During the early years of the seventeenth century, Ulster was transformed by the plantation of people from England and Scotland. In the west of the province, the counties of Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone had been ‘escheated’ or confiscated by the Crown following the ‘Flight of the Earls’ in 1607. Land in these counties was granted to new owners who were expected to let the land to British settlers and to instigate a programme of building works and other improvements. Counties Antrim and Down were not subject to a formal scheme of plantation, but also saw a substantial influx of people from England and Scotland during this period. There was also a smaller movement of people in to County Monaghan.

This exhibition is intended to illustrate the origins and progress of the plantations using documents from the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and other repositories. It is based on the publication Plantations in Ulster, 1600–41, edited by R J Hunter, which was republished in 2018 by PRONI and the Ulster Historical Foundation. It also draws on the resources of the National Monuments and Buildings Record for Northern Ireland part of the Historic Environment Division of the Department for Communities. A survey of the surviving building and structures from the plantation period by Rowan McLaughlin and James Lyttleton An Archaeology of Northern Ireland, 1600–1650 was published by the Department for Communities in 2017.
Planning the Plantation

Detailed planning for the proposed plantation of the six ‘escheated’ or confiscated counties began in 1609. As part of this process maps were produced by a team of surveyors, the most prominent of whom was Sir Josias Bodley. These were ready for use in early 1610. Although more detailed than anything previously available, inaccuracies in the maps were to cause problems resulting in legal disputes which lasted for many years.

The English and Scottish ‘undertakers’ who were granted land agreed to observe various conditions, which were set out in a printed pamphlet in 1610. These included settling people from England and Scotland, within a defined time, at a minimum density of twenty-four adult males per 1000 acres. They were also required to erect various buildings, including fortified houses. Thomas Blennerhasset, who received land in County Fermanagh, published his own proposals in 1610. This was an unofficial piece of promotional literature for the plantation.

[Images 1-4: Maps and illustrations related to the Plantation]

‘Art thou rich, possessed with much revenue? Make speed without racking of rents, or other offensive means; thou shalt doe God and thy Prince excellent service… Art thou a Tradesman? a Smith, a Weaver, a Mason, or a Carpenter? goe thither, thou shalt be in estimation, and quickly enriched by thy endeavours … Art thou a Gentleman that takest pleasure in hunt? the Fox, the Woolfe, and the Wood-Kerne doe expectancy comming … There thou shalt have elbowe room … . Art thou a Minister of God’s word? make speed, the harvest is great but the laborers be fewe: thou shalt there see the poor ignorant untaught people worship stones and sticks; thou by carrying millions to heaven maieest be made an Archangel, and have whiles thou dost live for worldly respects, what not, …?’

Extract from Thomas Blennerhasset’s pamphlet A direction for the plantation in Ulster, printed in London in 1610. (PRONI D4446/B/2/8)

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Between 1611 and 1622 the government conducted a number of surveys designed to measure the progress of the plantation. They revealed a mixed picture, with some undertakers making little progress with building works or in settling British tenants. Many of the original settlers sold their estates and opted out of the endeavour.

One area where good progress was made was the precinct of Strabane in County Tyrone which was granted to the Earl of Abercorn, a Scottish undertaker. Other members of the Hamilton family also received land in the area and by 1622 there were around 200 British families living on the Abercorn estates.

The Precinct of Strabane allotted to Scottish Undertakers

The Earl of Abercorne hath 1000 acres called Strabane, upon this there is a strong Castle of Stone and lime which standeth within the Towne of Strabane; In which Towne there are above 100 dwelling houses diverse of them of stone and lime, and 120 British Families, which are able to make 200 able men furnished with shott and Pike, in which is also built a Sessionshouse, and a Markett Cross of stone & lime, with a strong Roome under it, to keep Prisoners in: and a Plottforme on the top, w[h]ich is a place of good defence.

There is also a Watermill built, with stone, with a Bridge over the Water, w[h]ich by the said Mill at the charges of the late Earle of Abercome.

