

1 GAELIC ULSTER IN THE LATE 1500S

In the mid 16th century nearly all of Ulster remained under the control of Gaelic Irish lords. The strongest family was that of O'Neill of Tyrone, followed by O'Donnell of Tyrconnell (now Donegal). Other lordships in south and west Ulster included those of the Maguires, McMahons and O'Reillys, whose territories were reflected in the counties that were created by the Tudor state in the late 16th century, respectively, Fermanagh, Monaghan and Cavan. The O'Cahan lordship covered most of what became County Londonderry.

In east Ulster the Clondeboye O'Neills controlled much of south County Antrim and north County Down, while the Magennises dominated west and south Down. By the middle of the 16th century, the MacDonnells, Scots from the Highlands and Islands, had established a strong presence in north Antrim at the expense of the McQuillans. English influence in Ulster was restricted to a couple of outposts at Carrickfergus and Newry.

As the English Crown began to extend its reach in Ulster it adopted a variety of strategies to bring the Gaelic lordships under its authority. One of these was 'surrender and regrant', a policy by which Irish lords would surrender their Gaelic titles and in return would be granted a title and lands by the Crown. In this way the lord of the O'Neills became the earl of Tyrone.

Increasingly, however, English intervention in Ulster led to conflict with the northern lords. An attempt to establish an English colony in the Ards peninsula in County Down proved an abject failure, while the campaign led by the Earl of Essex in the mid 1570s resulted in enormous destruction across large parts of the province. The increasing number of mercenaries that were introduced from Scotland, brought in to fight for the Gaelic lords, added to the instability of the region.

In 1590–91 the power of the McMahon lordship was broken when, following the execution of Hugh Roe MacMahon for failing to fulfil the terms of his 'surrender and regrant' agreement, his lordship was divided between nearly 300 Irish freeholders, each of whom now held under the Crown. This settlement created considerable alarm among the other lords in Ulster and was a major factor in the outbreak of the Nine Years' War in 1593–4.



Engraving of Irish lords feasting, possibly at Dunnalong, County Tyrone, from John Derricke, *The image of Ireland with a discoverie of woodkarne* (1581)

2 THE NINE YEARS' WAR AND THE FLIGHT OF THE EARLS

The combatants in the Nine Years' War were, on one side, a confederation of Gaelic lords led by Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone, and Hugh Roe O'Donnell, lord of Tyrconnell, and, on the other, the forces of the English Crown. To begin with the war proved disastrous for the English. However, following the arrival in Ireland of Lord Mountjoy as lord deputy in 1600, the war was pursued with increased vigour and began to turn in the Crown's favour.

The scorched-earth policy adopted by the English commanders in Ulster and the ruthlessness with which they pursued their campaigns had a devastating effect on the local population. In recounting one of his expeditions, Sir Arthur Chichester, the English commander based at Carrickfergus, wrote: 'we killed man, woman, child, horse, beast, and whatsoever we found'. The rivalries that existed in the Gaelic world were also exploited to win over a number of prominent lords who were dissatisfied with the leadership of O'Neill and O'Donnell.

Following the decisive defeat of the Gaelic lords at the Battle of Kinsale in December 1601, O'Donnell travelled to Spain where he died in 1602. O'Neill and his remaining followers were gradually forced to withdraw into the more inaccessible parts of Ulster. In a highly symbolic act, in August 1602 Mountjoy marched on Tullyhogue and smashed the leac na ri – 'the stone of the kings' – the seat used in the inauguration of the O'Neill lords of Tyrone. Eventually O'Neill was forced to surrender and in March 1603 the Treaty of Mellifont, which formally ended the war, was signed.

In the circumstances, the terms granted to O'Neill were relatively generous. He was pardoned and

allowed to retain his lands. This was to the considerable dissatisfaction of many of the officers in English army in Ireland and those Irish lords who had sided with the English during the recent war. O'Neill left Ireland in September 1607 along with the newly created earl of Tyrconnell, Rory O'Donnell, and almost one hundred supporters in what has become known as the 'Flight of the Earls'. Whatever the reasons for his departure O'Neill never returned to Ireland and died in Rome in 1616.



The Flight of the Earls
sculpture at Rathmullan, County Donegal
(© Donegal Tourism Ltd www.govisitdonegal.com)

3 PLANTATION PLANNING AND THE IRISH

The Flight of the Earls took the authorities by surprise. The immediate response of the lord deputy, now Sir Arthur Chichester, was to recommend that the lands held by the departed lords should be seized and then divided among the Gaelic Irish – ‘to every man of note or good desert so much as he can conveniently stock and manure by himself and his tenants and followers’ – and servitors (mainly English army officers). Chichester believed that in granting lands to many Irishmen, ‘the contentment of the great number [would] outweigh the displeasure and dissatisfaction of the smaller number of better blood’.

