



Reivers House

The Schomberg Society's Reivers House stands opposite the old historic Church in the town centre and is an Ulster-Scots cultural centre promoting the rich Ulster-Scots traditions and identity here in the Kingdom of Mourne. Reivers House takes its name from the 'Border Reivers' of lowland Scotland, who settled in large numbers in the Mourne during the early 1600s.

The Schomberg Society is helping to build a strong and dynamic Ulster-Scots community within the Kingdom of Mourne and beyond through empowerment and educational outreach. The Society's core activities include the promotion of Ulster-Scots Music and Dance, Language and Literature and now organises one of the largest Ulster-Scots Festivals in N. Ireland, The Reivers Festival which climaxes with a huge Pageant and Open Air Concert on the 11th July night in Kilkeel. Fusefm Mourne Radio is a new venture for the Society, broadcasting our Ulster-Scots music and language traditions twice a year live from Studio One in Reivers House.

Tours of Reivers House are available and include a guided tour of its historical murals, a display of Ulster-Scots music and dance and a presentation on the history and heritage of the Ulster-Scots of Mourne. The Society can also organise a guided tour of our Ulster-Scots heritage trail in Mourne and we welcome bookings from all groups including touring coaches, schools, cultural societies and other interested parties.



Get in Touch! For more information or to organise a visit to Reivers House or a guided tour of the area, please contact the Schomberg Society, Reivers House, Kilkeel.

The Schomberg Society, Reivers House

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Ulster-Scots

Heritage Trail in the Kingdom of Mourne

Local Ulster-Scots Heroes



Robert Hill Hanna VC

6th August 1887 - 15th June 1967

Born at Hannas Close, Kilkeel, Robert was educated at Ballinran School before emigrating to Canada aged 18, where he worked as a lumberjack. At the outbreak of WW1, he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force and rose to the rank of Sergeant-Major. He was awarded the Victoria Cross on the 21st of September 1917 at Lens, France. His company facing severe resistance from a heavily armed enemy position and under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire, Hanna successfully led a party capturing the enemy position. Although he is buried in Canada, his officer's sword is proudly on display in Kilkeel's Royal British Legion Club and his name is appears on the cenotaph in front of Mourne Presbyterian Church.



Robert Scott VC

6th June 1874 - 21st February 1961

Private Robert Scott of Ballinran, Kilkeel served with the Manchester regiment where he won his Victoria Cross at Ladysmith in South Africa during the Boer War. Scott and one other were the only survivors of a party of 16 who successfully held off the enemy for 15 hours at Caesar's camp. Both men were awarded the VC for their actions. VC Scott also served in both the First and the Second World Wars and is buried in the Church of Ireland Graveyard in Kilkeel. He is also remembered on a memorial stone at the Cenotaph at Mourne Presbyterian Church.



Captain Alexander Chesney

16th September 1756 - 12th January 1843

Captain Alexander Chesney was an Ulsterman of Scottish descent who emigrated to South Carolina in 1772. During the Revolutionary War, he fought with the British side, serving with distinction under Hastings and Cornwallis. Chesney saw action at the Battles of Cowpens and King's Mountain, where he was captured and escaped under sentence of death. Following the defeat of the British, he returned to Ireland and settled in Pacolet House, Kilkeel and he is buried in the graveyard of Mourne Presbyterian Church, where his memorial now stands adjacent to the Meeting House.



Hanna's Close

Hanna's Close is a settlement of eight historical cottages nestling on the bend of the Kilkeel river at Aughnahooroy and is the only surviving habitable Scottish Clachan in Ulster. The close was settled by Scots from Dunfries and Galloway in the early 17th century and takes its name from the Hannas of Sorbie in Galloway, whose family were resident in the close up until the late 20th century. One of the Close's most famous sons was Robert Hill Hanna VC who was born there in 1887.

The Close is a must see with its unique stone built cottages, thatched and slate roofs and picturesque location in the heart of the Mournes. It is an ideal opportunity to catch a glimpse of how the early Scottish settlers lived and worked here in the Kingdom of Mourne.

Hannas Close has now been restored to its former glory and has been adopted by Mourne Country Cottages is available for accommodation and to host gatherings and events. The Schomberg Society as part of the Reivers Festival annually hold an Ulster-Scots Evening Soiree at the Close which is a celebration of traditional Ulster-Scots music and dance, crafts, cookery, song and literature.



