Northern Ireland Curriculum

The Plantation of Ulster and Ulster-Scots:

What's it all about?



The Plantation of Ulster and Ulster-Scots: *What's it all about?*

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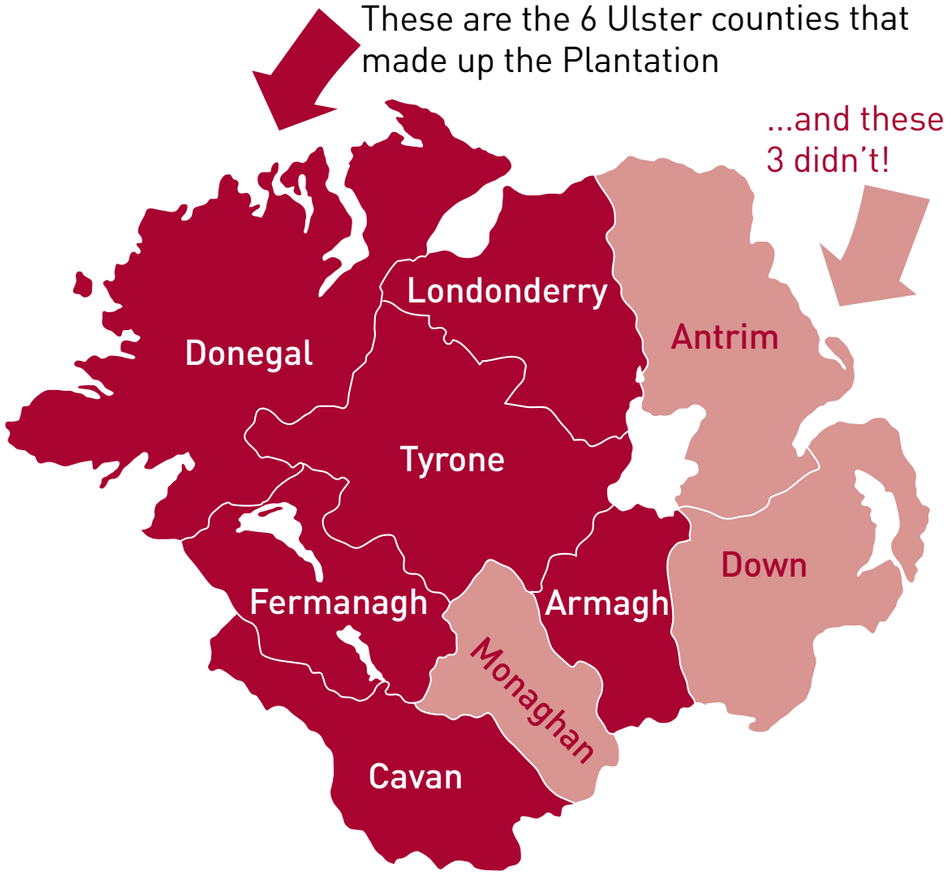
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The Plantation of Ulster

began over 400 years ago.
Many thousands of people from Scotland and England moved across the Irish Sea to live in Ulster during the reign of King James the First.

He had been the King of Scotland, but in 1603 he had also become King of England.
He wanted to change Ulster by 'planting' people from England and Scotland in it.

What?

What happened before the Plantation?

There had been many wars in Ireland between the Irish people and the English. The last one – The Nine Years' War (1594–1603) – took place during the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First and ended with the defeat of the Gaelic chieftains.

Now the whole of Ireland was under English control. But the very same year, Queen Elizabeth died. She had no children. What would happen to Ireland now?

Elizabeth was replaced by her Scottish relative, King James of Scotland. The King of Scotland now became the King of England too. This meant that Scots would play an important part in the plans for the Plantation.

Queen Elizabeth I



What were the aims of the Plantation?

King James the First hoped that the people who came over to Ulster during the Plantation would help him to change the province.

He hoped that settlers from England and Scotland would be obedient to him and to his government. In the King's mind Ulster needed to be 'civilised' and made to be more like England and parts of lowland Scotland.

Most of the Irish people living in Ulster did not see things this way and resented the King interfering in their land.

