

*Parliaments, nations
and identities in
Britain and Ireland,
1660–1850*



edited by
Julian Hoppit

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Catherine Hall
Julian Hoppit

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Abbreviations

<i>CJ</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Commons</i>
Cobbett, <i>Parliamentary History</i>	W. Cobbett (ed.), <i>The parliamentary history of England</i> , 36 vols (1806–20)
<i>LJ</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Lords</i>
PP	Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons

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*Introduction*¹

Julian Hoppit

In 1660 the four nations of the British Isles were governed by one imperial crown but by three parliaments.² In 1707 the Edinburgh parliament was abolished and the Scots given some representation at Westminster. In 1801 something similar happened to the Dublin parliament. At the same time (though somewhat independently) what Westminster did in terms of legislation, legal appeals, debate and inquiry developed significantly and in 1832 the nature of its representation was overhauled. Consequently, the nineteenth century marked the heyday of the idea of an imperial parliament and an imperial crown. But what did the making of that monolith mean for the four nations? Did conceptions of English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh identities flourish, mutate or wither as a consequence of the growth of the imperial parliament and to what extent did that parliament help or hinder a developing sense of Britishness as a new nationality? These are the questions at the heart of this volume of essays and the answers to them are strikingly multi-faceted. Though it might be expected that the unification of the parliaments of Britain and Ireland was integral to the development of Britishness, the essays here suggest that at those parliaments both distinctions and similarities were drawn between nations. Moreover, parliaments contributed to non-national as well as national identities within Britain and Ireland, with the former sometimes cutting across the latter. Though Westminster was frequently celebrated as the fount of absolute power and a guardian of liberty and property within the British imperial polity, it was used and seen in very different ways by highly distinctive communities, some national, some not.

In recent years much has been written from very different intellectual perspectives about the relationship between state formation and national identity, both for the distant past and the immediate present. In Britain and Ireland this is a very current concern because of developments within the European Union and the creation of devolved representative institutions at Cardiff, Edinburgh and Stormont in the late 1990s. More broadly, the traumas caused by numerous states pursuing nationalist agendas across the twentieth century have prompted considerable and often multi-disciplinary studies of the nature of geo-political identities. Initially,

much weight was given here to the interaction between ‘modernisation’ and emerging nationalism. Famously, Gellner and Hobsbawm saw nationalism as consequent upon the French and the industrial revolutions of the late eighteenth century.³ Increasingly, however, doubt has been cast upon the emphasis they accorded to secular rationalism and economic growth as the stimulus of developing nationalism.⁴ The role of religion, ethnicity, law, myths and culture have all been emphasised. It is now recognised that nationalism is a particular expression of national identity and that the latter, as an imagined community, can be traced back well before 1800.⁵ Indeed, medieval historians have particularly stressed that national identities can often be found in Europe after about 1000.⁶

If it is helpful to distinguish between nationalism and national identities, then it is also important to note that geo-political identities exist at both the more specific and the more general levels than the national. Sub-national identities include, for example, local or regional affiliations and supra-national identities include, for example, those based on religious beliefs. Consequently, to understand the development of a national identity often requires these narrower and broader identities to be assessed and assimilated. Moreover, to focus upon national identity as the most important form of geo-political identity risks a descent into inappropriate anachronism and teleology: the importance of national identity today should not be assumed to be the importance that it had in earlier periods. The situation is complicated further because states and nations are two distinct entities, the former ‘a legal and political organisation’ the latter ‘a community of people’.⁷ The boundaries of states can, therefore, coincide with, fall within or extend beyond the boundaries of nations.