While Chichester may have preferred a scheme of plantation that was limited in its scope, others favoured a much more ambitious programme of change that involved large tracts of land being given over to ‘undertakers’ (so-called because of the conditions they undertook to fulfil) from England and Scotland with a correspondingly smaller area being allocated to the ‘deserving Irish’. Following the unsuccessful rising of Sir Cahir O’Doherty in 1608, further territories were seized by the Crown, increasing the amount of land available for redistribution. In the end, six of Ulster’s nine counties formed part of the ‘official’ plantation scheme – Armagh, Cavan, Coleraine (renamed Londonderry), Donegal, Fermanagh and Tyrone (collectively known as the ‘escheated’ counties).

One of the principal architects of the Ulster Plantation, Sir John Davies, the attorney general, was very clear about what he hoped would be the ultimate result of the scheme, writing that the settlement was designed to be ‘a mixt plantation of British and Irish that they might grow up together

in one nation’ so that the Irish ‘(like wild fruit trees) they might grow the milder, and beare the better & sweeter fruit.’

A transformation of the Irish way of life was envisaged. For example, in an effort to discourage seasonal transhumance, or booleying (the practice of moving cattle to upland areas during the summer), the Irish were to be ‘drawn from their course of running up and down the country with their cattle ... and are to settle themselves in towns and villages’. Such decrees were difficult to enforce, however, and practices such as this continued largely unchanged.



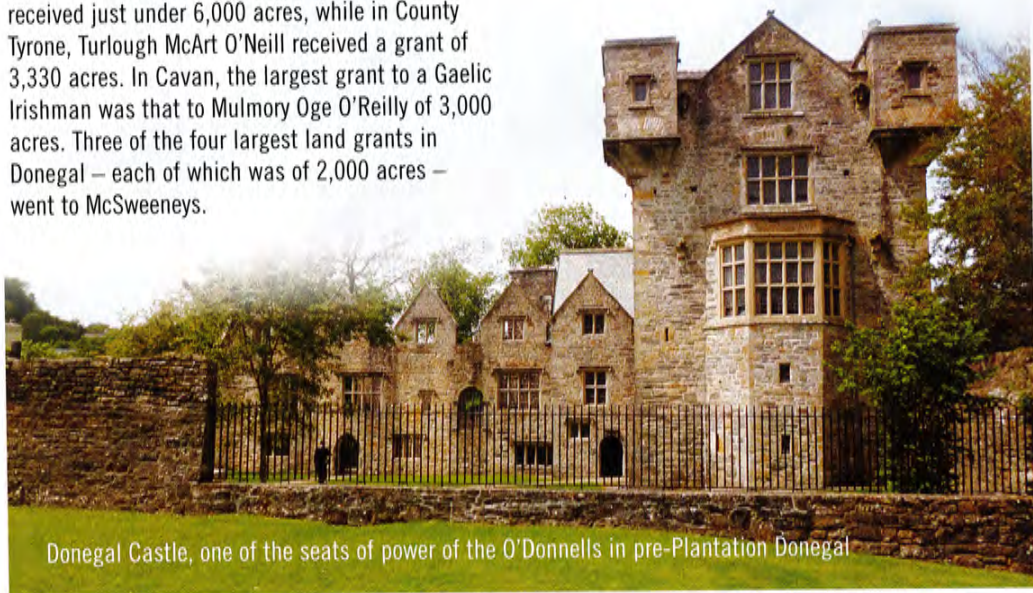
Extract from Bodley map of Strabane barony, 1609 (Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive)

4 THE IRISH PLANTATION GRANTEES

In all over 94,000 plantation acres (an estimated 430,000 statute acres) were allocated to the Irish. This represented around 20% of the land across the escheated counties. A total of 280 Irish received land grants, but only 26 of them were given estates of 1,000 acres or more. Over 90 different surnames are represented among the Irish grantees. Some 40 O'Neills received land grants, followed by 34 Maguires and 33 O'Reillys. On the other hand, some important pre-Plantation families were clearly losers. For instance, only five O'Donnells were beneficiaries of the Plantation scheme.

The largest grant to an Irishman in the escheated counties was the 9,900 acres in south Armagh allocated to Sir Turlough McHenry O'Neill, a supporter of the English cause in the Nine Years' War. In County Fermanagh, Connor Roe Maguire received just under 6,000 acres, while in County Tyrone, Turlough McArt O'Neill received a grant of 3,330 acres. In Cavan, the largest grant to a Gaelic Irishman was that to Mulmory Oge O'Reilly of 3,000 acres. Three of the four largest land grants in Donegal – each of which was of 2,000 acres – went to McSweeneyes.

Among the lesser Irish grantees was the Gaelic poet and historian Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh, who received, jointly with others, a portion in north Donegal. Ó Cléirigh, a cousin of Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, one of the 'Four Masters', was the author of *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill* ('Life of Hugh Roe O'Donnell'). A few women also received grants of land as part of the Plantation scheme. Iníon Dubh, the Scottish-born mother of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, received a small land grant in north Donegal, as did Honora Burke, the widow of O'Boyle, lord of Boylagh. Catherine O'Neill, the widow of Turlough Oge O'Neill who had died fighting for the Crown during Sir Cahir O'Doherty's revolt, received one of the larger land grants – 2,620 acres straddling the Armagh/Tyrone border – in trust for her son Phelim.



