

## RESEARCHING DERRY & LONDONDERRY ANCESTORS: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

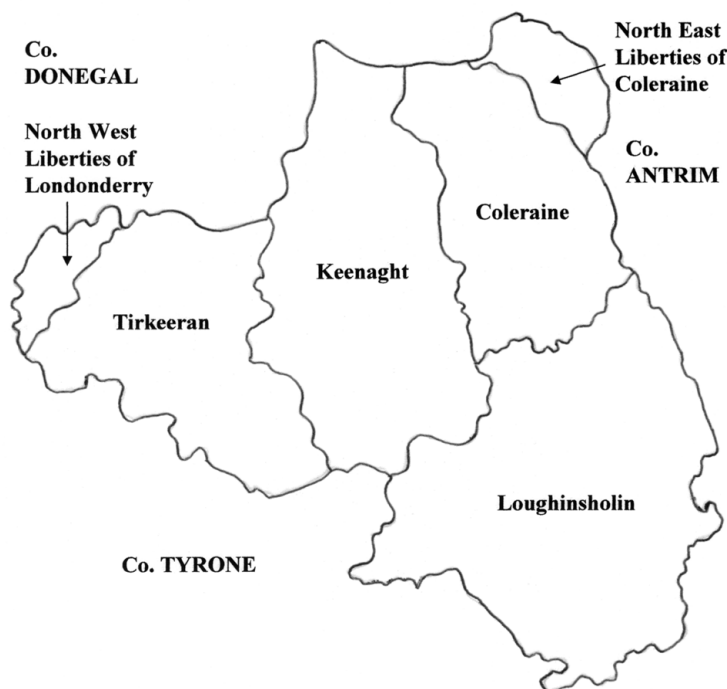
### The Plantation of Ulster and the creation of the county of Londonderry

On the 28<sup>th</sup> January 1610 articles of agreement were signed between the City of London and James I, king of England and Scotland, for the colonisation of an area in the province of Ulster which was to become the county of Londonderry. This agreement modified the original plan for the Plantation of Ulster which had been drawn up in 1609. The area now to be allocated to the City of London included the then county of Coleraine,<sup>1</sup> the barony of Loughinsholin in the then county of Tyrone, the existing town at Derry<sup>2</sup> with adjacent land in county Donegal, and a portion of land on the county Antrim side of the Bann surrounding the existing town at Coleraine. The Londoners did not receive their formal grant from the Crown until 1613 when the new county was given the name Londonderry and the historic site at Derry was also renamed Londonderry – a name that is still causing controversy today.<sup>3</sup>

The baronies within the new county were:

1. Tirkeeran, an area to the east of the Foyle river which included the Faughan valley.
2. Keenaght, an area which included the valley of the river Roe and the lowlands at its mouth along Lough Foyle, including Magilligan.
3. Coleraine, an area which included the western side of the lower Bann valley as far west as Dunboe and Ringsend and stretching southwards from the north coast through Macosquin, Aghadowey, and Garvagh to near Kilrea.
4. Loughinsholin, formerly an area in county Tyrone, situated between the Sperrin mountains in the west and the river Bann and Lough Neagh on the east, and stretching southwards from around Kilrea through Maghera, Magherafelt and Moneymore to the river Ballinderry.
5. North West Liberties, formerly an area in county Donegal comprising the parish of Templemore.
6. North East Liberties, formerly an area in county Antrim which included the parishes of Coleraine, Ballyaghan and Kildollagh along with parts of the parishes of Ballywillin and Ballyrashane.

