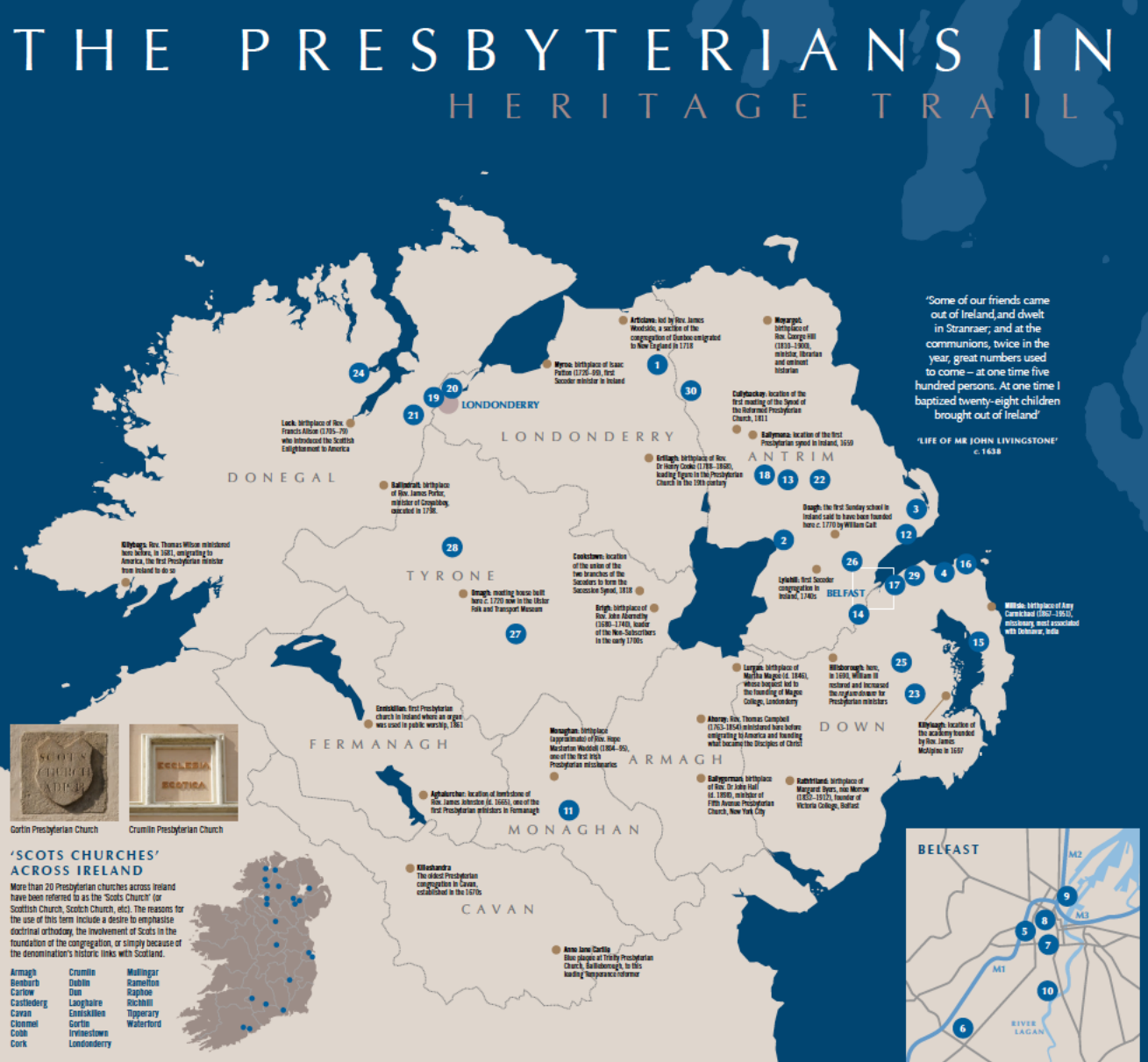
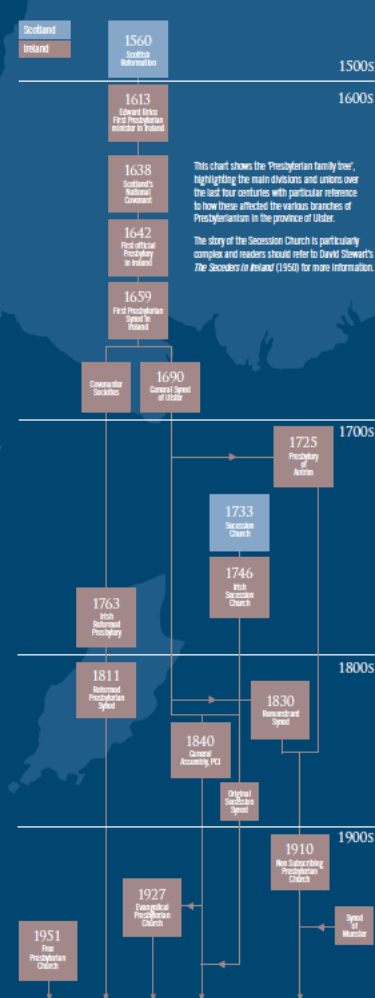