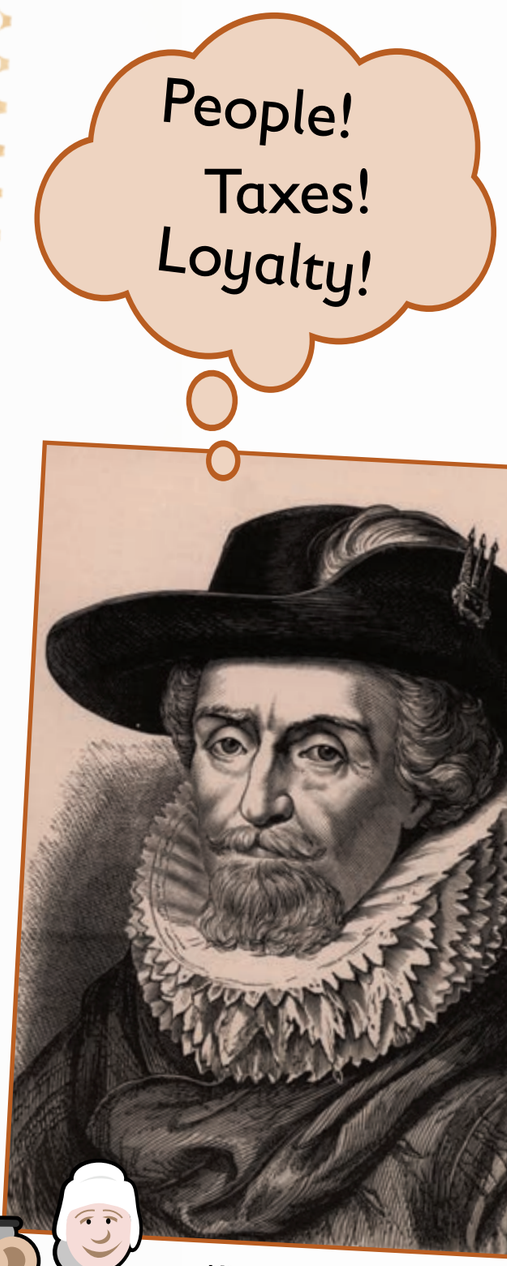
What was the result of the Plantation?

The Plantation brought many changes to Ulster. The population grew rapidly as thousands of settlers arrived, many of them with their wives and children.

New towns and villages were created and schools and industries were established.

The new people brought new names and customs to Ireland. But some people say that many of Ulster's problems began with the Plantation.





King James I

When?

Background

Ulster was not the only place to be 'planted'. Other parts of Ireland had been 'planted' with English people. A quarter of a century before the Plantation of Ulster, a plantation in the southern Irish province of Munster had been started.

At the same time that the Plantation of Ulster was taking place some English people were sailing across the Atlantic Ocean to establish settlements in Virginia in America. In 1607 Jamestown, named in honour of the King, was founded in Virginia.

King James had also tried to 'plant' the islands of Lewis and Harris in the Outer Hebrides with lowland Scots when he was King of Scotland.



Antrim, Down and Monaghan

Counties Antrim and Down were not included in the Plantation of Ulster. Because these counties are very close to Scotland, Scottish people had been coming to them for centuries. Usually on a clear day it is easy to see Scotland from the coasts of Antrim and Down.

Two Scots, James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery, received large land grants of many thousands of acres in County Down. So in May 1606 the 'Hamilton and Montgomery Settlement' began, and hundreds of Scottish families began to arrive in east Ulster.



James Hamilton



Hugh Montgomery



Dunluce Castle, home of the MacDonnells

In Antrim, a Scottish family, the MacDonnells, were already firmly in control of the north of the county. The MacDonnells were a Highland family. King James officially 'granted' the MacDonnells large parts of County Antrim. The MacDonnells also began bringing families from Scotland to live on their lands. By the time the Plantation of Ulster began, there were already many Scottish people living in Counties Antrim and Down.