**Map of the Baronies in the New County of Londonderry**



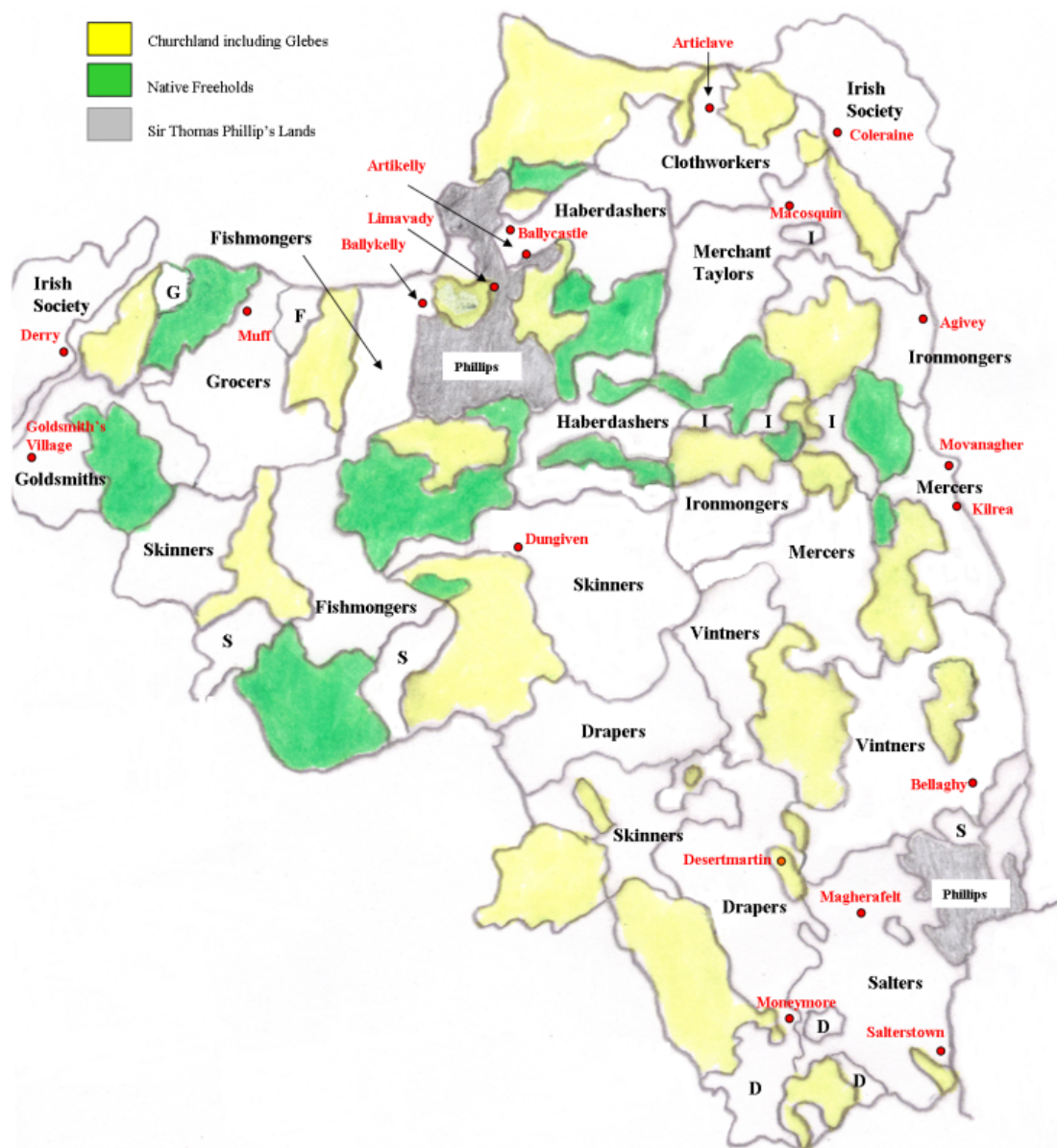
<sup>1</sup> The counties of Coleraine, Donegal and Tyrone along with Armagh and Monaghan had just been created in 1585. Sometime later the county of Cavan, which had been included in the province of Connaught, was added to the province of Ulster. To people today the only one of these counties that is not recognisable is the county of Coleraine which had been formed from O'Cahan's country which lay to the north of the Sperrins between the rivers Foyle and Bann, viz. the baronies of Tirkeeran and Keenaght. Within the county of Coleraine these two baronies had been known as Anagh and Limavaddy respectively.

<sup>2</sup> In 1604 Sir Henry Dowcra had been granted a charter by James I for the settlement at Derry as a town fit for war and merchandise. It is not entirely clear if the word city was used in the charter.

<sup>3</sup> Particularly since the recent troubles, various attempts have been made to accommodate both communities within the province, who argue that the correct name for the city is either Derry or Londonderry. The following are now in use – Derry, Londonderry, Derry ~ Londonderry, Derry/Londonderry, Stroke City, and the latest - The Walled City.

The Irish Society, a body created in 1613, began the task of building the two key settlements in the county - the city of Londonderry on Dowry's old town of Derry and the town of Coleraine again on the site of an existing settlement. They were also charged with settling the liberties around each settlement with British tenants. The task of building settlements and peopling the rest of the county was put in the hands of twelve companies.<sup>4</sup>

### London Companies' Estates, Church Lands & Native Freeholds in the County, 1613



Beginning in the west of the county, were the Goldsmiths with their main settlement at Goldsmiths Village (later called Newbuildings); the Grocers with their main settlement at Muff (later called Eglinton); the Fishmongers with their main settlement at Ballykelly; the Haberdashers with their main settlement at Artikelly; the Clothworkers with their main settlement at Articlave. Then south from Coleraine, the Merchant Taylors with their main settlement at Macosquin; the Ironmongers with their main settlement at Agivey, later Garvagh;<sup>5</sup> the Mercers with their main settlement at Movinagher, later Kilrea; the Vintners with their main settlement at Bellaghy; the Salters with their main settlement at Salterstown, later Magherafelt; the Drapers with their main settlement at Moneymore. Then west of the Drapers were the Skinnners with their main settlement at Dungiven. The Skinnners' estate was perhaps the most scattered of all the estates. It had land in three different baronies – Loughinsholin, Keenaght and Tirkeeran. In the east it 'marched' with the Drapers' estate and in the west with the Goldsmiths' estate.

<sup>4</sup> Each company headed up a group of sub-companies e.g. the Ironmongers' group included the Brewers, Scourers, Coopers, Pewterers, Barber-Surgeons and Carpenters.

