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The Settlement Story

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Part One

The Dawn of the Ulster-Scots

2006 will be a big year for Ulster-Scots. It's the 400th anniversary of one of the most important events in Ulster-Scots history - the Hamilton and Montgomery Settlement of 1606 - yet like much of our history, its a story that hardly anyone knows about. The Ulster-Scots Agency aims to change that. Here's a summary of the story:

Before the Plantation of Ulster, two Ayrshire Scots - James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery - pioneered a massive migration from the Lowlands of Scotland to County Antrim and County Down. Starting in May 1606, over ten thousand mainly Presbyterian Lowland Scots made the short voyage across the North Channel, transforming barren Ulster into an industrial powerhouse. Their success inspired King James VI of Scotland and 1 of England's Virginia Plantation of 1607 and his Ulster Plantation of 1610. Their achievement was "The Dawn of the Ulster-Scots".

The lands they came to had been devastated and depopulated by the wars of the late 1500s. Records say that Antrim and Down were "wasted". The owner of the lands, Con O'Neill, had been imprisoned in Carrickfergus Castle by the late Queen Elizabeth I and was probably destined for execution. So Hugh Montgomery hatched an elaborate plan to both free O'Neill and to gain a Royal pardon for him from the newly-crowned King James I (formerly King James VI of Scotland) - and Montgomery's payment was to be half of O'Neill's lands. However James Hamilton found out and intervened in the negotiations - and won one third of the lands for himself.

Hamilton was from Dunlop in Ayrshire, was an academic and had been a founder of Trinity College in Dublin. His new territory included the entire River Bann and the area around Coleraine, as well as a major part of County Down which took in Bangor, part of Comber, Killyleagh, Dundonald and some of the Ards Peninsula. Montgomery was the Sixth Laird of Braidstane and had been a mercenary in the wars in Holland. His new territory included Newtownards, Donaghadee, part of Comber, Greyabbey and a large portion of the Ards Peninsula. Hamilton and Montgomery can rightly be called "The Founding Fathers of the Ulster Scots".

The thousands of settlers they brought over absolutely transformed the region. The success of their settlement in Antrim and Down must have reassured King James VI & I of his Plantation in Virginia (at Jamestown) in 1607, and without doubt inspired the Plantation of the rest of Ulster which started in 1610.

As our American cousins head towards their own "Jamestown 400" celebrations in 2007, it is right that Ulster-Scots celebrate the success of the Hamilton & Montgomery Settlement of 1606. The Agency will be co-ordinating a series of events, publications and initiatives during the New Year, so watch this space - and contact us to ask how you can get involved!

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Part Two

Who were Hamilton and Montgomery?

Ayrshire - the birthplace of the Founding Fathers.

James Hamilton (1559 - 1644) and Hugh Montgomery (1560 - 1636), the Founding Fathers of the Ulster-Scots, were born in Ayrshire just as the Reformation took hold in Scotland. The Scots Confession was written in 1560 at the direction of the Scottish

Parliament and was drawn up by John Knox and five other ministers inside four days. It was promptly ratified as the first confession of faith of the Reformed Church of Scotland.

Ayrshire, just across the North Channel from Co Antrim, had long been a hotbed of activity. "The Lollards of Kyle", followers of John Wycliffe, had been active there since the late 1400s. One of them - Murdoch Nisbet - had translated the New Testament into Scots and sought refuge from persecution, probably in Ulster, for around 10 years. Robert the Bruce, William Wallace and Robert Burns were all either born or spent time in the Kyle district of Ayrshire. And even though they were Ayrshire neighbours, James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery could hardly have been more different.

James Hamilton - Minister's Son, Academic and Agent.

The Hamiltons had arrived in Scotland around 1215 AD - Roger de Hamilton found favour with the Scottish king Alexander II and married the daughter of the Earl of Strathern. Their son Gilbert married King Robert the Bruce's niece Isabella and obtained a grant for a barony in Lanarkshire. There he established the town called Hamilton which today has a population of around 50,000 people. The Hamiltons continued to have close links with the Scottish royal family for centuries to come.

Rev. Hans Hamilton (1536 - 1608) was the first Protestant minister in Dunlop, Ayrshire. Dunlop is in the East Ayrshire council district, and if you visit the historic Main Street today you can still see his church, his mausoleum and also the significantly-named Clandeboye School buildings, all of which date from the early 1600s. He and his wife Jonet had six sons - James, Archibald, Gawin, John, William and Patrick - and one daughter, Jean.

Their eldest son, James Hamilton (1559 - 1644), was educated at St Andrews University where the first martyr of the Scottish Reformation, Patrick Hamilton, had been burned at the stake on February 29th 1528. Having built a reputation as "one of the greatest scholars and hopeful wits of his time", James became a teacher in Glasgow. Around 1587 he left Scotland by ship and due to storms unexpectedly arrived in Dublin. He decided to stay there and established a school, employing fellow Scot James Fullerton as his assistant. One of their pupils was the young James Ussher, who went on to become the Archbishop of Armagh, and who famously calculated that the first day of Biblical creation was Sunday 23 October 4004 BC! Fullerton and Ussher are buried alongside each other in Westminster Abbey in London.

In 1591, Queen Elizabeth 1 established Trinity College in Dublin, and the first Provost noted that Hamilton had "...a noble spirit... and learned head..." and persuaded the two Scots to become Fellows of the College. Hamilton was made Bursar there in 1598.

Both men were agents for King James VI of Scotland, providing him with information about Elizabeth 1's activities in Ireland, and perhaps even tampering with the mail to keep the King, and themselves, informed. They were so successful that they gave up their academic positions to take up appointments at the royal court. Hamilton was appointed Scottish agent to the English court of Elizabeth 1st, was involved in the negotiations for James VI's succession to the English throne, and eventually brought official news of Elizabeth's death to Scotland. Fullerton was knighted when King James VI of Scotland became King James 1 of England - at the Union of the Crowns - in 1603.

So James Hamilton had great influence with the new King James 1 - influence which he would soon use to gain lands in Ulster.

Hugh Montgomery – Aristocrat and Soldier

Roger de Montgomerie came to England from Normandy with William the Conqueror. His grandson, Robert, travelled to Scotland and became the First Laird of Eaglesham, Ayrshire, in 1106 and married Marjory, the daughter of Walter the Steward (of the House of Stewart). Over the following centuries the Montgomeries would also acquire the titles of Eglinton, Ardrossan, Coilsfield (Tarbolton), Annick Lodge (Kilwinning) and Skelmorlie(Largs).

In 1452 Robert Montgomerie acquired the title of first Laird of Braidstane, an area in the bailliary of Kyle in Ayrshire. Braidstane is close to the small town of Beith in the North Ayrshire council district. Adam Montgomery was the Fifth Laird of Braidstane, and his son, Hugh Montgomery (1560 - 1636), was primarily an aristocrat and a soldier. He had been educated at Glasgow Colledge and went to France where he spent some time at the royal court. He then moved to Holland and became Captain of Foot of a Scottish Regiment, under William 1 of Orange-Nassau (King William III's great grandfather) fighting against the army of King Philip II of Spain – whose troops included an Englishman called Guy Fawkes!

When his father died, Hugh returned to Scotland to become the Sixth Laird of Braidstane and married Elizabeth Shaw, daughter of the Laird of Greenock. His fighting skills were used again when he became involved in the generations-old feud between the Montgomeries and the Cunninghams (led by the Earl of Glencairn). Hugh Montgomery claimed that one of the Cunninghams

had insulted him, and challenged him to a duel, but Cunningham fled - first to London and then to Holland. Montgomery tracked him down to the Inner Court of the Palace at The Hague, drew his sword and with a single thrust aimed to kill him. Luckily for Cunningham, the sword hit the buckle of his belt and saved his life - but Montgomery, thinking he had killed Cunningham, put away his sword and while he was leaving the Palace was arrested and imprisoned in the Binnenhof.

Stationed there was a Scottish soldier - Sergeant Robert Montgomery - who came to visit Hugh in prison, and they came up with a jailbreak plan. Robert arrived at the prison dressed as a wealthy Laird with property in Scotland, to court the daughter of the prison Marshall in order to get the key to Hugh's cell. The plan was so successful that within a few days they were married in the prison, with Hugh Montgomery performing the ceremony according to Scottish law. The wedding guests had drunk so much wine that Hugh, Robert and his new wife were able to slip away unnoticed to a pre-arranged ship which took them to Leith, near Edinburgh.

Part Three Jailbreak, Rivalry and Plot!

The Union of the Crowns

The Coronation of King James VI of Scotland as King James I of England on the 25th July 1603 brought huge change to the British Isles. The new King and his associates now had greater power at their disposal and could implement new policies across these islands. To understand the impact this was to have on life in Ulster we need to go back in time...

East Ulster: Waste and Desolate

For centuries east Ulster had been different from the rest of the Province. The Norman Lord, John de Courcy, arrived in Ulster in 1177 and the Earldom of Ulster (essentially counties Antrim, Down and part of County Londonderry) was established around 1205 with its headquarters at Carrickfergus Castle. 100 years later a branch of the O'Neills advanced from mid Ulster into south Antrim and north Down and laid claim to the areas known as Lower (North) Clondeboye, Upper (South) Clondeboye and the Great Ardes.