Just as Antrim and Down were not part of the Plantation, neither was County Monaghan. In this county most of the land remained in Irish ownership in the early 17th century. Some Englishmen acquired large estates in the county and a number of English families settled there. However, the number of Scots in County Monaghan at this time was very small – fewer than in any of the other Ulster counties.

The Flight of the Earls

After being defeated by the English in The Nine Years' War, two of the most powerful Irish chieftains, the Earl of Tyrone and the Earl of Tyrconnell, left Ireland with many of their supporters in an event known as 'The Flight of the Earls'.

They boarded a ship in Rathmullan in County Donegal on 4 September 1607 and hoped to sail to Spain where they would ask for help from the Spanish king to drive the English out of Ireland. However, because of storms the Earls never reached Spain. Instead they landed in France and ended up in Rome. They never returned to Ireland.



Earl of Tyrone

The lands of these chieftains were confiscated and King James now had to decide what should be done with these territories. Eventually the King and his officials decided that the solution to their problems in Ulster would be to have a Plantation.

1606: Hamilton and Montgomery
1607: Jamestown (Virginia)
1607: Flight of the Earls
1610: Plantation of Ulster

Why?

"Ulster? I'll sort this place out once and for all!"



King James I

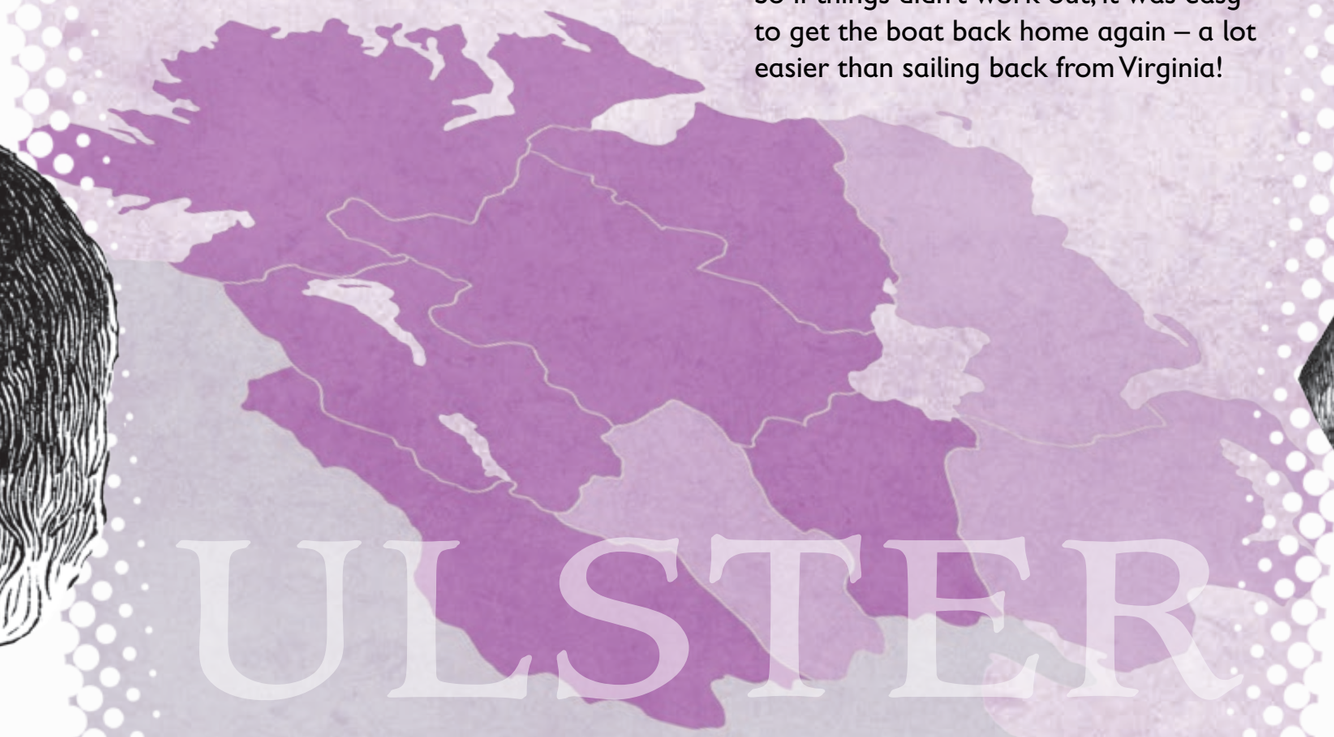
Why have a Plantation in Ulster?

