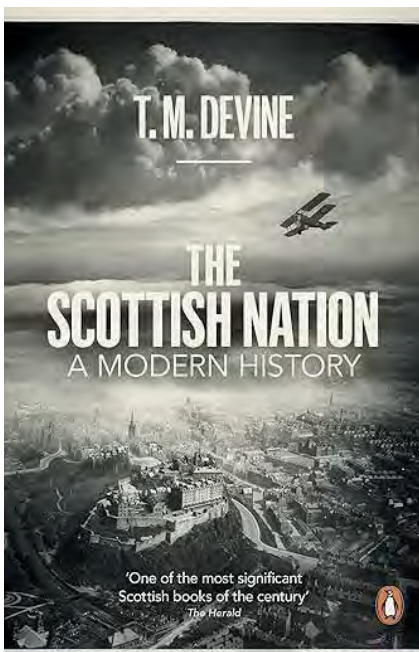


Gordon Craigie



An independent mind...

This month, I'm revisiting yet another pivotal part of Scotland's history as an English/British colony – how did it happen in the first place?



The Scottish Nation, by Tom Devine
Penguin Books

This was a naked piece of economic blackmail designed to bring the Scottish parliament swiftly to the negotiating table

AS THIS IS THE LAST edition of *iScot Magazine* that will bounce through your letterbox or magically appear on your tablet before the 2026 Holyrood election, it would be fair to assume that what follows will be a detailed examination of what is being promised by our independence-supporting politicians and, equally importantly, what is being threatened by our Unionist opponents. You should know me better than that by now dear reader! Instead, to misquote Laurel and Hardy, I think it's the perfect time to reflect once again on how exactly we got into this fine mess in the first place – why exactly is Scotland in the Union?

Things looked so rosy back in 2021 as we headed into that Holyrood election with Nicola Sturgeon's cast-iron guarantee – no ifs, no buts, no maybes – that an SNP Government would deliver a second referendum. Indeed, we only had to wait a year before the date was set – 19 October 2023... we all remember only too well what happened next! Her ill-conceived masterplan to assert Scotland's right to legislate for a referendum without the permission (!) of the English/British Government by appealing to the UK Supreme Court, an English/British state construct deliberately initiated to circumvent Scots law, was doomed from the outset. The chaos that has caused within the independence movement is only now beginning to clear, and next month we'll see if we've recovered our mojo.

Anyway, back in early 2021, based on that promise of an imminent second referendum, I was optimistically (naïvely?) setting out this explanation of how we were where we were which, sadly, is as relevant today as it was five years ago...

IN HIS CLASSIC book *The Scottish Nation*, Scotland's foremost historian Professor Tom Devine explains how Scotland was coerced into the Union of 1707:

On 5 February 1705 the [English] House of Commons passed legislation which would help to shape the entire future of the United Kingdom. The Alien Act recommended to Queen Anne that commissioners be appointed to negotiate for Union between England and Scotland and, if the Scots did not comply and if discussions were not advanced by Christmas Day 1705, severe penalties would be imposed. All Scots, except those living in England, would be treated as aliens and the major Scottish exports to England of coal, linen and cattle would be suspended. This was a naked piece of economic blackmail designed to bring the Scottish Parliament swiftly to the negotiating table; north of the border the first response was one of outrage.



The Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton. © Crown copyright: National Records of Scotland

But how exactly did it come to this? The precise details of much of the origins of our nation may be lost in the mists of time but there appears to be a general acceptance that the country we now know as Scotland began to be established when the Gaels and Picts came together under Kenneth MacAlpin in the ninth century. Despite the turbulent times, Scotland gradually stabilised, made peace with her English neighbours (Treaty of York, 1237) and reclaimed the Western Isles from Norway (Treaty of Perth, 1266). But the English were still keen to expand their influence beyond the agreed border...

