Urban Celtic Subcultures 1700-1850

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Synopsis

The aim of this paper is to highlight some developments pertaining to ethnic Celtic minorities in foreign city environments before the rapid onset of industrial growth that changed the character of Europe in the period following 1750. Due in part to the constraints of source material, but also to the fact that France felt the effects of the industrial revolution about a hundred years later than Britain, the testimony relating to the Bretons in Paris is taken up to 1900. It is hoped that despite being of a later date, the complementarity of the Breton experience to that which the other Celts experienced in Britain will outweigh strictly temporal considerations. The general scantiness of the evidence relating to the experience of the dominated Celts in adapting to the novel environment of the city means that evidence from all periods is useful. However I have chosen to study in more detail from 1700 to around 1850, justifying this somewhat subjective end-date by the establishment of the rail network, universal education, and the accelerating social effects of technological advance.

Preliminary remarks

I would like to emphasise that by Celtic I will be referring to the Celts proper, and not the French-speaking inhabitants of eastern Brittany or English-speaking inhabitants of the eastern part of Ireland or the southern and eastern parts of Scotland: none of the latter suffered the linguistic difficulties in adjusting to urban life which the Celts proper experienced. In following this line in this paper – which I believe to be the only option for a historian trying to perceive contemporary realities – there can be some difficulty with the sources as, throughout this period, the Celts were

1 As today the terms 'Irish', 'Scottish', 'Breton' tended to be applied liberally to non-Celts who lived within the Celtic countries, only in Scotland do we find the common use of a term that referred specifically to the Celtic as opposed to the non-Celtic peoples of Scotland.
finally subjugated all trace of separate political identity in the Celtic countries they dominated.

At the very same time, however, a resurgence of the national sentiment began to make itself felt. The growing interest in antiquarian and local history studies in learned and comfortable circles, indulged in as a hobby with no ulterior motive in view, created a growing interest in the nation's past. This 'aristocratic' interest was transformed and subsumed in an intellectual movement with a nationalist perspective, which began influencing civic and political leaders by offering new analyses of the condition of the dominated nationalities. The subsequent propagation of these ideas to the populations concerned had far-reaching effects and was enabled by the growing presence and power of the media of newspapers and of education, and led to a growing reassertion of political independence by the Celtic nations. The scenario given above for the Celtic nations has parallels in the political development of most other contemporary dominated nationalities in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, and was the path by which an independent state was created for many of these nations.

The Celts had — and indeed have to the present day — never succeeded in establishing a native urban tradition. In view of the undeveloped nature of institutions particular to the Celtic countries it is thus understandable that in the political/intellectual reawakening of the Celtic countries the situation of distant 'foreign' capitals — London, Paris, Dublin, Edinburgh, Rennes — became even more important in offering the best modern facilities for intellectual activities to promote Celtic tongues and culture. This, however, was not to remain permanent, for as technological advances, literacy and democratic government progressively spread in each country, centres for modern intellectual activities in the Celtic tongues finally formed themselves in the actual areas in which the languages were spoken, so the relative cultural importance of the secondary capitals waned towards the end of the 19th century. In this respect the period 1700-1850 can be interpreted as a well-defined transitory phase — never before and never since matched — in which intellectual and cultural activities in the Celtic tongues, catching up with technological and cultural advances in other parts of Europe, were centralised in a small number of foreign urban environments.

**Temporary migration**

Before we turn to each capital in turn, I would like to refer to temporary, circular or seasonal migration. Seasonal migration from Celtic areas to English or French areas is widely attested, and was chiefly dictated by agricultural or commercial considerations, but also in the case of the upper strata of society by legal exigencies.