Ulster was the last province in Ireland to be brought under English control. King James hoped that the 'planting' of loyal subjects would stop the threat of rebellion.

Keeping law and order in Ulster was expensive and the King was also worried that if a Spanish army invaded Ireland it would find support among the Irish.

The Flight of the Earls meant that he was now in possession of vast territories in six counties and could choose who should receive them.

To the King, a Plantation in Ulster seemed like the perfect answer. By encouraging settlers from England and Scotland to move to Ulster, he hoped that the province would become richer. And a richer Ulster meant a richer King because of the extra tax that would be paid.



Why go to Ulster?

There were many reasons why people moved from England and Scotland to Ulster.

For most of the settlers it was with a hope that they would find a new and better life for themselves and their families. The younger sons of landowners saw the opportunity to acquire their own estates. Farmers hoped to receive larger and better farms. Landless labourers hoped they would have their own farms rather than having to work for farmers.

It is likely that many people had heard about the success of the Hamilton and Montgomery Settlement in east Ulster, and this encouraged many more people to come across to make a new start.

For Scottish settlers, Ulster was also easy to get to – just a three hour boat trip from Portpatrick in Scotland to Donaghadee.

So if things didn't work out, it was easy to get the boat back home again – a lot easier than sailing back from Virginia!

"I would rather labour with my hands in the Plantation of Ulster, than dance and play in the Plantation of Virginia!"



Sir Arthur Chichester
Lord Deputy of Ireland

Who?

Who received land in the Plantation counties?

The confiscation of Irish-owned territories in the six Plantation counties meant that the King now had hundreds of thousands of acres to grant out to whom he pleased. After much planning it was agreed that the land should be divided between the following groups of people:



Undertakers
160,000 acres

The undertakers got their name because they agreed to undertake the 'planting' of British settlers on the estates they were given. There were 59 Scottish undertakers and 51 English undertakers, but the average size of the Scottish-owned estates was smaller than the English-owned estates. The undertakers were expected to introduce British settlers to their estates. For every 1,000 acres he received an undertaker was expected to 'plant' 24 men or at least 10 families from England or Scotland.

Servitors
55,000 acres

Servitors were men who had served the King in Ireland as soldiers or government officials. Altogether the servitors received nearly 55,000 acres in the Plantation counties. Most of them were given estates of 1,000–2,000 acres, but some of them received as little as 200 acres. The servitors were allowed to have both Irish and British tenants.

London Companies
40,000 acres

The King and his officials hoped to find support from the wealthy merchants of London for the Plantation. These merchants belonged to what were known as companies. Eventually it was agreed that the London companies would receive land in what is now County Londonderry.

Irish
94,000 acres

A total of 280 Irishmen received grants of land in the six Plantation counties – in all over 94,000 acres – but only 26 of the more important Gaelic lords were given estates of 1,000 acres or more. The largest grant to an Irishman was the 9,900 acres in south Armagh given to Sir Turlough McHenry McNeill.

Church of Ireland
75,000 acres

Lands that had belonged to the pre-Reformation Irish Church were transferred to the new Protestant Church that in time became known as the Church of Ireland. This included lands owned by bishops as well as lands possessed by monasteries and abbeys that had been closed by the English.
In addition, land was set aside in each parish for the support of the Church of Ireland minister. This land was known as 'glebe'. Today there are many townlands with the name Glebe because they were once owned by the Church of Ireland.

How?

How did the Plantation affect ordinary people?

The Irish

The rules of the Plantation were that all Irish had to leave the estates granted to English and Scottish undertakers. In reality, on nearly every estate given to an undertaker there were large numbers of Irish families.

In most areas Irish families significantly outnumbered English and Scottish families. The undertakers were happy to have Irish tenants, especially if they did not have enough British tenants on their estates.