Donegal Castle, one of the seats of power of the O'Donnells in pre-Plantation Donegal

5 THE ESTATES OF THE IRISH

Although some of the Irish were allocated what were substantial land grants, the recipients were frequently left disappointed by what they had been given. In a number of instances, they received far less than they had been given to believe. Other Irish grantees were relocated to districts some distance from where they had previously lived and often with poorer quality land. In the case of Art McBaron O'Neill, the lands granted to him in County Armagh were only for his life and that of his wife. Not surprisingly, this led to considerable resentment and anger. In the words of one of the leading Englishmen in Ulster in 1610, 'there is not a more discontented people in Christendom.'

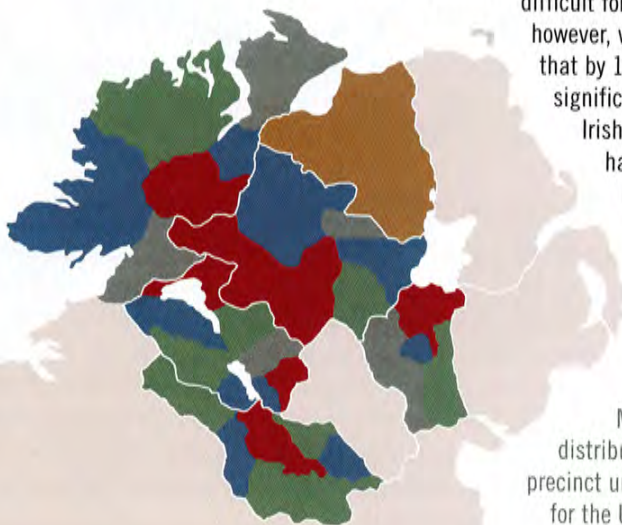
The Irish grantees were not required to introduce settlers from Britain to their estates. Nonetheless, some Irish landowners were ready to have British tenants on their lands.

In 1622 it was noted that 'Britons and natives' lived in the collection of houses adjoining Walter McLaughlin McSweeney's dwelling in north Donegal. It was said that Sir Phelim O'Neill and other Irish landowners had, shortly before the uprising of 1641, 'turn'd off Lands their Irish Tenants admitting English their rooms who are able to give far greater Rents'. These instances aside, the great majority of the inhabitants of Irish-owned estates were of Gaelic background.

A few of the Irish lords became anglicised to some extent. For instance, it was reported in 1622 that Brian Maguire of Tempo, County Fermanagh, 'lives very civil after the English manner', and in order to avoid the customary hospitality expected by 'his kinsmen and others of his house', he lived privately near Dublin. On the other hand, most of the Irish lords attempted to maintain a traditional way of life insofar as their circumstances allowed. The demands of adjusting to a market economy proved

difficult for many of them, however, with the result that by 1640 a significant portion of Irish-owned land had been sold or mortgaged, for the most part to British settlers.

- Precincts allocated to Scottish undertakers
- Precincts allocated to English undertakers
- Precincts allocated to servants and Irish
- Londonderry plantation
- Precincts allocated to Trinity College and selected individuals



Map showing the distribution of lands by precinct under the scheme for the Ulster Plantation

6 THE CONSPIRACY OF 1615

In April 1615 a conspiracy to seize a number of important towns in Ulster was discovered. While some in the Dublin administration regarded it as a serious attempt to overthrow the Plantation, it was in reality a somewhat half-hearted and muddled scheme. The plot was initiated by a Highland Scot, Alexander MacSorley MacDonnell, but the majority of the conspirators were Irishmen with a variety of grievances and whose motivations ranged from desperation to revenge.

The evidence gathered by the authorities provides a fascinating insight into Irish society at this time. The conspiracy itself was first hatched in May 1614 in an alehouse near Macosquin run by an Englishman. The principal Irish figure in the conspiracy was Rory O'Cahan, whose father Sir Donnell was imprisoned in the Tower of London and who was deeply concerned about his own status in a rapidly changing society. What particularly galled him was the fact that his father's castle was now in the possession of a professional soldier, Sir Thomas Phillips, in Rory's mind a man lacking creditable lineage.

A fellow conspirator was Brian Crossagh O'Neill, the illegitimate son of Cormac McBaron O'Neill, brother of Hugh, earl of Tyrone. Whereas O'Cahan's position was in decline, O'Neill had risen higher than would have been in the case in the older dispensation. In 1611 he was the recipient of 1,000 plantation acres in north-east County Tyrone. Yet his new found status did not bring with it social acceptance and he was aggrieved at being slighted by the assize judges at Dungannon in 1614.

Other insights into Gaelic society emerge from this episode, including aspects of literacy and bilingualism and the wearing of English dress by some of the Irish. One incident – apparently unrelated to the conspiracy – reveals that it was not impossible to combine being an office-bearer of the Church of Ireland with maintaining a devotion to Catholicism. One O'Mullan accused another, 'Thou art a church warden yet do not attend. Thou had sixteen masses said in your house'. Six of those put on trial in Derry, among them O'Cahan and O'Neill, were found guilty on 31 July 1615 and hanged. The jury included two Irishmen, one of whom was O'Cahan's own uncle, Manus.

