

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 Five: The Arrival of the Presbyterian Ministers

by Mark Thompson

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".

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 GENEVA BIBLE AND THE 1611 AUTHORISED VERSION



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.

LEFT: SIR HUGH MONTGOMERY'S REBUILT PARISH CHURCH STILL DOMINATES HIS TOWN OF DONAGHADEE

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.



KING JAMES' VERSION OF THE PSALMS



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** (Carrmonee, 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** (Killynchy)

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)



BANGOR ABBEY: Originally founded in 558AD (and having been in ruins since 1572 when it was burned by Sir Brian O'Neill) Sir James Hamilton brought fellow Scotsman Dean John Gibson to be minister in Bangor from 1609 - 1623. The ruined building was rebuilt by Hamilton from 1617 - 1623, when Rev Robert Blair from Irvine, Ayrshire, was appointed as the new minister. Blair was a Presbyterian but was ordained by Bishop Echlin. Bangor Abbey has memorials to Dean Gibson, to Blair's first wife Beatrix and also to the Hamilton family. Sir James Hamilton was buried here in 1644, without a memorial.

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.

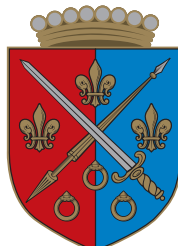
The Bishops in Ulster tolerated the Presbyterians for a time, and perhaps even initially welcomed the influx of new people and new clergy. The Bishops were also flexible in the ordination ceremonies of these new ministers, and in fact many of the new Bishops coming to Ulster were Scots. Bishop George 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 (right).

- 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 old 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...

Surnames of the Hamilton & Montgomery Settlers:

In 1954, the Presbyterian Historical Society published a series of three articles by Rev David Stewart entitled "*The Scots in Ulster*", which included lists of almost 250 people known to have been tenants on the estates of Sir James Hamilton and Sir Hugh Montgomery. Do any of these names feature in your family tree?:

Montgomery:	Hamilton:	
Agnew	Abercrombie	McCartney
Aicken	Adair	McEwen
Allen	Adams	McIlveyne
Anderson	Allen	McIlwrath
Barkley	Anderson	McKee
Barcklie	Austin	McLellan
Blair	Baillie	McMillin
Boyd	Barcklie	Magee
Boyle	Blackwood	Martin
Brackley	Blair	Mathyson
Cathcart	Boyd	Maxwell
Catherwood	Boyle	Millar
Cooper	Brown	Moneypenny
Crawford	Carliile	Monett
Cunningham	Carmichael	Montgomery
Drummond	Carson	Moore
Edmonston,	Cathcart	Murray
Frazer	Chambers	Nesbit
Harper	Craig	O' Coffie
Harvey	Crawford	O'Dornan
Hunter	Cunningham	O'Gilmore
Kennedy	Danielston	O'Hamill
Leckey	Dickson	Paddin
McCashin	Douglas	Peebles
McDowell	Dunbar	Pollock
McDowgall	Dunlop	Read
McMakene	Forsyth	Reid
Montgomery	Galt	Ross
Moore	Gemmill	Reynolds
Mowlane	Glen	Robb
Moon	Greenshields	Ross
Nevin	Greer	Rudd
Orr	Hamilton	Scott
Peacock	Harne	Temple
Shaw	Harper	Stewart
Spier	Hilton	Stewart
Thomson	Hogg	Stevenson
Wardlaw	Howie	Stevenson
Wardlow	Julius	Stanehouse
Wilson	Keveet	Tate
Wylie	Kelso	Trail
Wyms	Kennedy	Waddell
	Kuming,	Wallace
	Kyle	Wanchop
	Lindsay	Watson
	Lloyd	Welsh
	Logan	Williamson
	McDougall	Wilson
	McGee	Wylie
	McBurney	Young

• *Mark Thompson is Chairman of the Ulster-Scots Agency.* (With thanks to Rev Dr Joseph Thompson of the Presbyterian Historical Society for his assistance with this article)

NEXT MONTH - PART SIX: SPIRITUAL REVIVALS, THE DEATH OF MONTGOMERY & THE "EAGLE WING"



* 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)