Extract from a rental of the estate of Sir William Balfour, 1636.

[PRONI D1939/15/2/2]
The influx of new settlers, along with the extensive building programme and the establishment of new fairs and markets, invigorated the Ulster economy. This is reflected in the surviving port books which record the customs duties paid on goods entering and leaving the Ulster ports.

The page from the Londonderry Port Book for July 1615 (below) shows the importation of luxury goods such as ‘raisins of the sun’, currants, Castile soap and salad oil, along with manufactured goods including frying pans, iron pots, kettles and crockery ware. Weapons including firearms and armour were also imported, an indication of concerns about the security of the plantation settlements.

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`Extract from the Port Book of Derry~Londonderry, July 1615. [PRONI D4446/B/6/5]`

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**Public Record Office of Northern Ireland**

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[Department for Communities](www.communities.gov.uk)
Under the plan for the planted counties, the English and Scottish undertakers were expected to lease land to British tenants. The native Irish were to be accommodated on the estates granted to ‘servitors’, Irish grantees and the Church. In practice, many undertakers were prepared to allow native Irish tenants to remain rather than go to the trouble of attracting settlers from Britain. The government reluctantly accepted these arrangements.

The native Irish generally paid higher rents and had less security of tenure. As the plantation developed, they were increasingly squeezed out, moving to marginal land or becoming undertenants to the new settlers.

A rental (below) records the names of native Irish tenants living on the estate of an English undertaker, Sir William Balfour, near Lisnaskea, County Fermanagh in 1636.
Antrim and Down

Although counties Antrim and Down were not included in the formal plantation scheme, they also experienced an influx of English and Scottish settlers. A large area of south Antrim and north Down was acquired in 1605 from Conn O'Neill of Clandeboye, by two Scottish men, Hugh Montgomery and James Hamilton. Sir Arthur Chichester, who was Lord Deputy of Ireland from 1605–15, was also granted land in the area and developed the town of Belfast. The new land owners encouraged the settlement of British and Irish tenants on their estates, as did some of the remaining native lords such as Randal MacDonnell, Earl of Antrim, who owned much of the north of County Antrim.
A glimpse into the everyday life of British settlers can be found in the accompanying petition from tenants at Moneymore, County Londonderry, to their landlords, the Drapers’ Company of London. Their complaints cover a range of issues including the undeveloped state of the settlement, as reflected in the unpaved streets, unfinished buildings and the lack of a market or fair in the locality.

They are also concerned about the lawless nature of the country. Numerous dispossessed and landless people, known as ‘wood kern’, were living on the fringes of the new settlements, particularly in wooded areas, and attacks on settlers and their property were common.

That your worship will be pleased to pave the streets which in winter is so noysome and troublesome unto us, that for verye dyrt and myre we are scarce able to goe from one house to another without boots.

To speake of the dangerousness of the place wherein we live; wee need not make anie ample relation of it, noe man havning bene in these parts, but can testifie of yt, that the like or equall yt is not almost to be found in Ireland. Wee here beinge daily subject to the incursions and continuall stealthes of the woodkerne, w[hi]ch these p[ar]ts allwaies hitherto have been subject unto, and wee thinke will nev[er] be free from, Manie of your poore tenn[an]ts havinge lost in one night (verye lately) fower or five head of cattle, being all that ever they have had in the world,...
One of the objects of the plantation project was the strengthening of the protestant Church of Ireland. New parishes were to be established and new churches built. Glebe land was also granted to provide an income for the clergy. A visitation or survey of the diocese of Derry carried out in 1622 shows that in many cases the conditions had not been fulfilled. Churches remained unbuilt and glebes, when they were granted, were often at too great a distance from the parish. The Roman Catholic Church organisation continued to function in Ulster despite being deprived of financial resources and church buildings.

