

The Expatriate Scots Community on Merseyside

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I

Like many former imperial powers, Britain has a long history of immigration, and there is a considerable literature on immigrant groups within British society. Much of this has focused on black and minority ethnic groups,¹ but there have also been studies of European minorities such as the Armenians and the Maltese.² Within the U.K. there have been studies of Irish migration to mainland Britain,³ but studies of internal movements by the Scots, the Welsh, and the English are much less common. This paper seeks (in part) to remedy this by focusing on an expatriate Scottish community within England. This gap in migration research is slightly surprising. There have been numerous studies of Scottish migration overseas,⁴ but relatively little attention has been paid to the movement of Scots within the United Kingdom. Holmes, for example, in his detailed study of migration to Britain, deals extensively with the Irish, even though prior to 1920 such migration was internal to the U.K., but

¹ For example D. Hiro, *Black British, white British* (London, 1971); C. Peach, *West Indian migration to Britain* (Oxford, 1968); S. Patterson, *Dark strangers* (London, 1963).

² V. Talai, *Armenians in London: the management of social boundaries* (Manchester, 1989); G. Dench, *Maltese in London: a case-study in the erosion of ethnic consciousness* (London, 1975).

³ e.g. T. M. Devine, *The Scottish nation, 1700–2000* (London, 1999), chapter 19.

⁴ *Ibid.* chapter 20; G. Donaldson, *The Scots overseas* (London, 1966); J. Hunter, *A dance called America: the Scottish Highlands, the United States, and Canada* (Edinburgh, 1994).

says little about other national groups.⁵ The Irish were distinctive but were not alone in forming clear cultural groupings.⁶

Merseyside provides a good focus for migration research. The prosperity of the area from the eighteenth century onwards, particularly in shipping and commerce, resulted in extensive migration from within the U.K., from Europe, and from the colonies. Some of the studies of the Irish in Britain deal in varying degrees of detail with the Merseyside perspective.⁷ There have also been studies of the sectarianism which arose as a result of the Irish presence in Liverpool.⁸ The Welsh have also been studied, for example in Pooley and Doherty's detailed work on the movement of Welsh families to English towns, using Census enumerators' books, as well as in Roberts's work on Welsh influences in Liverpool industry.⁹

Most recently, there has been considerable research on the black and minority ethnic communities on Merseyside, some of it historical,¹⁰ some focusing on individual communities such as the black Afro-Caribbeans and the Chinese.¹¹ Other work has explored social and political perspectives of ethnicity, such as the role of race

⁵ C. Holmes, *John Bull's island: immigration and British society, 1871-1971* (Basingstoke, 1988).

⁶ R. Lawton and C. G. Pooley, *Britain, 1740-1950: an historical geography* (London, 1992), p. 205.

⁷ e.g. K. O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain* (London, 1972); *The Irish in British labour history*, ed. P. Buckland and J. Belchem (Liverpool, 1992).

⁸ J. Bohstedt, 'More than one working class: Protestant and Catholic riots in Edwardian Liverpool', in *Popular politics, riot, and labour*, ed. J. Belchem (Liverpool, 1992); P. J. Waller, *Democracy and sectarianism: a political and social history of Liverpool, 1868-1939* (Liverpool, 1981).

⁹ C. G. Pooley and J. Doherty, 'The longitudinal study of migration: Welsh migration to English towns in the nineteenth century', in *Migrants, emigrants, and immigrants: a social history of migration*, ed. C. G. Pooley and I. D. Whyte (London, 1991), pp. 143-73; T. A. Roberts, 'The Welsh influence on the building industry in Victorian Liverpool', in *Building the industrial city*, ed. M. Doughty (Leicester, 1986), pp. 106-49.

¹⁰ e.g. A. Murphy, *From the Empire to the Rialto: racism and reaction in Liverpool, 1918-1948* (Birkenhead, 1995); I. Law and J. Henfey, *A history of race and racism in Liverpool, 1660-1950* (Liverpool, 1981).

¹¹ D. Frost, 'West Africans, black Scousers, and the colour problem in interwar Liverpool', in *Black presence in the North West*, ed. J. Manley (Salford, 1995), pp. 50-7; M. Christian, 'Black struggle for historical recognition in Liverpool', *ibid.* pp. 58-66; M. L. Wong, *Chinese Liverpoolians* (Birkenhead, 1989); I. L. Lynn, *The Chinese community in Liverpool: their unmet needs with respect to education, social welfare, and housing* (Liverpool, 1982).

in the political life of the city.¹² Finally, the Commission for Racial Equality has conducted various studies and investigations of discrimination and disadvantage.¹³

II

If Merseyside was an area of extensive immigration, then Scotland has long been a country of emigration with a large 'diaspora' of expatriates scattered across the globe. Studies of Scottish emigration reveal something of a paradox. During the nineteenth century, it was part of a broader movement of people out of Europe. Among sixteen western and central European countries studied by Baines, three—Ireland, Scotland, and Norway—dominated in terms of emigration.¹⁴ Indeed in 1913 Scotland had a higher rate of emigration than any other European country, even excluding Scots emigration to England. The paradox lay in the nature of the exporting country. Almost all major groups of western European emigrants originated in agrarian economies, notably Italy, Spain, and Portugal in addition to Ireland and Norway. Yet the economic circumstances were entirely different in Scotland.

Emigration . . . expanded rapidly just as indigenous employment opportunities became more available and standards of living rose moderately in the later nineteenth century. The transformation of the economy enabled additional numbers to be fed, clothed and employed. Scottish population as a result rose from 1,265,380 in 1755 to 4,472,103 in 1901. But it was precisely in this period that more and more decided to leave. Between 1825 and 1938, 2,332,608 people departed Scotland for overseas destinations. No other industrial society in Europe experienced such a haemorrhage.¹⁵

That is not to say that there was no agrarian emigration from Scotland; on the contrary, large numbers of people moved out from the Highlands, particularly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as land was cleared for sheep and deer farming. In contrast, central Scotland expanded considerably, offering opportunities for

¹² G. Ben-Tovim and others, *The local politics of race* (London, 1986).