The walled city of Derry, scene of the trial of the 1615 conspirators



7 THE IRISH ON BRITISH-OWNED ESTATES

Under the rules of the Plantation the English and Scottish undertakers were forbidden to lease land to Irish tenants. As with so much else about the Plantation, the theory was very different from the practice. Though concerns were voiced on a regular basis about the presence of Irish families on the undertakers' estates, in general terms, no systematic and thorough government-conducted driving off of all of the native population from the undertakers' lands was carried out. The Plantation survey of 1619 went so far as to state that 'if the Irish be put away with their Cattle, the British must either forsake their Dwellings, or endure great Distress on the suddain'.

A shortage of British tenants and the willingness of the Irish to pay higher rents in order to hold on to their lands meant that significant numbers of Gaelic families continued to live on the undertakers' proportions. The Irish population in some areas was significant enough for the settlers to protest about it. For instance, on Sir Stephen Butler's estate in County Cavan, it was reported in 1622 that the 'British complain thereof generally that they can get no reasonable bargains till the Irish be removed'.

The Plantation survey of 1619 was particularly damning of the activities of the London companies in retaining Irish tenants in County Londonderry. Several of the companies were in the hands of agents who 'finding the Irish more profitable than the British Tenants, are unwilling to draw on the British, persuading the Company that the Lands are mountainous and unprofitable'. On the estate of the Ironmongers' Company there was 'an infinite number of Irish' who gave 'such great Rents that the English cannot get any land'. By the 1620s the government realised that the wholesale removal of

the Irish from the undertakers' estates was not going to happen. In 1628 a compromise was reached which allowed the undertakers to lease up to one quarter of their lands to native Irish tenants, but only on certain terms and not in perpetuity. There is little evidence, however, that this was strictly enforced.



Extract from John Speed's map of Ireland, c. 1610 (Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive)

8 THE IRISH IN ANTRIM, DOWN AND MONAGHAN

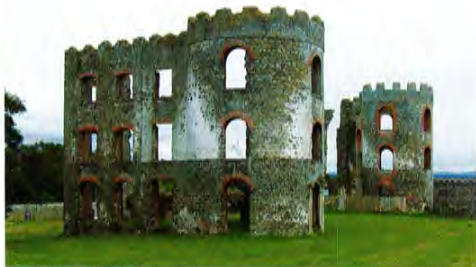
Though Antrim, Down and Monaghan were not part of an official scheme of Plantation, nonetheless, especially in the first two, changes in landownership and the immigration of settlers did have a significant impact on the Irish population of those counties. At the beginning of the 1600s there was a three-way division of Con O'Neill's estate in north-east County Down, with two of the shares going to Sir Hugh Montgomery and Sir James Hamilton. Con was left with one third of his lands, but in time rising debts forced him to dispose of most of this.

In south and west Down the Magennis, having emerged from the upheavals of the late 16th century in a relatively strong position, were able to retain a substantial quantity of land and preserve a high degree of continuity with the past. However, as a result of the piecemeal disposal of these lands, mainly due to high levels of debt, by 1640 the acreage owned by the Magennis had been reduced significantly.

In County Antrim, the O'Neills of Shanes Castle remained in control of much of the area immediately north of Lough Neagh. Near Ballymena the O'Haras were able to successfully adapt to the new political situation. Less successful was Rorie Oge McQuillan

who, having lost out to the MacDonnells in north Antrim, received the 'tuogh' of Clanagherty in mid Antrim, but sold it in 1619 and lived out his days on a royal pension and some loans.

A land settlement in Monaghan in 1591 which divided the county among native freeholders was confirmed in 1606 and during the opening decades of the 17th century, most of Monaghan remained in Irish ownership. However, the fact that Monaghan was almost entirely surrounded by counties that formed part of the official scheme of Plantation meant that it would have been virtually impossible for it not to have been affected by the massive changes that were being experienced in the rest of Ulster. Many of the Irish landowners in the county fell into debt and were forced to sell or mortgage their lands to British settlers with the result that by 1641 less than 40% of Monaghan remained in Irish ownership.