There were no rules forbidding Irish tenants on lands owned by the Church of Ireland or the servitors.
In many cases Irish and British were ready to co-operate on everyday matters.

They may not have liked each other, but they were prepared to work together if it meant getting what they wanted.





The English

The English servitors and undertakers in Ulster came from many different parts of England.

There was a strong Devon connection with Ulster. Sir Arthur Chichester was from Devon as was Sir Thomas Ridgeway, both of whom received land in County Tyrone. The Flowerdews, Blennerhassetts and Bartons and most of the other Englishmen who received land in County Fermanagh came from the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk in East Anglia.

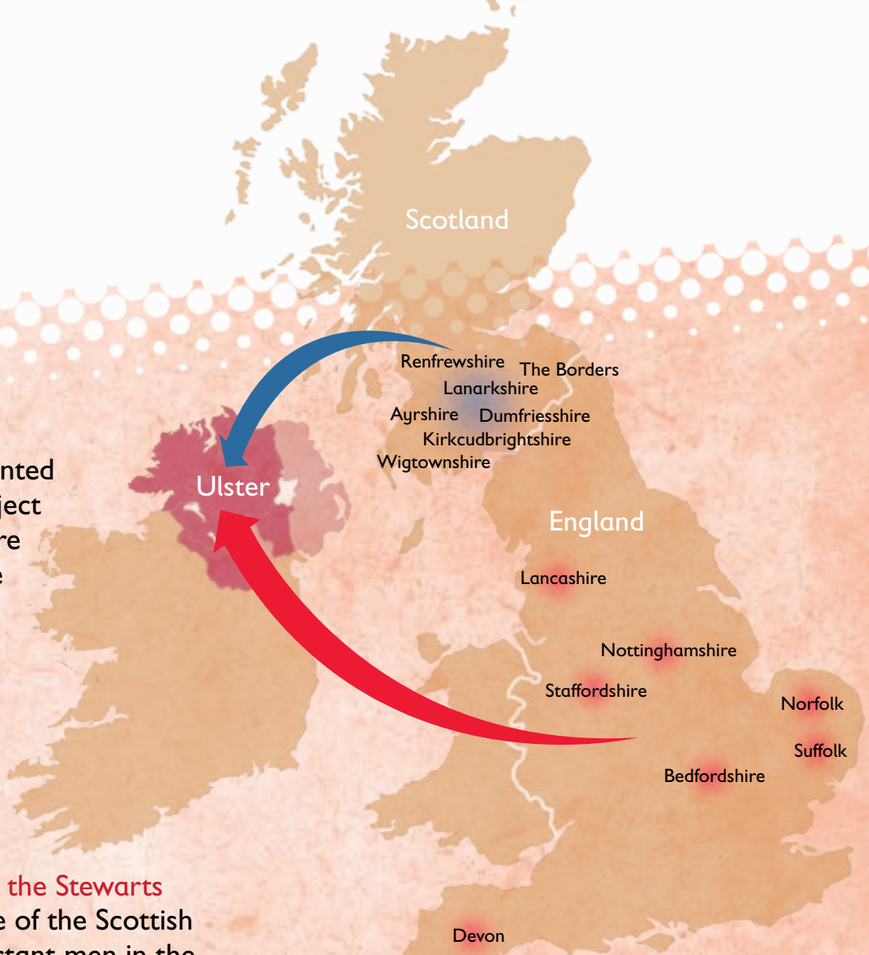
Others came from Staffordshire, Bedfordshire and Nottinghamshire. Some of these men were able to bring settlers across from their home counties. Many other settlers came from counties such as Lancashire in the north-west of England which were closer to Ireland.