¹³ Commission for Racial Equality, *Race and housing in Liverpool: a research report* (London, 1984).

¹⁴ D. Baines, *Migration in a mature economy* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 10.

¹⁵ T. M. Devine, 'Introduction: the paradox of Scottish emigration', in *Scottish emigration and Scottish society*, ed. T. M. Devine (Edinburgh, 1992), p. 2.

employment in mining, steelmaking, shipbuilding, and engineering. A further paradox of Scottish emigration therefore is the fact that, while many Scots were leaving the country, migration into Scotland was actually increasing. Patterns of population movement were therefore extremely complex.

Some of the Scots who moved to England were entrepreneurs seeking to invest in business, and Liverpool, with its developing commercial and shipping interests, was an attractive destination. There were also opportunities in the professions, because the Scots education system in the nineteenth century was undoubtedly superior to that of England. The Scottish universities were strong in science and medicine, and many Scots in England had moved south to become lawyers, politicians, and especially doctors.¹⁶ Many Scots, simply, liked to be mobile. There was a long tradition of movement by Scots to the colonies, and cultural factors, notably their religious and educational background, may have led Scots to seek self-advancement more readily than others. This may have led to a greater propensity to emigrate in search of appropriate opportunities.¹⁷ Some Scots opted for mobile forms of employment, such as hawking or peddling: 'in Manchester at the beginning of [the twentieth] century, "Scotsman" could still mean a hawker peddling wares from door to door'.¹⁸

III

Although migration to the cities was a significant feature of Victorian urbanization, at a local level the process has been only partially documented. According to Holmes,

Liverpool, for example, has accommodated Africans, Chinese and Jews as well as a traditionally large Irish element, but a general history of immigrants in Liverpool concentrating on numbers, social structure, varieties of cultural life, and their complex range of relationships with the receiving society has never been attempted.¹⁹

¹⁶ V. G. Kiernan, 'Britons old and new', in *Immigrants and minorities in British society*, ed. C. Holmes (London, 1978), p. 43.

¹⁷ M. Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Edinburgh, 2001); R. H. Campbell, 'Scotland', in *The Scots abroad: labour, capital, enterprise, 1750-1914*, ed. R. A. Cage (London, 1985), pp. 1-28.

¹⁸ Kiernan, 'Britons old and new'.
¹⁹ *Immigrants and minorities*, ed. Holmes, p. 18.

Early studies of migration to Merseyside tended to focus on Census data, and it has long been clear that the conurbation's growth was heavily dependent on migration, particularly from Ireland.²⁰ Yet in comparison with other large English cities, the Scots community in Liverpool was also significant. Table 1 shows the numbers of Scots-born residents in Liverpool and selected other northern English cities from 1851 to 1991. As might perhaps be expected, the proportion of Scots-born was greatest in Newcastle, within easy reach of the Scottish border, but numerically the Scots in Liverpool were more significant until the 1950s. In terms of Scots-born as a proportion of the total population, Liverpool was consistently in second place to Newcastle before the Second World War. After the war Liverpool lost its position, perhaps because its economic decline meant that it was no longer a city which could offer adequate employment opportunities.

In terms of location within Liverpool, Pooley's work on the 1871 Census has identified the main areas of non-English settlement. The Irish core area was in north-central Liverpool, which was an area of mainly high-density, substandard housing. Many of the Irish there were unskilled, presumably obtaining employment in the docks. There was also a second, mainly skilled working-class group of Irish who were located more evenly across Liverpool, notably in the Everton district. Everton, which was then an area typified by medium-density terraced housing, was also the main focus of Welsh settlement, while there were other smaller Welsh communities in central Liverpool and in the southern suburb of Toxteth Park. The main concentration of Scots was to the north of the city in Kirkdale, a mainly working-class area but ranging from poor-quality housing near the docks to middle-status housing further east. The Scots therefore spanned a range of social areas in north Liverpool. There was, however, a separate cluster of high-status Scots in the Mount Pleasant and Princes Park areas.²¹

Pooley suggested that the Scots in Liverpool did not form such an

²⁰ R. Lawton, 'Genesis of population', in *A scientific survey of Merseyside*, ed. W. Smith (Liverpool, 1953), pp. 120-31; K. G. Pickett, 'Migration in the Merseyside area', in *Merseyside social and economic studies*, ed. R. Lawton and C. M. Cunningham (London, 1970), pp. 108-48.

²¹ C. G. Pooley, 'The residential segregation of migrant communities in mid-Victorian Liverpool', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, II (1977), pp. 364-82.

TABLE 1 *Proportion of Scots-born in selected English cities, 1851–1991*

Year	Liverpool		Newcastle		Manchester		Leeds		Sheffield		Birmingham	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1851	9,242	3.6	5,745	6.5	3,209	1.4	1,268	0.7	642	0.5	1,100	0.5
1861	17,870	4.0	4,981	4.6	7,971	1.7	1,402	0.7	1,060	0.6	1,432	0.5
1871	20,394	4.1	8,906	6.9	7,176	2.0	2,198	0.8	1,414	0.6	1,545	0.4
1881	20,434	3.7	8,732	6.0	6,089	1.8	2,654	0.9	1,594	0.6	1,667	0.4
1891	15,276	2.9	11,085	5.9	7,599	1.5	3,347	0.9	1,696	0.5	2,007	0.4
1901	16,998	2.5	12,031	5.7	7,515	1.4	3,911	0.9	2,213	0.6	2,335	0.4
1911	14,275	1.9	11,990	4.5	9,065	1.3	3,678	0.8	2,395	0.5	2,184	0.4
1921	12,301	1.5	10,278	3.7	8,239	1.1	3,873	0.8	2,643	0.5	4,809	0.5
1931	10,340	1.2	8,780	3.1	8,473	1.1	4,315	0.9	2,496	0.5	5,670	0.6
1951	8,192	1.0	7,443	2.5	9,018	1.3	6,338	1.2	3,699	0.7	13,005	1.2
1961	6,700	0.9	6,096	2.3	8,756	1.3	6,813	1.3	3,794	0.8	13,139	1.2
1971	5,350	0.9	4,840	2.2	9,155	1.7	8,085	1.6	4,365	0.8	11,960	1.2
1981	3,951	0.8	5,672	2.1	7,571	1.7	11,193	1.6	4,214	0.8	11,422	1.1
1991	3,277	0.7	5,571	2.1	6,864	1.7	9,955	1.5	4,269	0.8	9,793	1.0