Shanes Castle, County Antrim



Extract from Richard Bartlett's map of Ulster, c. 1602

9 THE IRISH AND THE ENGLISH AND SCOTS

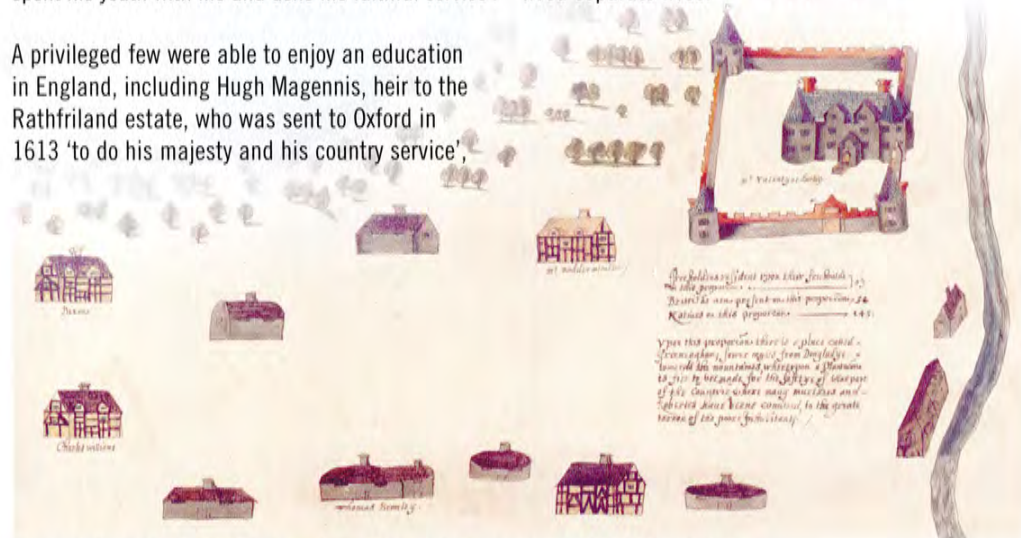
What was the nature of the relationship between the Gaelic Irish and the British settlers? This depended a great deal on the time period, location, level of engagement and a host of other factors. In the earliest period of plantation it is clear that there was a degree of cooperation in estate management between native and newcomer and that the settlers frequently relied on the Irish for assistance in establishing themselves in Ulster.

In 1611, for example, the 'diseased' George Crawford, Lord Lefnores, was unable to develop his estate in County Tyrone in person and so employed an Irish agent, Robert O'Rorke. The involvement of other Irishmen in estate management can be traced. For instance, the agent on James Hatton's Fermanagh estate was an Irishman named Patrick O'Brien, whom Hatton described in his will of 1637 as one 'who hath spent his youth with me and done me faithful service'.

A privileged few were able to enjoy an education in England, including Hugh Magennis, heir to the Rathfriland estate, who was sent to Oxford in 1613 'to do his majesty and his country service'.

and went on to study law in the Middle Temple in London, and Con O'Neill, a younger son of the earl of Tyrone accidentally left behind in 1607, who was at Eton from 1615 to 1622.

The muster roll of c. 1630 records a small number of Irishmen, suggesting that a few of the Irish had integrated, to some extent at any rate, with the settler population. There was also a degree of intermarriage which affected all levels of society. For example, William Brownlow, landlord of Lurgan, married Elinor O'Doherty, a niece of Sir Cahir O'Doherty of Inishowen. At the same, it must be acknowledged that across much of Ulster, British settlement was limited if not non-existent. Therefore, even allowing for a degree of assimilation and acculturation between settler and Gael, it is likely that for the most part they lived separate lives.



Thomas Raven's 1622 drawing of the Mercers' Company village at Movinagher, County Londonderry, showing Irish-style houses in an English settlement (PRONI)

10

IRISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The Irish population continued to speak in their own native tongue, though through interaction with the settler population some of them also became familiar with the English language, while a number of the settlers became conversant in Irish. There were proposals from some English administrators that the Irish should be compelled to speak English, though these came to naught.

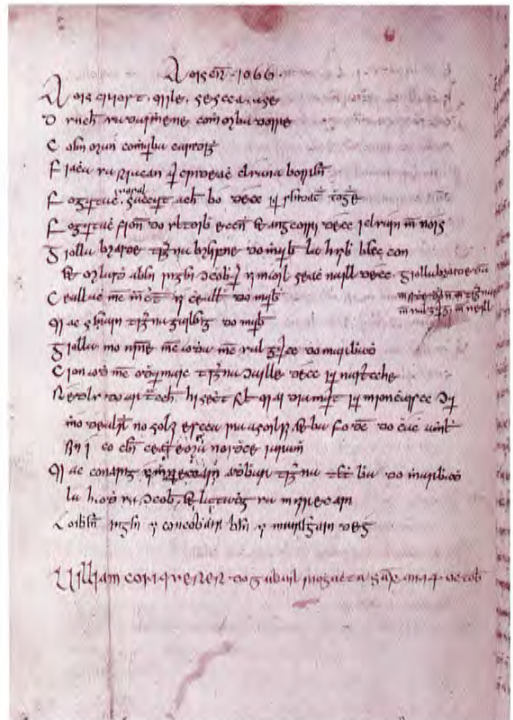
Despite the upheaval of the time, several major works in Irish were produced in the early 1600s. Among the most significant was the *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann* – the ‘Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland’, better known as the ‘Annals of the Four Masters’, produced by Mícheál Ó Cléirigh and his associates in County Donegal.

Of the Irish poets writing in this period, Fearflatha Ó Gnímh of Antrim was one of the most active, producing poetry for a number of different families, including the O’Neills of Clondeboye and the Magennises of County Down. He used his writings to lament the decline in status of the professional poet. This sadness at the changes for the bardic order can also be found in the poetry of Eochaidh O hEodhusa and specifically his *Beag mhaireas do mhacraidh Gheoidheal* (‘Few remain of the Gaelic youth’) of c. 1613.

