

Local Aspects of the Plantation of Ulster

BY CIARA MURPHY

In 1594 a Confederation of the two great northern Gaelic Chieftains, Hugh O'Neill and Hugh O'Donnell, took up arms in a bid to resist the imposition of English government into Ulster. Following a long and bitter struggle, the Nine Years War ended with the defeat of their forces at the Battle of Kinsale in 1603. This period known as the *Nine Years War* provided the immediate background to what is known as *The Plantation of Ulster*.

While Poyntzpass may not owe its existence to the Plantation of Ulster in 1610 the village and neighbouring Acton, owe their names, and much of their early written-history, to their association with Lieutenant Charles Poyntz. The 'pass' through the marshland here was of some military significance in wartime and a garrison was stationed here at various times to oversee movement between counties Down and Armagh. For a time during the Nine Years War, Charles Poyntz was in command of such a garrison. He was reputed to have acted heroically when "a few troops" of the English army he repulsed an attack by "a numerous body of Tyrone's soldiers." His behaviour on this

occasion stood him in good stead and assured him of favourable consideration when the lands of O'Neill's local henchmen, the O'Hanlons, were later seized to be 'planted' by colonists, loyal to the crown of James 1.

Mid and South Armagh's role in the Plantation receives a minimum of description in the vast majority of books about the removal of the native Irish and their subsequent replacement with English and Scottish settlers in James 1's reign. Instead, events and settlements in Derry, Coleraine, Donegal and Antrim form the bulk of the narratives. Yet it is one of the most significant events in this area in the past six hundred years.

This map shows 'the Pale' stretching from Dundalk down the east coast to the south of Dublin, an area in which English law and social habits predominated. The rest of Ireland was still under the Irish legal system, the Brehon Laws – a social, economic and religious way of doing things, "imposing a powerful obstacle to the spread of English law...representing an intuitive, archaic and subtle pattern of life." according to Roy Foster (*Modern Ireland 1600-1872*).

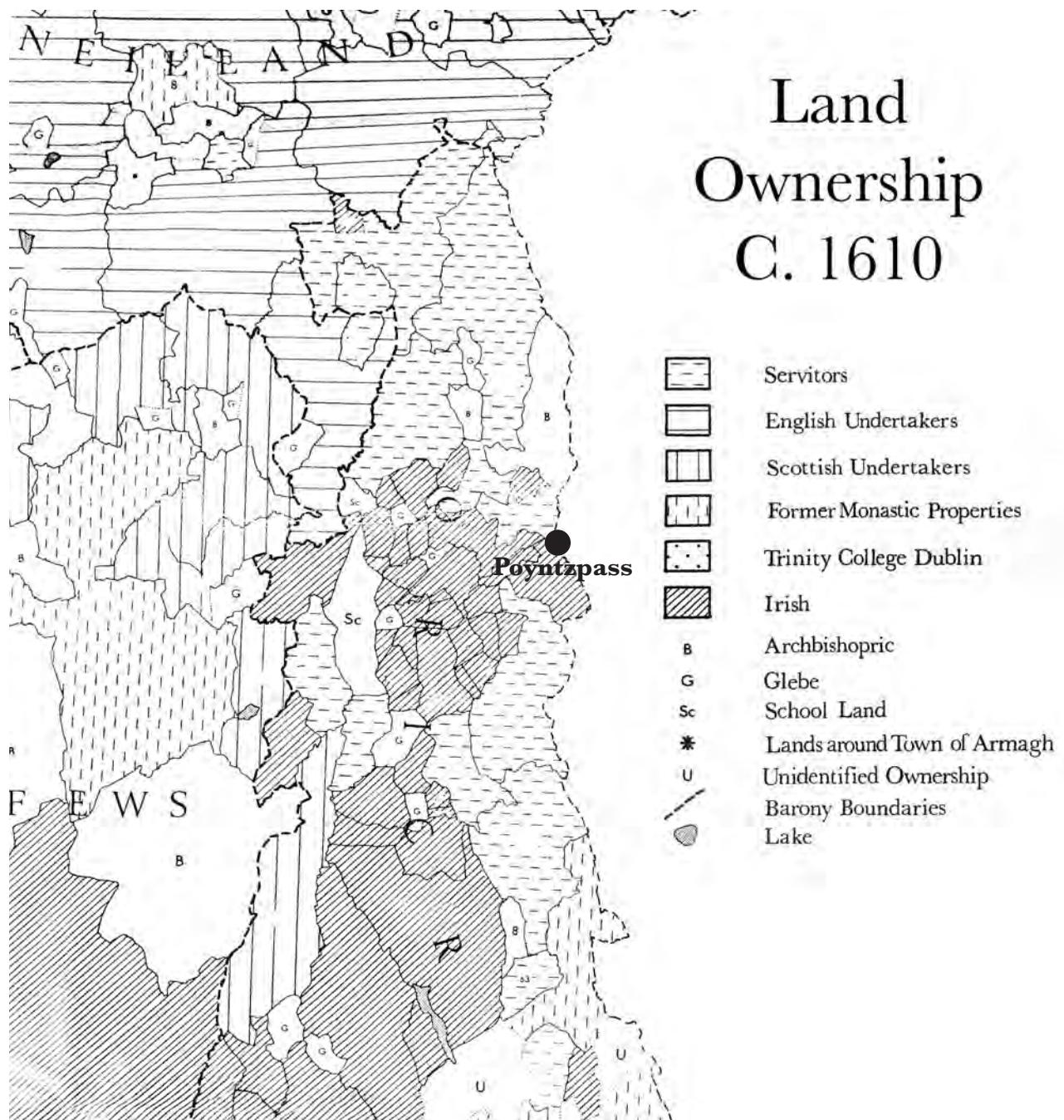
An example of an area where the old order prevailed was the Barony of Orior, ruled by the O'Hanlon's clan under the Lordship of O'Neill. O'Hanlon and Magennis over in Iveagh were septs of the powerful O'Neill chieftom. The other great Ulster clan, the O'Donnell's were overlords of a territory including Donegal, Fermanagh and Derry, and extending into some parts of mid-Ulster.