Source: Printed Census reports.

obvious 'ghetto' as the Irish or Welsh, perhaps reflecting the range of occupations which they entered. The absence of a Scottish quarter may account for the fact that the Scots' contribution to Merseyside life has been relatively poorly documented. Also, unlike the Irish and Welsh, the Scots were not distinguished from their English hosts by religion and language; some researchers have focused on the Irish precisely because they could be so distinguished.²² Although some Scots would have spoken Gaelic, the vast majority used English as a first language and would have been more quickly integrated into the Merseyside community.

Although the Scots tended not to locate in identifiable parts of Liverpool, they appear to have operated more as a 'community' than the Irish, not least because of the importance of Scottish organizations within the city. This paper seeks to explore this expatriate community, focusing on three main areas. First, although the Scots were (in the main) Protestant, they did have their own churches, which formed an important community focus throughout Merseyside. Secondly, 'Caledonian' societies and other social and charitable groups which existed were similarly significant. Thirdly, some Scots became politically active, particularly in Nationalist politics. The contribution of Scots was of course wider than this, many playing a significant part in Merseyside's industrial and commercial expansion. There were also many Scots doctors in the area, playing a key role in medical developments in Liverpool. But these are not specifically dealt with here, not least because the Scots involved in these ways appear to have operated as individuals and did not necessarily contribute to the Merseyside Scots community as such.

The paper also seeks to explore the extent to which these Scottish organizations remain relevant today. In some parts of the world, notably in North America, expatriate Scots have renewed their interest in their ancestry, and Scottish social organizations and Highland Games have undergone a significant revival.²³ The most striking example of this revival of interest in 'Scottishness' has been the designation by the U.S. Senate of 6 April each year as Tartan Day, in recognition of the Scottish contribution to America and the American Declaration of Independence. There is therefore considerable evidence that, even after several generations, the interest of expatriate Scots in their Scottish heritage remains high. It is not

²² J. K. Walton, *Lancashire: a social history, 1558-1939* (Manchester, 1987), p. 183.

²³ E. A. Donaldson, *The Scottish Highland Games in America* (Gretna, LA, 1986).

clear, however, that such a level of interest is found in expatriate Scottish communities in England.

IV

Although the Scots were Protestants, they nevertheless retained their distinctive Church adherence in their expatriate communities. Donnachie, writing of Scots in Australia, for example, refers to 'education, culture and the Kirk—those three great manifestations of Scottishness overseas'.²⁴ In a more detailed study of Scots in America, Donaldson discusses the ways in which they carefully fostered, and sometimes exaggerated, what they could preserve of Scottish life and Scottish ways:

Not least significant was the retention of many of the characteristics of Scottish church life. The rigid discipline of the Presbyterian system was maintained in the United States at least as long as it lasted at home. Antiquated customs in worship survived . . . In America, as in Scotland, church services were provided in Gaelic for highland congregations.²⁵

In England, the first Scots Presbyterian meeting house was established in Wiltshire as early as 1566,²⁶ so it is unsurprising that the 12th earl of Derby, speaking at a St Andrew's dinner in 1792, commented on the lack of a Scots kirk in Liverpool. This stimulated a number of Scots living in the city to form a society to fund the building of such a church in Oldham Street, which was opened in 1793.²⁷ In 1812 a 'Caledonian' school was added, and by 1824 there were 170 boys and 90 girls on the school roll.

In keeping with the schisms and secessions within the Church of Scotland, it was perhaps inevitable that a secession would occur in Liverpool. In 1808 a group broke away to establish a second congregation, also operating a Sunday school which in 1824 had

²⁴ I. Donnachie, 'The making of "Scots on the make": Scottish settlement and enterprise in Australia, 1830–1900', in *Scottish emigration*, ed. Devine, pp. 135–53.

²⁵ G. Donaldson, *The Scots overseas* (London, 1966), pp. 124–5.

²⁶ K. Macleod Black, *Scots churches in England* (London, 1906), p. 36.

²⁷ D. Thom, 'On the Scotch kirks and congregations in Liverpool', *T.H.S.L.C.*, II (1849–50), pp. 69–84, 229–31, on which the present article depends heavily for information before 1854. Although much controversy surrounded Dr Thom, he wrote in a very objective and factual manner without attempting to justify his own views.

98 on the roll. A new building was completed in Mount Pleasant in 1826. Music in worship was a major controversy among Presbyterians and its use in services at Mount Pleasant caused a further breakaway in 1831. A further dispute in the Oldham Street kirk over a ministerial appointment resulted in a third breakaway group, which constructed St Andrew's Church of Scotland, Rodney Street, opened in 1824. In 1872 a Sunday school was built in the grounds. Churchgoers in north Liverpool found it difficult to travel to Oldham Street or Rodney Street and another church, dedicated to St Peter, was opened in 1843 in Scotland Road, a district then largely occupied by businessmen, but which soon changed its character as cheap high-density houses were built to accommodate immigrant workers at the north docks.

As a result of the Great Disruption in the established Church of Scotland in 1843, most Scots churches in England severed their connections with it, a development reflected in Liverpool by further secessions. In 1845 a chapel in Myrtle Street, dedicated to St George, was established by a group from Rodney Street, and in May of the following year a church was opened in Canning Street by a group from the Oldham Street congregation after a bitter legal battle. St George's was the first Presbyterian church in Liverpool to have an organ, an innovation which caused some members to leave and eventually set up the United Presbyterian Church in Bootle in 1860. St George's never really recovered from their loss. In 1856 the synod of the Presbyterian Church in England declared that 'the introduction of instrumental music in public worship is not approved by this church', although such resolutions were finally rescinded in 1870. Meanwhile, an organ had been installed at St Andrew's, Rodney Street, in October 1865.²⁸

The Canning Street church was described by *The Porcupine* as the church where the 'well-to-do leading Caledonians of Liverpool' worshipped,²⁹ but it was also deeply involved in social work. A Presbyterian Young Men's Evangelical Association was formed in 1845 for the distribution of tracts among the poor of the town and also organized Sabbath schools. In 1847 it engaged a teacher to teach reading to ragged children in the evenings, and from 1853 it acquired an old auction mart in Harrington Street where it operated a day school. In 1858 a Wesleyan chapel was purchased and

²⁸ *Canning Street church*, p. 116 (pamphlet in Liverpool Central Library).

