

## **What do we know about the origins of the surname Flack that might be helpful?**

The Flack family history search so far strongly suggests that our Flack family ancestors were probably settled in Counties Armagh, Cavan or Monaghan with lowland Scottish families as a part of the Plantation of Ulster in the early 1600s. It is also possible, but slightly less likely, that our Flack family is descended from what are known as “servitors” – men who had served in the army in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century and who were granted freehold land, most often in Counties Armagh, Cavan, Monaghan or Fermanagh

Using a surname distribution map of the incidence of families bearing the name Flack from the 1901 Census of Ulster, it can be seen that there were concentrations of Flack families in the southern counties of Ulster in areas that had originally been part of the estates of Sir Hugh Montgomery and Sir James Hamilton. By the time of the 1901 Census, many descendants of these original settler families would have been drawn to the larger towns, no doubt in search of work following the Irish Famine in 1845-52 and progressive replacement of the linen cottage industries by industrialisation in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **The earliest incidence of the surname Flack in Ulster**

Among the Scottish surnames, contained on Muster Rolls and Estate Maps of the eight Plantation Counties of Ulster for the period 1607 - 1633, which was the initial phase of the plantation scheme, the surname Flack appears once on a list of surnames of planters in County Cavan but no further details of Christian name or names of other family members have yet been located. There are also references to the surname Flack in other early records as follows:

- Fergus Flack and a John Fleck of Armagh, County Armagh Muster Rolls 1630 (T.G.F Paterson, 1970. In Seanchas Ardmhaca. Vol. 5, No. 2).
- Capt. John Flack formerly serving in the Army of King Charles I or II during the Wars of Ireland before the 5th day of June 1649. (Irish Pedigrees. “(E)Inrolments" of the Adjudications in favour of the 1649 officers: Preserved in the Office of the “Remembrancer of the Exchequer”, Dublin.)
- Reverend Robert Flack who held lands in 1634 on the Manor of Castlehasset known as Mullochmore and Gortkervyn in County Fermanagh. (Hill, G. 2003. A Special Census of Northern Ireland, Pynnars Survey of Land Holders: Including Names and Locations of Protestants and Catholics Affected. Irish Roots Cafe.)

## **Plantation of Ulster**

Before setting out the available evidence about where the Flack families may have originated, it is important to have some understanding of the arrangements under which the “plantation of Ulster” were undertaken.

Planning for the Ulster Plantation got underway shortly after The Flight of the Earls in September 1607. As the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell were expected to seek to return to their lands, bringing foreign military assistance, time was of the essence. The planning and implementation of the Ulster Plantation was carried out as a matter of urgency, though with undue haste as it turned out. The initial 1608 survey of confiscated lands was discovered to be so imperfect that a second survey was required during 1609.

The primary beneficiaries of the enlarged Plantation project, English and Scots settlers, as well as the Protestant Church of Ireland, were to be allocated almost three quarters of the confiscated lands. The British 'undertakers' (principal landlords) were assigned the lands at favourable terms. Proportions allocated varied from 2,000, 1,500 to 1,000 acres. Undertakers were expected to settle 24 British males per thousand acres of lands granted. On lands allocated to English and Scottish undertakers, the native Irish population was to be cleared off these estates, the principle of 'segregation' underpinning the settlement project. Stipulated building conditions were also scaled according to the size of the proportion granted. Thus undertakers who were granted the largest proportions, 2,000 acres, were expected to build a castle on their lands whereas stone bawns (walled fortifications) were required to be built by undertakers with smaller proportions. Building and settlement had to be completed within three years.

However, the Plantation strategists had grossly overestimated the capacity of the undertakers to fulfil their obligations, not least because of the continuing political uncertainty in Ireland. A survey of the Plantation lands undertaken by Sir George Carew in 1611 discovered that relatively little progress had been made.

With time, and particularly after the Earl of Tyrone's death in 1616, the immediate threat to the Plantation was lifted somewhat. Experience proved that the allocated three years for implementing the Plantation was unrealistic. Subsequent decades resulted in increasing Protestant migration to Ulster, inspired not by political diktat but by social and economic conditions in England and Scotland. By the 1640s, the Protestant population in Ulster had swelled to some 40,000, being sufficiently numerous, as it turned out, to withstand the onslaught by the dispossessed Catholics which occurred in 1641. Some estimates conclude that about 80 percent of the migration was from Scotland and from the Scottish-English Boarder areas and that the great majority of English settlers in Ulster sold their land grants relatively quickly, preferring to invest in the American and West Indian colonies instead.

### **Who were the major planters in Ulster?**

If the Scottish origins of the Flack families in Ulster are to be taken as correct, then it is reasonable to assume that the original Flack family(s) came from one or more of planter's estates in Scotland. The following summaries provide more information about the principle planters in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century and the location of their estates

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Sir Hugh Montgomery of the Great Ards (c. 1560-1636)**

Sir Hugh Montgomery was an aristocrat and a soldier, known as one of the "founding fathers" of the Ulster-Scots along with Sir Hugh Hamilton. Montgomery was born in Ayrshire at Broadstone Castle, near Beith. He was the son of Adam Montgomery, 5<sup>th</sup> Laird of Braidstain, by his wife and cousin.

