



# THE COVENANTERS IN ULSTER

Every Presbyterian in Scotland, Ireland and America  
owes their origins to the Covenanters

**D**URING THE 1600s the Presbyterian people in Ulster and Scotland suffered for their faith because of laws imposed upon them by four tyrant Kings. These people - men and women, boys and girls, rich and poor - rose up and declared a series of Covenants, to stand for their faith and to oppose these laws, no matter what the cost would be. They became known as Covenanters. Many Ulster people went to Scotland to fight for the Covenanters' cause, and many Scottish people fled to Ulster for refuge from persecution. This is their story...

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IN 2006, THE ULSTER-SCOTS AGENCY’S THEME STORY WAS THE HAMILTON & MONTGOMERY SETTLEMENT OF 1606.

IN 2007 IT WAS KING ROBERT THE BRUCE’S REFUGE ON RATHLIN ISLAND IN 1307. 2008’S THEME STORY IS...



**PART ONE:** The Covenanters. A name that many thousands of Ulster people know of heroism and patriotism, of resistance to the state, of persecution and martyrdom,

Some of the most famous Covenanter stories have been passed down through the generations in families across the nine counties of Ulster.

Many people have heard of the two Margarets who were tied to stakes and drowned in the rising tide of Solway Firth near Wigtown in May 1685. Many people have heard of “The Killing Times”. And maybe some of you have heard of the Covenanter heroes like Richard Cameron “The Lion of the Covenant”, James Renwick and Alexander Peden “Prophet of the Covenanters”, who came to County Antrim.

But the Ulster connection is far greater than most people realise. Like so many of our histories, the Covenanter story connects Scotland, Ulster and America. Some would even say that the Covenanters’ experience is right at the heart of who the Ulster-Scots people are, what makes us tick, and helps to explain some of our attitudes and even our worldwide influence.

A generation ago, many homes across Ulster owned popular novels about the Covenanters, and so many of us grew up with their stories.

But did you know that:

- at least 18,000 Presbyterian Covenanters were killed by the King’s troops or banished into slavery?

- after some of the major Covenanter battles in Scotland, there were reports of empty boats being found along the Ulster coastline because many of the survivors had fled here?

- Scotland has hundreds of Covenanter memorials, from Galloway to Orkney, to commemorate their heroism and sacrifice?

- it was the Covenanters of East Tennessee who were the first to oppose black slavery in America – perhaps because many Scottish Covenanters had also been captured, imprisoned and sent to America as slaves to work on plantations during the 1600s - and because they remembered how much their own ancestors had suffered under tyrannical government?

As far as the history goes, the story runs from the Scottish Reformation in 1560 through to the signing of the Covenant at Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh in 1638, to “The Killing Times” of 1680 - 1688, and then the Glorious Revolution, which brought an end to the persecution of the Covenanters and established Presbyterianism as the national Church of Scotland.

But it doesn’t end in 1688 – the story continues to the present day, and it takes some surprising twists and turns in between. For example, the Covenanters were opposed to The Ulster Covenant of 1912, which was signed by over 450,000 people - but not because they were in favour of Home Rule!

The Ulster-Scots Agency is delighted that today’s Covenanters, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, have agreed to help us in telling their story to our readers. Some of you might also have seen an acclaimed documentary by BBC Northern Ireland a few years ago which was about the unaccompanied Psalm singing tradition today.

We’ll update you throughout the year about events and exhibitions that we hope to organise, to enable you to find out more and perhaps even experience 21st century Covenanter traditions for yourself. So for the rest of the year we’ll be publishing a series of articles in this newspaper, leaflets, heritage trails and a website explaining “The Covenanters in Ulster” story.

We’ll be letting you know about books you can read, films and DVDs to watch, and places you can visit both here in Ulster and in Scotland too (like museums, visitor centres, battlefields and memorials) to better understand the epic story of the Covenanters’ struggle for religious freedom.

And if you have anything you’d like to suggest to us that you think we should include in “The Covenanters in Ulster” please get in touch.

well, but maybe know only a little about. It’s a name which speaks of deeply-held faith, of opposition to slavery, of emigration - and of a tradition which continues to this day.

## WHAT WAS THE COVENANT?



For many years, King James I, and later his son King Charles I, had attempted to impose their authority upon the church in Scotland. However the people were deeply resistant to this interference.

On Sunday 23rd July 1637, the famous Jenny Geddes hurled a stool at the Dean of St Giles’ Cathedral in Edinburgh when he attempted to read from the King’s new Book of Common Prayer. The spot where she threw it from is marked by a plaque in the floor, and the stool

itself is in the National Museum of Scotland. The opposition to the King gathered momentum.

Two Presbyterians, Archibald Johnston and Rev Alexander Henderson, drafted a document, Scotland’s National Covenant, denouncing the King’s interference.

On Wednesday 28th February 1638, the Covenant was publicly read aloud and signed in Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh - the same kirkyard which 50 years later would become a deadly Covenanter prison.

Many copies of the Covenant were made, were sent to locations across Scotland and Ulster, and were signed by the people, who were then known as “Covenanters”. Some of these copies survive in Museums and churches to this day - for example at both St Giles’ Cathedral and Greyfriars Kirk.

## COVENANTER MEMORIALS



All across Scotland there are scores, maybe even hundreds, of graves and memorials to the Covenanters. Some are large and impressive monuments, for example at battle sites like Bothwell Bridge near Hamilton. There are also monuments to famous individuals like James Renwick, Richard Cameron and John Brown - and there are monuments to mark the place where many lesser-known Covenanters died.

You’ll be amazed at how many Covenanter

memorials there are in Scotland. For example, the main sign at the village of Barrhill in South Ayrshire (on the A714 road between Girvan and Newton Stewart), says “The Land of the Covenanters”. In the middle of the village near a narrow stone bridge there’s a tourist signpost which says “Martyrs Tomb Walk”. From here a narrow path leads about 100 yards from the main road, to a monument set among tall trees, close to the river bank. It marks the place where two Covenanters - John Murchie and Daniel Meiklewick - were killed by the King’s dragoons in 1687.

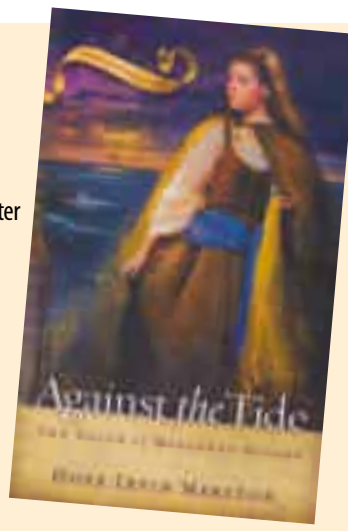
Many of the monuments are maintained by the Scottish Covenanters Memorial Association. Visit their website at [www.covenanter.org.uk](http://www.covenanter.org.uk) to find out about their work, Covenanter history and how you can join the Association.

## READ:

**Against the Tide: The Valour of Margaret Wilson** by Hope Irvin Marston (price £8.99)

This book, published in 2007, carries on the proud tradition of Covenanter novels which have been a feature of so many Ulster-Scots homes over the generations. It tells the story of the famous 18 year old Covenanter “Solway Martyr” who drowned in the rising tide with her friend Margaret MacLachlan in 1685, tied to a stake by the King’s troops. Aimed at younger and teenage readers, “Against the Tide” is an ideal way to introduce the story of the Covenanters to young people.

Available from the Covenanter Bookshop. Tel: 028 9081 4110  
Email: [bookshop@rpc.org](mailto:bookshop@rpc.org) Website: [www.covenanterbooks.com](http://www.covenanterbooks.com)



## WATCH:

**DVD: For Christ’s Crown and Covenant** by Spinnaker Productions (Price £11.95)

Produced in conjunction with the Reformed Presbyterian Church, this DVD is an excellent summary of Covenanter history. Beginning with John Knox and the Scottish Reformation in 1560, the DVD is a journey through the main Covenanter sites in Scotland, from Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh where the Covenant was signed in 1638, to many famous Covenanter memorials across the Lowlands. It also includes interviews and an overview of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland today.

Available from the Covenanter Bookshop. Tel: 028 9081 4110  
Email: [bookshop@rpc.org](mailto:bookshop@rpc.org) Website: [www.covenanterbooks.com](http://www.covenanterbooks.com)



## LISTEN:

**CD - Tales of the Covenanters** by The Grassmarket Butchers (price £10 plus £1 p&p)

A cd of 13 modern folk songs, written and performed by 9 different members of the “New Makars Trust” in Lanarkshire, telling the stories of the Covenanters. A range of different musical styles, capturing the emotion and drama of many of the most famous events in Covenanter history. For example, the track “John Craig the Covenanter” tells the tale of a minister who tricked the King’s troops at an ambush they had set.

Order enquiries to Billy Stewart  
email: [billy@garriongill.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:billy@garriongill.freereserve.co.uk),  
web: [www.newmakarstrust.org.uk](http://www.newmakarstrust.org.uk) or [www.haggerdash.co.uk](http://www.haggerdash.co.uk)



## VISIT:

**Memorial to Alexander Peden, “Prophet of the Covenant”** - Glenwherry, County Antrim

On the Douglas Road at Glenwherry is a small farmstead called “Misty Burn”. Between 1682 and 1685 this was the refuge of Rev Alexander Peden, one of the most famous Covenanter ministers. The setting is spectacular, not far away from Slemish. On the other side of the Glenwherry Valley is “Wee Collin”, the mountain where another famous Ulster Covenanter, Willie Gilliland, hid from the King’s troops. (Photograph by David Gordon)

Glenwherry is halfway along the A36 “Ballymena/Larne Line”





# THE COVENANTERS IN ULSTER

John Nisbet Memorial, Kilmarnock



"The Covenanters Trail" road sign, Drumclog



John Howie Memorial, Fenwick



Detail from Muirkirk Memorial



Memorial at the Grassmarket, Edinburgh



Greyfriars Kirkyard, Edinburgh



"Four Heads" Memorial, Hamilton



## PART TWO: From

To explain the background of the Covenanters' story, we need to

## Reformation to Revival - The Eve of the Covenant

go back to 1516, to discover how the radical ideas of a German monk became a great wind of change that swept across Europe - and eventually into Scotland and Ulster.

### FROM GERMANY AND GENEVA TO SCOTLAND

by Rev Robert McCollum, Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland

The Covenanters, who came to Ulster at the beginning of the 17th Century, were deeply influenced by the Scottish Reformation (1560).



#### GERMANY 1516

The story of the Scottish Reformation goes back to a German monk, **Martin Luther**, (above) who in 1516 discovered that the righteousness which God required of the sinner He himself had provided in Jesus Christ. In making this discovery Luther's reaction was euphoric. *"Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through the open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning, and whereas before the 'justice of God' had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage (Romans 1:16,17) became to me a gate to Heaven."*

Martin Luther wanted the world to share in his discovery. In 1517, when he published his beliefs on the church door at Wittenburg, he ignited a flame that soon spread throughout Europe.

#### PATRICK HAMILTON

The beliefs of Martin Luther came to Scotland via a young man of Royal descent called **Patrick Hamilton**. He had gone to Paris in the 1520's to further his education with a view to entering the priesthood. He became aware of the controversy in Germany associated with Luther and through his contact with the German Reformer accepted the Reformed faith for himself.

Thrilled with the blessings of his new found faith, Patrick Hamilton wanted all of Scotland to hear the Gospel. Scotland at that time was very hostile to the Reformation. After his arrival in 1528 he preached passionately and persuasively to his fellow Scots. The church authorities soon took notice, condemned him and burnt him at the stake in St Andrews in 1528. Archbishop Beaton hoped to make an example of Hamilton but his martyrdom had the opposite effect. One bystander at the scene of his execution remarked, *"The reek of Patrick Hamilton has infected as many as it blew upon."*



One of those influenced by Hamilton was **George Wishart**. The authorities caught up with him in 1546 at a time when one of his young friends was willing to die with him.

#### JOHN KNOX IN GENEVA

That friend was **John Knox**, who fled to St Andrews castle for safety. In 1547 the castle was captured by the French and Knox was forced to become a galley slave for 19 months in the French fleet. On his release in 1549 he preached for a time in England and then fled to Geneva to escape the malicious designs of Queen Mary Tudor (1553-58). At Geneva, Knox came into contact with the brilliant French Reformer, **John Calvin**. Knox was later to describe Geneva at that time as, *"the most perfect school on earth since the days of the apostles"*.

#### THE FIRST OF 30 COVENANTS

In the mid 1550's some Scottish nobles invited Knox to return to Scotland to promote the Protestant Reformation. When he was half-way home they changed their mind, but they later renewed the invitation and entered into a solemn covenant or bond pledging commitment to the Reformation and to Knox. This Covenant is of historical importance as it was the first of 30 Covenants associated with the Scottish Reformation.

In these Covenants the Scottish Reformers were following the example of the days of Joshua, Josiah and Nehemiah. In swearing these Covenants the Reformers did not consider that they were binding themselves to anything additional to the Bible, but that they were additionally binding themselves to that which was

already their duty to do.

Knox responded to this invitation arriving in Scotland in May 1559. The nation was ripe for his message and within a year the general population accepted the prominent doctrines of the Reformation.

After legislation was passed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Parliament in 1560 the church became a Reformed Church and the nation became a Reformed nation. Subsequently a struggle ensued as to the nature of the Reformed Church. Knox had in mind the independence of the Church under Christ governed by elders (Presbyterianism). James VI (right) wanted a Church subject to the State, governed by bishops (Episcopacy).



#### THE FIRST NATIONAL COVENANT

After the death of Knox, **Andrew Melville**, through his preaching and controversy with the King, became known as the great champion of the 'Divine Right of Presbytery'. His efforts culminated in the 'First National Covenant' or 'King's Confession' of 1581 which became known as 'The Great Charter of Presbytery'.

### FROM SCOTLAND TO ULSTER

by Dr Lawrence Holden, Queens University Belfast

#### MIGRATIONS TO ULSTER

No single date or event transformed the Scots into a Presbyterian people. The progress was slow and steady, influenced by events in Europe, and by Scottish Reformers such as Knox and Melville who returned from Geneva to reform the Kirk. As the religious life of the Scottish Lowlands changed over a period of two or three generations, the people's belief in themselves as a Covenanted people and the resulting struggle for Presbyterianism became intertwined with their national identity.



The population of lowland Scotland was rising, and when the migrations to Ulster began, firstly with the Hamilton and Montgomery (above) Settlement in 1606, and then with King James' highly planned Ulster Plantation in 1610, the Scots crossed the North Channel in numbers.

James had deemed the Lowland Scots suitable for the 'planting of civility' in Ulster. However his struggle for control over the Church in Scotland had not been resolved, and within the 'official' plans for Plantation an unplanned, and more natural, migration of Scottish culture and religious identity crossed over to Ulster.

#### RELIGION AND REVIVAL

The first generation of Scots in Ulster were not a pious people, but they were a practising people - familiar with the preaching style of their own ministers and familiar with the simplicity of the Scottish Presbyterian style of worship.

One of leaders of the small band of Presbyterian ministers who had crossed into Ulster was **Robert Blair**, who settled in Bangor in 1623. Blair and his fellow ministers laboured quietly in a small number of Scots congregations in south Antrim and north Down, and by the long winter of 1625-6 the small rivers of spiritual change became a torrent as a mighty revival occurred in Oldstone by the banks of the Six Mile Water in county Antrim.

**James Glendinning** the minister at Oldstone had 'roused up the people, and wakened them with terrors', and as Glendinning's ministry ended so the people were soothed by the preaching of **Josias Welsh**.

Josias Welsh was the grandson of John Knox, and also a former professor at Glasgow University who was part of a group of Godly ministers described as 'the heirs of Andrew Melville'. The Scottish Reformation arrived in Ulster with an impact both powerful and enduring.

#### PRESBYTERY AND PERSECUTION

The influence of the revival quickly spread through the small communities of county Antrim

and Down. The ministers spoke of 'multitudes of such men who had no power to resist the word of God', and sought to give some form and leadership to the growing numbers attending house meetings in the Antrim area. **John Ridge**, the English minister at Antrim, suggested a monthly lecture and invited Robert Blair of Bangor, **Robert Cunningham** of Hollywood and **James Hamilton** of Ballywalter to 'bear the burden.'