Historian Jenny Eeles, who transcribes and collates historical documents on her website www.rsh.scot, has an impressive collection of contemporaneous accounts from the 1700s and 1800s and has provided many of the extracts quoted in this feature. She takes up the story: "In 1290, King Edward I of England, after adding Wales to his dominions, decided that he was also to be recognised as Overlord of Scotland. He was taking advantage of a break in the Scottish line of succession due to the untimely death of Margaret, the granddaughter of King Alexander III who died in 1286, and the subsequent confusion caused by there being thirteen rivals contesting the now vacant Scottish throne. Edward's attempt to annexe Scotland was to lead to the First War of Scottish Independence, between 1296 and 1328.

"By this time the Catholic church had begun the Crusades, which stated that any Christian nation was able to, conscience-free, enact war against any other non-Christian country and take possession of that place. [Scotland was deemed non-Christian as Robert the Bruce, King of Scots, had been excommunicated by the Pope for not making peace with England!] Edward had obtained a Papal Bull allowing him to enter and take control of Scotland by whatever force necessary. To counter this, Robert the Bruce sent the Declaration of Arbroath to the Pope declaring Scotland's history as a Christian nation, over which no ruler of England had a claim.

"Edward's has been the prevailing sentiment of those in authority in England [ever since] who struggle to see Scotland as anything more than a province that should be under their control. However, his grandson, Edward III, was less inclined this way, leading to the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton in April 1328, which recognised Robert the Bruce as our king, the kingdom of Scotland

Edward had obtained a Papal Bull allowing him to enter and take control of Scotland by whatever force necessary

as being an independent nation and established the border between Scotland and England."

... the King of England declared for himself and his heirs that the kingdom of Scotland shall remain for ever to the great prince, Lord Robert, by the grace of God illustrious King of Scotland, and that Scotland shall be separated from the Kingdom of England, and from all claims of subjection or vassalage.

(A. Whamond, 'A History of Scotland: From the Earliest Times to the Union of the Crowns', 1881)

So, the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton should have been the end of it, allowing Scotland and England to peacefully coexist as neighbours without constantly waiting for the next threat of invasion. And yet, as this newspaper quote from 1869 demonstrates, it was far from the end of the matter...

The English in the 13th century demanded that Scotland should acknowledge their Kings to be Lords Paramount over the whole island; and in the 19th century the same spirit led these assuming Southerners to speak and write as if that demand had never been resisted, and as if they had swallowed us up when the Union was consummated as the boa constrictor swallows a rabbit.

(Glasgow Herald, 8 February 1869)

Jenny continues: "In 1603, the Union of the Crowns saw the King of Scots, James VI, ascend also to the throne of England on the death of their Queen Elizabeth I. Although he was still our king, he moved to London with the promise to return to Scotland every three years – he was to return only once, in 1617. However, regardless of this joint monarchy, Scotland maintained a separate legislature to England.



King James VI and I

When James VI fell heir to the English throne the first step was taken towards the union of the two hitherto hostile countries. All in the island fondly hoped that the long struggle, beginning with Edward I, had now reached a close, as the annexation of Scotland, which had been so covetously desired by the English for centuries, was now attained, and by a process alike honourable to Scotland and beneficial to England.

(C. Waddie, 'How Scotland Lost Her Parliament', 1891)

"In the immediate run-up to the signing of this Union there was a lot of back and forth and antagonism between Scotland and England. In 1688, when James VII was dethroned due to his post-Reformation Catholic tendencies, William of Orange and James' daughter Mary were chosen as his successors, being his nearest Protestant relations. Then, in the final decade of the 1600s, there were two further significant events – in 1692 there was the Massacre at Glencoe and, in 1698, the now infamous Darien scheme...

The failure of the Darien expedition greatly embittered the minds of the Scots against the English, and this unfortunate state of feeling was intensified by the cruel and unjustifiable massacre of Glencoe - a barbarous act that will leave an indelible stain upon the memory of William; for, in spite of his apologists, there can be no doubt in the mind of any reasonable man that he not only gave orders for the military execution, but approved of it.