After being educated at University of Glasgow and time spent at the royal court of France, Montgomery served as a Captain of Foot of a Scottish Regiment under William I of Orange during the early parts of the Eighty Years' War. He returned to Scotland upon the death of his parents in 1587. He inherited his father's title as the Laird of Braidstane and married Elizabeth Shaw, who died in 1625. Montgomery established a relationship with King James VI. He was able to gain some influence in the king's court due to his correspondence with his brother George Montgomery, who

had been named Dean of Norwich in 1602. The information contained in the correspondence was important to James as it included details on English politics.

Montgomery's friendship with the king was useful to him next in establishing a Settlement in Ireland in 1606 (preceding the Plantation of Ulster in 1610). Looking for opportunity for advancement, Montgomery came into contact with the wife of Con O'Neill, a landowner in Ulster, who was imprisoned at Carrickfergus Castle for instigating rebellion against the Queen. Montgomery and Ellis O'Neill (the wife) made a deal that the O'Neills would give half of their land to him if he could free Con and secure for him a royal pardon. Montgomery sent a relative to Ireland to lead the jailbreak, which was successful.

At this point, James Hamilton interfered with the negotiations with the King, securing for himself a share of the land in question with the resultant shares being one-third each for Hamilton, Montgomery and O'Neill, who gained pardon. (Montgomery also secured for his brother George, title as Bishop of Derry and Raphoe.) Montgomery and Hamilton recruited Scots of many families and trades to populate their settlement. In May 1606 the first wave of settlers arrived. Montgomery settled at Newtownards and soon established a trade route between Donaghadee in Ireland and Portpatrick in Scotland.

In 1613, Montgomery, along with Hamilton, represented the settlement to the Irish House of Commons. At Donaghadee he built a large stone quay to accommodate vessels ferrying between Scotland and Ireland from 1616 onwards. On 3 May 1622, Montgomery was made Viscount Montgomery.

Bogston House and estate was a residence of the Montgomerie family and it lay between South Barr, Hayhills and Bogfaulds Farms in what is now DM Beith. Bogston was once a well wooded estate of 100 fertile acres, with fine plantings, orchards and gardens. Part of the Giffen Barony, this property was feued out by the Earl of Eglinton to Robert Montgomerie in 1663. In its latter days Bogston was a farm, but following the creation of the munitions storage facility Bogston was demolished and is now only indicated by a small group of trees.

### **Sir James Hamilton**

James Hamilton, 1st Viscount Claneboye (c. 1560–1644) was a Scot who became owner of large tracts of land in County Down, Ireland, and founded a successful Protestant Scots settlement there several years before the Plantation of Ulster. Hamilton was able to acquire the lands as a result of his connections with King James I of England, for whom he had been an agent in negotiations for James to succeed Queen Elizabeth I of England.

Hamilton was the eldest of six sons of Hans Hamilton (1535/6–1608) and Jonet (or Janet), daughter of James Denham, Laird of West Shield, Ayrshire. His father Hans was the first Protestant minister of Dunlop in East Ayrshire, Scotland.

He was probably the James Hamilton who studied at the University of St Andrews and received a BA in 1584 and an MA in 1585. He acquired a reputation as "one of the greatest scholars and hopeful wits in his time" and became a teacher in Glasgow. Later he became a diplomat, representing King James VI of Scotland both in Dublin and in London.

In 1602, Gaelic chieftain Conn O'Neill of Ulster sent his men to attack English soldiers after a quarrel and was consequently imprisoned. O'Neill's wife made a deal with Scots aristocrat Hugh Montgomery to give him half of O'Neill's lands if Montgomery could get a royal pardon for O'Neill. Montgomery obtained the pardon but in August 1604 Hamilton discovered the plan for the land. James Fullerton, now Sir James and an advisor to King James, convinced the king that the lands were too large to be split in two and should be divided into three, with one third going to his associate Hamilton; the king agreed. Hamilton's main grant, made formally in November 1605, was the lordship of Upper (South) Clondeboy and the Great Ardes in County Down.

The Nine Years' War in Ireland had ended in 1603, and Hamilton and Montgomery both recruited tenants from the Scottish Lowlands to migrate to Ulster to farm their newly acquired lands for low rents. They persuaded members of their extended families to come and, in May 1606, the first group of farmers, artisans, merchants and chaplains arrived to form the Ulster Scots settlement, four years before the Plantation of Ulster in 1610. The settlement was a success and Hamilton was knighted by the king at Royston on 14 November 1609. By 1611, a new town of eighty houses had been established at Bangor, where Hamilton lived. His brother John acquired lands in County Armagh and founded Markethill, Hamiltonsbawn and Newtownhamilton.[8]

Hamilton was elected a member of parliament for County Down in 1613. He repaired the Bangor Abbey church in 1617.[9] He was made the first Viscount Clondeboy on 4 May 1622, in the Peerage of Ireland. He was also a privy councillor. In about 1625 he moved from Bangor to Killyleagh Castle. Montgomery died in 1636 and in 1637 Hamilton built the Custom House and Tower House at his port of Bangor, to try to replace Montgomery's port at Donaghadee as Ulster's main port.

