

5. THE MODERN DECLINE AND REVIVAL OF THE CELTS

By 1750 all the Celtic peoples were dominated directly by either the English or the French as a consequence of which the speakers began abandoning their languages for either English or French (indeed Cornish was already obsolescent by this time even if a few of its speakers survived into the late 18C). The history of the Celtic peoples after 1750 is a history of the decline of these languages to the point of near extinction in many cases, though this recession began to be challenged by a revival that first surfaced in the late 19C. It is not the aim of this module to look into the detail of this linguistic and societal change of seismic proportions, however an understanding of Celtic societies in the modern era can hardly be attained by ignoring the linguistic situation at any particular time. Instead, this section will lay the emphasis on the historical, societal and cultural developments of the different Celtic countries of this era, with an approach using common stereotypes of each country confronted with the reality (as known to us).

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Web Resources

- 'Celtic Congress'. At < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_Congress >
- 'Celtic Film Festival'. At < www.celticfilm.co.uk/index.php?node_id=1.9.11 >
- 'Celtic League'. At < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtic_League_%28political_organisation%29 >
- 'Pan-Celticism'. At < <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-Celticism> >

5.1 SCOTLAND AND THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS (18C to the present)

As was said above, on the whole the Highlanders had remained conservative in religious matters and in 18C many areas remained loyal to Episcopalianism (particularly north Argyll) or even to Catholicism (a central corridor running from the Western Isles to Moray, including Barra, Moidart, Morar). The defeat of the Jacobite clans in 1746 dealt a heavy blow to Catholicism, nevertheless the Catholic Bishop MacDonald, though sentenced to exile, was living quietly in Glengarry. The seminaries continued in various places in the Highlands before becoming amalgamated in Blairs College near Aberdeen in 1829. By then Catholicism had long ceased to be politically worrisome to the authorities. Those areas which saw missionary activity in 17C were to remain Catholic into 20C.

It is only around the Black Isle near Inverness that Presbyterianism, dominant in the Scottish Lowlands, established itself early amongst Highlanders. Fearing the success of Catholic missionaries and a return to Rome and Jacobitism the drive to 'presbyterianise' the Highlands and other "uncivilised" areas of the country began in 18C aided by the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK, fd.1709). The initial policy of the SSPCK was to anglicise the Gaels but later came to support education in Gaelic. It published a Gaelic-English vocabulary in the 1740s and oversaw the translation of the New Testament 1767 (with facing pages in Gaelic and English) which became the forerunner of the standard of Scottish Gaelic whose Bible was completed in 1801. Their schools supplemented those of the Scottish Kirk and in 1808 numbered 189 with 13,000 pupils, and through correspondence with Thomas Charles, the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist, the Edinburgh Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools was established in 1811 which by 1828 had 85 schools in the Highlands (though there was to be a decline in subsequent years). Like in Wales, the promotion of Bible reading in the native language was to lead to high amounts of literacy which led to a vibrant publishing industry in Gaelic during 19C from the first periodical *An Teachdaire Gaelach* (1829–31) to book runs of over a hundred for every decade of 19C.

Though the Presbyterian rule had won in the official Scottish Kirk in 1689, the spirit of Presbyterianism was subsequently compromised by the 1712 act of patronage which allowed a wealthy landowner to name an clerical incumbent to his office over the wishes of the parish. The General Assembly was displeased at this development but was thwarted by a strong body of 'Moderates' who did not want to confront the state. In 1834 a majority of Evangelicals took control of the General Assembly and proceeded to dispute patrons' nominations, court cases followed and seeing no redress from the state, 450 ministers left the Kirk in the 1843 Disruption and established the Free Church of Scotland. The Free Church gained an almost total adherence of ministers in the Highlands and became, like the Nonconformists of Wales champions of the

people against abusive landlords. However, the Free Church itself suffered a split in 1893 when a relaxation of doctrine led to the establishment of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (or colloquially the 'Wee Frees'), again it was based mainly in the Highlands in Lewis and Harris (a feature of its doctrine is that hymns are not sung, only psalms). The Free Presbyterian Church is accounted the most Highland and most puritan of all Scottish denominations (a minister who died in 1993 boasted that he had drowned his bagpipe after 'discovering' Christ). The relaxation in doctrine and growing liberalism of the Free Church saw it unite in 1900, a few years after the split, with another liberal Nonconformist denomination the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland to give the United Free Church of Scotland, this denomination in turn returned to the Scottish Kirk in 1929. The complicated history of religious affiliation in the Scottish Highlands, punctuated by acrimonious splits, has resulted in the Highlanders' religious allegiances being shared between the four main denominations of the Free Presbyterian Church, the Scottish Kirk (Church of Scotland), the Episcopalians and the Catholics. And even today where the Gaelic language is the strongest in the Western Isles, the islands are shared between the most doctrinally opposing branches of the Church: Catholics and Free Presbyterians ('Wee Frees') not without prejudice in years past to establishing co-operation towards nurturing the language, though the sectarianism has never reached the violent outbursts typical of Northern Ireland.