In 1594 Hugh O'Neill was chief of the O'Neill clan. He was in great favour with Sir Henry Sidney at the court of Queen Elizabeth I and also with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. He had become 'Earl of Tyrone' in 1590. (The entrenchment where some of O'Neill's troops were stationed locally during the Nine Years War is still known as *Tyrone's Ditches*).

The O'Hanlon's three main strongholds in Orior were at Loughgilly, Mullaghglass and Ballymore Castle, Tandragee. The map of the O'Hanlon lands shows them stretching from Mullabrack and Ballymore to the River Blackwater, and parts of the barony of O'Neilland in North Armagh.

There was a pecking-order among the clans. While O'Neill was lord over O'Hanlon, O'Hanlon in turn was lord over quite a few sub-septs, or smaller clans. Some of the clans under the O'Hanlons would have been O'Heaney, McCann, Collum, and McMurphy. O'Heaneys were keepers of the Bell of Ballinabeck, which is now in the National Museum in Dublin, and which would probably have been used for ceremonial purposes, for example, at the installing of new O'Hanlon chieftains.





Following the defeat at Kinsale, the terms of surrender granted to the rebels at the Treaty of Mellifont were quite generous, for O'Neill and O'Donnell were allowed to retain their lands. The principal conditions were that lands formerly contested by feudal right and Brehon Law were now to be held under English law; the Protestant religion was to be imposed on Ulster and the English language used.

Although the war was officially over, the peace was at best uneasy. Times were very unsettled and there was resentment on both sides. The vanquished resented the loss of their traditional ways and those who had fought against O'Neill and O'Donnell were disappointed that they hadn't been rewarded and that O'Neill and O'Donnell were allowed to keep nearly all their lands.

The Flight of the Earls.

Then in 1607, these two great Northern chieftains abruptly left for the continent from Rathmullan on the shores of Lough Swilly, supposedly to seek Spain for further military assistance from another attack on the English in Ireland. This event is known as 'The Flight of the Earls'.

Their departure meant that their lands were forfeited to the King and half a million acres was now up for grabs. Shortly thereafter, Deputy Lord Chichester wrote to James 1, "*If His Majesty will, during their absence assume the countries into his possession, divide the lands among the inhabitants, and bestow the rest upon servitors and men of worth here, and withal, bring in colonies of civil people of England and Scotland, the country will ever after be happily settled.*"

insurgents and in particular closing a potential back-door from the fear of the might of Catholic Spain. This was always in the mind of the English monarchy, trying to stop Spain from moving towards Ireland. Another reason, of course, was to reward those who had fought on the side of the crown, and against O'Neill and O'Donnell.

