SCHOMBERG SOCIETY

Tha Ulster-Scots O' Mourne

'Tha fasch an' tha fiel'

'The Ulster-Scots Influence on Fishing and Farming in Mourne'

THA ULSTER-SCOTS O' MOURNE

'Tha fasch an' tha fiel'

(THE FISH AND THE FIELD)

Sir. Jeffrey Donaldson MP and Northern Ireland Centenary Piper Mark Smyth at the unveiling of the Northern Ireland Centenary Stone at Reivers House, Kilkeel 31st December 2021

"As a proud Ulster-Scot and someone who grew up in the midst of the farming and fishing communities in the Kingdom of Mourne, I very much welcome the publication of this book which highlights an important part of our local heritage and traditions.

During my childhood, I spent many happy times working with my grandfather Jimmy Donaldson on his smallholding farm at Ballinran, nestling in the shadows of the Mourne Mountains. Each summer and into the autumn, there were many farming activities to be undertaken including stookin corn and gaitherin purdas. As a child, I was absorbed in this rich linguistic vein that runs through the heart of our local Ulster-Scots community.

Similarly with the local fishing industry, I became aware of many traditions such as tying up the boats for the Sabbath Day and the use of the Ulster-Scots language in names for particular sea birds, fish and so on. Even today when I visit the harbour and meet with local fishermen, I am reminded of the rich influence of Ulster-Scots in the local vernacular.

The Ulster-Scots language, culture and traditions are an important part of our local community and I commend the Schomberg Society for the publication of this book. I trust that you the reader will enjoy its contents and be reminded again of our rich cultural heritage which continues to pervade our farming and fishing traditions."

The Rt Hon Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP
Leader, Democratic Unionist Party

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17th Century Ulster-Scots Settler (Living History Ireland); ***Photo ©DtMcC***

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A Foreword from The Schomberg Society

THA ULSTER-SCOTS O' MOURNE

'Tha Fasch an' tha fiel'

(THE FISH AND THE FIELD)

In the Ulster-Scots heartland of the Kingdom of Mourne, generations of Ulster-Scots have shaped and moulded the landscape and were instrumental in how its society evolved. Its vibrant Ulster-Scots community has a daily use of the Ulster-Scots language and their lives revolve around many diverse elements within a deeply engrained Ulster-Scots culture and Presbyterian faith. Such is the depth of their identity it has even heavily influenced local built heritage!

The modern method of planting potatoes, pictured on the Kilkeel coast; Photo @Mourne Drone

Since its inception, some of the key objectives of the Schomberg Society have been to promote and preserve Ulster-Scots history, heritage, language and traditions here in the Kingdom of Mourne for future generations. The goals of this project are to focus on one distinct facet of that, namely the Ulster-Scots influence in our local Fishing and Farming Tradition. Much of that history is held only in the oral custom, and through this project the Society hopes to preserve a valuable asset too often allowed to disappear.

This work focuses not just on the Ulster-Scots language entwined therein, but local traditions, folklore, superstitions, and customs associated with the fishing and farming communities in Mourne, many of which also have their origins in Ulster-Scots.

The compilation of this information required the Schomberg Society to engage with and carry out interviews and workshops with reams of local groups and individuals. Schools, youth groups, fishermen, farmers, community groups and local historians have all played a pivotal role in helping gather the information.

The Schomberg Society is indebted to all those who helped in any way to contribute, and we hope it will prove to be a very beneficial resource for generations to come, helping preserve and promote this very important part of our heritage and history in Mourne. In particular we give our thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund who made this project possible.

The Schomberg Society

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

THE ULSTER-SCOTS IN MOURNE

Who are the Ulster-Scots?

When we refer to Ulster-Scots we are referencing a definable group of people found mostly in Ulster who share a common ancestry traceable back primarily to Lowland Scotland.

17th Century Ulster-Scots Settlers at Hanna's Close, Kilkeel (Living History Ireland); **Photo @DtMcC**

With that common ancestry also comes a common heritage that entwines many distinctive traits including language, culture, faith, music and a vast range of traditions impacting all aspects of daily life. To fully understand the reasons for the penetration of Ulster-Scots heritage into the Kingdom of Mourne, it is necessary to look back to their forebearers.

Where did they come from?

The Ulster-Scots, officially defined as an ethnic group in its own right, largely came into being at the beginning of the 1600s during an episode in British and Irish history known as the Plantation of Ulster.

Vast numbers of Lowland Scots arrived in Ulster from the areas of Ayrshire, Berwickshire, Clackmannanshire, Dumfriesshire, East Lothian, Fife, Kinrossshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, Lanarkshire, Midlothian, Peeblesshire, Renfrewshire, Roxburghshire, Selkirkshire, West Lothian and Wigtownshire.

Their numbers were added to in a lesser extent from elsewhere across Scotland and Northern England, who with their lowland comrades melded together to form a largely homogenous community. Throughout the 17th Century further arrivals came adding to their numbers, the most coming in the final years of the decade following the famous Battle of the Boyne. It is during this time that Mourne's Ulster-Scots became an important demographic.

What brought Scots to Ulster?

There were a range of factors that resulted in Scots men and women travelling to Ulster.

For millennia Scotsmen and Ulstermen alike woke up on their respective coast lines, only to see green land at the other side of the water. Communities that survived via food and resources from the sea, with a natural inquisitiveness, and comparative ease compared to elsewhere along the Irish, Scottish and English coastlines, ensured that for centuries people travelled between both land masses. Many that came chose to stay in Ulster, brought their own world perspectives and cultural traits with them, and mixed and melded among the existing peoples. This natural relationship between the peoples of both areas that had begun in ancient times, was reinforced by other events in the 17th and 18th Century that would either encourage or force more to follow the journey.

Early Ulster-Scots Settler (Living History Ireland); Photo © DtMcC

Guided by Faith

On different occasions throughout history Scottish Protestants who were Presbyterian felt persecuted for their faith, and travelled to Ulster in the belief they would have more religious freedom.

The first Presbyterian Church outside Kilkeel was opened by Scots in 1696 at Ballymageough, with others soon following at Derryogue and Ballymartin. The Plantation of Ulster brought thousands here. King James I of England and VI of Scotland was keen to combat his concerns about Irish Catholic loyalty, by populating Ulster with Scottish Protestants that he believed would be devoted to both him and the political institutions of England.

John Fisher pictured at Meeting House Lane, leading to the old ruin of Ballymartin Presbyterian Church

A Glorious Revolution and economic need

The Williamite Wars, and especially the Battle of the Boyne, brought many Scots to Ireland as soldiers or the many tradesmen that were necessary to maintain the ranks of General Monroe's and King William's Armies.

A Williamite Soldier pictured at Greencastle Castle, Kilkeel (Living HIstory Ireland)

That period also saw economic factors come into play. In the late 17th Century Scotland suffered what became known as 'seven ill years', with prolonged famine resulting in wide-scale poverty and suffering. There were land shortages in rural Scotland, and Ulster offered opportunity. Land was abundant, it was cheaper to rent. Some were able to afford land for the first time, while others were able to get larger farms they never could have afforded at home. It was an added bonus that much of the Ulster Countryside, particularly in Mourne, was very fertile.

King William III as re-enacted by the North Irish Dragoons Society as part of the Schomberg Society's Ulster-Scots Summer Festival; Photo @DtMcC

Captain Hunter

This influx to the Kingdom of Mourne is believed to have been heavily influenced by one man, Captain Henry Hunter.

Hunter had been a very successful soldier in the Williamite Wars, including seeing action during the 1688-1689 Siege of Derry. His important and hugely respected role in so many pivotal battles, saw him appointed the Governor of Carlingford, and eventually he also became the largest tenant of Nicholas Bagenal- leasing vast estates in Townlands across the Mournes. Bagenal desired tenants on his lands who he believed would be loyal. He believed the Scots were perfect for the role, and it was Hunter's reputation and influence that encouraged further Scots settlers to the area. His daughter was also married to the first minister of Mourne Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Charles Wallace.

What did the Scots bring to Mourne?

The Scots brought much to Ulster and the Mournes.

The physical trappings of their lives in Scotland were the most obvious things. They brought with them their own animals such as the border collie, the Scottish blackface sheep and the Clydesdale horse. They brought their own dress and costumes such as kilts and tartan. They even brought the skills they used at home to build stone walls and ditches, that now march the fields, both changing the landscape of Ulster and the Mournes forever.

The Meeting House

Their Presbyterian faith was strong, and soon Presbyterian meeting houses sprung up all over the countryside.

Mourne Presbyterian Church in Kilkeel; Photo Courtesy of Adam Beck

Springing from the inherent sense of self responsibility within that faith, was an ethos for the necessity of and indeed the 'good' in working hard. That ethos of hard work impacted everything they did in a positive way, with individuals always striving to do work quicker and in better ways. That brought innovation, and among other areas, resulted in new methods and techniques in fishing and farming.

Scottish Blackface Sheep in the Mournes with dry stone ditch in the background; Photo Courtesy of Adam Beck

A Tongue

They brought their own language, today better known as Ulster-Scots and widely spoken in Mourne and Ulster.

Their surnames and Christian names came as well and remain strong in Mourne, as do Scottish music, dance and food.

The legacy of the Ulster-Scots in Mourne...

Over the passage of time since the first Scots began arriving in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Ulster-Scots have left their mark all across the Kingdom of Mourne, leaving a rich legacy, which is still very evident today.

Ulster-Scots Placenames

As the Scots arrived and spread, they introduced new descriptive Scots names to the area to describe some of the rivers, hills, mountains and various landmarks and features of the Mournes.

Most of these names were localised to townlands, villages and farms and many live on today only in oral history and folklore. Some however have become standardised and are to be found on official maps and documents.

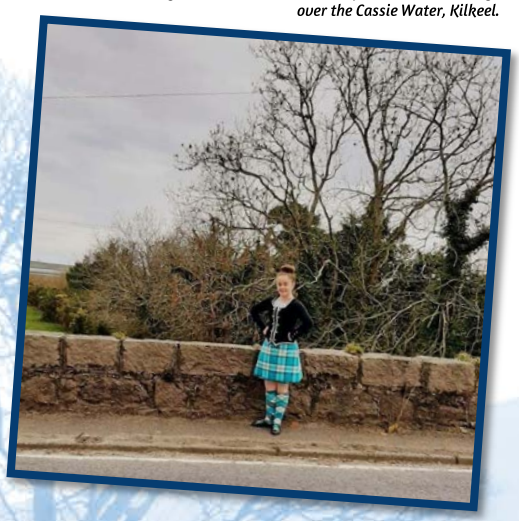
Cliff Coulter at the new Ulster-Scots sign for Kirkiel in the centre of Kilkeel

The Towns

Kilkeel took on the Scots name 'Kirkiel' from approximately 1692, which lasted well into the 1800s.

A Kirk is the Scots word for Church, and Kilkeel when translated from Irish is the Church of the Narrows. Annalong was known locally for centuries by its Scots sounding name, 'Islealong'.

Kirknarra Highland Dancer Leah Newell pictured as the bridge over the Cassie Water, Kilkeel.



The 'Water'

Water is the Ulster-Scots word for a medium river.

Several examples in the Mournes include the Yellow Water, White Water, Cassie Water (With Cassie also being the Scots word meaning causeway), Rocky Water, Dunny Water and Cross Water. The Kilkeel River was also once known as the Kilkeel Water. Moss is the Scots word for a Bog, with the Mourne Mountains containing Red Moss River. Ladies Burn, just outside Annalong at Mullartown, takes its moniker of Burn from the Scots word meaning Small Stream. The Rowan Tree River is also in the Mourne Mountains, Rowan is the Scots name for The Mountain Ash Tree.

Hills and Braes

Brae is the Scots word for a Slope.

The many examples in Mourne include Kelly's Brae, Billy's Brae, Baird's Brae, Chesney's Brae (Named after Frances Rawdon Chesney of the Suez Canal), River Brae in Kilkeel Town, Kennedy's Brae (named after Rev. Kennedy of Mourne Presbyterian Church) and Linden Brae. Knowe means a small hill and in Mourne there are the famous 'Brown Knowe' at the side of Slieve Binnian and Foxes Knowe at the Silent Valley. A famed poem/song was written called 'The Maid of the Sweet Brown Knowe'. Loanen is the Scots word for Lane. Examples of loanens in Mourne are The Mill Loanen and Manus' Loanen. One of the most famous mountains in Mourne, 'Wee Binnian' includes the Scots Word Wee meaning Small. Knock means a Small Hill with Mourne boasting Knockchree Mountain and Knockchree Avenue in Kilkeel.

Kirknarra Highland Dancer Connie Morris pictured at the new Ulster-Scots sign at The River Brae in Kilkeel

Other Landmarks

Hanna's Close is named after the Hannas from the Lowlands of Scotland who settled in Mourne during the 1600s.

