WHAT MAKES AN ULSTER -SCOT?

Factors contributing to tradition

A Guide for Teachers

None of us can deny that, over a period of time, the Ulster-Scot has made an impact in the northeast corner of Ireland, giving the Province a definitive Scottish character.

Scotland is visible on a clear day from the east coast of Ulster and on occasions from Belfast. Even in the middle ages, the choice of the best strategic site for a Castle was well thought out. From Carrickfergus Castle are clear views through the mouth of Belfast Lough and beyond to the Scottish coast.

Today, many people in Ulster associate Scotland with relatives, family holidays and university education. The short sea crossing has become one of Ireland's most important economic links with the mainland; some consider it

A Gateway to Europe

The concept of geographical closeness is not a new phenomenon.

Geography and history have combined to link the peoples of what we now call Scotland and Ireland closely together. The Mull of Kyntyre, which can be seen from Ireland on a clear day, is only twelve miles from the coast of Antrim. Over centuries, the narrow channel between the two countries has been a bridge for people and ideas moving in both directions……….Thus, long before the plantation of Ulster, Scotland and the north of Ireland were closely linked…………History and geography have combined to make Ulster as much a Scottish as an Irish province.

Finlay Holmes, 'The Scots' in Pat Loughrey (ed.) The People of Ireland *(Belfast: Appletree, 1988)*

This west-orientated map helps us visualise the geographical closeness of Ulster to Scotland. Not only does it explain the concepts of space and distance, perceived in the past, but illustrates how easy it has always been for people to move, to and fro.

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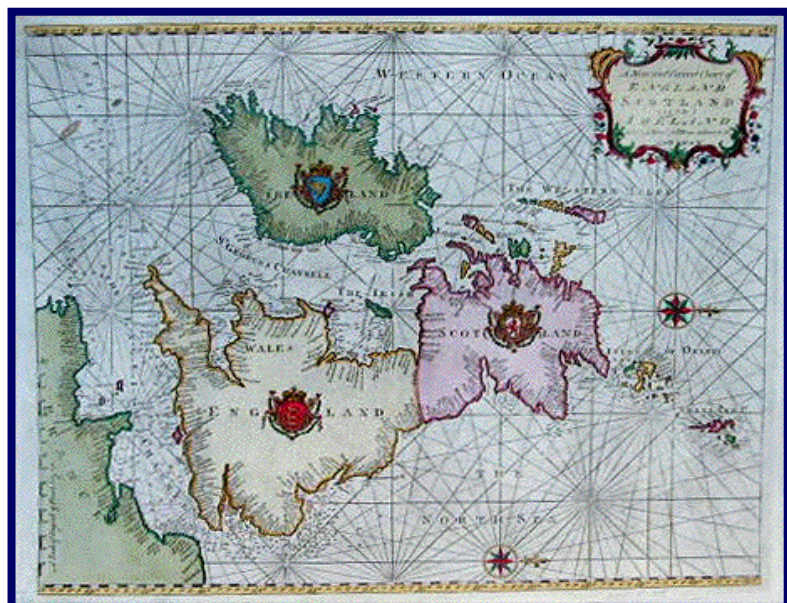
'Toing and Froing'

Modern developments continue ancient associations: the movement of people for various reasons has occurred for thousands of years.

By 7500 BC rising seas had swept away the last land bridges with Great Britain. It was possible to travel as far as the Isle of Man and beyond Islay before encountering water. Close contacts between Ulster and Scotland can be demonstrated ever since humans first appeared in Ireland: from the 'Larnian' flint tools of the Mesolithic, through the 'Clyde-Carlingford' court cairn ceremonial tombs built for the Neolithic leaders, to the 'Atlantic A' bronze cauldrons of the Late Bronze Age of around 1000BC.

In the fifth century A.D., the Dalriada period, the migration of people from Ulster to Scotland introduced Christianity and gave Scotland its modern name the land of the 'Scotti', Latin for Irish.

In the Middle Ages, many Scots came to Ulster to fight, mercenaries employed by feuding Irish lordships. These were the Galloglasses. They have left their mark in names such as Gallagher, MacDonnell and McSweeney.