Historians of Britain and Ireland have done much to develop this complex understanding, and not only for the period covered by this volume.⁸ On the one hand much profit has been gained by considering the attractions and perils of a so-called ‘new British history’. Arguably initiated by J. G. A. Pocock, that history abandons Anglo-centrism in favour of a truly British or even British and Irish perspective. This has been especially significant for scholars of the early modern period, more particularly for those of the civil wars and revolutions of the mid-seventeenth century.⁹ A second closely related historiographical stream explicitly addresses the ‘making’ of Great Britain or the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland, both in terms of the state and of national identities.¹⁰ Particular attention has been directed at the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707 and of developing ideas of Britishness within the context of existing national identities, especially in relation to political thought, the waging of war and ‘culture’.¹¹ Thirdly, and often independently, considerable advances have been made in understanding the development of the state, mainly in England, including the imperial dimension, but also in Scotland and Ireland (hardly at all in Wales). This has emphasised the growth of state power and, at least by implication, one aspect of ‘British’ unification, the loss of America aside.¹²

This volume takes state formation as its starting point, unquestionably a vital aspect of the development of nations and national identities. As Smith has noted

“national” identity involves some sense of political community . . . [which] in turn implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all members of the community.¹³ This makes it singularly appropriate to assess the role of parliaments in Britain and Ireland between the Restoration and the mid-nineteenth century, for the four nations lacked ‘a common British history, ethnic identity or confessional commitment’ but came to be governed by a highly active common parliament.¹⁴ Indeed, given the proliferation of the ‘new British history’ and the associated literature on Britishness it is surprising that the role of parliament has so often been overlooked. In some measure that is because of the legacy of a ‘Namierite’ approach to parliamentary history and the complexity of writing a history of three parliaments becoming one which does more than tell the tale of the unions (which has been done effectively).¹⁵ Recently, however, new and more structural approaches to the history of the Westminster parliament have been developed which, by emphasising the importance of ideology and showing patterns of activity, hold out the prospect for integrating the legislatures into a long-term story.¹⁶ New approaches to the Dublin and Edinburgh parliaments are also being developed.¹⁷

To provide some background for this volume it is helpful to consider the similarities and differences between the parliaments of Dublin, Edinburgh and Westminster. This can best be examined by considering the issues of their constitution, size, representation, frequency of meeting and business conducted. As to the first, Dublin and Westminster were bicameral, both with a House of Lords and a House of Commons, whereas Edinburgh was unicameral. In the eighteenth century the Dublin parliament comprised 300 MPs (64 county, 234 borough and 2 Trinity College Dublin), 22 spiritual peers and a variable number of lay peers – some 88 in 1700 and 169 in 1800.¹⁸ The Edinburgh parliament was made up of unelected nobles, higher clergy (before 1689) and officers of state and those elected to 33 county and 67 burgh two-member constituencies. In practice, however, Scottish constituencies often returned only one member and there was significant absenteeism among the other groups. Only in the parliaments of 1703 and 1705 were there more than 200 Scottish parliamentarians.¹⁹ At Westminster in 1700 the House of Commons had 514 MPs, as detailed in Table 1.1.

The House of Lords had a variable number of lay peers (173 in 1700) and 26 spiritual peers.²⁰ Put very baldly, in the early eighteenth century total membership of the parliament at Dublin numbered around 410, at Edinburgh perhaps 200 and at Westminster about 712. But because England and Wales had a significantly larger population they had one elected member for about every 10,000 people, whereas for Ireland the ratio was one per 6,600 and for Scotland one per 5,200.²¹

Union in 1707 and 1801 radically diminished the amount of parliamentary representation for Scotland and Ireland – Scotland was given 45 MPs and 16 representative peers at Westminster, Ireland 100 MPs, 28 representative peers and 4 bishops – thereby significantly enhancing the relative position of England

Table 1.1 Composition of the Westminster House of Commons in 1700

	England	Wales
Two-member counties	40	–
One-member counties	–	12
Four-member boroughs	2	–
Two-member boroughs	196	–
One-member boroughs	5	5
One-member borough groupings	–	7
Two-member universities	2	–
Total MPs	489	24

Source: C. Cook and J. Stevenson, *The Longman handbook of modern British history, 1714–1980* (Harlow, 1983), 56–7.

and Wales.²² In 1801, consequently, the ratio of MPs to population was now one to 17,800 in England and Wales, one to 50,000 in Ireland and one to 36,000 in Scotland. Between 1700 and 1801 representation was strikingly diluted for Ireland, markedly diluted for Scotland and somewhat diluted for England and Wales. This was not significantly changed by parliamentary reform in 1832, as Table 1.2 shows.