Brooke, Zoe and Lewis Forsythe pictured beside the new Ulster-Scots sign at The Glen Loanen in Ballymartin

Close is the Scots name for a Courtyard. Elsewhere Glen is the Scots word meaning Valley, with local examples including The Glen Loanen in Ballymartin, The Glen River in the Mournes and the Kilkeel Glen; while the Brandy Pad which winds its way through the Mourne Mountains, takes its name from the Scots word for path, which is pad. The Crawtree Stone in Kilkeel takes its name from the Scots word for Crow, while the Sabbath Hill Road at Ballyvea takes its name directly from the Scots word for Sunday. Hulla in Scots means a flat area between two hills with Mourne having the Hulla in Kilkeel, the Hulla in Ballymartin and 'Soldier's Hulla' in the Mourne Mountains.

Ulster-Scots Built Heritage

Built Heritage is one of the key markers which identify an area as having an Ulster-Scots community and Ulster-Scots influence.

When the Scots arrived in Mourne during the 17th and 18th centuries they immediately began having an impact on the landscape of Mourne. Many Scots styled clachans or closes were built. These small clusters of houses were often built in a semi-circular fashion to help defend them in the case of attack from the native Irish (known as the woodkern). They often had no rear doors and only small windows which left it difficult for attackers to breach the small cottages.

Mills and wheels

Many Scots settled along rivers and valleys in the Mournes and developed over the years Water Driven Mills to process flax, wool and flour.

Forsythe's Mill at Ballinran; **Photo Courtesy of Newry and Mourne Museum. (Hugh Irvine Collection)**

Few of these mills remain today and of them, most are in ruins. The Ulster-Scots families once associated with them such as the Forsythes and Andersons of Ballinran, however still survive. The Corn Mill in Annalong is one of the finest examples to be found, with the original owners being of Scots descent namely Atkinsons, McCormicks and Hamiltons.

Stone-Masons

The Scots skill with stone saw the material utilised to a high standard at every opportunity.

Meeting Houses were established in Kilkeel, Annalong and Ballymartin, built with Mourne Granite by some of the finest stonemasons in Ulster. This remarkable stonework also features prominently in the towns and villages of Mourne. The ruin of the old Meeting House is still to be found at Meeting House Lane in Ballymartin, just across from the Orange Hall. A related expertise was the creation of granite stone ditches (Dry stone walls) that criss-cross the Mournes and are quite unique to Ulster, but can also be found across the North Channel in western Scotland. In Scotland, these are known as Stane Dykes.

A dry stone wall in Mourne.; **Photo Courtesy of Adam Beck**

Scottish Surnames

Schomberg Society's Kirknarra Highland Dancers Jessica Mitchell, Bethany Shields and Kasey Nicholson - all very proud of their Scots surnames and Ulster-Scots ancestry

One of the most obvious things that the Scots brought with them to Ulster and the Mournes was their Scottish surnames.

These names can be seen all across the Mournes in every facet of life, whether it be in school rolls, church records, shop fronts or town and village graveyards. Scots surnames have stood the test of time and make up a very significant proportion of local names right up to the present day.

Some of the most common Scottish surnames in Mourne are Cunningham, Hanna, McKee, Graham, McConnell and Campbell. A significant proportion of other Scots names are of Border Reiver origin. The Border Reivers were large families or clans from the Border area of Scotland and England. They had a fearsome reputation and at times, were quite lawless. Many of them settled in the southern areas of Ulster during the 17th century. In Mourne surviving Border Reivers Names include Wilson, Charleton, Henderson, Irvine, Stevenson, Burns, Johnston, Scott and Patterson.

The Scots also brought with them their own pronunciations of the local Christian names and surnames. This is still quite common today across the Mournes and it adds to the unique Scots flavour of local language. Examples of pronunciation of names include:

Irvine (Pronounced Ervin)
Perry (Pronounced Peerie)
Rooney (Pronounced Roaney)
Mooney (Pronounced Moaney)
Edgar (Pronounced Eggar)
Haugh (Pronounced Hawk)
Wilson (Pronounced Wulson)
Houston (Pronounced Quoustin)
Shields (Pronounced Shales)
Denny (Pronounced Dainey)
Donaldson (Pronounced Donelsen)
Herron (Pronounced Hern)
Jamison (Pronounced Jemisen)
Charleton (Pronounced Sharlton)

Hugh / Hubert
(Pronounced Queue / Qubert)
Thomas / Tommy
(Pronounced Thamas or Tammy)
Robert / Robbie
(Pronounced Rabert or Rabbie)
William / Willie
(Pronounced Wulliam or Wullie)
Charles (Pronounced Char Less)
Arthur (Pronounced Arter)
Alex (Often known as Ackie)
James
(Often referred to as Jim or Jimmy)
David (Often referred to as Davey)

The Hamely Tongue

The Ulster-Scots language or 'Leid' is one of the richest legacies from those early Scots settlers and is something that enriches conversation in the Kingdom of Mourne.

The language is still very prevalent, especially amongst the older generations. Scottish words and phrases brought by Scots settlers are still very much in use today. As with all languages, there are some regional variations and words and pronunciations that are almost exclusive to Mourne.

The Ulster-Scots in the Kingdom of Mourne use many of these Ulster-Scots words in everyday conversation to describe all aspects of life and as the language has evolved, it has absorbed and borrowed words from both English and Irish, enhancing it even further.

Some examples of the best known and most frequently spoken Ulster-Scots words in Mourne include...

quare (exceptional)
thran (stubborn)
lads (boys)
lassies (girls)

scundered (fed up / embarrassed)
dander (leisurely stroll)
crack (gossip/banter)
blether (talk nonsense)
foundered (very cold)

cowp (fall over)
hoke (search)
lugs (ears)
hirple (limp)
aye (yes)

A Happy *Wean*

teemin (raining)
canny (careful)
footer (fidget)

A Bonnie *Lass*

A Hasky *Day*

naw (no)
eejit (idiot)
wee (small)
auld (old)

Ulster-Scots Culture

The Scots brought their love of music and dance with them to Ulster.

Ulster-Scots culture is thriving, it is one of the most visual aspects of Ulster-Scots, and can be seen right across the Kingdom of Mourne. The Kingdom is one of the strongest areas in Northern Ireland showcasing these unique talents.

Aughnahoory Pipe Band performing at the Schomberg Society's Annual Ulster-Scots Gaitherin;
Photo ©DtMcC

Dance

Scottish Highland Dancing is flourishing in Mourne, with hundreds of children taking part in weekly Highland Dance classes.

The Schomberg Society's own Kirknarra School of Dance is one of the first Scottish Highland Dance Schools to be formed in Northern Ireland and is stronger now than ever. It is also one of the most active Highland Dance Schools in N. Ireland. Scottish Country Dance classes regularly take place across Mourne, and are especially popular amongst particularly older folk.

Schomberg Society's Lambeg Drummers performing at the Annual Gaitherin;
Photo ©DtMcC

Music

The Ulster-Scots musical traditions of Fife, Flute, Snare Drum, Lambeg Drum, Fiddle, Accordion and Bag Pipes are vibrant and strong in Mourne.

The Kingdom of Mourne boasts a total of 16 Marching Bands from an Ulster-Scots background, including some of the finest Marching Bands to be found in Europe.

Events

The D Day Darlings performing at the Schomberg Society's 11th Night Festival in Kilkeel; **Photo @DtMcC**

They brought with them their traditional Scots tongue and accents, bringing many new and unique words to the people of Ulster.

The Schomberg Society's Ulster-Scots Hub, Reivers House, is a busy centre delivering and supporting Ulster-Scots Music and Dance Classes almost every night of the week with hundreds of folk participating in their programmes. Other major Ulster-Scots events take place regularly across the Kingdom of Mourne showcasing the best of Ulster-Scots culture. The largest is The Schomberg Society's Ulster-Scots Summer Festival, an annual carnival like occasion offering a wide range of Ulster-Scots events over a two week period in July. Other high profile annual occasions include the Schomberg Society's Burns Night.

The Schomberg Society's annual Burns Night in Kilkeel; **Photo @DtMcC**

Faith

The 'Wee Meeting'; ***Photo*** **Courtesy of A. Stevenson Photography**

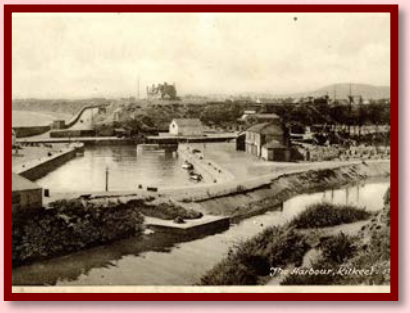
The Presbyterian congregations in Mourne are some of the largest in Northern Ireland and are a living and enduring legacy of those first Scots settlers.

The vast majority of those Scots who arrived in Mourne were Presbyterians. This was a very important part of their lives and remains very much so today for their Ulster-Scots descendants. The faith of these pioneers saw them establish the first Presbyterian congregations in Mourne soon after their arrival in the late 1600s.

'THA FASCH'

The beginnings of Mourne fishing...

Mourne has a long heritage of fishing along its coast, recognised as some of the richest fishing grounds in United Kingdom waters.



Kilkeel Harbour circa 1920s;
~Photo Courtesy of Newry and Mourne Museum

Prior even to the Plantation of Ulster fishing boats from various parts of Great Britain and Ireland are recorded as having taken advantage of the bountiful fishing waters along the South Down coast. In his Description of Ardes Barony, in the County of Down, 1683, William Montgomery - grand-nephew of Sir Hugh Montgomery - wrote that "...all the Eastern coasts thereof abounds with fishes, as herrins in harvest; also Cod, Ling, Graylords (which are near as big as Cod), whiteings, Bavins, large dog fish, Haddocks, Mackrells, Lithes, Blockans, Lobsters and crabs..."

Ulster-Scots Fishing in the Kingdom of Mourne

It is thought that this availability of good fishing opportunities, coupled with the fertile ground is likely to have encouraged many Scots to settle in the Kingdom of Mourne.

Annalong Harbour; **Photo Courtesy of Annalong Harbour Watch**

Little information has survived about the early days of Ulster-Scots involvement in the Mourne fishing industry, but an interesting insight appears in 1744. That year Walter Harris wrote in his 'Ancient and Present State of Down' that 'Islealong' harbour is the best in the twelve miles of Mourne. Given Islealong was the Scottish sounding name for Annalong still fondly remembered by older folk in the area, it certainly indicates an Ulster-Scots presence and influence.

Fishing was and still is a tough job, requiring an ethos of hard work and commitment. The fishermen of Mourne are traditionally very independent minded and enjoy the freedom of the open water. All of these are renowned characteristics of the Ulster-Scots. Over the years, this unique blend of men who have laboured on land and sea has nurtured many customs and practices, quite uniquely associated with the Mourne fishing industry.

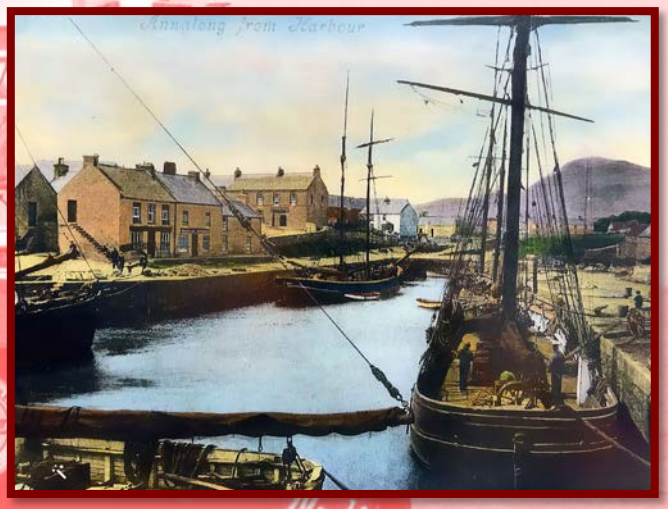
Kilkeel

Kilkeel Harbour; **Photo Courtesy of Mourne Drone**

Kilkeel harbour is now hame to the largest fishing fleet in Northern Ireland, and a great many of the fishermen who use it as their base are descended from Scots settlers.

Kilkeel harbour was established in the mid-1800s to cater for the larger boats that new technology and construction methods were creating. Before this small fishing boats were pulled up on to the beach at Derryogue and various other points, and fishing was often seasonal.

Annalong



Annalong Harbour back in the era of sailing ships

The village of 'Islealong' (Annalong) was once the principal port in South Down, a haven to fishing boats and, at one time, used to export granite and other products to the rest of the United Kingdom and beyond.

Like Kilkeel, many of the fishermen of Annalong can trace their roots back to the Scots settlers who arrived in the Mournes in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Connections remain...

Ulster-Scots fishermen have greatly influenced the fishing industry and the fishing community of the Kingdom of Mourne, and indeed todays fishermen still maintain strong connections with the fishermen and fishing ports of western Scotland. These strong ties across many generations continue to influence and enhance the Kingdom of Mourne.

The Ulster-Scots impact on Mourne Fishing

The legacy of those early Scots settlers in Mourne can be seen in many ways.

It can be found in the abundance of Scottish surnames among the crews on the boats in Kilkeel and Annalong harbours, in many of the names adorning the vessels of the fleet, the place names surrounding the harbours and even the Ulster-Scots names given to the birds and fish of the sea. Ulster-Scots influence is evidenced everywhere among Mourne's fishermen.

Scottish surnames of the Fishermen of Mourne

Many of the Ulster-Scots fishermen in Mourne have been involved in fishing for generations.