Local Planters

After the plans for the plantation had been finalised in approximately 1610, there were to be three classes of grantees who would benefit from the handout of new land. They went under the titles of Undertakers, Servitors and Native Irish freeholders:

Undertakers - those were usually English and Scottish gentry, who undertook to *plant* certain areas with settlers from England and Scotland. **Servitors** - these were individuals who had been of service to the Crown during the War, and who were rewarded with grants of land. **Native Irish freeholders** - these were trusted Irish who had not been involved in the conflict during the Nine Years' War.

The Undertakers were given grants of from one thousand to two thousand acres; they were to build, within three years, a stone house and a bawn. A bawn was a defended courtyard with walls usually built of stone, but sometimes of brick, clay, timber and sod. Bawns protected the house, the family and property of the plantation's principal landlords who were allowed to plant the land with exclusively English or Scottish settlers and were expected to introduce twenty four able-bodied men per one thousand acres granted.

English and Scottish Undertakers received almost the same number of acres, being eighty one and a half thousand and eighty one thousand respectively in Ulster, but the English received their grants in the better, more fertile land. In County Armagh, English Undertakers received land mostly in the north of the county, whereas the Scots got land in the more rugged Fewes area to the south.

The Servitors were to receive similar portions of land as the Undertakers with the following differences: their land could be leased to either British or Irish. There was no requirement to plant.

The English undertaker closest to the area of Poyntzpass/Acton region as we know it today, was Sir Oliver St. John, Master of the Ordnance in the government, who received fifteen hundred acres which included the O'Hanlon ancestral seat in Ballymore and Tandragee Castle. St John was the second son of Nicholas St John, a Wiltshire gentleman. He later became Lord Grandison and succeeded Sir Arthur Chichester as Lord Deputy. Other undertakers in the vicinity were Henry Acheson (Atkinson), a Scottish undertaker, who received a thousand acres around Mullabrack, while lands around Loughgall and Richhill went to an English undertaker, Francis Sachervell.

The local English servitors were Lieutenant Charles Poyntz and Sir Garret Moore. Charles Poyntz received two hundred acres in the townland of Brannock. This was in repayment for his military service in the area. He was the eldest son of Sir Charles Poyntz of Iron Acton in Gloucestershire. Sir Garret Moore, an army Captain in the Nine Years War, received one thousand acres in Drumbanagher. He was the son of Sir Edward Moore of

Mellifont and incidentally was the person who escorted Sir Hugh O'Neill to Mellifont to sign the treaty there in 1603.

The native Irish grantees were to observe the same conditions as the servitors, with the following exceptions: servitors and native Irish were to receive their grants within the same baronies.

One of the native Irish grantees who received land around what is present-day Poyntzpass was Turlogh Groom O'Hanlon, who received one hundred and forty acres primarily in the 'balliboes' of Aghantaraghan (Aghantaraghan) and Nederny (Federnagh). A "balliboe" is defined as the area of the grazing of a cow. Even bearing in mind that the grass probably wasn't particularly thick, the area would be ridiculously large. Roy Foster in *Modern Ireland, 1600 -1972* pertinently writes:

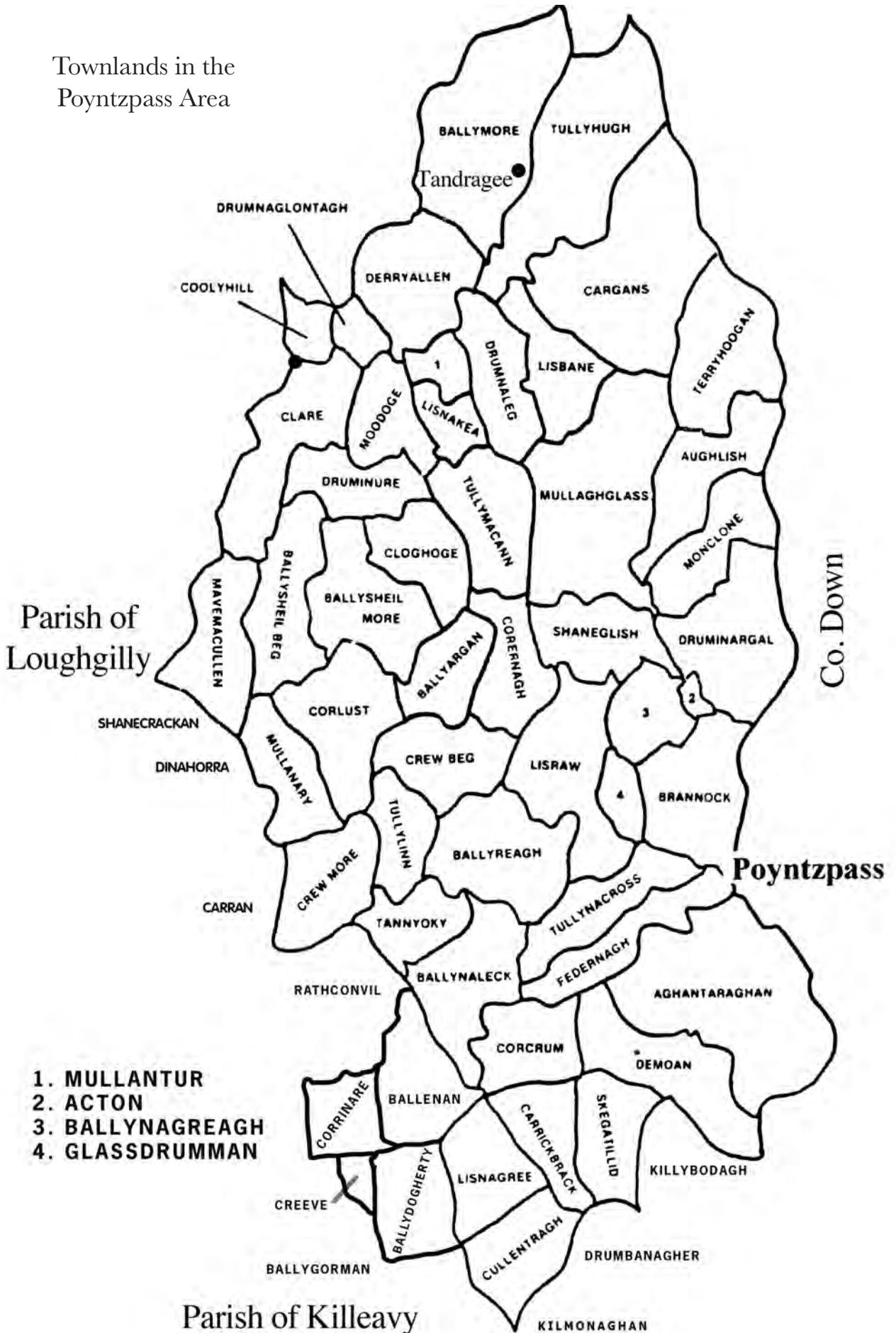
Much of the initial reason for the unmanageably large grants had to do with the classic Anglo-Irish difficulty of semantic misunderstanding. The Irish land grant unit of a 'balliboe' was reckoned in terms of value or productivity, not as a fixed unit of acreage. English surveyors, however, decided to work on the ludicrous underestimate that it averaged sixty acres. Sixteen 'balliboes' made up a 'ballybetagh' the traditional area of a sept's authority; by their arithmetic the commissioners decided that a 'ballybetagh' would equal the 1,000 acre unit called for by plantation theorists.....one outcome was that many holdings, reckoned in terms of 'balliboes' and 'ballybetaghs' turned out to be so large that the undertakers relied upon natives staying on.