(C. Waddie, 'How Scotland Lost Her Parliament', 1891)

"The Darien scheme was a Scottish attempt at trade expansion but was seen by the English as being detrimental to, competition for, and a threat to English trade. With specific regard to Darien, in a bid to maintain their trading monopoly, various English parties took it upon themselves to persuade and convince those English and Dutch investors involved in the scheme to back out. Many commentators have been forthright about the English role in the failure of the Darien scheme."

English mercantile jealousy, and the king's indifference to Scottish interests.

(R. Chambers, 'Domestic Annals of Scotland', 1885)

There was no decline in Scottish shipping activity until 1681... On the whole, Scottish merchants were making a living and were quite remote from any prospect of a great crash...

In a bid to maintain their trading monopoly, various English parties took it upon themselves to persuade and convince those English and Dutch investors involved in the scheme to back out

They complained, of course, and especially about the navigation act, but their main grievance against it was that in English law Scotland was made a foreign country for the purposes of trade. Official exclusion from the plantation trade was legally rather than commercially resented, being seen as a gratuitous slight to the status of Scotsmen... Any Scotsman with the capacity to trade with the English colonies continued to do so, the navigation act notwithstanding, greatly to the distraction of the English customs service, whose resources were strained in an attempt to stop this illegal trade.

(P. W. J. Riley, 'The Union of England and Scotland', 1979)

Jenny concludes, "So, not only were we Scots deemed by the English to be foreign, in order to inhibit our trading capabilities, but we were tagged so regardless of it being detrimental to their own English workforce."

[Darien] failed miserably, solely through the jealous opposition of the English, who were determined that the Scotch should have no lot or part with them, either in founding new settlements or in engaging in foreign commerce. Ultimately our richer and more powerful neighbour, possessing the ear of the Government in London, succeeded in their opposition, and the ruin of the Darien scheme, and practically, also, the ruin of the whole country, was complete. It was in these circumstances that, at the beginning of the century, the question of union came to be discussed, the English scheming to get rid of their northern neighbour with its troublesome Parliament, and the Scotch prepared to sacrifice something of their independence in order to extend their trade but never contemplating anything beyond a federal union.

(Aberdeen Juridical Society: Address by Sheriff Guthrie Smith, Aberdeen Free Press, 11 April 1885)

It is important to lay a few of these persistent myths to rest once and for all over Darien, and we have previously exposed these in *iScot Magazine* (Issue 54, August 2019: *Myths and lies – what a surprise!*). Historian and genealogist Gordon MacGregor gives his succinct analysis:



The border was largely established in 1018 and was legally settled by the Treaty of York in 1237. It was further confirmed by the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton in 1328, but England "stole" Berwick in 1482! © CC BY-SA 3.0



A point to consider in the “bankruptcy” version [of Darien] is that if, as a nation, we were bankrupted and in such dire straits that England had to bail us out with cash, where on earth is it supposed that all of our money went in the first place? If we were leasing, purchasing, provisioning, and manning our own vessels, such as *The Caledonia*, then it stands to reason that our own money was being circulated around our own people in our own ports. And there are volumes in the Books of Council and Session dedicated to the recording of the hundreds of loans to the Company of Scotland not just by the folks at the top of the tree but by much smaller landholders and merchants.

The venture didn’t bankrupt Scotland as a country. Instead, if anything, the increased spread of money during the preparations would have stuck a few extra coins in many a person’s pocket. No doubt some of the larger single investors took a serious hit – and there is the initial trigger for the sell-out, then the Alien Act of 1705 which threatened further depletion of their precious reserves. It wasn’t the country that was bankrupt but rather that those at the top didn’t like taking a loss and would rather sell-out and recoup their personal losses than defend their own country’s interests, come what may.