The 'Antrim Meeting' quickly grew over the following years with the addition of **Henry Calvert** of Oldstone, **George Dunbar** who had ministered at Ballymena and Larne, Josias Welsh (now settled at Templepatrick), **Andrew Stewart** of Donegore, **John Livingstone** of Killinchy and **Edward Brice** of Broadisland (Ballycarry). King James' ambitions to control the church were not confined to Scotland, and in Ireland the bishops on whom he conferred great power to administer that royal control, viewed the growth of the Antrim Meeting with suspicion and contempt.

One bishop described the influence of the revival as a 'contagion lately spread over the face of the whole countries of Down and Connor' and the ministers as 'absolute irregulars, the very ebullition of Scotland'.

By the 1630's the Ulster Scots were living in 'perpetual fear that the bishops would put away their ministers'. Their fears were well founded as the first ministers were deposed in 1634 in

persecutions which lasted until 1636. In that year some of the ministers and people tried to set sail for New England in the 'Eagle Wing', without success.



Amidst emotional scenes the remaining depositions took place on the 12th August 1636. Defiant in front of the bishops, Robert Cunningham of Hollywood delivered his final response to their persecution - 'I rather lay down my ministry at the feet of my Lord and Saviour Christ, of whom I did receive it, than to live with an evil conscience at the free liberty of it'.

#### RESILIENCE AND THE EVE OF THE COVENANT

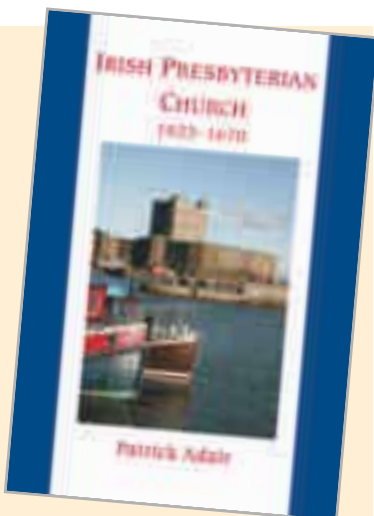
By 1637 the Scots in Ulster had lost their spiritual leaders, the state and established church were optimistic that ejecting the ministers would finish Presbyterianism in Ulster. It was not to be, the community remained resilient, the fledgling Kirk endured and the bishop's optimism that their persecution had been successful proved ill founded on the eve of the Covenant.

## READ:

**A True Narrative, or, The Rise and Progress of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland 1623-1670**  
by Rev Patrick Adair (price £20.00)

Sometimes simply called "Adair's Narrative", this is arguably the most important book about the early Presbyterians in Ulster, because the author, Rev Patrick Adair, was one of their early ministers. It has been out of print since 1866, but a limited edition reprint (of only 250 copies) will be launched by the Presbyterian Historical Society on 19th March.

Available from the Presbyterian Historical Society, Belfast  
Telephone 028 9032 2284  
Website: [www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com](http://www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com)



## READ:

**The Six Mile Water Revival of 1625**  
by Rev W.D. Bailie (price £2.00)

Originally published by the Presbyterian Historical Society in 1974, this 28 page booklet is the best-known summary of the events that took place around South Antrim during the Six Mile Water Revival of 1625. It covers the period from the arrival of the first Scottish settlers through to the massacres of 1641, and includes lots of information about the early Scottish ministers in Ulster.

Available from the Presbyterian Historical Society, Belfast  
Telephone 028 9032 2284  
Website: [www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com](http://www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com)



## CLICK:

**CD Rom - The Covenanters Trail**  
by Robert Hart and Alan Hart, Cumnock, Ayrshire  
(price £14.00 inc p&p)

This excellent CD Rom (PC only, no Mac version available) contains an interactive tour of more than 60 Covenanter memorial locations across Scotland, spread over 180 pages of maps, photographs, memorial inscriptions and the stories of many of the martyrs themselves.

Available from Robert Hart, 162 Barshare Road, Cumnock, Ayrshire, Scotland, KA18 1NR  
email: [robert.hart2@btinternet.com](mailto:robert.hart2@btinternet.com)  
Website: [www.robert.hart2.btinternet.co.uk](http://www.robert.hart2.btinternet.co.uk)



## SPECIAL EVENT:

**Who Are the Covenanters? From the Killing Times to the 21st Century**  
Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, Doagh Road, Newtownabbey  
Friday 18th April 2008 at 7.30pm

- A presentation by Professor Edward Donnelly, Principal of Reformed Theological College, Belfast and Minister of Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church
- Unaccompanied singing of psalms
- Historical and present day Covenanter testimonies
- An exhibition of Covenanter history

**Everyone welcome!**







Detail from Robert Ferguson's Covenanter gravestone, Auchencloy, Galloway

Detail from John Morton's Covenanter gravestone, Newmilns, Ayrshire

# THE COVENANTERS IN ULSTER



Detail from John Nisbet's Covenanter gravestone, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire



Detail from Covenanter Memorial, Muirkirk, Ayrshire

## PART THREE: Scotland's National Covenant, the Black Oath and the Solemn League & Covenant

By **Dr William Roulston** (Ulster Historical Foundation and Board member of the Ulster-Scots Agency) and **Mark Thompson** (Chairman, Ulster-Scots Agency).  
of the early Presbyterian ministers in Ulster. This instalment looks at the Covenants of 1638 and 1643 and the impact of the 'Black Oath' on the Scots in Ulster.

In the previous issue, Rev Robert McCollum looked at the background to the Reformation in Scotland, while Dr Lawrence Holden explored the experiences  
These events took place during a period that has been termed the Second Scottish Reformation (1638-49), the repercussions of which are still with us today.

The famous Scottish minister Samuel Rutherford was a close friend of the early Ulster-Scots ministers, and wrote to them many times. His published *Letters and Sermons* are regarded as some of the finest Christian literature ever written. In 1636, on the eve of the attempted emigration of "Eagle Wing" from Groomsport to America, Rutherford had been imprisoned in Aberdeen, yet he wrote to Holywood minister Robert Cunningham, passing on his best wishes as they prepared to set sail. He even wrote to console them when they returned – to Robert Blair of Bangor from his prison cell, and to John Stuart (one of the ship's passengers) saying "If I saw a call for New England, I too would follow it!"

After what looked like the failure of "Eagle Wing" (led by Blair, James Hamilton of Ballywalter, John McClelland of Newtownards and John Livingstone of Killinchy), most of the Ulster Presbyterian ministers were driven back to Scotland - Blair and Livingstone were soon preaching across the Lowlands. During this time as many as 500 members of Livingstone's former congregation at Killinchy would sail to Stranraer on a Sunday, worship with him there, and sail home again that evening.

Yet these ministers snatched victory from the jaws of defeat - they went on to play a vital role in the struggle between the Church and the King, and were the vanguard of perhaps three consecutive generations of Ulster-Scots ministers who played an important part in the opposition to the Crown, right up to the Glorious Revolution – a period known in Covenanter history as "The 50 Years Struggle".

**The Ulster dimension is not merely a footnote in the Covenanters story – Ulster is right at its very heart.**

### BACKGROUND TO THE COVENANTS

As opposition in Scotland to King Charles I's interference in the church gathered momentum, the people and the Kirk renewed an old tradition, but this time more powerfully than ever before. Scotland's National Covenant was born.

The Covenants of 1638 and 1643 were not something entirely new. Drawing on Biblical precedents, the Scottish reformers had frequently entered into religious covenants designed to unite the people of Scotland in the defence of the principles of the Reformation. The National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant were following in this tradition, but framed to meet the needs of the time.

By the mid-1630s, the chief aim of King Charles I and William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, was to bring all the churches in England, Ireland and Scotland into closer conformity. A new set of laws for the Scottish church was introduced in 1635, outlawing sessions and presbyteries, increasing the power of the bishops and exalting the position of the king as head of the church. Those who opposed this were to face severe penalties.

Charles I and Laud, by ignoring both the Scottish church and the Scottish parliament, aroused the anger of the people. They felt that their civil and religious liberties were being infringed, and that the Reformation itself was under threat. Sunday, 23 July 1637 was a day never to be forgotten in Scotland. In the Church of St Giles in Edinburgh, the new rules for church services were introduced for the first time. According to tradition, as the dean began to read the order of service, the voice of Jenny Geddes rang out in anger, "Villain, dost thou say mass at my lug?" Taking hold of the stool upon which she had been sitting she flung it at the dean's head. Instantly the service was thrown into confusion and had to be abandoned. Today, a plaque in the floor of

St Giles marks the spot where she stood.

### 1638 - SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL COVENANT

Over the next six months, the depth of feeling across Scotland was so strong that by February 1638, 60,000 people had gathered in Edinburgh. On 28 February 1638 – "that glorious marriage day of the Kingdom with God", according to Archibald Johnston of Warriston (who co-authored the Covenant along with Alexander Henderson) – the nobility and gentry signed Scotland's National Covenant at Greyfriars' Church in Edinburgh. The next day it was signed by the ministers and on 2 and 3 March by the general populace. John Livingstone of Killinchy was sent, disguised and on horseback, to London to take copies of the Covenant to Presbyterians there.

In this Covenant the people of Scotland solemnly bound themselves and succeeding generations to promote the reformed faith. Copies of the covenant were sent throughout Scotland and received almost everywhere with much enthusiasm. Inside three weeks, almost the entire Scottish population had signed the Covenant. Soon afterwards a presbyterian system of church government was restored in Scotland and the bishops were expelled. Scotland was effectively now under the control of the Covenanters.

King Charles I was outraged by this national defiance of his authority. With a military outcome becoming inevitable, Archibald Campbell, the Marquis of Argyll, and the most powerful man in Scotland, raised a Covenanter army. By May 1639, Argyll had 20,000 men under his command.

### 1639 - THE BLACK OATH

The Scottish colony in Ulster was in a state of flux in the late 1630s. Immigration from Scotland was slowing down and a succession of poor harvests was leaving many people impoverished. Thomas Wentworth, the Earl



The Signing of Scotland's National Covenant,

Greyfriars Kirkyard, Edinburgh, 28 February 1638

**"...None is so dim-sighted, but of the Ulster Scots to the**

**sees the general inclination Covenant..." - Sir George Radcliffe, 1640**

of Strafford, was appointed as Lord Deputy of Ireland in 1633, and he brought major changes. Presbyterians in Ulster were coming under increasing pressure.

Wentworth watched the events that were unfolding in Scotland with some alarm and was concerned that what was happening there could very easily happen in Ireland, particularly in those parts of Ulster where Scottish settlement was strongest. The Scottish settlers in Ulster, once regarded as the backbone of English authority in Ireland, were now seen as its greatest threat. In July 1638, it was rumoured in London that the Covenanters were assembling an army in Ulster; "seditious pamphlets" from Scotland were being imported, and Scottish traders arriving in Ulster boasted

of supporting the Covenant and defied the royal customs officials. And in early 1639, a Covenanter plot to take control of Carrickfergus was discovered.

Wentworth's response was to introduce a compulsory oath of obedience to the king. Those who swore the 'Black Oath', as it was known, promised to have nothing to do with the National Covenant. Wentworth also quartered a large military force in Ulster. The text of the Black Oath was:

*I, [...], do faithfully swear, profess and promise that I will honour and obey my Sovereign Lord, King Charles, and will bear faith and true allegiance to him, and will defend and maintain his regal power and authority, and that I will not*

*bear arms or do any rebellious or hostile act against him or protest against any of his royal commands, but submit myself in all due obedience thereunto. And I will not enter into any covenant, oath or bond of mutual defence or assistance against any persons whatsoever, by force, without his Majesty's sovereign and regal authority. And I denounce and abjure all covenants, oaths and bonds whatsoever, contrary to that I have herein sworn, professed, and promised, so help me God in Christ Jesus..."*

The aim of the Black Oath was to demoralise the Covenanters by limiting their support in Ulster, but it had the opposite effect – it infuriated the Covenanters in Scotland, it galvanised the Ulster-Scots, and it caused many Ulster-Scots to go back to Scotland as dedicated supporters of the Covenant to join the Covenanter army. It also meant that the King's army in Ireland had to remain here to quell any possible uprising. The degree of resistance to the Black Oath proved beyond any doubt how much support there was for the Covenant among the Ulster-Scots.

**1640: THE FIRST USE OF THE TERM "ULSTER SCOTS"**  
Wentworth's adviser in Ireland was Sir George Radcliffe. He was deeply concerned that the Covenanter Army, under the command of the Earl of Argyll, might come to Ulster. On 8th October 1640 Radcliffe wrote (citing the famous assassination which had caused Robert the Bruce to flee to Rathlin Island over 300 years before):

*"...many thousands in the North never took the oath... they will shortly return, to any that dares question them, such an answer as Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick, made to Sir John Comyn, who, charging him with breach of oath, taken at Westminster to King Edward, replies, with cleaving his head in two. None is so dim-sighted, but sees the general inclination of the Ulster Scots to the covenant: and God forbid they should tarry there till the Earl of Argyll brings them arms to cut our throats..."*

Radcliffe was the first to use the term "Ulster Scots." The response of many was to abandon their farms and homes and return to Scotland, rather than swear the Black Oath. There are many accounts of the farms and harvests in Ulster being left to waste because the people had fled. Wentworth returned to England, but he had many enemies among the Parliamentarians and was beheaded on 12 May 1641.

### 1639/40: THE BISHOPS WARS

The National Covenant led directly to what were known as the 'Bishops Wars' in 1639-40 between the Scots and the King. The Covenanters were victorious, and again the Ulster ministers were to the fore: "...along with colours displaying the motto 'Covenant for Religion Crowne and Country' marched resolute military chaplains, namely Alexander Henderson, Robert Blair, John Livingstone... and other country pastors..." (from *The Covenanters*, Hewison, p 349).

The King was forced to summon Parliament, but the relationship between the two was fraught and soon broke down completely. In England, armed conflict began between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians. The Parliamentarians were short of cash and turned to the Scots for assistance. The outcome of these negotiations was the Solemn League and Covenant.

### 1643: SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT

While the National Covenant affected only Scotland the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 affected England and Ireland as well. In return for a promise to reform the Church in England and Ireland along presbyterian lines, the Scots agreed to invade England with an army of 20,000 men. The intervention of the Scots was critical to the eventual success of the English Parliamentarians. However, the English had little appetite for church reform in the manner that the Scots wanted and failed to honour their side of the bargain. The historian

Laurence Kirkpatrick has written, "It is probably not an oversimplification to say that the Scots emphasised the religious aspects of the Covenant, while the English emphasised the political aspects of the same Covenant" (*Presbyterians in Ireland*, p. 28).

Despite the ultimate failure of introducing presbyterian church government and practice to England, much was achieved in the 1640s that was to underpin the doctrine of Presbyterians in Britain, Ireland and around the world. Between 1643 and 1649 the Westminster Assembly of Divines prepared a confession of faith, known as the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Larger and Shorter Catechisms – documents still used by most Presbyterian churches today.

### THE 1640s IN ULSTER: REBELLION, MASSACRE AND THE FIRST PRESBYTERY AT CARRICKFERGUS

The 1640s brought rebellion and massacre to Ulster. The eyewitness accounts of these events are known as the "1641 Depositions" and are held in Trinity College Dublin. They are currently being digitised and it is expected that in 2010 they will be available to view on a dedicated website.

In 1642 the Covenanter army would arrive at Carrickfergus Castle, where the first Presbytery in Ireland would be established. During 1644, the Solemn League and Covenant was "administered" right across Ulster, from Ballywalter on the east coast of County Down, to Ballyshannon in south Donegal. Now the story of the Covenanters in Ulster really gets underway.

(with thanks to Jack Greenald, Dr Lawrence Holden, Rev Robert McCollum and Rev Harry Coulter for their assistance with this article)

## READ:

**Robert Blair of Bangor**  
by John W Lockington (price £2.00)

This is an excellent booklet summarising the life of Rev Robert Blair, who is described in the booklet as "the leader of the Ulster Scots", covering the major events of his time in Ulster, including the Eagle Wing and the Covenants.

Available from the Presbyterian Historical Society, Belfast

Telephone 028 9032 2284

Website: [www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com](http://www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com)



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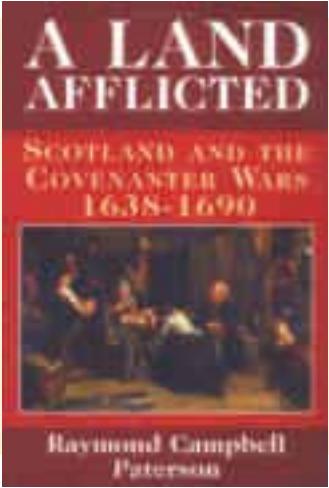
(The red hand / crown symbol in the logo above is taken from a 1689 Covenanter banner

## READ:

**A Land Afflicted - Scotland and the Covenanter Wars**  
by Raymond Campbell Paterson (price around £15.00)

Published in 1998, this is an excellent popular account of the Covenanter Wars in Scotland during the "50 Years Struggle" from 1638 - 1688. It clearly explains related events in England and Ireland, and the policies of the three Kings who reigned during this time: Charles I, Charles II and James II. Available by order from most bookshops, and most online booksellers.