There has been a long tradition of sons following in the footsteps on from fathers, grandfathers and even great-grandfathers into the industry. In Mourne it's often said that 'fishing is in the blood'. Many Ulster-Scots surnames that are still common in the fishing industry in Kilkeel and Annalong today include Chambers, Gordon, McKibbin, Orr, Graham, Nicholson, McCullough, Patterson, McBride, Hanna, Murdock, Campbell, Wilson, McKee, Forsythe, Gracey, Stevenson, Brown and Glenny.

Proud Ulster-Scot and Fisherman Brian Chambers who has been involved in fishing in Mourne most of his life; **Photo Courtesy of Sea Source NI**

More Scottish Fishing Connections...

One of the most visual signs of the Scots influence on the fishing fleet is on the naming of some of the fishing boats of Mourne. While traditionally most boats would have been referred to as 'she' or 'her', it is not uncommon for the boats to be named after boys or simply named after a place or an idea. Here are just some boat names associated with Mourne fishing...

- Bonnie is the Scots word meaning pretty or beautiful and quite a number of boats over the years associated with Mourne have had this prefix, including the Bonnie Jane, Bonnie Roy, Bonnie Ethel, Bonnie Les, Bonnie May and Bonnie Ann.

The Steadfast owned by the Pattersons in Kilkeel;
Photo Courtesy of A Day in the Life of Kilkeel Harbour

- Another popular Scots name quite often seen on Mourne fishing boats is Isle, which is the Scots word for an Island. Here are a few, the Misty Isle, Green Isle, Lady Isle and Fair Isle.
- The Scots for boys and girls, Lads and Lassies are also familiar names associated with the Mourne fleet. Some of the better known ones include the Mourne Lass, Our Lass, The Willing Lad, Jack the Lad and the Ulster Lad.
- Fair is the Ulster-Scots term, which usually refers to pleasant weather and a number of boats in the harbour have been adorned with this name, including the Fairhavens, Fair Dawn and the Fair Wind.
- Strath is the Scots or Ulster-Scots word meaning 'Broad River Valley'. There have been a few of these in Kilkeel, including Strathmore, Strath Donnan and the Strath Gairloch.
- 'The Highland Queen' and 'The Green Brae' are another couple of fine examples of the Ulster-Scots influence on the names of the Mourne fishing boats.
- Biblical references which are also to be found amongst the fleet in Kilkeel and Annalong are names such as Amazing Grace, Immanuel and Steadfast Hope.
- It is also not unusual to see many of the boats over the years in Kilkeel harbour sporting emblems and crests, reflecting their strong Ulster-Scots and Scots connections.
- For generations over the 'Twelfth' period, quite a number of boats in Kilkeel and Annalong will traditionally display flags and colours, promoting their strong ties with Scotland and mainland Britain.

Familiar Places

Over the generations, the Ulster-Scots fishermen of Mourne have also given names to some of the familiar landmarks and features of the fishing harbours around Annalong and Kilkeel.

Local Kilkeel Harbour Historian Leslie Campbell pictured at the Quay Brae, Kilkeel Harbour

In Kilkeel, the hill that leads away from the Harbour is known as the Quay Brae.

The Winney Gap is where the wind is known to funnel down the brae to the mouth of Kilkeel harbour and catch the boats as they make their way out to say (Say is the Ulster-Scots word for Sea), Winney being the Scots word for windy.

Manus' Loanen is the steep little lane that leads from the harbour on to the Harbour Road and for generations, has been the pad that has taken many fishermen down to their boat.

In Ballymartin, Meeting House Lane and the Glen Loanen will both take you down to the shore, where at one time, fishermen were able to pull up and launch their boats.

On up the coast from Ballymartin is 'Selk Rock' named after the seals which can be seen on most days between tides sunbathing on the rocks. Selk Rock is one of the markers for fishermen and of course selk is the Ulster-Scots word for a seal.

Selk Rock, just outside Ballymartin; **Photo Courtesy of Adam Beck**

In Annalong, the river that runs into the harbour at one time was known as the 'burn' (Burn is the Ulster-Scots word meaning a stream or river) and the steep hill that wound its way up from the harbour to the village has often been referred to as the Brae.

Annalong River or The Burn as it was once known in full flood as it flows into Annalong Harbour. Photo Courtesy of Annalong Harbour Watch

On the coast between Annalong and Glassdrumman, you will find Sherby Beach. Thought to be the Ulster-Scots word for Share Bay, where folklore suggests at one time the ill-gotten games of smugglers and shipwrecks were shared out between the locals. Sherby Beach is also a well known marker for local fishermen.

Near Sherby Beach, the Ladies 'Burn' River flows into the sea, another fine example of the Ulster-Scots influence found all around the coasts of Mourne.

Dunavel Forth just outside Kilkeel and the Wee Bank were markers used by local fishermen back in the day to navigate along the coast. Forth is the Ulster -Scots word for a Fort.

The Smuggler's Pad

Scents fur the Countess,
Claret fur the Earl,
Silks for their Lady Dochter;
Laces fur her lass;
Tay fur the Rector
Frae the China caravan,
An' brandy fur the Colonel,
Fur he's a fechtin man.
Silks fur her Ladyship
Webs 'at gleam an' shine;
Aa' the southern simmer
In His Lordship's wine.
Goold fur the sailor-mon
Silver fur the lad,
Them wus days o' plenty,
Oan the Smugglers' Pad.

Based on a poem by Richard Rowley, 1940

King William has a special place in the folklore and hearts of many Ulster-Scots across Mourne as he is credited by many as having secured the Plantation of Ulster and the future of Scots in Ulster for centuries to come. One of the lesser known smaller harbours found on the edge of the Kingdom of Mourne is William's Harbour, near the Bloody Bridge, Newcastle. It is said to be named after King William III and the Williamite troops he landed there in 1689 prior to the Battle of the Boyne.

Fish, Birds and Craters of the Say

The Fishermen of Mourne have many names and descriptions for the creatures, fish and birds of the sea.

Some of these are also common in western Scotland and other parts of Ulster, while others may be unique to the Kingdom of Mourne and indeed, some are peculiar to Kilkeel and Annalong. Many of these, but not exclusively so, have their origins in Scots and Ulster-Scots...

Fish

Fasch – Common name for Fish
Gabbock – Dog Fish
Blockan – Coal Fish
Lythe – Pollock
Picky – Small Fish
Hern – Herring
Cauld Iron – Referred to Salmon as they were bad luck
Bavin – Sea Fish
Dab / Fluke – Small Flat Fish
Baahiu – Young Pollack
Knowd – Grey Gurnard
Scalder – Jellyfish

Small Prawns referred to as Gellicks; **Photo Courtesy of Sea Source NI**

Other Craters of the Say

Crubin – Edible Crab
Partin – Inedible Crab
Wulluks – Periwinkles/welks
Small Prawns – Gellicks
Selk – Seal
Hernhog – Pilot whale that followed shoals of hern

A Sea Gull referred to as a Scurry; **Photo Courtesy of Sea Source NI**

Say Birds

Scurry – Seagull
Whaup – Curlew
Hern Cran – Crane
Sey Swalla – Tern
Cooter-neb – Puffin
Gant - Gannett

Crafts, Practices and Culture

Fishing was often seasonal and weather dependent and to supplement incomes, many fishermen in Mourne had other jobs. Some were part-time farmers and tradesmen, others at times would harvest wulluks and crabs on the shore to supplement their income.

Gaitherin Wulluks

Wulluks is the Ulster-Scots word for whelks, a type of sea snail.

These were to be found in the rock pools along the Mourne coastline and many of the families of fishermen were able to earn an extra few bob gaitherin wulluks on the shore. At times when the fishing wasn't good, any extra income was very welcome. In more modern times young lads and lassies, particularly around Kilkeel, were able to earn pocket money by gathering buckets of wulluks between the tides.

A creel (Lobster Pot) complete with a freshly caught crubin or crab

Crubin and Crubin Cleeks!

Forbye (as well as) fishing for sea fish, many small boats have been involved in fishing for crubin for generations.

Known locally as 'crubin', edible crabs were a much sought after meal and were seen as a treat for many families.

Wee boats or skiffs using 'creels' baited with fish have traditionally fished for crabs and lobsters close to the Mourne coastline, with creel being the Ulster-Scots word for a Cage or Lobster Pot. Sometimes crabs could be caught using a long hook or a 'crubin cleek' to hoke (dig) the crabs out from under the rocks along the shore which kept you at a safe distance from the crab's claws, when you were wheekin (snatching) them out from under a rock. (Cleek is the Ulster-Scots word for a sharp hook).

A box of fresh crubin ready for the market

Crubin Point, near Derryogue, just outside Kilkeel was a favourite spot along the coast for hunting for crabs among the rocks and a great sport for young lads!

Ulster-Scots Fisherman and Net Mender Kenny Pue, mending nets at Kilkeel Harbour

Nets and Net Mending

Much of modern fishing now involves the use of nets.

When nets get caught or 'fanked' on rocks or propellors, it is important that you have those that have the skills and craftsmanship to repair them. Fanked is the Ulster-Scots word meaning tangled. The wires that haul up the fishing nets were often called 'warps', Ulster-Scots for 'wraps'. The 'Dures' (doors) were the two trawl doors which were used to open the nets. This very old tradition of mending fishing nets in Mourne still survives in the Kingdom of Mourne today and is a remnant of bygone days of yore, carried on by among others, many Ulster-Scots craftsmen.

Weights and Measurements

Reflecting the close ties and proximity to the west coast of Scotland, many Scots words and terms for weights and measurements are to be found in use in the fishing Industry in Mourne...

A wheen of Kilkeel Hern; **Photo Courtesy of Sea Source NI**

- **Maise- Approximately 600 herrings**
- **Cran- Approximately 4 baskets or boxes of herring**
- **A Wheen of Fasch- A few fish**
- **Hog- Shoal of Herring**

Hern Boats in Kilkeel Harbour Circa 1920s; **Photo Courtesy of Newry and Mourne Museum**

Fishing Boats

Before today's modern boats with high powered engines came into being, most of the fishing in Mourne was done with small sail boats.

In the late 1800s Manx originated sailing boats called Nickeys were actually built in Kilkeel, but they were known to many in the Mourne fishing industry by their Scots name, Buckies.

Several Ulster-Scots words came to describe parts of the sail boat. A small sail was known as a lug, lug being the Ulster-Scots word for ear. Local fishermen in Mourne would also refer to the stern of the boat as the 'Down Aff', with Aff being the Ulster-Scots word for off.

Cadgers and Hern Hawkers

When fresh fish, particularly herring, were landed at the harbour in Kilkeel or Annalong, most would have been salted and taken off to towns and cities for sale.

Salting or Rowsing Hern at Kilkeel Harbour in the early years of the harbour

Local needs would have been filled by individuals known as cadgers and hern hawkers. Armed with handcarts or on bicycles, they would have taken small amounts to sell at street corners or in the countryside to farms and homesteads.

Traditionally cadgers were 'auld hauns' who made a wheen o' pound selling fish where and when they could get it. In contrast, Hern hawkers were usually younger lads, often with an entrepreneurial spirit, who would have taken fish around the doors of the neighbourhood, making a few bob for themselves and their families.

Cadger is the Ulster-Scots word meaning someone who sells goods from door to door, while a Hawker is the Ulster-Scots word meaning a pedlar who travels about selling goods.

Kilkeel Fisherman Bobby Maginnis carrying on the age-old tradition of hern fishing off the Mourne coast

Hern Fishing

During the autumn time, huge shoals of herring annually arrived off the coast of Mourne.

This occurrence would have been awaited with great anticipation, with locals keeping watch from the shore for signs of their imminent arrival. Diving seabirds or oil on the surface of the water signalled that herring were now off the coast of Mourne.

Another sign was that of the Hern Hog. This was the local Ulster-Scots name for the pilot whale, a creature which followed shoals of herring and when seen surfacing, caused great excitement in the local community.

For many years hern fishing was one of the main stays of the fishing industry in Mourne. Due to the quota system and the continual reduction of numbers permitted to fish, it is now very limited and now is only carried out by a small number of boats and mainly by part-time fishermen. Hern fishing has been long-time associated with Kilkeel and Kilkeel folk have been known the country over as the 'Hern Gutters'. The Hern Gutters Festival in Newcastle and the Fish Festival in Kilkeel celebrates the heritage of this great tradition of fishing.

Gadgies

While the fishermen of Kilkeel and the wider community were known as Hern Gutters, Annalong fishermen were known as Gadgies, the Ulster-Scots word for 'fellows' or 'men'.

One old Annalong fisherman recalled that only those born along the Shore in Annalong were 'real Gadgies'. Today, the term Gadgie is still used to describe people from Annalong.

'Twas on an autumn evening
She set sail from the quay.
A-heading for the 'Churches'
Her prospects there to see.
A hern hog came up in front
And tumbled on his head
And soon she was upon the spot
The gallant 'Go Ahead'.

Based on a poem by J. Rooney

Scottish boat, The Moray Endeavour, berthed in Kilkeel Harbour

Living Scottish Connections...

For generations there have been strong connections between the fishermen of South Down and the west coast of Scotland.