Outwith religious matters, the Highlands in the period following the defeat of Culloden in 1746 (apart from a short period of military rule) was now subject to the law common to the rest of Scotland. One of the reasons that military rule was relaxed is that the Highlanders proved themselves to be great recruits for the British army in its colonial wars and distinguished themselves in many battles (not least General Wolfe's daring capture of Québec in 1760 which put an end to French power in North America). This was a period in which the economy of the Highlands was developed by the introduction of sheep farms which were remunerative to the landowners but disastrous for many of the tenants who were forced to relocate in remote seaside areas where the gathering of kelp (seaweed) and fishing supplemented the meagre resources of the land or to emigrate. This was the beginning of the period of the clearances which has led to an acrimonious debate between 'colonialist' and 'economic' interpretations (see Hunter 2000). Highlanders emigrated in sizable numbers to the developing industrial belt of central Scotland, and males joined the army and went to the developing colonies of Britain's expanding empire. It is during this period, especially after the 1770s, that sizable colonies of Highlanders were established in North Carolina, Mohawk Valley (New York) (later to Glengarry Township, Ontario), Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The fur trade of the Canadian north-west also attracted many Highlanders, so much so in fact that a creole called Bungee had arisen in Manitoba by 19C based on a pidgin spoken between native Amerindian Cree women and Highland fur

traders. By late 18C Gaelic was described as the third language of Scotland after English and French. The Gaelic language long remained vibrant in both North Carolina but especially Nova Scotia, and books and periodicals were published there (and a transatlantic readership developed). In the Highlands the new economic necessities led to wholesale, often brutal, evictions of the population by landlords. By mid 19C deer-hunting estates became an additional reason for eviction and many valleys on the mainland became deserted with a continuing emigration. Inspired by the Irish Land League (fd.1879) and Gladstone's Irish Land Act (1881) the Scottish Gaels who had been passive for over a century they began organising themselves to fight for their rights and following such incidents as the 'Battle of the Braes' in Skye (1881) the Highland Land League was formed. The Government reacted by passing the Crofting Act in 1883 which secured many – but not all rights – for small tenant farmers (*crofters*) in the Highlands and Islands. To this day, landholding is deeply influenced by the provisions of this act in the crofting counties of western and northern Scotland.

The decline in population of the Highlands which continued well into the middle of 20C coincided with more intense interaction with English speakers. In 1750 spoken throughout the Highlands and Islands, Gaelic was estimated to have been spoken by 23% of the population of Scotland, this percentage had dropped to an estimated 19% by 1800 and by the time of the first census which featured language question had dropped further to 6% (this apparent decline, however, was only the result of the exponential growth of the population of industrialised Scotland as the total of Gaelic speakers in 1801 was 298,000 and in 1881 was still 231,000). Nevertheless, by the early 20C a decline had set in and anglicisation added to the attrition of depopulation of the Highlands and Islands. The percentage of speakers fell from 5% in 1901, to 3.5% in 1921, to 1.5% in 1961. The numbers and percentage of Gaelic speakers has since tended to remain steady, though there are reports of a language shift on the Western Isles since the 1980s.

Though seen as exotic ever since their romantic portrayal James Macpherson in his Ossianic poetic compositions of 1760–62 and more especially by Walter Scott in his 'Waverley' novels from 1814 and his stage management of the pageantry celebrating King George IV's visit to Edinburgh in 1822 where he persuaded the king to wear a tartan kilt starting a fashion that has weakened to this day, the Highland Gaels have long been a peripheral people in Scotland, so much so that the plight of their language has never formed a central plank in the grievances of Scottish nationalism of 20C. This nationalism, although its purported aim is to obtain fair play for both Highlanders and Lowlanders from the English government in London, has always emphasised the economic gains of independence and has never envisaged a Celtic revival which was so characteristic of Irish nationalism from the 1890s onwards. The ancestor of modern-day Scottish nationalism was the rather conservative National Association for the Vindication of Scottish

Rights (fd.1853). This was followed in 1885 by the Scottish Home Rule Association (a movement within the Liberal Party) inspired by similar movements in Ireland and Wales. Both these movements were interested in devolution rather than independence, but in the 1920s some more radical nationalist groups appear on the scene Scots National League (1920), the Scottish National Movement (1926), the Glasgow University Scottish Nationalist Organisation (1927), the National Party of Scotland (1928) and the Scottish Party (1932). The latter two merged into the Scottish National Party (SNP) in 1934. Some individual nationalists – Hugh Mac Diarmid being one – toyed with the idea of reviving a Celtic past but such ideas never became central to the success of Scottish nationalism.

The SNP managed to enjoy its first parliamentary seat in the Glasgow suburb of Motherwell for a few weeks in 1945 before a general election returned a Labour MP. For a long time after the SNP only managed to gain a profile in local politics in smaller towns in rural areas, until 1967 when Winifred Ewing demolished a massive Labour majority in Hamilton, another suburb of Glasgow and a swell of support was registered throughout Scotland. Unlike the successes of its Welsh contemporary *Plaid Cymru*, and despite the fact that it was pro-Gaelic in principle, the SNP protest crystallised around economic matters that affected much of Scotland, rather than to the cultural difference that was inherent in Gaeldom. The tide soon turned and in 1970 the SNP failed to break through with Ewing losing her seat. Nevertheless, in the disaster that the SNP experienced in 1970, the Gaelic stronghold of the Western Isles elected the second SNP MP (Donald Stewart) who for a few years was the solitary SNP MP. The SNP's successes in the rest of Scotland occurred in the 1973 by-election (Glasgow Govan) and – following the boost of the discovery of North Sea oil – in the two general elections of 1974 when eleven MPs were elected as well as 30% of the total vote. The SNP seemed to be in a very promising position especially after 1976 when the British Labour government lost its parliamentary majority.

But, incredibly, it all collapsed. Many Scots feared the SNP. Few outwith its ranks wanted an independent Scotland. Some thought it tainted with Fascism: though it always eschewed violence and xenophobia, certain fervent figures could easily whip up an SNP conference into something resembling a Nuremberg rally. (Rather unfairly, many Nationalists found themselves under the intrusive surveillance of the Special Branch, MI5 and other arms of the 'secret state'.)