THE PRESBYTERIANS IN ULSTER

HERITAGE TRAIL



PRESBYTERIAN FAMILY TREE 1560-PRESENT



“I perceived the Lord welcomed me to that land. I behoved to stay a little, a mile about Carrickfergus, and, lying upon the grass, to rejoice in the Lord, who was the same in Ireland which he was to me in Scotland.”
REV. ROBERT BLAIR OF BANGOR, 1623

“The large majority of us here today look back to a Scottish ancestry; we cherish the same faith and hold the same doctrines.”
REV. DR HENRY MONTGOMERY, MODERATOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ULSTER DAY 1912

“The stronghold of Ulster Protestantism has always been the Presbyterian Church, rooted in the Scottish Reformation and maintaining close and continuous contact with Scotland.”
PROFESSOR T. W. MOODY, TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

“... the Presbyterian system was born in opposition, and its adherents have never been inclined to minimize the sacrifices made for principle.”
DR A. T. Q. STEWART, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONS 1642

Immediately after the first Irish Presbyterian was formed in Carrickfergus in June 1642, Presbyterian communities in east Ulster began to look to it for leadership and guidance and sent requests for ministers to preach to them. In response the Presbytery...

... moved that there should be elderships erected with the consent of these congregations, and that by their help a present supply might be procured, and in due time ministers be settled among them. This motion of the Presbytery was very agreeable to those congregations, as appeared by their immediate and earnest address to the Presbytery for ministers to be sent for that effect, which also was readily done by the Presbytery, who sent ministers to eleven congregations who were first in a case for elderships. And, the elderships being erected in these places, there began a little appearance of a formed church in the country. (Adair's 'The Marrow', p. 56)

SOLEMN LEAGUE & COVENANT 1644

In the spring and early summer of 1644 the Solemn League and Covenant was signed at 26 locations across Ulster. On 25 May 1644 a report was sent to the General Assembly in Scotland that the persons of age and standing in these parts, who have already embraced the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Kingdoms with much zeal and forwardness, are above sixteen thousand.

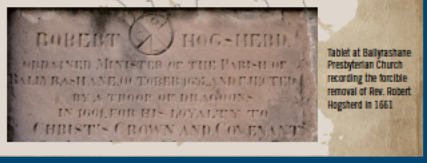
The Solemn League and Covenant gave a strong sense of identity to Ulster's Presbyterians and was one of the foundational episodes in the emergence of a distinct Presbyterian denomination.

