

Northern aye reland

Everybody kens a
wee bit o' Ulster-Scots

Belfast has a rich Ulster-Scots heritage which stretches back over 400 years. For centuries, the town's population was largely Ulster-Scots, both in identity and speech; and the impact of this can be seen today in the Ulster-Scots place names that can be found all over the city.



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Ulster-Scots Place Names of Belfast

Bilfawst

kirks
burns
braes
& loanens

Belfast

Northern
aye reland

Everybody kens a
wee bit o' Ulster-Scots

POOR RABBIN'S OLLMINICK

FOR THE

TOWN O' BILFAWST:

CONTAINING

VARRIOUS DIFFERENT THINGS WHICH IVERY PARSON
OUGHT T'BE ACQUENTIT WITH.

1861;

WROTE DOWN, PRENTET, AN' PUT OUT, JIST THE WAY THE PEOPLE
SPAKES.

BY BILLY M'CART,

Of the County Down Side, that uset to be; but now of the Entherim Road,
toast the Cave Hill.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

BELFAST:

JOHN HENDERSON, BOOKSELLER, 13, CASTLE-PLACE.

London: JOHN RUSSELL SMITH, Soho-Square.

Edinburgh:—J. P. NIMMO, Glasgow:—GRIFFIN & Co.

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Ulster's Three Cultures

Ulster is a special place, a place apart. It has a cultural landscape that is unique in the British Isles, unlike either Britain or the rest of Ireland. This has come about through centuries of interaction between three distinct peoples, the Irish, the Scots and the English, who have been the principal elements of our community since the early 1600s.

This diversity can be seen in all sorts of ways, from the main churches we attend, to our musical traditions, our traditional dances and the sports that we play, which have their origins in England, Scotland and Ireland. It can even be seen in the symbols that we use to represent ourselves, from the shamrock, rose and thistle to the crosses of St Andrew, St George and St Patrick.

One of the greatest examples of our unique cultural wealth is our linguistic diversity. Everyone in Ulster speaks English, but we also have two cherished minority languages, Irish and Ulster-Scots, which people all over the Province are fighting to preserve and promote.

Ulster's triple-blended culture has been regularly depicted as a combination of Irish shamrock, Scottish thistle and English rose. This example is a mosaic at the Ulster Reform Club in Belfast's Royal Avenue.





'The Pass Loning' or 'Pass Loanen' shown on this 1791 map is today the Donegall Pass. 'Loanen' is the Scots language word for 'lane'.
Courtesy Linen Hall Library.

The Town of Belfast

Although Belfast was founded by an Englishman, Sir Arthur Chichester, in 1603, it soon became a magnet for lowland Scots, who made the short journey across the North Channel in search of economic opportunity and religious freedom.

By the 1630s, the number of English and Scots in the town was roughly equal, but by 1700, after a second large wave of Scottish migration in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, the town was overwhelmingly Scottish.

At the end of the 18th century, Belfast was still a small town, with a population of around 19,000, but it was essentially a Scottish and Presbyterian town. When **Amyas Griffith** arrived from Dublin in 1780 as Surveyor of Excise, he noted that

"the common people speak broad Scotch, and the better sort differ vastly from us, both in accent and language."

When the French aristocrat, **Le Chevalier de la Tochnaye** visited Ireland in 1797 he said,

"Belfast has almost entirely the look of a Scotch town and the character of the inhabitants has considerable resemblance to that of the people of Glasgow. The way of speaking is much more Scotch than Irish."

The Growth of Belfast

During the 19th century, Belfast expanded rapidly. In just forty years the population increased from 19,000 to 70,000 and this was largely as the result of industrialisation. William Ritchie had come over from Ayrshire in 1791 to establish what would become the Belfast shipbuilding industry; and many mills and other factories were springing up.

As the town expanded northwards, people flooded in from adjacent areas of county Antrim, which were Ulster-Scots settled and Scots speaking. The **Ordnance Survey Memoirs**, compiled in the 1830s, recorded of the people of the neighbouring parish of **Mallusk** that their

"dialect, accent and customs are strictly Scottish".

In nearby **Carnmoney**, it was noted that

"their idioms and saws [sayings] are strictly Scottish".

It was from these 'strictly' Ulster-Scots speaking areas that much of the population of North Belfast came.

Across the Lagan, the parish of **Knockbreda** covered what is now east Belfast, but was then largely open space and fields. Here the Ordnance Survey Memoirs reported that

"the inhabitants of this part of Ireland are half Scotch in their language and manners."

Street after street of new houses was built to accommodate the workers in the factories and those who came from rural areas of Antrim and Down brought with them the Ulster-Scots language that they had spoken since childhood.



1840s Belfast
viewed from Knockbreda

Ulster-Scots Place Names in Belfast

The names the Ulster-Scots of Belfast gave to features in the landscape, or to their homes or to streets that they built, have left a legacy that bears witness to the strong Scottish character of the city.

In North Belfast, on the slopes of the Cave Hill, **brae** (hillside) appears prominently, while in East Belfast, on the shore of the Lagan and Belfast Lough, **strand** (beach) provides many names. There are **burns** (small streams) all over the city, including Purdysburn, Minnowburn and Wedderburn in South Belfast. The **Knock** (prominent hill) in East Belfast also provided many street names.

Big houses were often named for a nearby geographical feature or an association with Scotland. These included **Glencairn** (after the Cunningham seat in Dumfriesshire) and **Maryburn** in West Belfast and **Strathearn** and **Netherleigh** in East Belfast. In turn they influenced the names of nearby streets.