In the fourteenth century, Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland and his brother Edward, came to Ulster and influenced events of the time considerably.

However, when we think of maps and of this part of the British Isles in particular, the map above is not quite how we see things.

Ulster in the past considered itself closer to Scotland than Dublin. This relief map shows us that the Province is fairly isolated from the rest of Ireland by mountains, lakes and bog-land: the absence of efficient internal route ways meant it was easier and safer to travel by sea than land.
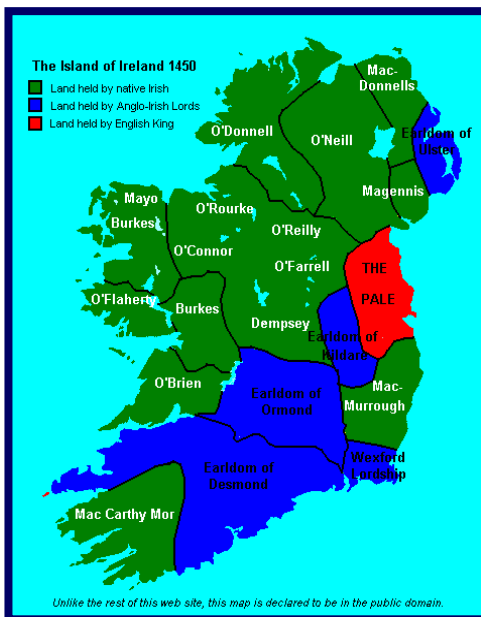
In modern times, with sophisticated transport and communication infrastructures, we often fail to appreciate past difficulties associated with making a journey. We tend to travel more by land than sea, and in a sense, our 'mental' map has changed! Even today, it takes less time to sail across to Scotland than it does to travel to Dublin: a point realised by Ulster-Scots in the 1630s who took day-trips to Stranraer for communion and to have their children baptized by Presbyterian minister, Rev. John Livingston, rather than in the Church of Ireland.

In the context of Ireland, Ulster's comparative geographical isolation meant it remained firmly under Gaelic rule up to the beginning of the seventeenth century: it was in fact the last vestige of ancient Irish society, a jurisdiction which the English crown found difficult to penetrate.

Ｔhis same geographical closeness created a security problem for the English over many centuries. While they found on occasions Ireland to be bothersome from the standpoint of security, they have been unable to walk away from the problem. Traditional enemies in the past, especially Spain and France, took full advantage of Ireland's potential to weaken and stretch the resources of the English. This fact became even more apparent in the Reformation period when religion became a central issue.

The Island of Ireland 1450
- Land held by native Irish
- Land held by Anglo-Irish Lords
- Land held by English King

Mac-Donnells
O'Donnell
O'Neill
Earldom of Ulster
Magennis
Mayo
Burkes
O'Rourke
O'Reilly
O'Connor
O'Farrell
THE PALE
O'Flaherty
Burkes
Dempsey
Earldom of Kildare
O'Brien
Earldom of Ormond
Mac-Murrough
Earldom of Desmond
Wexford Lordship
Mac Carthy Mor

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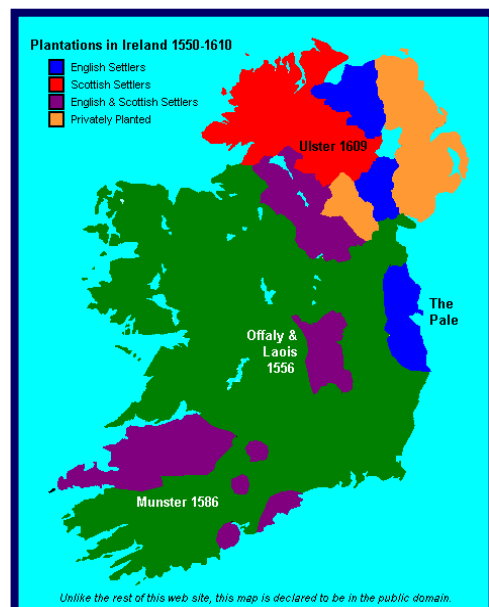## Plantation Schemes and the Demise of Gaelic Life