Kilkeel Harbour

There has been a long history of fishing in the Mourne and the influx of large numbers of settlers from the west coast of Scotland in the 1600s brought new fishing skills and techniques to the area. By the 1700s, small harbours were recorded as being in operation in both Annalong and Derryogue, Kilkeel.

In the 1800s, the present harbour at Kilkeel was established and replaced Annalong and Derryogue as the major fishing port in Mourne. A new pier was built in 1868 which paved the way for Kilkeel harbour to hold the largest fishing fleet in N. Ireland. In the early days it was also a common sight to view schooners (tall ships) leaving the harbour for Kinsale, Scotland, Cornwall or Liverpool, transporting goods for trade, such as granite, potatoes, grain and importing coal.

As well as working at the Harbour and on the boats, many local Ulster-Scots also left Kilkeel Harbour to start new lives in places such as the America's New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.

The Nautilus Centre and Mourne Maritime Visitor Centre is located at the Harbour and provides visitors with the opportunity to learn about the local fishing and maritime heritage, see how nets and boats are mended and also sample some of Mourne's finest catch.



The Mourne Wall and Silent Valley

Ulster-Scots families dominated the shipbuilding, textiles and heavy industries which drove the rapid growth of Belfast in the 18th and 19th centuries and the population of the city grew from 20,000 in 1790 to 350,000 in 1901.

To provide the city with water a 9000 acre area was purchased in the heart of the Mourne and work began on both the Silent Valley and Ben Crom Dam. In 1923 Sir Edward Carson cut the first sod of what was to become the largest man made reservoir in the country and a testament to N. Ireland engineering and local endeavour.

The two reservoirs are surrounded by the Mourne Wall, a 22 mile wall which crosses 15 of Mourne's highest peaks. The granite stone walls were built by local Mourne men, many of whom were the descendants of Scottish Settlers who had arrived some 300 years earlier and had built much of the stone ditches and walls which are synonymous with the Kingdom of Mourne, and handed down this unique skill from father to son for generations.

Located at the Silent Valley is a museum and café at the visitor's center and an example of the Mourne Wall is also on site to view, whilst a shuttle bus is provided to transport visitors to the upper Ben Crom Dam. Nature walks and heritage trails are signposted throughout the Valley and include children's activities.



Greencastle

Greencastle is a picturesque hamlet located along the northern shores of Carlingford Lough approximately 4 miles south of Killeel town. This quaint village has much natural beauty and built heritage including historic connections with Scotland and more lately the Ulster-Scots.

Overlooking the village is the splendid 13th Century Norman castle which was captured by the Scottish forces of Edward Bruce in 1315 and placed under the command of a Scottish garrison, many of whom subsequently settled in the area.

Prior to the Battle of the Boyne in the winter of 1689/90, a contingent of The Duke of Schomberg's army under the command of Colonel William Stewart billeted in and around Greencastle. His orders were to safeguard the north bank end entrance to Carlingford Lough. This task was vital to the success of the battle.

Greencastle also has a rich maritime heritage where for many years, fishermen sailed from its small harbour to fish for lobsters, crabs, mussels and oysters and a small ferry sailed daily from the village across the Lough to Greenore. For many local Ulster-Scots, Greencastle was a starting point where left the shores of Ulster by ferry to Greenore, then onto Liverpool to set sail for adventure and the possibility of a better life in the new world via.



Annalong

Annalong, formerly known by its Scottish prefix 'Islealong' is situated approximately 6 miles north of Killeel on the South Down coast. The village boasts a very strong Ulster-Scots heritage where the use of the Ulster-Scots language is still commonly used in everyday life and Scottish surnames such as Hanna, Gordon, Chambers, Baird and Johnston are very common among its inhabitants.

In the centre of the Village is Annalong Presbyterian Church established in 1840. The present building built with Mourne granite by local tradesmen is a fine example of traditional stonework here in the Kingdom of Mourne.

Annalong has had a harbour since the 1700s and in more recent time was used to export Mourne granite to other parts of Britain. This scenic harbour set at the foot of the Mourne mountains still retains a small fishing fleet and is quite busy during the Summer months.

Situated at the harbour is a beautiful stone built corn mill which was in operation from the early 1800s until the 1960s where many local farmers brought their oats to be ground into oatmeal. On display in the corn mill is a multi-media exhibition where visitors can experience the corn mill of bygone days and see how many of the local people lived and worked.