It is not unusual still today to see Scottish boats landing or sheltering in Kilkeel harbour or for Kilkeel boats to be found in Scottish fishing ports.

Mourne and Scotland...

Many shared friendships and family ties have been established over the years between the fishermen of Scotland and Mourne, and indeed over the years, many Scots fishermen have found employment in Mourne and settled here.

Many of those who have found work and settled here are simply known by the locals with the prefix 'Scotch', giving them names such as Scotch Rab, Scotch John and Scotch Jimmy. There is a strong Scottish influence in the port of Kilkeel, where you can even find a Scottish themed bar and restaurant, called the 'Tam o' Shanter'. There is also a long tradition of boats being bought and sold between the ports of Scotland and Kilkeel. In times gone by local Mourne fishermen travelled to Scotland to work on boats when work locally was scarce. Over the centuries the ties between the Kingdom of Mourne and Scotland have been very much strengthened and renewed by the fishing communities on both sides of the Irish Sea. Today this connection is still stronger than ever.

Donald McDonald WW1

The Scottish connections even brought visitors into local political events.

During the Third Home Rule period, a young Scottish fisherman who worked in Kilkeel as a cooper with Mr. James McKee, fish merchant, named Donald McDonald joined the Ulster Volunteer Force there. The young man, believed to be from Peterhead, even followed his local friends into the ranks of the 13th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles to serve in the Great War. Noted as being a crack shot, he was killed in action on 17th March 1916 aged just 23. Donald McDonald is remembered on Peterhead War Memorial.

Peterhead War Memorial

Seafaring Superstitions and Folklore

Seafaring folk all across the world are renowned for being superstitious, and the fishing community of Mourne are no different.

The fishermen of Mourne including many Ulster-Scots have long held superstitions that have lasted for generations, many of which are shared with the fishermen of Scotland, and some of which are thought to have originated in Scotland. These superstitions have melded and combined into a plethora of customs and traditions and have always been an important part of Scottish culture, particularly in days gone by.

Some of the superstitions that have been gathered from local fishermen and their families are...

- If you met a red headed woman on the way to the harbour, you would turn and go back home as that was considered extremely bad luck.
- It is considered bad luck to have a woman on a fishing boat.
- Certain words are to be avoided at sea especially crawling creatures, such as rats, rabbits and pigs. Pigs were referred to onboard as 'curly tailed fellas' and rats referred to as 'long-tailed fellas'.
- If a salmon was caught in the net, which was considered bad luck, someone would shout 'cauld iron' to ward off the bad luck. (Cauld is the Ulster-Scots word for Cold).
- Whistling was not allowed on the boat as you might whistle up a wind, however, if it was dead calm, you may be able to whistle very quietly to encourage a slight breeze.
- Back in the day, being the third boat to leave the harbour was not good, so two may have left side by side.
- Monday was considered not a good day to be the first boat to leave the harbour.
- Borrowing among boats was avoided and they would never give away anything on a Monday as it's giving away luck, so don't ask a boat at the harbour to give you fish on a Monday.

The Red Haired Woman

The skipper's standing at the door
Inside the tea is wet
The sky is swept, the morning's fine
The glass is high and set
There's fish galore off Derryogue
The gannets dip like mad
The wind is fair, there's shoals out there
We'll fill the skiff, Jim lad
For Jimmy's Pat he saw the hog
A-blowing off the quay
Go tell your ma to hurry up
Or we'll be last away
The shore road echoes with seaboots
Along the Well Brae
'I feel it in my bones my lad
This is our lucky day.'
'But da .....' 'Oh never mind the talk
Just hurry out of there.'
'But da, I thought you'd want to know
There's a woman with red hair.'
'Come in ower that and close the door!
There's no more to be said
If hern were swimming up the road
I'm going to my bed.'

- An open handed fisherman will never want.

A fishing boat leaving Kilkeel Harbour;
Photo courtesy of Black Space Digital Agency

- On a Monday morning, a fisherman will laughingly refuse to give you a light for your pipe, for he would be giving away his luck for the week.
- There were lucky and unlucky people to whom to sell fish, and it was the custom not to sell all the catch, but to leave some fish in the boat.
- When a present of fish was made, they were lifted backwards high over the head from the boat and not given straightforwardly.
- Monday was considered not a good day to be the first boat to leave the harbour.
- Old fishermen would not clean their boats until the end of the season, or even wipe the fish-scales from their boots.

- An unlucky boat would try to steal the luck of another boat by rubbing alongside it.
- When at sea, you must be careful not to point at anything, and you must avoid turning the boat or casting a net against the sun.
- There is one pleasant little custom, which keeps the fishermen in touch with Mourne, even if he is out of sight of his mountain marks – The last stone put into the vessel when in ballast must be a grey stone – a granite pebble from the shore.
- Gants flying is a good sign for fishing. (Gants is the Ulster-Scots word for Gannetts)

A Gant / Gannett flying off the Mourne coast - A good sign for fishing;
Photo Courtesy of Annalong Harbour Watch

Old Fishing Sayings and words

The fishing industry has many words and phrases unique to its environment.

In Mourne many of these have become a daily staples of those within the local industry, the surrounding fishing community and even far beyond. More than a few have very much an Ulster-Scots flavour. Many of the 'turn of phrase' below were gathered directly from local Ulster-Scots fishermen...

A hasky day at Annalong Harbour; **Photo Courtesy of Annalong Harbour Watch.**

- Acting the Cod - Someone who is fooling about. (Cod is the Ulster-Scots word for fool)
- An auld haun – Term for an old friend at sea (auld is the Ulster-Scots word for old and haun the Ulster-Scots word for hand)
- Fanked Up – The net caught in the propellor (Fanked is the Ulster-Scots word for tangled)
- Wind 'er – Turn the boat in
- Snapper – Sometimes used to described a good fisherman (Snapper is a Scots word for a dock worker)
- A Hasky day – Rough Weather (Hasky is the Ulster-Scots word for windy weather)
- Under yer tick – Keep things under your mattress (Tick is the Ulster-Scots word for mattress)
- Pan-Drill – Weight on the wires referenced to the amount of fish being hauled on the net
- Gie ye a spiel at the wheel – To give someone a helping hand at the wheel of the boat. (Spiel is the Ulster-Scots word for Lending a Hand).
- As thin as a spent hern – A spent hern is a herring that has released all of its eggs.
- Is you gan home – Are you going home? (Gan is the Ulster-Scots word for going)
- Rowl the milk out o' yer tay! – A rough day on the boat (Rowl is the Ulster-Scots word for Roll and Tay is the Ulster-Scots word for tea).
- Fresh'n – A storm is picking up (Fresh is the Ulster-Scots word for a flood)
- Marrow – Ulster-Scots Word for a mate – The fishing port of Whitehaven in the north of England was often referred to as 'Marrow-land'.

The Sabbath

Immanuel VIII owned by William McDowell returning to Kilkeel Harbour;
Photo Courtesy of A Day in the Life of Kilkeel Harbour

In the not too distant past, it was the practice of most boats in Mourne to observe the Sabbath and many boats kept a Bible on board for the use of the crew.

This was particularly true of many Ulster-Scots, whose roots were steeped in Scottish Presbyterianism. Most businesses in Mourne, including fish markets would have closed on Sundays and the boats would have been tied up in the dock. Even leaving the harbour before midnight on a Sunday was much frowned upon. Many boats even had biblical names and references.

One of the biggest Sabbath days of the year for the fishing community is the Harvest of the Sea Services in local churches, when the church or Meeting House is colourfully decorated up with nets, ships flags and life rings. Traditional hymns of the sea are sung such as 'For those in peril of the sea' and 'Will your anchor hold' and is largely attended by local fishermen. This tradition of Harvest of the Sea services is still a very well attended and enjoyed annual service today here in Mourne.

In more modern times while some boats and crews still observe the Sabbath, many now work with the tides and can be seen leaving Kilkeel on a Sunday afternoon. It was also considered very bad luck and frowned upon to fish on one of the holiest days of the year, Good Friday.

Will your Anchor Hold

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?
We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love.

A Tradition of Service and Sacrifice...

Giving its strong fishing and seafaring heritage, it's not surprising that the Kingdom of Mourne has had strong connections to the Royal Navy and has given much service over the years.

Many fishermen, including Ulster-Scots from across Mourne have served in the Royal Navy and the Royal Navy Reserve and the fishing boats of Mourne have played a vital role during two World Wars, in helping to keep the nation fed. During the Great War in particular considerable numbers enlisted to serve in the British Navy. It was service not without cost, and in the period from September 1914 to May 1915 alone no less than five men would die in that duty.

HMS Goliath

Able Seaman James Kelso

A typical example is Able Seaman James Kelso.

Born at Glassdrummond Annalong in 1893, James had grown up with the boats of the Mourne coast, and undoubtedly influenced by both that and his father's part service in the Navy, he enlisted into the Royal Navy in March 1911. Upon the outbreak of the Great War James found himself in service on the HMS Goliath. On the 13th of May 1915, the HMS Goliath was sunk during the Dardanelles campaign. James lost his life alongside 570 other of the ships 700 crewmen. His memory is marked on the Plymouth Naval Memorial and in Kilhorne Parish Church Annalong.

World War One Memorial in Kilhorne Parish Church, Annalong;
Photo © DtMcC

U-Boats

The Schooner 'Earnest'

The fishing industry locally also saw the iconic German submarines known as U-boats play a role in the Mournes, with several incidents during the Great War.

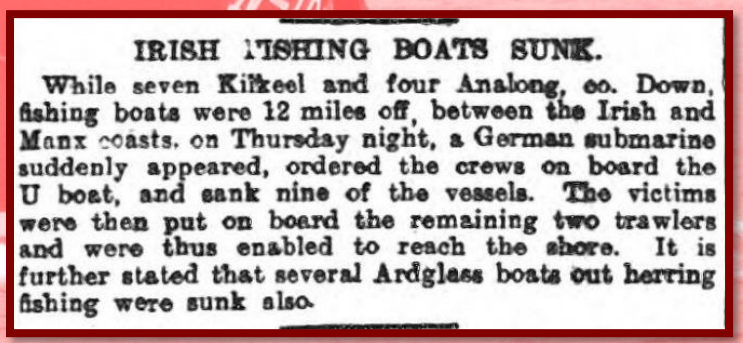
The first was in June 1915 when the Schooner 'Edith' was sank by a submarine on the Cork Coast in disputed circumstances. The schooner crew claimed in the aftermath that the submarine was flying the Union Jack. The crew, Thomas Doyle, James Cunningham and Thomas MacDonald were all from Kilkeel, and all three survived uninjured.

In May 1917 another commercial vessel was sunk, this time the 'Earnest'. It had been transporting coal to Dublin, when a German U-Boat surfaced and ordered all aboard to abandon the ship. In remarkable, but quite common, courtesy, the German U-boat captain apologised to 'Earnest' Captain James Ferguson for sinking his vessel!

The UB64...

The most astounding incident however was that of 30th May 1918, when a flotilla of no less than nine fishing boats were scuttled by German forces on board U-boat the UB64.

After surfacing in the midst of the fleet, the crews of all nine ships were ordered via loud hailer to immediately abandon them and head to shore via their punts. One boat had no punt, with the crew of the 'Never Can Tell' having to spend over an hour on the German submarine before being able to transfer onto another ship. In their short 'visit', the crew were invited to share both cigarettes and gin with German soldiers! The Mourne boats destroyed were the 'Never Can Tell', the 'Sparkling Wave', the 'Lloyd', the 'Cyprus', the 'Jane Gordon', the 'Honey Bee' and the 'Marianne McCrum'.



IRISH FISHING BOATS SUNK.

While seven Kilkeel and four Analong, co. Down, fishing boats were 12 miles off, between the Irish and Manx coasts, on Thursday night, a German submarine suddenly appeared, ordered the crews on board the U boat, and sank nine of the vessels. The victims were then put on board the remaining two trawlers and were thus enabled to reach the shore. It is further stated that several Ardglass boats out herring fishing were sunk also.

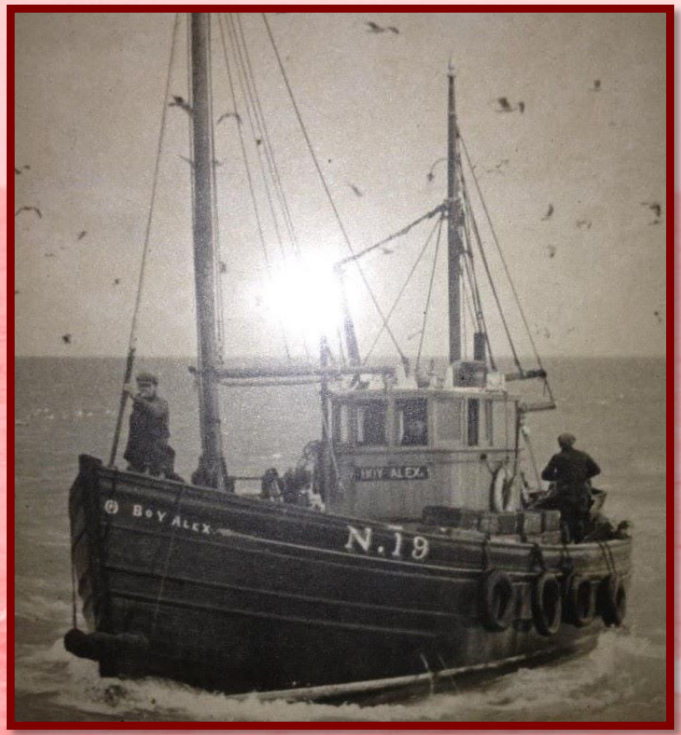
'The Boy Alex'

Sergeant Alex Newell from Kilkeel who won the Distinguished Service Cross while serving with the Americans in World War One

In 1939 the Northern Ireland government introduced a scheme to assist fishermen which subsidised the purchase of new and more advanced fishing vessels.