Another fact would be that from 1500 on, economic pressures experienced throughout Europe, made England realise Ireland's potential for expansion. Colonisation was perceived as a way of both protecting and extending crown interests. Plantation Schemes were the tools used to implement this idea.
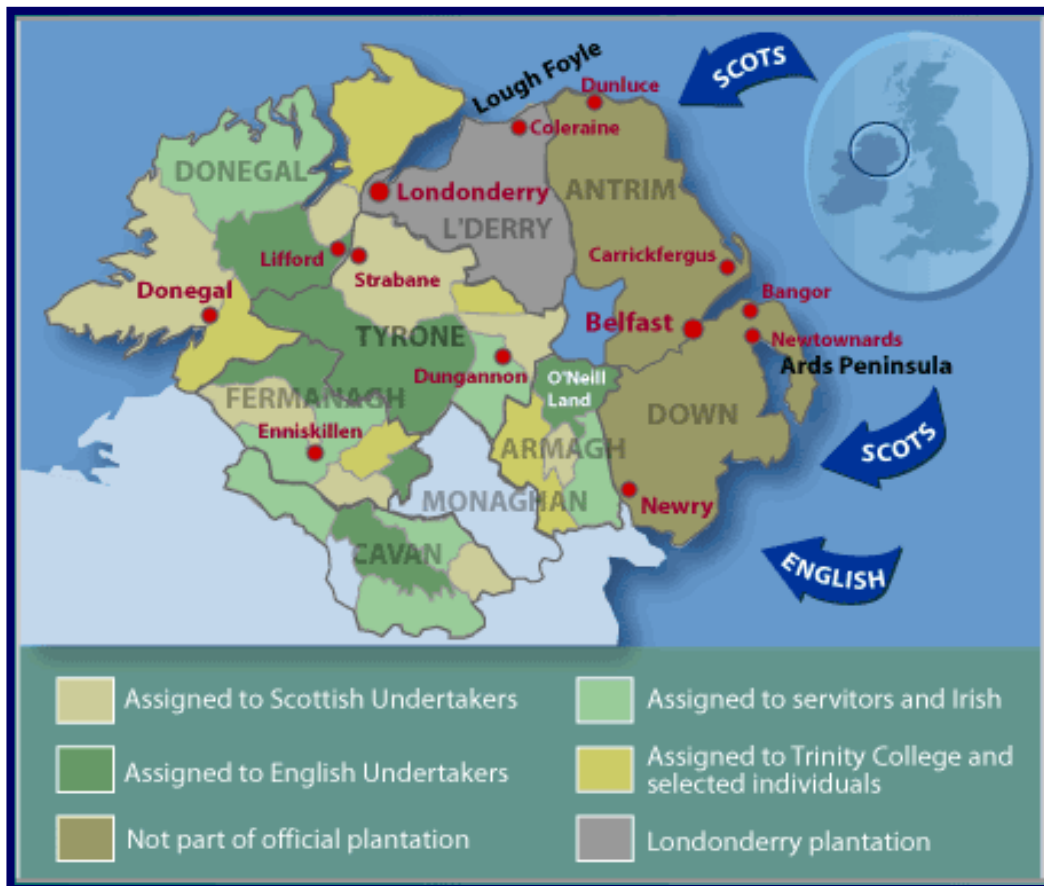
What then was the situation in Ulster before systematic colonisation took place? Four hundred years ago Irish was the universal language of Ulster, stronger than in any other part of Ireland.   Ulster chiefs visiting the English court used an interpreter or spoke in Latin. Gaelic lords extracted from their tenants, rents paid in kind, especially foodstuffs. There also existed a rich literary and musical culture that was distinctly Celtic.

The sixteenth century plantation schemes in the south caused alarm and an upgrading of military strength in the north; peasants were mobilised and Scottish mercenaries imported. The Ulster Plantation would bring a swift and dramatic change to these Gaelic traditions: there would be a shift from a bartering economy to a money-based one causing economic and social transformation. Colonisation in Ulster brought an end to Gaelic society as it had existed for centuries.