Table 1.2 Composition of the Westminster House of Commons in 1833

	England	Ireland	Scotland	Wales
Six-member counties	1	–	–	–
Four-member counties	26	–	–	–
Three-member counties	7	–	–	–
Two-member counties	6	32	–	3
One-member counties	1	–	27	9
Single-member county groupings	–	–	3	–
Four-member boroughs	1	–	–	–
Two-member boroughs	133	6	2	–
One-member boroughs	54	27	5	–
One-member borough groupings	–	–	14	13
Two-member universities	2	1	–	–
Total MPs	472	105	53	28
Population (millions)	13.1	7.8	2.4	0.8
Ratio of MPs to population	1:27,754	1:74,286	1:45,283	1:28,571

Note: England's four member counties were each divided into two constituencies. The Isle of Wight has been classed as a single member county. Scottish urban constituencies have been classed for convenience as boroughs.

Source: M. Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (1973), 310–11; B. Mitchell, *British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1988), 9–10, 31.

Table 1.3 Size of the electorates in the British Isles, 1831–33

	England and Wales	Ireland	Scotland
Electors in 1831	435,000	49,000	4,500
MPs	513	100	45
Ratio of MPs to voters	1:848	1:490	1:100
Ratio of voters to population	1:31	1:159	1:533
Electors in 1833	653,000	90,000	65,000
MPs	500	105	53
Ratio of MPs to voters	1:1,306	1:857	1:1,226
Ratio of voters to population	1:21	1:86	1:37

Note: J. Cannon, *Parliamentary reform, 1640–1832* (Cambridge, 1973), puts the number of electors in England and Wales in 1831 at 366,000. That makes for a ratio of MPs to voters of 1:713 and of voters to population of 1:38.

Source: Brock, *Great Reform Act*, 312; Mitchell, *British historical statistics*, 9–10.

Certainly the reform acts of 1832 were more concerned with representation in intra rather than ‘inter’ national terms and, as Table 1.3 shows, national variations were also apparent in terms of numbers of voters. Most adults could not vote at any point in this period, notably women, but in national terms it is usually the exclusion of Irish Catholics which is commented upon. However, as Table 1.3 makes plain, the restricted nature of the franchise in Scotland was much more marked before 1832, with parliamentary reform bringing it much closer to parity with England and Wales than was the case with Ireland. As Ferguson has noted, ‘A case can be made for the assertion that the Scottish Reform Act, like the Irish, was more revolutionary than its English counterpart.’²³

The place of parliament in national life was only partly consequent upon the nature of representation, partly upon what parliaments did. Parliamentary activity can be thought of in terms of the frequency of meeting, the nature of debate and of inquiry, the passage of legislation and the determination of legal appeals. As to the first, in the period between 1660 and 1706 the Dublin parliament held 11 sessions, the Edinburgh parliament 24 and the Westminster parliament 42. After the Glorious Revolution the Dublin parliament usually met biannually until 1782, when it became annual, whereas the Westminster parliament usually met annually – so Westminster had about twice as many sessions as Dublin between 1689 and Union.²⁴ Sessions were not of course of fixed length, but that the Westminster parliament met more frequently and for longer is clear. For example, between 1690 and 1800 the Commons in Dublin sat for a total of 5,293 days, whereas its counterpart at Westminster sat for 12,016 days.²⁵ These differences reflected the differing degrees of ‘self-determination’ enjoyed by parliaments in the British Isles over when they met. As is well known, from 1689

Westminster, exploiting its absolute authority in matters of public finance, established frequent sessions by providing the crown with revenue to cover no more than a year's expenditure. By keeping the crown on a tight financial rein it assured that it would need to be recalled reasonably often. Similarly, in Edinburgh the Glorious Revolution led to the abolition of the Lords of the Articles who had done so much to control their business. But at Dublin, a high degree of self-determination over meetings was not formally established until 1782. Painting with a very broad brush, Westminster developed considerable autonomy first, Edinburgh second and Dublin third. In turn this influenced what those parliaments could do, in terms of scrutiny, debate (especially of the work of the executive) and of legislation. So, for example, when Princess Anne's only surviving child died in 1700 the succession question was a vital matter for Edinburgh and Westminster but caused hardly a ripple of concern at Dublin.