The first boat to be purchased under the new system came to the Mournes to Mr Tom Newell of Stanley Terrace in Kilkeel. He imported the vessel from Scotland at the subsidised cost of £1800, which at almost 50ft, an engine speed of 800rmp, a four blade propeller of 36" and a cabin that could accommodate six men, was vastly superior to the small outdated boat he had previous used. Mr Newell was an ex serviceman in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, and decided to name the new boat after another member of the military, his brother Alex.

Sergeant Alex Newell had left Kilkeel for the United States many years previously, and after the outbreak of the Great War had enlisted into the US Infantry.



'The Boy Alex' - Named for its owner's brother, Sergeant Alex Newell;
Photo Courtesy of A Day in the Life of Kilkeel Harbour

While serving in France, Alex led a squad of nine men through enemy lines, in the process capturing 33 prisoners, five machine guns and rescuing a wounded fellow Sergeant. For this great action he received the Distinguished Service Cross, the American equivalent to the Victoria Cross. The story appeared in the Belfast Telegraph under the headline 'Boat named after Brave Soldier', and the 'Boy Alex' would later feature in advertising for the vessels.

Poem and Song

There is a rich tradition of poetry and song associated with the fishing industry in the Kingdom of Mourne.

Some of this can be attributed to the need to spend long hours and days away from home and the need to fill rare and precious moments of rest and free time. Much was written with the use of the Ulster-Scots language.

The Fishermen o' Mourne

The history o' Mourne
Wus scrietrit oan the seas
By the men wha sailed in schooners –
The McKibbins an' McKees;
By the Purdys, Carens an' Skillens,
By Chambers, Campbells, Dorans;
By the Kearneys, Hills an' Gordons –
The sailormen o' Mounre

Monies the Mourne sailor mon
Haes fun a watery grave,
An' noo their banes lee bleachin'
Aneath the restless wave.
But lang we'll houl their memr'
In yarns an' aye in sang,
The sailormen o' Mourne
Frae Kirkeel an' Islalong.
(Based on a poem by Tom Porter)

Kilkeel Harbour Circa 1920s; **Photo Courtesty of Newry and Mourne Museum**

The Pad along the Mourne

Did ye ivver tak a dander on the pad alang the Mourne
Whaur the say's a-dashin on the rokes alow?
Did ye ivver feel the fresh saat air, a-blowin frae Kilkeel
Kiss yer cheeks tae make wee rosies on the glow?
Did ye ivver see the herrin fleet a-sailin' in the bay
Dae ye mine the smell o' turf – reek turning byue?
Ye'll see it whun we dander on the pad alang the Mourne
Gin ye're Ulster boarn, 'twll taak o hame tae you.
It's proud I am o' Canady, whaur a hae made ma hame
This sonsie lan o kinsmen leal an kine,
But whiles ma hairt is langin fur the days o auld lang syne
Whun blithesome scenes w idea freen come tae mine.
Och, the perfume o the honey-suckle growein on the Mournes
An' the heather whaur Slieve Donald rears his heid
An' the cryin o' the gulls, as they circle o'er the say
Ach, the'll haunt me aa me days till A am deid.
An yinst mair A see in memory the moountains o' the Mourne
Whaur the burds are chauntin oan the whinny knows
An the gloaming shaddas faain on the deaerest lan' A lowe
Ach, A'm hairt-sair fur a dance whaur the honeysuckle grows.

(Based on a song by Edith M. Mackay)

A Wee Taste of Hamely Cooking

Herring with Apple and Dulse Salad (Recipe by Paula McIntyre)

Hern is a favourite fish to eat here in the Kingdom of Mourne. This recipe uses hern and a salad of apple and dulse, which is a dried seaweed.

Ingredients

2 Herrin fillets per person; 1 tablespoon canola oil; 1 oz butter; 1 cup dulse simmered with knob of butter; 1 eating apple, quartered; 2-3 scallions (spring onions) – finely sliced; Handful of parsley – chopped; Dressing made with 1 tablespoon cider vinegar and 3 tablespoon canola oil; Salt and pepper; Wheaten or wholemeal bread to serve.

The Wather an The Tide

The fisher fowk, tha gae tae sea tae bring thair ketch tae shore,
Nae matter whut the time o year, they jaist cannae ignore
Twa different things will aye divine if they gae nor bide,
Fur fisher fowk wull aye pay heed tae the Wather an the Tide.
In wunter time the prawns are whut the fishin boats wull lan,
Frae Patricks Day , they'll chase the cod til it gets tae April's en.
Then Prawns agane tae August time an summer's saison turns
Tae autumn time an tae the Isle O' Man tae chase the hern.
Then bak tae prawns through Wunter til the year runs roon agane,
But aa the time the Wather an the Tide will wax an wane.
Thaur's times ye'd rather bide at hame, stay bae yer ain front dure,
But still ye laive, tae shoot an haul, tae ketch an bring tae shore
The prawns or hern, the codlin, the colie nor the saithe,
An mine an laive the brunties thair tae growe a bit forbye.
An thair'll aye be plunty needin daein, tae keep the boat jaist richt,
An nets tae men an stow readie tae shoot bae day nor nicht.
The fishin is a teuch auld life, nae fur the faint o' hairt,
The sea's aye full o' danger, nae metter whut the airt.
But whan yer stannin ain the deck ain a bricht caul autumn morn,
An the sun is risin oor the bow, in the first spark o the dawn.
Or ye see a schuil o dolphins swimming bae ye as ye watch,
Or see the selks , as fly as jailers, tryin tae steal yer ketch!!
Shur thair's times thairs nae place in the Worl ye'd rather hae tae bide,
Than ain the sea whaur aa is ruled bae the Wather an the Tide.

Roy Ferguson 24/05/2022

The method

Slice the apple into matchsticks. Add to a bowl with scallions, parsley and shredded dulse. Toss together with the cider dressing. Lightly season the cleaned herrings. Heat the oil in pan until hot. Fry the herring skin side down for 2-3 minutes until the skin crisp. Add the butter. Turn the fish and lightly cook the flesh side. Turn off the heat and allow to rest. Serve hot with the dulse salad and wheaten bread.

Ulster-Scots Chef Paula McIntyre with one of her fish dishes;
Photo Courtesy of Paula McIntyre.

'THA FIEL'

Ulster-Scots Farming in the Kingdom of Mourne

A large proportion of farmers in the Kingdom of Mourne can trace their roots back to the Scots settlers who arrived in the area during the 17th and 18th centuries.

During the intervening centuries these farmers have flourished and prospered, and they have contributed hugely to the history and heritage of the farming industry and community across the Mournes.

17th century Scottish Settlers (Living History Ireland); **Photo @DtMcC**

Scottish Farmers Arrive

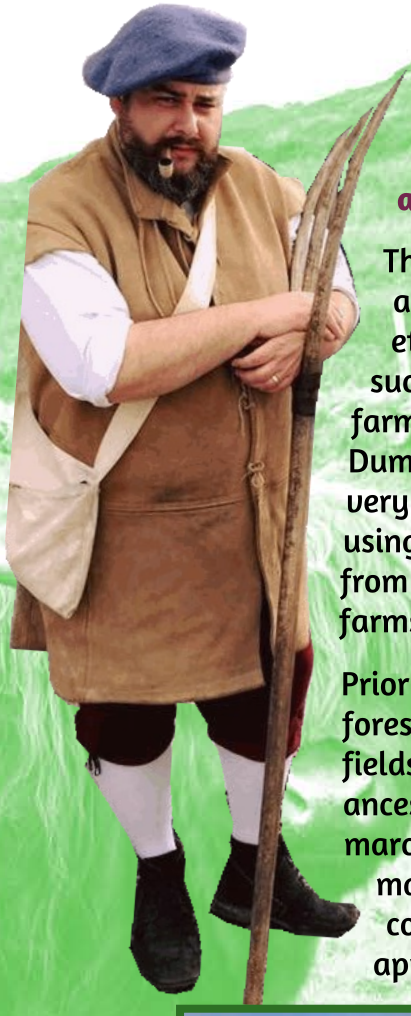
In the early part of the 1600s, following the Plantation of Ulster, a small number of Scots farmers are thought to have settled in the Mournes.

These numbers were augmented by further waves of Scottish settlers in the mid-1600s, but more significantly in the years after the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, when the largest numbers of Scots settled in the Kingdom.

Some of these Scottish farming families are recorded as having leased lands in Mourne during the early 1700s...

Robert Adair – Ballykeel
Alexander Agnew – Moneydarraghmore
Arthur Atkinson – Moneydarraghbeg
James Austen – Aughnahoory
John Carson – Ballinran
John Erwin – Ballykeel
Samuel Ferguson - Drumcro
James Hanna – Aughnahoory
George Houston – Ballyveamore
Henry Hunter – Ballymageough
John McKee – Derryogue
James McKibbin – Moneydarraghbeg
James McKnight – Brackney
John Millar – Dunavil
William Mitchell – Derryogue
William Morris – Leitrim
James Newell – Corcreaghan
John Nicholson – Derryogue
John Orr – Dunavil
John Spence – Glassdrummond

Over three hundred years later, like their fishermen neighbours, many of these Scottish family names still survive and significant numbers still have strong connections to farming in the very same areas into which their ancestors arrived.



17th Century Ulster-Scots Farmer
(Living History Ireland)

A hardy breed

The Scots farmers were a hardy breed, they were used to a harsh environment, more so than their English contemporaries, giving them a distinct advantage when they came to settle in rural Ulster.

They were pioneers, people who were venturing into new and unknown environments, who brought with them an ethos of hard work. They had a determination to make a success of their new lives in Ulster. Many of these Scottish farmers came from the lowlands of Scotland, particularly Dumfries and Galloway, where the climate and terrain was very similar to that of the Mournes. They cleared the land, using the trees that they cut down and stone that they took from the ground, to build cabins and to secure their fields and farms.

Prior to the arrival of the Scots, much of Ulster was heavily forested and impassable and few areas were enclosed as fields or farms. In the succeeding years, these Scots and their ancestors helped transform the landscape in Mourne, marching the fields with hedges and granite stone ditches to mark out their own farms and fields and criss-cross the countryside, giving the Kingdom of Mourne its unique appearance.

The Mourne Landscape criss-crossed with stone ditches; **Photo Courtesy of Blank Space Digital Agency**

Bringing New techniques

On their journey from Scotland, many of these farmers brought with them their own Scottish livestock and farming tools and began planting their own new crops and implementing new farming techniques.

A Scottish Black Face Sheep grazing in the Mournes; **Photo Courtesy of Adam Beck**

One good example of a farming technique introduced to Mourne in the 1700s from Scotland was the Barn Threshing Machine. This could be turned by horses walking in a circle and sheaves were fed into the machine, where a revolving drum with beaters knocked the seeds out of the heads of grain. Mechanical threshers were developed in Scotland in the 18th century and could be turned by hand or using water or steam power.

Clydesdale Horses making an appearance at the Schomberg Society's 11th Night Pageant, Kilkeel; **Photo @DtMcC**

New Breeds and New Names

Over the years, the Scots and Ulster-Scots introduced new animals and breeds to farming in Mourne. Some of the most well known in Mourne include the Clydesdale Horse, the Scottish Blackface Sheep and the Border Collie Dog.

In the early years following the Scots settlement of Mourne, the Clydesdale horse was introduced and was ideal for agriculture helping break up the ground, pulling better Scots ploughs and making cultivation easier.

The Scottish Blackface Sheep were hardy animals and well suited to the hilly terrain here in the Kingdom of Mourne and are still to be seen grazing across the slopes of the Mournes today.

Perhaps one of the most famous farm dogs, the Border Collie has its origins in the Scottish Borders and is today to be found in farms all across Mourne and Ulster.

A Quare Spake…

"The Scotch element has been conspicuous in agricultural and industrial enterprise…" – Estyn Evans, 'Mourne Country', Referring to the Ulster-Scots Community in Mourne.

As well as bringing new animals and breeds to Mourne, the Scots also used their own words to describe their farm animals. Many of these words are still in use today in Mourne.

This includes...

Cows - coos, kye or kettle
Moiley – Hornless Cow
Young calves – Sookie
Drapped Cawf – New Born Calf
Baists – Beasts/Animals
Yo – Ewe/Female Sheep
Yearauld – A year old sheep
Jorey – Weakling of the Litter

Moiley Cattle grazing on the lower Mournes; **Photo Courtesy of Adam Beck.**

Tipp – Ram
Houn' - Dog
Doag/Dug – Dog
Colly – Dog
Bagle – Small Dog
Banty – Hen
Cuddy – Horse

They also brought new descriptive words and give Ulster-Scots names to the local wildlife, insects and birds.