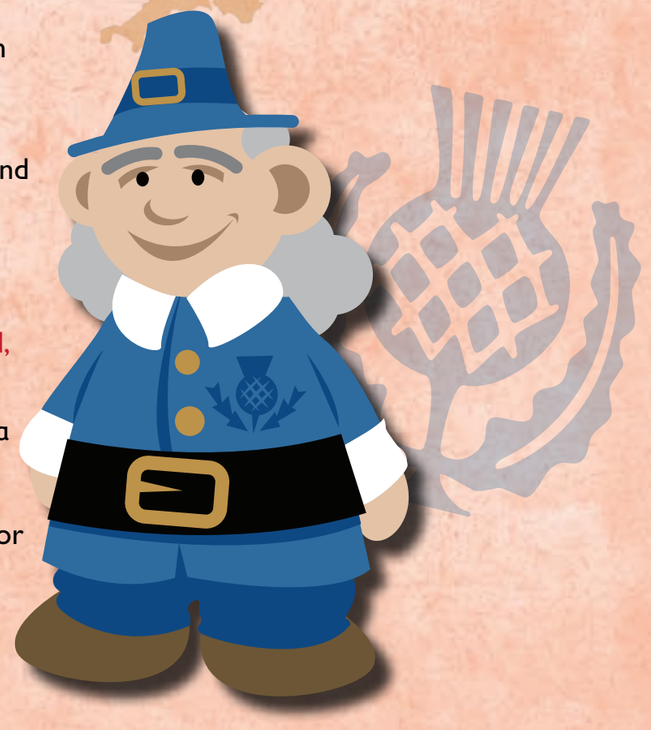
The Scots

Over 60 Scots were granted lands as part of the project of Plantation. A few were servitors, but most were undertakers. The most important of the new landlord families from Scotland included the Cunninghams in County Donegal, the Achesons in County Armagh, the Humes in County Fermanagh and the Stewarts in County Tyrone. Some of the Scottish undertakers were important men in the government of Scotland and close friends of the King. Others were landowners from south-west Scotland or the Borders.

Most of the ordinary Scottish settlers in Ulster came from the south-west of Scotland – that part of Scotland closest to Ulster – and in particular Ayrshire, Dumfriesshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Wigtownshire, Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire. Surnames associated with this area include Crawford, Cunningham, Hamilton and Montgomery.

Other settlers came from the Borders area of south-east Scotland including the Armstrongs, Beattys, Elliotts, Grahams and Johnstons. The Borders had a reputation for lawlessness and the Border Reivers were feared for the trouble they caused. The word 'reiver' means a raider, rider or a bandit. Some of them were banished to Ireland to stop them causing trouble in Scotland.





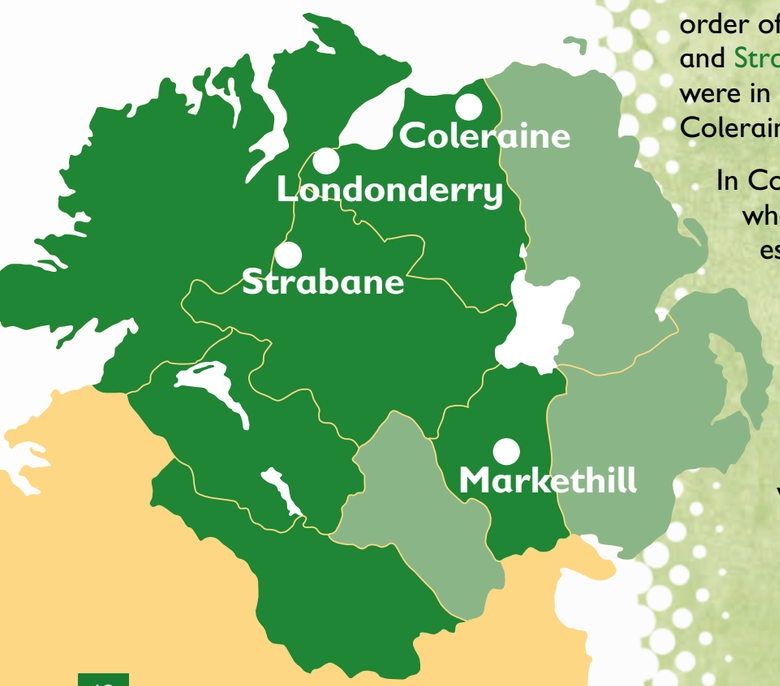
Where?

Where did the settlers live?

The English and Scottish settlers tended to live in areas with their fellow countrymen.