The 1979 devolution proposed for Scotland and Wales on the condition of a referendum was a sop to the growing political clout of the Celtic nationalist parties of Britain by an increasingly besieged Labour government. The original devolutionary measures were emasculated and in Scotland the majority which voted for devolution was discounted due to a technicality (the conditions for implementation had demanded a majority of the voters rather than a majority of the votes despite the fact that entry into the European Union a few years previously had been

accepted on a lower percentage). Donald Stewart tabled a motion of no confidence in parliament, followed in this by Margaret Thatcher of the Conservative party, which resulted in the calling of a general election which saw the Labour government swept from power and which saw the SNP MPs reduced from 11 to 2. In 1987 the by-election that followed the retirement of Stewart saw Labour regain the Western Isles (though Ewing had established the Highlands and Islands Euro-constituency as her personal fiefdom). The SNP took a long time to recover, winning a by-election now and then and doing better in the European rather than in British elections, by 1996 they had reached 4 MPs. Macleod (1996) was of the opinion that: "If Scotland ever won independence, it seemed the SNP would be a catalyst, rather than a true national movement that would sweep the land". The 18-year sway of the Conservatives in government, perceived to be headed by a 'little England' mentality had strengthened public opinion in Scotland that devolution was needed to protect it from an English government that cared little for the electoral periphery that Scotland constituted. Conscious of the growing disenchantment of the Scottish electorate with the English politics of Westminster and also in part in keeping with the shortlived Labour leader John Smith's advocacy of devolution, the new Labour government which was re-elected in 1997, carried their election pledge of a new referendum for Scotland and Wales and following an overwhelming majority 'yes' the Scottish Parliament was inaugurated in 1999.

The emergence since the 1960s of Scottish nationalist sentiment on the political scene is only faintly reflected in the emergence of a Gaelic as a language enjoying political support and the establishment of a Scottish Parliament has only begun to change this to any extent in measures such as the Gaelic Language Act (2005). For years Gaelic activism had been channelled into cultural spheres under *An Comunn Gàidhealach* (fd.1893), but in the late 1980s *Comunn nan Gaidheal* (CNAG) a splinter group emerged which was more militant in its demands for greater recognition of Gaelic and which achieved success with a television campaign. Typical of the distance between Gaels and the majority of the Scottish population of cities such as Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen are the views of Professor Donald Meek (a native of Tiree, born 1949) who wrote in 2002:

Being Scottish is not something that I often think about. Being Scottish and feeling proud of it, as Scots are supposed to do, is for me an even rarer sentiment. / For me Scottishness has been an acquired concept, initially as remote and as inaccessible as those peaks [of the Scottish mainland]. In my Hebridean boyhood, I was first and foremost Gaelic, brought up on an island croft, where cows and sheep and humans and the Gaelic language lived in happy harmony. Even the dogs barked in Gaelic, and understood no English. Scotland was some place far away in a big, blue school-book. I reasoned that those mountains on the hazy eastern skyline must belong to Scotland. / Scotland became for me a land of other, more menacing, mountains. As I ventured beyond the safe confines of the Gaelic-speaking areas, I found acceptability and animosity towards my native language in almost equal measure. It was my joy to study and teach the language and its culture, and my great sorrow to encounter tokenism, trivialisation

and sometimes sheer disparagement. The Scotland that so often growled at England, and expressed the pain of being a repressed nation, could show its internal animosities in fine style, and give surprisingly little place to its own indigenous treasures.

Considering how small the percentage of the population Scotland living in the Highlands became in 20C it is hardly surprising that there did not arise much specific political protest which concerned the Highlands as opposed to the rest of Scotland. Individuals like Sorley Maclean (1911–96) and his brother Calum (1915–60) were hardly representative of the resigned disposition of the Modern Gaels to their cultural heritage. Only in the early 1980s did a protest movement named Ceartas ('Justice') arise – inspired by the Welsh Cymdeithas yr Iaith – which began painting anglicised signs. More typical of language activism has been the yearly peripatetic Gaelic cultural festival the Royal National Mod (fd.1892, *Am Mòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail*), a festival of song, art and culture, inspired by the Welsh eisteddfod and held annually since its first outing in Oban (it is known jokingly as the 'Whisky Olympics') and is supplemented by a number of local mòds.

The last strongholds of Gaelic in the Western Isles had traditionally been divided for centuries between Ross-shire and Inverness-shire, whose administrative centres lay far to the east in long-anglicised Dingwall and Inverness. The reorganisation of local government in 1975 allowed the Western Isles to become a regional authority under the name of Comhairle nan Eilean with a fairly positive language policy to Gaelic. The new authority was not a wholly comfortable one, the southern islands of Barra and South Uist were Catholic whereas North Uist, Harris and Lewis were the strongholds of the most austere Calvinist Presbyterian Protestants. Those on the southern islands were more familiar with Oban and Glasgow than with Stornoway, the administrative centre located in Lewis. The new authority installed simultaneous translation facilities to enable Gaelic to be used in the council's meetings and all the anglicised place-names on road signs were replaced by their Gaelic versions (MacLeod (1996) argues "such things are, really, for the benefit of visitors, they bewildered many a tourist."). The late 1980s Lewis sabbatarians managed to pressure the council to forbid work on Sunday a move disliked by the Catholic islands, they were further enraged when a number of schools were shut on their islands but none in Lewis. The question of the replacement of Daliburgh hospital with its Catholic chapel and big murals of the Virgin Mary to a more central new hospital in Benbecula aroused the ire of local priests but their action group was resoundingly defeated in a local election in 1994. The bankruptcy of the BBCI in 1991 had stong reverberations in the Western Isles as *Comhairle nan Eilean* lost £22 million (loaned from the government's Scottish Office, an illegal practice). Comhairle nan Eilean introduced a 'bilingual' education policy in primary schools after 1975, but it seems to have been a failure. In 1986 a wholly Gaelic-medium type of education was commenced at Breasclete, its