²⁹ *The Porcupine*, 5 May 1878.

activities included Sunday services, meetings for religious instruction, entertainment (lectures, readings, and music), a mothers' meeting, evening school, a Band of Hope (and later Temperance Society), and a reading room which was open every evening.³⁰

Meanwhile, Scots Presbyterian influence was also strong in Wirral. In Birkenhead the foundation stone of St Andrew's church in Conway Street was laid on 31 May 1839 and the church was opened the following year.³¹ There was a church school, St Andrew's Higher Grade Presbyterian School, adjacent to it.³² More churches were built as the population moved away from the centre of Birkenhead, in Tranmere, Egremont, and Claughton.³³ Trinity Presbyterian church, Egremont, was also heavily involved in social work at its Seacombe mission from 1859, ministering to what the church's own historian called people 'mostly of a rough illiterate type'.³⁴ To uplift them there was a very full programme of activities including tract and Bible distribution, a Sunday school, temperance work, a mothers' meeting, and a sewing class ('to induce habits of industry and thrift among young women', as 'the young women of Seacombe had many temptations' and it was 'intended to help them meet these'). There was also a youths' fife and drum band, a day school from April 1863, adult evening classes, a reading and recreation room, Sunday services, household weekly prayer meetings, and a penny savings bank.³⁵

An event of national importance occurred on 13 June 1876 in Liverpool, when the English congregations of the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church of Scotland met to form the Presbyterian Church of England, after which it is difficult to identify churches as specifically 'Scots kirks', apart from those in connection with the established Church of Scotland, which formed its own Scottish synod in England in 1851.³⁶ Scots did continue to play a prominent part in establishing further Presbyterian churches in the suburbs, and in 1906 K. Macleod Black commented that 'Liverpool shares with Newcastle the honour of being the most Presbyterian

³⁰ *Canning Street church*, p. 121.

³¹ Black, *Scots churches in England*, p. 312.

³² *Canning Street church*, pp. 13–14, 20.

³³ *Gore's Liverpool directory* (1859).

³⁴ *Seacombe Presbyterian church, 1862–1937* (Wallasey, 1937), p. 11.

³⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 18–26.

³⁶ Black, *Scots churches in England*, pp. 22–3.

town in the north of England' and noted that 'many English Presbyterian ministers are Scots'.³⁷

It took some time for St Andrew's, Rodney Street, to recover from the loss of members to St George's, but its fortunes were revived during the ministry of the Revd James Hamilton (1894–1935). Quarterly services in Gaelic, addressed by invited Highland ministers, were well attended,³⁸ and in 1907 Oldham Street kirk closed and its congregation was welcomed to St Andrew's. Indeed, it is amazing that two kirks of the Church of Scotland, less than a quarter of a mile apart, had survived for so long. James Hamilton was well known in Liverpool and in 1926–7 held the prestigious office of president of the Athenaeum. After the Second World War St Andrew's experienced considerable decline, its reduced congregation no doubt reflecting the declining number of Scots on Merseyside. The church itself began to fall into disrepair, and by 1975 the congregation was seeking alternative premises.³⁹ On 5 November 1983 the building was severely damaged by fire and has stood derelict ever since. Meanwhile the St Andrew's congregation has since 1975 used the Western Rooms of the Anglican cathedral for Sunday worship.

Thus, while the presence of Scots kirks has in the past been of great social, as well as religious, importance on Merseyside, the declining number of adherents suggests that the kirks are becoming significantly less important as symbols of Scottish society in the area. Their decline may also reflect the reduced numbers of Scots migrating to Merseyside.

V

Perhaps in keeping with the stereotype, Scots emigrants were often very active in establishing social clubs and Highland Games and maintaining traditional festivities.⁴⁰ As Hunter points out in relation to the Scots of Glengarry county in eastern Ontario,

It is a simple matter to make fun of the enormous pomp and ceremony surrounding events like the Glengarry Highland Games . . . But to adopt such an attitude is simply to demonstrate one's own failure to comprehend

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 338.

³⁹ *Liverpool Echo*, 4 Aug. 1975.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 29.

⁴⁰ Donaldson, *Scots overseas*, pp. 124–5.

the distinction between symbol and substance. What is being celebrated . . . is the profound sense of community generated over the last two hundred years in the homesteads and the villages established with such difficulty in this little bit of North America . . . what matters . . . is the opportunity which such an event provides each year for many thousands of men and women . . . to renew their acquaintance with the place which, for several generations, their people have called home.⁴¹

As noted earlier, Highland Games and other Scottish organizations in America have experienced a revival, as expatriate Scots have taken a renewed interest in their heritage.⁴² It may be, however, that distance lends a certain enchantment to concepts of the 'home country', and the view of Scotland possessed by expatriates may not be a very accurate one. Nevertheless, even in England, where expatriate Scots are perhaps less likely to adopt such a rosy view of their homeland, Scottish clubs and societies are of great social significance.