Throughout the 1500s Ulster was embroiled in conflict. Queen Elizabeth I intended to tame the Province by sending armies across the water to fight the Gaelic chieftains of the time. Yet these wars weren't as "black-and-white" as we might imagine today - for a variety of reasons some of those Gaelic chieftains became allies of the English.

Scorched Earth and Failed Settlements in Antrim & Down

In County Down, Sir Brian Phelim O'Neill had been knighted in 1568 for his service to the Crown against Shane O'Neill - yet in 1571 Elizabeth granted a sizeable amount of Sir Brian's lands to Sir Thomas Smith, to settle the area with English gentlemen. Smith passed the opportunity on to his son of the same name, who shortly after was murdered by one of O'Neill's supporters. The Thomas Smith settlement scheme had failed.

By 1572 it was clear to O'Neill that he had fallen out of favour and he adopted a "scorched earth" policy, burning the major buildings - Grey Abbey, Movilla Abbey, Newtownards Priory, Black Abbey, Holywood Priory and Comber Abbey - to prevent any incoming English army using them as garrisons. Subsequently, Elizabeth directed the Earl of Essex to sail to Ulster in 1573 with the lofty ambition of taking control of the lands from Belfast to Coleraine. Essex's campaign was brutal - he captured Sir Brian O'Neill and had him, his family, and their attendants executed in 1574. After yet another brutal massacre - on 26th July 1575 on Rathlin Island - Elizabeth brought Essex back to England. Essex's settlement plans had also failed.

Across the North Channel, King James VI of Scotland's own efforts at settlement had also been unsuccessful. He had tried to establish settlements of Lowland Scots in Kintyre and Lewis in 1598 but, under attack from the local clans, many of these settlers fled across the North Channel to seek refuge in County Antrim.

So, for the 34 years between 1572 and the beginning of the Hamilton and Montgomery Settlement of 1606, the east of Ulster was depopulated, wasted and desolate.

Con O'Neill's "Grand Debauch"

Sir Brian Phelim O'Neill's lands eventually passed to his son Niall in 1575 and were described by Sir Henry Sydney in that year as "...all waste and desolate...". Next they were passed on to Niall's son, Con Niall MacBrian Fertagh O'Neill. In 1586, Con signed his entire estates over to the Queen, who then re-granted them to him in 1587 for his "faithful services and allegiance". Con lived in the ancient Norman fortress Castle Reagh, also known as Castle Clannaboy, a massive structure 100 foot square, with turrets on the corners, dominating the Castlereagh Hills and overlooking what was then the small village of Belfast.

Around Christmas of 1602, Con held what has been described as “a grand debauch” at Castle Reagh, and when the wine ran out he sent his servants to Belfast for more. As they were returning they quarrelled with some of Sir Arthur Chichester’s troops and had the wine confiscated. Con was furious and sent them back to attack the English soldiers, some of whom were killed in the skirmish. Con was arrested, found guilty of “levying war against the Queen” and was imprisoned in Carrickfergus Castle. Although the conditions of his imprisonment were later relaxed, and he was occasionally allowed to walk through Carrickfergus with a guard, he was ultimately destined for execution - Chichester having generously offered to hang him without trial.

The Carrickfergus Jailbreak

When Elizabeth I died and James VI of Scotland became James I of England, many in Ulster saw this new era as an opportunity. James, the first Stuart on the English throne, angered Chichester by regranteeing the Gaelic lords of west Ulster their lands; he also lost no time in granting the MacDonnells of North Antrim the territory of the Glens and the Route. James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery were aware of the opportunities in Ulster and had influence with the new Scottish King. Their time would soon come.

Another who saw an opportunity was Ellis O’Neill, Con’s wife. She made contact with Hugh Montgomery to see if he could use his influence with the new King to secure a Royal pardon for Con. If he succeeded, Hugh Montgomery’s reward was to be half of Con’s wasted lands in County Down. Montgomery agreed. Hugh Montgomery then entered into a plan with his Ayrshire neighbour, Thomas Montgomery of Blackstone, who is described in The Montgomery Manuscripts, the family records, as “...a discreet, sensible gentleman...”. Thomas was owner of a ship (or ‘sloop’) which traded between Scotland and Carrickfergus, and he was to implement a jailbreak plan very similar to one Hugh had used to escape from Holland a few years before.

In July, 1604, Thomas arrived in Carrickfergus and noted the identity of the Provost Marshall, who was also the jailer of the town. He then courted the Provost’s daughter, Annas Dobbin, in order to befriend her father. After an evening of well-planned drunken revelry in the Castle jail, Thomas got a rope to Con, possibly inside a hollowed-out cheese. Con escaped from his cell, used the rope to scale the castle wall, boarded the boat at the harbour below, and he and Montgomery fled to Scotland.

Arriving at the coastal town of Largs in Ayrshire, in the shadow of the Montgomery clan castle of Skelmorlie, they were met by a welcoming party led by Hugh’s brother-in-law, Patrick Montgomery, and they all travelled to the castle home of Hugh Montgomery, the Sixth Laird of Braidstane. The Montgomery Manuscripts say that Con “...was joyfully and courteously received by the Laird and his Lady with their nearest friends. He was kindly entertained and treated with a due deference to his birth and quality, and observed with great respect by the Laird’s children and servants...”

When the deal - a Royal pardon for O’Neill (with half of his lands going to Montgomery as a reward) - had been finalised at Braidstane, Con and Hugh travelled to London to win the King’s approval.

James Hamilton Intervenes

But little did O’Neill and Montgomery realise what was about to happen. In August 1604 James Hamilton discovered their plan.

Hamilton’s close associate, Sir James Fullerton, was an advisor to the King and had been granted Olderfleet Castle, near Larne, in September 1603. He convinced the King that O’Neill’s lands were much too large to be split between O’Neill and Montgomery alone and that it would be better if they were divided into three portions - with one third for James Hamilton. The King agreed to the new plan; after all, settlement had never worked before and he had nothing to lose by allowing Hamilton and Montgomery to invest their own finance and energy in the wasteland of east Ulster. When O’Neill and Montgomery arrived in London, the King presented them with the new scheme. Montgomery, realising what had happened and no doubt outraged, kept his composure and agreed to the revised plan.

On 31st April, 1605, the tripartite deal was agreed, but Hamilton’s actions seem to have united Montgomery and O’Neill for a time. Even though Con’s life had been spared and his Royal Pardon had been granted, and Hugh Montgomery had secured substantial lands in County Down, they had both lost out on their original deal. The Hamilton Manuscripts, the Hamilton family’s record of the settlement, state that O’Neill and Montgomery left London together, travelled back to Edinburgh and Braidstane, and then across to Ulster. Con returned to a hero’s welcome in Castle Reagh.

Before leaving London, Montgomery had renewed his relationships with some of the King’s advisors and in doing so created an opportunity for his brother George to benefit in some way. George had been made Dean of Norwich by Elizabeth I, and after her death he was appointed as King James’ personal chaplain. Six weeks later, as a direct result of Hugh’s influence on the Royal advisors, George Montgomery was made Bishop of Derry, Raphoe and Clogher on 13th June 1605 – the first Scottish bishop in Ireland. His portrait can be seen in Clogher Cathedral.

Hamilton, delighted by his own success, travelled to Dublin to present the outcome to Sir Arthur Chichester, “the most important

Englishman in Ireland". Chichester was aghast at the amount of land which had been granted by the Scottish King to his fellow countrymen Hamilton and Montgomery - perhaps because he wanted O'Neill's lands for himself? If Chichester's offer to Queen Elizabeth I (to hang O'Neill without a trial) had proceeded, he would have been in a prime position to confiscate all of O'Neill's lands for himself. However the Queen was dead, and he had now been sidelined by the new King and his ambitious Scottish associates.

The relationship between Hamilton and Montgomery from this point on has been described as "mutual hatred". These two Ayrshire neighbours, the minister's son and the Laird's son, who had grown up only five miles from each other, were now bitter rivals for supremacy in Ulster. Perhaps their rivalry and determination were factors in the unprecedented success of the settlement.

Three-way negotiations and the Gunpowder Plot

With the agreement signed, O'Neill, Hamilton and Montgomery began to trade and sell with each other in a complex set of transactions from June 1605 until May 1606. Half way through this period, back in London, one of the most famous events in world history took place - the Gunpowder Plot. Guy Fawkes and Hugh Montgomery had fought on opposing sides during the wars in Holland in the late 1500s; Fawkes was there from 1594 - 1604 and held a post of command in the Spanish army when they seized Calais in 1596, and Montgomery was Captain in a Scottish regiment under William I of Orange from circa 1582 - 1587.

On 5th November, 1605, Fawkes' Gunpowder Plot was foiled and he was arrested. An emergency session of the King's Privy Council was held early that morning, and Fawkes was brought in under arrest. When questioned by the King and the Privy Council (all of whom had originally been with James at his court in Scotland) as to how he could conspire such a hideous treason, Fawkes replied that his intentions were "...to blow the Scotsmen present back to Scotland...".

Fawkes and the other conspirators were found guilty and were hung, drawn and quartered in London in January 1606. If the Gunpowder Plot had succeeded in killing the King and replacing him with a new monarch, the Hamilton & Montgomery Settlement may never have happened at all, and neither would James' Plantation of Virginia in 1607, his Plantation of Ulster in 1610, and his Plantation of Nova Scotia in 1621. The course of modern history would have been radically altered.

