Mid-Ulster Visit
22nd and 23rd March 2019

This was the second visit to Mid Ulster and where history Groups from Mid Ulster and Donegal come together to take part in a study visit to County Tyrone to explore sites linked to the O’Neill and clans of ancient Ulster.

The two day programme included visits to Castles at Caledon and Benburb as ancient sites of the O’Neill and O’Donnell Clans.

The programme is an opportunity for joint working between Mid Ulster District Council and Donegal County Council though 3 study visits in each area to explore the shared heritage which led to the ‘flight’ of the Earls which took place from Rathmullan, Co Donegal; with the ‘Earls’, themselves coming from both Donegal and Dungannon along with the subsequent Plantation of Ulster which had a huge significance in the history and development of the areas.

The next visit will take place in Donegal in May 2019 with visits to Burt Castle and Grianán of Aileach.
The ruins of Castle Caulfield, built by Sir Toby Caulfield between 1611 and 1619 are in the village. The gatehouse has murder-holes and the Caulfield arms. The village came into being during the Plantation of Ulster in an area formerly known as Ballydonnelly. Formerly part of the O’Donnghaile clan’s territory, it was “undertaken” by English settlers. Local historian Jonathan Gray from Killeeshill & Clonaneese Historical Society provided an overview of the castle. The Castle to which the name refers was in the main square and was built to protect the local population from Irish attacks. It was built by Toby Caulfield, Viscount Charlemont. The remains of George Walker are buried within the local parish church.
Benburb Castle

The group then visited Benburb Castle led by local historian James Kane from O’Neill Country and Historical Society who explained that a plantation bawn was built in 1611 by Sir Richard Wingfield, on the site of an O’Neill strong point on a bend in the Blackwater River thought to have been constructed as early as the 15th century. It is an irregular four-sided bawn with the entrance in the north wall. There are large rectangular flanking towers at the north-east and north-west corners and a smaller round tower at the south-east corner. It is built on a limestone cliff overlooking the River Blackwater, the border between County Tyrone and County Armagh.

Clonfeacle Parish Church of St. Patrick - Benburb

St Patrick’s Church is one of the oldest plantation churches with one of the oldest preserved stained-glass windows. The church stands at the gates of, but pre-dates, Benburb Manor, home of Bruce family. Single cell. C17th nave. C19th tower. Mullioned-and-transformed triple round-headed lancets with square hood-moulds. The Gothic style church consists of rendered nave, 4 bays long with stepped buttresses and mullioned windows. Pointed arch tracery window at East gable. South wall rendered with modern vestry. The church is fronted by square stone bell tower with crenulation and corner buttresses. Rounded arch door with carved keystone and hood-mould.
The final visit was to Caledon village which was originally the old settlement of Kinard was burned in 1608 by the forces of Sir Cahir O’Doherty during O’Doherty’s Rebellion. Sir Henry Óg O’Neill, the main local landowner, was killed by the rebels. The group were hosted by Caledon Regeneration Project in the old Courthouse welcomed by William Beattie where local historians Anthony and Dominic provided a talk with a display of artefacts they found around the crannog along the river.
Speakers

Dr. William Roulston

On Saturday 23 March 2019 the group heard a lecture from Dr William Roulston, Research Director of the Ulster Historical Foundation. He holds a PhD in Archaeology from Queen’s University Belfast. Dr Roulston spoke on the Plantation in Donegal and Tyrone with a focus on urbanisation, the demographics of the new settlers, the houses, industrial activity and the interaction with the Gaelic population. Dr William Roulston is a Member of Council of both the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland and the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society, and is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

He has written a number of books, including Fermanagh: History and Society (edited with Eileen Murphy, Dublin, 2004), Researching Scots-Irish Ancestors (Belfast, 2005), Restoration Strabane, 1660-1714 (Dublin, 2007), Three centuries of life in a Tyrone parish: a history of Donagheady from 1600 to 1900 (Strabane, 2010) and Abercorn: The Hamiltons of Barons Court (Belfast, 2014).
Dr. Colm Donnelly

Dr Colm Donnelly, Senior Research Fellow at the School of Natural and Built Environment is the facilitator of the 6 study visits during the term of the project to guide the groups from Donegal and Mid Ulster through the shared heritage of the O'Neill and clans of Ancient Ulster.

He provided an outline on a range of online resources available for research.

Dr Donnelly is an historical archaeologist who specialises in Medieval and 17th-century buildings, and has a particular interest in tower houses, the subject of his doctoral research. A founding member of the Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group (IPMAG) in 1999, he is also an experienced field archaeologist and he has directed excavations at a range of sites including Sir Toby Caulfield’s early 17th-century manor-house at Castlecaulfield, County Tyrone (2011), and the O'Neill tower house and Sir Arthur Chichester’s fort on Castle Hill, Dungannon, County Tyrone (2007).

Workshops

Members of both the Mid Ulster and Donegal Forum worked in groups to plan Heritage weekends to be held in each Council area. The Heritage weekends are 1 – 2 day events which are based around an existing heritage event open to the public. Events were proposed for Innishowen and South Donegal area as well as an event for Mid Ulster based around Tullyhogue.
About the programme

The purpose of the programme is the provision of the research, management and facilitation of a bespoke programme that will engage and develop sustained linkages through shared heritage between Mid Ulster District Council and Donegal County Council and groups within these areas.

The shared heritage will focus on The O'Neill and clans of Ancient Ulster with significance for Mid Ulster and Donegal. The programme presents an opportunity for joint working between both Councils and local interest groups. The programme is not only focused on bringing people together from across the border but also people from different community and religious backgrounds; with the aim of seeking to make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society and developing sustainable cross border contacts.

This project is supported by the European Union’s PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

The timeline for the delivery of the Programme is to commence June 2018 and complete May 2020.

Activities
1. Research into heritage of the O'Neill and clans
2. Development of a booklet and interactive app
3. Facilitation/ connection of local interest groups in Mid Ulster & Donegal
4. Heritage Weekends: 2 in Mid Ulster 2 in Donegal
5. Study Visits and workshops: 3 Mid Ulster Visits 3 Donegal Visits

Participants

Donegal History Forum Members
Ardara GAP Heritage + History Group
Ballybofey and Stranorlat historical society
The Colgan Heritage Group
Cineal Eoghain Inishowen
Cooley Cross Heritage Group
Craobhin an Teamann (Termon)
Culdaff and Ooncha Heritage Group
Donegal GAP Heritage and History Group
Donegal Heritage
Fahan Heritage Group
Lands of Eogain Group
Leitir Corrn Mill, Kilcar
McGinley Clan of Donegal
Newtowncunningham & District Historical Society
Oireas
Rathmullan Historical Society
Raymochy Historical Society
Sliaabh Sneachta Centre
Ulster Local History Trust (UHT) Donegal Historical Society
West Inishowen Historical Society

Mid Ulster History Forum Members
Aughnacloy and Truagh
Ancient Clan O'Neill
Broughderg Groups/ cookstown
Cineal Eoghain
Caledon Regeneration Project
Clans of Ulster
Clogher Historical Society
Donaghmore History Group
Desertcreate Church of Ireland
Eglish Historical Society
Killeshial and Clonanesse
O'Neil Country Historical Society
Stewartstown and District Local History Society

The programme is open to all groups that have an interest in participating throughout the duration of the Peace IV Cross Border Heritage Programme between Mid Ulster District Council and Donegal County Council

The aim of engaging groups of interest in both areas is to identify O'Neill and Ancient Clans heritage linkages, gather local information and knowledge and develop sustained community linkages between Donegal and Mid Ulster.