<sup>5</sup> In actual fact Garvagh was on church land and belonged to the Cannings who were the first chief tenants and agents of the Ironmongers' estate.

The map on the previous page shows clearly the patchwork quilt pattern of the company lands amongst the lands which were allocated to the church and to some Irish families. The latter were known as native freeholds. The main beneficiaries of the native freeholds, which tended to be located well away from the main planter settlements, were the O'Cahans in the baronies of Tirkeeran, Keenaght and Coleraine and the O'Mullans in the baronies of Tirkeeran and Keenaght. The townland of Ballycarton in Magilligan was granted to a McGilligan and the townland of Boveedy, near Kilrea, was granted to a McCowell. Note that these freeholds were all located in O'Cahan's country. No native freeholds were granted in the barony of Loughinsholin which was in O'Neill's country. By the time of the Civil Survey in 1654 only a few native freeholders remained.<sup>6</sup> The rest had either sold their lands to speculators such as the Beresfords or had them confiscated by the Crown in either 1615 or after the 1641 rebellion.<sup>7</sup>

There were two 'non-company' estates in the county which originally belonged to Sir Thomas Phillips, a servitor. These were at Limavady and Moyola. The Limavady estate was eventually bought by the Conollys who had also bought the Vintners at Bellaghy. The Moyola estate became the property of the Dawsons who gave their name to the main settlement, Castledawson.

Since the history of the colonisation and settlement of the county and the province is well documented in the books of Moody, Robinson and Perceval-Maxwell and in many articles and papers that have been written over the years, I do not intend to cover that here in any detail.<sup>8</sup> Instead, I want to concentrate on two key sources that family historians would use to identify the names of planters and native Irish during this period. These are the Muster Rolls of the 1620s and 1630s and the Tax Returns of the 1660s.

The undertakers who were granted land in the Plantation of Ulster were required to muster their tenants periodically - they had to "have ready in their houses at all times, a convenient store of arms, wherewith they may furnish a competent number of men for their defence, which may be viewed and mustered every half year". A number of musters were taken on the company lands between 1618 and 1631. Some of these only provide numbers of men and arms on each estate, but there are two that list names - 1622 [for the City and Liberties of Londonderry, the Town and Liberties of Coleraine and the Vintners' Estate at Bellaghy] and 1630/31 for all company lands except the Salters and the Skinners. These are useful because they give us some idea of the country of origin of the planters. Many of these planter surnames could be English or Scottish which in a sense reflects the pattern of planter settlement during the first half of the seventeenth century. There were areas within the county that had pockets of Scottish settlement such as the Haberdashers' estate near Limavady and the Clothworkers' Estate in the parishes of Dunboe and Killowen. Both areas had benefited from the colonising efforts of Sir Robert McClelland of Kirkcudbright. The barony of Loughinsholin would have had more English than Scottish settlers in the first half of the seventeenth century but these were still outnumbered by the native Irish.<sup>9</sup> The better and more accessible lands of the Grocers, Fishmongers and Merchant Taylors' estates would have had more settlers than those in the south of the county and in the early years had probably more English than Scottish settlers. The names in both the 1622 and the 1630/31 muster rolls are available as databases on the CD.

During the years 1660-1663 a number of Tax Returns survive for the county which give us an idea of who was living there at that time. There is a Poll Tax Return for 1660 [usually referred to as Pender's Census of 1659], Subsidy Rolls for 1662 and Hearth Money Rolls for 1663. These sources come at the end of a period that had seen the initial colonisation of the county by British settlers, the attempt by the native Irish in the rebellion of 1641 to reverse that process, the reconquest of the county by Scottish and Cromwellian forces, and the influx of a new wave of Scottish settlers in the wake of that reconquest.

The Hearth Money Rolls are particularly important because they are the first source available for the seventeenth century that list the names of both planter and native Irish. The map on the next page gives a generalised picture of the distribution of the main Irish throughout the county in 1663 and, excluding the larger urban areas, it is not so very