In 1641, when in his eighties, he returned to his Scottish home town of Dunlop and built a mausoleum to his parents in the churchyard where his father had been minister. He erected a school attached to the mausoleum which he named Clondeboy School. Both buildings still stand.

In the Irish Rebellion of 1641, the native Irish population rose against English settlers, and later also Scottish settlers, and killed thousands of them. The king gave colonels' commissions to Hamilton and other Scots in November to raise troops in Ulster to combat the rising. Hamilton raised a regiment of 1,000 men. The regiments raised by Hamilton and Hugh Montgomery's son, the 2nd Viscount Montgomery, saved their areas of County Down from the degree of damage done in other parts of Ulster.

Hamilton died, aged about eighty-four, on 24 January 1644 and was buried in the church at Bangor.

### **Sir Edward Blennerhasset**

The origin of what is now essentially an Irish surname may be found in the ancient Manor of Blenerhayset and the modern village of Blenerhayset (now Blennerhasset, with single 't') in the northern English county of Cumberland (now a part of the recently created county of Cumbria), close to the border with lowland Scotland. Pronunciation of the place-name has been Blen'hayset, Blen'hasset, Blen'rasset or simply 'Rasset. Carrying no surname and owning no property, the family will no doubt have worked the land or otherwise served their Lord of the Manor. In the twelfth century one of them adopted or was given the name of the manor as a personal surname, he and his descendants being described as "de Blenerhayset" (i.e. "of Blenerhayset").

Subsequently the family left the manor of Blenerhayset for the nearby City of Carlisle, where in the 1350s is found Alan de Blenerhayset, a merchant active in local politics who later, in 1390, sealed a deed with the arms still borne by the family.

Blenerhaysets prospered at Carlisle a further 200 years, regularly serving as Mayor, Sheriff or Burgess for that city or M.P. for the county of Cumberland. In 1547 the leading line of the family established themselves as gentry at Flembly Hall, Flembly (now called Flimby) on the Cumberland coast, while younger sons moved further afield to found dynasties in the English counties Norfolk & Suffolk and the Irish counties Kerry, Limerick & Fermanagh.

Ancestor of the East Anglia (Norfolk & Suffolk) and Northern Ireland (County Fermanagh) lines was Ralph de Blenerhayset of Carlisle, Cumberland, who in 1423 married Joan de Lowdham of Loudham, a 14 year old heiress and already a widow. By this marriage Ralph gained the manors of Loudham, Toddtenham & Halvergate in Suffolk; Frenze in Norfolk; and Kelvedon in Essex, thus becoming Lord of the Manor for each of these places.

Their distant kinsman, an Elizabethan soldier, writer and poet from Norfolk also named Thomas Blennerhassett, was stationed at Guernsey Castle (Castle Cornet) in St Peter Port, Guernsey, Channel Islands. He also served in Co.Fermanagh, Ireland c1600 and a few years later this Thomas, with his brother Sir Edward Blennerhassett, Knight, settled by the beautiful Loch Erne in Fermanagh, having in 1610 been granted land in the Plantation of Ulster, on confiscated Maguire property in the western part of the Barony of Lurg. Their property stretched from Belleek to the river Bannagh and there they built Castle Hassett (now named Crevenish Castle) at Hassettstown (now named Ederney), also Hassett's Fort (now named Castle Caldwell) and the new towns Belleek, Ederney & Kesh.

### **Research findings**

On the following map, the major plantations headed by Sir Hugh Montgomery, Sir James Hamilton and Sir Edward Blennerhassett are plotted along with the origins of these families in Scotland and in Cumbria.

Whilst great caution must be taken in making any definitive statements about the origins of the Flack family, the circumstantial evidence points to they having been part of Sir James Hamilton's settlement in South Armagh and were probably tenants or servitors associated with the Hamilton estate near Dunlop Ayrshire, between Glasgow and Kilmarnock. It will be noted that the Hamilton and Montgomery were neighbouring estates and both are located within a day's walk of Auckinleck (okh-in-lek) or "field of stones") (Scots: Affleck /'æflək/, Scottish Gaelic: Achadh nan Leac), said to be the origin of the surname "Flack". It will also be noted that Sir Hugh Hamilton was a strong supporter of Presbyterianism.

If this rather tenuous line of evidence is taken with the evidence from the Y-DNA results for Edmund Flack, which finds that there is an 80% chance of Edmund Flack having a common ancestor with other male Flacks who can trace their family history to Ayrshire, then there is good chance that the Flack family were originally tenants or servitors on the Hamilton Estate near Dunlop, Ayrshire, Scotland.