The Settlement Begins

The trading continued through late 1605 and early 1606; Hamilton passed the Masserene area of Antrim over to Chichester, and acquired lands around Coleraine as well as the lucrative fishing rights to the River Bann, which infuriated Sir Randal MacDonnell of North Antrim. By April, 1606, Hamilton had sold off all his interests in County Antrim in order to concentrate on County Down.

King James' "Union of the Crowns" policies continued, and on 12 April, 1606, he issued a proclamation announcing a new flag for his combined kingdoms.

With their new areas now assigned, Hamilton and Montgomery sent communications to Scotland to find willing tenants to farm the lands. Both men convinced their extended families to join them in the settlement scheme and, in May 1606, the first waves of settlers - farmers, stonemasons, builders, carpenters, textile workers, merchants and chaplains - sailed across the narrow channel of water and arrived in Ulster to form the backbone of the new Ulster-Scots community there.

(This article was originally published in The Ulster-Scot, March 2006)

Part Four

May 1606 - The Settlement Begins

May 1606

The first boats sailed from Portpatrick in May and arrived at Donaghadee. These were not the warrior emigrants which Queen Elizabeth I had sent during the 1500s to tame a hostile land. These settlers were an entire cross-section of Lowland Scottish society from large landholders to small tenant farmers, with their families in tow. They were attracted to Ulster by James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery's offer of low rents for relatively large areas of available land. They were ready to create a new society.

They were wise to begin the Settlement in May; even today the North Channel can be a difficult crossing during the winter months. This also gave them a full summer to prepare for their first winter, always the most difficult time of year in a new land, never mind a land which was as devastated as east Ulster was.

Where did they come from?

Hamilton and Montgomery brought their own extended families from Ayrshire, and in Montgomery's case some of the family's existing tenants on the Montgomery estates in Scotland were tempted across the water to begin a new life in Ulster. Word spread like wildfire and soon the entire west of Scotland was aware of the new opportunity, right up into the Mull of Kintyre and eventually across the Lowlands into what was still then Border Reiver territory. In his book "Albion's Seed", Professor David Hackett Fischer includes a map which shows where the earliest settlers came from – the map on this page shows these locations (reproduced below with Professor Fischer's personal permission).

The sea crossing was not as much of a challenge as we might think. Travel today to where many of the settlers came from - the Ayrshire coast near Ardrossan and Largs - and look across to Arran, Bute and Kintyre. If you travel along the coastal road from Stranraer towards Dumfries you'll see it again – narrow stretches of water with outcrops of land, peninsulas and large islands just a boat trip away. These people were familiar with short sea crossings, it was part of their culture. (In fact, the crossing from Portpatrick to Donaghadee is shorter than the crossing from Ayr to Campbeltown on the Mull of Kintyre.)

What did the settlers find when they arrived?

The first sight of east Ulster must have been a shocking experience for the settlers. This was not a landscape of well-tilled agricultural land, it was a wasted and devastated former war zone.

The Montgomery Manuscripts famously record that "...in the spring time, Anno. 1606, those parishes were now more wasted than America... 30 cabins could not be found, nor any stone walls, but ruined roofless churches, and a few vaults at Gray Abbey, and a stump of an old castle in Newton, in each of which some Gentlemen sheltered themselves at their first coming over...". Sir Brian O'Neill's scorched earth policy of 1572 had been highly effective.

So the settlers started work, repairing the few ruined stone buildings which remained and preparing the lands for farming. Montgomery had "a low stone walled house" built near the harbour at Donaghadee and sent both the building materials and workers over from Scotland. This house is believed to be the original building on the site of The Manor House in Donaghadee today.

Next he repaired the stump of the old Castle in Newtown (Newtownards) - Castle Gardens Primary School and the new CastleBawn retail development in Newtownards are both references to Hugh Montgomery's repaired castle. Next were the adjacent Newtownards Priory ruins, for which he imported timber from Norway and slates from Scotland. He doubled the Priory in size and added the bell tower. He built a "great school" in Newtown to teach Latin, Greek and Logicks, including a green where the students could play golf, football and archery.

Montgomery acquired lands at Grey Abbey in 1607, "wholly repaired" the Abbey and installed Rev David McGill of Edinburgh as Curate there. Grey Abbey and Newtownards Priory survive to this day and are maintained by the Environment & Heritage Service.

Where did the Settlers live?

The initial settlements were Donaghadee, Newtownards and Bangor, and later included Greyabbey, Comber and Killyleagh. Con O'Neill's lands had been divided among O'Neill, Hamilton and Montgomery on the basis of townlands, with the main tenants granted up to 1000 acres each. The smaller tenants who came across were granted portions of these lands, usually in amounts of between two and four acres each, at a price of 1 shilling per acre each year. The map shown here shows the distribution of the initial 1606 Hamilton & Montgomery lands.

The main landholders built stone houses for themselves, whilst the smaller tenants built cottages from sods and saplings, with rushes for thatch and bushes for wattle. Wood was cut from the forests in the Lagan Valley and was transported to the new settlement to help in the building of houses and farms.

Meanwhile, back in Scotland... The Fight of the Earls!

Back in Scotland, the Montgomery/Cunningham struggle for precedency in Scotland (which had begun in 1488) once again flared up. On 1st July 1606 the heads of the families - the two Earls themselves - had a "violent tumult" close to the Scottish Parliament and Privy Council in Perth. The Montgomery Manuscripts tell us that "...the fight lasted from seven until ten o'clock at night... and it was not until the year 1609 that a reconciliation could be effected..."

Yet events back home don't seem to have disturbed Hugh Montgomery's planning and he forged ahead with the new Ulster settlement. His brother, the newly appointed Bishop of Derry, Raphoe and Clogher - George Montgomery - arrived in west Ulster in Autumn 1606, and copied what Hugh was doing in the east. He advertised his newly acquired church lands to Scots living in Glasgow, Ayr, Irvine and Greenock, and the first Scottish settlers began to arrive in Donegal and the North West in the spring of 1607. Around the same time other Scots started to arrive in Derry and Lifford.

Behind every good man...

Hugh Montgomery's wife, Elizabeth, organised most of the progress on the Montgomery estates in east Ulster. She had watermills built and established textile manufacturing of linen, woollen and tartan cloth. She offered new settlers a house, a garden plot and fodder for the winter in return for their labour. The fallow land was planted and the result was two consecutive bumper crops, giving the Settlement the prosperity it needed to survive and the appeal to attract more and more Scots across the North Channel.

A market was established in Newtown, with Scottish merchants coming across the North Channel to sell their goods to the Ulster-Scots. Records say that many of these traders were able to travel to the market in Newtown and be back in Scotland for bedtime. Sir Thomas Craig, still regarded as one of the finest legal minds Scotland has ever produced, wrote in 1606 "every day I see a stream of emigrants passing over to Ulster from my homeland".

May 1607 - Jamestown, Virginia

King James I may well have been inspired by the immediate success of the Hamilton & Montgomery Settlement. On December 20th 1606 three ships – the Godspeed, the Discovery and the Susan Constant – left London with the King's blessing, bound for Virginia. They arrived with 104 male settlers and established the first permanent English settlement in the New World on May 13th 1607 - exactly one year after the Scots arrived in Ulster. They founded the settlement of Jamestown, in honour of the King.

September 1607 - The Flight of the Earls

Back in west Ulster, Bishop George Montgomery was becoming embroiled in a series of disputes - as the only Scottish bishop in Ireland he has been described as having a "zeal" compared to the "sluggishness" of the other bishops. George Montgomery claimed far more land than the church could prove that it owned, including about half of the Earl of Tyrone's estate. This dispute was one of the factors which would result in the Flight of the Earls from Rathmullan in September 1607.

Arise, Sir James Hamilton

Hugh Montgomery had already been knighted by the King sometime between April and November of 1605 (ie around the time of King James approving the three-way division, and appointing George Montgomery as Bishop). Delighted by the achievements in east Ulster, King James I knighted Hamilton in 1608, but the year was also one of sorrow - his father, Rev Hans Hamilton, died at Dunlop, Ayrshire on 30th May.

September 1610 - The Plantation of (the west of) Ulster commences

Sir Arthur Chichester - no doubt still angered by losing out on Con O'Neill's lands in east Ulster, and greatly irritated by the rapid success of the Hamilton & Montgomery Settlement - saw the Flight of the Earls as another opportunity. On 17th September 1607, just 13 days after the Earls had left, Chichester brought forward two plans as to how their forfeited lands could be developed. These proposed schemes would eventually become the Plantation of Ulster (covering the counties of Armagh, Fermanagh, Cavan, Donegal, Tyrone and Londonderry) which would begin in September 1610.

Hamilton was concerned with the plans for the Plantation. He travelled to England in October 1609 and May 1610 - as a result he purchased some of the lands in County Cavan which had been set aside for Scottish planters.

1611 – The Plantation Commissioners Report

With the Plantation of Ulster underway, the Plantation Commissioners visited the Hamilton & Montgomery Settlement in 1611. Montgomery's Newtownards was described as "...a good town of a hundred houses or thereabouts all peopled by Scots..."