The degree of self-determination enjoyed by the three parliaments was directly related to their capacity to debate issues or inquire into them. A major feature of the development of Westminster in this period was the increasing resort it made to collecting information, often from government departments, which was fed into the deliberations of its committees. For example, between the 1716 and 1799–1800 sessions the number of accounts and papers ordered by the Commons rose from 36 to 231.²⁶ This was an important way in which it gained some sense of the state of the nation, even if the concerns were overwhelmingly of a military-fiscal nature. The Dublin parliament developed in similar ways, its Commons producing some 1,751 'subject' interest reports between 1692 and 1800, representing 'an important contemporary account of the changing Irish society during the eighteenth century'.²⁷ At Edinburgh, by contrast, the parliament had no long tradition of scrutiny to draw upon and only in the last fifteen years or so of its life did it begin to develop such powers, and when that happened it was negotiated out of existence.

One of the striking features of the history of the parliaments of the British Isles in this period is that each became highly (though distinctively) productive in legislative terms. The picture before the Union of 1707 is set out in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4 Number of acts passed by the Dublin, Edinburgh and Westminster parliaments, 1660–1706

	Dublin	Edinburgh	Westminster
1660–88	58	1,388	564
1689–1706	134	829	1,298

Sources: *The statutes at large, passed in the parliaments held in Ireland*, 21 vols (Dublin, 1786–1804), i–iv; *Acts of the parliaments of Scotland*; O. Ruffhead (ed.), *Statutes at large*, 18 vols (1769–1800), iii–iv.

The fecundity of the Edinburgh parliament in the Restoration era is especially notable, 75 per cent of whose acts were technically classed as ‘private’ and some 77 per cent subjectively as specific rather than general in scope.²⁸ The abolition of the Lords of the Articles may not have led to a dramatic surge in legislative action, quite the contrary, but it provided the context in which only 59 per cent of legislation was now private and 61 per cent specific. The comparison here with Dublin and Westminster is striking. For them the Glorious Revolution was followed by much more legislation, for Edinburgh it was not.

Differences between Dublin and Westminster as legislatures have long been appreciated by historians, especially because of the operation of Poyning’s law upon the former. Theoretically that law disallowed the Dublin parliament from initiating legislation or amending bills presented to it; it was meant only to respond in simple yes or no terms to the bills passed to it via the privy councils in Dublin and London. In practice, however, the Dublin parliament had devised ways round Poyning’s law by the early eighteenth century, framing not bills but ‘heads’ of bills. That said, the constitutional superiority of the Westminster parliament over its Dublin counterpart was loudly asserted in the 1720 Declaratory act. Not until 1782 was that act repealed and Poyning’s law formally modified, allowing the Dublin parliament much greater theoretical and actual freedom. Certainly, 1782 led to many more acts being passed at Dublin – from 1,215 for 1689–1782 to 1,054 for 1782–1800 – though still much less than at Westminster which passed 4,157 acts during the era of Grattan’s parliament.

The Dublin parliament did not produce numbers of acts to match Edinburgh or Westminster. Between 1689 and 1800 it passed 2,269 acts compared to 13,652 at Westminster. Put another way, from 1660 to 1706 the Edinburgh parliament passed 69 per cent of all legislation within the British Isles, but from 1689 to 1800 the Dublin parliament accounted for only 14 per cent (20 per cent for 1782–1800). One important point about the Dublin parliament was the very high proportion of its legislation which was formally classed as public and which might be subjectively classed as ‘general’, a point detailed in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5 Nature of legislation at Dublin and Westminster, 1689–1800

	Dublin		Westminster	
	% public	% general	% public	% general
1689–1714	70	65	39	33
1714–60	81	64	54	26
1760–82	85	62	50	20
1782–1800	93	75	65	31

Sources: *The statutes at large, passed in the parliaments held in Ireland*, i–xxi; Ruffhead (ed.), *Statutes*, iii–xviii.

