image: Aghadowey Presbyterian Church
- 2. ANTRIM, COUNTY ANTRIM**  
Though more of a Puritan than a Presbyterian, Rev. John Ridge, an Englishman who was the first Protestant minister in the parish of Antrim, worked closely with neighbouring Presbyterian ministers and was held in high regard by them. He was actively involved in the Six Mile Water Revival of the late 1620s/early 1630s. Arising out of the Revival, Ridge organised what became known as the 'Antrim Meeting'. Presbyterian ministers in Ulster were invited to this meeting which has been likened to a presbytery.  
Image: The Six Mile Water in Antrim Castle Gardens
- 3. BALLYCARRY, COUNTY ANTRIM**  
In 1613 Rev. Edward Brice moved from Drymen in Strirlingshire to the parish of Templecorran, where a Scottish settlement had been established by the Edmonstones. Brice is considered to be the first Presbyterian minister in Ireland. He was deposed in 1636 on account of his Presbyterianism and died shortly afterwards. A memorial to him and other members of his family survives within the walls of the ruined church in which he once preached in the village of Ballycarry.  
Image: The ruins of Templecorran church
- 4. BANGOR, COUNTY DOWN**  
In 1623 Rev. Robert Blair, who had previously been regent of Glasgow University, became minister of Bangor. In 1636, having been deposed by the authorities due to his Presbyterianism, he was one of the organisers of an unsuccessful attempt to establish a colony of Ulster-Scots Presbyterians in America, after which he returned to Scotland. His autobiography provides a valuable record of early Presbyterianism in Ireland. Inside Bangor Abbey is a memorial to his first wife, Beatrix Hamilton (d. 1633).  
Image: Bangor Abbey
- 5. BELFAST: ASSEMBLY BUILDINGS**  
Assembly Buildings in Fishwick Place, the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, was opened in 1905, having cost over £70,000 to construct. The General Assembly meets here in June of each year. The crown spire was designed in imitation of St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh. Other interesting features include the 'Carrickfergus Window', which commemorates the formation of the first presbytery in Ireland in 1642, and the window and memorial to Thomas Sinclair (d. 1914), the leading Presbyterian layman of his day.
- 6. BELFAST: BALMORAL CEMETERY**  
Following an incident in which a funeral conducted by two Presbyterian ministers was obstructed by a Church of Ireland rector, a number of Presbyterians decided to establish a burial ground of their own. A site was acquired at Balmoral and the new cemetery opened in 1855. Many of Belfast's leading Presbyterians during the Victorian period were buried here, including Rev. Henry Cooke and one of the first missionaries sent by the Presbyterian Church to India, Rev. James Glasgow.  
Image: The entrance to Balmoral Cemetery
- 7. BELFAST: MAY ST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
A new church in May Street was built in 1829 for Rev. Henry Cooke, 'the champion of orthodoxy' who had led the campaign against the liberals in the Synod of Ulster. With its fine Ionic portico, the church is a striking example of Classicism applied to a Presbyterian place of worship. This church was the venue for the last gathering of the Synod of Ulster prior to the formation of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 1840.
- 8. BELFAST: FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
Of the three Presbyterian churches that once stood in Rosemary Street, this is the only one to survive. It is believed that Presbyterians began to meet for worship on this site some time before the end of the 17th century. Designed by Roger Mulholland, the present building, with its distinctive elliptical plan, was erected in 1783 and is without doubt the finest 18th-century Presbyterian place of worship in Ireland. The ornate interior features monuments to some of Belfast's leading citizens.
- 9. BELFAST: SINCLAIR SEAMEN'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
This congregation developed from the work of the Seamen's Friend Society in the port of Belfast. Following the death in 1856 of John Sinclair, a wealthy Belfast merchant, his widow and brother Thomas decided to donate £1,000 towards the building of a meeting house for the congregation. Members of the Sinclair family were active in the church for many years. The interior of the church is well known for its many nautical features, including a pulpit shaped like a ship's prow.  
Image: Corporation Square, showing the church and Harbour Office
- 10. BELFAST: UNION THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE**  
Designed by Charles Lanyon, the Presbyterian College – also known as Assembly's College – opened in 1853 as an institution training candidates for the ministry. From 1921 to 1932 it was the home of the new Northern Ireland Parliament. The college's Graham Library has an outstanding collection of books, pamphlets and manuscripts relating to the story of Irish Presbyterianism. The present name of the college was acquired in 1978 after the merger with the theological department of Magee College in Derry.
- 11. CAHANS, COUNTY MONAGHAN**  
Cahans Presbyterian Church was established in the mid 1700s, and was originally a Secession congregation. The first minister, Rev. Thomas Clark, a native of Paisley, Scotland, was ordained in 1751. Thirteen years later he led 300 Presbyterians, many of them members of his own congregation, to New York. In 1972 Cahans amalgamated with First Ballybay. The former meeting house has been restored. A blue plaque commemorating Victoria Cross winner David Nelson was placed on the church in 2014.  
Image: The old Cahans meeting house
- 12. CARRICKFERGUS, COUNTY ANTRIM**  
Carrickfergus was the location of the inaugural meeting of the presbytery formed by five of the chaplains in the Scottish army sent to Ireland in April 1642, and four elders drawn from the regiments that had formed Kirk sessions. St Nicholas's Church was the probable venue for this meeting, held on 10 June 1642, and which, in an institutional sense, is considered the birth of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The memorial commemorating this event was recently re-erected beside Juncourt Presbyterian Church.  
Image: The 1642 Presbytery Memorial
- 13. CONNOR, COUNTY ANTRIM**  
Connor was one of the centres of the 1859 Revival – the place where it all began in the view of many. The congregation's minister at this time, Rev. John Hamilton Moore, has been described as 'the friend, guide and encourager of the great Ulster awakening of 1859'. The substantial increase in the numbers of people attending the meeting house eventually led to the formation of a new congregation in neighbouring Kells in 1873.  
Image: Connor Presbyterian Church
- 14. DUNMURRY, COUNTY ANTRIM**  
The congregation of Dunmurry was founded in the late 17th century. In the early 1700s the minister, Rev. John Malcom, was involved in the subscription controversies and was the first to use the term 'New Light' in print. The present meeting house dates from 1779 and is a very fine example of an 18th-century Presbyterian place of worship. The next famous minister was Rev. Dr Henry Montgomery who led the congregation out of the Synod of Ulster in 1829.  
Image: Dunmurry Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church
- 15. GREYABBEY, COUNTY DOWN**  
Though the origins of Presbyterianism in Greyabbey can be traced back to the 1600s, it was not until 1733 that a distinct congregation was formed. In 1787 Rev. James Porter was ordained minister. He was executed in 1798 in the wake of the 1798 Rebellion for his alleged complicity in the insurrection and was buried in the graveyard adjoining the ruins of the former Cistercian abbey. Today there are two Presbyterian congregations in the village: Trinity Presbyterian and the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian.  
Image: The abbey ruins