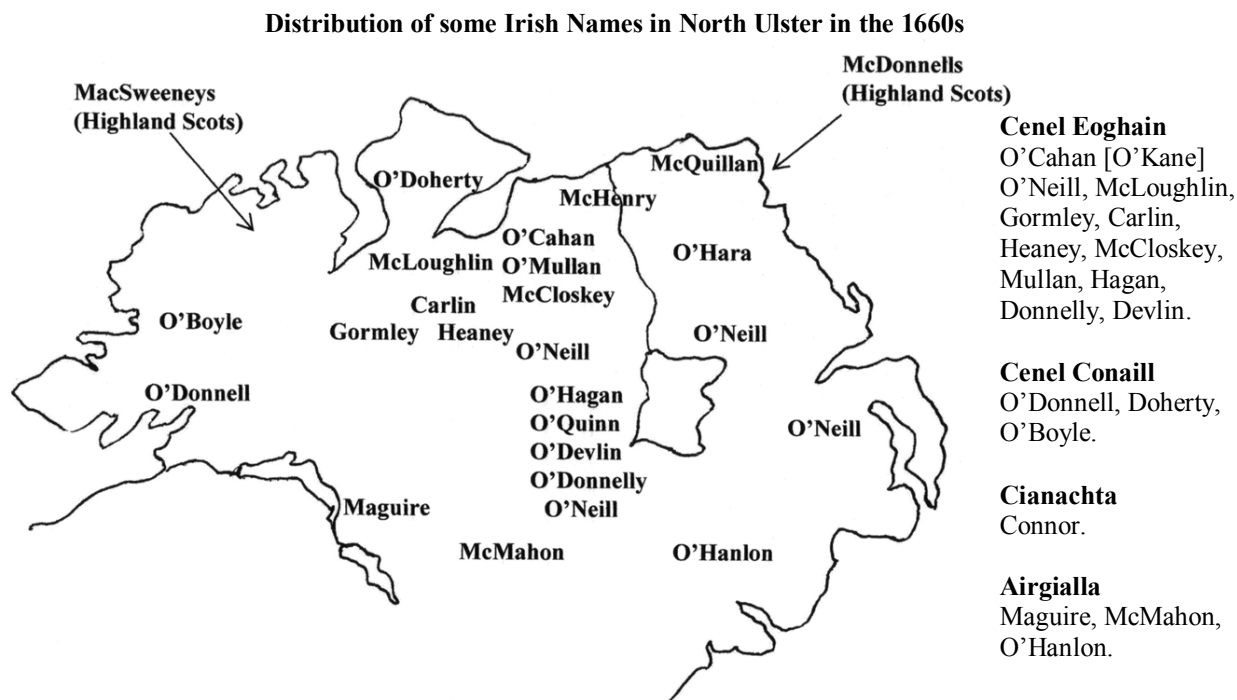
<sup>6</sup> These were Tomlin O'Mullan who retained the townlands of Tamnagh, Dreen and half of Altinure and James O'Quinn, son of Turlogh, an Irish Protestant, who had bought the townland of Strathall from John Freeman in 1640. Most of these townlands were in the barony of Tirkeeran.

<sup>7</sup> In 1615 a conspiracy was uncovered which had begun in May 1614 in a tavern near Coleraine. A gathering of O'Cahans, O'Mullans, McHenryrs and some Scottish MacDonnells hatched a plan to sieze the towns of Derry, Coleraine, Lifford, Culmore and Limavady. The plotters sought the help of some O'Neills in Tyrone and one of the MacDonnells promised to organise a force from north Antrim. The plot went into abeyance during the hard winter of 1614-15 but was resurrected in the spring of 1615. However, before anything could happen the authorities got wind of the plot and the conspirators were arrested, tried and the ringleaders executed. As a result some lost their freeholds. However, the major event which led to the confiscation of most of the remaining native freeholds was the 1641 rebellion. Any O'Neills or O'Cahans of the chieftain's lineage who had been left behind after the 'Flight of the Earls' lost their lands at this time and a look through the Civil Survey of 1654 shows that few of the native freeholds granted in 1610 were still in Irish hands.

<sup>8</sup> T. W. Moody, *The Londonderry Plantation, 1608-41* (Belfast, 1939); P. S. Robinson, *The Plantation of Ulster: British Settlement in an Irish Landscape 1660-1670* (Belfast, 1984); M. Perceval-Maxwell, *The Scottish Migration to Ulster in the Reign of James I* (London, 1973). See also R. J. Hunter, "The Fishmongers' Company of London and the Londonderry Plantation, 1609-41" in Gerard O'Brien, ed., *Derry and Londonderry History & Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 205-258.

<sup>9</sup> W. Macafee, "The Colonisation of the Maghera Region of South Derry during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" *Ulster Folklife*, Vol. 23, 1977, pp. 70-91. and "The Movement of British Settlers into Ulster", *Familia: Ulster Genealogical Review*, Vol. 2, No. 8, 1992, pp. 94-110.

different from the pattern today. The map also has a key to the different dynastic groups from which the names are derived and given the history of the movements of these groups throughout the county from earlier times, the pattern reflects those migrations.<sup>10</sup>



However, because of exemption and evasion, these lists are far from complete,<sup>11</sup> There is a database of the 1663 Hearth Money Rolls on the CD where you can see down to townland level where a particular name was recorded in 1663.

The top seven names in the county according to the Hearth Money Rolls were Mullan [57], O'Cahan [52], Doherty [41], O'Neill [30], McLoughlin [36], McCloskey [25] and O'Hagan [23]. The fact that no planter name occurs in this list emphasises the point that, despite the plantation in the first half of the seventeenth century, the Irish population of the county outnumbered the British population c.1660 by at least two to one.