236 pages. Published by John Donald Publishers. ISBN No: 0859764869



## SPECIAL EVENTS:

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Saturday 31st May at 8pm:

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**Conventicle Open Air Field Meeting, Carrickfergus Castle**

The traditional form of Covenanter worship

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in the collection of South Lanarkshire Council, on display at the John Hastie Museum, Strathaven)





**BEYOND ULSTER:**  
Manorhamilton Castle in County Leitrim was built by Sir Frederick Hamilton around 1630. Sir Frederick was the major figure in the Scottish settler community of north Leitrim, he signed the Covenant, and died in Scotland in 1647 where he was serving in the Covenanter army. In April 1644 Rev William Guthrie of Fenwick in Ayrshire (right) wrote that “...There was a brave day in Ireland...at the swearing of the Covenant in Belfast...”

## PART FOUR: 1644: The Solemn League & Covenant comes to Ulster

By **Dr Lawrence Holden** (Queens University) and **Mark Thompson** (Chairman, Ulster-Scots Agency). In the wake of “Black Oath” being forced and a growing anger and militancy among the people who remained to face persecution. Sir James Hamilton, Viscount

upon the Ulster Scots in 1639, many people had fled back to Scotland, leaving an abandoned, wasted landscape in parts of east Ulster, Clondeboye, reported that when he tried to impose the Oath upon his tenants, the Ulster Scots *‘fled out of the country’*...

Many resettled along the west coast of Scotland, preferring to leave the corn harvest in the fields rather than to take an oath they saw as ‘contrary to the one which the Scotch had taken in 1638’. As a result, it was reported that ‘the south of Co. Antrim is already waste’.

**1641: THE “SCOTCH RISING” IN ULSTER**  
In April 1641, the authorities in Ulster reported ‘disorders lately attempted by some of the inferior sort of the Scottish nation in the Counties of Down and Antrim’. Copies of Scotland’s National Covenant were circulating in Ulster - one of the suspects who had been arrested reported that ‘that there was such a scroll, and that it had been carried through the country and signed by 1,000 people and more’. Ulster Scots also protested at parish churches, and rumours abounded that the ‘rowtes’ (riots) in Antrim and Down had been instigated by ‘beacon fires on the Scotch Mountains’. As events escalated King Charles I acknowledged that he had heard news of ‘the Scotch rising in Antrim and Down... in contempt of the State and Established Church’, ordering his forces in Ulster ‘to stop outrages, you shall declare martial law wherever you use troops’.

The violent Irish rebellion which broke out on 22 October caused further devastation amongst the Scots settlements. In response to the massacres taking place, a Scots army finally arrived in Ulster in April 1642.

**1642: THE SCOTS ARMY ARRIVES**  
Presbyterian ministers arrived along with the ten regiments, each with their own minister. For example **Hugh Peebles** was chaplain to Glencairn’s regiment, **John Baird** to Colonel Campbell’s, **Thomas Peebles** to Eglinton’s, **James Simpson** to Sinclair’s, **John Scott** to Major-General Monro’s, **Jon**

**Aird** to Hume’s. Many of the other ministers’ names are recorded in the historical sources.

One further minister who crossed with the army was **John Livingstone**, the former minister of Killinchy and passenger on “Eagle Wing”, and the man who had taken the National Covenant to London.

The army chaplains were ordered to set up Kirk Sessions and a Presbytery when the army was in Ulster. Accordingly the first official Presbytery sat on the 10th June 1642 at the Scots army headquarters in Carrickfergus. A sculpture in Carrickfergus town centre, and the “Carrickfergus Window” at Presbyterian Church House in Belfast commemorate the event.

The Presbytery was inundated with calls from across Ulster for ‘having the Gospel planted amongst them’. The Presbytery set up ‘elderships’ or Kirk Sessions across east Ulster; the people petitioned the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. In emotive language the petition called for ministers ‘claiming interest with you in common Covenant that according the good hand of God upon us, you may send us ministers’. Specifically the Ulster Scots requested their first ministers be returned to them; the Assembly was sympathetic and in September 1642 they sent **Robert Blair** (formerly of Bangor) and **James Hamilton** (formerly of Ballywalter).

**1644: THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT**  
The new church structure and the returned ministers provided the foundation for the Solemn League and Covenant to be brought to Ulster. In April 1644 the Presbytery ordered it to be administered to the Scots army where it was garrisoned throughout Ulster. Rev James Hamilton of Ballywalter, described as “a faithful minister in this kingdome and whose integritie is well knowne in Ireland” was to oversee the Solemn League and

Covenant in Ulster, assisted by **Hugh Henderson** (of Dalry, Ayrshire), **William Adair** (Ayr) and **John Weir** (Dalserf, Lanarkshire). The ministers understood their commission to administer the Covenant not only to ‘the officers and souldiers of our army’ but also to ‘all such others of the British as shall be willing to enter into this covenant’.

**A PERSECUTOR REVEALED**  
The Solemn League and Covenant was first administered in Carrickfergus on 4 April 1644. 1400 Scottish soldiers and 400 civilians both renounced the “Black Oath” and accepted the Covenant. Amid the universal scenes of rejoicing, one man refused the Covenant. He was **Major Tam Dalzell**, a Scottish soldier aged just 29. It was a sign of things to come, for in twenty years time, Dalzell would become one of the most brutal persecutors of the Covenanters in Scotland, known as “Bluidy Tam”.

**THE ULSTER MUSEUM’S HOLLYWOOD COVENANT**  
For the three months from 4th April 1644 at Carrickfergus to 30 June 1644 at Killyleagh, the Solemn League and Covenant was administered and signed by the Ulster Scots people at 26 locations across the province, from Ballywalter in Co Down to Ballyshannon in Co Donegal. Remarkably, one of these original Covenants survives to this day, signed by the people at Hollywood on 8 April 1644, and is in the collection of the Ulster Museum. It has just 67 of the original signatures - we hope to publish it this year.

**BELFAST AND THE COVENANT**  
The news of the success of the Covenant in Ulster reached Scotland within days. In his published *Memoirs*, Rev William Guthrie of Fenwick, Ayrshire wrote “...There was a brave day in Ireland on the last Lord’s Day (April 7th) at the swearing of the Covenant in Belfast by our army and sundry others...”



Above: The Ulster locations where the Solemn League and Covenant was administered, April - June 1644

“...in those places where the Covenant the whole country about came and willingly was administered to the army, joined themselves in the Covenant...”

### LONDONDERRY AND THE COVENANT

The most detailed description of the Solemn League and Covenant in Ulster is found in “Adair’s Narrative” (recently reprinted by the Presbyterian Historical Society), with six pages devoted to the Covenant in Londonderry. To this day, First Derry Presbyterian Church has a large marble plaque in the vestibule which reads “...from 1605AD onward, many Scotsmen settled in Londonderry and the neighbourhood, so many that in 1644, when the Solemn League and Covenant was publicly signed in the Diamond, they formed the bulk of the population...”

### THE PEOPLE AND THE COVENANT

Throughout Ulster the people supported the Covenant with great rejoicing – ‘in those places

where the covenant was administered to the army, the whole country about came and willingly joined themselves in the covenant’. The enthusiasm of the Ulster Scots for the Covenant was not novel. As we have seen already, copies of the 1638 National Covenant were circulating prior to the “Scotch Rising” of 1641, so the community was in fact renewing its Covenanting sympathies, but this time under protection of the Scots army and under the leadership of Scots ministers.

The ministers themselves estimated the numbers who received the Covenant in 1644, and though no independent accounts exist to verify their accuracy, they appear to be moderate. Inside six weeks, over 16,000 Ulster Scots had taken the Solemn League and

Covenant. This was reported by the Presbytery (sitting at Bangor on 25 May 1644 with Rev James Hamilton of Ballywalter as Moderator) to the General Assembly in Scotland, outlining 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, besides those of the Scottish forces that are among them’.

### REPENTANCE AND REJOICING

The renouncing of the Black Oath and calls to public repentance generated great emotion during the taking of the Covenant in Ulster. With the persecutions and the sufferings of the Irish rebellion still fresh in the minds of the people, the communal Covenant meetings became a vent for the community’s emotion.

Adair, who had the use of the diary of one of the ministers, describes scenes where ‘sighs and tears were joined together’. In scenes reminiscent of the great open air communion services which appeared in the wake of the 1625 revival, and became part of the practice of 17th century Ulster Presbyterianism, the ministers preached to the crowd then ‘expounded more fully the covenant, and, among other things, told the people that their miseries had come from those sorts of people who were there sworn against’.

In repentance the community came and were empowered by the message that the very taking of the Covenant was an act of defiance against religious enemies, healing the grievance of recent years and empowering them for action for the future. The community had described themselves as ‘scattered as sheep’ a result of persecution by ‘cruel Task-masters [which] have made us who were once a people, as it were, no people, an astonishment to ourselves, the object of pittie and amazement to others, and hopelesse of remedie’.

In the churches and market places where the people gathered they were called to abjure the Black Oath and

enter into the Covenant by ‘lifting up their hands and countenances... which was done with many tears by the multitude’.

In Coleraine the people ‘by lifting up hands to God entered into the Solemn League and Covenant, with which were mixed prayers and singing of psalms’.

The tense emotion of entering the Covenant gave way to joy, in Ballymena ‘the ministers were directed to insist on sweet and suitable subjects’. One Bible text, Psalm 102, verse 13, which was preached upon in the then small garrison town encapsulates the feeling of the people and the mood of the time: ‘Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come’.

It was a defining moment for the Ulster Scots; they described themselves as ‘scattered sheep’ that became a chosen people, who again found favour after suffering - a people chosen by ‘the Lord of Hosts [who] hath left to himself a remnant as a precious seed to embrace the covenant’.

### THE KING IS THE LAW?

From the warm renewal that Ulster was experiencing, the temperature back across the water in Scotland and England was about to rise even further.



In late 1644 the close friend of the early Ulster ministers, **Rev Samuel Rutherford**, published “*Lex Rex*,” (the Prince and the Law). Presbyterian ministers like Andrew Melville and George Buchanan had written similar books arguing against the Kings of the 1500s, and “*Lex Rex*” was another brilliant demolition of the King’s claim to absolute authority, specifically the doctrine of “*Rex Lex*” (the King is the Law). Subtitled “the lawfulness of resistance in the matter of the King’s unjust invasion of life and religion,” *Lex Rex* was based on Deuteronomy chapter

**CARRICKFERGUS:** As well as being the location of the first Presbytery in Ireland in June 1642, Carrickfergus was also the place where the Solemn League and Covenant was first administered, to 1800 people, on 4 April 1644. The photo here is the impressive “Carrickfergus Window” at Presbyterian Church House, Belfast. On that day in Carrickfergus, only one man refused to take the Covenant - Thomas Dalzell - who would later become one of the Covenanters’ bloodiest persecutors.

17 and is still today regarded as one of the greatest works on government, law, church and state ever written. Rutherford was later accused of ‘laying the ground for rebellion’, with people who owned copies ‘treated as an enemy to the government’.

### 1651 - THE COVENANTERS CROWN CHARLES II

England descended into Civil War; King Charles I, Archbishop Laud and Thomas Wentworth were later executed. England was declared a republic, with Oliver Cromwell becoming “Lord Protector” of England. The Covenanters, despite their opposition to the King, were appalled by his execution. Cromwell turned against the Covenanters and sent armies north into Scotland.

In 1651 the Covenanters invited the late King Charles I’s son, also called Charles, to Scotland where he was crowned King Charles II at historic Scone near Perth. As part of the coronation ceremony, King Charles II swore the National Covenant, the Solemn League and Covenant as well as the Coronation Oath. Covenanter leader the Marquis of Argyll placed the crown on his head, but to the gathered crowd it must have seemed a strange event. Just three months before, Charles had fled from the Covenanters in Perth – now he was being crowned by them.

### 1661 - THE “RESTORATION” OF THE MONARCHY

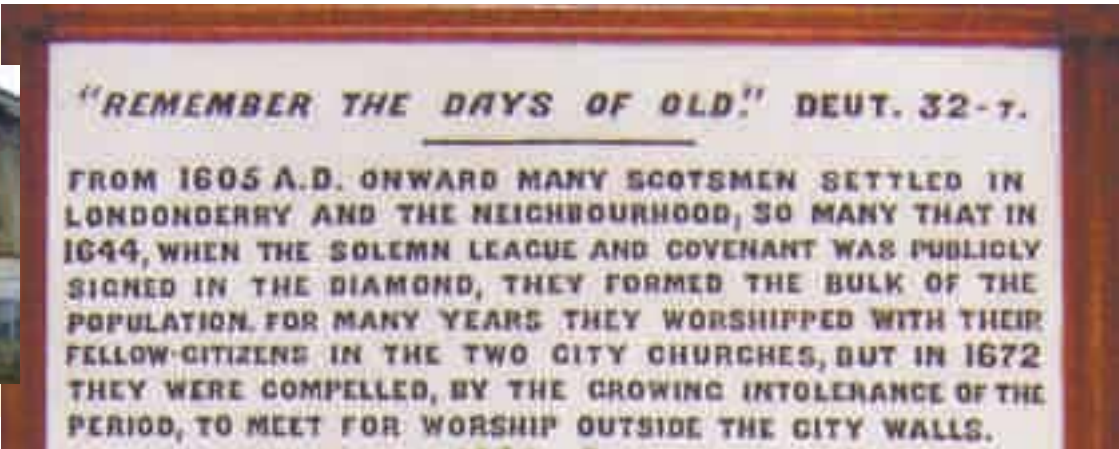
It was an entirely political move, the Covenanters had been exploited by Charles in his ambition to retake the throne of England, Scotland and Ireland. He again went into exile on the continent almost immediately, but was fully “restored” to the throne of the three kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland in April 1661.

Persecution would now be unleashed in Scotland and Ulster with greater ferocity than ever before.

## COVENANT MEMORIAL

**Solemn League and Covenant Memorial plaque**  
**First Derry Presbyterian Church, Londonderry**

Currently undergoing major refurbishments, the vestibule of First Derry Presbyterian Church (on the world famous Walls) has a number of large marble plaques. The detail shown here describes the arrival of Scottish settlers in the area from 1605 onward, and also describes the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in the Diamond. The building will reopen when the refurbishments are complete.



(The red hand / crown symbol in the logo above is taken from a 1689 Covenanter banner in the



collection of South Lanarkshire Council, on display at the John Hastie Museum, Strathaven)

## THE SURVIVING COVENANT

**The Hollywood Covenant (8 April 1644) in the Ulster Museum**

The Ulster Museum is also currently undergoing major refurbishments, and the Covenant in their collection hasn’t been on display for many years. The signatures on it include Rev William Adair, Charles Hall, John Wright, Thomas Reid, Thomas Bailie, Alexander Waddell, John M’Cormick, John Waugh, John Scott, John M’Bride, James Fairlie, Thomas Russel, John Pentland Alexander Gillespie, John Martin, James Webster and John M’Clelland. There were some newspaper articles published about it in September 1912, around the time of Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant.



ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL  
1ST MARQUIS OF ARGYLL

Argyll had raised an army of 20,000 Covenanters in 1638, and the authorities in Ireland feared that he might invade Ulster. He was the first Covenanter to be publicly executed following the Restoration of King Charles II. The Victorian illustration here shows his execution - his head was displayed on a spike in Edinburgh on 27 May 1661



# THE COVENANTERS IN ULSTER



THE PENTLAND RISING

Right: Rullion Green, with Turnhouse Hill behind. The importance of the Rullion Green story is clear - the first book written by world famous Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson (right) was a 70 page tale entitled *"The Pentland Rising"*. He was just 16 years old when it was published on 28th November 1866 - exactly 200 years after the battle itself. He went on to write many classic novels such as *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

## PART FIVE: Ulster and the Killing Times, Part I :

Article by **Dr Lawrence Holden** (Queens University)

*"...the insurrection known by the name of the Rising of Pentland, was nothing more than the intolerable oppressions of those times justified, nature having dictated to people*

## From the Restoration to the Battle of Rullion Green

and **Mark Thompson** (Chairman, Ulster-Scots Agency).

