

Tha Ulster-Scots O' Mourne

They brought with them an ethos of hard work, cleared the land for building, introduced new farming and fishing techniques and their now familiar, traditional Scottish livestock is regularly seen grazing on the slopes of the Mourne Mountains.

With a strong Presbyterian faith, these Scots established Meeting Houses in Kilkeel, Ballymartin and Annalong, and speaking in their native Scots tongue, they created a new culture of Scottish poetry, song, music and dance.



Mourne Presbyterian Meeting House; Photo Courtesy of Ewa McBride

- **Presbyterianism** – By 1700, there were three flourishing Presbyterian Meeting Houses in Mourne, which are still flourishing with well over one thousand Presbyterians in Mourne today.
- **The Ulster-Scots Language** – Many Scots words are still spoken in everyday conversation in Mourne and the Ulster-Scots language is something that the folk of Mourne are very proud to use day and daily.
- **Scottish Surnames** – In the local schools, Scots surnames still dominate the rolls and most people in Mourne have some Scottish ancestry connection.
- **Music and Dance** – These traditions are now thriving in Mourne with many young people involved in Scottish Highland and Country Dancing and learning all aspects of Ulster-Scots music and song.
- **Scottish Animals** – Still today, you can often see Scottish breeds of animals, such as the Scottish Blackface Sheep, Belted Galloway and Scottish Highland Cattle roaming on the slopes of the Mourne Mountains.
- **Farming Methods** – Many farmers in Mourne still carry on some of the practices introduced by their Scots ancestors, such as marching their ground with traditional stone ditches and growing traditional cereal crops.

Dae Ye Ken... These Scottish settlers left a lasting legacy on the Kingdom O' Mourne and samples of their work can still be seen in the Mournes, such as the unique Scottish Clachan located at Hanna's Close!



Jasmin Cullen, Schomberg Fife & Drum, Kilkeel; Photo © DTMcC

The Legacy

The impact made by the Scots in Ulster and indeed in the Kingdom O' Mourne has been momentous.

Four hundred years after those first Scots Planters began arriving in Ulster; the connections between Scotland and Ulster are as strong as ever.

In the Ulster-Scots hairtland, that is the Kingdom O' Mourne, the legacy and inheritance of those early Scots settlers is very much in evidence all around us. Arriving principally in the 17th and early 18th centuries, these folk, mainly from the Lowlands of Scotland have changed the character of the Mournes forever.

A thran, resilient people, they have triumphed over adversity and shaped and moulded the history, heritage and culture of the Kingdom O' Mourne. Despite enduring many trials and indeed, much opposition over the last four centuries, the Ulster-Scots O' Mourne have not only thrived, but flourished and prospered, giving the Kingdom its unique identity and distinctly Scottish flavour.

Dae Ye Ken... Of the top ten most popular surnames in Mourne, at least seven are of Scottish origin!



Mourne, a changed Landscape Photo Courtesy of Ewa McBride

"Houl Yer Wheesht Fur We're Still Here!"



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Tha Kingdom O' Mourne

An Ulster-Scots Hairtland





An Ulster-Scots Settler,
Photo Courtesy of Living History
Ireland

Who are the Ulster-Scots?

The 'Ulster-Scots' are generally known as the descendants of the folk who came from Scotland and made their home in Ulster in the early 1600s, during the period known as the Plantation of Ulster and in the following years of the 17th century.

However, today the term also refers to the many people who identify themselves as Ulster-Scots through their shared traditions, culture, language, religion and heritage and is very much a modern, vibrant and flourishing culture open and welcoming to all.

Where did they come from?

In the early 1600s, thousands of Scots began arriving in Ulster.

They came mainly from the lowlands of Scotland, from places such as Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, Galloway, Dumfriesshire and the Borders. They settled all across Ulster, particularly in counties Antrim, Down, Londonderry and Donegal. As they made their homes in Ulster, these Scots made a lasting impact upon the area.



A Typical Scots Settler of the 1600s
Photo Courtesy of Living History Ireland

This Scottish influence was continued and further strengthened by the largest wave of immigration when tens of thousands of Scots arrived in the later years of the 17th century after the Battle of the Boyne. Here in Mourne today, you can still find many Scottish surnames that are prevalent in Dunfries and Galloway in Scotland!

Dae Ye Ken... Many folk think the term 'Ulster-Scots' is a recent invention. However, the first time the term 'Ulster-Scots' was recorded was actually away back in 1640! That's almost 400 years ago!

"Houl Yer Wheesht Fur We're Still Here!"

Why did they come?

There were many reasons as to why the Scots left their homeland and settled in Ulster.

During the 1600s in Scotland there were many factors that encouraged families to brave a move to Ulster. Some of these factors were negative (push factors), but there were also positive (pull) factors...

Push Factors

- Failed harvests and famine in Scotland
- Land was scarce in Scotland
- Ongoing persecution of Presbyterians in Scotland
- Scotland was in poverty and suffering from a poor economy

Pull Factors

- King James I of England and VI of Scotland was keen to populate Ulster with Protestants who would be loyal to the crown
- There was an opportunity for land in Ulster
- It was only a short distance to travel across the water
- There was more freedom to practice the Presbyterian faith in Ulster
- Land was cheaper to rent in Ulster

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the Bagenals were the landlords responsible for leasing the lands in Mourne to farming tenants. The Bagenals encouraged hundreds of Scottish Presbyterians to settle on their estates in Mourne.



Typical Mourne
Stone Ditches; Photo Courtesy of Ewa McBride



Hanna's Close, Kilkeel; Photo © DTMCC

Dae Ye Ken... At the closest point, Scotland and Ulster are just twelve miles apart and the migration of folk between the two countries has been going on for centuries!

What did they bring with them?

As these new migrants made their home in Ulster, they brought with them their rich culture and traditions.

The Scots have contributed much to the lifestyle in Ulster. They brought with them their...

- Presbyterian faith
- Scots tongue (the Ulster-Scots Language)
- Scottish surnames
- Music and dance traditions
- New methods and techniques for fishing, farming and an ethos of hard work
- Scottish breeds of animals
- Traditional Scots costumes
- Scottish food and recipes



Soda Bread on the Griddle; Photo © DTMCC

Much of what these hard working folk brought with them had never before been introduced to the people of Ulster and as such made a positive contribution to the everyday life of Ulster men and women.

Dae Ye Ken... Two of the most popular animals you will find in the Mournes come from Scotland! The Border Collie Dog originates from the Scottish Borders and of course, the Scottish Blackface Sheep has its roots in the Scottish Lowlands!

These rich Scottish traditions are still very much evident today in Ulster and play a huge role in the promotion and preservation of the Ulster-Scots culture. It is a testament to these Scots who brought this culture and traditions with them that they are still alive and well hundreds of years later!

A Scottish Blackface Sheep
in the Mournes
Photo Courtesy of Ewa
McBride



On these estates there was plenty of land and an opportunity to prosper. Hundreds of years later, the descendants of these Scottish settlers can still be found in Mourne today!