success led to Gaelic-medium education spreading throughout the Highlands and even in some instances to the larger Lowland cities. In 1978 Skye followed by implementing a bilingual policy in schools. One must also mention the Gaelic-medium college of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on the Island of Skye which initiated full-time courses in 1983 and has just this year (2003) ended its first degree scheme. In the urban areas of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness, far from the Gaelic heartlands of the west, there has been a demand in recent years among some parents for Gaelic-medium schools for. In 2006, the first solely Gaelic-medium secondary school, Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu, was in Glasgow.

Gaelic radio existed before the mid 1970s when the BBC suddenly transferred all its Gaelic output to VHF (though many areas of the Highlands lacked VHF). Through the pressure of CNAG the government established Comataibh Telebhisean Gàidhlig (CTG) in 1992 with a £9 million budget, and within a few years good high-quality Gaelic programmes were to be seen on BBC Scotland, Scottish Television and Grampian. Concerning the apparent progress of both Irish and Scottish Gaelic, Ken MacKinnon, the sociolinguist of Scottish Gaelic, told a conference in 1998:

We may have the media, we may have the arts, we may have the broadcasting, we may have education going forward and developing, we may even have secure [legal] status. But if there is not an actual community of speakers, and if there is not an oncoming generation, this will be merely an overcoat around an invisible man. There will be a lot of quite impressive outer garments and if they are revealed, nothing inside.

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*MACLEOD, John. 1996. *Highlanders: a History of the Gaels*. (London: Hodder & Stoughton). (Chapters 1, 7–12)

Web Resources

‘The Clann’ recreation society. At < www.the-clann.co.uk/home.htm >

‘Scottish independence’. At < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scottish_independence >

5.2 MANN (13C to the present)

Though Mann had been formally ceded to Scotland in 1266, the ensuing Scottish wars of Edward I of England saw the island see-saw between the English and the Scots until by 1333, English sovereignty was established over Mann (though in the form of a grant to the Earl of Salisbury who became King of Mann). In 1405 Mann was given to Sir John Stanley of Wirral, Cheshire, by the English king and he and his descendants – also Earls of Derby after 1486 – ruled Mann as an absentee lord of a semi-independent kingdom (until 1505) then as a semi-independent lordship until 1736 (a nominal payment of two peregrine falcons were to be made to each English monarch on their accession). The Stanleys were the most powerful landed family in north-western England and their interest in Mann varied, some not even setting foot on the island.

This temporal neglect was replicated in regard of the Manx Church, in 16C the see of Man and Sodor was vacant or in the hands of an absentee bishop. Two Welsh bishops John Meyrick of the Bodorgan family of Anglesey (r.1576–99) and John Phillips (r.1605–33) were to strengthen Church organisation in Mann with the latter even learning Manx in order to preach and also to compose to complete a ‘Mannish’ (to use his term) *Book of Common Prayer* in 1610. This manuscript was never printed in his lifetime due to obstinate opposition from the Manx clergy who were used to making extemporaneous translations of prayers and lessons in public worship and a Manx version of the *Book of Common Prayer* was finally published in 1765 (when Phillips’s version was published in 1895, one of its editors described the translation as simple and direct, and “for the most part, easily understood by those who speak Manx at the present day”). He worked with a Manx assistant to translate the Bible. Whatever literature was written in Manx before his time has not come down to us though it is probable that an anglicised tradition of spelling as existed in parts of Scotland was used. Phillips is thought to have been responsible for having codified this anglicised Manx and improved it with at least one convention the letter <y> for the dull schwa sound thus Manx *Yn Ghaelg* ‘(Manx) Gaelic’ in opposition to contemporary Irish *An Ghaedhealg* ‘(Irish) Gaelic’. Though he had himself learnt some Manx during his long reign, Bishop Thomas Wilson (r.1697–1755), promoted the spread of English and the first-ever Manx book published under his auspices in 1699, a Manx catechism titled *The Principles and*

Duties of Christianity, featured Manx and English side by side in order to promote the learning of English. He had parts of the Bible translated to Manx and under his successor the Manx Bible was completed in 1775.

James Stanley, seventh Earl of Derby (*Yn Stanlagh Mooar* ‘The Great Stanley’ to the Manx) succeeded in involving Mann in the English Civil Wars on the side of the royalists, making the island his base for military operations after 1645. However, the heavy taxing of his subjects to fund the war effort led to the rebellion of William Christian (*Illiam Dhone* ‘Brown William’) in 1651 against the Earl’s wife after he had departed to join Charles II. He surrendered the island to Cromwell’s representatives and succeeded in becoming governor for a while. Shortly after the Restoration and the return of Stanley to the lordship of Mann, he was executed for treason (having mistakenly assumed that the Act of Indemnity applied to Mann as well as England). William Christian remains the subject of nationalist commemoration and continued debate on Mann. In 1736 the last Stanley died without heirs and Mann passed to the Duke of Atholl, his heir sold its sovereign rights to the English Crown in 1766 which as it dealt a blow to the lucrative ‘smuggling’ trade, which had flourished since 17C, would be remembered in Manx as *Yn Chialg Mooar* ‘the great swindle’). Many Manxmen were seamen and some turned to privateering. Wesleyan Methodism arrived in Mann in the 1770s and along with the later Primitive Methodism was to increase its numbers until it gained the adherence of about 40% of the Manx population. Since 1766 the isolation of Mann was breached with bouts of immigration of English from Lancashire as well as bouts of emigration. Tourism from mainland Britain began in the 1830s and Mann became intimately connected with the great port of Liverpool where many Manx people emigrated (a descendant of this Manx diaspora was the Cambridge Celticist Edmund Quiggin (†1920) brought up in Staffordshire, whose mother was a native speaker of Manx, and George Broderick, one of the most distinguished specialists on the Manx language, was born and brought up in the Wirral).