The oldest Scots society on Merseyside is the Liverpool Caledonian Association, formed for charitable purposes in 1869: to give relief in Liverpool and district to Scots or those of Scottish descent, who from sickness or other cause needed assistance. Little is known of its early work but its relief committee met twice weekly to consider applications for regular and casual payments, the money for this being raised largely through subscriptions. Another Liverpool charity, largely supported by Scots, was the Liverpool Sheltering Homes, established by Louisa Birt, a member of the congregation at Fairfield Presbyterian church. Appalled at the poverty which she saw in Liverpool, she opened the first Liverpool Sheltering Home in Byrom Street in 1873. Ten years later, a Sheltering Home for girls was established near Myrtle Street, with adjacent land later acquired for a new home to replace the Byrom Street premises.⁴³ An advertisement for the Sheltering Homes in 1908 stated that 'over 200 fresh children are received each year. Over 180 emigrate yearly and are placed in comfortable homes with Canadian families of good standing and repute.' Boys between 10 and 12 and girls between 4 and 16 were accepted for the homes and 'in addition to ordinary school instruction, the girls have cooking,

⁴¹ Hunter, *Dance called America*, pp. 86–7.

⁴² Donaldson, *Scottish Highland Games in America*; C. Ray, *Highland heritage: Scottish Americans in the American South* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2001).

⁴³ 'Louisa Birt: children's home founder', *Liverpool Citizen*, 14 Jan. 1888, p. 154.

laundry and “cutting out” lessons, while the boys have carpentry classes and training in the management of horses and cattle’. A donation of £12 would defray the cost of emigration for one child.⁴⁴ There was never any religious discrimination in helping destitute children, though that gave rise to accusations that the homes were being used to subvert Roman Catholic children.⁴⁵

The first Scottish social society on Merseyside was the Liverpool and District St Andrew Society, founded in 1890. It started as a pipe band, but diversified to include both social evenings and outdoor activities such as rambles. It was joined in 1896 by the Liverpool North End and District Scottish Association, founded in Bootle. Birkenhead and District St Andrew Society was formed in 1918, St Helens and District Caledonian Society in 1922, the Liverpool Burns Club in 1924, the Liverpool Scots Association in 1925, the Liverpool Scots Society in 1926, and Wallasey Caledonian Society in 1932.⁴⁶ The Liverpool Burns Club seems to have developed from a group which had been meeting annually since 1859, when it was suggested that meetings might be more frequent and include socials, rambles, and lectures on Scottish subjects.⁴⁷ It is surprising that no society was formed in Birkenhead before 1918, as Scots had always had an influence on the town, most notably through William Laird, who founded the town’s shipyard. Indeed, it was probably the strength of Scots sentiment locally which resulted in the tremendous popularity of a then unknown performer named Harry Lauder, who sang a repertoire of Scottish songs at the Argyle Theatre in Birkenhead in January 1898, for a fee of £4 per week.⁴⁸

The minute books of the St Helens and District Caledonian Society for 1932 give a good picture of its activities, which included a regular dancing class, a New Year party consisting of a whist drive and dance costing 2s. 6d., a St Andrew’s Night lantern lecture on ‘Primitive life in the Highlands’, a Burns Dinner at a local hotel costing 3s. 6d., and a dramatic society and concert party which put on an annual show. From the beginning benevolence played a major part in the society’s activities and the minute books list the following grants and gifts:

⁴⁴ *Gore’s Liverpool directory* (1908), p. 2263.

⁴⁵ *The Porcupine*, 2 Dec. 1892.

⁴⁶ George Penman: personal communication.

⁴⁷ Hazel Bishop: personal communication.

⁴⁸ Carol E. Bidston, *Birkenhead of yesteryear* (Birkenhead, 1985), p. 18.

- £1 1s. to purchase a corset for the crippled daughter of a poor family in the town
 10s. 6d. to the St Helens Poor Children's Holiday appeal
 £1 1s. to the annual Poor Children's Christmas Party
 5s. and 1s. respectively to two poor Scots travelling through the town
 £21 to the St Helens and District Nursing Association to furnish a bedroom in the Nursing Association Building
 £5 to the Y.M.C.A towards a new Boys Club building (presented in person by the president's wife to Princess Helena Victoria on her visit to St Helens)
 £1 1s. to the refurbishment of the Burns Mausoleum⁴⁹

By 1927 there were many similar societies throughout Lancashire and Cheshire, and, at a meeting in Preston attended by ten societies, the formation of a federation was agreed in principle. The ten original member societies included three from Merseyside (Birkenhead St Andrew, Liverpool Scots Society, and St Helens and District Caledonian), and in September Liverpool and District St Andrew was also admitted. A practical outcome of the September meeting, in Blackpool, was an agreement to compile a list of speakers and singers for Burns Dinners.

In the early years of the Federation attempts to introduce Scottish cultural activities met with limited success. At a meeting in December 1928 it was agreed to organize a Highland Games, held in July 1929 at Morecambe, with the duke of Atholl as Chieftain. A singing competition for boys and girls was held, in conjunction with the Wallasey Musical Festival in October 1930, but attracted very few entries. Attempts to establish an essay competition for under-16s in 1929 had little more success, possibly because of the rather unimaginative subjects chosen, 'The character of Rob Roy as depicted by Sir Walter Scott' in the first year and 'The Scot as an Empire builder' in the second. In the third, the more straightforward 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' was set. An adult competition was introduced too, the set piece being 'The life and work of Sir Walter Scott'. Bowls and golf competitions were also introduced but they too met with a poor response. Rather more successful was the idea of making the annual general meeting into a weekend conference, the first being held in Southport in June 1931 and including supper dances and a Highland Games.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Mrs E. Adam (St Helens): personal communication.

⁵⁰ *Lancashire and Cheshire Federation of Scottish Societies, 1927-1977* (50th anniversary brochure).