Seasonal migration of Highland agricultural labourers — sometimes gangs of young women — to the Scottish Lowlands is attested from the late 17th century onwards, young men would go as crew on herring fleets. In the 18th century agricultural labourers from Ireland went to the rich lands of south-eastern England and Lowland Scotland. Gangs of Irish agricultural workers would embark on ships at certain times of the year, and Irish harvesters are mentioned as lodging in London (probably the port of embarkation and disembarkation for many). The leader of Welsh gangs of reapers who went to the English county of Hereford in the early 18th century were acquainted with English so as to strike bargains with farmers and landholders — and as a consequence were known as Sais 'Englishmen'. From as early as the early 18th century large numbers of Welsh labouring women known as merched y gerddi 'the garden girls' set off in groups of 6 from western Wales and trudged over 300 km to London to work the gardens and parks of London, others went to work the harvests of hay, grain, hops and fruits in Middlesex and Kent. In the 19th century many of the Irish gangs moved from harvesting to more remunerative seasonal occupations such as railway setting, building work and brick-making.

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13 "There was little contact between the inhabitants of north and south Wales. Indeed, Iolo Morganwg went so far as to claim [...] that north and south Wales had 'no more intercourse with each other than they have with the man in the moon'." Geraint H. Jenkins, *The Foundations of Modern Wales 1642-1780*, Oxford 1987, 388.
15 Withers, *Urban Gaelic Subculture* (s. note 7), 178.
21 Vaughan, *A New History* (s. note 18), 631-33.
minority in what is a comprehensive account of 18th century social life in Edinburgh.28

Houston states that in the early 18th century there were no more than 500 Highlanders (1%) in Edinburgh,29 and in 1800 it is estimated that Edinburgh and Glasgow had some 2-3,000 Highlanders each.30 The fact that Edinburgh, lying well outside the Scottish-Gaelic homeland, was known to Highlanders by its traditional Gaelic name Dùn Eideann indicates an unbroken familiarity between the Highlanders and the town.

Plaids and blue caps were typical of Highlanders’ dress in the early 18th century.31 The Highlanders were also noticeable by their dress in Glasgow in the 1780s.32 There are notices of Highlanders with swords, daggers and pistols (1680), but the carrying of weapons was also common in Lowland Scottish society until much later than in England.33 Highlanders were thus described by Defoe in 1706-07:

“They are all gentlemen, will take affront from no man, and insolent to the last degree... a man with his mountain habit, with a broad sword, target (shield), pistol or perhaps two at his girdle, a dagger and a staff, walking down the street as upright and haughty as if he were a lord – and withail driving a cow.”34

In 1787 the history of Edinburgh by Kincaid remarked that Highlanders were almost all (sedan-)chairmen, porters, watermen, soldiers of the town-guard, and household servants, besides a vast number of labourers.35 Part of the ‘chronic distancing’ of the town-guard from the bulk of the populace was the fact that they were mostly Gaelic speaking Highlanders.36 Two Highlander women beggars from Blair Atholl had to have a town-guard soldier translate for them when they were brought before the judge.37

We are also fortunate in that the Highlander Iain Mac Domhnaill (John Mac Donald) has left us an account of his arrival with his siblings in Edinburgh in 1747,38 they were accosted by a woman “seeing us strangers and in Highland dress [...] she was a widow, and let lodgings; her husband before he died, was a master-chairman of the name of Mac Donald, born near the place where we were born.” After being arrested for vagrancy, another Highlander who ran an inn and livery stables helped them out and promised, and gave, them work. In 1752 a 54 year-old homeless ‘resident’ who had a son in the poorhouse, “he cannot write neither can he read but some of the Irish language.”39 Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir (Duncan Ban MacIntyre) (1724-1812) of Glenorchy, Argyle, was a member of Edinburgh’s town-guard from 1767 onwards,40 whilst his wife Màiri opened a small bootleg liquor shop in Lawnmarket for which she was brought before the magistrates but discharged after Donnchadh argued that he had drunk more than his wife had ever sold.41 John Forbes, a Gaelic monoglot, lived in Canongate by taking lodgers and selling ale.42 A writer in 1766 noted of Highlanders: “even after residing amongst us for a course of years, their knowledge of our language, generally speaking, is very imperfect, and they rest satisfied with so much as is necessary for their daily business.”43

The Irish community increased noticeably with the industrialisation of Glasgow in the 19th century, the Irish-born comprised 10% in 1819, 25% in 1845, and were mostly employed in cotton industry, the 30% destitute listed as Irish in 1841 compares equitably with the proportion of Irish in Glasgow’s population.44 The way the Irish were perceived in Glasgow, as compared to the Highlanders, is given in an interesting account of 1841:

“It may be a prejudice on the part of the Scotch but they generally prefer the Highland females in their families: ... the Highlanders have many friends in Glasgow to whom they apply.”45

28 Houston, Social Change (s. note 8).
29 Ebd., 69.
30 Withers, Urban Gaelic Subculture (s. note 7), 186-87.
31 Houston, Social Change (s. note 8), 41.
33 Houston, Social Change (s. note 8), 168.
34 Ebd., 41.
35 Ebd., 282.
36 Ebd., 68.
37 Ebd., 278.
The situation at sea is grave. The enemy is pushing our fleet westward, and the situation is becoming critical. We must act quickly to avoid a catastrophic defeat.

In Dublin, there were two opposing мнения among the public. Some were in favor of a negotiated settlement, while others were calling for immediate military action.

The government is facing great pressure to make a decision. The situation is rapidly deteriorating, and time is running out.

Meanwhile, the situation on land is equally grim. The rebels are gaining momentum, and the government is struggling to maintain control. The situation is becoming increasingly unstable.

In conclusion, the situation is dire. We must act quickly to prevent a devastating defeat. The government must take bold action to save the country from the brink of disaster.
class or upper middle class, were to refer to native, Gaelic culture and to native, Gaelic antiquity in the first person, as something to identify with, while seeing England as an alien, foreign country.\(^{51}\)

The same process occurred in the Spanish colony of Mexico, where a colonial elite sought independence from the country of origin of the elite, Enrique Florescano calls this process "creole patriotism" and remarks that the appropriation of the indigenous past by the colonial elite to give them historical legitimacy in their struggle with their original "motherland" was a development particular to the creoles (inhabitants of Hispanic descent) of Mexico amongst the ex-Spanish colonies. In Ireland this almost imperceptible change of definition of Irishness occurred, not only amongst the English of Ireland, with the members of the Protestant ruling classes increasingly describing themselves as Irish in opposition to the English of England, but also amongst growing sections of the native Irish. This is most clearly demonstrated by the activities of Cathal Ó Conchobhair (1710-91), a native Irish scholar, and one of the few remaining catholic landed gentlemen of the 18th century, despite defending the rights of the Catholic religion and cultivating the Irish language, whilst at the same time acquiescing in – or at least resigning himself to – the new order. His son would write that his aim had been: "to reconcile the conquerors and the conquered in Ireland".\(^{52}\) It thus seems that many native Irish during the 18th century began reconciling themselves to the new system, and like Ó Conchobhair they held fast to their Catholic religion, but unlike him, perhaps feeling the pressure of a more modern and anglicised economy, they abandoned the Irish language for English. It would seem that in the 18th century the native language had become considerably less important for the sense of identity as opposed to their geographical provenance and their religious allegiance to Catholicism: as a corollary the term Irish ceased to have an unambiguous "ethnic" meaning.\(^{53}\)

\(^{51}\) Ebd., 356, 376.

\(^{52}\) McDowell, Ireland (s. note 47), 185.

\(^{53}\) That the term Irish referred to people of very different background in 18th century London has been established by D. George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century. Harmondsworth 1976 (quoted by Withers, Gaelic Scotland [s. note 7], 175).

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Urban Celtic Subcultures 1700-1850

London

Already evident in London in the 1640s, during the 18th century the Irish became the largest foreign group in the city.\(^{54}\) They were the most unpopular Celts in this period, having taken this dubious honour from the Scots, who themselves had previously taken it from the Welsh.\(^{55}\) There was an Irish colony nicknamed 'Little Dublin' in St-Giles-in-the-Fields (also known as 'the Rookery of St Giles'), and another in the East End.\(^{56}\) From 1775, well into the 19th century, the hub of Irish Catholic London was the Freemasons Arms.\(^{57}\) Their adherence to Catholicism made them at times unpopular with the London mob which could be fiercely xenophobic and anti-catholic, e.g. the Rose Fair Riots of 1736,\(^{58}\) the Gordon Riots of 1780.\(^{59}\)

