



SCOTLAND AND NATIONALISM

SCOTTISH SOCIETY AND POLITICS 1707 TO THE PRESENT
FOURTH EDITION

Christopher Harvie

**Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details**

SCOTLAND AND NATIONALISM

Reviews of previous editions:

‘...witty, penetrating and frequently provocative overview of Scots culture and politics during the last three centuries.’ *History Today*

‘This is a brilliant book, packed with learning and imagination.’ *The Scotsman*

‘*Scotland and Nationalism* provides a bold and imaginative lead into difficult territory and has more ideas within a page or two than many a definitive work in its entirety.’ *The Times Literary Supplement*

‘...a brilliant book, full of provocative insights.’ *Political Studies*

Scotland and Nationalism provides an authoritative survey of Scottish social and political history from 1707 to the present day. Focusing on political nationalism in Scotland, Christopher Harvie examines why this nationalism remained apparently in abeyance for two and a half centuries, and why it has become so relevant in the second half of the twentieth century.

This fourth edition brings the story of Scottish nationalism up to date, and has been updated throughout to take account of recent historiography. The new edition includes a brand new biographical index of key personalities and a detailed Chronology.

Christopher Harvie is Professor of British and Irish Studies at the University of Tübingen. His other books include *The Rise of Regional Europe* (1993), *Scotland: A Short History* (2002) and, with Peter Jones, *The Road to Home Rule: Images of Scottish Nationalism* (2000)

SCOTLAND AND NATIONALISM

Scottish society and politics 1707 to the present

Fourth edition

Christopher Harvie



LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 1977 by George Allen & Unwin

Second edition published 1994 by Routledge 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire,
OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada by Routledge 270 Madison Avenue, New York,
NY 10016

Third Edition 1998

Fourth Edition 2004

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

“ To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of
thousands of eBooks please go to <http://www.ebookstore.tandf.co.uk/>.”

© 1977, 1994, 1998, 2004 Christopher Harvie

The right of Christopher Harvie to be identified as the Author of this Work has
been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act
1988

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or
by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including
photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission
in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data A catalogue record for this book is available from
the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data Harvie, Christopher T. Scotland &
nationalism: Scottish society and politics, 1707 to the present/ Christopher Harvie. -4th ed. p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index. 1. Scotland-Politics and government. 2.
Nationalism-Scotland-History. 3. Scotland-Social conditions. I. Title: Scotland and nationalism. II.

Title. DA765.H37 2004 320.9411-dc22 2004001262

ISBN 0-203-64846-3 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-61322-8 (Adobe e-Reader Format)

ISBN 0-415-32724-5 (hbk)

ISBN 0-415-32725-3 (pbk)

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
Scotland and nationalism: an introduction to the fourth edition	1
PART I	7
1 The ballads of a nation: political nationalism, 1707–1945	8
2 An achieving society: Unionist Scotland, 1707–1945	27
3 The intellectuals, 1707–1945	60
PART II	84
4 Leaders to no sure land: Unionist Scotland, 1945–79	85
5 Nothing abides: civil society, 1945–79	100
6 A dance to the music of nationalism, 1945–79	121
PART III	141
7 On the eve	142
8 ‘A journey that has no end’: politics, 1979–2000	162
9 Answered prayers	178
<i>Chronology</i>	188
<i>Further reading</i>	194
<i>Index</i>	200

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first edition of *Scotland and Nationalism* was researched and written while I was lecturer in history at the Open University, which kindly granted me study leave and research assistance to study Scottish nationalism and war between 1914 and 1945. I was grateful for the advice, encouragement, criticism and hospitality of Clive Emsley, the late Julie Brotherstone, Jack Brand, Neal Ascherson, the late Graham Martin, John Bright-Holmes, Irene Hatt, Jackie Baldick, Jean Jordan, Gavin Kennedy, Christopher Smout, Tom Nairn, Nicolas Phillipson, Keith Webb, John Simpson, Gordon Brown MP, Owen Dudley Edwards, Henry Cowper, Joan Christodoulou, Chris MacWhirter, Stephen Maxwell, Bob Bell, Robin Cook MP, Angus Calder, the late Ian Jordan, the late Gwyn A. Williams, Geoffrey Best, Ian MacDougall, Arthur Marwick, Robert Tait, Iain McLean, the late Alex Aitken, the late Archie Lamont and the late William Marwick. I also owed much to the staff of the Open University Library, the National Library of Scotland, and Edinburgh University Library.