Colonisation was used as a policy of containment – of Irish and Scots. England was not only concerned about the potential of a Gaelic uprising, but as Scotland was a separate kingdom until 1603, there was fear that the Scots would join forces with her enemies. Quite rightly, as history was to prove, Ireland could be used as a 'back door'. The sixteenth century had seen the failed plantation schemes of Antrim and Down, which had not only been an attempt to revive the Anglo-Norman colony based chiefly around Carrickfergus, but a means of controlling the Scots, including Highlanders, and the O'Neills.

The Nine Years War 1593 –1603 and the defeat of Gaelic lordships, gave the crown the opportunity to extend its control into Ulster, through confiscation and plantation, thus completing colonisation in Ireland. Significantly, at the same time the two Crowns of England and Scotland were united through James I, the very same monarch who would oversee the Plantation of Ulster.

Plantations in Ireland 1550-1610
- English Settlers
- Scottish Settlers
- English & Scottish Settlers
- Privately Planted

Ulster 1609
The Pale
Offaly & Laois 1556
Munster 1586

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Seventeenth century settlement map of Ulster, © bbc.co.uk

Plantation of Ulster

There are nine counties in the Province of Ulster but the scheme for Plantation was concerned with only Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh, Tyrone and the new county of Londonderry.

Monaghan was not included because in 1591 eight Gaelic chiefs had surrendered their lands to Elizabeth I and then received them back to hold according to English law. However many Scots did eventually settle in Monaghan. Antrim and Down were not part of the scheme either but nevertheless, these most easterly counties underwent radical changes. Influential men like Sir Arthur Chichester, and the Scots James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery developed vast estates. South Down remained predominantly in Irish hands with some English owners, but as time went on it became increasingly populated by Scots.

The main beneficiaries of the Plantation were known as undertakers. These were classified as English, Scottish or Servitor. Servitors were military men who had fought for the crown. Counties were sub-divided into baronies with the various types of undertakers grouped together. The project was to be privately funded, so it was important that the Londonderry Plantation should succeed, as it would be used to raise revenue for the Plantation. It embraced one newly created county and was granted to merchants from the City of London who, through the Irish Society, built Coleraine and the city of Londonderry. Remaining lands were allocated to twelve livery companies.

The respective sharing out of land was as follows:

Undertakers & Londoners	40%
Servitors	15%
Native Irish	20%
Church of Ireland	20%
Trinity College, Royal Grammar Schools & Towns	15%

The undertakers comprised 60 English, 60 Scottish, 60 Servitor and approximately 290 Irish grantees restored to lesser estates.

Push and Pull Factors

Colonisation in Ulster guaranteed the continuum of the 'toing and froing' between Scotland and Ireland up to the present. Push and pull factors were caused primarily by conflict, political and religious persecution and economic factors. The following are just a few examples that represent waves of Scots in and out of Ulster.

Scots nobles, lairds, clergy and common folk sign the National Covenant in Greyfriars Kirkyard, Edinburgh.
© City of Edinburgh Museum and Art Gallery

Immigration

This picture illustrates the signing of the National Covenant in Edinburgh 1638 – a measure undertaken to defend the religious practices of the Scottish Reformed Church and in protest of the English Crown's desire to reintroduce prelacy. In this way, Scots came into direct conflict with the state. Consequently, many came to Ulster throughout the seventeenth century in the hope of greater religious tolerance.

In 1642 Monroe's Scottish Presbyterian army of 10,000 came to quell rebellion, thousands stayed. At this date the first Irish Presbytery was constituted in Carrickfergus, which greatly helped shape and organise Ulster-Scots identity.

The Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, resulting in the Highland Clearances, prompted more Scots to choose Ulster, this time as political refugees in search of a new start.

Over a hundred year period, Scots in all nine counties transformed the economy and character of Ulster as they settled into agrarian life. They established industries with Huguenots and fought alongside King William, erected meeting houses and schools.

In the 1690s, 70,000 Scots escaped famine in Scotland, enticed to Ulster by cheaper rents. The forbears of the men in this picture arrived at this time.

The three Guthrie brothers, King's Moss, Co. Antrim, c.1895. They are descendants of settlers who came from Stirling after the Revolution of 1689

© Copyright of Newtownabbey Borough Council Museum Service

Another significant wave of Scots in the nineteenth century swelled the population of Belfast from 20,000 in 1800 to 35,000 by the end of the century. Some came as industrialists, others, as in the 1850s, were brought over from Clydeside as Scottish labourers to work in the shipyard.