*a right of defence when illegally and arbitrarily attacked in a manner not justifiable either by laws of nature, the laws of God, or the laws of the country..."* Daniel Defoe, 1717

In an early history of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, historian Robert Wodrow described the 1680s in Scotland as the *'Killing Times'* due to the extreme measures used against the Covenanters. Since Wodrow first coined the phrase it has been used to describe both the 1680s, and a longer period of persecution which began when King Charles II came to the throne in 1660.

It has been used almost exclusively for what Wodrow described as the suffering of the Church of Scotland. In Ulster, where a particularly Scottish form of Presbyterianism had flourished, these persecutions began with royalist troops harrassing Presbyterian assemblies in Ballymena - and ended with two young Presbyterian ministers from County Down and County Donegal lying dead and unburied on the Pentland Hills outside Edinburgh.

### A RETURN TO PERSECUTION

The joyous scenes across Ulster when the Solemn League and Covenant was administered in 1644 had been followed by a period when Presbyterianism had flourished across the country.

As the ministry expanded Presbyterian church government was established in congregations with Kirk Sessions, regionally in Presbyteries, and finally in 1659 the entire Presbyterian Church in Ulster gathered in Synod for the first time in Ballymena. It was a point of consolidation for the fledgling Kirk which had endured many trials in the early decades of the century. However, the restoration of Charles II in 1661 ushered in a new regime - a return to the old order of episcopacy within the church and persecution of those without.

### 'ALL THE BRETHREN IN THE NORTH'

Immediately after the appointment of arch-bishops

and bishops in January 1661, the Lord Justices in Dublin, acting on their orders, banned all *'unlawful assemblies'* - in which they included meetings of the Ulster Presbyterians.

In defiance of the proclamation, the final meeting in a series of Presbyterian Synods was held in Ballymena *'where all the brethren in the North were present'*. From the small meeting house in the town the Presbyterians of Ulster had sent commissioners to address Charles II. In the same meeting house the brethren had received the returning commissioners in sadness when they learned that at the Royal Court any mention of the Covenant was *'smothered'*. The ministers rightly predicted that there was *'a change and overturning drawing near'*.

That change came swiftly and dramatically. Shortly after the ministers left their last Synod in Ballymena by Meeting House Lane, a party of royalist troopers sent by George Rawdon arrived in the town to *'scatter the brethren'*. They were too late, the ministers had already left the town. It would be thirty years before Presbyterians would again sit in Synod in Ireland, and sadly, never again as a united body adhering to the Covenants.

### JUNE 1660 - 'A MATTER OF TERROR'

*'A matter of terror'* was how the Presbyterian ministers in Scotland who had stuck rigidly to the Covenants viewed the restoration of King Charles II. Named 'Protestors' for their refusal to accept any limitation of the Covenants in Scotland's national life, they were justified in their concerns about the return of the king.

The arrests and public executions began soon after. In August, James Guthrie, the minister of Stirling, was arrested. In September, his book *"Causes of God's*



JAMES GUTHRIE STATUE, STIRLING, SCOTLAND

execution of the Marquis of Argyll on 27 May 1661. In this act of public loyalty Hamilton embodied the gratitude of the Ulster Scots for Argyll's support in an earlier day of persecution.

Four days later, Guthrie was executed on the same spot. Before his execution he told his young son not to be ashamed at his hanging for *'it is in a good cause'*. Allowed to speak to onlookers from the gallows, Guthrie exclaimed that the Covenants *'can be loosed or dispensed with by no person, or party, or power on earth, but are still binding on these kingdoms, and will be so for ever hereafter'*. Guthrie's head was severed and fixed to the Netherbow Port in the city, a grim announcement that the anticipated 'terror' of the Covenants had arrived.

### SPRING 1661 - THE MINISTERS EJECTED

By Spring of 1661, 61 of Ulster's 68 Presbyterian ministers had been ejected from their pulpits - the bishops *'simply held them not to be ministers'*. In Scotland, Presbyterianism was deemed unsuitable to *'his Majesty's monarchical estate'*. In 1662 around 400 ministers were ejected across Scotland, and the *'king's curates'* were imposed upon parishes. The people across Ulster and western Scotland withdrew to the fields and *'solitary places'* to hear their rightful ministers preach.

### 'SOLEMN AND GREAT MEETINGS'

The Ulster Scots inhabitants of Ballymena witnessed the changing regime at first hand, as royalist troopers charged through the streets and their Presbyterian ministers were forced to flee. Parliament ordered the burning of the Covenant in towns throughout the land. Isolated resistance began in towns such as Carrickfergus, where the

*Wrath*," and Samuel Rutherford's *"Lex Rex"* were both declared to be *"poisonous and treasonable"*, with all copies to be seized. Despite the terror of the times in the first execution of this new period of persecution, James Hamilton, former minister of Ballywalter, willingly faced the crowds at Edinburgh's Mercat Cross where he publicly prayed at the

magistrate John Dalway initially refused to comply with the order. It soon spread throughout the countryside as a group of young Presbyterian ministers determined to uphold a Covenanting witness *'called the people to solemn and great meetings, sometimes in the night and sometimes in the day, in solitary places'*.

Across Ulster the small group of ministers preached to large numbers in the fields and hills, often in the long summer nights in the months that followed the ejection of the Presbyterian ministers, at times wearing disguises to avoid being captured by the authorities. Young ministers such as John Crookshanks of Convoy, Andrew McCormick of Magherally and Michael Bruce of Killinchy *'were cried up as the only courageous ministers by the common sort of people, and by those who had great zeal'*. At the field meetings it was reported that the Ulster Scots *'flocked to them'* in great numbers, and *'in daring the magistrate openly and calling great assemblies together in despite of authority, was, by that sort of people, thought great stoutness and gallantry'*.

### CROOKSHANKS, BRUCE AND MCCORMICK

The three ministers most notably involved in the Ulster field-meetings had come into the Ulster church in a period of expansion during the late 1650s.

**John Crookshanks** from Redgorton in Perthshire had been educated at Edinburgh University and was ordained in the parish of **Raphoe** about the year 1657, though he ministered to a congregation in Convoy.

**Michael Bruce** was also educated at Edinburgh University and after graduating in 1654 he was recommended by the former minister John Livingstone to the congregation at **Killinchy**. After his trials Bruce was ordained in Killinchy in October 1657.

**Andrew McCormick's** origins are less well known, having worked as a country tailor before being recognised as 'a great professor of religion' and called to the ministry. After his time at university McCormick crossed into Ulster in 1654 or 1655 and was eventually ordained in **Magherally** near Banbridge in 1655.

The three young ministers had served their congregations for a short period before the ejections of 1661. On being ejected from their pulpits they

had determined to oppose the persecutions of the bishops and each would suffer for that opposition in different ways in the coming years.

### BLOOD'S PLOT

In 1663 Crookshanks and McCormick were implicated in "Blood's Plot", named after the leader of the scheme, Captain Thomas Blood. McCormick allegedly gave assurance that 20,000 Scots in Ulster would join the planned revolt and he was reported to be in Dublin in 1663 *'to see in what readiness they were for that design'*. When the unsuccessful plot was eventually uncovered Crookshanks and McCormick were forced to flee from Ulster and reprisals were enacted on Presbyterian ministers across the country whether they had knowledge of the plot or not.

In June 1663 *'the whole ministers of Down and Antrim, who could be found, were in one day apprehended'*. The ministers of Antrim were imprisoned in Carrickfergus and those from County Down were imprisoned at Carlingford Castle. Four

**"...The fire of persecution for non-conformity in Scotland soon extended to the North of Ireland. The king and his courtiers well knew that there were many valiant men in Ulster who would never bend before the blast, however furious it might blow..."**

from *"Sermons Delivered in Times of Persecution in Scotland"* by Covenanter historian John Howie of Lochgooin, 1779

ministers of the Lagan Presbytery in Donegal were ordered to be jailed in Lifford in 1664, a sentence reduced to a form of house arrest which lasted for the following six years.

### ULSTER & THE WEST OF SCOTLAND - "SMOLDERING RESENTMENT"

The ministers of Antrim and Down were eventually issued with an order that they must *'depart the*

*kingdom or go to prisons in other parts of Ireland'*. Many chose to go to Scotland and found themselves in the company of Presbyterian brethren in the western lowlands who had been deposed by the bishops in 1662. Added to the humiliating deposition and persecution of the ministers was a smouldering resentment felt by the Presbyterian people who were suffering from the brutal military presence of Royal dragoons in their midst.

The mingling of Ulster and Scottish Presbyterian ministers in western Scotland in the years after 1663 caused a rise in the number of field meetings in south-west Scotland despite the introduction of harsh laws designed to stop them.

The episcopal authorities in Scotland feared the connection of Ulster and Scottish Covenanters and the bishop of Aberdeen, Alexander Burnet believed that an insurrection was being planned in a conspiracy hatched by Scottish Covenanters and Ulster Presbyterians. Burnet had good cause to fear that union as reports from Raphoe in 1664 claimed that though John Crookshanks *'had escaped and gone into Scotland'*, before he left *'he gave great hope to his party that there will speedily be a rising in Scotland, so that they are now bolder than they have been'*. Whatever plans the Covenanters across Ulster and western Scotland may have had for *'a rising'*, its beginnings were to prove sudden and spontaneous.

### 13 NOVEMBER 1666: THE DALRY RISING

As royalist troops filtered into south-west Scotland extracting fines for non-attendance at the parish churches, a farmer at Dalry in Galloway was apprehended by soldiers for non-payment of a fine. They threatened that they would *'strip him naked and set him on a hot grid iron because he could not pay'*. Local Covenanters intervened - shots were fired at the party of soldiers, and rather than wait for reprisals a Covenanter band of approximately 200 men and 50 horse answered a call to arms.

### WALLACE & WELSH'S ULSTER CONNECTIONS

The path to the Pentland Hills had begun. The Covenanters were small in number, badly armed and lacked leadership. Two men from Ulster came to their aid. The first was Presbyterian minister John Welsh, who had been born in county Antrim at Templepatrick, who brought 300 men and 15 horse. Then came Colonel James Wallace, a veteran of the Covenanter army in Ulster in the 1640's, former Governor of Belfast and Elder in the Ballycarry congregation in east Antrim, who provided much needed military leadership.

Their lack of planning and resources suggests that the Covenanters may at first have wished to petition the king rather than engage in a pitched battle.

### 28 NOVEMBER 1666: THE PENTLAND RISING (THE BATTLE OF RULLION GREEN)

The march eastward in late November 1666 was made in hard weather, with stragglers and deserters reducing the small army to about 900 men. As they approached Edinburgh on the 26th the Covenanters were forced to stand out in the night in *'a great snow'* and those who remained proved resolute. Among them were John Crookshanks and Andrew McCormick who were reported to have joined *'with the said rebels... going alongst with them and marching with them with their horse and arms'*.

On the 28th November the Covenanters drew back from Edinburgh, fearing they would be caught between Royalist forces in the city and Tam Dalyell's Royalist force which had followed them from Glasgow. (Dalyell was notable as having been the only man who had refused the Covenant at Carrickfergus in 1644). On the morning of the 28th, Wallace drew up the Covenanters at Turnhouse Hill above Rullion Green in readiness for a Royalist attack.

The first attack came on Wallace's left, which was met with a detachment of Covenanters in a fierce skirmish. Muskets were discarded in hand-to-hand fighting and the Royalists were eventually forced back. It was a small victory for the Covenanters, as among those who lay dead on the Pentland moss were the Ulster ministers John Crookshanks and Andrew McCormick.

As the large Royalist force attacked, the Covenanter army sang the 71st and 78th Psalms before they were broken on the Pentland Hills. The winter evening came on early and the falling darkness saved the remnant who broke towards the west...

Wallace and Welsh both escaped, but among the 50 Covenanters who had been killed, the two Ulster ministers lay unburied where they had fallen.

### 'EXECUTED TO DEATH, AND DEMEANED AS TRAITORS'

Around 80 Covenanter prisoners were taken, and the state authorities inflicted upon them malicious acts of cruelty and execution. Throughout December 1666 a spate of bloody public executions of Covenanters took place across Scotland.

The first ten men hanged had their right hands cut off and sent to Lanark to be fixed on the Tolbooth and their heads severed and sent to different parts of Scotland. To this day, a famous grave in Hamilton marks the place where the severed heads of four Covenanter prisoners from Rullion Green were later buried. At Irvine and Ayr the official hangman refused to execute the Covenanters - a problem the authorities at Ayr attempted to resolve by offering mercy to one of the prisoners if he would agree to hang the rest.

The vengeful persecution extended to the dead as well as the living. Among the Covenanters who were tried at Edinburgh in their absence was John Crookshanks.

Although he was dead, he along with the others was condemned as *'guilty and culpable of treasonable crimes... to be executed to death, and demeaned as traitors'*. Crookshanks, still lying unburied on the Pentlands, had in the words of Samuel Rutherford, *'got summons already before a Superior Judge and Judiciary... where few kings and great folk come'*.

## VISIT:

### Rullion Green Covenanter Memorial

Ulster ministers John Crookshanks and Andrew McCormick are the only men named on the simple memorial at Rullion Green. Today Rullion Green is part of Pentland Hills Regional Park, just south of Edinburgh near Penicuik. To visit the monument, go to Flotterstone Visitor Centre and be prepared to walk for about a mile up the grassy slopes of Rullion Green. The monument is on the edge of a small wood.

**Website: [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/phrp](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/phrp)**  
**Flotterstone Visitor Centre: Telephone 0131 445 3383**





JOHN WELSH

The life of **John Welsh of Templepatrick and Irongray** is intimately bound up with the Scottish Reformation, Scottish migration to Ulster, the Six Mile Water revival and the struggles of the Covenanters. Welsh's great-grandfather was the Reformer **John Knox**, his grandfather the celebrated **John Welsh**, Presbyterian minister of Ayr (pictured right) and his father was **Josias Welsh** former professor of Glasgow University who preached at Oldstone and Templepatrick at the outbreak of the 1625 revival. (memorial plaque at Castle Upton pictured right). John was brought to Oldstone and Templepatrick when still an infant and grew up in Ulster amid revival and persecution. He later became minister of Irongray near Dumfries until being ejected for non-conformity in 1662 (pictured right). John Welsh became a leading figure in Covenanting struggle, playing a leading role at the battle of Rullion Green and the battle of Bothwell Brig.







DRUMCLOG

The **Battle of Drumclog Monument**, **Drumclog Memorial Kirk** and the famous “**Bluidy Banner**” which the Covenanter William Cleland carried at the battle. The Kirk (which has a Covenanter battle flag painted on the wall behind the pulpit) is on the main A71 road between Kilmarnock and Strathaven, with the monument signposted just opposite. The “Bluidy Banner” is on display at the **Cameronians’ Regimental Museum** in Hamilton. An exhibition of the battle can be seen at the **John Hastie Museum** in Strathaven. Visit the kirk’s website at <http://www.garrion.co.uk/avendale/drumclog.htm>

PART SIX:

Ulster and the Killing Times,

Part II : 1666 -1679, A Kirk Divided

Article by **Dr Lawrence Holden** (Queens University) and **Mark Thompson** (Chairman, Ulster-Scots Agency). With thanks to *“I have made inquiry how the pulse of this part of the country beateth. I find that very many ministers are lately come out of Scotland and do preach privately in several*

ULSTER AS A REFUGE

In the months after the Covenanters were broken at the Pentland Rising /Battle of Rullion Green in November 1666, the searching persecutions, particularly in the west of Scotland, meant that many of the Ulster Scots who had been involved in the rising attempted to return home across the North Channel.

In their flight they were joined by the western Scots whom they had mingled with in the troubled days before the Rising. Just as Scotland had proved a safe haven for the Ulster Scots in times of persecution, such as the forcing of the *‘Black Oath’* in the 1630s, now Ulster proved a refuge for the Scots. The experience of persecution and flight across the North Channel, in both directions, was a regular occurrence in the period. It became a common and shared experience of the lowland Scots on each side of the Channel, their frequent crossings rendering the short stretch of sea little more than an inconvenience.