They wrote that "...Sir James Hamylton, Knight, hath buylded a fayre stone house at the towne of Bangor... about 60 foote longe and 22 foote broade; the town consists of 80 newe houses, all inhabited with Scotysshemen and Englishmen...". The site of this house is now Bangor Town Hall and North Down Heritage Centre. Part of the permanent exhibition is the original 1625 Hamilton estate "Raven Maps", drawn by Thomas Raven.

1613 - The First Royal Borough, The First Presbyterian Minister

By 1613 it was clear that the Settlement had been a transformation. Inside only seven years, from what had been wasted and depopulated land, Newtown was made a Royal Borough, with Sir Hugh Montgomery nominated as Newtown's first Provost, and the right to send two members to Parliament.

Yet the progress of the Settlement was not just physical, economic and political. One of Hugh Montgomery's major tenants was Sir William Edmonston, Laird of Duntreath in Scotland. (His father, Sir James Edmonston, had narrowly escaped execution for his involvement in a plot to kill the young King James). Sir William moved from his Donaghadee lands to Ballycarry in County Antrim, and brought the 44 year old Rev Edward Brice across from Stirlingshire. Brice was the first Presbyterian minister in Ulster, arriving in 1613.

And so begins the next great chapter in Ulster-Scots history - the arrival of the Presbyterian ministers - all rooted in the Hamilton

& Montgomery Settlement of 1606, "The Dawn of the Ulster-Scots."

(This article was originally published in The Ulster-Scot, May 2006)

Part Five

The Arrival of the Presbyterian Ministers

Intro

People often think that all Ulster-Scots are Presbyterians. This part of our story shows us that in the early years of the 1600s the Ulster-Scots settlers, both people and ministers, worshipped and ministered within the Established Church (the Church of Ireland) - a period often described as the "Prescopalian" era (ie both Presbyterian and Episcopalian). Even through the religious difficulties and theological differences which lay ahead, large numbers of Ulster-Scots have always been members of the Church of Ireland, right up to the present day. You don't have to be a Presbyterian to be an Ulster-Scot!

The Attraction of Ulster

By now the Settlement was a spectacular success. Many of Hamilton and Montgomery's family connections and major tenants were now pushing westward into new territory in King James I's Plantation in the west of Ulster - a pattern which around 250,000 of the settlers' descendants would continue centuries later in the New World of North America.

For example, James Hamilton's brother John acquired lands in County Armagh and founded Markethill, Hamiltonsbawn and Newtownhamilton. The Co. Londonderry villages of Eglinton and Greysteel were named after Sir Hugh Montgomery's cousin and the head of the Montgomery family, the Earl of Eglinton, whose nickname was Greysteel.

The economic success of the Settlement, whilst good news for Ulster, was causing significant economic problems back home in Scotland. Huge numbers of tenant farmers had left for Ulster, particularly from the large estates in the West of Scotland. The Scottish Secretary of State wrote "...the West country people of the common sort do flock over in so great numbers that much lands are lying waste for lack of tenants...". The attraction of Ulster was causing so much difficulty that the Scottish Privy Council ruled that no tenants were to migrate without their landlord's permission. There weren't even enough boats to meet the demand, and this allowed the shipowners to raise their prices. Again the Scottish Privy Council stepped in, to introduce fare controls.

The appeal of Ulster was to be a major factor in Scottish emigration for centuries. In fact, from 1650 to 1700, only 7,000 Scots emigrated to America, yet between 60,000 and 100,000 emigrated across the North Channel to Ulster. The Scots settlers seem to have agreed with Sir Arthur Chichester when, comparing the New World with Ulster, he said "I had rather labour with my hands in the plantation of Ulster than dance or play in that of Virginia."

The Scum of Both Nations...?

For all of its economic success, the spiritual condition of the Settlement may not have been quite so positive. Two of the early Scottish Presbyterian ministers who came to Ulster, Rev Robert Blair and Rev Andrew Stewart, wrote bleak accounts of what they found when they arrived.

Blair wrote that "...the case of the people through all that part of the country was most lamentable, they being drowned in ignorance, security and sensuality... the most part were such as either poverty, scandalous lives...".

Stewart famously wrote that "...from Scotland came many and from England not a few, yet all of them generally the scum of both nations, who, for debt, or breaking and fleeing from justice, or seeking shelter, came hither, hoping to be without fear of man's justice in a land where there was nothing, or but little, as yet, of the fear of God... void of Godliness who seemed rather to flee from God in this enterprise..."

... Or Worthy and Godly?

When most authors and historians quote Blair and Stewart, they stop with the two statements above.

However, Blair went on to write that "...among these, Divine Providence sent over some worthy persons...". Stewart went on to write "...yet God followed them when they fled from Him...", and The Montgomery Manuscripts record that "...among all this care and indefatigable industry for their families, a place of God's honour to dwell in was not forgotten nor neglected...". John Harrison, in his 1888 book *The Scot in Ulster*, wrote that "...Hamilton and Montgomery looked after the spiritual wants of the emigrants in County Down...".

Faith and church life clearly played a significant role in the early Settlement in Ulster.

The Divine Right of Kings and The Geneva Bible

At this time the Established Church (the Church of Ireland) held precedence, yet Sir Arthur Chichester wrote that the churches in Ulster were few, none were in good repair and that many of the clergy were absent. It has been said that there weren't three sufficient preaching Bishops on the whole island.

However across the water in Scotland, the Calvinism of the Presbyterians had been legally established in 1567, the year that King James came to the throne of Scotland. Thanks to Reformers like John Knox, Presbyterianism had won the hearts of the people. Many of the ministers who were graduating from Scottish universities, and many professors at the universities, were committed Presbyterians. Yet some of the Bishops within the Scottish Kirk were opposed to Presbyterianism and remained loyal to King James.

King James, as Head of State, was therefore also Head of the Established Church and he believed that Presbyterianism was destructive and anarchical. He was a firm believer in an idea known as the "Divine Right of Kings", and as such was deeply unhappy with the popular Bible of the time, the Geneva Bible, which was used in the Scottish Kirk but not in the Church of England.

The reason for this was that the Geneva Bible included footnotes written by John Calvin, John Knox and other Reformers. King James saw these footnotes as highly dangerous - they opposed the idea of the "Divine Right of Kings" and encouraged resistance to tyrants. Because the Geneva Bible was so popular (there had been 144 printings of it between 1560 and 1644) James saw these footnotes as a direct threat to his position both as Head of State and Head of the Established Church.

So King James ruled the Geneva Bible "seditious" and made it a criminal offence to own one, and he commissioned a new Bible - the Authorised Version or King James Bible, stripped of these dangerous footnotes - with the intention that it would replace the Geneva Bible. The Authorised Version was first published in 1611, yet it would be 40 years before the Geneva Bible was unseated as the most popular edition. King James also worked personally on his own version of the Psalms, entitled The Psalms of King David, translated by King James.

He was assisted by Sir William Alexander, (left) the author of The Great Day of the Lord's Judgement (Sir William Alexander will reappear in the next part of our story). The Authorised Version is rightly regarded today as perhaps the finest of all Bible translations, yet it is interesting to see some of the motivation which lay behind it. King James I's ambitious desire to be Head of both Church and State were soon to cause great turmoil in Scotland and Ulster.

The First Two Ministers Arrive

Sir James Hamilton had already brought Rev John Gibson to Ulster in 1609 to minister in Bangor, but it was 1613 when the first acknowledged Presbyterian minister arrived in Ulster. Driven from Scotland by Archbishop Spottiswoode (King James' main supporter in Scotland) Rev Edward Brice came from Stirlingshire to Broadisland (Ballycarry), on invitation from one of Sir Hugh Montgomery's first tenants, Sir William Edmonston. Edmonston may have been a cousin of Sir James Hamilton, and had just moved from his initial Ulster lands near Donaghadee to a larger estate in east Antrim.

Next, in 1615, Sir James Hamilton brought Rev Robert Cunningham to Holywood; he had formerly been a chaplain to a Scottish regiment under the Earl of Buccleugh in Holland, and married one of Sir Hugh Montgomery's daughters. Then events in Scotland took a serious turn for the worse for the Presbyterians.

The Five Articles of Perth

On 25th August 1618 King James exerted his power, and, in an effort to conform Scottish worship to the pattern of the Anglican Church and to impose bishops on the Presbyterians, his "Five Articles" were imposed upon a reluctant General Assembly at Perth. (these were - kneeling during communion; private baptism; private communion for the sick or infirm; confirmation by a Bishop; the observance of Holy Days). This coincided with a great storm directly over the Assembly building. When these "Five Articles of Perth" were made law on 4th August 1621 by the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, an even greater storm took place and made the entire city as dark as night, with thunder, lightning and hail - a day which became known as "Black Saturday".

The Scottish people now called their bishops "Tulchan Bishops" - tulchan being a Scots language term for a fake calf, designed to deceive a cow into giving milk. The people clearly felt they were being deceived by the actions of the King and his Bishops.