### 'SCOTS CHURCHES' ACROSS IRELAND

More than 20 Presbyterian churches across Ireland have been referred to as the 'Scots Church' (or Scottish Church, Scotch Church, etc). The reasons for the use of this term include a desire to emphasise doctrinal orthodoxy, the involvement of Scots in the foundation of the congregation, or simply because of the denomination's historic links with Scotland.

Armagh	Crumlin	Mullingar
Benburb	Dublin	Rameton
Carlow	Dun	Raploe
Castlederg	Langhaire	Richhill
Cavan	Enniskillen	Tipperary
Commel	Gortin	Waterford
Cobh	Irvinestown	
Cork	Londonderry	

'I perceived the Lord welcomed me to that land. I behaved to stay a little, a mile about Carrickfergus, and, lying upon the grass, to rejoice in the Lord, who was the same in Ireland which he was to me in Scotland.'

REV. ROBERT BLAIR OF BANGOR, 1623

'The large majority of us here today look back to a Scottish ancestry; we cherish the same faith and hold the same doctrines.'

REV. DR HENRY MONTGOMERY,  
MODERATOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ULSTER DAY 1912

'The stronghold of Ulster Protestantism has always been the Presbyterian Church, rooted in the Scottish Reformation and maintaining close and continuous contact with Scotland.'

PROFESSOR T. W. MOODY, TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

'... the Presbyterian system was born in opposition, and its adherents have never been inclined to minimize the sacrifices made for principle.'

DR A. T. Q. STEWART, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

### THE FIRST CONGREGATIONS 1642

Immediately after the first Irish Presbytery was formed in Carrickfergus in June 1642, Presbyterian communities in east Ulster began to look to it for leadership and guidance and sent requests for ministers to preach to them. In response the Presbytery...