The Tynwald (M. *Tinvaal*), the successor of the Norse parliament of the independent kingdom of Mann (similar in origin to comparable named institutions that existed in the Faeroes and Iceland) but existed through most of the later Middle Ages as a consultative judicial body for the rulers of Mann. The replacement of the Stanleys by the Dukes of Atholl enabled the Tynwald to obtain a veto on taxation, though this only lasted a generation. The assumption of direct rule by the English government in 1766 saw the real powers of the Tynwald wane, and despite organising petitions for greater participation in government was eclipsed by the powers of the Lieutenant-Governors. In 1866 proper elections were held for the office in the Tynwald and a measure of devolution (home rule) was granted. It lost its judicial powers at this time but remained a legislative assembly. The Tynwald is divided between the lower House of Keys and the upper

Legislative Council (though they sometimes sit together). The early 20C saw the House of Keys becoming the dominant element in the Tynwald. Mann was in the economic doldrums, and when the British government relinquished all control over the island's finances in 1958 this allowed the House of Keys to abolish surtaxes in 1962 – at the instigation of a businessman – and then a special relationship was brokered between Mann and the European Union in 1971–72. The decline of the power of the lieutenant-governor, now largely ceremonial, allowed his removal from active government in 1980 and subsequently a ministerial system was consolidated in law in 1986. A Manx nationalist party Mec Vannin nationalist party was established in 1962, which sought independence for Mann and which won one seat at the 1976 election, though the candidate Peter Craine subsequently joined the shortlived breakaway Manx National Party which existed between 1977–81. Mec Vannin have been highly critical of the fact that ruling Manx governments have aimed only for the economic tax haven status for the island, but this attitude slowly changed. The Manx government subsidised the publication of Douglas Faragher's *Dictionary of Manx* in 1979 and in 1992 Manx was introduced as an optional school subject (with this as well as Manx history confirmed by the Education Act of 2001 as optional subjects in all schools).

Up till the 1840s Manx had remained the main language of the island outside Douglas and the main towns, but thereafter within a generation there occurred a language shift towards English so that by 1880 none of the island's children were being raised in Manx. Aware of the decline of the language, some Manx people formed Yn Cheshaght Ghailckagh ('The Manx Language Society') in 1899 to preserve and promote the language and its periodical *Mannin*. The enthusiasts were as much folklorists as revivalists and included Arthur William Moore, Charles Roeder, Sophia Morrison, J. J. Kneen, Mona Douglas. The early revivalists learnt their Manx from native speakers such as Edward Faragher (†1908). The last native speaker, Ned Maddrell, of the rural village of Cregneash in the extreme south of the island died in 1974 (he had been born in 1877 and had learnt Manx from his great-aunt with whom he had been raised). The Irish prime-minister Éamonn de Valera visited the island and called upon Ned personally, he later sent a team from the Irish Folklore Commission in a specially adapted van to make recordings of the last native speakers. There are no longer any native speakers of Manx, but contrary to Cornish, a number of fluent learners who acquired their Manx from the last native speakers and recordings of the last speakers are available (although a debate still persists as to which of these 'imperfect' speakers represented 'genuine' Manx).

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- ‘Mec Vannin’. At < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mec_Vannin >

5.3 IRELAND (17C to the present)

The Flight of the Earls from Ulster in 1607, is viewed as the romantic end of Gaelic Ireland, but though it constituted a milestone, the native Irish had ceased to be independent a few years earlier with the conclusion of the Nine Years’ War in 1603. Confiscations of Catholic lands increased throughout Ireland, a process hastened by the Irish uprisings of 1641–50 (the Cromwellian confiscations) and the War of the Two Kings of 1690–91 (the Williamite confiscations). Lands owned by Catholics went from 90% in 1603 to 59% in 1641 to 22% in 1685 to 14% in 1704 to 5% in 1778. By 18C the ruling class was overwhelmingly English speaking and Protestant whilst the discriminated majority was overwhelmingly Irish speaking and Catholic.

The real significance of the disappearance of the most powerful native rulers of Ulster is that it allowed the greatest of the plantation schemes, that of Ulster, to be put into operation in 1608. The particularity of this plantation is that it was permanently successful in changing the subsequent human face of the north of Ireland, since over 17C many Scottish and English settlers, nearly all Protestant, took over some of the most fertile lands of Ulster and established little Englands and little Scotlands in many parts of the north. The Scottish king, James VI who had ascended the throne of England in 1603 favoured a British identity that could unite both English and Scots (an identity that was of needs Protestant). The descendants of these settlers formed the

Protestant Ulstermen, nowadays, due to their history, the most ardent proponents of the British identity.