During this period there were other Scottish societies on Merseyside which were somewhat different in character. When the *Liverpool Echo* quoted Hamish Rae, secretary of the Burns Club, as saying that the 'Scottish clubs in the city were mainly dance societies', it provoked an angry reply from Samuel Munro, secretary of the Wallace Society of Liverpool, pointing out that his own society was a national one, where 'we discuss questions on every phase of Scottish National life—social, religious, political, industrial and, when necessary, religious'.⁵¹

The local branch of the Wallace Society may have been formed after a dispute in the Burns Club, of which Samuel Munro had once been secretary, and it seems to have been relatively short-lived. Programmes for its annual Burns Dinners survive from 1927 to 1933 and give some indication of its distinctiveness. While the other Merseyside Scots societies were non-political, the Wallace Society had Scottish Nationalist sympathies. There was no Loyal Toast, the main toast being to 'Scotland: A Nation' (or 'Scotland Yet'), with a further toast to 'Our Celtic Kinsfolk'. Notable speakers at these dinners included Councillor David Logan (later M.P. for the Scotland Division of Liverpool and leader of the Irish Nationalist Party), various Welsh nationalist leaders, and Matthew Anderson, a person of some importance in the city as head of the Liverpool Organization Ltd. This body had been set up in 1923 by local businessmen, to advance the interests of Merseyside by encouraging businesses to move into the area and by staging events to project the city's image. It was established as a limited company in 1928 and funded with subscriptions from over three hundred companies and grants from local authorities. The high point of the Wallace Society's existence was probably its 1931 Burns Dinner, when the toast to the Immortal Memory was given by no less a person than Christopher Murray Grieve (the poet Hugh MacDiarmid), who lived in Liverpool for about a year, working as publicity officer for the Liverpool Organization. It was in Liverpool that he did much of his work on one of his great poems, 'To Circumjack Cencrastus'.⁵²

About 1929 graduates of Edinburgh University formed their own

⁵¹ *Liverpool Echo*, 19 Dec. 1930.

⁵² Wallace Society menus of annual dinners 1927, 1929, 1931, 1932, 1933; Hugh MacDiarmid, *Lucky poet* (London, 1972), pp. 41, 105; *The Liverpoolian*, Jan. 1934; *Liverpool Daily Post Supplement* 1927, p. 35; Alan Bold, *MacDiarmid: Christopher Murray Grieve, a critical biography* (London, 1988), pp. 245–6, 255, 259–60.

club in Liverpool, and former pupils of George Heriot's School, Edinburgh, resident in Liverpool set up the Liverpool Heriot Club and considered extending membership to all former pupils of Scottish schools living in the area. The fact that societies with such exclusive membership were considered viable gives some indication of the number of exiled Scots on Merseyside at the time. Scots were also active in sport, and their numbers led to proposals to form a Liverpool Scots Sports Club in 1934, under the title of Liverpool Caledonians. The main mover behind the scheme was Andrew Sim, an Aberdonian and amateur footballer. Writing to the *Liverpool Echo*, he described his ideas:

There are 30,000 of the clan on Merseyside and, properly organized, they should make a fine sporting body. We have nothing of the calibre of London Caledonians; no rugby team similar to London Scottish; in fact Liverpool does not offer facilities to Scottish sportsmen. There are possibilities of this being remedied; a group of enthusiastic Scots being hopeful of forming a first class football team to compete with the best of Merseyside amateur sides and in time, perhaps with the best of London and the rest of Britain . . .⁵³

London Caledonians at this time played in the Isthmian League.

A committee was formed in July 1934 and, interestingly, the formation of the Liverpool Caledonians coincided with the launch of a 'Young Wales' team which later became Liverpool Welsh. The long-term aim was to become active in various sports but, unsurprisingly, the Caledonians began with football, entering teams in local Challenge Cups in 1934–5. The team played a number of friendlies over the next three or four years and entered cup competitions but it is not clear if it played regularly in a local league. The plan to move into other sports was frustrated by the onset of the Second World War, and the organization effectively folded.

In the immediate post-war years several new Scottish societies were formed on Merseyside, in Crosby, West Derby, Southport, Deeside, Maghull, and Wirral, reflecting the general movement of population away from the inner suburbs.⁵⁴ Many of the events which the Federation had tried to organize in the inter-war years

⁵³ *Liverpool Echo*, 23 May 1934.

⁵⁴ *Lancs. and Ches. Federation, 1927–1977*; George Penman: personal communication.

now became firmly established features. The first musical festival was held in Warrington in 1951, with competitions in singing, Scottish country dancing, and elocution. In later years the scope was extended to include public speaking, essay writing, instrumental music, crafts, and cookery, and the event was held at venues throughout the Federation's area.⁵⁵ The first of the annual Highland Games was held in July 1951 in Liverpool. After using various other venues, the Games were held at Stanley Park, Blackpool, in 1962 and have been held there almost every year since. The Federation's annual general meeting developed into a weekend residential conference, with a civic reception, dinner, ball, and church service; since 1962 it has always been held in Fleetwood.⁵⁶

The Federation's main charitable effort, a scholarship fund, was set up in 1937. In 1948 it became known as the Student Aid Fund and grants were made to children of members of any affiliated society in need of help with their education. By 1972 it was felt that it had outlived its usefulness and was wound up.⁵⁷ (This was a time when most university students with reasonably frugal tastes could survive on their local education authority grants).

Like most cities, Liverpool has had a number of pipe bands. Pipe-Major Angus Macleod founded the Clan Macleod Pipe Band, whose annual Highland Ball was held in the magnificent setting of St George's Hall from the end of the Second World War to the 1960s. The spectacle of dancers and pipers made it one of Liverpool's major social events, and the galleries were crowded with spectators.⁵⁸

The range of Scottish organizations on Merseyside—social, musical, and sporting—has therefore been extensive, reflecting the size of the Scottish community in the region. There are signs, however, that reduced migration from Scotland to Merseyside is having an impact on the size and viability of such organizations. Without an influx of new 'immigrants', the Scottish community is ageing, and second- and third-generation Merseyside Scots appear to have become assimilated within wider Merseyside society and to be less likely to celebrate their Scottish ancestry. This is in contrast to the U.S.A., with its development of Tartan Day and a continued interest in Scottish ancestry and genealogy.

⁵⁵ Lancs. and Ches. Federation, *Musical Festival Programme*.

⁵⁶ *Lancs. and Ches. Federation, 1927-1977*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Programme, Highland Ball*, 3 Jan. 1953.