... moved that there should be elderships erected with the consent of these congregations, and that by their help a present supply might be procured; and in due time ministers be settled among them. This motion of the Presbytery was very acceptable to these congregations, as appeared by their immediate and earnest address to the Presbytery for ministers to be sent for that effect, which also was readily done by the Presbytery, who sent ministers to divers congregations who were first in a case for elderships... And, the elderships being erected in these places, there began a little appearance of a formed church in the country. (*Adair's True Narrative*, p. 96)

### SOLEMN LEAGUE & COVENANT 1644

In the spring, and early summer of 1644 the Solemn League and Covenant was signed at 26 locations across Ulster. On 25 May 1644 a report was sent to the General Assembly in Scotland that the persons of age and standing in these parts, who have already embraced the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Kingdoms with much zeal and forwardness, are above sixteen thousand'.

The Solemn League and Covenant gave a strong sense of identity to Ulster's Presbyterians and was one of the foundational episodes in the emergence of a distinct Presbyterian denomination.

### PRESBYTERIAN MINISTERS EJECTED 1661

In 1661, following the Restoration, ministers who refused to accept the episcopal form of church government were dismissed. The overwhelming majority of Presbyterian ministers remained true to their convictions and were ejected.

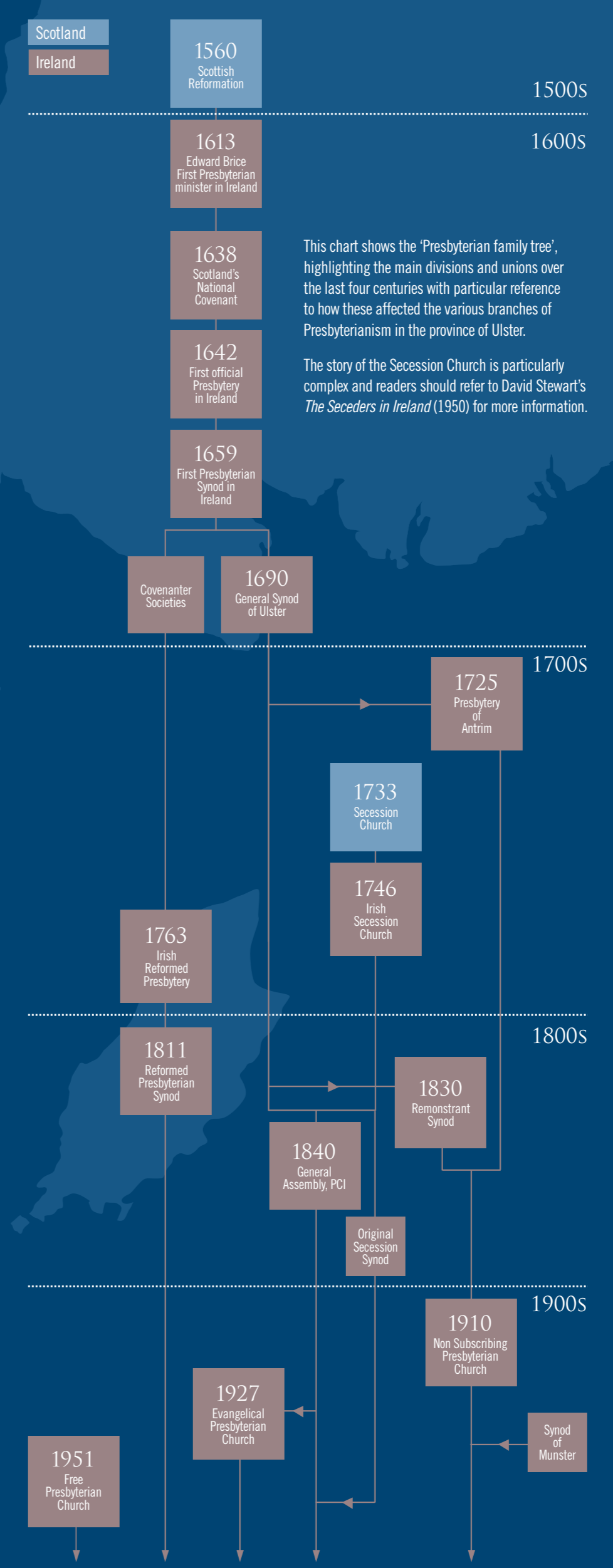
Tablet at Ballyrashane Presbyterian Church recording the forcible removal of Rev. Robert Hogsherd in 1661.