PRESBYTERIAN MINISTERS EJECTED 1661

In 1661, following the Restoration, ministers who refused to accept the episcopal form of church government were dismissed. The overwhelming majority of Presbyterian ministers remained true to their convictions and were ejected.

CONGREGATIONS TODAY

Today there are over 500 congregations of the three historic Presbyterian denominations in the province of Ulster with several dozen more in other parts of the island.



- Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland
- Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Ireland

16. GROOMSPORT, COUNTY DOWN
Now a picturesque seaside village, Groomspoint is generally regarded as the place from where the *Edgehill* set sail for America in the autumn of 1636 with 140 men, women and children on board. The ship had been built for a group of Presbyterian ministers in Ulster who wanted to emigrate to New England where they hoped to enjoy religious freedom. Frustrated by others, the ship never made it to America. After eight weeks at sea severe storms forced the ship to return to Ireland.
Image: The harbour and Cuckie Row cottages
17. HOLYWOOD, COUNTY DOWN
The first Protestant minister, Rev. Robert Cunningham, settled in Hollywood in 1615 and preached in the Priory Church. Because of his Presbyterianism, Cunningham was eventually deposed by the authorities and returned to Scotland. In 1644 the Solemn League and Covenant was brought to the town where it was signed by the local populace. A copy of this Covenant is on display in the Ulster Museum. A 19th-century minister, Rev. Henry Henderson, wrote a newspaper column under the pseudonym 'Ulster Scot'.
Image: The old priory church
18. KELLSWATER, COUNTY ANTRIM
In the late 1630s, Covenanters fleeing to Mid Antrim met regularly on Finistree Hill, south of Kells, where Rev. David Houston preached to them. In 1700 Rev. William Martin based himself in this area and a farmar mill building by the banks of the Kells Water was converted to a meeting house. Because of its historical importance Kellswater has been described as the 'Capital of Covenanting'. The present building dates from 1806 and retains many of its original features.
Image: Kellswater Reformed Presbyterian Church
19. LONDONDERRY: FIRST DERRY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Following the lifting of the Siege in 1689, Queen Mary gave a generous donation to the Presbyterians of Derry to construct a new meeting house. The present building, erected in 1770, stands on this site. The impressive portico was added in 1830. The former Bible Class School to the rear of the church has been renovated as a visitor centre that tells the story of the many ways in which Presbyterians have contributed to the development of Derry.
20. LONDONDERRY: MAGEE COLLEGE
Magee College was established using the generous bequest of £20,000 by Martha Magee, the widow of Rev. William Magee of Lurgan. It opened in 1865 and offered courses in both arts and theology. Though established as a Presbyterian institution focused on preparing men for the ministry, it accepted students from all backgrounds. In the 20th century the arts and theological departments separated with the former becoming part of what is now Ulster University and the latter merging with Assenby's College, Belfast.
21. MONREAGH, COUNTY DONEGAL
Monagh Presbyterian Church was the earliest congregation to be formed in County Donegal – over 65 main doors to its stone 1644. The 18th-century meeting house, on the traditional T-plan, contains many of interesting features. Across the road in the former manse is the Monreagh Heritage Centre which tells the story of the area, with a strong emphasis on the history of Presbyterianism in the region, and the links that exist between East Donegal and the wider world.
Image: Monreagh Heritage Centre
22. PEDEN MEMORIAL, COUNTY ANTRIM
Arstyn-born Rev. Alexander Peden was one of the key figures in the story of the Covenanters in late 17th-century Ireland. He has associations with a number of places in Ulster, where he sought refuge from persecution in Scotland on several occasions, but most especially with the Glenavy district of County Antrim where in 1682 he lodged with the Sheel family. Today a visitor to the site of his former refuge will see a monument commemorating his time there.
Image: Peden memorial, Douglas Road, Glenavy
23. RADLEIGH, COUNTY DOWN