As well as Turlough O'Hanlon in Aghantaraghan, and (today's) Federnagh; Shane McShane O'Hanlon, one hundred acres in Ederny (Federnagh); Shane McOige O'Hanlon, was granted one hundred acres in Ballyyennon (Ballennon); Phelim and Brian O'Hanlon, sons of Oighe Og, who had fled to Sweden, were granted two hundred acres in Ballinaleck, Tanniokey and Raconnell (Rathconville); Ruari McFedera O'Hanlon - one hundred and twenty acres in Corlusty (Corlust); Shane Og McShane Roe O'Hanlon, one hundred and twenty acres in Corcrum; Carberry McCann, three hundred and sixty acres in Ballytullynacross (Tullinacross), Reehan(?), Ballycullen (?); Donal McCann, eighty acres in Corinare; Patrick McManus O'Hanlon and Ardlie Moore O'McCrue, one hundred and twenty acres in Rathconville and Creevagh(?); McFadragh O'Hanlon - sixty acres in Creenaghmore (possibly Cremore); Con McTurlough - three hundred and sixty acres in Ballydougherty, Leis and Skegatilda; Brian McPhelim Roe McDonnell, Hugh McCarberry O'Neill and Shane McTurlough O'Neill - two hundred and forty acres in Carrickbrack, Rathcarberry, Lisnalea and Drumnabeg(?); Phelim O'McDonnell - one hundred acres in Cullentragh and Loughlin O'Hagen, one hundred and twenty acres in Lisnagree. (There are still O'Hagans in the townland).

The Lord Deputy and part-author of the Plantation, Sir Arthur Chichester-Clarke, granted the elderly Sir Oigie O'Hanlon Senior, eighty pounds a year for the dispossession of most of his lands in Orior. Tandragee Castle would now house Oliver St John.

The grant to Oliver St. John included the castle at Tandragee, otherwise Ballymore, and Tullyhugh, one balliboe each; Cargans, two ballyboes; Mullaghliss, Taunatee, Taunarock, Creenabeg, Lisreagh, one ballyboe each, in all fifteen hundred acres.

Townlands in the Poyntzpass Area



How did the plantation progress?

King James took a close personal interest in the progress of the plantation. He wanted to see how things were going, to see if people had done what they were supposed to do. He appointed Sir George Carew in 1611 to oversee this and report back to him.

As it turns out, the plantation did not progress very well. In 1611, Sir George Carew found that a few had begun work, many simply deigned a glance at their lands, and many had not taken the trouble to do even this.

Charles Poyntz, however, was one of those who had gone earnestly to work. In 1611, Carew wrote:

“Lieutenant Poyntz hath two hundred acres called Curriator. Upon these there is a bawn of eighty square feet, the lower part thereof is of stone and clay, with a house in it, but he, not liking the seat, hath begun a bawn of one hundred feet square with three flankers and a large house, which shall be of brick and lime. Work is now in place with workmen labouring very hard, and undertaken to be finished in August.”

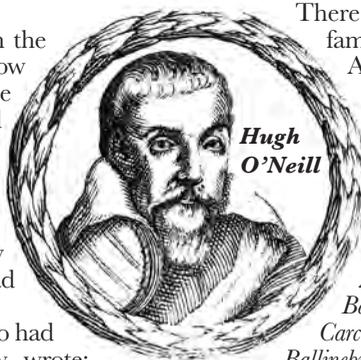
In 1611, Carew found that Garrett Moore in Drumbanagher had not made as much progress as Charles Poyntz, but he had provided stone and timber for building: *“Sir Garrett (or Gerald) Moore hath one thousand acres called Ballemonehan, ... the lands called Kilnebodagh, Denone, Drombanchorr, Liscomon, one balliboe each; Kilrie, one and a half balliboe; Knockduffe otherwise Kilmanaghan, Ballinesearsagh and, Cavan-Icallon, one balliboe each. in all 1,000 acres. The premises are created the manor of Knockduff.”*

Lieutenant (Poyns) Charles Poyntz’s grant of two hundred acres in the townland of Brannock was one of the smallest grants locally. Both Acton and Poyntzpass owe their names to him. It is evident however that Lieutenant Poyntz was upwardly mobile. In 1613, he was made High Sheriff of County Armagh and was a Burgess of the Borough of Newry. In 1620, he secured the lease of six townlands north of Acton from the Archbishop of Armagh, including Ballyargan and Drumminargle

From the list of native Irish grantees it can be seen that “deserving” natives received possession of lots of a few hundred acres. But as Roy Foster writes, *“this was no compensation for a dislocation that was as much psychological as geographical, involving as it did transplantation and limitation of tenure.”* In other words land which had belonged to the clans and families of those named above for centuries was now granted on a kind of ‘good behaviour’ tenure.