And recoup their personal losses they certainly did a few years later when they were “persuaded” to agree to Scotland entering into Union with England. *iScot Magazine* has reproduced this following extract from James Grant’s *Old and New Edinburgh*, published in 1880, before, but it is worth repeating to emphasise the point:

It is, of course, a matter of common history, that the legislative union between Scotland and England was carried by the grossest bribery and corruption; but the sums actually paid to members who sat in that last Parliament are not perhaps so well-known and may be curious to the reader.

During some financial investigations which were in progress in 1711 Lockhart [Sir George Lockhart of Carnwath, MP for Midlothian 1708–1715] discovered and made public that the sum of £20,540 17s. 7d. had been secretly distributed by Lord Godolphin, the Treasurer of England, among the baser members of the Scottish Parliament, for the purpose of inducing them to vote for the extinction of their country, and in his Memoirs of Scotland from the Accession of Queen Anne, he gives the following list of the receivers, with the actual sum which was paid to each, and this list was confirmed on oath by David Earl of Glasgow, the Treasurer Deputy of Scotland.

It wasn’t the country that was bankrupt but rather that those at the top didn’t like taking a loss and would rather sell-out and recoup their personal losses than defend their own country’s interests, come what may

Ere the consummation, James Duke of Hamilton and James Earl of Bute quitted “the house in disgust and despair, to return to it no more”.

Under terror of the Edinburgh mobs, who nearly tore the Chancellor and others limb from limb in the streets, one half of the signatures were appended to the treaty in a cellar of a house, No 177, High Street, opposite the Tron Church, named “the Union Cellar”, the rest were appended in an arbour which then adorned the Garden of Moray House in the Canongate; and the moment this was accomplished, Queensberry and the conspirators – for such they really seem to have been – fled to England before daybreak, with the duplicate of the treaty...

To put the level of bribery and corruption around the compensation of those Darien investors, and to

		£	s.	d.
To the	Earl of Marchmont	1104	15	7
"	Earl of Cromarty	300	0	0
"	Lord Prestonhall	200	0	0
"	Lord Ormiston, Lord Justice Clerk	200	0	0
"	Duke of Montrose	200	0	0
"	Duke of Athole [Atholl]	1000	0	0
"	Earl of Balcarris	500	0	0
"	Earl of Dunmore	200	0	0
"	Lord Anstruther	300	0	0
"	Stewart of Castle Stewart	300	0	0
"	Earl of Eglinton	200	0	0
"	Lord Fraser	100	0	0
"	Lord Cessnock (afterwards Polworth)	50	0	0
"	Mr. John Campbell	200	0	0
"	Earl of Forfar	100	0	0
"	Sir Kenneth Mackenzie	100	0	0
"	Earl of Glencairn	100	0	0
"	Earl of Kintore	200	0	0
"	Earl of Findlater	100	0	0
"	John Muir, Provost of Ayr	100	0	0
"	Lord Forbes	50	0	0
"	Earl of Seafield (afterwards Findlater)	490	0	0
"	Marquis of Tweeddale	1000	0	0
"	Duke of Roxburghe	500	0	0
"	Lord Elibank	50	0	0
"	Lord Banff	11	2	0
"	Major Cunninghame of Eckatt	100	0	0
"	Bearer of the Treaty of Union	60	0	0
"	Sir William Sharp	300	0	0
"	Coultrain, Provost of Wigton	25	0	0
"	Mr. Alexander Wedderburn	75	0	0
"	High Commissioner (Queensberry)	12,325	0	0
		£20,540	17s.	7d.

'An outstanding and comprehensive study of the motivation and the making of Scotland's national hero'
 Alex Salmond,
 First Minister of Scotland



Robert Bruce

AND THE COMMUNITY OF
 THE REALM OF SCOTLAND

G. W. S. BARROW

with an introduction by Michael Brown

Robert Bruce, by Geoffrey Barrow
 Edinburgh University Press

It was an obvious necessity for Scotland to keep on good terms with England, not only its closest neighbour but also the only country in a position to inflict serious injury upon it...