The congregation was formed in 1713 and is also known as First Kinnaird. The sturdy-built, T-plan meeting house is one of the finest examples of a Presbyterian place of worship built in the vernacular style. It was erected in 1747 during the ministry of the Rev. Moses Nelson, a fluent Irish speaker. Nelson established a successful academy at Rademoin. His son William also became a Presbyterian minister and was one of the foremost scholars of the Irish language of his day.
Image: Kathleen Mac-Suibhne Presbyterian Church
24. RAMELTON, COUNTY DONEGAL
Ramelton was one of the early centres of Presbyterianism in Donegal. The Solemn League and Covenant was brought here in 1644 and ten years later the first Presbyterian minister was ordained. The Old Meeting House in Ramelton (no longer used as a church), parts of which may date from the end of the 1600s, features a blue plaque to Rev. Francis Makemie, the 'Father of American Presbyterianism', who, after emigrating to the New World in 1683, conducted an influential and pioneering ministry in Ulster and was an avid collector of artefacts.
Image: The Old Meeting House
25. SAINTFIELD, COUNTY DOWN
A congregation was formed in Saintfield in the 1650s and the first minister was Rev. Alexander Hutchesson. He was the grandfather of the celebrated Francis Hutchesson, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University and widely regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of the modern era. In 2003 a blue plaque in recognition of life and legacy was unveiled at the Gullshalt. To the east of First Saintfield is a Memorial Garden which tells the story of the Battle of Saintfield in 1798.
Image: The Gullshalt beside First Saintfield Presbyterian Church
26. SENTRY HILL, COUNTY ANTRIM
Now in the care of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and open to the public, Sentry Hill was the home of the Presbyterian McKimney family for over 150 years. As the dwelling changed very little in the 20th century, it still has very strong feel of a Victorian mansion. The house number member of the family who here was William McKimney who created a remarkable collection of photographs depicting rural life in Ulster and was an avid collector of artefacts.
27. SIXMILECROSS, COUNTY TYRONE
The congregation of Sixmillecross was established by the Seacoters as early as 1744 and was originally known as the Seacoast. The most famous member of this congregation, as well as its minister from 1816 to 1838, was W. F. Mackay. He was a renowned writer and became a leading authority of Ulster Gaelic. He was buried at Sixmillecross in the burial ground beside the Presbyterian Church – the 'yale old house of Gal' – as he referred to it in one of his poems.
Image: Sixmillecross Presbyterian Church
28. ULSTER-AMERICAN FOLK PARK, COUNTY TYRONE
The Ulster-American Folk Park has a number of buildings with Presbyterian associations, including the Mellon Homestead which was the boyhood home of Thomas Mellon who went on to enjoy success in America in law and banking. The 'Meeting House' is a replica of the Presbyterian place of worship at nearby Mourville which was attended by the Mellon family. Thomas Mellon remembered that it was a 'venerable old structure built in the shape of a T and roofed with straw thatch'.
Image: The Mellon Homestead
29. ULSTER FOLK AND TRANSPORT MUSEUM, COUNTY DOWN
The Folk Museum opened in 1964 and contains a range of reconstructed buildings from across Ulster. The Presbyterian meeting house originally stood in Omagh, County Tyrone, and was built in the early 18th century during the ministry of Rev. James Maxwell. It was superseded by a new church in the late 19th century, but thankfully was not demolished. Prior to its reconstruction in the museum's rebuilt village of 'Ballyculter' in 2004, it had been used as a grilling yard.
Image: The Presbyterian meeting house
30. THE VOW, COUNTY ANTRIM
A fiery crossing point on the River Bann, The Vow, near Ballymoney, was the location of the ordination in 1727 of the first Reformed Presbyterian minister in Ireland, Rev. William Martin. Six years after the formation of the Reformed Presbyterian met here. In 1772 Martin led a major outbreak of Covenanters' families, mainly from County Antrim, to 1772 Carolina. In 2007 a memorial stone was erected close to the old Vow ground commemorating Martin's ordination and his subsequent emigration to America.