### CONGREGATIONS TODAY

Today there are over 500 congregations of the three historic Presbyterian denominations in the province of Ulster with several dozen more in other parts of the island.

- Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland

### PRESBYTERIAN FAMILY TREE 1560-PRESENT



'Some of our friends came out of Ireland, and dwelt in Stranraer; and at the communions, twice in the year, great numbers used to come – at one time I baptized twenty-eight children brought out of Ireland'

'LIFE OF MR JOHN LIVINGSTONE' c. 1638

This chart shows the 'Presbyterian family tree', highlighting the main divisions and unions over the last four centuries with particular reference to how these affected the various branches of Presbyterianism in the province of Ulster.

The story of the Secession Church is particularly complex and readers should refer to David Stewart's *The Seceders in Ireland* (1950) for more information.

- 16. GROOMSPORT, COUNTY DOWN**  
Now a picturesque seaside village, Groomspoint is generally regarded as the place from where the *Eagle Wing* set sail for America in the autumn of 1636 with 140 men, women and children on board. The ship had been built for a group of Presbyterian ministers in Ulster who wanted to emigrate to New England where they hoped to enjoy religious freedom. Frustratingly for them, the ship never made it to America. After eight weeks at sea severe storms forced the ship to return to Ireland.  
Image: The harbour and Cocker Row cottages
- 17. HOLYWOOD, COUNTY DOWN**  
The first Protestant minister, Rev. Robert Cunningham, settled in Holywood in 1615 and preached in the Priory Church. Because of his Presbyterianism, Cunningham was eventually deposed by the authorities and returned to Scotland. In 1644 year the Solemn League and Covenant was brought to the town where it was signed by the local populace. A copy of this Covenant is on display in the Ulster Museum. A 19th-century minister, Rev. Henry Henderson, wrote a newspaper column under the pseudonym 'Ulster Scot'.  
Image: The old priory church
- 18. KELLSWATER, COUNTY ANTRIM**  
In the late 1600s, Covenanters living in Mid Antrim met regularly on Fernisley Hill, south of Kells, where Rev. David Houston preached to them. In 1760 Rev. William Martin based himself in this area and a former mill building by the banks of the Kells Water was converted to a meeting house. Because of its historical importance Kellswater has been described as the 'Capital of Covenanting'. The present building dates from 1806 and retains many of its original features.  
Image: Kellswater Reformed Presbyterian Church
- 19. LONDONDERRY: FIRST DERRY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
Following the lifting of the Siege in 1689, Queen Mary gave a generous donation to the Presbyterians of Derry to construct a new meeting house. The present building, erected in the 1770s, stands on this site; the impressive portico was added in 1903. The former Blue Coat School to the rear of the church has been renovated as a visitor centre that tells the story of the many ways in which Presbyterians have contributed to the development of Derry.
- 20. LONDONDERRY: MAGEE COLLEGE**  
Magee College was established using the generous bequest of £20,000 by Martha Magee, the widow of Rev. William Magee of Lurgan. It opened in 1865 and offered courses in both arts and theology. Though established as a Presbyterian institution focused on preparing men for the ministry, it accepted students from all backgrounds. In the 20th century the arts and theological departments separated with the former becoming part of what is now Ulster University and the latter merging with Assembly's College, Belfast.
- 21. MONREAGH, COUNTY DONEGAL**  
Monreagh Presbyterian Church was the earliest congregation to be formed in County Donegal – over its main door is inscribed the year 1644. The 18th-century meeting house, on the traditional T-plan, contains many of interesting features. Across the road in the former manse is the Monreagh Heritage Centre which tells the story of the area, with a strong emphasis on the history of Presbyterianism in the region, and the links that exist between East Donegal and the wider world.  
Image: Monreagh Heritage Centre
- 22. PEDEN MEMORIAL, COUNTY ANTRIM**  
Ayrshire-born Rev. Alexander Peden was one of the key figures in the story of the Covenanters in late 17th-century Ireland. He has associations with a number of places in Ulster, where he sought refuge from persecution in Scotland on several occasions, but most especially with the Glenelgh district of County Antrim where in 1682 he lodged with the Steel family. Today a visitor to the site of his former refuge will see a monument commemorating his time there.  