"persuade" them into supporting the Union, into context, that **£20,540 17s. 7d.** from 1707 would today be worth around **£5 million** in terms of what it could purchase in goods and services, or a staggering **£70 million** in terms of social status! To 32 people...

Looking at the development of Scotland on this timeline, from its origins as a recognisable nation state in the ninth century through to the "incorporating union" with England in 1707, seems to throw up so many questions that still appear pertinent today. In his definitive book *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, the eminent medieval historian Professor Geoffrey Barrow noted that, even back in the 1300s:

It was an obvious necessity for Scotland to keep on good terms with England, not only its closest neighbour but also the only country in a position to inflict serious injury upon it... But it would be a mistake to think that Scotland's relations with England, political, cultural, and economic, were the only ones that mattered to it, or that it counted in any way upon English protection and patronage. Enjoying

SOME PEOPLE would have us believe that none of this is important, that it's just ancient history but, as I have frequently quoted, the late Alex Salmond wisely observed that, "a nation which is ignorant of its history cannot properly make choices about its future". The fact that our history clearly demonstrates the extent to which the English/British state will go to in order to deny us our nationhood, to ignore our democratic choices, and to rob us blind of our natural resources, is beyond dispute. Yet, generations of Scots have not been taught Scotland's true history at school, a grievous (and deliberate!) wrong that is only now being righted in our schools, and are therefore only cognisant of the English/British Establishment's view of Scottish history which, without exception, paints a picture of a nation, and a people, too wee, too poor, and too stupid to look after their own affairs. Johann Lamont, the former Labour-Party-in-Scotland leader, even famously said during 2014 that, "We're not genetically programmed to make political decisions in Scotland", before admitting that she and her Labour-Party-in-Scotland colleagues were treated like a "branch office" by her Westminster masters.

And now, while Starmer lies, deflects, and prevaricates on Scotland's right to democratically choose its own constitutional future, aided and abetted by the lies, deflections, and prevarications of his current Labour-Party-in-Scotland branch manager, the odious Anas Sarwar, one of his

Wes Streeting arrogantly declared that there was absolutely zero chance that the English/British Labour Government would "give" the Scots another independence referendum irrespective of any SNP mandate or Holyrood parliamentary majority

prominent backstabbers-in-waiting has finally come out and said out loud what we all already knew was the English/British Government's position. Questioned on LBC (ironically enough, the London Broadcasting Company now rebranded as Leading Britain's Conversation!) about Scotland's route to democratically deciding its future governance in the event of pro-independence parties securing a majority and therefore a mandate in next month's election, Wes Streeting arrogantly declared that there was absolutely zero chance that the English/British Labour Government would "give" the Scots another independence referendum irrespective of any SNP mandate or Holyrood parliamentary majority. When pressed on how exactly we Scots could then get another referendum he simply sneered, "Well, they're not having one", while going on to rant about the chaos caused by the financial crash, years of Tory austerity, Brexit, wars in Ukraine and Iran, and Covid. His attempt to link all of that hotch-potch to our democratic rights is even more laughable:

And the SNP may well want to further this chaos, but I just say again to people in Scotland, look at the damage that Brexit did when the UK left the European Union. There is a much stronger and older single market here in the UK called the United Kingdom. If you think Brexit was bad, imagine what Scexit would do.

The irony in this last statement is simply off the scale – he admits that Brexit was, and continues to be, a disaster yet seeks (allegedly!) to lead a party that refuses to ever consider rejoining the EU. He also attempts to link the restoration of Scotland's independence to a Brexit-type scenario by scaremongering this "Scexit" nonsense when no independence-supporting politician has ever said anything about discontinuing trade with the so-called rUK after independence. We'd better believe that Project Fear II is steadily building momentum as we accelerate towards May!