These include ...

A Brock or Badger

Birds:
Craw – Crow
Wullie Wagtail - Wagtail
Yornies – Yellowhammer
Whincheckers– Stonechats
Snipe - Heatherbleat
Pyet – Magpie
Mavis – Thrush
Pee-Weep – Lapwing

Insects:
Bum Bee – Bumble Bee
Cleg – Horse Fly
Flay - Fly
Eariewig – Earwig
Slaters – Woodlouse
Midgies – Midgets
Clock – Beetle/Cockroach

Local Wildlife and Small Animals:
Brock – Badger
Todd - Fox
Moose – Mouse
Hurchin – Hedgehog
Rebbit – Rabbit

Similar to animals and wildlife, the Scots and Ulster-Scots locally also gave their own names to some of the flowers, plants, trees and shrubs native to the Mourne area. Some of these are still in regular use today. Others have long since ceased to be used or are only remembered by the older generations.

Crops:

Corn – Oats
Aipple – Apple
Kale – Cabbage
Scallions – Onions
Neeps – Turnips
Purdas – Potatoes
Crap – Crop
Lint – Flax
Strow - Straw

The Plantin at Jimmy Donaldsons Farm at Ballinran

Trees and Shrubs:

Whins – Gorse
The Rowan Tree – Mountain Ash Tree
Fir Tree – Any Coniferous Tree
Haw Bush – Hawthorn
Bush – Shrub or Small Tree
Scrog – Scrubby Woodland
Fairy Thorn – A Hawthorn tree standing alone in an open field
Plantin – A copse of trees
Sprit - Rushes

Plants:

Docken – The Common Dock Plant
Blaeberry – Blueberry or Bilberry
Gress – Grass
Bracken – Fern
Briers – Thorny Stems
Scraw – Rough Grass/ Sods
Brammle – Bramble/ Blackberry
Thristle – Thistle

Cutting Gress is highly mechanised today in the Mournes; **Photo Courtesy of Mourne Drone**

Ulster-Scots Farming Field Names

Paul Campbell pictured at the Big Holme Field on his farm at Riverside Farm, Kilkeel

Fields were traditionally bounded or marched by stone ditches or wooden pailin posts, many had a sheugh or a drain at the bottom to run off excess water.

As the Ulster-Scots farmers in Mourne established their farms and divided them into fiels (fields), traditionally they would have given each field its own name. Some would have Scots and Ulster-Scots origins while others were simply descriptive or just named after the owners of the fields.

Some of these included:

- **The Plantin – A field containing a copse of trees**
- **The Hulla – A field in a flat area between two hills**
- **The Big Holme – A large field in a flat area beside a river**
- **The Meda Field – A field normally used for grass**
- **The Wee Field – A small field**
- **The Tap Field – The top field**
- **The Plan – A field or enclosed area on a mountain**
- **The Moss Field – A wet or boggy field**
- **Scott's Field – Named after its previous owner**
- **Irvine's Bog – A wet marshy field, named after its owner**
- **The Jib – Triangular field**
- **The Winney Field – A field with gorse bushes**
- **The Wee Holme - A small flat field beside a river**

A Five Bar Gate on the Aughnahoory Road, Kilkeel

Connecting many of these fields around the traditional farm would have been a small country track or lane that the Ulster-Scots called a loanen.

Today field entrances have been widened to accommodate large tractors and other machinery, but traditionally all across the Mournes, field entrances were two large pillars with a five bar gate. For some these pillars and gate were once considered the unofficial symbol of the Ulster countryside.

Ulster-Scots Farming Buildings, Tools and Machinery

Two Ulster-Scots Farming Inventors have contributed greatly to the modernisation of farming not just in Ulster, but across the entire world.

Harry Ferguson

Harry Ferguson was born in 1884 near Dromore in County Down, an Ulster-Scot who became famous for inventing the three point linkage system for tractors which is still in use today.

William Hanna with his Wee Grey Fergie taking part in the Schomberg Society's Annual 11th Night Pageant in Kilkeel; **Photo @DtMcC**

Amazingly, Ferguson was also the first man to fly in Ireland having won a competition in Newcastle in 1910 when he flew along Newcastle Strand. He also invented the very famous Ferguson Tractor, fondly known as 'The Wee Grey Fergie'. Today the 'Fergie' is still a regular sight and favourite at vintage shows in Mourne and beyond.

An old raiper owned by Robert McClenaghan from Ballinran;
Photo Courtesy of Adam Beck

Cyrus McCormick

Cyrus McCormick was born in 1809 in Virginia, USA, descended from Ulster-Scots settlers who had hailed from Ballygawley in Co. Tyrone.

McCormick became famous for designing and building the first practical reaping machine, allowing farmers to harvest grain faster and cheaper than ever before. In Mourne, these reapers were known by their Ulster-Scots name as a 'raiper'.

Ulster-Scots Phrases and Practices on the Farm

There are many jobs, chores, activities and general farming practices that over the years have been given their own unique Ulster-Scots term or name.

From moving animals to harvesting crops, Ulster-Scots words and phrases have crept into all aspects of farming life in the Mournes. Types of outhouse, farming implements and machinery all too had their own Ulster-Scots name.

Stephen Donaldson reddin out the sheugh on the loanen that leads to his farm in Ballinran

Byre – Cowshed
Shade - Large Shed
Oothoose – Out House on the Farm
Pig Crue - Pigsty
Dunkel/Midden – Cow Manure Pit
Yaird – Yard
Laft - Loft
Bucht – Sheepfold
Graip – Fork
Bill Hook – Cutting Hook
Cleek - Sharp Hook
Pailin Posts – Fence posts
Hoker – Potato Digger
Langle – A rope fetter for sheep
Raiper – Machine for Mowing grass
Sheugh – Drain along the side of a field
Purda Graip – Fork for lifting potatoes
Slipe – Wooden sledge for carrying stones, etc

Steps leading to the laft over the old byre at Jimmy Donaldson's farm in Ballinran.

Run-rig

Run-rig was the farming practice in Scotland of subdividing land into plots, particularly among families. The land was cultivated and occupied by a number of tenants who leased it jointly. This was commonplace in the Mournes in the 17 and 1800s and was sometimes known as 'work mean'. This often happened in clachans or closes, such as Hanna's Close in Kilkeel.

Keppin Baists!

Warren Graham keppin baists on their way to be milked at Stevenson's Farm, Aughnahoory, Kilkeel

'Keppin Baists' is the task of moving farming animals from one place to another. Keppin is the Scots word for 'heading off' and 'baists' of course is the Scots word for animals.

This would be a very common practice across most farms in Mourne, where often sheep and cattle have to be moved to fields or pasture a distance apart and the animals need to be headed off while on the road, preventing them from wandering into other farms and houses. A good help with 'keppin yo's and cattle' is the Border Collie Dog, an animal specially trained for herding sheep and cattle.

John Fisher demonstrating how to braird a ditch on his farm in Ballymartin

Brairding Ditches!

Farmers are always kept busy maintaining their land and the ditches that march them.

Quite often holes that appear in hedges around the fields and also in stone ditches, need to be mended. This was often done by pushing in cuttings of whin bushes and thorns to plug the hole until they are properly mended. This process is known as 'brairding ditches' and is still very much common practice on farms across Mourne, particularly when you have livestock. 'Brairding' is the Scots word meaning 'To fill gaps in a hedge using cuttings' and of course 'ditch' is the Ulster-Scots word meaning 'wall or boundary'.

Corn shigs at Ballymageough, just outside Kilkeel; **Photo Courtesy of Newry and Mourne Museum. (Hugh Irvine Collection)**

Stookin Corn and Granny Sheaves!

Harvesting barley and oats was a laborious task.

The barley was cut by hand using a sythe or bill hook, and gathered into sheaves, which were stooked or leant together, usually in fours, for drying. 'Stookin' is the Ulster-Scots term for 'placing a group of sheaves together and tying them at the heads'. The sheaves were then placed in 'shigs' (Ulster-Scots word meaning haystacks) before being eventually brought in to a 'shade' or 'oothouse'. The last sheaf of the harvest is known as the 'Granny Sheaf' and was often taken and hung on the chimney brace for good luck or placed in triumph around the neck of the oldest female member of the family.

Sneddin Turnips!

'Sneddin' is the Ulster-Scots word meaning 'To cut off leaves, foliage or roots' from particularly vegetable crops.

Sneddin Turnips and other root crops on the farm was usually done by hand, using a knife or cleever, and was part of the harvesting process. This was a common practice across many farms in Mourne, preparing the crop for sale or storage.

Isaac Beck skailin dung the auld fashioned way with a graip; **Photo Courtesy of Adam Beck**

Skailin Dung!

'Skailin' is the Ulster-Scots word meaning 'Spreading' and 'Dung' is the Ulster-Scots word meaning 'Manure'.

The practice o' 'Muckin oot the byre' or cleaning out the cow shed resulted in a ready-made supply of natural fertiliser for the fields. This would be spread on fields prior to planting crops to help increase yields. Back in the day this task was carried out using horse and carts and graips to spread the dung. Nowadays farming has become much more mechanised and advanced and there is specialised farm machinery for spreading dung and slurry over huge areas in a short period of time.

The Reddin Up!

'Reddin Up' is the Ulster-Scots phrase meaning to 'Finish and tidy up'.

Around the farm, 'reddin up' usually refers to completing all of the chores and jobs on the farm before quitting at night time. This may include milking the cows, feeding the livestock and securing all the farm animals overnight. Of course, there is also the 'reddin out' of byres and cattle shades of manure, which must be regularly done! Today in the Kingdom of Mourne, 'reddin up' is one of the best-known Ulster-Scots phrases by everyone, including young school children who are always keen to get redd up at bell time in school!

Keelin Yo's

Keel is the Ulster-Scots word meaning 'Marking' and 'Yo' is the Ulster-Scots word for a female sheep or ewe.

Many Mourne farmers would seasonally take their sheep to graze on allotted areas on the Mourne Mountains. These flocks would quite often wander considerable distances and it was important to be able to identify your own sheep and flocks. To this end farmers keeled their ewes with their own colours to make them more easily identifiable from other farmer's sheep. The practice of keelin yo's is still a very important part of sheep farming here in the Mournes today and you will often see different keel marked flocks grazing on either sides of the 'Cairns' as you travel between Kilkeel and Hilltown.

Scottish Black Face Sheep freshly keeled and ready for taking to the mountain; **Photo Courtesy of Adam Beck**

Ditchin and Ditchers!

Granite stone ditches are quite unique to Mourne, though similar structures can also be found in Galloway, Scotland, the origins of many of the Ulster-Scots farmers in Mourne.

Sam Annett and Robert Annett carrying on the age-old tradition of ditching in Mourne with Billy Hanna lending a more modern hand on the digger

The remnants of a long-gone ice age, large granite boulders and smaller stones are to be found all across the Mourne landscape, especially the higher and closer you got to the mountains. For many Ulster-Scots farmers, clearing their ground in preparation for cultivation meant the removal of these stones before ploughing. However they were put to good use, building cabins, filling stone drains to help drain the land and of course, to build the stone ditches that divide or march the fields and farms of Mourne. The process of building these stone ditches is known as 'ditching' and the tradesmen who build the ditches are known as 'ditchers'.

Many of the Ulster-Scots words and phrases associated with 'ditching' include...

- Clearing the scraw means removing the grass and sods in preparation for building the ditch.
- The base stones are known as 'buttars' and are the largest stones on the ditch.
- The ditch is 'tapped out' with 'spallies', these are small flat stones which are placed on top of the ditch to level it out.
- 'Wee cogs' were the small stones that were used as wedges to fill out any gaps in the ditches and prevent any larger stones from moving.
- The boundaries which these stone ditches mark out between fields and farms are known as 'marches' and Ulster-Scots farmers will talk of the 'ditch that marches between their farm and the next'.
- The process of ditching is a highly skilled job and those stone craftsmen, known as ditchers are highly sought after.

A Quare Spake...

Estyn Evans in his book, Mourne Country recalled: "I remember a Mourne farmer telling me that the Irish owed a lot to the Scots settlers." "We would like to lie in bed till nine in the morning" He said. "But they rise at five and we must be up by seven."

Gaitherin Purdas

'Gaitherin' is the Ulster-Scots word meaning 'Gathering' and 'Purdas' is of course one of the Ulster-Scots word for 'Potatoes'.

James Morris gaitherin purdas behind the hoker; Photo Courtesy of Ewa McBride.

Purdas were a staple of the Ulster-Scots diet and a crop that has been farmed for centuries in Mourne.

The harvesting of potatoes or 'purda gaitherin' involved large numbers of local folk and was a back-breaking job, often carried out in the cauld (cold) and wet Autumn months. Purdas were gaithered into baskets and filled into hunner (hundred) weight purda bags and at the end of the day, gatherers were paid for how many hunner weight bags you had up.