Within days of the battle the Lord Lieutenant in Ireland ordered *‘any of His Majesty’s frigates now at Dublin to lie between the north of Ireland and Scotland, and to take account of all who pass those seas.’* His worries were based on the unity of purpose between the Scots, complaining that in Ulster *‘there certainly are many as ill inclined as those in rebellion in Scotland’.* The artificial blockade created by the king’s ships sailing out of Dublin to patrol the North Channel was easily breached. Covenanters were already passing into Ulster, including *‘ministers, come out of Scotland, who have a great concourse of people that follow them and hear them preach all manner of sedition.’* By the New Year in 1667 it was reported that *‘Scots who were in the late insurrection there have got over to Ireland in spite of vigilance at the ports. A boat was found without owner or pretender lately in Glenarm creek, which we suspect landed some of them.’*

‘GREAT DISORDER AMONG THE SCOTCH’

In the late 1660s and early 1670s the Ulster Scots still resolutely refused to conform to the established episcopal church. The ministers ejected in 1661 still attracted large crowds of people to the fields, hills and *‘solitary places’*, motivated by their belief that Presbyterian Church government was divinely ordained and conformity to episcopacy sinful. Rullion Green, and the persecutions which followed it, tended to sustain the Covenanters’ resolution rather than quench it. The bishops still nurtured the belief that the rising was *‘either born in Ireland or put to nurse there’* and that its aftermath brought *‘factious preachers which run out of Scotland, like wild boars hunted out of a forest and throw their foam of seditious doctrine among the people.’*



The influence of Scottish ministers in Ulster was only one part of the problem the established church and state authorities faced. Across all of Ulster the deposed Presbyterian ministers, as well as those recently arrived from Scotland, were preaching in outdoor conventicles which were too large and frequent to be dealt with in any effective way. The Lord Lieutenant Ormond recognised the problem stating that *‘It is not strange that the non-conformists in the north of Ireland when they are more numerous and united should assume more boldness in their meetings than in other places.’*

CAIRNCASTLE AND CARRICKFERGUS

The authorities also began to grow concerned at reports that the Ulster Scots were again publicly renewing the Covenant. In the late summer of 1668 a large conventide was held during the night in Cairncastle, county Antrim. Four local Presbyterian ministers were involved, preaching to a large gathering that had travelled from Coleraine, Carrickfergus, Antrim and Belfast. The people were called on to subscribe the Covenant and reported to have been urged *‘to stand to the Covenant, and not yield to the government’*, the ministers telling them, *‘that God would fight their quarrel’.* By late December of 1668 Ormond was warned that there was *‘great disorder among the Scotch... all those Scottish ministers that were silenced here and afterwards sent to Scotland by your Grace’s command are now returned and in all places preach up the Covenant very openly and with a boldness in my mind very dangerous.’*

The threat of another rising developing out of the unrest amongst the Covenanters in Ulster preyed on the mind of government officials. Charles II had been informed of the discontent of the Ulster Scots and the Lord Lieutenant Ormond openly speculated that the field meetings could act as a prelude to something much more serious. In Ulster, he reported, *‘the preaching up of the Covenant so boldly and so frequently and in so many places is a degree beyond conventicling and is the next immediate step to active rebellion.’*

Those concerns were exacerbated by the fact that the Covenanters in Ulster were greatly strengthened by the continued arrival of people and ministers from Scotland. By the spring and early summer of 1670 William Keyes, the Presbyterian minister of Belfast who had been present at the night-time conventicle at Cairncastle, was reported to have been *‘in the liberties of Carrickfergus by the highway [and] had six Scotch preachers with him and had six sermons and above 3,000 persons...some say 4,000 and many of them out of Scotland.’*

‘THE TEMPER OF THE TYMES’

Despite the ongoing persecutions in the country the Presbyterian ministers attempted to maintain the Church structure it had erected in more peaceable times in the 1640s and 50s. Congregations had access to preaching, the Lord’s Supper and even Baptism at conventicles, although in one case in Donegal the minister had to flee at *‘the furious approach’* of the bishop whilst baptising a young child.

The authorities had some knowledge that the Ulster Presbyterians still maintained a strong Church structure, but they had no idea of the regularity of Kirk Sessions, Presbytery meetings, or indeed that an oversight committee of ministers had regular secret meetings in Ahoghill in the absence of a Synod. Due to the turbulence of the times the Presbyterian organisation had to be secretive, it also had to be cautious with the arrival of many Scots ministers of whom they had little knowledge. Before a minister was accepted into a congregation, the settled ministers insisted on the candidate pledging a unity of purpose, due to what they called *‘the temper of these tymes’*, the candidate was urged *‘expressly and particularly to peaceableness and subjection to his bretherne in the Lord.’*

DAVID HOUSTON AND ALEXANDER PEDEN

The Presbyteries’ insistence on ministerial unity was not easily achieved in a Kirk which had already experienced divisions on the degree of application and role of the Covenant in the state.

In the 1650s the Scottish Church had already become bitterly divided between Protestors who would admit none to public or military positions unless they had subscribed the Covenant, and the Resolutioners who took a more moderate stance. The Ulster Kirk had favoured the more moderate Resolutioner stance but had not prevented young militant Protestors such as Crookshanks, McCormick and Bruce entering into Ulster. With the influx of Scottish ministers in this era the

also held under cover of darkness because *‘ministers durst neither preach nor give communion in the day-time, but in the night; and the people then found no hurt by wanting their sleep at such occasions’.*

One such young man was David Houston. We aren’t certain of the year of his arrival, but amidst the turbulence of the summer of 1671 Houston was publicly rebuked by the Antrim Meeting for *‘his disorderliness in exercising a ministry without consent of the meeting’.* Houston had preached on both sides of the Bann to willing audiences at Macosquin, Ballymoney, Derrykeighan, and on the coast at Glenarm, in countryside neighbouring the large Cairncastle conventicles. The settled Presbyterian ministers formally chastised him for *‘preaching in way of opposition by fixing tent against tent’.* However, despite the anger of the Presbytery, Houston remained in the country and proved popular. He received a call from the people of Glenavy in south Antrim, which the Antrim Presbytery reported included *‘some few persons in repute for piety’* who had resisted the settling of another minister in the congregation.



In the same period Alexander Peden (above) also crossed into Ulster, he was reported to have been in county Armagh among Scots from Galloway who had fled the post-Pentland persecutions. He preached to *‘great multitudes’*, and in Armagh as in the other counties, the Ulster Scots were willing to travel long distances on foot or horseback to hear ministers such as Houston and Peden. The conventicles in Armagh were

The state increasingly returned to using military force against the Covenanters and to subdue the west of Scotland. The circumstances mirrored those in the period the west had erupted in anger before the Pentland rising. Galloway was once again a tinderbox. Reports from Belfast alleged that in Scotland *‘there is a full purpose... to take the sword in hand, and that the covenant is there renewed’*, and claimed that John Welsh was involved in its planning. The duke of Hamilton further reported that *‘ther was great allarum at Edinburgh that the West was about rising in arms’* and that *‘7,000 horses are transported from Ireland [and] that they are in the hands of disaffected persons in the western and southern shires.’*

The Covenanters became increasingly militant in the face of further military persecutions, and particularly in response to the deployment of regiments of Highland troops in Ayrshire and Galloway. Throughout the south west of Scotland all the people suffered at the hands of this “Highland Host”, some *‘grievously wounded and beaten’* in what the lowland Scots described as *‘the crueltie of these strange locusts’.* Their militant response included the death of James Sharp, archbishop of St Andrews, who was ambushed and killed on 3 May 1679 at Magus Muir. In response, five innocent Covenanters were arrested and executed nearby.

1 JUNE 1679: THE BATTLE OF DRUMCLOG

By the spring of 1679 a larger confrontation was inevitable – and it came about on the moss at Drumclog, below Loudon Hill in Ayrshire. On the 31st of May John Graham of Claverhouse (also known as “Bloody Clavers” or “Bonnie Dundee”) took a party of horse to scatter a reported conventicle, but on arrival on the 1st June he found a small Covenanter force of 200 men and 50 horse. Although they were not well armed, the Covenanters raised their voices to sing the 76th Psalm and received both rifle fire and a cavalry charge whilst standing their ground. Claverhouse’s dragoons faltered in the moss as the Covenanters charged, and

clearing the field they pursued the royalist troops through Strathaven. It was a small battle, but a major victory. News spread like wildfire and the Covenanters across the west *‘began flocking to them from all hands.’*

22 JUNE 1679: THE BATTLE OF BOTHWELL BRIG

The path from victory to defeat was to prove all too swift. Despite the advantage gained at Drumclog the Covenanters lost their military advantage in a series of delays and theological debates. One party called for a free General Assembly, but recognised a duty to the *‘maintenance and defence of the king’s authority’*, the other opposed *‘a king who had broken the covenant, altered the polity of the church and waged war against the godly’.* Meanwhile royalists gathered an army of 10,000 men under the duke of Monmouth, and they drew up to face the Covenanters at Bothwell Brig, near Hamilton, on the banks of the River Clyde.

Although John Welsh of Templepatrick arrived with 1,000 men from Galloway on the eve of battle, swelling the Covenanter ranks to 4,000, it was not enough. Dispirited and lacking leadership the Covenanters had been all but defeated by 10 o’clock on the 22nd of June, the morning of the Sabbath. Monmouth’s army crossed the bridge at Bothwell killing 400 men and taking 1,200 prisoners.

Monmouth advanced into the south-west to check for signs of the Covenanters rallying – but their would be no response. The last great Covenanter rising was over, and once again in flight many of the remnant sought refuge in Ulster.



VISIT:

Cairncastle - home of Patrick Adair, haven of the Covenanters.

James Shaw arrived in east Ulster from Scotland around 1616 to join his brother-in-law Hugh Montgomery near Newtownards. He later moved to east Antrim and built Ballygally Castle in 1625. The castle was garrisoned by local Ulster Scots during the 1641 rebellion. Cairncastle was the scene of the ministry of Patrick Adair, first historian of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, whose settlement was aided by the Shaw family. In 1669, one year following the large conventicles held during the night in Cairncastle, Patrick Adair was recorded as living in ‘Ballyhackett townland’; his glebe farm is the most probable location of the conventicle. Cairncastle also provides an excellent vantage point to view the sea crossing taken by many Covenanters in their flight to Ulster after Rullion Green and Bothwell Brig. For a biography of Adair and discussion of the location of his residence visit [www.antrimhistory.net/content.php?cid=730](http://www.antrimhistory.net/content.php?cid=730)



READ:

Covenanters in Ulster Heritage Trail

The Covenanters in Ulster walkchart-style heritage trail has now been published, and free copies are available from the Ulster-Scots Agency (telephone 028 9023 1113). Bundles of up to 200 free copies are also available for church congregations. Featuring 24 locations across Ulster and 20 in southern Scotland, the



heritage trail also tells the general story of the Covenanters with a timeline and series of smaller maps. Order your copy of the trail and spend a few days visiting the sites - many of the locations in the article above are featured on the heritage trail. An interactive GoogleMaps version is on the website below.

VISIT:

The Covenanters Prison and the escapes to Ulster

Approximately 400 of the Covenanters taken after the Battle of Bothwell Brig were confined in an outdoor enclosure at Greyfriars in Edinburgh. The Kirkyard which witnessed the first rise of the Covenants now became the Covenanter’s prison. Some died there, others were executed, and 257 were deported overseas as slaves to the Plantations of Virginia or Barbados. However the ship they were in - *Crown of London* - sank in a raging storm off Orkney, and 211 drowned. Two monuments on Orkney - a 44 foot tower on the coast at Deerness, and a memorial fountain at Kirkwall church - mark the event. Ten of the Orkney survivors are known to have fled to Ulster. They were **Andrew Clark** (Galloway), **John Gardner** (Clydesdale), **John Martin** (Galloway), **Thomas Miller** (Fife), **Hugh Montgomery** (Stirling), **Andrew Thomson** (Ayr), **John Thomson** (Clydesdale), **Thomas Thomson** (Stirling), **William Waddel** (Clydesdale) and **James Young** (Teviotdale).

To find out more, visit [www.greyfriarskirk.com](http://www.greyfriarskirk.com) and [www.orkneyjar.com/history/covenant.htm](http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/covenant.htm)



(The red hand / crown symbol in the logo above is taken from a 1689 Covenanter banner in the collection of South Lanarkshire Council, on display at the John Hastie Museum, Strathaven)



## WILLIAM KELSO

William Kelso, a chemist from Ayr, was just 27 when he fought for the Covenanters at the Battle of Bothwell Bridge in 1679. After their defeat, he was one of many Covenanters who escaped over land to the Ayrshire coast and then sailed to Ulster for refuge, avoiding the government troops which had been stationed at the ports on both sides of the water on high alert. Kelso was eventually arrested in Lisburn on 27 June, and was questioned by the authorities about Covenanter strategy.



## DAVID HOUSTON AT THE SIEGE OF DERRY

4000 people died during the Siege, the longest in British history. A comment made at the time was *“No matter how many of them die, they are but a pack of Scotch Presbyterians.”* David Houston was at the Siege, where he *“would suffer none to fight for the Protestant religion but such as would take the Covenant.”* Houston's influence was beyond doubt - in Ulster *“his movements were narrowly watched by the various political leaders in this province.”* The lecture hall at Kellswater Reformed Presbyterian Church (shown left) is named the Houston Memorial Hall, with a large commemorative plaque.

# PART SEVEN: Ulster and the Killing Times, Part III : 1679 - 1690 The Revolution and the Remnant

The “Glorious Revolution” of 1688 is celebrated every year on 12 July by thousands of people. William’s arrival brought an end to the 50 The Revolution brought civil and religious liberty to the British Isles. But William’s “Revolution Settlement” did not place the Covenants at the

Article by **Mark Thompson, Jack Greenald** and **Dr William Roulston**. With thanks to Rev Robert

### JUNE 1679: REFUGE IN ULSTER

Following the Covenanters’ defeat on 22 June 1679 at the Battle of Bothwell Bridge, Ulster again became their refuge. On 28 June the Duke of Ormond wrote to Hugh Montgomery (**Earl of Mount Alexander**, near Comber). News had reached Ormond of the *“flight”* of Covenanters from Scotland to Ulster, and he ordered Montgomery to send troops to the ports of Donaghadee and Larne. Montgomery confirmed that any escaping Covenanters would be seized and imprisoned at Downpatrick and Carrickfergus. On the Scottish coast, **Graham of Claverhouse** did the same, stationing troops at Portpatrick and Ballantrae, because *“those rogues run over to Yrland”*.

One of these Covenanters was **William Kelso**. Kelso had fought at Bothwell and then fled to Ulster. He had been one of the passengers onboard a flotilla of around 14 open boats, carrying Covenanters who had fled the brutal aftermath of Bothwell, firstly to the Ayrshire coast at Irvine, and then across the water to Carrickfergus. Kelso avoided the government troops on the Ulster coastline and headed inland, but was seized at Lisburn on 27 June 1679.

The Bothwell Bridge defeat had a devastating impact on the Presbyterians. Only four ministers now continued as field preachers – **Richard Cameron**, who had preached at Strabane in the early 1670s, **Donald Cargill**, **John Blackadder** and **James Renwick**. James Renwick did not become a preacher until 1683, having resolved to become a Covenanter minister after witnessing Cargill being martyred at the Grassmarket in Edinburgh in July 1681. The rest had been silenced by fear, bribery and the ever-present reality of execution – or had fled to the safety of Ulster.

### JUNE 1680: THE SANQUHAR DECLARATION

The remnant of Covenanters, now led by Richard Cameron “The Lion of the Covenant”, were still

determined to oppose King Charles II and his officials in both Ulster and Scotland. So on 22 June 1680, the anniversary of the Battle of Bothwell Bridge, Cameron and a group of 20 Covenanters rode into the Galloway village of Sanquhar. Their *“Sanquhar Declaration”* was a devastating attack on the King, disowning him, describing him as a tyrant, and declaring war on him *“and all the men of his practices”*. The targets of their fury included the King’s brother James, the Duke of York – the man who five years later would become King James II. Copies of the Sanquhar Declaration were soon circulating among the Covenanters in Ulster.

### JULY 1680: THE BATTLE OF AIRDS MOSS

Knowing that the King would now unleash a merciless retaliation upon them for their defiance, Cameron gathered a group of around 60 men. While at worship on the open plain of Airds Moss, outside Muirkirk, they were ambushed by royal troops, led by the notorious Captain John Creighton of Castlefin in Donegal.

As they came under attack, Cameron famously prayed for the safety of the younger men in his company - *“Lord, spare the green and take the ripe”*. Nine of the Covenanters, including Cameron, were killed. **David Hackston** (whose gravestone features on the front of the Covenanters in Ulster Heritage Trail) was seriously wounded and captured, and later suffered the most brutal death of any of the Covenanters. Richard Cameron had his head and hands cut off, which were then delivered in a bag to his father who was in prison in Edinburgh. The severed heads of Hackston and Cameron were later displayed on spikes in the city.