Despite the reputation for poverty and being chiefly employed in labouring and menial tasks, this was certainly not the fate of every Irish immigrant. In the 1760s a Mrs Farrell of St Giles left more than £1,000 accumulated from 2-penny lodgers "chiefly her own countrymen, harvesters or labourers from Ireland".\(^{60}\) Regional patterns of emigration can also be discerned, at least as early as 1834 when it was noted that more Irish was spoken in London than in Liverpool, as Connacht immigrants habitually passed on to London. Western Ireland provided more emigrants than Leinster.\(^{61}\)

As we have seen many Welsh gentlemen, merchants and scholars prospered in London.\(^{62}\) Thomas Jones, a tailor from near Corwen, Meirionydd, became a successful bookseller and almanacker in the 1680s, he was friend with such famous men as Tom Brown, Francis Moore (another Almanacker), Tom D'Urfe. Welsh poets could at times praise London as the fairest city on earth: "its streets", sang Ellis ab Ellis, "ran with gold", and James Howell, for one, confessed he was "habitually in love


\(^{55}\) This hierarchy in the arrival and status of the different nationalities is also suggested by the fact that the quarter called 'Welshtown' in Liverpool was later known as 'Irishtown'. Vaughan, A New History (s. note 18), 634.

\(^{56}\) Ebd., 634.

\(^{57}\) Porter, London (s. note 22), 132.

\(^{58}\) Withers, Urban Gaelic Subculture (s. note 7), 173.

\(^{59}\) Porter, London (s. note 22), 157.

\(^{60}\) Lecs, Exiles (s. note 56), 48.

\(^{61}\) Vaughan, A new History (s. note 18), 639.

\(^{62}\) Ebd., 627-628.

\(^{63}\) Jenkins, Foundations (s. note 13), Oxford 1987, 111.
many commentators have expressed concern about the potential for the spread of...
Lebesque further notes that some of these Bretons did live amongst the French, and elaborates on a coiffe-wearing widow who lived in the same apartment block as the author:

"On l’appelait la Bretonne. Point d’autre nom, jamais. Tiens, disions-nous, voilà la Bretonne qui rentre, la Bretonne qui va faire sa soupe ou (quand après un coup de tafia, elle interpellait ses voisins d’une grosse voix raucue, avec ses mots de nulle part) [...] Alors, les gosses se rassemblaient dans la cour et braillaient: Les pommes de terres pour les cochons, / les épiluchures pour les Bretons, / à la nigousse, / à la nigousse, / à la nigousse, merdouse! «Ne parle pas à la Bretonne», m’enjoignaient mes parents: la Bretonne est sale, la Bretonne boit; jusqu’au jour où elle réussit à coincer ma mère dans la cour et à lui raconter sa vie, devenant dès lors la Bretonne qui a eu des malheurs, puis la Bretonne qui au fond est une femme comme tout le monde. Finalement, la Bretonne mourut. Mais des longues années plus tard, je me souvins d’elle et du nom qui la désignait, aussi fabuleux pour moi que la Cafre ou la Bantoue."

In 1882 the 3 Breton-speaking départements supplied one-seventh of the domestic servants of France (which is comparable to the many Irish domestic women in 19th century Britain). In the 18th century there seems to have been a well-known route from Brittany to Paris with Versailles forming a kind of staging post before reaching the capital. I have heard oral evidence dating to the late 19th century – from the central Breton-speaking homeland – that many, being poor, walked the whole distance from western Brittany to towns like Rennes, Nantes, Angers.

**Associative institutions of exiled Celts**

It seems that the Celts were slower in establishing particular institutions for themselves than were some other immigrant groups. It is noticeable that in 17th century London, it was the French protestants and the Jews who were the most organised ethnic groups. Of course these were, in the main, religious refugees who already

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72 "Nigousse" is a pejorative term for a Breton woman derived from a colloquial Breton pronunciation of "an hini goz" 'the old one' (a familiar term for 'my wife').