Though an English system of government that favoured English speakers and Protestants had been established all over Ireland, the native Irish were far from quiescent. Members of the upper class were resentful of past confiscations and fearful of future ones (English Law was subverted to confiscate lands from them, for example to get officially recognised titles to their lands, Irish landowners had to yield a third of their land to the government). This resentment was also shared by poorer Irish tenants, especially when changes of ownership forced them to move from fertile to less rewarding lands. In fact the actual and perceived misrule of the new Protestant ascendancy (administrators and landowners) affected the Old English, those English descended from medieval English settlers of Ireland, who were concentrated in the Pale area around Dublin. These had in large part remained Catholic whilst trying to maintain a political loyalty to the Protestant rulers of England. The abuses of the central administration also pushed them into rebellion in 1641 in support of the native Irish of Ulster. In fact the 1641 rebellion and the subsequent (Catholic) Confederacy of Kilkenny 1642–49 which ruled most of Ireland in the name of the king but also in the name of Irish liberties was the first time that the ethnic divisions between the English and Irish of Ireland was surmounted, these all now – irrespective of language – accepted their identity as Irishmen (in Irish the terminology for the evolving ethnic identities is clearer, instead of *Gael* ‘(native) Irish’ against *Gall* ‘foreigner, English’, now all could be accounted *Eireannach* ‘Irlander’). Rather than being united by language, ethnic mobilisation now was motivated by religious adherence, this was the origin of the ‘Catholic Nation’ of Ireland. As well as having arisen due to English government neglect, the unification of the ancient ethnic divides was pro-actively inspired by the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Since early 17C seminaries all over the Continent – most notably Louvain in present-day Belgium – brought Irish Catholics of various backgrounds together, a nationalistically-inspired project to publish the Irish dictionaries, histories and Irish saints’ lives was begun. A notable contemporary work was *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (‘A Fount of Knowledge concerning Ireland’) completed about 1634 by the Old English priest Geoffrey Keating from County Tipperary. Many of these works were not published, the reason appearing to be that there was a ban on publishing such works in Ireland itself as well as the fact that the Irish language was beginning to lose its standing vis-à-vis English. Apart from the legal disadvantages now imposed on Irish, were economic reasons the foundation of a network of towns all over the Irish countryside and the strengthening of long-distance trade now incorporated in a transatlantic economy where Ireland lay between England and the rapidly developing American colonies gave English a practical edge over Irish. So the paradox arose that has characterised Ireland ever since: the Irish remained determinedly anti-English in political

terms whilst becoming more and more English in language and in culture. By the end of 17C during the War of the Two Kings (Battle of the Boyne, Treaty of Limerick) the ethnic difference between the native Irish and the Old English was no longer politically relevant.

The 18C was the high point of the Protestant English ascendancy where the native Irish, with few exceptions, formed an underclass unseen by many later historians (the celebrated 'Hidden Ireland' of Daniel Corkery). The economy flourished and the urban centres of Dublin and Cork increased enormously and Belfast had begun to grow. Nevertheless, there seems to have been a higher occurrence of disturbances which took the form of brigandage, rural class unrest, secret societies (tories, raparees in 17C, Houghers 1710s, Whiteboys 1760–80s, Rightboys 1780s, Ribbonmen early 19C. In northern Ireland these secret societies were involved in sectarian troubles: Protestant Peep-o'-day Boys against Catholic Defenders in County Armagh in the 1780s (the masonic Orange Order was a spin-off from the Peep-o'-day Boys and has had a great influence on sectarian events in the north of Ireland to this day). The prevalence of such violent secret societies were precursors to the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB, but more popularly known as the Fenians) which was the precursor of the physical force nationalism of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) of 20C. It seems to be that the proliferation of such societies supplied redress to whole sectors of the Irish population denied of many important legal rights under the Protestant ascendancy imposed on Ireland in 18C and that the historical memory of dispossession in 17C fed a political awareness quite different to many other countries where anglicisation or frenchification was experienced much more as a gradual evolution rather than as a sudden imposition.

The Irish language began to collapse geographically in 18C with the dominant English replacing it, spreading westwards from two centres Dublin in the south and Belfast in the north. By mid 19C Irish was generally only spoken west of a line connecting Waterford in the south to Derry in the north. The Great Famine of 1845–49 dealt a further blow to the remaining western regions, and by late 19C only 15% of the population spoke Irish. It is a paradox that during 19C the period which saw modern Irish nationalism develop, that the Irish language was collapsing before English. Daniel O'Connell, the 'Emancipator', and a popular hero, who succeeded in gaining equal rights for Catholics in 1829, famously dismissed the Irish language as of no worth, despite being himself a speaker. In fact, since late 18C the Irish-speaking population had played a marginal part in Irish politics which has been led, with some exceptions, for the most part by English speakers. Thus patriotic or nationalist climaxes such the formation of Grattan's Parliament 1782–97, the uprisings of the United Irishmen in 1798, that of Emmett in 1803, and that of Young Ireland in 1848, the Fenian attacks in America in 1866–67, the formation of the Irish Home Rule politics after 1870, that of Sinn Féin in 1905, the Easter Rising of 1916, the War

of Independence 1919–21 and the Civil War of 1921–23, were the actions of English-speaking men and organisations, with the Irish-speaking remnants of the Irish population mainly on the sidelines even if they sometimes enthusiastically supported the Irish nationalists. Sometime in 18C, the Irish speakers cease to be representative of the population of Ireland, a fact that is obscured by the succeeding Irish nationalist ideologies that have since 1798 elevated the language to a symbolic status buttressing the right of the English-speaking Irish to claim a nationality for themselves distinct from that of English-speaking Britain.