Richard Cameron had prophesied that theirs was a standard that would overthrow the throne of Britain. He was right. Eight years after the Sanquhar Declaration, the entire nation rejected the Stuart monarchy and replaced them with William and Mary at the “Glorious Revolution”.

### 1680s SCOTLAND - “A HUNTING FIELD”

During the 1680s, the savagery of the anti-Covenanter persecutions was personified in the king’s brother, **James Stuart, Duke of York**. He declared that *“there would never be peace in the country until the whole south of Scotland had been turned into a hunting field”*. He empowered his senior officers including Tam Dalzell, Graham of Claverhouse and Grierson of Lagg to search, examine, imprison, torture and kill as they pleased. They did so with an army of close to 10,000 Highland dragoons, who delighted in ravaging the Lowland homeland of the Covenanters.

Their cruelties extended to women and children. **Marion Cameron**, said to be a sister of Richard Cameron, was discovered with two friends, each with a Bible, and were shot on sight. Two young women, **Isabel Alison** (27) and **Marion Harvey** (15) were arrested and executed for having attended an open air conventicle. Covenanter children are recorded as having been interrogated, tortured and killed. The field preacher Donald Cargill, aged 60, was arrested in 1681 and was publicly beheaded in Edinburgh on 27 July.

### 1681: THE COVENANTERS FORM THE UNITED SOCIETIES; THE ULSTER MINISTERS

Despite the loss of Cameron and Cargill, the remaining Covenanters were resolute and reorganised themselves as the United Societies in December 1681. They formed eighty local societies with a membership of around 7,000 people.

Now without ministers, in February 1683 the United Societies issued *‘a call, by a remnant of the true Presbyterians of the Church of Scotland’* to ministers of the Gospel, which included **Alexander Peden**, **Michael Bruce** and **Samuel Arnot**, all three of whom were in Ulster at the time. None of these ministers felt able to accept the call, but in 1686 **David Houston**, a Covenanting minister who had also spent time in Ulster, was accepted as a minister by the Societies. The

Societies sent another young preacher, **James Renwick**, to Holland to train for the ministry. In Summer 1683 Renwick returned to Scotland via Ireland - in August he arrived in Dublin, where he recruited a number of followers. On 24 August he wrote: *‘I think the Lord has a special hand in my coming to this place... He has kindled a fire which I hope Satan will not soon quench’*.

While in Dublin Renwick was thought to be responsible for a document which stated that Irish Presbyterians would *‘stand for all those that have or would fly for Religion from Scotland, and for their Brethrenne that were under affliction there, and that they were to assist them to the utmost of their indeavours’*.

The Societies also had supporters in Ulster. Three men from Belfast - a bookbinder named **James Caldwell**, and two coopers named **James Coburn** and **John Robinson** – had been circulating Renwick’s paper and encouraged sympathisers to sign it.

As the arrests continued, prisoners taken at Carrickfergus in November 1684 admitted that *‘they had subscribed to a kind of engagement carried about by one Callwell amongst the Scotch in the north, the substance of which is to assist the brethren now persecuted for the cause of religion in Scotland... when they were asked whether they would pray for the King or no, the only answer that could be got from them to that question was that they would pray for the elect’*.

### 1685: THE TWO MARGARETS

The Duke of York became **King James II** in February 1685. Just three months later two women - **Margaret Wilson** (18) and **Margaret MacLachlan** (64) - were arrested near Wigtown on suspicion of having attended an unauthorised prayer meeting. They were tied to stakes in the rising tide at Wigtown, but if they disowned their faith they would be freed. They both refused. The older Margaret was first to drown, with the

younger Margaret refusing to bow to the tortures of the soldiers who were gathered around her.

Forcing her head under the water, they mockingly shouted *“Tak anither drink, hinny!”*, but she defied them by singing Psalm 25 as the waters engulfed her. The bodies of the “Two Margarets” were buried together in Wigtown graveyard along with three local men who were executed a few days later.

News of the drownings swept the country and soon reached Holland. On 10 October 1688, in his *Declaration for Scotland*, **William of Orange** wrote of *“drowning them without any form of law or respect to age or sex”* as one of the barbarities being experienced by the people of Scotland at the hands of their government. In response, government propagandists denied that the drownings had ever taken place.

### 1688: EXECUTION OF JAMES RENWICK; THE END OF THE KILLING TIMES

From Renwick’s published letters it is clear that he was planning a return to Ulster, but before he was able to he was captured and martyred at the Grassmarket in Edinburgh on 17 February 1688, aged 26. A large memorial just outside his home village of Moniaive commemorates him to this day. In July 1688 the last of the martyrs, a 16 year old Ayrshire boy named **George Wood**, was shot dead in the fields near the village of Sorn, his only crime being caught in possession of a Bible.

By the end of the year, Richard Cameron’s prophecy was fulfilled - King James II was overthrown and the *‘Killing Times’* were at an end. To this day, the Killing Times are the most murderous systematic persecution of a people ever known in the British Isles, driven by the vicious cruelty of four successive Kings against their own subjects: Scots and Ulster-Scots alike.

### 1688: REVOLUTION, “THE COMBER LETTER” AND THE SIEGE OF DERRY

William of Orange was invited by seven leading aristocrats to sail to England and take the throne from James II. He arrived at Torbay in Devon on 5 November 1688 with 12,000 troops and 500 ships. A service of thanksgiving was led by **Rev William Carstairs** (William’s Scottish Presbyterian chaplain, whose father had fought with the Covenanters at Rullion Green) with the singing of Psalm 118. King James II then fled to Ireland, realising that his only hope of regaining the British throne was by rallying his co-religionists in Ireland and linking up with the Scottish Highlanders.

Then on 3 December a letter was found in Comber, addressed to the Earl of Mount Alexander, alleging that on 9 December all of the Protestants of Ireland were to be slaughtered. The letter caused pandemonium – 3000 Protestants fled in ships from Dublin, with thousands more pouring inside the city walls of Londonderry. As the civic leaders of the city dithered, 13 young “Apprentice Boys” shut the gates. One of them was **William Crookshanks** - a relative of **John Crookshanks**, the Ulster Covenanter minister who had been killed at Rullion Green. Mount Alexander, who had followed orders to arrest Covenanters in 1679, cynically turned to the Covenanters of county Down, led by minister David Houston, for protection.

### 1689: THE CAMERONIAN REGIMENT FORMED

The Scottish Parliament met in March 1689, guarded against any Jacobite (pro-James) attack by armed Covenanters. The following day William and Mary were proclaimed Monarchs at the Mercat Cross in Edinburgh.

However the struggle was not yet over. Claverhouse, the persecutor of the Covenanters, raised a force of Highlanders to carry on the fight for James. In response, on 14 May 1689 the United Societies raised a regiment of 800 men at Douglas in Lanarkshire, which

they named the **Cameronian Regiment** (in honour of Richard Cameron), *‘in defence of the nation, recovery and preservation of the Protestant religion, and, in particular, the work of reformation in Scotland, in opposition to Popery, Prelacy, and arbitrary power’*.

Claverhouse was killed at the battle of **Killiecrankie** on 27 July 1689, and despite the Jacobites winning the battle, his death was a fatal blow to James II’s ambitions of retaking the crown. The Cameronian Regiment fought their first battle against the Jacobite Highland army at Dunkeld on 18 August 1689. Outnumbered and in hostile territory they won a famous victory for the Williamite cause and secured the success of the Revolution in Scotland. Back in Ireland, William’s famous victory over James at the Battle of the Boyne in July 1690 secured the Revolution for the three kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland.

### DAVID HOUSTON (1633 - 1696)

The only remaining Covenanter minister was **David Houston**. He was born near Paisley in 1633 and came to Ulster around 1660 where he preached to congregations in the Route Presbytery in North Antrim. His commitment the Covenants led to an unsatisfactory relationship with the Presbytery and on 27 February 1672 he was suspended. He was believed to be in Scotland from 1675-9 and was actively involved in the Battle of Bothwell Bridge. Following the battle he continued to preach in both Ulster and Scotland, but in January 1688 he was arrested and jailed in Dublin. The authorities decided that he should stand trial in Edinburgh, where, like so many others, he would most likely be executed. The Covenanters of Ayrshire rescued Houston at Lugar, near Muirkirk, on his journey to Edinburgh and by 1689 he was back in Ulster, living in Newtownards. He was also present at the Siege of Derry. From 1692 to his death, Houston lived at Armony in County Antrim. A Bishop wrote to the Lord

Lieutenant of Ireland in 1694 that Houston was a *‘clergyman that preached up the Solemn League and Covenant, accusing the people of Scotland for not sticking to their League, and having a congregation of 500 resolute fellows that adhere to him’*. David Houston died in 1696 and was buried at Connor in Co Antrim.

### 1689 - 1701: THE REVOLUTION SETTLEMENT

The political changes that the Revolution settlement brought fell far short of what many Covenanters in the United Societies had hoped for. The Church of Scotland and its General Assembly were now established as Presbyterian, with the Westminster Confession of Faith as their ‘subordinate standard’. But the Covenants, which had been a spiritual foundation for the people throughout their “50 Years Struggle” from 1638 - 1688, were cast aside by the new post-Revolution Church.

Regardless, all three ministers of the United Societies - Alexander Shields, William Boyd and Thomas Lining, and also a minority of their members - joined the Church of Scotland, and the General Assembly was allowed to meet for the first time in almost 40 years.

However, the majority of the members of the Societies remained faithful to Scotland’s National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant, and were opposed to the Revolution Settlement. William was an uncrowned King, the Covenants were not renewed and the majority of the reinstated Church of Scotland ministers had accepted the royal “indulgences” during the earlier persecutions - during the time when the Societies had remained steadfast. These glaring weaknesses in the Revolution Settlement cemented the separate existence of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

## VISIT:

### Wigtown - The Two Margarets and their memorials

- The drownings of the two Margarets is the most famous of all Covenanter martyrdoms, and their graves and memorials are popular locations for visitors, with tourist roadsigns pointing out their locations. The graves are in the small graveyard at Wigtown church and are very distinctive - they are painted white and are surrounded by black cast iron railings. Nearby, a stone stake marks the location where they were drowned, and a huge obelisk monument to their memory overlooks the town.
- There is also a grand Victorian monument to them in central Scotland, in the graveyard of the Church of Holy Rude next to Stirling Castle. Sadly it has been vandalised over the years and is presently in poor condition, but is still worth a visit if you are in the area.
- Some traditions say that Margaret Wilson had four older brothers, all of whom had fled to Ulster.



“...To this day, the *Killing Times* are the most murderous, systematic persecution of a people ever known in the British Isles, driven by the vicious cruelty of four successive Kings against their own Presbyterian subjects: Scots and Ulster-Scots alike...”



## WATCH, READ AND VISIT:

### CD: “Psalm Singing - Christ and His Suffering Church”

This is a recording of the event of Saturday 31st May 2008, held in Carrickfergus Civic Centre, featuring the choirs of the Eastern Presbytery, Northern Presbytery and Western Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. Copies are available from Rev Harry Coulter (tel 028 9336 6201 / email: [harry.coulter@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:harry.coulter@yahoo.co.uk))

### FREE Covenanters in Ulster Heritage Trail now available

The Covenanters in Ulster wallchart-style heritage trail is available from the Ulster-Scots Agency (telephone 028 9023 1113 / email: [info@ulsterscotsagency.org.uk](mailto:info@ulsterscotsagency.org.uk)). Bundles of up to 200 free copies are also available for distribution within church congregations.



## THE EXECUTION OF DANIEL ENGLISH

“...The execution of a Covenanter named Daniel English made a deeper impression than most of the hangings of that dreadful period, and the memory of it still lingers in local tradition. English was marched four long miles from the guard house at Ballymena to the gallows on the bridge of Connor, dressed in his gravedclothes and attended by a great company of his co- religionists, who, as the procession wended its way amongst the hills, joined together in singing the 119th Psalm...” (from *Ulster and Ireland* by JW Good, 1919). Daniel English was executed in 1798, just opposite Kirk Hill (shown right) - where the Covenanter minister David Houston had been buried in 1696.



# THE COVENANTERS IN ULSTER



## WILLIAM STAVELY GRAVE, KELLSWATER

William Stavelly's grave is at Kellswater Reformed Presbyterian Church in Co Antrim. It is surrounded by wrought iron railings, right beside the church door. Kellswater was the first Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland and is also the location of the Houston Memorial Lecture Hall, named after Covenanter minister David Houston.

## PART EIGHT: 1690-1811: From Covenanters to Reformed Presbyterians

In the aftermath of the Killing Times, and the disappointment of King William III's "Revolution Settlement", the Covenanters of Ulster remained

Article by **Dr William Roulston**. With thanks to Rev Robert McCollum, Rev Harry Coulter,

resolute and by the beginning of the nineteenth century had changed from being a scattered remnant to an organised denomination

Dr Lawrence Holden and Mark Thompson for their ongoing guidance and support.

When **David Houston** died in 1696 the Covenanters in Ulster were left without a pastor, a situation that was to continue for over 60 years. In Scotland, too, there were no Covenanter ministers. Neither were there any meeting-houses and instead services were held in private homes or in the open air. The Covenanters there were able to maintain a structure through the United Societies and close links continued with Irish Covenanters. Occasionally large conventicles reminiscent of earlier times were held. Daniel Defoe, in his *Tour thro' the whole island of Great Britain* (1724-7) witnessed the such a gathering near Drumlanrig, between Dumfries and Sanquhar:

*Here we were surprised with a sight, which is not now so frequent in Scotland as it has been formerly, I mean one of their field meetings, where one Mr John Hepburn, an old Cameronian, preached to an auditory of near 7,000 people, all sitting in rows on the steep side of a green hill, and the preacher in a little pulpit made under a tent at the foot of the hill; he held his auditory, with not above an intermission of half an hour, almost seven hours; and many of the poor people had come fifteen or sixteen miles to hear him, and had all the way to go home again on foot.*

In 1706 the Reverend **John Macmillan**, whose support for the Covenants had brought him into conflict with the established church authorities, defected from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland to the United Societies. He was their only pastor for 37 years. In 1743, following the defection to the United Societies of a second minister, this time a pastor from the Associate Presbytery, the Reformed Presbytery was organised in Scotland.

### ULSTER COVENANTERS IN THE EARLY 1700s

At the final meeting of the Reformed Presbytery of Ireland, held at Maghera, County Londonderry, on 7 November 1810, a suggestion was made that a history of the rise and progress of the Covenanter church in Ireland ought to be written. Rev. William Stavelly was

asked to prepare something on this. Whether Stavelly ever got round to writing this history is unclear; certainly nothing has survived to show that he did. Had it our understanding of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in its formative years would be much greater than it is now. As it is, our knowledge of the Irish Covenanters in the first half of the eighteenth century is limited in the extreme.

In Ulster the Covenanters were widely scattered across those areas where Scottish settlement was strongest. Contact was maintained with the Scottish Covenanters through correspondence and the exchange of delegates. In 1707 Rev. John Macmillan visited Ireland. In 1712 when Macmillan renewed the Covenants at Auchinsough, Covenanters from Ireland were represented. Occasionally Covenanters in Ireland crossed from Donaghadee to Portpatrick to have marriages solemnised and children baptised.

### YEARS OF DIFFICULTY - THE 1704 TEST ACT

This was a time when Presbyterians in general were disillusioned with the establishment. The aftermath of the Williamite War had been a disappointment for them. Whereas in Scotland Presbyterianism was established as the state church, in Ireland Presbyterians continued to operate under various disabilities. For example, in 1704 a law was passed that required persons holding public office to produce a certificate showing that they had received communion according to the rites of the Church of Ireland; this became known as the Test Act and was a particular source of frustration for Presbyterians. Covenanters felt especially aggrieved with the general situation and were in an even more awkward position as they were a minority within Presbyterianism and even viewed with disdain by other Presbyterians. Disparagingly they were known as the 'Mountain Men'.

There are a few references to Ireland in the minutes of the General Meeting of Societies in Scotland, though these are of a fairly broad nature. In August 1723 it was agreed that *for the encouragement of our friends in*

*the Kingdom of Ireland, some two of our number go over and correspond with them at such time and place as their commissioners shall direct.* In January 1735 in setting out the reasons for a fast, one of the motives was to ask God's blessing on *'his poor suffering remnant in our neighbouring Covenanted kingdom of Ireland'*. Soon after the formation of the Scottish Reformed Presbytery in 1743 two delegates from Scotland, Rev. **Thomas Nairn** and **Alexander Marshall**, visited Ireland. They did so at the request of the Irish Covenanters, 146 of whom had signed a petition asking for *'a faithful minister to dispense Gospel ordinances among them.'* In 1744 the Irish Covenanters were taken under the supervision of the Scottish Reformed Presbytery.