It is somewhat surprising and certainly frustrating that literary works of the period reveal very little about how the Irish felt about the Plantation. We do find recorded in the *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann* under the year 1608 that in consequence of the Flight of the Earls and O’Doherty’s revolt ‘their territories, their estates, their lands, their forts, their fortresses, their fruitful harbours, and their fishful bays, were taken from the Irish of the

province of Ulster and given in their presence to foreign tribes’.

In one of the few examples where poetry touches on the changes brought about by the Plantation, one Gaelic poet, Lochlainn Ó Dalaigh, described the newcomers as ‘a conceited and impure swarm ... an excommunicated rabble – Saxons are there and Scotsmen’. What is interesting, however, is that the poet attributes the changes that had occurred as a judgment from God on the Irish, rather than blaming the new arrivals for what was happening.



Extract from the ‘Annals of the Four Masters’
(© Royal Irish Academy)

11 THE IRISH AND THE REFORMATION

The Reformation, which had its formal beginnings in Ireland in the 1530s, made little impact on the northern province of Ulster until the early 17th century. The sites of most pre-Plantation parish churches were appropriated by the new Church of Ireland which restored or rebuilt a number of churches for Protestant worship. In a few instances this was resisted. For instance, in 1628 in County Monaghan the Irish 'through a misconceived hope of liberty of conscience' celebrated Mass and erected altars in two parish churches before action was taken by the authorities to put a stop to this.

There were attempts by some of the Protestant bishops to involve Irishmen in the pastorate of the Church of Ireland, while in a number of areas there is evidence that some of the Irish conformed. For example, it was noted in 1619 that 36 Irishmen ('who had taken the Oath of Supremacy') attended the new Protestant church in Dungannon. Of those Irish who did convert to Protestantism, one of the most interesting was Murtagh King, a clergyman in Cavan who worked on the translation of the Bible into Irish under Bishop William Bedell of Kilmore.

On the whole, however, Protestantism failed to win the hearts and minds of the Irish population. For many of the Irish, the spread of Protestantism as a result of the Plantation was a major concern. In 1636 the Catholic bishop of Raphoe wrote to Rome 'not without deep sadness of heart' at 'how thick [were] the weeds which the persistent heresy daily sows' through the influx of Protestant settlers to his diocese.

The Church of Ireland came to be seen as the church of the settler population with its ministers nearly all of British background and English-speaking.

In 1622 it was found that the Protestant minister of Killelagh, County Londonderry, did not live in the parish, but visited the ruined church occasionally 'where no man cometh at him', the parish being entirely inhabited by Irish families. Those churchmen who did attempt to evangelise the Irish, such as Bishop Bedell, were treated with suspicion by the authorities.

Tombstone of Bishop Bedell (d. 1642),
Kilmore, County Cavan



An early
19th-century
edition of
Bedell's Bible
translation

12

THE IRISH AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The disruption to Ulster society in the late 16th century, culminating in the Nine Years' War, had left the Roman Catholic Church in a weakened position, in terms of its structures, personnel and physical fabric. Many places of worship, especially the friaries and other religious houses, had been used as strongholds during the war, resulting in considerable damage to them.

In the early 1600s Catholic clergy were targeted in particular by government officials with frequent complaints made against the authorities of harassment and persecution. In 1612 Conor O'Devany, Catholic bishop of Down and Connor, having been found guilty of treason, was executed. Occasionally fines were imposed on 'recusants', i.e. those who would not attend the Established Church, and some of the funds raised were used to finance the construction of Protestant churches.

Despite the considerable efforts of the authorities to suppress it, the Catholic Church continued to maintain a witness in early 17th-century Ulster. The attitude of the government towards the Catholic Church varied considerably, and was often closely

connected with external factors, such as the threat of war with Catholic powers on the Continent. The great majority of the Irish remained loyal to the Catholic Church and most of the Irish gentry provided what support they could. Of crucial importance in this regard were the links with Continental Europe.

Rather than merely survival, the experience of the Catholic Church in this period has been characterised as renewal. By the late 1620s, many of the northern dioceses had a resident bishop for the first time in decades, while Catholic worship was conducted freely in many areas. In Strabane, County Tyrone, Mass was said openly with the connivance of the settler population and the Catholic vicar general of Derry diocese, Turlough O'Kelly, was sheltered there by 'Scottish papists'. In 1631 it was noted that there were several mass-houses on the estates owned by the London companies in County Londonderry. Furthermore, there was a priest in every parish, while it was also alleged that the Londoners' representatives used the priests to secure higher rents than might otherwise have been the case.



The ruins of the Franciscan friary in Donegal Town, County Donegal

13

THE IRISH AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

While high-level administrative matters were controlled by the leaders of the settler population, the Irish were not entirely excluded from participation in local government. Irishmen, for example, were found on juries in the early 1600s. Some also held important positions in the administration of justice. For example, in County Donegal, Walter McLaughlin MacSweeney was a justice of the peace and was described in 1619 as 'conformable to his Majesty's laws, serving the King and Country upon all occasions'.