The First Wave of Ulster-Scots Ministers

These "Five Articles" were met with fierce opposition across Scotland, and ignited a new exodus of clergymen and settlers across the water. The initial wave of ministers who came to Ulster was:

1619 Rev John Ridge (Antrim)
an English Puritan

1621 Rev James Glendinning (Carnmoney, Carrickfergus, Oldstone)

1621 Rev Henry Colwert (Broadisland, Oldstone)

an English Puritan

1621 Rev George Hubbard (Carrickfergus)

an English Puritan

1620? Rev David McGill (Greyabbey)

personal Chaplain to Sir Hugh Montgomery and son of Lord Nisbet, the Lord Advocate of Scotland

1620 John MacLellan / McClelland (Newtownards)

First Principal at Sir Hugh Montgomery's school in Newtownards and also a part-time minister. Sir Hugh's eldest daughter married John's close relative Sir Robert MacLellan around 1620.

1623 Rev Robert Blair (Bangor)

Blair's first wife was Beatrix Hamilton, a sister of Jenny Geddes (who famously threw the stool at the Bishop in Edinburgh in 1637).

His second wife was Sir Hugh Montgomery's daughter Catherine, who he married in 1635.

1625 Rev George Dunbar (Larne)

1625 Rev Josias Welsh (Templepatrick)

John Knox's grandson

1625 Rev James Hamilton (Ballywalter)

Sir James Hamilton's nephew, who married one of Sir Hugh Montgomery's daughters

1627 Rev Andrew Stewart (Donegore)

1630 Rev John Livingstone (Killinchy)

Other Ministers of the era, listed in The Hamilton Manuscripts and the Ulster Visitation Book of 1622, include:

Rev John Bole (Killyleagh)

Rev George Porter (Ballyhalbert)

Rev John Leathem (Holywood)

These ministers were theologically Presbyterian and were welcomed by the Ulster-Scots settlers, yet they preached and worshipped within the Established Church and its buildings. The Bishops in Ulster tolerated the Presbyterians for a time, and perhaps even initially welcomed the influx of new people and new clergy. The Bishops were also flexible in the ordination ceremonies of these new ministers, and in fact many of the new Bishops coming to Ulster were Scots. Bishop George Montgomery was Sir Hugh Montgomery's brother (he was transferred from Derry, Raphoe and Clogher in January 1610 to become Bishop of Meath). His replacement was fellow Scot Bishop Andrew Knox, formerly Bishop of the Isles.

During the reign of King James VI & I, at least 65 Scottish ministers served in Ireland, and 12 Scottish bishops, seven of whom were in Ulster dioceses.

The Rebuilding of the Churches

In many instances the Scottish ministers and their new congregations set about restoring and rebuilding the ruined churches which had been destroyed by the English/Gaelic wars of the late 1500s, renewing worship in them for the first time in many decades. Montgomery repaired or built:

- Donaghadee Parish Church
- Portpatrick Parish Church
- Newtownards Priory
- Grey Abbey
- Comber Parish Church (2/3 of the cost)
- Kilmore Parish Church

Montgomery presented these six churches with a large bell, a Geneva Bible and a Common Prayer Book - all of which had his Braidstane coat of arms stamped on them. Hamilton repaired or built:

- Bangor Abbey
- Holywood Priory
- Comber Parish Church (1/3 of the cost)
- St Andrews, Ballyhalbert
- Whitechurch, Ballywalter
- Dundonald, St Elizabeth's
- Killinchy Parish Church
- Killyleagh Parish Church
- Innishargy Church

The Death of Con O'Neill & The Death of King James

During this period of great change, in 1618, Con O'Neill died. By the time of his death Con had sold off most of the 68 townlands he had agreed in the deal with Hamilton and Montgomery back in 1605, and may only have had as few as six townlands left in his estate. Con was buried near Holywood, but no known grave remains today. The Montgomery Manuscripts tell us that the local people fondly described Con as "the ould King." (page 83)

On 27th March 1625 the other "ould King" in our story, King James VI & I, also died. In the months that followed, great religious revivals would sweep through the West of Scotland and East Ulster, through the work of the ministers listed above.

However, when King James' son took the throne and was crowned as King Charles I in February 1626, life for the Presbyterians in Scotland and Ulster was to become worse than ever before...

(With thanks to Rev Dr Joseph Thompson of the Presbyterian Historical Society for his assistance with this article)

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Part Six

Three Ulster-Scots Spiritual Revivals, the Death of Montgomery and the "Eagle Wing" sets sail

Intro

King James was dead and his son, King Charles I, was now on the throne. James VI & I's death on 27th March 1625 coincided with remarkable spiritual renewal in Ulster and Scotland. In his History of Protestantism, Rev J A Wylie wrote that:

"...the year of the king's death was rendered memorable by the rise of a remarkable influence of a spiritual kind in Scotland, which continued for years... preachers had found no new Gospel, nor had they become suddenly clothed with a new eloquence; yet their words had a power they had formerly lacked; they went deeper into the hearts of their hearers, who were impressed by them in a way they had never been before... the moral character of whole towns, villages and parishes was being suddenly changed..."

For Wylie, the key to the revivals was this: "...it was distinctly traceable to those ministers who had suffered for their faith under James VI..."

Unsurprisingly, the ministers involved in the revivals, and the regions where revival was so strongly experienced, were both closely linked to James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery.

1. Stewarton, 1623 - 1630

The village of Stewarton is just two miles from James Hamilton's home village of Dunlop, and close to the Montgomery family castles of Eglinton, Giffen, Hessilheid and Braidstane. Rev William Castlelaw was then the minister in Stewarton; the previous minister had been Sir Hugh Montgomery's uncle, Rev Robert Montgomerie. Robert later moved to Ulster to become minister in Newtownards by 1630.

Rev Castlelaw's neighbour and colleague Rev David Dickson from Irvine had been banished to the north of Scotland in January 1622 for his opposition to King James' "Five Articles of Perth". However he was allowed to return to Ayrshire in June 1623 thanks to the support of Sir Hugh Montgomery's cousin and head of the Montgomery family, the Earl of Eglinton (above), and in particular the Earl's wife Anna. Eglinton Castle became a refuge for many of Scotland's persecuted Presbyterian ministers. Dickson began a weekly service in Irvine on Monday mornings, and within a few weeks thousands of people were flocking from all over Scotland to listen to his preaching.

Dickson was soon joined by Rev Robert Blair, the man Sir James Hamilton had brought to Ulster to become the minister in Bangor. The revival swept across the entire Stewarton parish, along the valley where the Annick Water or Stewarton Water runs and into the homelands of Hamilton and Montgomery. The Stewarton Revival lasted until around 1630, and its impact was to be felt for generations to come - the entire region would soon become a hotbed of Covenanter resistance to the Established Church.

2. SixMileWater, 1625 - 1634

The second revival took place in Ulster, in the area of South Antrim along the course of the Sixmilewater, in what had once been Sir Brian O'Neill's lands of Lower Clondeboye. Scotsman Rev James Glendinning had been preaching in Carrickfergus amongst the English settlers of the town without success. He was visited in 1625 by Rev Robert Blair, who had sailed across Belfast Lough from Bangor to hear him preach. Blair advised him to move to Oldstone to preach among the Scots settlers - this advice brought immediate results.

Crowds flocked to hear Glendinning, who was soon joined by Rev Josias Welch (Templepatrick - John Knox's grandson), and then in turn by Rev John Ridge (Antrim), Rev Robert Blair (Bangor), Rev Robert Cunningham (Holywood) and Rev James Hamilton (Ballywalter).

They established a monthly lecture meeting in Antrim on the last Friday of the month, in the house of a Scots settler called Hugh Campbell, which lasted from 1626 - 1634, and was attended by large crowds of Ulster-Scots. Religious revival swept the region. Glendinning left the area, and additional help then came to Sixmilewater in the form of Rev Henry Colwert (Oldstone), Rev George Dunbar (Larne) and in 1630 by Rev John Livingstone (Killinchy). Of these ministers, Cunningham, Blair and Livingstone had all been brought to Ulster by Sir James Hamilton.

In October 1632, Rev John Livingstone wrote to Anna, Countess of Eglinton (she had been involved in the Stewarton Revival) to tell her that there were crowds of around 1500 people regularly attending the communion services in Ulster.

3. Kirk O' Shotts, 1630

The Kirk of Shotts is only around 35 miles from Stewarton. The minister in 1630 was a Rev Hance. Hance had been assisted by some of the local Ladies, Countesses and Marchionesses who were supporters of the Presbyterian ministers.

In return for their help they asked him to hold a large communion service at Shotts on Sunday 20th June 1630, attended by other ministers of their choosing. The same familiar group of ministers were invited - Rev Robert Blair, Rev David Dickson, the renowned Rev Robert Bruce (Edinburgh) and a young John Livingstone (aged 27, the chaplain to his future wife's close relative Sarah Maxwell, Countess of Wigtown, but not yet ordained as a minister). The service attracted an enormous crowd, who remained at the church overnight, singing psalms and praying.

The next day the young Livingstone was due to preach a sermon, but he became nervous and tried to run away. However he returned and preached in the churchyard (below) to the assembled crowd for an hour and a half when a heavy rain shower began, but he preached on through for another hour regardless. 500 people in the crowd were converted.

1620 – 1630

1621 - Sir William Alexander is Granted Nova Scotia, Canada

On September 10 1621, King James signed a land grant to his old friend, and his partner on the Psalms project, Sir William Alexander. This was for an area larger than Great Britain and France combined, "between our Colonies of New England and Newfoundland, to be known as New Scotland ". In Latin the name of this land was Nova Scotia.