In revising the text for the second edition in 1993, I was indebted to my editors at Routledge, Claire L'Enfant and Emma Cotter, and Jane Mayer of Tübingen who converted the first edition into a disc for rewriting. This edition benefited a great deal from journalistic and broadcasting assignments, and academic contacts made in the 1980s. So, thanks to: John Milne and Ken Cargill of the BBC, Tom Gallagher, John Osmond, Peter Jones and the late Bobby Campbell of the *Scotsman*, Hans-Gustav Klaus, Ursula Kimpel, Thomas Kleinknecht, the late Allan MacCartney MEP, Bernard Crick, Lindsay Paterson, George Rosie, Jim Ross, Jim Sillars, David Steel, James Douglas-Hamilton MP, Alex Salmond MP, the late John McGrath, Hamish Henderson, Cairns Craig, Paddy Bort and the late Carola Ehrlich. My sister Jane George compiled the index.

Reworking the third edition in 1997–8 was greatly aided by my Honorary Chair in History at Strathclyde University, and in particular my colleagues Hamish Fraser, Richard Finlay and Isobel Lindsay; Ted Cowan, Alex Broadie and Colin Kidd at Glasgow University, Ken Ferguson, Mike Russell, Mark Lazarowicz MP, Anja Sandersfield, Matthias Köthe, Douglas Dunn, Bill Knox and Rab Houston and the late Colin Matthew at Oxford. The more drastic revision of 2003 owes much to James Burnett, Iain Bamforth, Alex Ballantine, Christine Frasch, Allan Massie, and to another Honorary Chair, in Politics at Aberystwyth, and co-operation with Richard Wyn Jones and Roger Scully, Neil Evans, Ieuan Gwynedd Jones and the late Phil Williams AM.

As the 'acknowledgements' in the 1977 edition records, Kenneth Morgan started me off as a Scottish historian. To my original dedication I add his name, and that of his wife Jane. Jane died tragically young, like Kenneth MacKenzie. The contribution of both was such that 'What would they have thought?' remains a touchstone.

SCOTLAND AND NATIONALISM

An introduction to the fourth edition

‘TIS SIXTY YEARS SINCE’

‘The Scottish Parliament, adjourned on the 25th day of March 1707, is hereby reconvened.’ The last word in the celebrations of 1 July, 1999 went to the new Parliament’s oldest member, Mrs Winifred Ewing, and she spun it for all its worth. The Edinburgh day had been one of unusual splendid sunshine. Guns had fired, fighter-planes had swooped, a raggedy crocodile of politicians, clergy, citizens and schoolkids trod from the old Parliament House up the steep and ancient Lawnmarket to the Assembly Hall of the Church of Scotland, past where Montrose had been hanged, where Adam Smith and David Hume had disputed, where Boswell had got drunk and fornicated, and ended up in the Victorian Gothic chamber below Patrick Geddes’ Outlook Tower. First Minister Donald Dewar, gawky and clever, invoked the many voices of the country

...the shout of the welder in the din of the great Clyde shipyards: the speak of the Mearns, with its soul in the land; the discourse of the enlightenment, when Edinburgh and Glasgow were a light held to the intellectual life of Europe; the wild cry of the Great Pipes; and back to the distant cries of the battles of Bruce and Wallace. The past is part of us.

Sheena Wellington sang Robert Burns’ ‘For a’ that’ and the Presiding-Officer’s wife, Judy Steel, subversively distributed its republican text to all the MSPs, so that they could, at first quaveringly, then ‘wi’ the haill voice’, roar out in the Royal Presence:

A prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquess, duke an’ a’ that
But an honest man’s aboon his might—
Guid faith, he maunna fa’ that.
For a’ that an’ a’ that,
Their dignities, an’ a’ that,
The pith o’ sense an’ pride o’ worth
Are higher rank than a’ that.

Mrs Ewing was spinning, but such arts were as old as the nation. The old parliament wasn’t prorogued; it was closed down, or swallowed by the Union Parliament in Westminster, without the Act of Union even being regarded (out of Scotland) as a fundamental law. In April 1945 when Dr Robert MacIntyre had been elected as the first Scottish Nationalist MP at a by-election for Motherwell—my mother voted for him, and I made my political debut at the polling station in a pram—the Anglo-Scot patrician Sir

Harold Nicolson considered him an awkward spectre at the feast of allied triumph, 'a sad nuisance'. We were in a different Union, and an almost unrecognisable world.

