

History Revision – The Plantations

What was Plantation?

In the 16-century the English were seeking to extend their control over Ireland. One of the ways they tried to do this was to drive the Irish landowners off their land and replace them with English or Scottish settlers. Between the 1550's and the 1650's **Four Plantations** took place in Ireland. Each plantation was the result of a rebellion by the Irish who were trying to resist the extension of English control over Ireland.

PLANTATION.	RULER WHO ORDERED IT.	REVOLT THAT LED TO IT.
PLANTATION OF LAOIS AND OFFALY IN 1556.	QUEEN MARY I	REBELLION OF O MOORES AND O CONNORS IN 1553.
PLANTATION OF MUNSTER IN 1586.	QUEEN ELIZABETH I	THE DESMOND REBELLION IN 1579.
PLANTATION OF ULSTER IN 1609.	KING JAMES I	THE NINE YEARS WAR 1594 – 1603.
CROMWELLIAN PLANTATION IN 1652.	OLIVER CROMWELL	THE REBELLION OF 1641.

THE PLANTATION OF LAOIS AND OFFALY 1556;

The first Plantation took place because two families, the **O Moores and the O Connors** were proving to be troublesome to the English. These were constantly raiding The Pale {the part of Ireland controlled by the English} and had to be dealt with. First of all the Lord Deputy gradually pushed them back to the River Shannon and built a number of Forts on their land to keep the peace. **Queen Mary** then granted the land surrounding the Forts to army officers and old English officers on certain conditions;

- They had to build stone houses.
- They had to set up towns and villages.
- They had to arm themselves for defence.
- They had to cultivate the land in the English Manner.
- They could not mix with or marry the Irish.
- They had to employ English servants.

The Govt. divided the land into Counties. Laois became **Queen's County** and Offaly became **King's County**. Forts were built at **Maryborough** (Portlaoise) and **Philipstown** (Daingean).

Aims of the Plantation;

- The land was used to reward loyal servants of the Crown.
- Queen Mary hoped it would ease the cost of running Ireland.
- That the armed settlers would control the Natives.
- That towns and villages would act as “beacons of civilisation” and calm the Irish.

Outcome of the Plantation;

The Plantation was not very successful, for the following reasons;

- The O Moores and the O Connors terrorised the Planters who had taken their land.
- The Planters were unable to attract workers from England and had to employ Irish labourers.
- More money was spent protecting the Planters than was raised by them.

THE PLANTATION OF MUNSTER 1586;

Thirty years later **Queen Elizabeth I** ordered the next Plantation with strict instructions that lessons should be learned from the mistakes of her sisters’ Plantation.

In 1579 the **Earl of Desmond**, the most powerful man in Munster rebelled against the English Crown. Describing his rebellion as a fight for the Catholic Religion he persuaded the Pope to send him troops. In 1581 Elizabeth sent her army into Munster to deal with the situation. The English army laid waste to the whole of Munster, destroying farms, killing livestock and wiping out the peoples’ ability to feed themselves. A famine resulted killing 30,000 people and the Earl of Desmond was captured and executed. To ensure the future peace of Munster Queen Elizabeth I decided to carry out a Plantation.

How the Plantation Worked;

The Government divided the Earl of Desmonds’ land into 35 huge holdings. These holdings were granted to army officers and government officials and favourites of Queen Elizabeth. One of these was Sir Walter Raleigh who was granted 42,000 acres near Youghal in Co. Cork. These people were called **Undertakers**, because they undertook to fulfil certain conditions;

- To bring in English workers.
- To employ English farming methods.
- To maintain a part-time army to protect the Plantation.
- To build a defensive enclosure.

Outcome of the Plantation;

The Plantation of Munster did not work as well as was hoped. The land was so badly damaged as a result of the war and the famine that it was difficult to farm. The Irish, who had been driven from their land, constantly attacked the Planters. Due to these attacks most of the Planters fled back to England. Those who remained behind had to employ Irish workers and

even rent out land to them. Also the Planters did not give enough money to support the part-time army and it was never strong enough.

On the plus side however new towns such as Bandon and Killarney were established and new industries such as a timber export business were set up. The crown learned valuable lessons from the Plantation and these were to be seen in the next Plantation in Ulster.

THE PLANTATION OF ULSTER 1609;

Between 1594 and 1603 the leading Chieftains in Ulster, **Hugh O Neill** and **Hugh O Donnell** led a rebellion against the Govt. of Queen Elizabeth. This was known as the **Nine Years War** and included some spectacular victories for the Irish such as the **Battle of the Yellow Ford in 1598**. The final battle took place at Kinsale on Christmas day 1601 and was a huge defeat for O Neill and O Donnell. In 1603 they surrendered when they signed the **Treaty of Mellifont**. Under the terms of the Treaty they were allowed to keep their land but had to allow English Sheriffs into Ulster to enforce the Treaty. By **1607**, fed up with this restriction on their power they left Ulster forever in what has become known as **The Flight of the Earls**.