Mullan and O'Cahan were fairly evenly divided between the baronies of Keenaght and Coleraine, the heart of the old county of Coleraine which was O'Cahan's country. Doherty which is a Cenel Conaill name from Inishowen in Donegal is fairly widespread throughout the county probably reflecting a migration of that family from their homeland at a much later period than the other families listed in the table. Note that the Hagans, Quinns, Devlins and Donnelly, families closely associated with the O'Neills and their move from Inishowen towards Tullyhogue, Dungannon and Armagh, were, and still are, concentrated in the barony of Loughinsholin,

The Hearth Money Rolls also give us a general picture of the planter settlement of the county. Not surprisingly the top three planter names were Smith [31], Wilson [30] and Thompson [23], followed by Moore [22], Miller [20], Reid [15], Allen [14], Robinson [14], White [13], Brown [12], Ross [11], Cooke [11], Hunter [10] and King [18]. Many of these planter surnames could be English or Scottish which in a sense reflects the pattern of planter settlement during the first half of the seventeenth century, which was referred to earlier. Whilst in later years, some surnames such as Brown, Moore, Reid, Smith and White could be Irish, I am fairly sure that the persons with these names listed in the Hearth Money Rolls were planters.

Whilst the official Plantation in the first half of the seventeenth century provided the framework and initial impetus for the colonisation of the county, it took further settlers, particularly from Scotland, to guarantee its success. A new influx of settlers from Scotland began to arrive during the 1650s attracted by low rents and high wages and driven out of

<sup>10</sup> For more detail on these migrations see – T. H. Mullin & J. E. Mullin, *Ulster Clans: O'Mullan, O'Kane and O'Mellan* (Belfast, 1966); Gerard O'Brien, ed., *Derry and Londonderry History & Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 1999) – particularly the chapters by Brian Lacey on 'County Derry in the Early History Period' pp. 115-148 and Katharine Simms on 'Tir Eoghain 'North of the Mountain'' pp. 149-173. It is worth having a look at the chapter in the *County Tyrone* volume (published in 2000 and edited by Henry A. Jefferies & Charles Dillon) by A. S. Mac Shamhrain on 'The Making of the Tir nEogain' pp. 55-84.

<sup>11</sup> See S. T. Carleton, *Heads & Hearths: The Hearth Money Rolls and Poll Tax Returns for County Antrim, 1660-69*, Belfast: PRONI, 1991. Note that due to exemption and evasion not all households were recorded in the Hearth Money Rolls. I am of the opinion that this was particularly the case where Irish households were concerned. In some ways the Poll Tax of 1660 (generally known as Pender's census) is a much more accurate count of Irish households. Unfortunately it does not supply us with the names of ordinary tenants.

Scotland by the reorganisation of tenure on estates by landlords anxious to improve their estates. This was in complete contrast to conditions on estates within Co. Londonderry. Here, because the 1641 rebellion had left much land bereft of British tenants, landlords were forced to offer good terms to attract prospective tenants. Whilst some of these new settlers would have ventured inland, most of them settled in the north of the county near the ports of entry, Londonderry and Coleraine. As the Hearth Money Rolls show there were still many areas in the upper parts of the baronies of Tirkeeran and Keenaght that had few British tenants, as was the case throughout the barony of Loughinsholin.

However, as the more desirable land filled up and the population increased, the low rents and high wages which had attracted the settlers during the 1650s gave way, by the 1660s to higher rents, static wages and falling agricultural prices. Furthermore the early 1670s saw a dramatic worsening of the economic situation, not only in the county, but throughout Ulster as a whole. By the late 1670s economic conditions had begun to improve and there was a period of economic growth until confidence was shattered under James II. These improved economic conditions probably led to a resumption of Scottish migration to the province. The repression of Covenanters after the Bothwell Bridge uprising in 1679, would also have helped to swell the numbers crossing the North Channel during the early 1680s.<sup>12</sup>

The arrival of James II on the English throne in 1685 brought this period of economic growth to an end, and led eventually to the Williamite Wars. The war would have caused some devastation within the county but, since Ulster was a theatre of hostilities for a relatively short period of time, the direct consequences of the war on the county were not as catastrophic as those of the earlier 1641 rebellion.

The end of the Williamite Wars saw a large influx of settlers particularly from Scotland. In many ways the reasons for this were similar to those that had brought Scots into the county in the 1650s. There was, however, an additional factor. As Cullen<sup>13</sup> has suggested, the immigration of the early 1690s would have quickly lost impetus, as on previous occasions, had it not been boosted by a further and concentrated influx following the exceedingly bad seasons of 1695-98. The vagaries of weather left Ulster untouched by these bad seasons, so the province would have been attractive to persons wishing to escape the horrors of famine.

## The Eighteenth Century

This new wave of immigrants not only helped to consolidate the settlements near to the ports of entry, it provided a surplus population which could begin to settle the upper parts of the baronies of Tirkeeran and Keenaght and the outlying parts of the barony of Loughinsholin where planter families were in short supply. Certainly landlords were keen to acquire new British tenants to settle those parts of their estates which were relatively undeveloped. The more substantial tenants were able to obtain relatively long leases and it was not uncommon for some tenants to move to another estate if the terms of a lease were better.