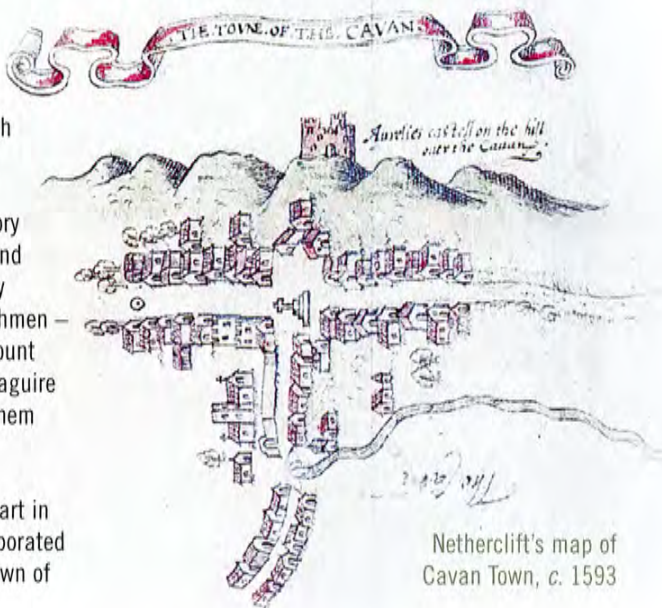
The position of county high sheriff was held by a number of Irishmen, including Philip O'Reilly and Myles O'Reilly in Cavan in 1629 and 1641, respectively, and Neal McKenna in Monaghan in 1639. In County Down, three members of the Magennis family were among the sub-sheriffs in 1641. In that same year Cormac McDonnell of Lisnaskea, County Fermanagh, was sheriff's bailiff.

Several Irishmen were returned to the Irish House of Commons as MPs for Ulster constituencies. For example, in 1641 Sir Phelim O'Neill was MP for Dungannon, Rory Maguire was MP for County Fermanagh and Philip McHugh O'Reilly was MP for County Cavan. The ennobling of a number of Irishmen – for example, Sir Arthur Magennis as Viscount Magennis of Iveagh in 1623 and Brian Maguire as Baron Enniskillen in 1628 – allowed them to take part in the Irish House of Lords.

Only a handful of Irishmen played their part in municipal government in the newly incorporated towns in early 17th-century Ulster. The town of

Cavan was alone in having an original set of burgesses that were predominantly Gaelic Irish rather than British. Elsewhere, Irish burgesses were much rarer, though the charter of Dungannon included two Irishmen, George O'Mullan and Laurence Tallon.

Some office-holders of Gaelic Irish background felt that they were not always afforded the respect they deserved. Hugh McMahon found one leading settler, Edward Aldrich, to be 'proud and haughty' in his attitude to him, and on one occasion at the Monaghan assizes Aldrich 'gave him not the right hand of friendship at the assize or session, he being also in the commission of peace with him'. Incidents like this contributed in their own way to the course of events that followed the uprising of October 1641.



Netherclift's map of
Cavan Town, c. 1593

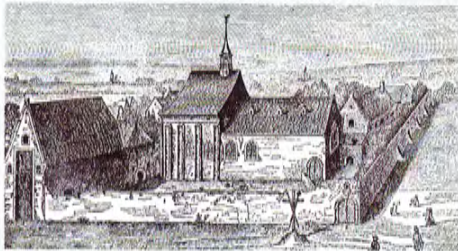
14 THE IRISH AND EUROPE



Thousands of the Ulster Irish from across the social spectrum left the province in the early 17th century for Continental Europe. Many saw military service in Flanders and elsewhere, while others trained for the Catholic priesthood at the 'Irish colleges' that were established at various locations, including Douai, Lisbon, Madrid, Paris, Rome and Salamanca.

In the aftermath of the Nine Years' War there were concerns about the number of 'idle swordsmen' in Ulster and steps were taken to have them shipped abroad. Others left of their own volition. Owen Roe O'Neill, who was to be one of the leading figures in Ireland in the 1640s, left Ireland c. 1604 to serve as a soldier in the Spanish army in Flanders. He was the son of Art McBaron O'Neill, a half-brother of Hugh, earl of Tyrone.

The 'Irish colleges' that were created from the late 16th century onwards played an important educational role and were crucially important to the revival of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Ulstermen occupied prominent positions in a number of these institutions, especially in St Anthony's College, Louvain (Leuven, in modern-day Belgium), established in 1607, where there was a press for printing books in Irish.



St Anthony's College, Louvain

A key figure in the founding of this Franciscan establishment was Aodh Mac Cathmhaoil (also known as Aodh Mac Aingil), who was born in Downpatrick c. 1571 into a scholarly family. After a period as tutor to the sons of the earl of Tyrone, he enjoyed a distinguished career as scholar and theologian on the Continent and was consecrated archbishop of Armagh shortly before his death in 1626.

Another important figure in the early history of St Anthony's was Donatus (Donagh) Mooney who was from Ballymore, County Donegal. One of the guardians of the college, he visited all of the Franciscan friaries in Ireland in the period 1615–17, collecting materials for an official history of the order on the island.