The Plantation objectives also made provision for the establishment of endowed grammar schools in each of the confiscated counties. Although land had been granted for their support, progress on the establishment of the schools was slow.

"As touching Schooels it is well knowne that his Ma[jesty] intended a convenient propor[c]ion of lands as well for London Derry, as for Dongannon or Donegall, yett both these have hayre p[r]or[i] ons Alotted unto them for the Maynetenance of Schooels. But the Lands intended for the Schooels at Lo. Derry are swallowed up i knowe not well by whome, ..."

Extract from an ecclesiastical visitation of the diocese of Derry, 1622. (Trinity College Dublin MS 549)

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Extract from an ecclesiastical visitation of the diocese of Derry, 1622. (Trinity College Dublin MS 549)
The undertakers who received land in the plantation came from across England and Scotland. They were expected to bring with them tenants who would be settled together to form British communities. In addition, estates were granted to servitors, who were military officers or government officials, and to institutions such as the Church of Ireland and Trinity College Dublin. A number of native Irish lords also received estates.

One prominent planter was Sir William Cole (1576–1653), an English soldier and administrator who was granted land in County Fermanagh. He was also provost of the town of Enniskillen and constable of Enniskillen Castle. The accompanying genealogy, produced in 1630, emphasises Cole’s descent from landed gentry families in County Devon, although his immediate family were merchants and lawyers and Cole himself was born in London.

A less typical settler was Robert Algeo from Renfrewshire in Scotland. He acted as agent or estate manager for various members of the Hamilton family, including the Earl of Abercorn, who were granted land in the Strabane area. Algeo was a Roman Catholic, as were a number of the Hamiltons. A memorial stone bearing Algeo’s name survives in the townland of Artigarvan near Strabane.
The area which became County Londonderry was treated in a different manner to the rest of the plantation counties. Most of the land in the new county was granted to the wealthy City of London Livery companies. Grants were also made to a servitor (Sir Thomas Phillips), the Church of Ireland and some native Irish lords. The London companies created 'The Honourable The Irish Society' to oversee the plantation and to develop the towns of Londonderry and Coleraine.

The number of families now inhabiting in the Cittye of London Derrie Souldiers and others doe make 109 Families dwelling in stone houses slated

Families of poore soldiers & poore labouring men dwelling w[i]thin the walles in Cabbins 12
So the whole number of families dwelling within the walles of the Citty are 121
The number of men present well armed w[i]thin the Cittie of London Derey 110
presented by the Maior in a scroule of dwellers neere the towne 63
There had been a settlement at Derry from medieval times, however this was destroyed during Sir Cahir O’Doherty’s rebellion in 1608. In 1613 the Irish Society began to build a new fortified town on the site which they named Londonderry. The walls of the new settlement, which were designed by Thomas Raven and Sir Edward Doddington, were completed in 1619 when they were described by Nicholas Pynnar in the accompanying document. The walls remain intact and are among the best preserved of any walled town in Europe.

The Cittie of London-Derrie in now compassed aboute w[i]th a verie stronge wall excellently made and neatly wrought being all of good lyme and stone the circuit whereof is 284 p[er]ches and 2/3 at 18 foote to the p[er]che, besides the 4 gates w[hi]ch containe 84 feete and in every place of the wall it is 24 foote high and 6 foote thick, the gates are all battlemented, but to two of them there is no going upp so that serve to no great use, neither have they made anie leaves for their gates but make two Draw-bridges serve for two of them, and 2 p ort cullices for the other two The Bullwarke are verie large and good beinge in number nine, besides 2 half Bullwarke and for 4 of them there maye be placed 4 Cannons or other great peeces, the rest are not all out so large, but wanteth verie little, the Rampart w[i]th[in] the citty is xii foote thick of earth.

All thinges are verie well and substantially donne, Savinge there wanteth a house for the Soldiars to watch in and a Centinell house for the Soldiars to stand in, In the night to defend them from the weather w[i]ch is most extremate in theis p[ar]tes...