



Hollywood Graveyard

The burial ground adjoining the old Priory Church in Hollywood has been in use for centuries. In the early seventeenth century it was a popular place of burial for Scottish families that had settled in North Down. Several of the Hamiltons, kinsmen of Sir James Hamilton, Lord Clandeboy, were interred here.

They include his younger brother William who was, according to the Hamilton Manuscripts 'creditably buried, and with great lamentation, at Hollywood' in the late 1620s. Likewise his younger son Captain Hugh Hamilton of Carnesure was buried here in 1655. The earliest gravestone in Hollywood bears the date 1645, but the surname on it is no longer legible.

The earliest headstone with a discernable name known to have existed at Hollywood commemorated Alexander Hamilton, second son of Patrick Hamilton of Enderwick in Scotland, who died in 1648 aged 35. Patrick was the youngest brother of Lord Clandeboy. Alexander moved to County Down and settled at Granshaw, near Comber. He married Mary Reading, daughter of William Reading Esq., and they had a son, Patrick, and two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth.

The private chapel in the grounds of Clandeboye was built in 1898 and shortly thereafter this Hamilton memorial was removed there, though precisely why is not known. Of Castle-espie limestone, this worn and cracked memorial is mounted on the east wall of the chapel. An inscription in Latin runs around the edge of the stone, while an English inscription is in the centre. The latter repeats much of the information in the Latin inscription, such as Alexander's parentage, but includes additional information on his own family. Above the English inscription is a coat of arms.

In the Hamilton Manuscripts Alexander is described as thus:

Thro' his inclination, and the necessity of his country, was bred to be a soldier; was shortly made a captain of foot, in which station he was very useful and of good account. He married one Mary [Reeding], a gentlewoman in this country, by whom he had one son, Patrick/ and two daughters, who lived to maturity. He died young, and was very well beloved, though a little passionate in his temper.

A seventeenth-century Hamilton memorial still at Hollywood, in this case a very worn ledger, is hard to make out but seems to read, 'James Hamilton lyes under this stone of a land hated from mortal life, who departed this life the twenty of December 1651 of age 38'. Who this man was is not clear, but the same stone also remembers Mr John Hamilton of the townland of Ballymenagh who died in 1722 aged 76 years.

Of the other early gravestones in this burial ground we have one to John Russell, son of William Russell of Hollywood, who died in 1670 at the unlikely age of 118 (it should



probably be 18). William Russell appears as a tenant in Holywood in the Clanbrassil rent roll of 1681.

Another commemorates Jane Clerke, wife of John Watt of Holywood, who died in 1679 at the age of 36. A badly worn ledger marks the resting place of Alexander Car of Ballyrobert who died in 1691.