The highlight of purda gaitherin for many was the 'tae break', heralded by the gulder (shout) of 'Tae Up'! In days gone by many farmers brewed the tae in the field and brought home-made pieces (sandwiches), which always tasted good after a hard morning's work in the purda fiel!

Planting potatoes the modern way along the shore in Mourne; Photo Courtesy of Mourne Drone

There are lots of Ulster-Scots words and phrases associated with the purdas

- 'Gaitherers' were the folk who came to help harvest the crop and were usually given shares of the drills to gather in the purda fiel'
- The 'hoker' was a piece of machinery powered by a tractor which mechanically dug the potatoes from the drills, ready for the gaitherers. (Hoke is the Ulster-Scots word meaning to 'Search/Rumage').
- 'Clattin' described the process of 'hoking' over the ground after the 'hoker' had passed, to find any potatoes still buried in the soil.
- 'The Head Rigs' were the side drills of the field which had to be dug first.
- 'Points' were short drills usually found in a 'jib' (Triangular) shaped field.
- 'Chats' were the smallest of potatoes, which were often kept as seed for the next potato season or for feeding cattle or pigs.

A wheen o' chats

- 'Mowl' was the fine soil or dust which would often swirl about in the 'purda fiel' on a windy day.
- 'Cloddin' was much frowned upon in the purda fiel' and is the Ulster-Scots word meaning throwing. Carried out mostly by young lads, cloddin purdas was for them, great sport and 'quare crack' and was often done in between drills being dug by the hoker!
- 'Happin Purdas' refers to how purdas used to be stored. Before the modern purda shades (stores) were built to keep potatoes, purdas were stored in 'pits'. The heaped up potatoes were 'happed' up with 'spritt' or rushes and a protective layer of well compacted soil to keep them fresh for long periods over winter and spring. 'Happin' is the Ulster-Scots word meaning 'To wrap or cover'.
- In more recent times, purda harvesters have replaced the need for gaitherers in most fields and the sight of purda gaitherin is now a very rare occurrence.

Wrack Harvesting

'Wrack' is the Ulster-Scots word for 'In-blown seaweed' and throughout history was an important natural fertiliser for farms.

Around the coast of Mourne, farmers could rent or 'take' a section of seabed for cultivating seaweed. Stones would be placed in straight lines, creating wrack beds, on which the seaweed could be grown, a process which could take up to four years. It would then be cut in April, May or June and transported by horse and cart to farms all across the Mournes. This old custom has long since been replaced by artificial fertilisers and the spreading of slurry, although the traces of these wrack beds can still be seen today at low tide, especially at Millbay, just outside Kilkeel.

Kirknarra Highland Dancer Morgan Griffin at the Wrack Road near Ballymartin, where wrack was traditionally drawn from the shore to nearby farms

Drawing wrack home from the shore of Carlingford; **Photo Courtesy of Newry and Mourne Museum. (Hugh Irvine Collection)**

Hearth and Hame

The family and the homestead, the hame, have traditionally been at the centre of Ulster-Scots farms and over generations, many traditions, customs, and practices have come and gone, while others have endured or are only recalled in folklore.

A demonstration of the skill of spinning yarn by a re-enactor dressed as an 18th century Ulster-Scots woman at the Schomberg Society's 11th July Festival in Kilkeel. (Living History Ireland); **Photo @DtMcC.**

Women on the Farm

Women played a very important role on the farm, managing the homestead, preparing meals, rearing the children, helping with harvests, feeding animals and caring for the livestock.

Like the Ulster-Scot ethos in general, the life of women on a traditional Ulster-Scots farm required an ethos of hard work, dedication and commitment. This is still very much the case today and many women take a lead role in managing farms across Mourne. They are to be seen front and centre on farms, whether it be driving huge tractors and machinery, managing the accounts, or keeping the household, women are the main stay of many farms in Mourne.

Evelyn Brown pictured with a flooerin exhibit in Ballyvea Museum

Flooerin or Flowering

During the 18th and 19th centuries, many farmhouses had spinning wheels and local women were able to earn an extra income using locally produced wool and flax.

The embroidery skills of many Ulster-Scots women in Mourne was in much demand across the country and further afield during the 19th and 20th centuries. Known by it's Ulster-Scots term, Flooerin or Flowering, this was the process by which hankerchiefs and tablecloths were embroidered. Items were sent flooering from Scotland to local agents in Annalong and Kilkeel and was a great way of bringing extra income into the home. A related skill and part of the Ulster-Scots 'make do and mend' ethic was that of patchwork quilting. Using offcuts from old cloths and garments alongside wool as fill, waste was minimised alongside providing invaluable quilts to keep the family warm before the days of central heating.

The Farm Hoose or Homestead

When the first Scots settlers arrived in Mourne during the 17th and 18th centuries, farm houses were quite basic, built with stone and wood, and often thatched roofs.

Ulster-Scots Re-Enactors pictured at the open fire in Hanna's Close (Re-Enactors Andrew Tinney and Laura Douglas)

They were small in size, often only having one or two rooms with a chimley or chimney and open fire for heating and cooking. A good example of early Ulster-Scots farming dwellings is Hanna's Close, near Kilkeel. Windows were small, there were no back doors and the houses were built in a cluster for defensive purposes.

In modern times farmhouses or homesteads have become more substantial buildings. It was not unusual for several generations of a family to live together in the one farmhouse, and it was necessary to add extensions and improvements to cater for these large extended families.

The Scullery

'Scullery' is the Ulster-Scots word meaning a small kitchen and was an important part of the farmhouse where dishes and laundry were washed and often stored.

It was also a good place to keep food as it was cooler than the rest of the house. In many modern farm houses some of the old traditional baking skills still remain. Ulster-Scots favourites such as soda farls, scones, pancakes and fadge are a very welcomed treat after a hard day on the farm.

The Scullery / Pantry in Ballyvea Museum

The Guid Room

The Guid Room in Ballyvea Museum

The tradition of having a Guid Room dates back for many years in most traditional Ulster-Scots farmhouses.

This room was rarely used by the family, except for special occasions such as weddings, wakes and Christmas. Important folk visiting the house would always been shown to the guid room, especially a visit from the Minister, where the finest delft (Delft is the Ulster-Scots word for crockery) would be brought out and a wee drap o' tae provided.

Sabbath Day on the Farm

The strong faith basis of Ulster-Scots heritage ensured that all across Ulster and in Mourne they had a very strong tradition of observing the Sabbath Day (Sabbath is the Scots word meaning Sunday).

A 17th Century Presbyterian Minister pictured at the Old Church in Kilkeel (Living History Ireland)

The Sabbath Day was traditionally a day of rest and worship and all work was to be redd up on a Saturday. Only absolutely essential work on the farm such as feeding the livestock or milking was to be done on the Sabbath Day. Where possible even food was prepared on a Saturday for Sabbath Day meals and even the carrying out of housework was frowned upon.

As Presbyterian Meeting Houses were established across Mourne, rural folk would travel a considerable distance by foot or horse and cart to attend Sabbath Day worship. In many isolated rural farming homesteads, where it was difficult to attend a Meeting House, families would read their bibles and sing traditional Psalms and Hymns in the home.

The day after the Sabbath, Monday was traditionally a big day in the household, where the big wash was carried out in preparation for the working week ahead.

Ulster-Scots Farming Words and Phrases

One of the best examples of how Ulster-Scots has influenced the farming character and community of the Kingdom of Mourne are the many Ulster-Scots words and phrases associated with farming in the Kingdom of Mourne.

The Ulster-Scots language is a legacy of those first Scottish settlers who arrived in Mourne during the 1600s, which lives on today. The large majority of these words are still in use today not just in Mourne, but across Ulster. Some have even seeped into the everyday language of the entireties of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

A traditional stone ditch marching the fields in Mourne; **Photo Courtesy of Julieann McCallister**

A rooster at the scraich o' dawn

Phrases:

- **"As lazy as sheugh water" – Someone who is very lazy - as the water in a sheugh barely moves.**
- **"Scraich o' Dawn!" – The break of day – This was normally when the first scraich or screech of the rooster could be heard at dawn on the farm.**
- **"Shoot the craw" – This means it's time to go.**
- **"Dinnae Fash Yersel" – Don't Bother Yourself or get stressed.**
- **"Houl Yer Wheesht" – Keep Quiet**
- **"Never cast a cloot until May is out!" – A reminder to not be too quick to throw away your winter clothing! (Cloot is the Ulster-Scots word meaning Cloth)**
- **"As thick as a ditch" – Refers to someone with little common sense.**
- **"Keep 'er between the ditches" – If someone got a new car or tractor, this was a term wishing good luck.**
- **"Tappin a fiel" - Cuttin the grass**
- **"Mowl them up" - Cover with soil**
- **"Chowin her cud" - Chewing her cud**

Other Ulster-Scots words associated with Farming...

Dayligon at Carlingford Lough; **Photo Courtesy of Amy Stevenson**

Alleys – In between drills
Steading – Homestead
Fermhoose – Farm House
Coulter – Ploughnose
Ganzie – Heavy Jumper
Chey – Calling for a cow

Dayligon – Dusk
Elder – Udder
Lint – Flax
Wee – Small

Rig – Matching set of clothing
Beatens – Poor Quality Land
Wunnell – Armful of straw
Scar / Skitter – Diarrhoea
Tether – Length of a rope

Gopin – A measurement of two cupped hands
Work Mean – Joint Enterprise between farmers
Group – Channel in a byre for manure
Spale – To give someone a break
Male – Animal Feeding Meal

James Morris with a gopin of potatoes;
Photo Courtesy of Ewa McBride

Skelf – Splinter
Stour – Rising Dust
Stane – Stone
Tap Boots – Top Boots
Besom – Broom
Spell – To take a turn
Cloot – Hoof
Glar – Mud

Ferm – Farm
Pad – Path
Vit - Vet
Jab - Job
Harra - Harrow

Barl – Barrel
Childer – Children
Weans – Children
Lan' – Land
Skailed – Spread

Ulster-Scots Farming Poems

Over the years, there have been many poems and songs written about rural farming life in the Mournes, some even having been composed in Ulster-Scots.

At The Ballagh

Out at the Ballagh, close to the sea
It's the quare hard life for herself an' me
In a two-roomed cot, wi' an acre of ground
An' children that throng, there's no room to turn around.

Och, the times is hard; the pitaties scare,
The price o' bacon, sure it makes thing worse
An' the baker's bread that dear to buy,
If we get yer victuals! Ye must ate them dry.

An Extract from Richard Rowley's 'At The Ballagh' poem.

Gaitherin' Purdas!

Mid October, scraich o' dawn,
Wi yer auld clabbered gutties on.
Tae the field wi the hoker, going ditch to ditch,
Fill yer basket, quare and quick!

Mind the drills wi a ready eye,
An' don't miss any purdas forbye.
Ye'll no be long workin up a drooth,
Fir there's nay time tae footer or spoof.

Up an' doon, too and fro,
A drap o tae will soon be on the go.
Fading sun, a yarn to tell,
Near time fir hame, dinnae fash yersel.

Hairvest time, reap what ye sow,
Still, not half as tough as days of old.
Gettin redd up, not a bad days crack,
Wi a wee jingle in yer pocket an' a fierce sore back!

Wendy Graham Hanna

A Fairmer's Lot

Ploo an hairvest, sow an reap,
The year runs roon, an niver sleeps.
Whan crop is sowed an in the grunn,
An waitin their fur rain an sun,
Thair's baists tae hannle, clane an bed,
Mooths that aye are needin fed.
Fences tae be bigged an kep,
Tae houl the baists tha rin an lep.
The saisons mave, the weather turns,
Will the crop bae washed awa nor burnt?
Thairs hay tae cut and silage made,
Tae keep thon mooths that's needin fed.
Will thaur be enuech this year?
Or mebbes naw, a constant fear!
The fairmer's wirk jaist disnae wane,
Thair'll aye be sumthin needin daein.
They growe an rair the fuid we need,
Year ain Year, they maun succeed.
They till the soil an mine the lan,
An keep the yearly cycle gaein.
An worry, hurry, wirk, repeat,
Tae keep life's circle turnin sweet.
Sae Thank the Lord for thaim that fairms,
An pray the niver come tae hairm.
They'll aye be roon tae sow an reap,
The soil tae work, the lan tae keep.

Roy Ferguson 19/05/22

SUPERSTITIONS AND FOLKLORE

Although traditionally Ulster-Scots farmers were generally a very religious people, many of them also held on to some superstitions.

Many of these were passed down over many centuries and predating recorded history. It was not unusual for some to be believe in witches, ghosts and fairies.

A lone fairy thorn along the ditch in a field near Baird's Farm in Ballinran

Rakers

Elements of some of these superstitions lingered on well into the 20th century, with rakers responsible for keeping the fantasies alive.

Rakers were folk who visited houses and told yarns and ghost stories. Their company at times was much sought after before the modern invention of wireless and TV, when they brought a bit of crack and entertainment to the farmhouse on many winters nights.

Fairy Forths and Fairy Thorns

In many fields across the Mourne countryside it is still possible to see a lone thorn bush that would appear to be out of place.