73 Jean-Jacques Monnier, Jean-Christophe Cassard, Toute l'Histoire de la Bretagne: des Origines à la fin du XX° siècle, Morlaix 1996, 455.

74 Vaughan, A new History (s. note 18), 641.

75 Withers, *Urban Gaelic Subculture* (s. note 7), 179.

76 Withers, *Gaelic Scotland* (s. note 7), 194.

er of the English institution that was the Royal Irish Academy providing succour to Cathal Ó Conchobhair, and in the latter's wake, to younger Irish scholars such as Sylvester O'Halloran and Theophilus O'Flanagan.

Indeed, the growing acceptance of Irish identity during the 18th century led to the formation of associations in Dublin which specifically strove to maintain and promote Irish: the apparently short-lived Irish Club or Cómhdhaon Gaedhilge (fd. 1752). The Gaelic Society of Dublin (fd. 1807), was established by Theophilus O'Flanagan who was employed as an Irish language expert at Trinity College and the Royal Irish Academy (this was to be a direct forerunner of many similar societies throughout the 19th century, culminating in the Gaelic League [fd. 1893]).

London

The enormous metropolis of London was, of course, a magnet for all the nationalities within the British state. Here existed societies representing the three Celtic nations of Britain:

- the Scottish Gaels:
  - the Highland Society of London (fd. 1778).92
  - the Comunn Fior Gàidhlig as the Club of True Highlanders (fd. 1815).93
  - the Gaelic Society of London (fd. 1830).94

- the Irish:
  - the London Hibernian Society (fd. 1806) which supported Irish-speaking proselytising.95

Because there seems to be better documentation we shall daily a little longer with the Welsh societies. The civil war of the 1640s had brought a small coterie of Welsh puritans to London that would preoccupy themselves with bringing the reformed religion to their "backward" homeland,96 such sentiments seem to have continued in Welsh circles, for in the late 17th century we find Welsh London merchants (or those of Welsh origin) financing the publishing of Bibles and devotional literature in Welsh.97 In a similar vein, but with wider horizons, Moses Williams, a Welsh scholar, dreamt of raising Wales from its provincial torpor, and appealed — unsuccessfully — to prosperous Welsh London merchants of the Society of Antient Britons in 1717 to raise money to build universities, charity schools, workshops, almshouses and hospitals in the homeland.98 The Society of Antient Britons99 does not seem to have achieved much and one must wait for the mid 18th century before a more productive Welsh cultural association asserted itself in London.100

The Welsh Cymraddorion ‘aborigines’ (fd. 1751) in London, under patronage of Prince of Wales, met on the 3rd Wednesday of each month in the Half Moon tavern in Cheapside, members mostly gentlemen, lawyers, doctors, merchants, goldsmiths, gloveers, brewers, apothecaries, printers, grocers, craftsmen, gathered to eat and drink and be merry. Membership was open to Welshmen by birth or extraction. Richard Morris (1703-79), who had arrived aged 14 in 1722 in London and had become clerk in the Navy Office (and fell in love with the place), bore the brunt of organising. He had a strikingly ambitious plan: to help Welsh poets and authors, to collect valuable manuscripts, to promote study of Welsh history and scientific research, to encourage economic developments, to publish learned material (redolent of Moses Williams’s dream of 1718). The total membership varied: 168 in 1759; 228 in 1778; 70 in 1787 (the year the society became defunct). The society’s members were disappointment to Morris brothers, apart from William Vaughan of Cors-y-gedol, a colourful patron and bon vivant “few members either understood or cared about Welsh scholarship”.

The Gwyneddigion „the Gwynedd people“ (fd. 1779) was established mainly for the northern Welsh by Owen Jones & Robert Hughes, a solicitor, resolved to turn it into the show-piece of Welsh culture by providing a popular forum for stimulating and wide-ranging discussions. Membership was open to “all London-based Welshmen, provided they were fluent Welsh-speakers and fond of singing”. It attracted people of more modest background, than the Cymraddorion, including teachers, printers, solicitors, merchants, craftsmen and taverners. Met in taverns such as Goose & Gridiron in St Pauls churchyard, George & Vulture (Lombard St), members were more democratic and less pretentious than the Cymraddorion. Passionate