<u>Emigration</u>

After 1630, Scottish migration to Ulster declined somewhat and many returned to Scotland. This was due to the efforts of Charles I to impose high Church doctrines into Ulster. The 'Black Oath', 1638, required absolute allegiance to the king and a promise never to take up arms against the Crown. Many Scots, finding this unacceptable, returned east to Scotland, their hopes of greater religious tolerance dashed.

The Rebellion of 1641, had the initial effect of immunity for Scots. Indeed, many were told to write above their doors, 'Scots'. As events unfolded however, this immunity was withdrawn. Records show that they account for almost half of those who fled Ulster as a direct consequence of the uprising. Interestingly, the Scots in Fermanagh on the whole remained throughout these unsettled years, possibly because they were of the reiver communities, and as frontiersmen capable of putting up 'a good fight'. They were also further away from coastal escape routes.

During the eighteenth century, the period of English Ascendancy and the Penal Laws, Ulster-Scots considered avoiding religious discrimination through emigration. 100,000 and possibly as many as 250,000 Ulster-Scots emigrated to North America leading up to the American War of Independence. Many of them settled in lands near Pennsylvania and eventually through to Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and the Carolinas. There, they continued with familiar customs, music, distilling whiskey and of course dissenting religious practice. It was in areas such as the Appalachians, that they were nicknamed 'Hillbillies', the association being with King Billy.

The Great Famine of the 1840s, which devastated the whole of Ireland, resulted in another significant wave out for Ulster-Scots.

When we consider the characteristics of Scots, words spring to mind like hardy, canny, thrifty, opportunist; yet it would be unfair to dismiss the importance of entrepreneurial skills and social concern that the Ulster-Scot has contributed to the shaping of modern Ulster. What follows is an outline of just a few significant cultural influences.

Reivers

Many of the lowland Scots were border people known as Reivers, raiders who for generations found it difficult to live peacefully, often carrying out cattle stealing, kidnapping and blackmail. They defied both the Scottish and English governments. Through out this period, they became highly skilled and adaptable individuals, hence the term 'frontiersmen' which was applied to their later experiences as pioneers in America.

© William Ewart of Langholm, Scotland

Religion

Presbyterianism, a product of the Reformation transformed the Scottish church. Through John Knox, the Scots became much more convinced of Calvinism than the English. As a separate kingdom they were able to reorganise the government of their church as Presbyterian. Therefore, from the sixteenth century, their church was ruled by presbyters as opposed to bishops. This was the religion brought to Ulster in 1642. Its Presbyterian form unified Ulster-Scots giving them a social identity as well as a religion.

© William Roulston – Bready Reformed Presbyterian Church

Radicals

The radical ideas of the Enlightenment were embraced by many intellectual Ulster-Scots in the eighteenth century, including Presbyterian clergy. Notions of freedom and liberty expressed themselves as anti-British in the American and French Revolutions. These same ideas became important principles adopted by radical Presbyterian leaders in the 1798 Rebellion. What was perceived as unjust treatment by a suppressive Anglicised regime, caused many Ulster-Scot Presbyterians to be uncompromising and eventually, confrontational. This highlights an Ulster-Scots trait – a people prepared to agitate when faced with discrimination and unfairness.

Philosopher Francis Hutcheson, whose political theories inspired Scots-Irish radicals in America and Ulster

Photo © Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, University of Glasgow

Owing to the fact that under the Penal Laws they were denied access to Trinity College, those able to pursue a university education went to Scotland or Dutch reformed seminaries. It was in places like Glasgow, that they were exposed to the philosophical ideas of men like Francis Hutcheson. Hutcheson, a philosopher and Ulster-Scot, born and bred in County Down, embraced the ideals of the Enlightenment. He never set foot in America, yet those who formulated the Declaration of Independence, 4 July 1776 held his doctrines, for example – *that colonies had a right to revolt against the motherland.* The importance of the Ulster-Scots in the establishing of the American state cannot be overstated: up to eight of the fifty-six signatories to the Declaration were Ulster-Scots. The man who printed it was John Dunlop, from Strabane and John Nixon whose father came from Ulster was responsible for the first public reading. Ulster-Scot leadership and involvement in the development of the USA is further illustrated by the fact that seventeen Presidents so far can be identified as 'Scotch-Irish'.