'Tis (almost) sixty years since—I use Walter Scott's subtitle for the first of the *Waverley Novels*—and thirty since I first drafted *Scotland and Nationalism*. It has proved resilient. It outlasted the first devolution campaign and stayed in print until the early 1980s, reviving with the cause in 1990, and being extensively revised and reprinted in 1994 and again in 1998. On Routledge's invitation to produce a fourth edition I found myself, so to speak, stripping the vehicle down to find out whether the basic structure of its argument still served.

Obviously, a lot had changed. An autonomous Scotland has been gained, just when in world-political terms the nationalist case has receded, with the onset of an uncontrollable, technology-driven globalism, in part Scots-created. At the same time, 'the politics of identity' have re-created the nation as a surrogate for a troubled civil society: not always a positive prospect. Tom Devine's *The Scottish Nation*, launched with great success in the immediate aftermath of 1 July 1999, stressed the themes of land and people and the democratic intellect, and ended as heartwarming as Madame Écosse, though more careful about the facts. My analysis has been darker: you could not 'create the modern world', then become in short order 'workshop of the world' and 'that distressed area', without sustaining collateral civic and social damage.

Why did *Scotland and Nationalism* have this staying power? Stylistically, perhaps, because it stemmed from an earlier age of communicated history—of George Dangerfield, G.M.Young and A.J.P.Taylor—when it was important to seize the reader's attention and keep it. Although not a conventional narrative—political, social and intellectual themes ran in parallel—it was intended to provide a 'rounded' portrait of the country. In this my inspiration and indeed model was Scott's *Waverley Novels*, with Carlyle's remark in mind that Scott wrote of 'living men...not protocols, state papers and abstractions'. This was what I tried to do with the industrial and social change to which the book responded, while at each stage analysing the way in which it was interpreted. In this sense *Scotland and Nationalism* was in the tradition of 'improvement', assuming on the same rationalist grounds that made for the Union, that an autonomous political structure would have to be achieved to safeguard its achievements, and mitigate the damage it left.

This led to me reconsider my own output, whose reception seemed oddly lopsided. Since 1977 I had produced two further Scottish histories which had likewise been successes—*No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Scotland since 1914*, published in 1981, has also gone through three editions; *Scotland: a Short History* published in 2002 has already topped 10,000 in sales and translations are planned. But, and here was the puzzle, I had seen these as continuous with absorption in British history, through five books. *The Lights of Liberalism* (1976) was a study of democratic British nationalism and its capture by the Oxbridge élite; *The Centre of Things* (1991) dealt with the unique power of fiction as a convention of British politics, *Fools' Gold* (1994) covered the remarkable survival of the union state in the last quarter of the twentieth century, bankrolled by oil. Each was written in far different circumstances and well-received by the critics, in one case forming the basis for a television series. *North Britain: West Britain*, a 'take' on the morphology of the union state which stresses the technological and civic dynamism of its Atlantic coast, will shortly appear from Oxford. These have been published in the south,

have sold reasonably and kept me happily on the lecture circuit. All have suggested the centrality of nations and regions to the matter of Britain, yet their impact has been moderate, compared with my Scots titles. A study of transport in British politics and culture, *Derailed*, I converted into a polemical short book, *Deep-Fried Hillman Imp: Scotland's Transport*, which had considerable success, made me President of the Scottish Association for Public Transport in 2002, and contributed to the impact of the Greens and Scottish Socialists in the 2003 elections.

So in Scottish terms a modest civic success. In the British context a critical success, but falling short of my ambition to get public discourse to focus on the centripetal and centrifugal impulses in British society from the industrial revolution onwards. Episodically, British society seemed broadly to allow the interpretation I had (somewhat pessimistically) suggested. But the Cassandra-voice was not listened to, and the old masters—Hobsbawm, Thompson, Taylor, Samuel—of the 1970s were now all but silent. Their vogueish successors seemed to form a sub-sect of the celebrity cult, rather than enhance the profession. I could quarrel legitimately with Tom Devine; but with Simon Schama, Linda Colley or Niall Ferguson I—and I think most Scots historians—felt myself facing the *spinmeisters* not of British history but of London media politics.

Devolution had, paradoxically, accompanied an unprecedented Scots colonisation of the upper reaches of government, not just under New Labour, but under their hapless Tory predecessors. At the same time, metropolitan interest in Scotland or Wales—even given a stillfulminating situation in Northern Ireland—waned to near-vanishing-point. A book which started as an attempt to provide an intellectual justification for a decentralised, federalised reorganisation of Britain—something also worked out in a Fabian Tract of 1983, *Against Metropolis*—ended with its author regarded as an intellectual proponent of the break-up of the state.