1622 - The Marriage of Hugh Montgomery & Jean Alexander

The following year, Sir William Alexander's daughter Jean married Sir Hugh Montgomery's eldest son Hugh. As a wedding present Sir Hugh built a large manor house for the newlyweds just outside Comber, and named it Mount Alexander in honour of Sir William. It was made from the stone from the ruins of Comber Abbey, which, like Bangor Abbey, had been burned by Sir Brian O'Neill in 1572. Only a few walls from Mount Alexander survive today, as part of a farm.

1622 - Hamilton & Montgomery Become Viscounts

On 3rd May 1622, Sir Hugh Montgomery was made the first Viscount of the Great Ardes by King James; the next day, Sir James Hamilton was made the first Viscount Clandeboye.

1625 - Hamilton & Montgomery's Land Disputes

Hamilton & Montgomery's relationship was deteriorating fast and legal actions caused by boundary disputes were relentless. The estimated cost of these legal cases was £1400 - approximately £200,000 in today's money! These disputes would reach such a low point that in 1625 Hamilton called in the cartographer Thomas Raven to map all of the Hamilton estates. These maps are on display at North Down Heritage Centre in Bangor.

Portpatrick, Donaghadee, Ballymena, Ballygally, Killyleagh

Sir Hugh Montgomery bought Portpatrick from the Adairs of Kilhilt in 1626; he also tried to rename Donaghadee as "Montgomery" and Portpatrick as "Port Montgomery". With the income, the Adairs bought Ballymena from the MacQuillans and named the area "Kinhiltstoun" for a time. Sir Hugh's brother in law James Shaw moved to Ballygally and built Ballygally Castle in 1625. Around this time Sir James Hamilton moved from Bangor to Killyleagh Castle.

The Death of the Wives

Sir James Hamilton's second wife Ursula - from whom he was divorced - died in 1625. Ursula was the sister of Bishop George Montgomery's wife Elizabeth. Sir Hugh's great companion in the Settlement project, his wife Elizabeth, died in the late 1620s (exact date unknown). She was buried inside the Priory in Newtownards, without memorial. In 1630, during a visit to the Earl of Eglinton in Ayrshire, Sir Hugh remarried. His new spouse was Rev Livingstone's friend the Countess of Wigtown, Sarah Maxwell. She moved to Newtownards but stayed only a few months before returning to Scotland, vowing never to return to

Ulster!

1631 - 1636

The Opposition of the Bishops

The three revivals were opposed by the Bishops of the Established Church in both Scotland and Ulster. After Blair and Livingstone had preached at Kirk O' Shotts, they were accused by the Scottish bishops of "exciting the people" - these charges were sent to Bishop Echlin in Ireland, who accused Blair and Livingstone of "making an insurrection". In Autumn 1631 Rev Blair, Rev Livingstone, Rev Dunbar and Rev Welch were all suspended from their ministries in Ulster.

The suspension was lifted briefly following an appeal to Archbishop Ussher, (James Hamilton's former pupil in Dublin) but it was reinstated in May 1632.

So Blair decided he would travel to London to appeal to King Charles I, carrying letters of support from a number of Scottish noblemen including Sir Hugh Montgomery's now-relative Sir William Alexander. Blair was given a letter of support from the King and he returned to Ireland.

However, the King's Lord Deputy in Ireland (Thomas Wentworth, the Earl of Strafford) and the new Archbishop of Canterbury (William Laud) were firm opponents of Presbyterianism. Nevertheless, the suspension of the four ministers was lifted in May 1634, but only for six months. In November 1634 not only were these ministers suspended again - this time they were permanently deposed.

Shortly after this action, Bishop Echlin fell ill. When his doctor asked what was wrong he replied "It's my conscience, man!". Lady Jean Montgomery (described in The Montgomery Manuscripts as a "vehement Presbyterian") said of Echlin "...I shall bear witness of it to the glory of God, who hath smitten this man for suppressing Christ's witnesses..."

A Letter to America

It was clear that life for the Ulster-Scots was going to get much worse. However, America offered the religious freedom they desired so Rev John Livingstone and his former teacher at Stirling (a Mr William Wallace) were chosen to make an advance trip to New England, to gather information and choose a suitable homeland in America for any future Ulster-Scots emigrants.

Livingstone wrote to John Winthrop, Governor of Massachusetts (left) in July 1634, but due to storms the attempted voyage was unsuccessful. However Winthrop's son visited Ulster in January 1635 and encouraged them to come to America.

The ministers began to make preparations, intending to set sail to America in the spring of 1636. Events would delay their planned departure date.

The Death of Hugh Montgomery

Spring of 1636 was to be a time of great sorrow for the Ulster-Scots settlers and their ministers - they were devastated when one of the Founding Fathers of the Settlement, Sir Hugh Montgomery, died on 15th May 1636, aged 76. The Montgomery Manuscripts (available as digital CD Roms from the Ulster-Scots Agency) provide a detailed description of his funeral arrangements. The funeral followed the full Scottish ceremony for the burial of a Viscount - a Scottish state funeral in Newtownards for the Founding Father of the Ulster Scots.

The Ministers are all Deposed

To make matters even worse, in August 1636, all of the remaining Presbyterian ministers in Ulster - Rev Brice, Rev Ridge, Rev Cunningham, Rev Colwert and Rev Hamilton - were also deposed. Not only was Montgomery, the great figurehead, now dead, but the Ulster-Scots now had no ministers to pastor them.

The Funeral of Hugh Montgomery

Sir Hugh Montgomery's body was embalmed, rolled in wax and locked away until September. One week before the funeral, his body was taken outside Newtownards where it lay in State. He was buried in Newtownards Priory (above) on 8th September 1636, the building he had rebuilt in 1606 and where his first wife Elizabeth was already buried.

On the day of the funeral a great procession, all clothed in black, made the slow walk to the Priory. Carrying a large banner and large flag, the cortege of around 200 people included the Earl of Eglinton and scores of other noblemen who had travelled from Scotland to pay their respects. Even Montgomery's bitter rival, Sir James Hamilton, was there.

Perhaps Sir Hugh Montgomery's death was the factor which delayed the planned emigration to America. Rev Blair's wife and Rev Hamilton's wife were both daughters of Sir Hugh; Rev Livingstone and John McClelland were also related to Sir Hugh through marriage. It is highly likely that they would have wanted to see their father, father-in-law and Founding Father laid to rest before leaving for America.

Perhaps they were among the crowds in Newtownards that lined the streets as the funeral procession made its way through the town. Perhaps they stood outside the Priory during the funeral, where they might have gritted their teeth as their arch enemy Bishop Leslie preached the sermon. Perhaps they bristled at the irony of this when they saw the two Bible texts Sir Hugh had carved above the doorway there (Psalm 122v1 and Ecclesiastes 5v1) Perhaps, knowing that Sir Hugh's son would waver between the Established Church and Presbyterianism, they decided the time was now right to leave Ulster. And perhaps they slept on it...

Eagle Wing Sets Sail

... because the next morning, 9th September 1636, the Eagle Wing finally sailed from Groomsport.

On board were three of Sir James Hamilton's ministers (Rev Robert Blair, Rev John Livingstone and Rev James Hamilton) along with Sir Hugh Montgomery's schoolmaster and part-time minister in Newtownards John McClelland. With them was John Stewart, Provost of Ayr and 135 other Ulster-Scots emigrants, who had surnames like Campbell, Girwin, Brown, Stuart, Agnew, Calver and Summervil.

This was the first attempted voyage from Ulster to the New World of America. Adair's Narrative records that Livingstone and Blair had reservations about the journey. However the Eagle Wing left Ulster and sheltered off the Scottish coast, first at Loch Ryan and then near the Isle of Bute, before heading out across the North Atlantic. Around 1200 miles from Ireland they were struck by "a mighty hurricane" which smashed one of the master joists and the rudder. Adair wrote "...there were no waves there, but mountains of waters...".

After a stirring address from Blair, one of the crew volunteered to go over the side of the ship to fix the rudder, with a long rope tied around his middle. The repairs were made but the storm didn't cease. Livingstone proposed that they should wait for a further 24 hours, and if it was God's will He would end the storm and allow them to carry on; if not, they would take this as His sign to turn back. The storm continued, and they all agreed to turn back and head for Ulster. The trip home was completed in fine weather.

There were two deaths and one birth during the voyage, and on 3rd November 1636 the Eagle Wing docked in Carrickfergus. Sadly for Rev Blair and his wife Katherine (Sir Hugh Montgomery's daughter) their baby son William died on their return to Ulster.

Back to Scotland - for now...

The failed emigration was scorned by the Bishops in Ireland, and under further persecution the four ministers fled to Scotland - a Scotland where revolution was building and a National Covenant was being conceived. The Ulster-Scots ministers had little idea of what lay just around the corner...

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Part Seven

Scotland's National Covenant, the Black Oath and the 1641 Massacre

Intro

The early years of the Settlement, referred to in The Montgomery Manuscripts as the "golden peaceable age", was over. Sir Hugh Montgomery was dead and had been succeeded by his son and namesake Sir Hugh Montgomery, 2nd Viscount Ards. The emigration attempt by Eagle Wing had failed and now all of the Presbyterian ministers were deposed. The once-depopulated Ulster was now filling up with mainly Scottish settlers in the east, and a combination of English and Scottish planters in the west. Tensions with the "native" population were rising...