Known as a fairy thorn or thorn bush, it has long been believed to be extremely bad luck to remove or cut them down. Even up to this present day farmers are still reluctant to do so. In a similar vein, fairy forths (Forth is the Ulster-Scots word for a fort) were a circular formation of thorns believed to be the home of a large number of fairies. It was always seen as extremely bad luck to disturb or annoy the fairies or their thorns and forths. Stories of animals dying in the same field where a fairy thorn had been cut down are still recounted by farmers in Mourne to this day.

IRISH TIMES- 26 January 1952

FAIRY THORN

Because of a 'fairy thorn' Kilkeel Rural District Council may not be able to find tenants for 12 new houses – though there are many on the housing list. A 'fairy thorn' grows on a site of the new housing estate at Ballymaderphy, Lisnacree. It has been growing there for many generations. No one has ever damaged it. Year after year the field has been tilled, but the owner always ploughed around the tree. Now there is a move to uproot the 'fairy thorn' and folks who have applied for the new cottages believe that only misfortune can follow the uprooting. Says one applicant: 'I would rather live in a tent than in a house built on the site where the 'fairy thorn' now grows.'

The Banshee

There was a wildly held belief by many in the Mournes that the Banshee, a female spirit or ghost, was a harbinger of doom.

Particularly associated with death, it was said that if someone heard the screech of a banshee, it was the sign that a death was imminent.

An old depiction of the 'banshee'

A good luck horseshoe hanging on a outhouse door

The Horseshoe

Over the years, some Ulster-Scots farmers would have fixed a horseshoe above the front doors of the homestead or on the doors of their byres and outhouses.

Horseshoes were seen as a symbol of good luck and it was important that they were positioned upwards to keep the luck in. If the horseshoe was upside down, it was seen as bad luck.

Doors

Folk visiting a house were always encouraged to leave by the same door they had entered, as it was considered extremely bad luck for them and the house to leave via a different door.

The front door of Ballyvea Museum

The Luck Penny

In the buying and selling of livestock or farming machinery, it was often the practice to give the buyer back a luck penny.

For example, if you sold a cow for £100, you might want to give the buyer back £5 for good luck. Often an old penny, known as a luck penny was nailed above a door of a byre or farm dwelling house, or even built into the walls when the farmhouse was being constructed.

Black Cat

It has been long time considered good luck if a black cat were to cross your path.

Also, if a strange black cat were to turn up at your home it is thought to bring prosperity to the house.

A lucky black cat

Ladder

Walking under a ladder would have been considered bad luck.

Saturday Flit, Short Sit!

This is an old Ulster-Scots saying which was believed by many. It meant it was bad luck to move house on a Saturday and if you did so you wouldn't be staying too long in your new house.

Straw

A straw on the floor of kitchen was a sign that a stranger was coming.

Hungry Grass

There was a local belief that if you walked on 'hungry grass' on the mountain, you will suffer from the pangs of hunger!

Richard Rowley wrote this verse about it...

"From Bernagh to Binnian
and back again,
There's quare things happen
mountainy men,
But if you're on the hillside
Yer days must pass,
Keep a shepherd's piece
For the hungry grass."

HERITAGE SITES OF ULSTER-SCOTS INTEREST

Ulster-Scots places you can Visit ...

There are a ream of places you can visit which will give you an opportunity to learn a wee bit more about the history and heritage of Ulster-Scots farming in Mournes.

Annalong Cornmill- A Traditional Working Mill

Situated on the picturesque Annalong Harbour, the Annalong Cornmill was previously successively owned by three Ulster-Scots families.

Annalong Cornmill; **Photo Courtesy of Adam Beck**

A water driven Mill established in the 1800s, it was recently restored and is now a popular tourist attraction. There you can experience a wee bit of what life was like for farmers and mill workers and learn about the various crops they farmed. Tours can be booked in advance and include some hands-on experience given!

Hanna's Close- A Hidden Gem

Hanna's Close is a traditional Scottish Clachan located just outside Kilkeel.

Cottages at Hanna's Close, Kilkeel; **Photo Courtesy of Amy Stevenson**

It was established in the 1640s by Scots Presbyterian settlers, and has recently been restored as self-catering accommodation. One of the finest examples of Ulster-Scots farming heritage, the clachan offers a fantastic opportunity for folk to experience what life was like in a typical Ulster-Scots settlement and farm.

Ballyvea Museum- A Victorian Farm House

Ballyvea Museum is a 19th century museum, situated in the townland of Ballyvea, between Annalong and Ballymartin.

Ballyvea Museum, just outside Annalong

Built in the 1850s, it was the home of the Presbyterian Irvine family, who farmed in this area for generations and could trace their roots all the way back to the 1600s when their ancestors fled religious persecution in Scotland. The farmhouse is now a privately owned museum, which was restored by the Irvine family with the help of Kilkeel High School.

It gives a fantastic insight into the life of an Ulster-Scots farmhouse during the 1800s. Today it is strictly private, but is used as a resource for local school pupils and viewing can be accommodated by appointment.

The Ulster American Folk Park- A Tale of Ulster-Scots Emigration

It wasn't long after the Scots began arriving in Ulster and in Mourne that many of them were on the move again.

During the 17 and 1800s, great waves of Ulster-Scots left Ulster for the Americas where they became commonly known as the Scotch-Irish. Much of this story is told at the Ulster American Folk Park just outside of Omagh. In the park you will gain an understanding of the story of those Ulster-Scots farmers and their families who made their way to America, in their search for better opportunities and freedom to worship as they pleased.

Exhibit at the Ulster American Folk Park, Omagh

Ulster Folk and Transport Museum
A Wee bit of Mourne in the Big Smoke

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum just outside of Belfast, is well worth a visit.

It contains some excellent exhibits from Ulster-Scots farming families in Mourne, and provides an opportunity to experience and find out more of what rural agricultural life was like in Ulster, including of course, the Kingdom of Mourne.

The Old Rectory Cottage at the Ulster Folk Museum, Cultra

One of the best exhibits at the Museum from a Mourne perspective is Baird's cottage. Originally built in the 1840s in Ballyveaghmore, it was the home of the Ulster-Scots Baird family until the early 1990s. The cottage was carefully dismantled and rebuilt and is an excellent example of a typical Mourne farmstead of this era. Also to be found among exhibits from the Kingdom of Mourne at the Museum is a wooden slipe, which belonged to Jimmy Donaldson of Ballinran and was also donated to the museum.

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

There are many customs and traditions still in use today across the Mournes which date back many generations.

They are not peculiar specifically to either the fishing or farming communities, but span the entire Kingdom. Although their origins are often unknown, the Ulster-Scots in the Kingdom of Mourne have been widely associated with many of them, and some are believed to have their roots in Scotland.

Festive Times...

There are many customs and traditions in the Mournes associated with festive times in the annual calendar which rural folk observed or celebrated.

New Years

There has been a long tradition in the Kingdom of Mourne of celebrating the arrival of the New Year.

At the stroke of midnight on New Years Eve or what the Scots know as Hogmanay, in many homes, the door would be opened to let the old year out and the New Year in. On New Years Day the Scottish tradition of 'First Footing' was still quite common up until a number of years ago. This was the practice where folk visited each other's houses, bringing a present with them, usually coal, and the Scottish expression 'Lang May Your Lum Reek' or 'Long May Your Chimney Smoke' was a familiar greeting. It was particularly lucky if a tall dark man was your first visitor with coal, but it was equally as unlucky if your first visitor was a red headed woman. Another New Year tradition was 'wisps', when young people would bind small bundles of straw and hand them out to local households, often in return for a few pennies.

A darked haired man was good luck if he was your first visitor on New Year's Day

Enjoying catching up in the Twelfth Field in Kilkeel

The Twelfth!

For traditional Ulster-Scots farming families, the Twelfth of July was a very big date in the calendar.

Preparations would begin with new riggs (full outfits of clothes) purchased for the weans to look their best on the big day. Outhouses were whitewashed, pots of Orange lilies were placed at the front door, hedges and ditches cut and trimmed, the hay cut and where possible all farm work was redd up (completed) on the days running up to the Twelfth, and when that wasn't possible cows were milked and all livestock fed and watered in the early hours of the morning. When all the chores were completed and the family dressed, they would head off together to watch or participate in the big parade in Mourne, known the country over as 'The Family Twelfth'.

Orangefield Orange Lodge making their way to the field from Ballinran on the 12th Morning

During the day family and communal picnics were held in the field and blankets brought for sitting on the grass. The occasion was seen as a great opportunity to catch up with other family and friends that hadn't been seen for a long time, sometimes since the previous year. Back in the day, it was also not unknown for farmers to nip home during the break in the parade to turn hay and then return for the evening parade. In days when holidays were much more limited than in modern times, quite often the holiday would continue into the 13th July. In what were very rare excursions, there would be great excitement when the family would have went to Newcastle or Cranfield for the day!

The whin blossom used for colouring eggs at Easter

Easter

In many Ulster-Scots homes across the Kingdom of Mourne, Easter was awaited with great excitement amongst the younger children.

Quite often children would get new riggs of clothes, including Easter bonnets, to wear to church on Easter Sunday morning. Eggs were traditionally boiled in the flower of the whin, which gave them a yellow colour. They were then decorated with ribbons and bows and taken to local braes and knowes to be rolled on Easter Sunday afternoon at family picnics. The tradition of rolling eggs is thought to have its roots in Scotland.

Christmas

Christmas Day is one of the biggest days of the years in the calendar for folk in the Kingdom of Mourne.

In decades past Christmas was a smaller affair. In different eras when there was less disposable income, quite often Christmas dinner would have consisted simply of a large chicken or goose. It would be followed by a traditional Christmas pudding containing dried fruit, and may have been made up to six months before. There were fewer presents years ago, and the stockings most children hung up would have been filled the next morning with what were then classed as luxuries such as apples, oranges and chocolate.

Christmas in the Mournes; Photo Courtesy of Annalong Harbour Watch

Halloween

Halloween is celebrated at the end of Autumn and once was thought to be a time when evil spirits and witches were particularly active.

For children across the Mournes in more later times Halloween involved playing pranks and enjoying Halloween parties. There they would bob for apples and dress in Halloween masks and fancy dress.

Turnips would have been hallowed out to create Halloween lanterns, which would have been placed at housefronts to ward off evil spirits, as too was the purpose of small Halloween bonfires lit across the countryside.

The celebration of Halloween was frowned upon by many within the Ulster-Scots community who preferred instead to celebrate Guy Fawkes Day on the 5th November. For a period around the turn of the 20th century, there were Guy Fawkes parades and bonfires in Kilkeel within the Ulster-Scots community attracting thousands of participants. This is thought to have petered out and merged with the Halloween celebrations, with as recently as the 1970s and 1980s local children still making 'Guys' to burn on Halloween Bonfires after taking them around local houses singing 'A Penny for the Guy'.

A carved pumpkin, the modern equivalent of a carved turnip

CONCLUSION

Tha Fasch and tha Fiel

The Scots influence in Ulster and in particular the Kingdom O' Mourne has been earth-shattering, no more so than in the areas of fishing and farming.

The Ulster-Scots language influences and impacts every single facet of Mourne life, including fishing and farming, from the simple names of those involved to the wildlife, plants, machinery and even systems they use.

The Girl Beth owned by Brian Chambers fishing off the coast of Mourne.

Perhaps more fundamentally, centred in their faith, their world view ensured that their hard work did not just reap results, it also drove them towards continually bettering themselves and their place in Mourne.

The Scots brought new ideas and methods towards harvesting the fields and the sea, but then as they melded into the local countryside and morphed into the Ulster-Scots, they built on those ideas and methods. They continually improved on those things established, and came up with new ideas and means based on their experiences, to do things better. New and improved, but still intrinsically Scots and Ulster-Scots in origin and process.

You do not have to delve too deep to discover the Ulster-Scots presence in fishing and farming in the Kingdom of Mourne. You simply have to look around. The very shape of the countryside, its fields, walls, ditches and sheughs, is distinctively Ulster-Scots. Its buildings, its harbours, its boats, all have a visible heritage influenced by the Ulster-Scot.

The bequests of knowledge brought by the Scots who settled here, and the legacy of their determination, began a transformation of the Mournes. The birth and evolution of the Ulster-Scots from those beginnings created something even more special.

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SCHOMBERG SOCIETY

Tha Fasch an tha Fiel

The Kingdom O' Mourne has been shaped and moulded by generations of Ulster-Scots. They have guided the evolution of its communities via their vibrant and colourful cultural practices, their strong Presbyterian faith and distinctive language.
Ulster-Scots heritage, traditions and influence have touched every facet of Mourne society.

Fishing and Farming are hugely important in Mourne. Alongside a ream of directly and indirectly related practices, traditions, customs, folklore and superstitions; their influence on Fishing and Farming impacts every person who lives, works in or even just visits Mourne.

The 'Fasch an' tha Fiel' brings together oral histories and other information from across the Kingdom O' Mourne and beyond to examine this impact, and paint a picture of this colourful, intrinsic and sometimes even unique legacy of the Ulster-Scots people.

"Our Ulster-Scots heritage here in the Kingdom of Mourne is something that we in the Schomberg Society are proud to play a role in preserving. We as a community believe that these rich traditions and culture are well worth maintaining for future generations."

'The Schomberg Society… Building A Strong and Dynamic Ulster-Scots Community'

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