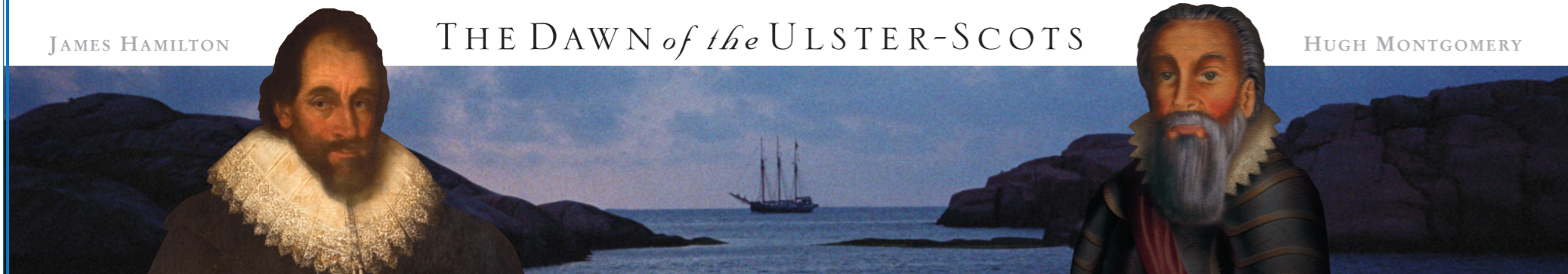


JAMES HAMILTON

THE DAWN of the ULSTER-SCOTS

HUGH MONTGOMERY



People have been migrating between Scotland and Ulster for thousands of years. The Hamilton & Montgomery Settlement of 1606 saw the trickle become a flood.

Part Seven: Scotland's National Covenant, The Black Oath and the 1641 Massacre

by Mark Thompson, Chairman, Ulster-Scots Agency

Before the Plantation of Ulster, two Ayrshire Scots - James Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery - pioneered the first large-scale settlement from the Lowlands of Scotland to County Antrim and County Down. Starting in May 1606, more than ten thousand Lowland Scots* made the short voyage across the North Channel, transforming barren east Ulster into an industrial powerhouse. Their success inspired King James VI of Scotland and I of England's Virginia Plantation of 1607 and his Ulster Plantation of 1610. Their achievement was "The Dawn of the Ulster-Scots".

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.

The Arch-Prelate of St Andrews in Scotland reading the new Service-book in his pontificalibus gaudibus by men & Women, with Crickets, Booles, Sticks and Stones.



King Charles 1 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 1641"

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.



ABOVE: A COVENANTER FAMILY IS ARRESTED LEFT: ST GILES CATHEDRAL, EDINBURGH

FROM LEFT: THOMAS WENTWORTH (EARL OF STRAFFORD) ARCHBISHOP LAUD, KING CHARLES I

ABOVE: DUNLOP KIRK, THE SIGNING OF THE COVENANT, CLANEBOYE SCHOOL AND THE HAMILTON MAUSOLEUM



RIGHT: THE 1641 MASSACRE

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.

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 Eglington, 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"

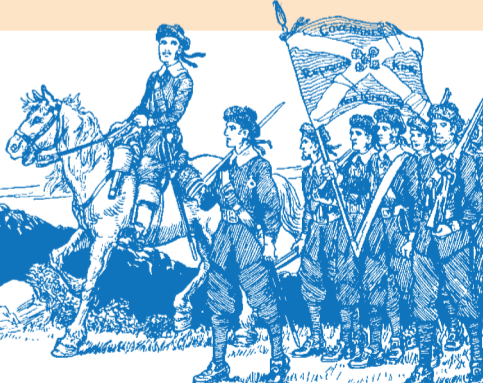
Strafford's adviser in Ireland was Sir George Radcliffe. He had arrived with Strafford in 1633 and was perhaps the first Royal official to acknowledge that The Black Oath had not been a success. He could clearly see the commitment of the Scots in Ulster, and was deeply concerned at the possibility that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



NEXT MONTH - FINAL PART: THE FIRST PRESBYTERY, THE COVENANT IN ULSTER AND THE DEATH OF SIR JAMES HAMILTON

HAMILTON & MONTGOMERY 400 YEARS 1606-2006

www.HamiltonMontgomery1606.com

* by 1614, the Hamilton and Montgomery Settlement area "...represented an emigration of at least 10,000 souls..." from John Harrison, *The Scot in Ulster* (Edinburgh & London, 1888)

* statistics quoted from the BBC web site: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/plantation/planters/es10.shtml>