VI

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Scots became more involved in British politics. Scots moving to England were increasingly in the position of having fellow countrymen sufficiently highly placed in politics to act as influential patrons.⁵⁹ Many Scots, having been actively involved in the Independent Labour Party or the wider labour and trade union movement, became similarly involved in English labour politics; others embraced Scottish nationalism. Harvie refers to expatriate Scots as being nostalgic—there were supporters of Jacobitism in both America and Australia in the nineteenth century—or straightforwardly radical, with little time for tradition. He notes that the Scottish National Party has rarely received widespread support from Scots overseas.⁶⁰

During the inter-war period, however, there were Scots in Liverpool who retained an interest in politics, specifically related to the growth of Scottish nationalism. It would have been pointless to stand for election in Liverpool, and instead they developed a network of political societies and debating clubs. Mention has already been made of the Wallace Society of Liverpool, founded in the late 1920s with decidedly pro-Nationalist sympathies. The precise dates of its operation are unclear, but its secretary, Samuel Munro, was still writing letters to the local newspapers in spring 1935. Munro himself died in 1938 and the Wallace Society is believed to have folded with the outbreak of the Second World War.

Its origins should perhaps be seen against the background of Scottish politics in the period. The cause of Scottish Home Rule had been espoused by the Labour Party in the period before and after the First World War, by individuals such as Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald, but once Labour took office other social issues came to be seen as more important. Hardie and MacDonald represented English constituencies for the bulk of their careers, which deprived them of a Scottish power base. Separate organizations were therefore established in Scotland to pursue the nationalist cause, merging in 1928 to form the National Party of Scotland, later the Scottish National Party (S.N.P.), in 1934. An S.N.P. branch was established

⁵⁹ L. Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707–1837* (London, 1994), p. 124.

⁶⁰ C. Harvie, *Scotland and nationalism: Scottish society and politics, 1707–1994* (London, 1994), p. 65.

in Liverpool around 1934 and was in existence until the beginning of the 1950s. Its secretary was Andrew Sim, a native of Aberdeenshire and close friend of Samuel Munro of the Wallace Society.⁶¹

Sim and Munro made extensive use of the local press to publicize Scottish issues. One of their most ingenious tricks was the invention of the Anglophile A. MacAndrew Fraser, whose letters appeared regularly in the columns of the local press, mocking the Nationalist cause. One of Fraser's letters would inevitably stimulate Munro or Sim to reply on behalf of the Wallace Society or the S.N.P., and the correspondence would continue until brought to an end by a weary editor. In fact, A. MacAndrew Fraser was simply Andrew Sim's *nom de plume*, using a relative's address in Birkenhead. While the correspondence clearly provided some amusement for those involved, the need to invent a figure like Fraser in order to prolong it may indicate a genuine lack of interest in Scottish nationalism among other expatriates on Merseyside. It is unclear, for example, how many members the Liverpool S.N.P. branch actually had, as no records have survived. Nevertheless, there were high points, notably in March 1935 when prominent Scottish and Welsh nationalists met at a private conference at the city's Adelphi Hotel. The duke of Montrose, president of the S.N.P., chaired the meeting, accompanied by prominent S.N.P. office-holders from Scotland. The Welsh Nationalists were represented by their vice-president, Professor J. E. Daniel of Bangor, the national organizing secretary, J. E. Jones, from Caernarfon, and other members of their executive. No statement was issued at the end of the meeting, and it is difficult therefore to establish its significance.

Because the Liverpool branch of the Scottish National Party was operating 'in exile', it was unable to become involved to any great extent in the Nationalist campaigning which was becoming more significant north of the border. Nevertheless, some campaigning was undertaken. During the 1930s many Scots had moved to Merseyside to obtain work, but returned home to their families in Scotland at weekends. S.N.P. members regularly leafleted evening trains to Glasgow, before their departure from Exchange Station, drawing attention to the economic circumstances which forced so many Scots to work at a distance from their family homes.

After the Second World War the level of local political activity

⁶¹ Rest of section based on personal communications from Andrew Sim.

involving Scots appears to have reduced significantly. The Wallace Society ceased to exist and, although the Liverpool S.N.P. branch continued in existence into the 1950s, it too ceased to function; without a formal organization in place, there was no profile for Scottish interests. Partly, this may simply have reflected migration patterns, with fewer Scots moving to Liverpool in the post-war period. The Scottish interest was maintained through the surviving social clubs and societies but they had no political profile.

VII

This paper has explored the significant Scots community on Merseyside by focusing on the range of distinctive Scots organizations within the area, notably the kirks, social clubs, and political organizations. We now attempt to draw some conclusions from our study.

It is clear that the Scots have been a distinctive group on Merseyside, but they have largely been neglected in comparison with the Welsh and the Irish. Work on the Scots in England generally is curiously limited, with Cage's relatively brief chapter in his own edited book one of the few general accounts.⁶² Many Scots emigrated to England, as elsewhere, in search of improved financial and employment opportunities. Thus:

Scotland was still a poorer society than England and the difference between opportunities at home and abroad was greater for the Scots. Quite simply, they had more to gain by emigration. The proof of this was the enormous migration from Scotland to England before 1900. For the period 1841 to 1911, according to one estimate, about 600,000 Scots-born persons moved to England and Wales. This was around half of the total net emigration from Scotland in the nineteenth century and was not paralleled by any similar movement from south to the north.⁶³

Migration to Liverpool was significant from all parts of the British Isles. In 1871 only 29 per cent of Liverpool household heads had actually been born in the city. A further 12 per cent came from elsewhere in Lancashire and Cheshire, but the majority came from

⁶² *The Scots abroad: labour, capital, enterprise, 1750-1914*, ed. R. A. Cage (London, 1985).