The modern history of the Irish-speaking population begins in late 19C following the disastrous Great Famine and the then almost certain obsolescence which almost all contemporary observers thought that language faced. The revival of Irish begins with David Comyn and the foundation of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language in Dublin in 1876. The SPIL published books and by 1884 *The Gaelic Journal / Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* the first Irish bilingual periodical. The SPIL campaigned for recognition of Irish in the education system and in 1878 succeeded immediately in getting Irish recognised as an extra-curricular subject (under the title ‘Celtic’). Paradoxically perhaps, progress was more difficult when it came to persuading Irish-speaking parents to demand Irish be taught. In 1880 a more militant association the Gaelic Union hived off the SPIL. Michael Cusack who founded the spectacularly successful Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in 1884 which ensured that Irishmen adhered to native sports such as Gaelic football and hurling rather than English imports (as most of the world would subsequently do) had been inspired by the Gaelic Union and implemented the promoted the use of Irish in its activities. Following a very influential lecture given by Douglas Hyde in 1892 ‘On the necessity for de-anglicising Ireland’, the Gaelic League (*I. Connradh na Gaedhilge*) was founded in 1893 and superseded the previous organisations. Under its dynamic leadership (Hyde, Mac Néill) the Gaelic League blossomed into a mass-movement with over 964 branches all over in Ireland in 1905. The Gaelic League taught Irish as a written language and promoted Irish dances (céilís) and music) to a growing generation of nationalists who were later to achieve independence. Though it was in origin an urban movement which was not particularly strong in the remaining Irish-speaking districts, its employment of travelling teachers in these districts promoted literacy amongst the illiterate native speakers of the west. Local festivals (féis) were organised where Irish had pride of place and between 1904–09 six summer colleges were established in the Irish-speaking districts (now rebaptised – by resuscitating an old word – them as the Gaeltacht ‘Gaeldom’). An annual national festival, modelled on the Welsh eisteddfod was established and baptised An tOireachtas (‘the Assembly’). Two papers *An Fáinne* and *An Claidheamh Soluis* were published by the Gaelic League. By 1900 the Gaelic League’s enthusiasm for the language had won over much of the Irish nationalist movement such as D. P.

Moran's influential *The Leader* and Arthur Griffith's nationalist party Sinn Féin (fd.1905). The Gaelic League succeeded in gaining recognition for Irish as a medium of teaching in Irish-speaking districts in 1904 and as a subject for matriculation at the National University of Ireland in 1913. The success of the Gaelic League in promoting Irish among the Irish nationalists was aided by the swelling of Irish nationalist sentiment at this time, but as its corollary saw it infiltrated by revolutionary nationalists such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and Sinn Féin who used it as a political lever. The president, Hyde, was so dismayed by these developments that went against the non-political/non-sectarian nature of the organisation he had nurtured that he resigned in 1915. However, other Leaguers welcomed the politicisation of the League, chiefly Pádraig Pearse who was to be the leader of the ill-fated 1916 rising.

The Gaelic League was an unusually influential language revival movement and when the independent Irish state was established in 1922, it is the League's policies that were implemented, with Irish becoming a compulsory subject in schools and on bilingual signs. Some financial support was directed promoting Irish in the Gaeltacht districts of the west but most of the more dedicated Irish-language campaigners felt that since the mid 1900s the use of Irish had become emblematic or tokenistic rather than real. The culture of the cúpla focal ('a few words') had arrived whereby all public speakers in Ireland felt impelled to begin a speech with some Irish words before returning to treat serious matters in English. The Gaelic League which had shown so much energy before 1914 dissipated as most members thought the victory had been won and that the revival of Irish could be left in the hands of the government. The Irish scholar Osborn Bergin's commented perceptively in 1927: "today the people leave the problem to the Government, the Government leaves it to the Department of Education, the Department of Education to the teachers and the teachers to the school-children. Only the very young are unable to shift the burden to someone else's shoulders." From having pioneering a language revival movement in the Celtic countries, the post-independence Irish example disappointed not only many Irish people, but also language campaigners from the other Celtic countries who increasingly saw in the Irish experience the counter-example not to follow, including the largely emblematic status of "first official language" accorded Irish by the 1937 constitution.

However, to be fair one must admit that the Irish-language revivalists had an incredibly difficult task in reviving a language that was then spoken only by 14% of the population, by a widely despised underclass in remote areas. In the discourse favoured by the new state attitudes towards Irish certainly improved, but in private a not a few Irish people resented the element of compulsion in the education system and in state employ. This feeling went increasing and by the 1940s some schools which had been Irish-medium became bilingual or abandoned Irish. With the ubiquitous spread of secondary education in the 1960s a short-lived Language Freedom

Movement was established to protest the presence of compulsory Irish in schools and in 1973 the Irish requirement for the secondary school leaving certificate for entry to the civil service was discontinued. During this period the emphasis in the Irish governments' promotion of Irish changed from being a requirement enforced on all citizens to being a choice offered to any group of people who availed of it. Thus, while still being promoted, the Irish language is not at present envisaged by any in Irish government as replacing English. Since the government's discontinuation of the policy of compulsory Irish in Irishing English speakers, Irish-language campaigners have concentrated on the spread of Irish playgroups (*I. naíonraí*) and Irish-medium schools (*I. Gaelscoileanna*) an dpersuading parents that an Irish-medium education is advantageous to promote polyglotism. Aware of the growing importance of the media, Irish language campaigners in Conamara set up a pirate radio station broadcasting in Irish, this succeeded in shaming the government to establish Raidió na Gaeltacht in 1972. A similar campaign to demand a television channel was not so successful and it was 1996 before an Irish-language television channel was established (initially called Teilifís na Gaeilge (TNG), thereafter TG4). Other measures to promote the language were the 1967 the establishment of the research centre Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (Linguistic Institute of Ireland) to advise the government and research questions of language policy and sociolinguistics (but government maladministration meant that it was not running effectively 1974, its first director Colm Ó Huallacháin having resigned in 1971). In 1978 Bord na Gaeilge, a governmental agency, was established established to promote the use of Irish (which was replaced in 1999 by An Foras Teanga which had a remit to promote Irish both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland and which followed on the heels of following the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 which brought the Troubles in Ulster to an end). In 2003 the Official Languages Act was passed in the Republic whose remit was to promote Irish and ensure equal treatment to Irish speakers who wished to be dealt with in Irish by state organisations. The emphasis nowadays is on promoting and persuading not on compulsion and enforcing.