Finally, the latest polls are extremely encouraging for us and I truly hope that the SNP does secure an overall majority, supported by an increased number of independence-supporting Scottish Greens. As I've said previously, I think the new leadership team of Ross Greer and Gillian Mackay have announced some really

Old and New
Edinburgh, by
James Grant.
www.rsh.scot



*Duplicity,
bullying,
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their successors in
Westminster today*

no special favours, hampered by no special prejudices or hostility, the Scots of the thirteenth century were accustomed to earning their own living and making their own way in the community of North Sea peoples.

Yet it is astonishing to note that the establishment behaviours towards Scotland back in the lead up to 1707 – duplicity, bullying, subterfuge, exploitation, and downright lying – are still being replicated by their successors in Westminster today.

The union was made by men of limited vision for very short-term and comparatively petty, if not squalid, aims.

(P. W. J. Riley, 'The Union of England and Scotland', 1979)

interesting ideas that will be well worth pursuing in the next parliament. In particular, the idea of pushing the limits of devolution and picking more fights with the UK Government over reserved/devolved dispute seems like a no-brainer to me and, judging from some of John Swinney's recent statements, seems like an approach that an incoming SNP Government could adopt. Also worth a separate mention is the adoption of a Finnish-style early years education system, with formal primary schooling starting at age seven, is something that's been close to my heart for many years and an initiative that I've been disappointed with the SNP's apparent reluctance to embrace – hopefully a re-energised and more confident government can now take that on.

There's no doubt that John Swinney has made some impressive and principled comments about major world issues recently, and those who criticise him for not taking more concrete action beyond those comments are, in my opinion, being churlish and ignoring the realities of operating within a devolved governmental structure – I have every confidence that he would take action as First Minister of an independent nation. The polls also seem to be increasingly supporting his ambition of an overall SNP majority and I really, really hope that happens. I still can't get behind the "both votes SNP" mantra though, and if that overall majority looks like coming from constituency seats anyway then that's even more reason not to "waste" the list vote – that opinion comes with the "health warning" that list SNP votes may be helpful in some areas of the country, particularly in the South of Scotland and the Highlands & Islands. As ever, please be "o independent mind" and check your local facts. For all the good work that smaller parties, and individuals, are doing in promoting the cause of independence, I don't think we can escape the *realpolitik* that dictates that "critical mass" is crucial in any election. For that reason, my vote will be going SNP 1, Scottish Greens 2.

So, let's not get swayed by any Unionist lies or be distracted by vague promises of "jam tomorrow" – they've been doing that since 1707! Anas Sarwar appears to have found an affinity with the Saltire and his country, Scotland, yet we can all see through this focus-group dictated charade as he leads his English-registered Labour branch office into inevitable

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humiliation. Russell Findlay is an irrelevance who is making a great job of being as unlikeable as the soon-to-be-forgotten (thankfully!) Douglas Ross in his role as branch manager of his English-registered Conservative and Unionist party. The Lord Offord of Garvel – Nigel Farage's posh-boy placeholder for the English-registered limited company Reform UK – is equally obnoxiously attempting to schmooze his right-wing entitlement into Holyrood assisted by erstwhile Tories who apparently found Findlay and Ross too moderate for their liking! Another Tory defector gravitated to the loving embrace of the English-registered Liberal Democrats under the decidedly shifty eye of Alex Cole-Hamilton, most famously remembered for loudly and proudly declaring that an independent Scotland, "can never and should never exist again" – well, at least he's not hiding his allegiances!

In an independent Scotland, by law there will only be parties registered in Scotland, so cometh the day it's certainly going to be interesting watching these charlatans squirm in their freshly reconstituted cloaks – until then we've got SNP, Scottish Greens, Scottish Socialist Party, and a few much smaller organisations, all registered in Scotland. For me though, it's that critical mass theory that dictates that my support will go to the SNP on the constituency ballot, and to the Scottish Greens on the regional list. Whatever you decide, please remember that our history informs our decisions about our future, and please do it for Scotland – Saor Alba Gu Brath!