In 1618 James I ordered a survey from Capt. Nicholas Pynnar to discover exactly how far the undertakers had performed their obligations. Pynnar’s Survey was one of the most comprehensive and famous surveys done of the Plantation. From Pynnar’s survey we learn that Charles Poyntz had completed his house at Acton and he had acquired much larger grants of land in the vicinity; Sir Garrett Moore had erected a bawn of lime and stone near one hundred feet square with two flankers, in one of which there is a small house built, being inhabited by an Irishman.

There was a further study in 1622 by Sir Dudley Digges, Nathaniel Riche and Lord Caulfield, entitled *“Divers Reports Concerning Ye State of Ye Kingdom of Ireland upon the View of Certain Commissioners Sent by His Majesty, King James, in 1622”*. From this we learn that Charles Poyntz had been busy: *“Lieutenant Poyntz- he hath an orchard, gardens and yardens, back sides enclosed with a ditch quickset besides a bawn, and a stable and hath provided materials to build a bawn of brick and hath eight English families that dwell in houses in the form a village near joining the fair mansion house.”*



Hugh O'Neill

There is no record as to where the eight English families came from but as the village was named Acton after Charles Poyntz’s home it is probable that they came from Gloucestershire.

Just how far Poyntz had come from his original grant of 200 acres is illustrated by the 1622 survey which states that, *“Charles Poyntz is possessed by letters patent of the following lands at County Armagh, viz. Brenock, one balliboe; 2 partes of a balliboe called Lysray; one balliboe called Ballageeth or Lissegreeth, Ballreeth, Tullynecrossy, Carcrume, Carneagh, the moitie of Rathconvale, Ballinebrokie, Dromensouth, Drewmore, Tollylime, and Arthnarara and the sixth part of Neddernagh. There belong to the said towne called Brenocke these parcels of land following, viz. Mullockbrenock, with the hill of Brenock, Brocarmande, Larkyne, Brockermore and the moitie of Cormocker. ... All these lands were created into the manor of Acton.”*

In 1621, Garrett Moore was created Viscount Drogheda. The 1622 survey recorded that *“he hath erected a good strong house of stone, twenty foot square, three stories high, in which Townlea, an Englishman, continually resides. The gates of his bawn are fit to be made stronger.”*

The concern about the gate of Moore’s bawn is an indication of the unease of the planters and reflects the unsettled state of the country was at the time. The settlers were still insecure about their place. Outrages were committed against property and animals, and livestock had to be brought inside the bawn at night just to keep them safe. The political situation was volatile.

In 1630 the Lords Justices of Ireland conferred a knighthood on Charles Poyntz. In 1630 also a ‘Muster Roll’ – a census of men and weapons available in the event of an uprising – was conducted. This again stressed that the political situation at the time was very unsettled. The results locally were not comforting.

The Muster Roll recorded that, *“Sir Charles Poyntz, Knight, with his British tenants residing on his native land of five hundred acres”, had men-in-arms as follows:*

“Wilson John Brown – sword only; Walter Scott – sword only; Thomas – sword only; William Wilson – sword only; John Stuart – pike only; James Stuart – pike only; William Irwin – calliver only (calliver or culver being a type of blunderbuss); Christopher Irwin – calliver only; Archibald Elliott – sword only; Richard Brown – sword only; Owen Powell – sword only”

The following had no arms: *John Smith, John Irwin, John Thompson, William Dodd, John Irwin the younger, Robert Stevenson, James Anderson, Robert Fryer, Roger Wilkinson, John Richardson, Archibald Richards, Christopher Wilson, John Taylor, Richard Cooke, George Vincent, William Elliott, Roger Williamson.*

Of twenty eight named, there were seven with swords, two with pikes, two with callivers, and seventeen men had no arms at all. So they were extremely ill-prepared if there was to be an uprising or trouble of any description.

Twenty years after the plantation, Ulster was still far from settled. The Muster Roll showed the insecurity and anxiety the settlers were feeling and that while they feared an uprising they were ill-prepared for any trouble. The dispossessed native Irish were still seething with resentment. Some sort of major trouble seemed inevitable, given the feeling of the time. This anxiety was well-founded for the feared uprising did take place in 1641. That would be a story for another day....