90 Ibid., 347.
91 Ibid., 366.
92 Withers, Gaelic Scotland (s. note 7), 203.
93 Ibid., 206.
94 Ibid., 206.
95 Ó Cuív, Irish language (s. note 87), 376.
96 Jenkins, The Foundations (s. note 13), 46.
97 Ibid., 43.
98 Ibid., 202, 248/69.
99 This is the oldest Welsh society that I know of, but I do not know the date of its foundation.
100 Jenkins, The Foundations (s. note 13), 390.
Common tendencies among the Celtic associations

The scholarly associations which were interested in the ancient history of the countries should be differentiated from the associations of Celts intended either to act as a focus for Celtic life or to promote the Celtic language. However, both types of associations tended to publish works which brought the Celtic language literature to a wider public. In the following paragraphs I will concentrate my attention solely on the associations of exiled Celts, as their composition can be taken to reflect, even if only dimly, the evolution of the Celtic immigrants in their new urban surroundings. Despite the fact that much of the following evidence comes from the late 19th century, it may point some light on the nature of these exiled associations at an even earlier date.

J. F. Campbell, the renowned collector of folktales, had been offered the directorship of the Highland Society of London, but after having attended one of the society's dinners in 1871 refused:

"This is a remnant of the ancient dining clubs with a good deal to drink [...] those who frequent the dinners chiefly are not the genuine article but Londoners making believe to be Highlanders [...] the whole thing struck me as make believe so I will have nothing to do with directing it."

Many of these associations were supportive of the native language, and included rules that demanded that the Celtic language itself be spoken (in itself suggestive that a certain amount of coercion was needed to stop many from conversing in English). The Dublin Irish Club of 1752's rules specified:

"That no language be spoken in the club room, but the Irish language, on a pain of one penny for every such offence [...] save only Doctor Taafe, or such other members, who may not be able to convey their sentiments in the Irish, without the help of the English, until better acquainted therewith; but subject nevertheless to receive instructions on such occasions."

The Glasgow Gaelic Club of Gentlemen of 1780 had as a principle to converse "as friends in the bold and expressive language of heroes in ages past" but the qualification that members were "to converse in Galic, according to their abilities, from 7 to 9 o'clock" suggests that after two hours of effort the language of conversation was English. The Gaelic Society of London of 1777, founded with the aim of fostering the Gaelic language, had the ability to speak Gaelic as a condition of membership to be too restrictive, and was renamed the Highland Society of London the following year, with 'Highland descent' replacing Gaelic fluency as a qualification.

With the Welsh association of the Cymrodorion in London things do not seem to have gone much better:

"They might style themselves 'ancient Britons' and develop a liking for ritual and pomp, but a wealth of good intentions, nostalgia, and empty patriotic gestures was simply not enough. Lewis Morris was appalled by the lethargy and ignorance of members. When Hugh Hughes's Cywydd yr Ardd [...] was read aloud during a meeting in 1757 the members unanimously called for an immediate English translation and exegesis."

Though established much later (about 1879, and lasting into the early 1900s), the Dinars Celtiques established at Paris, by Ernest Renan and Paul Sébillot for exiled Bretons, again shows the same kind of phenomena typical of an exiled Celtic association. The Dinars Celtiques consisted of a monthly lunch whereby Breton could be spoken, songs sung, pancakes eaten, and cider drunk. Casimir Le Roux in 1901 judged:

"Je n'appelle pas ainsi ces associations d'admiration mutuelle où l'on se réunit une fois l'an pour vider des coupes de champagne ensemble et où l'on se contente de célébrer les gloires de la Bretagne."

François Cadic, a priest, organiser of Breton exiled life in Paris around 1900, noted in 1899:

"On y mangeait bien, on y vidait les coupes de champagne, on y récitait des beaux vers, on y chantait de belles chansons et pendant ce temps les Bretons mouraient de fain dans les rues."