A self-fulfilling prophecy? This new introduction was first drafted on a weekend which saw huge demonstrations in London, and indeed throughout Europe, against an imminent war with Iraq. Tony Blair faced a Scottish Labour Party disastrously split, and an opposition to the war which seemed, in Scotland, universal. The rapidity of the American elimination of Baath forces frustrated a nationalist success which had seemed inevitable only weeks earlier, but the British situation was no longer stable. The economy was severely damaged, and this discredited Gordon Brown, ‘strong man’ both of the government and of Scottish politics. The Liberal Democrats had opposed Labour over Iraq, and although they remained in coalition the outlook was profoundly uncertain as the book went to press.

THE NATIONAL DIMENSION

As for nationalism, few ‘isms’ experienced more exciting decades. It was on the move in the 1960s with decolonisation, and strengthened in the 1970s with the moral crumbling of the great powers: the USSR in Czechoslovakia, the USA in Vietnam. Yet it was also countered by supra-national evolution in the shape of European union, and the energy that Jacques Delors injected into the project. For a time, around Maastricht in 1988 ‘subsidiarity’ seemed to point towards a regional renaissance, but the pendulum of ethnicity swung back a year later with the collapse of Communist East Europe at the

moment of its triumph in 1989–90, and the sudden vitalisation of Stalin's repertoire of phoney national assemblies. Yet even this was shortly and simultaneously assaulted by the global and the sectarian: the first essentially created by new technology, the second reacting to the overstretch of national institutions and the greatest migrations since the 1940s.

'Twas ever so? This stimulated a debate, in great measure centred in Scotland. Tom Nairn had started cosmopolitan in 1969, then shifted to regionalism. By the 1990s he was foregrounding nationalism as the essential political premise: both as a means of mobilisation and of keeping the beast of atavism under restraint. But what sort of nationalism? And where did Scotland's own version lie in a calibration which ran from city state to empire? The idea of the 'people in arms' entered the vocabulary after the French Revolution. It was largely of the left, but Scots had for half a century borne arms only under the Union Jack. Linda Colley elaborated on this in *Britons* (1992): protestantism and trade glued Britain (or at least mainland Britain) together, and expanded along evangelical lines into Empire. This gave a partial context: post-imperialism might account for the gathering pace after the 1950s, but Colley was sketchy about industry, the real locomotive of change in 1800s Scotland. Was the sort of polity that evolved at that time a hybrid, composed of Scots and English—as well as British—nationality, along with elements of imperialism, the city state and of a sort of proto-globalism, evidenced by the multi-national firm and the socialist movement? This will be the burden of a forthcoming study *North Britain: West Britain*, shortly to appear from Oxford University Press. It covers the western littoral from Cornwall to the Clyde, and is correspondingly complex. At its zenith in Scotland, however, this suggested a binary pattern: the export of a socio-economic revolution which became cosmopolitan, along with the contemporaneous development of a local populism which was acted as a means of defence against it. This was the dichotomy between 'red' and 'black' nationalism that Gwyn Williams noted in Goya's Spain in its resistance to Napoleon: nationalism as moderniser versus nationalism as particularist reaction, and I found it a useful means of exploring the mentalités of intelligentsias who saw nationalism as a way out from being sidelined by class politics, yet also fretted at the conservative implications of ethnicity.

The title of the first edition could almost have been *Scotland and Britain*: its purpose being to demonstrate that the 1707 Union wasn't a take-over of Scotland by England, but an essentially federative arrangement, which granted the Scots considerable cultural and economic autonomy, while opening to them the advantages of trade opened up by the union state. A form of 'indirect rule' in the classic imperial sense? Not quite, for the controlled were also to a great extent the controllers. My Part I showed how the Scots used empire as a springboard for social advance, while consciously finessing their nationalism to suit their pragmatic requirements. This led to a portable, resilient ideology which maintained identity while switching on or off at will the traditional components of the culture, to trim the vessel.

And vessel it quite literally was. The second chapter examined the pillars of a unionism fashioned by trade and its technologising through steam power: what Patrick Geddes called the 'palaeotechnic era'. The third concentrated on the ability of a particularly flexible intelligentsia to rationalise and exploit the union, while maintaining the self-confidence of the nation. The zenith of this performance corresponded with Britain's imperial grandeur: the crisis which brought *Scotland and Nationalism* into print

came about as imperialism ended. MacIntyre's short-lived success came only two years ahead of the end of the Indian Raj. So Part II, 1945–79 was inevitably about the career of nationalist grievance in a centralised, interventionist state whose frontiers were steadily narrowing.