Cultural Identity

Ulster-Scots have been interested in the Irish language as well as their own. At the time of the Plantation, the Scots spoke Scots-Gaelic or possibly possessed a measure of bilingual skills. The rapid economic and social transformation of Ulster caused by the Plantation must have created great linguistic diversity. There is no doubt that they brought with them cultural traditions and languages, Scots and Gaelic. From the time of Dalriada, there existed a common culture in Ulster and Scotland. Scots Gaelic speakers were able to converse readily with Irish speakers. From as early as the 1650s, Presbyterians evangelised, preaching in Irish in Gaelic areas. In the nineteenth century the Irish language was used successfully by Presbyterians in the west of Ireland. Presbyterian radicals in the spirit of the Enlightenment, especially the 'intelligentsia' were keen to promote all things Irish, especially in music and literature.

In contrast, the Orange Movement, established in the 1790s and associated at first with the Church of Ireland and landed gentry, became by the end of the nineteenth century an organisation that unified Ulster-Scots on grounds of religion and politics in the same way that Presbyterianism had done in 1642. It differed though in that its membership drew from all sectors of Protestantism, conformist and non-conformist, Anglo-Irish and Ulster-Scot. It was used as an instrument to preserve the Act of Union and to oppose the Home Rule Movement.

Beginning in the seventeenth century, the Scots in the nine counties transformed the economy and character of Ulster as they settled firstly into agrarian life and later as part of the industrial scene. It is not difficult for us to appreciate this tremendous impact as we look at the landscape of Ulster.

The bare landscape of Ulster was not unlike that of Scotland. Unlike the English, who came mainly from the more moderate southern English counties, they quickly adapted to both weather and climate.

Buildings

The Scots arriving in Ulster appreciated the effects of weather and climate on living conditions. While their building designs appeared dull and plain in comparison to English styles, they were practical, functional, secure and longer lasting. They preferred using stone rather than timber. Additionally, as the countryside was cultivated, stone became an essential material to enclose crops and animals as well as marking boundaries. Interestingly, the same tradition of dry-stone walling is found in Scotland, Ulster and the Appalachians: it is not only an example of shared practices but shows how wisely the landscape itself was utilised.

Fortified houses or bawns, are found throughout Ulster. Many were built by Ulster-Scots and possibly modelled on fortified houses and castles in Scotland such as Traquair. Each one has its own particular history and as stone constructions they gave security in hostile situations. As frontiersmen, the Ulster-Scot knew how to survive in situations where many English gave up.

*Ballygally Castle, Co. Antrim. Built 1625.*

Public buildings associated with Ulster-Scots, like churches, reflect a preference for what is plain, solid and functional as opposed to the ornate and grand of the established Church of Ireland. These contrasting styles of architecture reflect the differing respective beliefs and liturgies too.

St. Nicholas Church of Ireland, Carrickfergus

Loughmorne Presbyterian Church, Co. Antrim

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The Growth of Towns
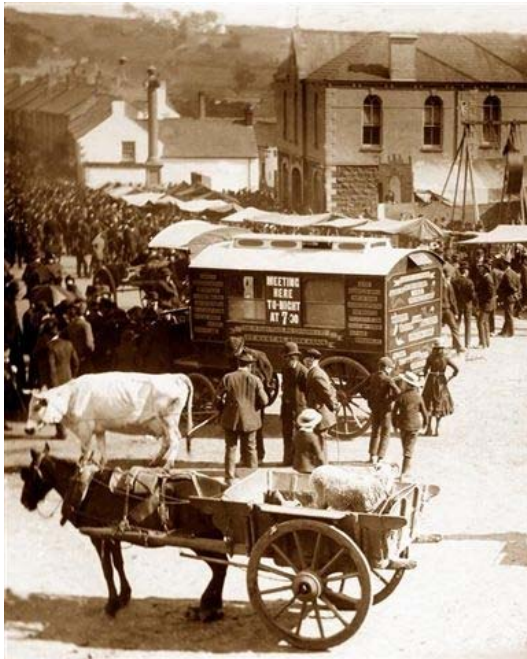
Ballyclare Square 1880. Photo © Andrew Gill