108 Withers, Gaelic Scotland (s. note 7), 206.
109 Leeson, Mere-Irish (s. note 89), 330.
Irish-language cultural tradition became increasingly transmitted through non-traditional or even non-Irish channels, in the main middle-class protestant English (whether as commissions by scholarly societies or the interests of wealthy individuals). In Wales Gruffudd Ffryll of Arduw (†1666) was described as last of the old perambulating bards (elerwr), and Siôn Dafydd Las of Nanau (†1694) was the last Welsh family bard. In 1655 Edward Dafydd, last of the old Glamorgan bards, wrote: "The world is not with the bards", and lamented the loss of patronage, with bards only occasionally commissioned. Eventually even this practice died too as was the experience of Owain Gruffudd of Llanstumdwy (1642-1730). In Scotland, the old ways generally lingered a little later into the 18th century, but suffered a fatal blow with the suppression of the 1745 rising. This can be illustrated by the cases of John Mac Codrum (1693-1779), appointed in 1763 as the last house-bard to Sir James Mac Donald of Sleat. 

The native learned tradition, secure in the Celtic homelands, seems to have been finding little by little before the increasing anglicising influences of the period. In many respects the 18th century therefore stands as a bleak interlude between the certainties of the old learned culture and the resurfacing of a new cultural tradition in the Celtic homelands following the advent of literacy in the late 19th century (the interlude was the least traumatic in the case of the Welsh, as the independent dissenting protestant religion began to dominate the Welsh homeland in the late 18th century, and brought Bible-based literacy to a high level). It can thus be understood that in the 18th century the relatively rich associations of exiled Celts were in a hitherto never attained position to influence their fellow countrymen, whether by publishing books on Celtic languages, literature, and history, or supporting them through donations or subscriptions.

The spread of literacy during the 19th century led to the spread of similar cultural associations in the Celtic homelands, as documented for Scotland127 and for Wales. A corollary effect was that the relative importance of the associations of the urban Celtic associations in the cultural field were no longer as predominant as they had been during the 18th century.

Patterns and discordances in urban Celtic experience during the period 1700-1850

The common experience of the Celtic urban experience in the period 1700-1850 was that they, unlike Jews and Huguenots in London for example, enjoyed no privileged – nor, for that matter, restricted – legal status, so that there never existed any Celtic ghetto outside hyperbolean assertions. The accession to the throne of England by a 'Welsh' dynasty in 1487, and then a Scottish dynasty in 1603, made adapting to the English environment fairly unproblematic for those Welsh and Scottish-Gaels who wished to do so (and this was also largely the case with the Bretons who posed no political threat to the French state). In sharp contrast stood the Irish, who because they had been involved in a bloody and protracted war with the English throughout the 17th century, and, despite losing, adhered to catholicism as their badge of identity. It is debatable whether the Irish were particularly unamenable to participation in the life of the host society or whether they suffered the English notions of the most reviled of all Celts, Vaughan, in an informative chapter on 19th century Irish immigration to Britain during the period, points out:

"The immigrant's sense of Irishness was to some extent a defensive posture, adopted in response to the hostility and prejudice of British neighbours and fellow proletarians."

While there existed natural tendencies for concentrations of Celts, these seem to have tended to dissipate as the second and third generation Celts became absorbed into mainstream English and French society. The – albeit paltry – evidence adduced from the experience of a few associative institutions reflect that many urban Celts, despite adhering in name to their ethnic background were already anglicised or frenchified. This seems to indicate a well-known observation on the absorption of ethnic minorities in host societies in the 20th century (at least where there is no great physical difference in appearance): the generation transformational process whereby a monoglot in the immigrant language has bilingual children, who in turn produce monoglot children who only have the language of the new society. One suspects that the insidious class distinctions of the urban environments (different from

125 Jenkins, The Foundations (n. note 13), 226-27. It must be emphasised that the cultivation of strict ancient metres persisted after these dates among farmers, craftsmen, clergymen and publishers, alongside the employment of freer metres.

126 Withers, Scotland (n. note 41), 346.

127 Ebd. 203/04.

128 Vaughan, A New History (n. note 18), 650.

Birgitta Möller
Das Betreiben des Mark Brandenburg
Bürgernutzung und Stadtbild in 18. Jahrhundert.