The lands of the Earls were confiscated and prepared for a massive scheme of Plantation.

Rules of the Plantation;

King James I of England was determined to avoid the mistakes of the previous Plantations. Under the rules drawn up there were **three types of Planters**.

- **Undertakers** - English or Scottish Gentleman to receive estates of between 400 and 800 hectares at the cost of €6.00 per year to the King. The Undertaker had to build a Castle, Stone house or Bawn and they could only take English or Scottish tenants, which they had to bring with them from Britain.
- **Servitors** – Civil Servants or army officers to receive estates of between 400 and 800 hectares at the cost of €10.00 per year to the King. The Servitor had to build a Stone House or Bawn. They were allowed to take Irish tenants and this meant they had an easier time than the Undertakers.
- **Deserving Irish** – Irish men who had remained loyal to the Crown during the nine years war to receive estates of 400 hectares at the cost of €12.70 per year to the King. They were allowed to take Irish tenants also.

The first problem with the Plantation was that they could not persuade enough Planters to go to Ireland. As a result King James I forced 12 London Trade Guilds to form **The Honourable Irish Society**. These were given the County of Derry and allowed to rent the land out to tenants. They built two towns, Coleraine and Londonderry. Each guild then built a village such as Draperstown on their allotted land. Motivated by profit they rented the land to Irish tenants.

The Impact of the Plantation;

The Plantation transformed the face of Ulster especially in the following ways;

- **Land Ownership** – Almost all Irish landowners lost their land. The Planters became the new landowning class. They became very wealthy and enforced the law as Judges. They helped the British control Ulster until the 20 Century.
- **The Countryside** – The Planters cleared forests and drained the land. Farming for profit replaced the subsistence farming of the Irish. Wheat, Barley, Oats and Potatoes were grown for sale. New styles of housing of stone and slated roofs were introduced.
- **Towns** – The Government built 16 new towns in Ulster including Donegal, Dungannon and Enniskillen. Each town had a central square or Diamond. A network of roads was built to link the towns. The native Irish were forbidden to live in them.
- **Religion** – The Scottish settlers were Presbyterians while the English settlers were Anglican. This created a Protestant majority. This created high religious tension with the Catholics, which continues to this day.
- **Culture** – The Irish way of dress and living was banned by law. English language, music, dancing and fashions became more widely used as Gaelic culture faded away.

THE CROMWELLIAN PLANTATION 1652;

In 1641 England was involved in a Civil War between King Charles I and his Parliament, led by **Sir Oliver Cromwell**. This encouraged the native Irish to rebel against the Planters and recover their lost lands. The rebellion began in Ulster in 1641 and spread to the rest of the country. About 4,000 Protestants were massacred in the early days of the violence. However these figures were hugely exaggerated in England with many English believing that almost a million had been killed. This created a desire to avenge the deaths as soon as the civil war was over.

In January 1649 King Charles was executed by his Parliament and the English now turned their attention towards Ireland. On 15 August 1649 Cromwell's **New Model Army** landed in Ringsend and marched to Drogheda where the town refused to surrender. Cromwell massacred the whole town. When the same thing happened a few weeks later to the town of Wexford a clear message had been sent to other Irish towns. In rapid succession the Irish began to surrender and by May 1650 when Cromwell returned to England the country had been defeated.

The Process of the Plantation;

The plantation began with an **Act of Settlement**, which listed all of those who would have their lands confiscated. These were then ordered to go **“to Hell or to Connaught”**. Parliament then ordered over 30,000 soldiers who had surrendered to be deported from Ireland. Up to 50,000 widows and orphans were sold into slavery in the Caribbean and all Priests were executed.

Before any land could be resettled, a survey had to be carried out. **Sir William Petty** did this. His survey was called **The Down Survey**, simply because the results were written down.

33,000 soldiers were given land; however few of them wanted to become farmers in Ireland and most sold their land to their officers who amassed huge estates.

The Impact of the Plantation;

The Cromwellian Plantation did not bring a large influx of settlers into Ireland. Most of the new landowners used Irish people as workers and tenants. The lives of the ordinary people changed very little, they were simply paying their rent to a new landlord. This was not the case among the landowning classes. The Old Irish and the Old English families were almost wiped out. For the next two hundred years a new social class, English speaking and Protestant, called **the Protestant Ascendancy** controlled Ireland and the people who lived in it.