The Ministers go back to Scotland

The four Ulster-Scots ministers who had commissioned Eagle Wing (Blair, Hamilton, McClelland and Livingstone) arrived back in Carrickfergus on 3rd November 1636. They remained in Ulster for a few months, avoiding the King's troops who were under orders to capture them.

As we've seen before, all four ministers had direct connections with Sir James Hamilton, who, according to The Hamilton Manuscripts, "...had secret friendly correspondence with the ministers and others that were persecuted for conscience sake; yea, some hid in his house when his warrants and constables were abroad looking for them..."

Blair lay low in Strandtown in Ballymacarrett, East Belfast (one of Hamilton's estates), in the house of an Archibald Miller, and preached every Sunday during the winter months. However in February 1637 a Mr Frank Hill of Castlereagh, on a visit to Dublin, informed on the ministers - fortunately they were tipped off by an Andrew Young and they escaped across the North Channel to Irvine in Ayrshire, where they stayed with their old friend Rev David Dickson. Shortly after this, the remaining Presbyterian ministers in Ulster also fled to Scotland.

Rev Robert Blair went to minister to a Scottish regiment in France, then came back to Ayr, and then to St Andrews in Fife where he joined with the renowned Samuel Rutherford. Rev John Livingstone became minister in Stranraer, and on some occasions as many as 500 Ulster-Scots sailed across to hear him preach. Rev John McClelland became minister in Kirkcudbright; Rev James Hamilton became a minister in Dumfries and then

Edinburgh.

King Charles I and Archbishop Laud's attempt to impose the Prayer Book upon the church in Scotland met with outrage and fierce resistance from the Scottish population. On 23rd July 1637, Jenny Geddes (Rev Robert Blair's sister in law by his first wife) famously hurled a stool at Dean John Hanna in St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh and cried "Villain! Dost thou say Mass at ma lug?", an act which forced the Dean and Bishop to flee from the scene in the ensuing riot. The opposition from the people was so great that the Bishop of Brechin had to conduct services using the new Prayer Book with a pair of loaded pistols.

1638 - National Covenant

The people of Scotland would not accept their church being ordered by the King and his Bishops. On Wednesday February 28th 1638, the Scottish National Covenant was read aloud at Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh, and was then signed by thousands of people from right across Scotland. This was the church where John Knox had once been taken for trial. Within months 300,000 people had signed the Covenant - a clear sign of rebellion against the King.

Back in Ulster, the King's Deputy, the Earl of Strafford, was deeply concerned that the Ulster-Scots would follow their kinsmen's example. Adair's Narrative records that "...Deputy Strafford, then ruling in Ireland, being a man not only opposite in his principles to the course now on foot in Scotland, but of a severe and jealous temper, began to be jealous of the whole Scotch nation in Ireland, and particularly the North, suspecting that they were on the same design with Scotland..." (page 59).

Strafford was aware that much of the trouble in Scotland was linked to the ministers who had returned there from Ulster - ministers who had lived on the estates of Sir James Hamilton and the late Sir Hugh Montgomery. Adair wrote that "...these two Scotch Lords (Ards and Claneboye)... found themselves and their estates in hazard..." (page 59)

1639 - The Black Oath

On May 21st 1639, Strafford launched his counter-strategy - to impose "The Black Oath" upon every Ulster-Scot over the age of 16. This oath required them to swear loyalty to King Charles I and to reject the Scottish National Covenant.

The penalties for not taking the Oath were severe; a report from the time said:

"the Prelates did jointly frame and wickedly contrive with the earle of Strafforde, that most lawlesse and scandalous oath imposed upon the Scottish-British among us,... they were persecuted with so much rigour, that very many as if they had been traytours in the highest degree, were searched for, apprehended, examined, reviled, threatened, imprisoned, fettered together by threes and foures in iron yoakes, some in chaines carried up to Dublin, in Starre-chamber fined thousands beyond abilitie, and condemned to perpetuall imprisonment..."

Strafford had met with the Scottish Lords in Ulster a few months previously at Montgomery's home. Perhaps in today's language we would say that Strafford made them an offer they couldn't refuse. Under pressure, Viscount Claneboye (Hamilton) and 2nd Viscount Ards (Montgomery) signed the petition in support of The Black Oath. No doubt Montgomery's wife - "Presbyterian Jean" - was furious. The Hamilton Manuscripts record how Hamilton personally forced the aged and blind Rev John Bole to take the Black Oath at Killyleagh.

King Charles I then began to form an army to march on Scotland. The Covenanters responded by appointing Scotland's greatest soldier, the veteran General Alexander Leslie, to organise an Army of the Covenant to defend them.

1641 - Hamilton Returns to Dunlop, Ayrshire

Now an elderly man in his 82nd year, Sir James Hamilton returned to his home town of Dunlop in Ayrshire. There he erected two buildings - a mausoleum to his parents in the churchyard of the Kirk where his father, Rev Hans Hamilton, had been the minister. Attached to this mausoleum he built a school building which he named Claneboye School. Both can still be seen today.

Claneboye School is now used as a Sunday School room for the church, and inside it is a memorial plaque with the following inscription:

"1641 - This school is erected and endowed by James Viscount Claneboyes in love to this parish in which his father Hans Hamilton was pastor 45 years in King James the Sixt his raigne 1cLV" The plaque is a copy of an inscription which was originally on the north gable of the building, and above it is the Hamilton coat of arms. Sadly the mausoleum has deteriorated over the years but there are major fundraising efforts ongoing to restore it to its former glory.

1641 - The Massacre

On 23rd October 1641 began one of the bloodiest chapters in Irish history, an event which Adair says had been in planning for eight years. Under the direction of Sir Phelim O'Neill, the native Irish population rose up against the English and Scottish settlers and planters, murdering thousands.

Adair also writes that the English were the primary target, and that the rebels "...first pretended a kindness to the Scotch nation in Ireland, and that their quarrel was only against the English that subdued them... but this was not to last long, for the Scotch neither expected nor found any kindness..."

At the time some estimated that 300,000 Irish Protestants had been murdered. Scholars now estimate that the figure was closer to 12,000, out of a total Ulster Protestant population of around 40,000*. The massacre had a massive impact upon the Ulster-Scots and Irish Protestants generally - and of course the name "P O'Neill" carries a significance to this day.

* statistics quoted from the BBC web site:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/plantation/planters/es10.shtml>

Hamilton & Montgomery's Armies

The Earl of Strafford had confiscated the arms and weapons owned by the Scots, leaving them defenceless. So Sir James Hamilton and Sir Hugh Montgomery (Jr.) each raised a regiment of 1,000 men, supplied with muskets and ammunition, to defend the Ulster-Scots settlers.

Many other Lords in Ulster did likewise, including Sir William and Sir Robert Stewart in the Laggan area of Donegal, Sir William Cole in Enniskillen and Sir Frederick Hamilton. Even at this, the Scottish forces were often outnumbered by as many as 4:1 - it was clear to the authorities in Scotland that the Ulster-Scots needed immediate assistance.

The Scots Army Arrives in Ulster

So, on 2nd April 1642, Major-General Robert Monro's Scottish Covenanter army of 2,500 men arrived at Carrickfergus. On 4th August a further 7,500 men arrived with General Leslie. With 10,000 Scottish Covenanter troops organised into 16 regiments, one of which was led by Montgomery's cousin the Earl of Eglinton, the Ulster-Scots would at last be defended. Their Presbyterian faith would be at the heart of this new era.

1640 – the first known use of the term “Ulster Scots”

Strafford's adviser in Ireland was Sir George Radcliffe. He had arrived with Strafford in 1633 and was perhaps the first Royal official to acknowledge that The Black Oath had not been a success. He could clearly see the commitment of the Scots in Ulster, and was deeply concerned at the possibility that the Covenanters, under the command of the Earl of Argyle, might come to Ulster.

On 8th October 1640 Radcliffe wrote:

“...many thousands in the North never took the oath; and as I am certainly made believe, they now publicly avouch it as an unlawful oath; and for aught I see, they will shortly return, to any that dares question them, such an answer as Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick, made to Sir John Comyn, who, charging him with breach of oath, taken at Westminster to King Edward, replies, with cleaving his head in two.

None is so dim-sighted, but sees the general inclination of the Ulster Scots to the covenant: and God forbid they should tarry there till the Earl of Argyle brings them armies [arms?] to cut our throats...”

This is the first known written record of the term “Ulster Scots”, used to describe them by one of their committed enemies.

(with thanks to Anne Smyth of the Ulster-Scots Language Society for sharing her research on Radcliffe, and to Dr Lawrence Holden for sharing his research on Strafford)

Part Eight

The First Presbytery, the Covenant in Ulster and the Death of Sir James Hamilton

Intro

Sir James Hamilton was now an old man; he was living at Killyleagh Castle and had been through three marriages, with one son. However he was still in good health apart from some trouble with gout and kidney stones - The Hamilton Manuscripts say that he spent a lot of time each day in his house-gown. His old adversary Sir Hugh Montgomery had died in 1636, and Hamilton tried the following year to eclipse Montgomery's Donaghadee as Ulster's main port by building the Custom House and Tower House on the sea front of his own port of Bangor. The Tower House is now the Tourist Information Centre for North Down Borough Council.