However, not all Scots who came to the county in the latter years of the seventeenth century were content with the conditions that they found there. In 1718 a group of families and individuals led by the Rev. James McGregor emigrated from the Garvagh/Aghadowey area to Massachusetts in New England. High rents and religious persecution of Presbyterians were given as the reasons for this exodus. Certainly the Test Act of 1704 whereby, effectively, Presbyterians could not hold public office without changing their religion was a contributory factor and the high rents could have resulted from the renewal of leases around that time. According to Leyburn the emigration of 1718 was an event that probably triggered off a movement which, in the fifty-seven years between 1718 and 1775 saw the departure of almost a quarter of a million emigrants from our northern shores.<sup>14</sup> You will find more information on emigration during this period at the *Emigration Sources* link in the top menu of the CD.

Within the county population grew slowly during the first half of the eighteenth century mainly because any periods of growth were quickly negated by periodic famines and outbreaks of disease. Nevertheless there was some economic growth particularly in the linen industry. The 1720s and 30s saw the setting up of beetling mills along rivers and streams in various parts of the county. Wallace Clark, a direct descendant of Jackson Clark (1695-1754) founder of Clark's Mills at Upperlands, describes how Jackson Clark who was already engaged in the linen trade in Maghera obtained a lease c.1739 on land along the banks of the river Clady which was the boundary between the two townlands

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<sup>12</sup> W. Macafee, 'The Movement of British Settlers into Ulster during the Seventeenth Century', *Familia: Ulster Genealogical Review*, Vol. 2, No. 8, 1992, pp. 94-111.

<sup>13</sup> L. M. Cullen, 'Population Trends in Seventeenth-Century Ireland', *Economic and Social Review*, Vol. 6, No. 9, 1975, pp. 149-165.

<sup>14</sup> J. G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish*, (Durham, North Carolina, 1962), p. 332. See also D. McCourt, 'County Derry and New England: The Scotch-Irish Migration of 1718', in G. O'Brien, ed. *Derry & Londonderry: History & Society: Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County*, (Dublin, 1999), pp. 302-320. There is now a dedicated website on the 1718 Migration and you will find a link to it on the CD at the *Emigration Sources* link in the top menu of the CD. For further reading on eighteenth-century emigration see R. J. Dickson, *Ulster Emigration to Colonial America 1718-1785*, (Belfast, 1996) and republished (Belfast, 1998) with an introduction by Graeme Kirkham. See also, E. R. R. Green, ed., *Essays in Scotch Irish History*, (London, 1969) republished (Belfast, 1992) with an introduction by Steve Ickringill.

of Upperland and Targarvil.<sup>15</sup> Here beetling mills were established which began an industry that was to last up to the present day.

Because of the scarcity of sources it is difficult to establish exactly who, or how many people, were living in the county during the eighteenth century. The two key sources for the middle part of the century are the 1740 Protestant Householders' Returns and the 1766 Religious Census. They are often referred to as census substitutes. However, both only list the names of heads of households and neither give anywhere near a complete list of householders. Furthermore the 1766 Religious Census is only available for the following parishes: Banagher, Bovevagh, Drumachose and Dungiven in the barony of Keenaght and Artrea, Ballynascreen, Derryloran, Desertlyn, Desertmartin, and Magherafelt in the barony of Loughinsholin.

On the CD you will find databases of both the 1766 Religious Returns and the 1740 Protestant Householders' Returns which will allow you search for names in specific areas within the county as well as, in the case of the 1740 Returns, look at the distribution of a particular surname throughout the entire county. Of course, we must not forget that the names in the 1740 database only refer to one section of the population whilst the names in the 1766 database only cover a small part of the county. At best, these sources give us a glimpse of who was living in the county in the middle of the eighteenth century.

A search of the 1740 database on the CD revealed that the ten top planter names within the county were *Smith* [115], *Campbell* [108], *Thompson* [102], *Wilson* [95], *Stewart* [92], *Miller* [88], *Moore* [86], *Brown* [76], *Johnston* [77] and *Henry* [76]. The names in italics were also in the top names in the 1663 database. *Campbell*, *Stewart*, *Johnston* and *Henry* were new names. *Campbell* and *Stewart*, in particular, are evidence of the much stronger Scottish element in the population resulting from the arrival of more Scots in the latter years of the seventeenth century. Certainly surnames such as *Cochrane*, *Hunter*, *Boyd*, *Anderson*, *Crawford*, *Blair*, *Dunlop* and many other Scottish surnames are more dominant in the 1740 Returns. The surname *Henry* also included some families who were clearly native Irish.

A further source of names for the later part of the eighteenth century is the Flaxgrowers' List of 1796. These were persons who received looms or spinning wheels depending on the amount of flax that they sowed between 10th March and the 1st June 1796. This was part of a government initiative to encourage the linen trade. We can take it that the persons listed here were farmers, but were only a fraction of the farmers within the county at that time. Unfortunately the names are only listed by parish.