Before the Plantation of Ulster there had been few towns of significance other than Carrickfergus and Newry. Settlers were given the opportunity of planning towns 'from scratch'. Names of many towns indicate how they began and some suggest a Scots influence e.g. Draperstown, Hamilton's Bawn, Hillsborough, Newtownstewart. These 'new towns' are characterised by a spacious central square, or diamond, with straight streets leading off forming a kind of grid pattern. In the centre of the towns were important public buildings – town hall, courthouse, jail and very often a Church of Ireland. In many cases, the Scots Presbyterians and other dissenting groups, were not permitted to build their meeting houses in the centre, only on the periphery – today, many of the dissenters' churches are positioned at some distance from the centre of the town e.g. Ballymena, Coleraine, Hillsborough, and Limavady.
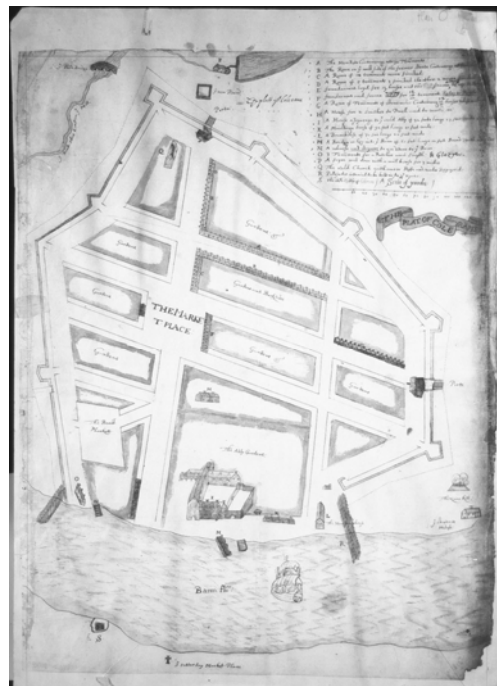
A plan of Coleraine 1609 © PRONI

Industry
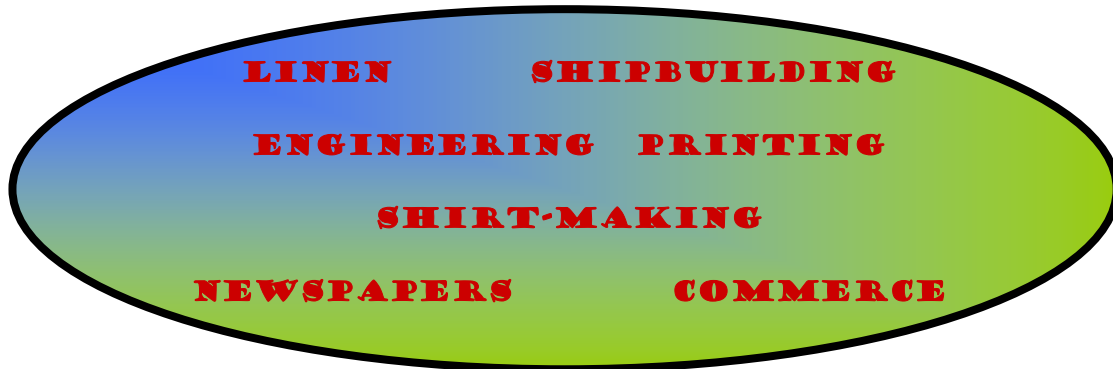
The growth of towns was influenced by industrialisation. Ulster-Scots have made a significant contribution to the development of linen, engineering, shipbuilding and other enterprises.

LINEN: The story of linen has become familiar to most people living in Ulster, starting in the 1690s with Huguenots. Without the support of Scottish migrants into Ulster it would not have been possible for the industry to develop on such a large scale. From the Ulster-Scots came not only the labour, but also the producers and developers of the linen industry.