### 1757 - 1763: THE FIRST ORDINATIONS

On 2 July 1757 the first ordination of a Reformed Presbyterian minister in Ireland took place. The ordinand was **William Martin**. He had been born at Ballspallen, near Limavady, in 1729 and was educated at Glasgow University, graduating in 1753. He then studied theology and in 1756 was licensed to preach the Gospel by the Scottish Reformed Presbytery. At this time it was agreed that his field of service should be Ireland. The venue for his ordination was at a place known as The Vow, a site marked by an ancient graveyard. Here was a ferry over the River Bann, making it a convenient meeting place for Covenanters in counties Antrim and Londonderry. A memorial stone was erected here in June 2007 to commemorate this important event.

To begin with Martin ministered to Covenanter societies scattered from Donegal to north Down. In 1760 the Covenanters in Ireland were divided into two congregations. Martin chose the Antrim congregation and based himself at Kellswater, near Ballymena. It was here that the first Covenanter meeting-house was built. As there was no minister for the other congregation, covering Donegal, Londonderry and Tyrone, he was asked to give what help he could to Covenanters living in these counties.

Martin's most important assistant at this time was a man named **Matthew Lynn**. He was from Larne and like Martin had been educated at Glasgow University, graduating in 1760 at the age of 29. While a student he had been actively involved with the Scottish Reformed Presbytery, serving at one time as its clerk.

He was licensed at Carnaughts near Ballymena on 26 July 1761. He spent the next two years as an itinerant preacher, but on 26 July 1763 was ordained minister of the newly formed Bannside congregation. His ministry covered most of County Londonderry and he seems to have been particularly active in the south-eastern part of the county in the Bellaghy and Magherafelt areas.

### 1763-1779: IRISH REFORMED PRESBYTERY

Now that there were two ordained ministers in Ireland, the Covenanters were in a position to form an Irish Reformed Presbytery. It was at this time that the church acquired its official name, the Reformed Presbyterian Church. This Presbytery lasted until 1779 and in this time several more ordinations took place: **William James** at Bready in 1765; **Daniel McClelland** at Laymore near Ballymena also in 1765; **Thomas Hamilton** at Faughan in 1770 and **William Stavelly** at Conlig, near Newtownards, in 1772.

The first Irish Reformed Presbytery was dissolved in 1779. Its collapse was the result of several factors. The first was the emigration to America of several of its ministers. These included both of the original ministers, William Martin and Matthew Lynn in 1772 and 1773. In 1779 William James of Bready and Thomas Hamilton of Faughan both died. With a depleted ministry the church decided to transfer its official administration to the Scottish Reformed Presbytery and a standing committee took care of local matters in Ireland. The willingness of the Irish Covenanters to forgo their independence indicates a desire on their part to maintain a regular presbyterial system of church government rather than continue in a somewhat haphazard fashion.

Despite losing its independence the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland continued to grow. In 1780 the Scottish Reformed Presbytery sent a Mr Thorburn to Ulster to investigate the state of the societies and congregations in the south and west of the province. His tour took in Armagh, Monaghan, Tyrone, Donegal and Londonderry. He preached at Ballybay, County Monaghan, and preached and baptised some children at Camteel (Aughnadoy), County Tyrone. In his report to the Scottish Presbytery he commented that he had found the people *'in those remote parts sensible and better established in the principles of the Presbytery's testimony than could be expected.'*

### WILLIAM STAVELY

The dominant figure within the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the late eighteenth century was William Stavelly. He had been born into a Covenanter family at Fernisky near Kells, his great-grandfather having moved from Yorkshire to County Antrim in the 1630s. From his base at Knockbracken Stavelly ministered over a vast area stretching from Donaghadee to County Cavan and was responsible for organising a further five congregations, earning himself the epithet *'The Apostle of the Covenanters'*. In 1786 **William Gamble** was ordained at Ballygey, near Letterkenney, the first Covenanter minister to have a settled ministry in County Donegal. In December 1792, with six ministers and twelve congregations, the Irish Reformed Presbytery was reorganised.

The increasing support for the Covenanters was giving cause for concern to some within the Presbyterian Church and this unease was given expression in published literature. One unjustifiably critical pamphlet on the Reformed Presbyterians was *An address to the people of Connor containing a clear and full vindication of the Synod of Ulster from the aspersions of the people called Covenanters* (1794), which though *'written in the name of Sanders Donald late sexton of Connor'* was the work of Rev. Henry Henry [sic], Presbyterian minister of Connor.

### THE CHURCH IN THE 1790s

The reorganisation of the Irish Reformed Presbytery came at a time of unrest in the north of Ireland. The previous year the United Irishmen had been founded in Belfast by radical Presbyterians influenced by the American and French Revolutions. Many within the Reformed Presbyterian Church found it impossible to, as one historian has put it, *'escape the revolutionary contagion.'* In 1793 Rev. **James McKinney** of Dervock and Kilraughts preached a sermon on the *'Rights of God'* that was denounced as treasonable and was forced to flee to America to escape arrest.

Another to go into exile was Rev. **William Gibson** of Kellswater and Cullybackey who preached to large crowds in County Antrim, reputedly prophesying the *'immediate destruction of the British monarchy'*. [When he left for America in 1797 Gibson was accompanied by two students for the ministry, John Black and Samuel Brown Wylie. The following year they met up with McKinney and established a presbytery in Philadelphia marking the formal beginnings of what is now the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America.]

### THE COVENANTERS, UNITED IRISHMEN AND THE 1798 REBELLION

Undoubtedly for some it seemed that the years of active state persecution had returned. In Maghera a young man of the Reformed Presbyterian Church was executed after information against him had been given by the Church of Ireland minister. Another Covenanter who met the same fate was **Daniel English** who was put to death at the Bridge of Connor on what was generally believed to be fabricated evidence. The circulation of *Life and Prophecies* by Alexander Peden, a Covenanter preacher from the 'Killing Times', which prophesied an invasion of the British Isles by the French heightened tensions still further.

Even more so than any of his ministerial colleagues, Rev. William Stavelly was drawn into the political and revolutionary intrigue of the time. Stavelly was initially involved with the United Irishmen. However, when he

saw the direction it was taking he withdrew from it. In October 1796 a notice appeared in the press entitled *'A seasonable and necessary information'*. Issued in the name of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and believed to be largely the work of Stavelly, it declared:

*we hold in the highest abhorrence and detestation all tumultuous or disorderly meetings and we utterly disclaim all connection with such whether publicly or privately held, where anything is said or done that is prejudicial to the peace, the safety or property of any individual or civil society.*

To the authorities, however, Stavelly remained a figure of suspicion. A Sabbath service in Knockbracken in June 1797 was interrupted when a detachment of troops arrived to arrest Stavelly on the grounds that he had hidden arms in the meeting house. He was a prisoner for two months on this occasion. In October 1797 he accompanied the United Irishman **William Orr** to his place of execution in Carrickfergus and, in the minds of many, publicly identified himself with the revolutionary cause. In June 1798 soldiers returning from the Battle of Ballynahinch burned his house and carried him a prisoner to Belfast. There he was ill-treated by the guards who *'threatened to hack me, hang me, burn me'*. He was then transferred to a prison ship in Belfast Lough and eventually released, again with no charges proven against him.

Though vindicated, Stavelly's relationship with his congregation at Knockbracken had been pushed to breaking point by recent events, and in 1800 he moved to the joint congregation of Cullybackey and Kellswater. This was where he had been born and raised and it provided him with an opportunity to make a fresh start after the difficulties of the 1790s. Here he enjoyed a successful ministry until his death in 1825.

### 1811: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SYNOD

By 1800, although the number of congregations had increased to nearly thirty, there were only three ministers, each of whom had a very heavy

workload. The work of these ministers was somewhat alleviated by the ordination of ten new ministers between 1802 and 1809. One of the most significant ordinations was that of **Josias Alexander**, the first minister of a congregation in Belfast. Hitherto nearly all Reformed Presbyterian congregations had been in rural areas or small towns.

With the increase in the number of congregations and ministers, the Irish Reformed Presbytery decided at a meeting in Maghera on 7 November 1810 to divide the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland into four presbyteries, to be called simply the northern, southern, eastern and western presbyteries, and to form a synod which would have oversight of the presbyteries. The first synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church was formally constituted at Cullybackey on 1 May 1811 under the moderatorship of Rev. William Stavelly. It is this same structure that continues today. In the words of Professor Adam Loughbridge,

*It was fitting that William Stavelly, upon whose shoulders there had rested so long the burden of leadership in the Church, should be the first moderator of Synod. He had served the Church well when it was in a disorganised state from 1779 to 1792. Now he saw his work crowned with a programme of expansion and organisation that reached its climax with the constitution of the Synod.*

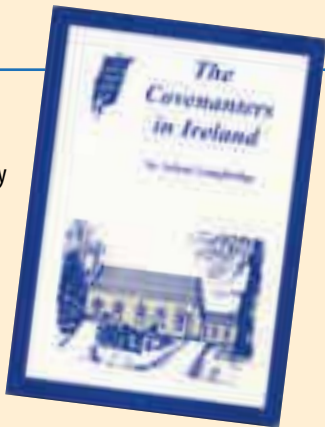
From being a scattered remnant in the late 1690s, the Covenanters had now established themselves as a recognised denomination in the early 1800s. It had been quite a transformation, and one the Covenanters acknowledged had only been possible through the grace of God.

## NEXT EDITION: FINAL PART FROM 1811 TO THE PRESENT DAY

## READ:

### The Covenanters in Ireland by Professor Adam Loughbridge

This book, first published in 1984, is acknowledged as the best summary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Beginning with the arrival in Ulster of the Scottish settlers of the early 1600s, it provides an excellent overview of the church's history in short chapters, and concludes with a chapter on "The Church in the 20th Century" Available from the Covenanter Bookshop. Tel: 028 9081 4110 Email: bookshop@rpc.org Website: www.covenanterbooks.com



## THE WEAVER POETS AND THE COVENANTS:

### Donegore Hill by James Orr

James Orr's epic poem Donegore Hill - an account of the failed 1798 Rebellion in which he was involved - begins with a poetic Ulster-Scots reference to Psalm 78 v 9:

*Ephie's base bairntime, trail-pike brood, Were arm'd as weel as tribes that stood; Yet on the battle ilka cauf, Turn'd his backside, an' scamper'd aff*

Orr referred to the Psalm (the Biblical story of the well armed tribe of Ephraim running away from battle) as a precedent for the failure of the Rebellion at Donegore in 1798. The next verse of the Psalm explains why the men of Ephraim failed, and might reveal Orr's view on the men of 1798 - **"They kept not the covenant of God"**.

In the late 1700s Robert Burns wrote his poem "Solemn League and Covenant". Ulster poets of the same era also demonstrated a regard for the Covenants.



### The Carmoney Inscription by Samuel Thomson

Samuel Thomson was one of the most famous Ulster-Scots "Weaver Poets". In 1806 he wrote a short inscription for the then-reformed Presbyterian meeting house at Carmoney (above), which read as follows:

*To show the world that God respects His covenant, full dear, The Reformation Church erects this Ebenezer here "Hitherto hath the Lord help'd us"*

Sadly the inscription stone was plastered over many years ago. The building is still there but is now closed.

## VISIT:

### Rev William Martin memorial, The Vow, Ballymoney

In 2007 a memorial stone was erected at The Vow, at the entrance to the old graveyard, to mark the 250th anniversary of the ordination of Rev. William Martin, the first Reformed Presbyterian minister to be ordained in Ireland. In 1772 he led a large number of families, many of them Reformed Presbyterian, to South Carolina. Martin was a major figure in the early Reformed Presbyterian Church in America. When in 1782 several Covenanter ministers joined with the Seceders to form the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church Martin stood apart from them and alone 'kept alive the Covenanter Church in America'.





## THE COVENANTERS AND THE 1859 REVIVAL

2009 is the 150th anniversary of the 1859 Revival – a subject which has recently been discussed in the Northern Ireland Assembly, and for which a number of churches have planned commemorative events. It is well known that the 1859 revival in Ulster brought great encouragement to the churches. The Covenanters, while critical of some of the emotional excesses associated with the revival, did in general welcome its influence. Certainly the church experienced many benefits as a consequence of the spiritual renewal that swept the province. It was noted that in two years between 1859 and 1861 the membership of the denomination had increased from 4050 to 4420. This was the largest percentage increase for any similar period for which statistics are available. Another benefit was seen in the greater number of students offering themselves for the work of the pastoral ministry. Between 1860 and 1865 the number was almost three times the average for any similar period during the century.



# THE COVENANTERS IN ULSTER



## REFORMED PRESBYTERIANISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The story of the Covenanters in Ulster is rich and glorious. It is also ongoing in the life, worship and witness of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in 21st century Ireland. The religious and civil freedoms that past generations so dearly won are once again being threatened by civil government which is becoming increasingly hostile to the Gospel and the Church. Further chapters of persecution may yet be written. Whatever happens, 'Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet'

# FINAL PART: From 1811 to the Present Day: Reformed Presbyterians in the 21st Century

In the final article of our series, two Ministers from the Reformed Presbyterian Church (from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland) outline how the denomination

has developed during the past 200 years, and its ongoing commitment to the principles which our Scottish and Ulster-Scots forefathers fought and died for.

At the centre of the Church and at the heart of our history, the Covenants have guided faith, influenced culture and shaped identity.

From the struggles of the Presbyterians of Ulster against absolute monarchy and arbitrary power in the 17th century to the turmoil and mass political protests of the 20th century, the Covenants and Covenanting ideology have maintained a powerful influence among the Scots in Ulster and their descendants.

At the very heart of that story is the persecution of Presbyterians in Scotland and Ulster who refused to compromise the sovereignty of Christ in His Church or give up their simple scriptural form of worship. The history of the suffering of both people and ministers in that struggle is crucial to all Presbyterians if they are to fully understand the history of their families, their congregations and their communities.

Outside of the Church, Covenanting ideology has also had a lasting impact upon the Scots of Ulster. For many generations the people of Ulster's rural communities have been aware that their forefathers had travelled from Scotland in troubled times. In the twists and turns of our troubled past the refusal to accept arbitrary power in religious matters in the 17th century has influenced Ulster Scots' attitudes to inequality and injustice in social, civil and political matters.

In our early history it was observed that the 'Covenant is deeply rooted in too many'; in the 19th century the community still retained a strong memory of the 'broken Covenants' and in the 20th century the language of the Covenants was used to appeal to a broad swathe of Ulster society in dire political circumstances.

It is a rich history, an untold story and it belongs to us all.

## THE 19TH CENTURY - A TIME OF DIVISION AND EXPANSION by Rev Raymond Blair, Galway Reformed Presbyterian Church

After the consolidation of the Covenanter cause at the close of the 18th century, the 19th century was to be a time of considerable growth for the churches in both Scotland and Ireland. However, they both experienced unhappy divisions, with the one that happened in Scotland having the more serious consequences.

### EXPANSION AND DIVISION IN SCOTLAND

**Expansion** - By the early years of the 19th century the number of congregations under the oversight of the Scottish Reformed Presbytery had greatly increased. In 1811 A Synod was organised which was initially made up of three presbyteries. By 1863 it had expanded to 6 Presbyteries with a total of 46 congregations and a membership of about 6,700.

**Theological Education** - As early as 1803 a Theological Hall was set up and theologians of some repute taught at this theological college. These included two brothers, Andrew Symington (between 1820 and 1853) and William Symington (from 1853 to 1862). William penned two able theological works, *"On The Atonement And Intercession Of Christ"* and *"Messiah the Prince"*. He also became involved in campaigning on issues of social reform because he regarded intemperance, illiteracy, slavery, bad working conditions and governmental corruption as a moral sins in a nation under a covenant commitment to God.

**Mission** - The Covenanters in Scotland had a heart for world mission. In the course of the century mission work was carried out in Canada, New Zealand and among the Jewish community in England. Of particular note was the Vanuatu mission established by the famous J.G. Paton.

**Division** - In protest against the covenant-breaking state the Synod of 1833 declared that voting at political elections was incompatible with church

membership. A long and troublesome debate ensued until in 1863 the Synod decided that voting should no longer be a matter for discipline. Believing this to be a betrayal of their Testimony a minority withdrew to form the present Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The majority eventually united with the Free Church in 1876.