All of this seems pretty commonplace now. It was not, in 1976. Yet it has kept its topicality, and I have to ask myself why? Of other accounts, Christopher Smout and John Prebble (at his best, well-documented as well as vivid) have stayed in print, but economic histories have been either short-lived or of purely Scottish interest and the same has happened to sociologists and political scientists. To the old staples of the wars of Independence, Mary Queen of Scots and the Jacobites has been added the Enlightenment, recorded particularly enthusiastically in America. *Scotland and Nationalism*, by attempting to mediate between politics, economics and intellectual history while providing a strong narrative drive, sustained a thesis borrowed from that grim Victorian rationalist Mark Pattison: that a mode of discourse depended on a particular milieu or 'way of seeing'—religious, imperial, social-democratic. When that weakened or died up, intellectuals made off in other directions, and in the multi-national British context, with social development in the four kingdoms never uniform, the metropolis could always draw on 'advanced' provincial intelligentsias.

Part III came when the book's original thesis—that the British state would have to open itself up to provincial identities and economies—seemed quickly subverted by an 'ism' which was dynamically centralist yet anti-collective. Yet within a decade Thatcher had succumbed to a *putsch*, and shortly afterwards her historic party faced extinction. The thornwood gave way, and Sleeping Beauty awoke again. This suggested at the time a blow-by-blow narrative of a constantly-changing situation, but by 2003 certain relationships had reasserted themselves, albeit in a more malignant constellation. The devolved parliament proved underpowered and accident-prone, but this didn't enhance Westminster; as systematically ignored by the Scots as by Tony Blair. 2003 saw the limits of this elitism, and the 'collapsibility' of the British system became embarrassingly apparent. It seemed therefore time to unpick and rearrange the 1979–2004 narrative and look at where the nations were headed.

It was not a simple or promising juncture, the fate of Scotland in a globalising economy, and the political history of the infant parliament could incubate what might prove to be the final British crisis. Understanding it, and prescribing for it, meant understanding parallel dualisms between the cosmopolitan and the native, the individual and the social. But the *praxis* of the settlement was familiar from the thinking of one European socialist 'discovered' by a Scot—Hamish Henderson—and influential in Scotland in the 1970s: Antonio Gramsci. Leader of the Italian Communists until his imprisonment by Mussolini, Antonio Gramsci was a Sardinian—from the Italian equivalent of the Highlands. Influenced by Croce, he challenged Marx's crude generalisations about nationalism, by examining the way in which the masses were persuaded to integrate themselves in the 'civil society' (a phrase originating in eighteenth-century Scotland) which sustained the dominant political and economic groups. He attributed this critical function to the intellectuals, whose history thus becomes the key to understanding why nationalist movements emerge.

Or do not emerge. For the uniqueness of Scotland lies in the power of a civil society divorced from parliamentary nationalism, and in an intelligentsia which, lacking a

political centre, was divided between two loyalties. Back to Gwyn A. Williams—another Gramsci man, this time Welsh. The red Scots were cosmopolitan, self-avowedly enlightened and, given a chance, authoritarian, expanding into and exploiting bigger and more bountiful fields than their own country could provide. Back home lurked their black brothers, demotic, parochial, sensitive about community to the point of reaction, but keeping the ladder of social promotion open, resisting the encroachments of the English governing class. In uneasy alliance, they controlled the rate of their own assimilation to the greater world, the balance which underlay their integration in ‘Britain’; they also guaranteed a moral purposiveness which went beyond nationalism, something recognised by one of its most uncomfortable products, Thomas Carlyle:

A country where the entire people is, or even once has been, laid hold of, filled to the heart with an infinite religious idea, has ‘made a step from which it cannot retrograde’. Thought, conscience, the sense that man is denizen of a Universe, creature of an Eternity, has penetrated to the remotest cottage, to the simplest heart.

After the Second World War, the balance changed. The attractions of ‘Britain’ declined with the effectiveness of the economy and the political elite; insensitive attempts at social engineering, right and left, brought the Union to a state in which its stability fluctuated from year to year, and sometimes from by-election to by-election. One cannot understand the intricacies of current politics without a backward glance at nearly three centuries of unionism—and at a Scottish history which both deeply influenced the idea of nationalism and rarely conformed to its orthodoxies. The Scots have, man for man, probably done more to create the modern world than any other nation. They owe it an explanation.