Most of the Scots lived on estates owned by Scottish undertakers and similarly most of the English lived on English-owned estates. The areas with the highest numbers of settlers were usually those closest to the ports. People were able to sail directly from England and Scotland to Londonderry and Coleraine.

There was also good farmland around these ports and so many people settled in these areas. Fewer people settled in areas far from ports or where the land was poor and mountainous.





1626 Map of 'The Cittie of London Derrie'



New towns

One of the big changes brought about by the Plantation was the establishment of towns.

Some of these towns were more successful than others. The largest towns in Plantation Ulster were, in order of size, Londonderry, Coleraine and Strabane. The London companies were in charge of helping the towns of Coleraine and Londonderry to grow.

In County Tyrone James Hamilton, who was the Earl of Abercorn, established a town at Strabane. Many of the landlords were not wealthy enough to establish a town and so founded a village on their lands instead. In County Armagh the Acheson family founded a village that was later to become Markethill.

Life in the countryside

The government wanted the settlers to live together in villages on each estate and not scattered here and there. However, in reality most of the settlers did not live like this. This shows that most of the time the settlers felt safe and did not fear an attack from the Irish living near them.

The settlers brought with them new ideas about farming. Better ploughs pulled by stronger breeds of horses meant that much more land could be used for growing crops. Some of the grain grown in Ulster was shipped to Scotland to be sold there.



Beef cattle now began to be kept in large numbers as well as dairy cattle. Farmers now produced extra food to sell at markets and fairs rather than just enough to feed their families. Many of the settlers, especially the English, planted orchards. In some areas fields were enclosed with hedges rather than the countryside lying open.



Legacy

How successful was the Plantation?

The Plantation was more successful in some areas than in others.

Many of the men from England and Scotland who received grants of land in the six Plantation counties sold out quickly and returned to their homelands. Some of them found it almost impossible to encourage British families to settle on their estates, especially if the land they owned was remote and mountainous.

Others were successful in bringing over settlers and in introducing new farming practices and industries.

The people

The Plantation brought big changes to Ulster. If we look around today we find evidence of the settlement everywhere, not only in the buildings and towns, but in the very people who live here. Surnames such as Hamilton, Stewart, Montgomery and Forsythe are Scottish in origin. Other names such as Babington, Poots and Parke are English. Because many settlers and Irish married each other there are people today who regard themselves as Irish when they have British surnames and British when they have Irish surnames.

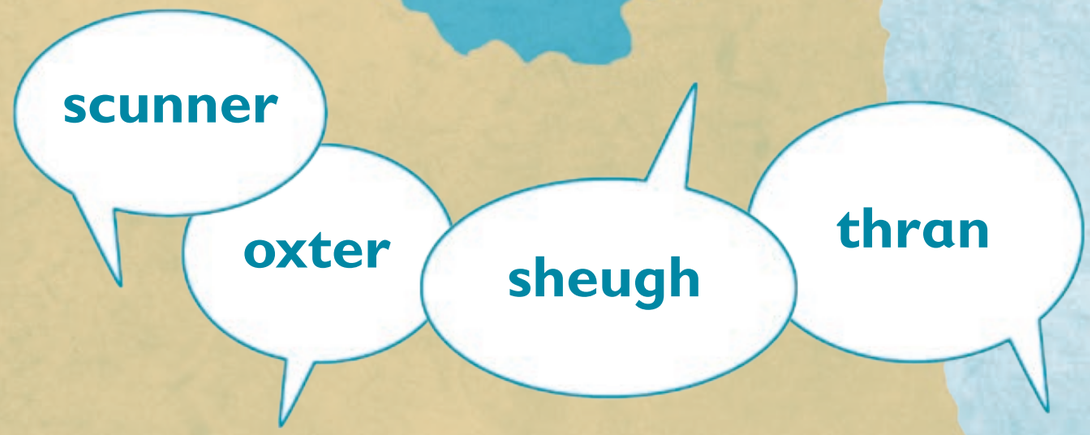
Differences in speech were also introduced as a result of the Plantation with the most important change being the spread of the English language. The Scottish settlers spoke Scots (also called Lallans) which continued to develop into what we now call Ulster-Scots. New words arrived in Ulster, – like sheugh, oxter, scunner, thole and thran. New words developed too, through the close influence of the Irish language on the settlers.