**Continuation** - Despite the sad division the minority continued their witness with a good deal of enthusiasm. In 1876 they had 12 congregations with a total membership of about 1,100. One of their most notable ministers was J.P. Struthers who is most renowned for his publication of *"The Morning Watch"*; this was a halfpenny children's magazine that was widely used in the instruction of young people.

### EXPANSION AND DIVISION IN IRELAND

**Expansion** - As in Scotland so also in Ireland the increasing number of congregations led to the establishment of a Synod in 1811. This was composed of 18 congregations and several preaching stations. Indeed, despite the high level of both pre-Famine and post-Famine emigration, the membership of the denomination increased significantly throughout the 19th century. In 1800 the membership was about 3,000 but by 1900 the figure had reached over 4,000. Several thousands more though not in actual membership were adhering to the Covenanter cause. In order to promote the Covenanter cause a significant step was taken in 1830 with the beginning of *"The Covenanter"* magazine which continues to this day (now under the title *"The Covenanter Witness"*).

**Theological Education** - A Theological Hall was established in 1854, a wise step at a time when the destructive influence of Higher Criticism was beginning to infiltrate other denominations. Indeed, one minister of the church, Rev. John Paul of

Loughmourne and Cammoney, took a leading role in opposing the errors of Arianism. Another theological giant was the Rev. Thomas Houston of Knockbracken who penned several works of importance including a treatise denouncing the evil of gambling.

**Mission** - Mission outreach at home and abroad was central to the vision of the Irish Covenanters of the 19th century. In the 1850's and 60's the gospel was brought to the West of Ireland. A congregation was established in Dublin between 1859 and 1879.

Support was given to the Colonial Mission in Canada and Australia. Foreign Mission was not neglected either. In 1871 the Irish Church in conjunction with the Scottish Church began mission work in Syria.

**Division** - In 1831 a controversy broke out concerning the extent of the authority of the civil magistrate in relation to spiritual matters. This culminated in 1840 in a serious schism. Five ministers of the Eastern Presbytery set up a separate body known as the "Eastern Synod of the Reformed Presbytery Church of Ireland." In 1902 this synod united with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland but half of its congregations returned at that time to the fellowship of the Reformed Presbyterians.

**Continued Expansion** - In spite of the division the Covenanters continued to make progress. The 1859 revival undoubtedly helped in this regard. Towards the close of the century several new congregations were established including three in the strategically important city of Belfast. Plans were being made for further outreach and it would be fair to say that the Covenanters in Ireland entered the 20th century with high hopes for expansion and growth.

## THE 20TH CENTURY by Rev Harry Coulter, Carrickfergus Reformed Presbyterian Church

The optimism and enthusiasm of the Church in Ireland at the end of the 19th century meant she entered the new century *'with high hopes and a constructive programme for expansion.'* This joyful heart commitment - to Christ, His Crown and Covenant - manifested itself throughout the ensuing century in a variety of ways.

### COVENANT RENEWAL

In 1901 at Ballymoney and in 1911 at Belfast, the Covenants, which had been an integral part of the Church's distinctive history for over 250 years, were renewed. The 1911 renewal was particularly poignant in that it marked the centenary of the Constitution of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

At the end of the twentieth century a further covenant renewal took place at Creevagh. On that occasion, contemporary issues facing the Church were also incorporated into the covenant. The renewal in 1990 coincided with the 300th anniversary of the Covenanters' rejection of the Revolution Settlement which had earlier set aside the National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643. On all three occasions congregations of the Church followed the example of Synod and participated enthusiastically in covenant renewal. It is not, therefore, without cause that Reformed Presbyterians are still known today as Covenanters.

### EXPANSION IN IRELAND

Between 1900 and 1930 seven congregations were added to the Reformed Presbyterian Church: Portrush, Cregagh Road, Milford, Cullybackey, Botanic Avenue, Clare and Lullyvallen. In the final decades of the twentieth century there was a renewed emphasis on beginning new congregations in response to the ongoing population drift from rural to urban settings. New congregations were established in Lisburn and

Cloughmills. Others got underway in Galway, Letterkenny, Dromore, Carrickfergus, Enniskillen, East Belfast and Antrim. Some congregations ceased to exist either due to their rural location - Ballymacashon and Mulvin or as result of 'The Troubles' - Clarendon Street, Londonderry and Grosvenor Road, Belfast. The Church's vision for the 21st century is to see a Reformed Presbyterian congregation established in every large centre of population in Ireland, with every congregation - urban and rural, recently formed and long established - bearing a vibrant witness to Jesus Christ as Saviour and King.

### OVERSEAS MISSION

For the first half of the twentieth century overseas mission was focussed on Syria until this work, begun in 1871, came to an untimely end in 1953 due to the rising tide of nationalism. From 1963 mission work was carried on in the Tigre Province of Ethiopia, where sharing the Gospel was combined with meeting educational, medical and social need. By 1970 a team of eight missionaries was working there with the assistance of some nationals. This work also came to an abrupt end when in 1975 the socialist revolution engulfed the country. Since 1988 the Church has undertaken mission work in Nantes, France. Her commitment to overseas mission as a small denomination is an example worthy of emulation.

### BIBLICAL WORSHIP

By the beginning of the 20th century denominations that were previously Psalm singing had begun to introduce uninspired hymns and organs 'to enhance' worship. This no doubt paved the way for the introduction of bands and orchestras by the end of the century. As this worship revolution was getting underway the Reformed Presbyterian Church was an enthusiastic partner in a Psalm Singing Conference held in Belfast in 1902. This conference embraced

representatives of most of the Psalm-singing Churches of the world. Addresses were given by ministers from America, Canada, Scotland, and Ireland and contributions were read from missionaries in Egypt, Syria and India. The addresses were subsequently collated in a book with the editors' expressing the desire, *'that God will use it as a means of giving His people clearer conceptions of the transcendent excellence of His own Book of Songs, and of the duty and privilege of using it to the exclusion of all other compositions in the ordinance of Praise.'*

Later in the century Presbytery choirs were formed to assist the singing of the Psalms in four-part harmony in local congregations and to promote the singing of Psalms further afield, in some cases across the world through the production of audio recordings. At the end of the century a further contribution to Psalm singing was made with the production of *'The Psalms for Singing – A 21st Century Edition'*. This manual of praise in modern English has ensured that Psalm singing, as a scriptural practice is carried on in contemporary language

### RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES

During the twentieth century there was an ongoing commitment to develop closer relationships with other biblical Churches. This began in 1896 when the Church joined her sister Reformed Presbyterian Churches in Scotland and America in an international conference in Scotland. Forty two years later a similar international conference was held to mark the tercentenary of the signing of the National Covenant of Scotland in 1638. Not until 1964 was the Irish Church host to an International Conference, which since 1982 happens every four years. In recent years this conference has been enriched through the participation of Reformed Presbyterians from Cyprus, Canada, Japan and Australia. The Church has also fostered relationships locally with

other denominations and churches that preach a biblical Gospel. The Church has not been part of The Ecumenical Movement or the World Council of Churches because of their rejection of a biblical Gospel and Reformed doctrine.

At an international level the Reformed Presbyterian Church has played a full role in various international church bodies that exist to promote fellowship and partnership among churches that hold to the Westminster Confession of Faith or other similar historic Confessions. These inter church contacts have safeguarded the Church from isolationism and provincialism.

### FAITHFULNESS TO THE GOSPEL

Liberal teaching - that denied the Bible as the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the way of salvation - swept through many formerly biblical churches in Ireland during the twentieth century. In the face of this the Reformed Presbyterian Church has stood firm in her commitment to Scripture, to Christ as Saviour, to the Covenants, to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms, consistently refusing to be blown of course by novel doctrines. Whilst others embraced such things in the mid years of the century, the Reformed Presbyterian Church concentrated on preaching the Gospel and passing on the Reformed Faith to the next generation. This she did through family worship, public worship, Sabbath School, the Covenanter Young People's Movement, church camps and conferences. This approach paid rich dividends in the second half of the 20th century, producing a generation of members, ministers and elders who confidently profess Christ, who love this historic branch of His Church, her doctrines and practices, and who have a heart compassion for people, being ready to share the good news that *'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.'*

## OPPOSING SLAVERY IN THE USA:

Reformed Presbyterians in America took a very strong line against slavery, more so than any other denomination with the exception of the Quakers. The cause of the slaves was initially championed by **Rev. James McKinney** who had been forced to flee to America from Ireland in 1793. In 1800 the American Covenanters made it a rule that *'no slaveholder should be allowed the communion of the Church'* and in 1803 **Rev. Alexander McLeod** published *Negro Slavery Unjustifiable*. Most members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church left the southern states where slavery was permitted and established new congregations in northern states such as Ohio and Indiana. Covenanters were actively involved in anti-slavery organisations and in the *'Underground Railroad'*, helping slaves escape to the north. After the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery, some Covenanters were actively involved in education programmes among the freed slaves and one congregation, Selma, Alabama, was established as a direct result of this work.



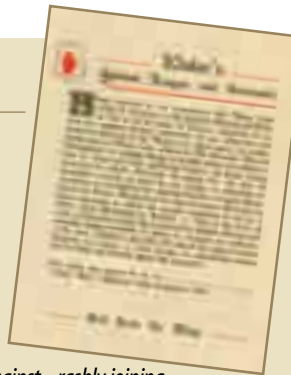
## THE MONUMENTS OF SCOTLAND

Scotland has remembered the Covenanters in many ways, including monuments. Over the years existing monuments have been restored and new monuments erected. The most famous of the monument restorers was Robert Paterson, also known as "Old Mortality". His statue at Dumfries Museum is shown here. During the late 1700s he devoted 40 years of his life to carving and erecting memorials to the Covenanters across the lowlands of Scotland. Without his work, many of the stories of the Covenanters may well have been forgotten. There are only a few Covenanter memorials in Ulster today, but there are many locations across the province which have a special significance for the Covenanters story. Hopefully, following this series of articles and the heritage trail produced this year, local churches, congregations and communities will go on to commemorate their Covenanter history. Perhaps a few new Covenanter monuments and memorials should be erected in Ulster?



## THE ULSTER COVENANT OF 1912:

The Reformed Presbyterian Church was opposed to the Ulster Covenant of 1912. The Ulster Covenant did not recognise the deficiencies of the British Constitution, which does not recognise Jesus Christ as head of Church and State. In addition the historic Covenants, *'National and Solemn League'*, which bound the nation to Christ and Scripture, are ignored and even violated. Reformed Presbyterians though opposed to Home Rule could not sanction a Covenant that was not honouring to Christ. In September 1912 the Reformed Presbyterian Synod sent an article to all congregations pointing out that: *"Reformed Presbyterians must be on their guard against... rashly joining in any Covenant that assumes that allegiance should be sworn to the British Constitution, which is a Covenant-breaking and Antichristian Constitution, against which Covenanters have protested and from which they have stood aloof, because of its Antichristianism, for two hundred and fifty years."*



## THE COVENANTERS TODAY:

The Reformed Presbyterian Church has 36 established congregations with new churches underway in Galway, Letterkenny, Carrickfergus and Enniskillen. It is not a large denomination, nor was it in earlier centuries. For four centuries the Church has consistently taught that Christ the King must reign over all of life: the individual, the family, the Church and the nation. Her motto continues to be *'For Christ's Crown and Covenant.'*

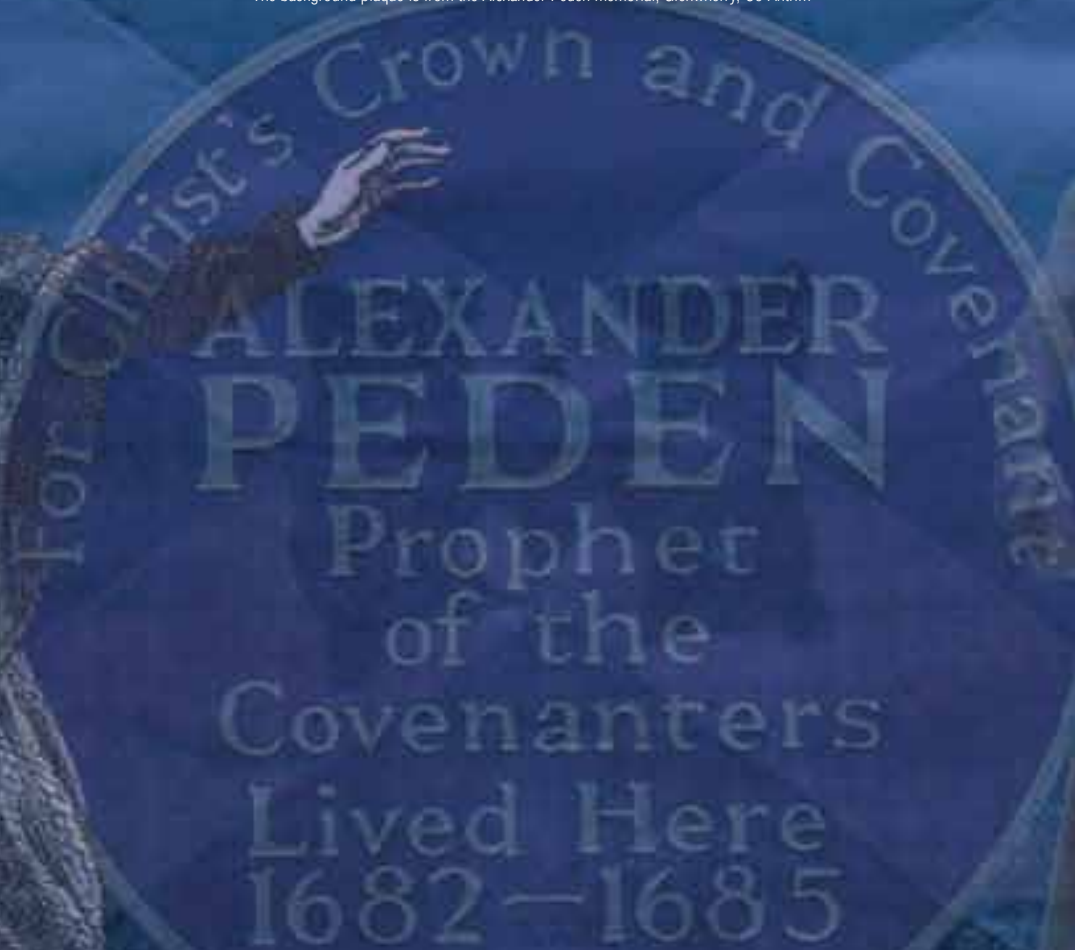
The Church operates a vibrant youth programme through Sabbath Schools and Covenanter Youth Groups, Presbytery get-togethers and five denominational camps. Annually the Church sends out around twenty *'Go Teams'* to assist with evangelism. Recently, the denomination celebrated 150 years of training men for the ministry with the erection of a purpose built Theological College at Knockbracken. And plans are in hand to build a new Covenanter Book Centre.

**To find out more about the Reformed Presbyterian Church, visit <http://www.rpc.org>**





Front cover images: 1) 19th century illustration of Alexander Peden. 2) Statue of James Renwick, Church of the Holy Rude, Stirling.  
3) 19th century illustration of Jenny Geddes. 4) Gravestone of the Covenanters Lawrence Hay, Andrew Pitulloch and David Hackston  
at the Parish Church of Cupar Old, Cupar, Fife. 5) Margaret Wilson, Martyr of the Solway © National Museums Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery  
The hand/crown motif is from a 1689 Covenanter banner from the John Hastie Museum, Strathaven, South Lanarkshire  
The background plaque is from the Alexander Peden memorial, Glenwherry, Co Antrim



The Covenanters. A name that many thousands of Ulster people know well, but maybe know only a little about. It's a name which speaks of deeply-held faith, of heroism and patriotism, of resistance to the state, of persecution and martyrdom, of opposition to slavery, of emigration - and of a tradition which continues to this day. The Covenanters' story is often presented as a Scotland-only history, yet it has a major Ulster dimension – from the first Ulster-Scots settlers of the early 1600s right up to the present day. The story of the Covenanters may be the most important in all of Ulster-Scots history.

This publication features a series of articles which were originally published during 2008 in the centre spread of "The Ulster-Scot". The articles were jointly researched and written by a group of individual authors, working voluntarily as a steering group for the project, and who are credited in the articles themselves.

We hope that these articles will inspire you to discover more about this wonderful story.

# THE COVENANTERS IN ULSTER