Image: Peden memorial, Douglas Road, Glenelgh
- 23. RADEMON, COUNTY DOWN**  
The congregation was formed in 1713 and is also known as First Kilmarin. The sabbath-school, T-plan meeting house is one of the finest examples of a Presbyterian place of worship built in the vernacular style. It was erected in 1787 during the ministry of the Rev. Moses Neilson, a fluent Irish speaker. Neilson established a successful academy at Rademon. His son William also became a Presbyterian minister and was one of the foremost scholars of the Irish language of his day.  
Image: Rademon Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church
- 24. RAMELTON, COUNTY DONEGAL**  
Ramelton was one of the early centres of Presbyterianism in Donegal. The Solemn League and Covenant was brought here in 1644 and ten years later the first Presbyterian minister was ordained. The Old Meeting House in Ramelton (no longer used as a church), parts of which may date from the end of the 1600s, features a blue plaque to Rev. Francis Makemie, the 'Father of American Presbyterianism', who, after emigrating to the New World in 1683, conducted an influential and pioneering ministry.  
Image: The Old Meeting House
- 25. SAINTFIELD, COUNTY DOWN**  
A congregation was formed in Saintfield in the 1650s and the first minister was Rev. Alexander Hutchison. He was the grandfather of the celebrated Francis Hutchison, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University and widely regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of the 18th century. In 2003 a blue plaque in recognition of his life and legacy was unveiled at the Guildhall. To the rear of First Saintfield is a Memorial Garden which tells the story of the Battle of Saintfield in 1798.  
Image: The Guildhall beside First Saintfield Presbyterian Church
- 26. SENTRY HILL, COUNTY ANTRIM**  
Now in the care of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and open to the public, Sentry Hill was the home of the Presbyterian McKinney family for over 150 years. As the dwelling changed very little in the 20th century, it still has the very strong feel of a Victorian farmhouse. The best known member of the family to live here was William Fee McKinney who created a remarkable collection of photographs depicting rural life in Ulster and was an avid collector of artefacts.
- 27. SIXMILECROSS, COUNTY TYRONE**  
The congregation of Sixmilecross was established by the Seceders as early as 1764 and was originally known as Iremion. The most famous son of this congregation, as well as its minister from 1916 to 1928, was W. F. Marshall. He was a renowned writer and became a leading authority on Ulster dialect. He was buried at Sixmilecross in the burial ground beside the Presbyterian Church – the 'plain old house of God' – as he referred to it in one of his poems.  
Image: Sixmilecross Presbyterian Church
- 28. ULSTER-AMERICAN FOLK PARK, COUNTY TYRONE**  
The Ulster-American Folk Park has a number of buildings with Presbyterian associations, including the Mellon Homestead which was the boyhood home of Thomas Mellon who went on to enjoy success in America in law and banking. The 'Meeting House' is a replica of the Presbyterian place of worship at nearby Mountjoy which was attended by the Mellon family. Thomas Mellon remembered that it was a 'venerable old structure built in the shape of a T and roofed with straw thatch'.  
Image: The Mellon Homestead
- 29. ULSTER FOLK AND TRANSPORT MUSEUM, COUNTY DOWN**  
The Folk Museum opened in 1964 and contains a range of reconstructed buildings from across Ulster. The Presbyterian meeting house originally stood in Omagh, County Tyrone, and was built in the early 18th century during the ministry of Rev. James Maxwell. It was superseded by a new church in the late 19th century, but thankfully was not demolished. Prior to its reconstruction in the museum's fictional village of 'Ballycultra' in 2004, it had been used as a printing works.  
Image: The Presbyterian meeting house
- 30. THE VOW, COUNTY ANTRIM**  
A ferry crossing point on the River Bann, The Vow, near Ballymena, was the location of the ordination in 1757 of the first Reformed Presbyterian minister in Ireland, Rev. William Martin. Six years later the first Reformed Presbyterian met here. In 1772 Martin led a major exodus of Covenanters families, mainly from County Antrim, to South Carolina. In 2007 a memorial stone was erected close to the old Vow graveyard commemorating Martin's ordination and his subsequent emigration to America.  
Image: The Vow Memorial Stone