The linen industry was the most important industry in the county during the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> As was mentioned earlier there is evidence of its presence in the county at the beginning of the century. The spinning and weaving of linen throughout the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century was a domestic industry. Many farmers combined linen with agriculture. But, the bulk of the weavers were smallholders and their webs provided them with a good income. Their webs were bought at markets in Coleraine, Londonderry, Limavady, Maghera and Magherafelt by linen drapers who bleached the linen on extensive bleach greens and finished the cloth in their beetling mills driven by water power. By the middle of the century demand for linen had grown considerably in England and the industry began a period of growth which was to last, albeit with some periods of slump, until the end of the century.

These weavers provided a ready internal market for agricultural produce which led to an increase in agricultural production. However, the real boost to agriculture came from outside the county. The Industrial Revolution on the British mainland, with its associated population growth, was creating an increasing demand for food, which could not be met totally by farmers on the British mainland. This demand, coupled with the subsidies and bounties being paid by the Irish Parliament, helped to boost prices. The onset of the Napoleonic Wars in 1793 led to blockades on grain and food shipments from mainland Europe. Thus the demand for Irish farm products further increased resulting in even higher prices.

The population of the county also began to rise from the middle of the century. Initially, the extra families that the growth produced spread on to land that had not been used by the much smaller population of the earlier part of the century. However, as land became scarcer, it was necessary to sub-divide existing holdings to accommodate the rising population of the period. This was particularly the case from the 1780s onwards. People began to reclaim mountain and bog in an attempt to find somewhere to house their growing families. The potato played a major role in this process not only as a foodstuff but also as an ideal crop for breaking in new land. Another factor was the somewhat lax attitude of landlords. Many of the London Companies had lost control of their estates during the eighteenth century, having sublet on long leases to various individuals. These middlemen were really only interested in the estate as an investment and

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<sup>15</sup> W. Clark, *Linen on the Green: An Irish Mill Village 1730-1982*, (Belfast, 1982). Note that Upperland is the official name of the townland. The village, which straddles the two townlands, is called Upperlands.

<sup>16</sup> For more details on the linen industry see W. H. Crawford, *The Impact of the Domestic Linen Industry in Ulster*, (Belfast, 2005) and *The Handloom Weavers and the Ulster Linen Industry*, (Dublin, 1972), and republished (Belfast, 1994).

more tenants meant more rent. One can see a parallel here with the way that we have been running parts of our economy today.

## **Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries**

With the ending of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 agricultural prices collapsed. They recovered again but not to the levels that they had been during the war. There was also a shift towards better prices for livestock and livestock products which encouraged the larger farmers to shift the emphasis of their production to livestock. Demand on the British mainland remained relatively high but Irish farmers had to compete, once again, with continental farmers.

The more substantial farmers were able to diversify in response to changing economic conditions at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. However, smallholders, cottiers and labourers, who formed the bulk of the population in many areas, did not have the luxury of being able to diversify or change what they did and many found it increasingly difficult to meet their rent commitments, and feed their families. The 1831 Census Returns, which are unique to the county of Londonderry, give us actual figures on how many people were living in the county at that time. You will find a database in the left-hand menu of the CD constructed from the 1831 Census Returns that will allow you to see how many families were living in each townland. When compared to the numbers there today, this should give you some idea of how overpopulated the county was at that time. A look at the Tithe Applotment Books of the 1820s and 30s will allow you to identify some of the landholders in a townland and match them to names in the 1831 Census Returns. It is important to realise that only the main landholders are listed in the Tithe Applotment Books.

Many of the poorer members of society began to migrate seasonally to the harvests in Scotland and England. Examples of this can be seen in the Ordnance Survey Memoirs for all of the parishes in the county. The plight of the poorer members of society was made worse by the collapse of hand spinning of linen. This took place during the 1820s and was the result of the setting up of factories to spin flax both faster and more cheaply. The spinning of linen yarn had been an integral part of many of the poorer households and had helped pay the rent. The fall in income did not stop there; handloom weavers also experienced a drop in their real wages as cotton became a major competitor to linen. As the excessive sub-division continued and the income of many people in the rural area declined, more and more people became dependent solely on the potato.

Some farmers saw the folly of excessive subdivision and, they or their sons, began to emigrate in the 1830s. The Ordnance Survey Memoirs of the 1830s, now available in print, provide evidence of this emigration and, for many parishes, supply us with the name and ages of individual emigrants, the year they emigrated and the port where they disembarked. Occasionally there are copies of emigrant letters and there is frequent reference to the collapse of the linen trade as being the prime factor behind emigration. Both young men and women can be seen in the lists and it is relatively easy to recognise family groups amongst the names. I have databased this information and you will find it at the *Emigration Sources* link in the top menu of the CD.

The increasing numbers of poor within Ireland by the 1830s led to the new English system of Poor Law administration being applied to Ireland in 1838. This led to new administrative areas known as Poor Law Unions being created with workhouses to house the poor at Londonderry, Limavady, Coleraine and Magherafelt. As well as an administrative structure for looking after the poor, these Poor Law Unions [in time] became the Superintendent Registrars' Districts which oversaw the registration of births deaths and marriages. The Poor Law Unions were subdivided into smaller units known as Dispensary Districts which doubled as Local Registrars' Districts where the births deaths and marriages were actually registered. These new administrative structures began to replace the old barony and parish administrative divisions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. You will find much more detailed information on these administrative structures at the *Administrative Divisions within the County* link in the top menu of the CD.

