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Commemoration and Scottish emigration: graveyard memorials, texts, and symbols in Ulster, North America and Australia

Summary

The identities emphasised by 17th-century Scots in Ulster on their burial monuments will be investigated. These will be compared with those of 18th-20th-century Ulster Scots in North America and Australia. Monuments are family-commissioned public statements, set within a physical setting of memorials to others of the same and different traditions. The importance given to Scottish or Ulster Scottish textual references, symbols or styles of burial monument can identify remembering; assimilation to local traditions suggests forgetting. A publicly accessible web site will disseminate results.

Description

The research forms a chain of chronologically and geographically distinct questions concerning the evolution of identity of Scots in Ulster and Ulster Scots in North America and Australia, as revealed through burial monuments.

In Ulster, the following questions will be posed:

- In what ways did the 17th-century Scots in Ulster mark their ethnic and religious distinctiveness in monument type, symbolism and text?
- To what extent were these merely transfers from Scotland, and how far were new forms created for the new context?
- How and why did styles change over time (18th-20th centuries), and to what extent was there influence from the native Irish Catholic commemorative traditions?

Similar questions will also be asked in North American and Australian case studies with documented Ulster Scots settlement; scoping work suggests that assimilation and change was apparently greater there, and the processes and the reasons for this will be explored. Movement of monuments, and the erection of memorials in homeland sites by descendants, will also be identified.

Data sets will be collected for 17th-century, 18th-century, and 19th/20th-century memorials of those with Scots ancestry in Ulster to define how their identities were/are expressed. The American case studies will be drawn from 18th-century Ulster Scots memorials in Steele Creek, North Carolina and South-

Central Pennsylvania, and the Australian examples will be from 19th/20th-century Sydney cemeteries.

These data sets will allow:

- Analysis of each data set as an example of diasporic identity expressed through material culture.
- Comparative analysis to investigate how and why Scots/Ulster Scots heritage was either emphasised, or denied (and new identities prioritised), in various temporal and geographical contexts.
- Analysis of other identities such as family, denomination (e.g. Presbyterian) that might also signal Ulster Scots origin or identity.

Results will be published in journals and a book, and will be further disseminated through conference papers and a web site.