Surname Map

of major Scottish landowners during the Plantation





Today

Although the Plantation of Ulster began over 400 years ago, there are still some reminders of it that survive today. Some of these you will be able to visit, but others will be hidden away and not easy to get to.



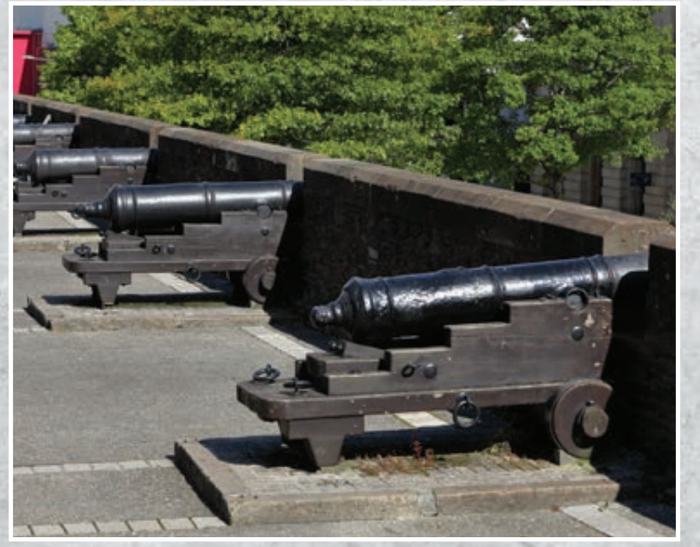
The Walls of Derry

Derry's Walls

In 1613 the town of Derry was renamed Londonderry because the London companies now became responsible for it.

In the same year the building of new walls around the town began. The walls were completed in 1618.

Today the walls survive almost intact and it is possible to walk along their full length of just over one mile. The walls are the most important surviving 17th century fortifications in the British Isles and well worth a visit. The remains of other town walls built at this time can be seen at Carrickfergus, County Antrim, and Jamestown, County Leitrim.



Cannon on the walls



Monea Castle

Plantation castles

Those granted land were required to build a fortification on their lands. The simplest type of fortress was known as a 'bawn'. The word bawn comes from the Irish for 'cow fort'.

A bawn was a courtyard surrounded by strong walls and was usually square or rectangular. The most important of the new English and Scottish landlords were expected to build a strong castle as well as a bawn.

The ruins of some of the castles built by the undertakers and servitors in the Plantation counties have survived. In County Fermanagh it is possible to visit Monea Castle, probably the finest surviving Plantation castle. It was built by Malcolm Hamilton, one of the Scottish undertakers. Comparisons have been made with Claypotts Castle near Dundee.



Claypotts Castle

Plantation churches

The English and Scottish settlers needed places to gather for public worship.

Sometimes they repaired an existing church and on other occasions they built a completely new church. A handful of these churches are still in use. The largest church built in the Plantation counties is St Columb's Cathedral in Londonderry. It is still used every day and is very popular with tourists.



Saint Columb's Cathedral, Londonderry

Other churches include Clonfeacle Church of Ireland church in Benburb, County Tyrone. This church was built around 1620 by Sir Richard Wingfield, an English servitor.

Most of the churches that survive from the Plantation counties are in ruins. In the old graveyards surrounding these churches it is sometimes possible to find a tombstone to one of the original settlers.

Glossary

Bawn
A bawn was a courtyard surrounded by strong walls and was usually square or rectangular. The word comes from the Irish for 'cow fort'.

Servitor
Servitors were men who had served the King in Ireland as soldiers or government officials.

Undertaker
The undertakers were men from England and Scotland who received lands in the Ulster Plantation. They got their name because they agreed to 'undertake' the planting of their lands with settlers from their homelands.

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Map (page 15) based on the Surname Map in *The Scots in Ulster – The First Scottish Migrations to Ulster, 1606–1641 (Surname Map and Pocket Guide) 2010*

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