⁶³ *Scottish emigration*, ed. Devine, p. 12.

further afield, with 24 per cent from Ireland.⁶⁴ There were, however, important differences between the Irish, Welsh, and Scottish communities on Merseyside. The Irish are generally accepted as having been much poorer, as well as culturally distinct from the host society. The Welsh were not as economically constrained as the Irish but were usually from north Wales and were often Welsh-speaking. They therefore formed a separate community because of their cultural coherence. The Scots fall somewhere between these two groups. Most spoke English and most were Protestants, although their faith was Presbyterian rather than episcopalian. As shown earlier, there were large numbers of Scots churches on Merseyside, which played an important role in Scottish society in the area. In economic terms, the Scots were generally successful and played a major part in the commercial life of Merseyside. They also had an important professional status, particularly in medicine. Devine refers to this so-called 'brain drain' as having been a feature of Scottish emigration since medieval times.⁶⁵ As an expatriate community, the Scots thus had high status and played a significant role in their host society. But while many would have increasingly felt British, it was important for them, as Colley has pointed out, to be Scottish as well.⁶⁶ Because the Scots were not spatially segregated, institutions became highly significant in helping to maintain their Scottishness, including the Kirk, Scottish societies and clubs, and organizations like the Liverpool Scottish Regiment. Thus the Scots, unlike many other immigrant communities, have not relied on geographical propinquity in order to maintain their distinctiveness and their traditions.

The preservation of Scottish distinctiveness may also have been quite consciously achieved. Many immigrant groups seek to maintain their identities by being consciously oppositional to their host society.⁶⁷ Some individuals, self-consciously Scottish, might determinedly choose marriage partners from the same tradition,⁶⁸ and

⁶⁴ R. Dennis, *English industrial cities of the nineteenth century: a social geography* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 34.

⁶⁵ *Scottish emigration*, ed. Devine, p. 5.

⁶⁶ Colley, *Britons*, p. 373.

⁶⁷ C. W. J. Withers, 'Class culture and migrant identity: Gaelic Highlanders in urban Scotland', in *Urbanising Britain: essays on class and community in the nineteenth century*, ed. G. Kearns and C. W. J. Withers (Cambridge, 1991).

⁶⁸ M. Gray, 'The course of Scottish emigration, 1750-1914: enduring influences and changing circumstances', in *Scottish emigration*, ed. Devine, pp. 16-36.

such intermarriage has helped to give reality to the notion of a Scottish 'community'; personal knowledge suggests that this has indeed taken place.

The maintenance of the Scottish community on Merseyside as a distinctive entity in the future will depend on two things. The first is the extent to which the children and grandchildren of Merseyside Scots continue to feel 'Scottish' and wish to continue an involvement with Scottish-led organizations. If the second and third generations become assimilated over time within wider Merseyside society, then this will not happen. The second is the extent to which the existing Scots community is 'renewed' by new migrants to the area.

In relation to the first point, assimilation takes place at different rates and to different extents, and is dependent on the motivations of both sides. Stopes-Roe and Cochrane point to the expectation that settlers in Britain will cast off their original culture and adapt to British ways. This invention of 'Britishness', they suggest, is a device by the English to incorporate Scots, Welsh, and even some Irish into 'the nation'.⁶⁹ Younger people may assimilate more quickly than their elders. On the other hand, as Holmes has pointed out, such assimilation has been affected by improved communications from the late nineteenth century onwards, which has helped many migrants to preserve their homeland links. One consequence of this has been that some migrants, as individuals, have felt stranded as marginal people, 'straddling two cultures and belonging fully to neither'.⁷⁰ There is no doubt that many Scots—at home as well as in England—did indeed subscribe to this notion of 'Britishness', but Scotland was close enough for expatriates to return regularly and maintain contact with their homeland. They may have been helped in this by a particularly strong sense of identity. Recent research into Scottish identity has shown that, in comparison with Basques and Catalans who, like the Scots, are located within a larger nation state and who have devolved rather than independent government, Scots have much stronger feelings of separate identity, most feeling more Scots than British.⁷¹ While this may be a more recent phenomenon, linked to political changes in Scotland and the establishment of a

⁶⁹ M. Stopes-Roe and R. Cochrane, *Citizens of this country: the Asian-British* (Clevedon, 1990).

⁷⁰ Holmes, *John Bull's island*, p. 293.

⁷¹ A. Brown, D. McCrone, and L. Paterson, *Politics and society in Scotland* (2nd edn, Basingstoke, 1998), chapter 9.

Scottish parliament, nevertheless it suggests that the rates of assimilation of Scots into English society would be very variable.

The second issue is whether cultural differentiation might be reinforced with the arrival of new migrants. As Dench has shown in relation to the Maltese community in London, declining migration leads to the probability that 'any real ethnic grouping here will soon have ceased to exist'.⁷² As shown earlier, the influx of Scots to Merseyside has fallen dramatically in the post-war period, mirroring the declining opportunities within the Merseyside economy, but also reflecting economic changes in Scotland. With the collapse of the old heavy industries and the development of electronics and oil-related employment, the Scottish economy has changed significantly. The political changes reflected in the establishment of the Scottish parliament may mean that emigration will decline, as it has done from the Irish Republic. It seems unlikely, therefore, that there will be any major new influx of Scots to Merseyside in the foreseeable future.

As far as Scottish institutions on Merseyside are concerned, many of the various clubs and societies still exist, although the membership is ageing and newer members are less likely to be first-generation Scots. Many of the Scots kirks have ceased to exist, and, although there is still a Church of Scotland congregation in Liverpool, its former building is semi-derelict. The decline in the Scottish presence is visible, at a very simple level, in the social life of the city. There were Scottish dinners and Highland balls through to the 1960s and they were a colourful part of the Liverpool social scene. Popular Scottish entertainers visited the city, Andy Stewart and the White Heather Club filling the Royal Court Theatre for a two-week stretch, and Jimmy Logan touring in Scottish comedy plays. It seems inconceivable that such audiences could be found for similar shows today.

Thus it seems that, like the Scots in Canada and America,⁷³ the Scots on Merseyside will continue to mark their presence by meeting in their clubs and societies and, for a small minority, by attending the Church of Scotland. Expatriate Scots societies in other parts of the world have survived for many generations and there seems no reason why Merseyside should be an exception. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that the Scottish community on Merseyside will be

⁷² Dench, *Maltese in London*, p. 206.

⁷³ Hunter, *Dance called America*.

renewed by new immigrants and, as it ages, it looks likely to contract. Future generations will probably become more assimilated into the host society and the Scots will become less obviously differentiated from the rest of the local community. Constitutional change within the U.K. may have an impact on emigration in the future and it will be valuable to revisit the Merseyside community to examine the impact of these wider political changes.