Owen Roe O'Neill

15

THE IRISH ON THE EVE OF THE 1641 RISING

Even allowing for a high degree of continuity with the past, there is no denying that early 17th-century Ulster was being transformed on social, economic, demographic and religious levels. These changes were especially felt by the Gaelic Irish population. The rapid social mobility brought about by the momentous changes resulting from the Plantation scheme was to the advantage of some Irishmen and to the detriment of others. As one historian has commented, 'Gaelic society was not extinguished, merely modified'.

To some contemporary observers it seemed that the accommodations necessary to make society function successfully were being worked out by the settlers and the Irish. Furthermore, it would appear that the settlers in general did not feel under threat from the Irish. By the end of the 1630s, however, life for nearly everyone in Ulster became much more difficult. The civil and religious policies pursued by the English administration in Dublin had a destabilising effect across all levels of society. In response, several of the leading Irish landowners in Ulster, including Sir Phelim O'Neill and Rory Maguire, began to make plans for an uprising which began in October 1641.

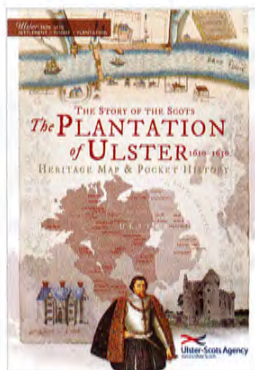
The events of the rising are beyond the scope of this publication, but it may be observed that what they revealed was the complexity of the relationship between settler and native. That some of the Irish intervened on behalf of the settlers does point to the existence of good relationships across the ethnic divide. On the other hand, others in the settler community were deliberately targeted on the basis of prior grievances.



Sir Phelim O'Neill

Ultimately the 1641 rebellion would prove disastrous for the Irish. It resulted in huge loss of life and led to the Cromwellian land settlement that significantly reduced the proportion of land in Irish ownership. This in turn opened up new areas for British settlement, thus putting even more pressure on the land available for the Irish and pushing them further to the margins in many parts of Ulster. Over the course of a century, the most Gaelic and Catholic part of Ireland had become the most British and Protestant.

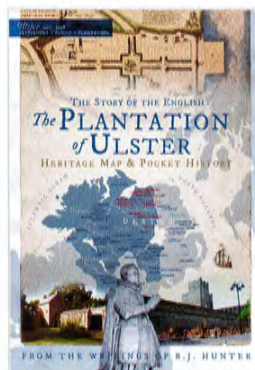
DISCOVER THE CONNECTIONS EXPLORE THE HISTORY VISIT THE SITES



The Ulster Plantation of the early 17th century is widely accepted as a period of critical importance in the shaping of modern Ulster and one of the most significant projects of colonisation in the early modern world.

This map is a companion to *The Plantation of Ulster: the story of the Scots* and *The Plantation of Ulster: the story of the English* and considers the experience of the Irish in the Plantation.

It comprises a pocket history with a series of biographical sketches and a map showing places of interest.



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R.J. HUNTER AND PLANTATION STUDIES

Robert John (Bob) Hunter was born in rural Meath in 1938 and was educated at Wesley College and Trinity College, Dublin. After graduation in 1960, he began research on the Ulster Plantation in the counties of Armagh and Cavan, 1608–41. This interest in the Plantation, and early modern Irish history generally, was to dominate his life.



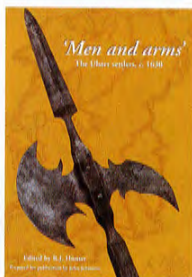
Robert John (Bob) Hunter, 1938–2007

In 1963 he was appointed Assistant Lecturer in History at Magee College, thus beginning an association with the city of Derry that was to continue for the rest of his life. The creation of what was to become the University of Ulster also saw him teaching regularly at Coleraine.

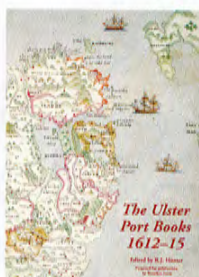
Through meticulous research he developed an encyclopaedic knowledge of his subject, traversing such themes as the development of towns, the role of the English planters, the history of trade and migration, and the intellectual and cultural life of Ulster more generally.

Through his untimely death in 2007 was to cut short his ambitions for further writing, he was nevertheless to leave behind numerous articles, essays, reviews, etc. which were the result of painstaking study conducted with a careful eye for detail and relevance.

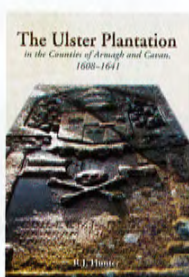
The R.J. Hunter Committee was established to acknowledge the contribution R.J. Hunter made to the study of our past by making more widely known the results of his research.



Men and Arms
The Ulster settlers,
c. 1630



**The Ulster Port
Books 1612–15**



The Ulster Plantation
in the Counties of
Armagh and Cavan

These publications, and others, featuring the works of R.J. Hunter have been produced by the Ulster Historical Foundation in association with the R.J. Hunter Committee.

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