William Barbour's Thread Works, Dunmurray, Co. Antrim © Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum

Prominent Ulster-Scot names connected with linen production include William Clark & Son of Upperlands, County Londonderry, Andrew Mullholland who bought the York Street Flax Spinning Company and the Andrews family of Comber. The Andrews family was to provide a Northern Ireland Prime minister plus Thomas Andrews chairman of Harland and Wolff who lost his life on the Titanic. Of further interest is perhaps the name Barbour not only associated with establishing linen mills, but with the Hilden community of Lisburn and the family homes Hunterhouse and Danesfort in Belfast.

SHIPBUILDING

The role of Ulster-Scots in this industry is significant. The first recorded vessel built in Belfast was for Presbyterian clergy, registered in 1663. However, the father of modern shipbuilding is considered to be William Ritchie who came with his brother from Ayrshire in 1791. The firm Harland and Wolff was established by Englishmen but managed by one of its major shareholders, William Pirrie, whose father was born in Wigtown.
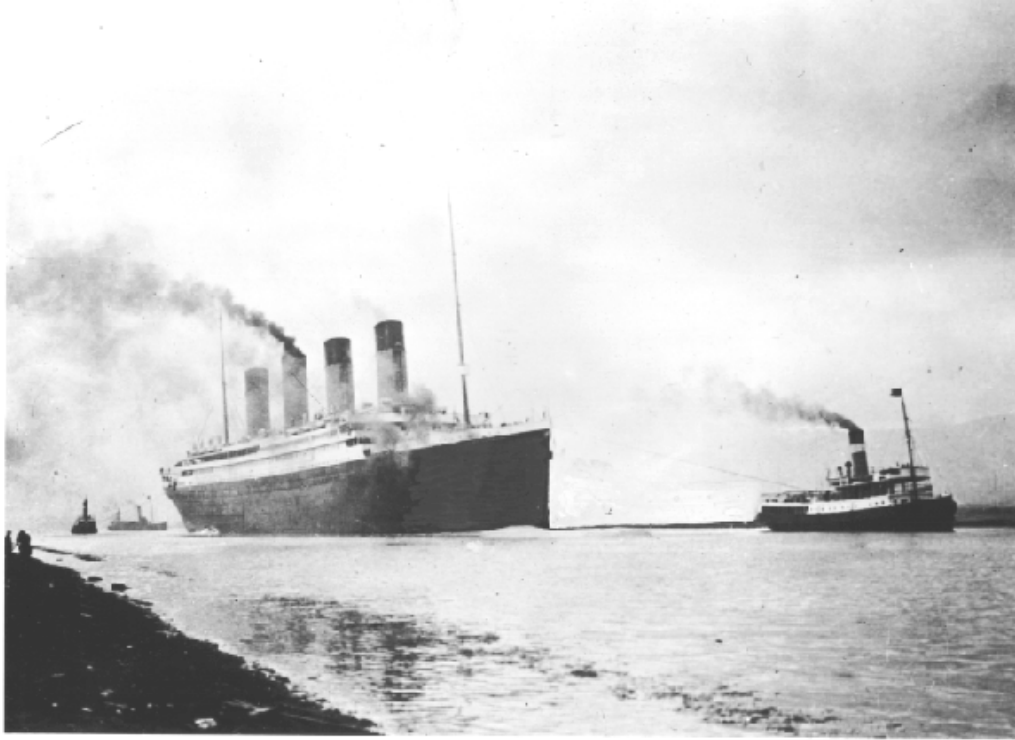
ENGINEERING

From Forfar came James Mackey, whose firm became the second largest privately owned company in the British Isles. The Corrys, whose ancestors arrived from Dumfries 1639, were involved in timber, the Star Shipping Line, and ambitious construction projects including, Upper/Lower Crescent South Belfast, University Street, Botanic Avenue, Mount Charles and Elmwood Presbyterian Church.

The impact made by Scots in Ulster and throughout the world is momentous. The connections between the north-eastern corner of Ireland and Scotland although dating back to prehistory, are as strong as they have ever been.

POSTSCRIPT

The story of Ulster-Scots is encapsulated in the account of an ordinary family who settled here in the early 18th century as a result of war, religious tension and political upheaval in Scotland. It is a fascinating account of agrarian life showing how the McKinney/Dundee family progressed in Ulster society, as well as overseas, in the past 300 years.

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