It is no secret that despite the promotion of Irish that the Irish Republic is a largely English-speaking country, nevertheless, according to the 2006 census, 44% (1,860,000) of the Republic's population have Irish. Ever since the establishment of the independent Irish state, census figures have increasingly distorted the number of actual speakers and concealed the drop in native speakers, which can be readily seen from the following table:

	1926	1961	1991
native speaker guesstimates	350K	100K	50K
official census speakers	450K	716K	1095K

The discrepancy at present between the number of native speakers and ‘census speakers’ of Irish is, respectively, something along the line of 1% against 44% of the population (though one can add another 50,000 speakers who have learnt the language and use it regularly spread all over the land to give a total of about 100,000 (2%) of the population who can be termed habitual and proficient users of the language). Interestingly enough the number of census speakers is noticeably higher in the western counties than in the eastern counties, which suggests that the memory of a more recent use of Irish in these areas is a ‘heritage’ factor in motivating people to acquire the language.

Whilst the policy of promoting Irish among English speakers in the Republic as a whole failed to change language use and – with some exceptions – only managed to achieve paper and superficial progress, the story of Irish in the Irish-speaking districts (or Gaeltacht) is markedly different. Whereas the trend towards accepting the Irish language as fashionable developed most early in anglicised urban environments where the language had become so rare that it was exotic rather than opprobrious, negative and disparaging views of the language lasted longest in those areas where the language was spoken, affecting the confidence of the speakers. Nevertheless, the establishment of the independent Irish state gave hope to many native speakers that Irish would at last be respected amongst their fellow citizens, however this hope was not fulfilled and disappointment and hopelessness soon returned. Goodwill to the language among their fellow English-speaking Irishmen did not extend to allowing native speakers to have the career and financial advantages required to promote Irish effectively without prejudicing their own chances. As inhabitants of unimportant and remote rural areas with no separate political representation (there is no elected local government below the county level) the Gaeltacht was always at the mercy of English speakers who were not likely to sympathise with the Irish speakers’ predicament. The support for the Gaeltacht by the central government was often paltry but included some economic subsidies and marketing help in 1925 and a yearly £2 grant in 1934 for children who spoke Irish. These areas continued to be associated with poverty. Occasionally, political agitation would shake off the dominating fatefulness of the Gaeltachts: in the 1930s Muinntir na Gaedhealtachta, a leftist agrarian party, succeeded in getting De Valera to grant land in eastern Ireland for destitute Irish-speaking farmers. The Meath colonies established in 1935 and 1940 were later to be accorded the status of Gaeltacht by the government. Concern with the decline of Irish in the Gaeltacht led in 1956 to the establishment of a ministry for the Gaeltacht and a clearer definition of the boundaries of the Gaeltacht. A growing unease with the effectiveness of the ministry in achieving much for Irish saw the flourishing of a number of Gaeltacht civil rights groups in the late 1960s and 1970s, one of their most important successes

was obtaining the establishment of Údarás na Gaeltacht ('The Gaeltacht Authority') in 1979 with elected Gaeltacht representatives and a move of the ministry offices to Conamara. The finer points of societal linguistics had not yet been studied in the 1920s but it is perhaps illustrative of how neglectful the independent Irish authorities were that it took the Official Languages Act of 2003 to prohibit bilingual naming of place-names within the Gaeltacht and only permit the Irish version. Despite many improvements in the perceived status of Irish and an economic upturn, there are fears that since the 1960s that a language shift is underway amongst the younger generations in most of even the strongest Gaeltachts.

The situation concerning the Irish revival in the northern six counties (Northern Ireland or colloquially Ulster) which had seceded from the impending independent Irish state in 1921 diverged markedly from the Republic. With an inbuilt Protestant majority that did not identify at all with things Irish, but considered themselves British, the large Catholic minority that did consider itself Irish had to contend with a difficult situation in obtaining all the cultural and political elements that were being established in the Republic. The raising of the tricolour flag was treated as seditious by the Ulster government as was the erecting of any Irish-language sign, even for a place-name. Despite the fact that Irish had survived in some pockets (Sperrins, Glens of Antrim, Rathlin Island) the language was deemed "foreign" and had no place in the state education system (though this was offset by Catholic schools). The Catholic minority suffered various facets of discrimination but it is the explosion of the sectarian Troubles (1969–98) which proved a catalyst to language campaigners in Belfast to found an Irish-speaking area in west Belfast around an Irish-medium school and a street in 1969. The Anderstown "Gaeltacht" is a pioneering example of the revival of Irish as a community language but even if it has yet to attain the strength of a traditional Gaeltacht it has proved to be an inspiration and a focus for language activism in Belfast, in Ulster and even in the Republic (witness the publication of *Lá* ('Day') the first-ever daily Irish newspaper).

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