Belfast also has over one hundred streets which are named after places in Scotland, many containing Scots language elements, including **Braemar**, **Langholm**, **Lochinver**, **Merkland**, **Selkirk**, and **Stratheden**.

Many more Ulster-Scots place names, no longer reflected in official street names, also survive in the historical record or in the memory of older Belfast people.

Ulster-Scots place name terms and definitions

Bracken - large fern

Brae - brow of a hill / hillside

Burn - stream

Loney - lane

Cairn - pyramid of stones

Wynd - narrow lane or alley

Water - large stream

Knowe - hillock

Flush - boggy ground

Forth - fort, fortress

Holm - small grassy island

Kirk - church

Knock - hill

Lang - long

Loch - lake

Loop - bend or wind in a river

Merk - old Scots unit of money

Moss - marsh, bog

Mote - mound of earth

Nether - low

Rodden - small road / rowan

Strand - beach, shore

Strath - broad river valley

Wedder - castrated sheep

Whin - gorse



This *Guide to Scots origins of place names in Britain* (published by Ordnance Survey, 2004) includes a glossary of hundreds of Scots language words. It is available online as a free PDF download.

Bracken Hill Avenue
Bracken Hill Close
Bracken Hill Mews
Bracken Hill View
Brae Hill Crescent
Brae Hill Link
Brae Hill Parade
Brae Hill Park
Brae Hill Road
Brae Hill Way
Braemar Street
Braeside Grove
Burnside Avenue
Burnside Park
Burntollet Way
Buttermilk Loney
Cairnburn Avenue
Cairnburn Crescent
Cairnburn Dell
Cairnburn Drive
Cairnburn Gardens
Cairnburn Grange
Cairnburn Park
Cairnburn Road
Cairndale
Cairnmartin Road

Cairns, The
Cairns Street
Carnbrae Avenue
Church Wynd
Commons Brae
Connswater Grove
Connswater Link
Connswater Mews
Connswater Street
Duncairn Avenue
Duncairn Gardens
Duncairn Parade
Fairyknowe Drive
Fairyknowe Gardens
Fairyknowe Park
Flush Drive
Flush Gardens
Flush Green
Flush Park
Flush Road
Forthbrook Court
Forth Park
Forthbrook Court
Forth Park
Forthriver Close
Forthriver Crescent

Forthriver Dale
Forthriver Drive
Forthriver Green
Forthriver Link
Forthriver Parade
Forthriver Park
Forthriver Pass
Forthriver Road
Forthriver Way
Glenburn Park
Glencairn Crescent
Glencairn Pass
Glencairn Road
Glencairn Street
Glencairn Walk
Glencairn Way
Glenholm Avenue
Glenholm Crescent
Glenholm Park
Highburn Crescent
Highburn Gardens
Highcairn Drive
Hillburn Park
Holmdene Gardens
King's Brae
Kirk Crescent

Kirk Street
Knockbracken Park
Knockbreada Drive
Knockbreda Gardens
Knockbreda Park
Knockbreda Park Mews
Knockbreda Road
Knockburn Park
Knockcastle Park
Knockdarragh Park
Knockdene Park
Knockdene Park North
Knockdene Park South
Knockdhu Park
Knock Eden Crescent
Knock Eden Drive
Knock Eden Grove
Knock Eden Parade
Knock Eden Park
Knock Green
Knock Grove
Knockhill Park
Knockland Park
Knock Link
Knocklofty Court
Knocklofty Park

Knockmarloch Park
Knockmount Gardens
Knockmount Park
Knocknagoney Avenue
Knocknagoney Dale
Knocknagoney Drive
Knocknagoney Gardens
Knocknagoney Green
Knocknagoney Grove
Knocknagoney Park
Knocknagoney Road
Knocknagoney Way
Knock Road
Knocktern Gardens
Knockvale Grove
Knockvale Park
Knock Way
Knockwood Crescent
Knockwood Drive
Knockwood Grove
Knockwood Park
Langholm Row
Lisburn Avenue
Lisburn Road
Lochinver Drive
Loopland Crescent

Loopland Drive
Loopland Gardens
Loopland Grove
Loopland Parade
Loopland Park
Loopland Road
Merkland Place
Merkland Street
Milewater Road
Milewater Street
Minnowburn Drive
Minnowburn Gardens
Minnowburn Mews
Minnowburn Terrace
Mossvale Street
Motelands
Mountain Loney
(Upper Whiterock Road)
Netherleigh Mews
Netherleigh Park
Purdysburn Hill
Purdysburn Road
Purdysburn Village
Roddens Crescent
Roddens Gardens
Roddens Park

Scotch Row
Selkirk Row
Stoneycairn Court
Strand Close
Strand Court
Strand Mews
Strand Walk
Strandburn Court
Strandburn Crescent
Strandburn Drive
Strandburn Gardens
Strandburn Parade
Strandburn Park
Strandburn Street
Strandview Street
Strathearn Mews
Strathearn Park
Stratheden Street
Strathmore Park
Strathmore Park North
Strathmore Park South
Strathroy Park
Tillysburn Drive
Tillysburn Grove
Tillysburn Park
Upper Knockbreda Road

Wedderburn Avenue
Wedderburn Gardens
Whincroft Road
Whincroft Way
Whinny Heights
Whinny Hill Drive
White Brae
Willowholme Crescent
Willowholme Drive
Willowholme Parade
Willowholme Street
Woodburn Drive
Woodburn Street

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