1642 - The Army of the Covenant

In 1642 the 2,500 strong Army of the Covenant had arrived at Carrickfergus under the command of Major General Robert Monro. King Charles 1 was opposed to the Army going to Ulster at all, but Parliament forced his hand. The Hamilton Manuscripts say that Hamilton had “...lived to see the war of Ireland, and by his wisdom and power of his tenants, and the interest he had at Court, was very successful for the preservation of Ulster from the power of the enemy, as he was very charitable to distress'd people that came in great numbers from the upper countries...”

The effects of the 1641 Massacre were everywhere to be seen - once again County Antrim had been devastated by warfare, but thanks to the regiments raised by Hamilton and 2nd Viscount Montgomery, the damage to County Down had been limited. The Scotch Army “...found much of the country wholly desolate, except some parts of the County of Down, where there had been two regiments formed by Lords Clandeboye and Ards... but generally in the country, through the county of Antrim, all was waste...” Adair p 90

A Presbyterian minister was appointed to each regiment in the Scotch Army, and on 10th June 1642, the first Ulster Presbytery was established at Carrickfergus, made up of five of these ministers and four ruling elders. They were soon joined by the chaplain to Hamilton's regiment (John Drysdale) and the chaplain to 2nd Viscount Montgomery's regiment (James Baty). A sculpture in Carrickfergus town centre commemorates this event, as does the magnificent “Carrickfergus Window” in Church House, Belfast.

The reaction among the Ulster-Scots people to the new Presbytery, and their new Scottish defenders, was spectacular. There was a flood of applications for elderships from all over County Antrim (Ballymena, Antrim, Cairncastle, Templepatrick, Carrickfergus, Larne and Belfast) and County Down (from Ballywalter, Portaferry, Newtownards, Donaghadee, Killyleagh, Comber, Holywood and Bangor). The demand was impossible to meet, so in July 1642 the Ulster Presbytery wrote to the General Assembly in Scotland to appeal for help. Help came quickly, in the form of two very familiar individuals, both of whom were old colleagues of Sir James Hamilton.

1642 - The Triumphant Return of Rev Robert Blair and Rev James Hamilton

Both military and spiritual help came across the water from Scotland. On 4th August 1642, General Alexander Leslie arrived with 7,500 soldiers. Then, in September 1642, the General Assembly in Scotland sent Rev Robert Blair (formerly minister of Bangor) and Rev James Hamilton (formerly minister of Ballywalter, Sir James Hamilton's namesake and nephew) back to Ulster. At this time Blair was Minister of St Andrews and Hamilton was Minister of Dumfries.

Having been driven out by the Bishops just six years previously (after the failure of the Eagle Wing) Rev Robert Blair and Rev James Hamilton had a deep knowledge of the Ulster-Scots and their experience, because they had stood shoulder-to-shoulder with these people in the early years of the Settlement. In fact, at least one historian of the period has said that it was Rev Robert Blair who was in fact the real leader of the Ulster-Scots. Blair and Hamilton were soon joined by Rev Hugh Henderson of Dalry, Ayrshire, Rev William Adair of Ayr and Rev John Weir of Dalsersf, Lanarkshire.

These ministers issued a call for public repentance to those people who had taken The Black Oath - to conforming clergy and congregations alike. Rev Blair oversaw these repentances in Bangor, Donaghadee and Killyleagh, assisted by Rev Hamilton. A national day of fasting was then held across Ulster on Sunday November 27th 1642.

As Adair writes "...Thus these two ministers, Blair and Hamilton, who had a while before been deposed from their ministry by the bishops, are now employed as the instruments for first planting ministers in the country according to the purity of the Gospel - who were also useful in the army's Presbytery, and were the beginning of a settled ministry in the country..." p98

1642 - The English Civil War

Back in London, relations between King Charles I and Parliament were deteriorating rapidly. He had dismissed the Parliament back in 1629 and ruled without them, but he needed their permission to raise an army to fight the Covenanters. Having been out of office for 11 years, Parliament got its revenge by recalling the King's advisor, that great enemy of the Ulster-Scots, the Earl of Strafford, from Ireland. Parliament accused Strafford of treason and had him executed in May 1641 (illustration below) - they also executed Strafford's great ally Archbishop Laud in 1645 - and also of course, King Charles I in 1649. These three most powerful opponents of the Ulster-Scots would each meet a grisly end.

In November 1641 Parliament demanded that the King's powers be reduced - in retaliation King Charles burst into the Houses of Parliament with 400 soldiers to arrest five leading MPs. However the MPs had been tipped off and had gone into hiding.

In Scotland, the wars against the Covenanters had been costly. King Charles was running out of money and he needed to raise funds, but Parliament refused his request for more money. The Covenanter Army then advanced south from Scotland and occupied much of Northern England. The situation was serious, and on January 1642 King Charles left London. Both the Parliament and the King then raised their own armies - the Parliamentarians and the Royalists - sowing the seeds of the English Civil War.

The Death of the 2nd Viscount Montgomery

The 2nd Viscount Ards (also called Sir Hugh Montgomery) had, along with Hamilton and under great pressure from the King, betrayed the Ulster-Scots and Presbyterian cause in 1640 by accepting The Black Oath and by opposing Scotland's National Covenant, probably for fear of losing their estates. However the 2nd Viscount died suddenly on 15th November 1642. His widow, the renowned "Presbyterian Jean", perhaps got her own back on her husband when she later married the Covenanter hero and the leader of the Army of the Covenant, Major General Robert Monro.

The 3rd Viscount Montgomery

The 3rd Viscount Montgomery, also called Sir Hugh, was a young man of around 18 when his father died. He suffered from a strange wound which left a large open cavity in the left side of his chest, in which his heart could be seen and even touched. He was an expert fencer, musician and horseman; when he took over the command of his father's regiment he would play trumpet, drums and bagpipes for the soldiers. He later became the first Earl of Mount Alexander near Comber, County Down.

The Death of Sir James Hamilton

Then, early the following year, on 24th January 1643, Sir James Hamilton, the First Viscount Clandeboyne and Founding Father of the Ulster-Scots, died aged 84. His death and burial have three things in common with Sir Hugh Montgomery's - Hamilton was buried inside a church he had rebuilt from ruins (Bangor Abbey, rebuilt in 1617); to which he had brought a Scottish minister of Presbyterian leanings (Rev Robert Blair in 1623); and without any gravestone or memorial.

(Gifford Savage, of the Friends of Bangor Abbey, recently showed me an old archive photograph of what is more than likely James Hamilton's coffin and tomb within the foundations of Bangor Abbey building. Sadly the tomb is no longer accessible to the public)

No information about Hamilton's funeral service is given in The Hamilton Manuscripts, but his rivalry with Montgomery lived on - in his will Sir James Hamilton threatened to disinherit any of his descendants who should marry a Montgomery!

1643 - Scotland's Solemn League and Covenant

On 25th September 1643, the Covenanters in Scotland formally allied themselves with the Parliamentary forces of England in a document known as the Solemn League and Covenant. From the spring of 1644, the Covenant was administered right across Ulster, from the east coast of County Down and Antrim to Ballyshannon and Ramelton in Donegal, overseen by Rev James Hamilton.

Against all the odds, the Ulster-Scots had succeeded - in forming their settlement in Ulster, their communities and a new church.

Conclusion

From their arrival at Donaghadee in May 1606, to the death of Sir James Hamilton in 1643, the Ulster-Scots had come through five decades of great opportunity and yet enormous turmoil. The success of the settlement in east Ulster provided "...the bridgehead through which the Scots were to come into Ulster for the rest of the century...".* So ends the story of the Hamilton & Montgomery Settlement - and so begins the epic story of the Ulster-Scots!

*from ATQ Stewart The Narrow Ground, page 38 - 39

Further Reading:

There are many chapters of history which connect to the story of the Hamilton & Montgomery Settlement:

- the Nine Years War
- the Union of the Crowns
- the Flight of the Earls
- the Jamestown Settlement, Virginia
- the Plantation of (the west of) Ulster
- the arrival of the Presbyterians
- the Nova Scotia Settlement
- the Revivals at Stewarton, Sixmilewater and Shotts
- the Eagle Wing
- Scotland's National Covenant
- the 1641 Massacre
- the Laggan Army
- Scotland's Solemn League and Covenant

I hope that this series of articles has interested you enough to now find out more about these stories, and more importantly to understand our own Ulster-Scots history and heritage much better. For too long we have forgotten our own story; we should be proud to learn it - and to share it with others.

Thanks:

My thanks are due to a great number of people for their help and support in putting this series of articles together - to the Board and staff of the Agency for their support throughout the year, Dr John McCavitt, Dr Philip Robinson, Dr William Roulston, Dr Lawrence Holden, Rev Dr Joseph Thompson, Anne Smyth and to the various Councils and organisations who have helped me to tell the story during 2006.

Above all I would like to thank today's Montgomery and Rowan-Hamilton families, who live at Greyabbey Estate and Killyleagh Castle respectively. They have been a great help and encouragement to me as I have tried to tell the story of their families.

In particular, I would like to thank Bill Montgomery, who has constantly reminded me that the power of the Hamilton & Montgomery Settlement story is as much about the achievements of those first pioneering "ordinary" Ulster-Scots settlers, as it is about the vision, ambition and legacy of our two Founding Fathers.

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