The workhouses had no sooner opened when they had to deal with the disaster of the Great Famine which began in 1845. There is a database on the CD which lists persons admitted to Magherafelt Workhouse during part of the summer of 1847. This provides examples of some of the individuals and families who had to enter the workhouse at that time. As you will see all those entering the workhouse were landless. By definition, farmers could not be admitted to the workhouse unless they gave up their land, something that few farmers were prepared to contemplate.

A comparison of the 1831 Census Returns, the 1830s Tithe Applotment Books and the Griffith's [Tenement] Valuation of 1858/59<sup>17</sup> will allow you to assess the severity of the Famine for any townland within the county. At the very least the Griffith's Valuation will allow you to see the socio-economic structure of the townland less than a decade after the Famine. Because there are no census records available for this period this valuation is often referred to as a census substitute. To some extent it is, but care must be taken when using it because the term occupier does not guarantee the person listed was actually living in that particular farm or house. Certainly in most cases within rural areas the occupier

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<sup>17</sup> Here the word tenement is used in the medieval sense of the word i.e. a holding leased by a tenant. Today the word tenement is associated with a building occupied by a number of separate families.

was resident; the same cannot be said for towns. On the CD you will find a detailed explanation of this very important source with many examples of it for various townlands and streets within the county. There is also a database of names covering the entire county for 1858/59 at the *1858/1859 Griffith's [Tenement] Valuation* link in the left-hand menu of the CD.

The 1858/59 valuation for the county was revised periodically up until 1929. The books containing this information are generally known as the Griffith's Revision Books. Changes in each property are recorded in these books and here you can often see how various holdings within a townland were consolidated into larger farms. You will find much more information and extensive examples from the Revision Books on the CD.

The period which followed the Great Famine was one of rural depopulation. The population of the county fell from 221,174 persons in 1841 to 144,404 persons in 1901, a decrease of 35%. There were a number of reasons for this dramatic change, some of which were already in place before the Famine.

Perhaps the most important factor was the attitude of farmers to subdivision and consolidation of land. Before the Famine many farmers had accommodated their sons on the land by subdividing their holdings. Many realised, even at that time, that this was pushing them closer to poverty. Finally the trauma of the Great Famine brought home the precariousness of such an existence. After the Famine farmers were more anxious to consolidate rather than subdivide their holdings. This had the two-fold effect of forcing surplus members of the family to find work elsewhere and of delaying the marriage of the son who was to inherit the farm. Indeed it led to a situation where many sons never married at all. These combined processes, inevitably, led to a reduction in the farming population.

The fact that more and more work on farms was carried out by members of the family meant less employment for labourers and cottiers. These less well-off members of society were also affected by the further decline of rural industry and crafts. This lack of employment in rural areas forced many to seek work in the towns. Within the county only Londonderry and Coleraine had sufficient industry to attract the local population and consequently were the only urban areas within the county to experience and increase in population between 1841 and 1901. Limavady and Magherafelt, the only other towns of any size in the county, did not grow. These four urban areas, plus Dungiven, are included within the locality studies on the CD. Here you will find a range of sources which you can use to find out more about each of them. In Londonderry there is also a more detailed study of William Street and within Coleraine a more detailed study of Church Street. However, apart from Londonderry, the urban centres of the county did not have an industrial base capable of absorbing enough of the people from the countryside who wished to leave the land. Some families would have moved to Belfast but the prospect of work and a better life in Britain, America or Australia caused many more people to emigrate to these countries, particularly in the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

This movement of population relieved much of the pressure on the land. In the better farming areas new technology, field drainage and better breeds of livestock began to be introduced. However, in many areas agricultural methods were slow to change, e.g. in some areas the scythe was only commonplace by the 1860s. Indeed the old ways continued in many areas well into the twentieth century.

The other important event that took place at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was the "buying out of farms" under the Land Purchase Acts. Rents had continued to rise in the post-famine period and this, plus security of tenure at a time when leases were rare, became a major political issue which led to the passing of the Land Acts beginning in 1870. The Act of 1881 put a curb on rents but soon the cry was for ownership of land. The landlord found that estates were becoming less profitable and in the end a series of Land Purchase Acts, beginning in 1885, were passed. Most farmers bought out their land under the Wyndham Act of 1903. Under this Act landlords were given a 12% bonus if they sold their whole estate at once. Tenants were given sixty eight and a half years to pay off their farm in annual, fixed instalments. The result is that today virtually all farmers within the county own their holdings.

The 1901 and 1911 Census online from the National Archives, Dublin provide us with detailed information on individuals and families living in the county in the early years of the twentieth century and a convenient entry point into the nineteenth century when searching for ancestors. Equally 1901/11 is an ideal starting point for searches for ancestors in the 1920s, 30s and 40s.

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