Edinburgh and Westminster passed large numbers of acts dealing with very specific issues, often to do with estates, titles, market rights and, in England at least, turnpike roads. By contrast, the majority of legislation enacted at Dublin concerned public questions of general import. Ireland's legislative independence from 1782 was not seized upon by private interests in the ways that had been true at Edinburgh and was still very much the case at Westminster. In that way the role of the Dublin parliament as a point of negotiation between centre and localities and between national and sectional interests was rather different from at Westminster.

Legal appeals are another area of expertise to be considered and again there were distinctive national experiences, though this has attracted very little attention from historians. With the developing institutionalisation of the Dublin parliament after the Glorious Revolution the role of its House of Lords as a court of appeal began to loom larger. In this it was following the example of its counterpart at Westminster. However, in 1720 the appellate jurisdiction of the Irish parliament was circumscribed by Westminster who asserted the supremacy of its Lords in such matters, though this was changed in 1782.²⁹ At Edinburgh, by contrast, the parliament did not act as an appeal court but, rather, allowed the supremacy of the Court of Sessions and Court of Justiciary in legal matters and the General Assembly in ecclesiastical ones – though many acts passed at Edinburgh between 1660 and 1707 appear to be resolutions of disputes over land and/or titles. However, though the Union of 1707 left Scottish law intact and discrete, appeals to the House of Lords began to assume some significance, to the extent that it has even been claimed that 'During the eighteenth century the bulk of appellate work was Scottish.'³⁰ If that is something of an exaggeration, it is clear that Scottish cases at Westminster increased significantly, from 8 per cent of appeals in 1708–9, to 22 per cent in 1740–41, 35 per cent in 1772–73 and 38 per cent in 1795–96, though the growth was not quite as steady as these figures suggest.

It is clear that the parliaments of Dublin, Edinburgh and Westminster developed in different and distinct ways, though they certainly shared some common ground. They varied in terms of their composition, electoral element and nature and volume of debate, inquiry, legislation and legal appeals undertaken. Consequently, the place of those parliaments in national life varied. For example, Terry believed that 'The Scottish Parliament before the Union was never precisely what the English Parliament was to Englishmen, the pulse of the nation's being, popular as the guardian of national interests, an institution whose membership was prized both by the constituencies and their representatives. Even . . . when it acquired powers and developed a procedure which enabled it to act in that character, the hearts of the people beat rather with the General Assembly of the Kirk than with the Meeting of the Estates.'³¹ Similarly, the Dublin parliament after the Glorious Revolution could not match the position of Westminster because of its religious antipathy towards the majority Roman Catholic and minority Presbyterian populations. And, of course, the Westminster parliament

conceived of itself as superior. The parliaments at Dublin and Edinburgh were never more than national bodies, but Westminster claimed a much wider jurisdiction and the unions were less mergers than assimilations by Westminster.

As an influence upon geo-political identities the nature of parliaments at Dublin, Edinburgh and Westminster, both before and after the unions, was obviously profoundly important. But the foregoing discussion does no more than provide a somewhat mechanical general context in which to understand the crucial issues of how parliaments were perceived and utilised by individuals and communities. It is those issues which the essays in this volume tackle. This is done by the authors adopting a variety of perspectives, not merely the national, which for convenience can be divided into three. Firstly, Sweet, Ditchfield and Hoppit are concerned with examining how non-national issues related to the national dimension. Secondly, Innes, Hayton, Harris and Jupp explicitly adopt a national approach. And finally, Armitage, Civin and Taylor consider how some international questions were framed and addressed at Westminster. All the time the authors have parliament at the heart of their concerns – usually the Westminster parliament but on occasions Dublin and Edinburgh also. It is hoped that this variety of approaches does justice to the complexity of the interactions between parliaments, nations and identities in the emergence of the imperial parliament at Westminster. Certainly a complex picture emerges from the essays.

Very much at the heart of this book is Joanna Innes' Neale lecture, in which she explores legislation at Westminster in unambiguously national terms, considering the acts that were framed for the four nations, individually or in combinations. She shows how there was both integrative and disintegrative legislation, that if Westminster was the source of some centrifugal forces, it was also the site for some centripetal ones. Moreover, she shows how in legislative terms Union in 1707 had different consequences than Union in 1801. If those unions shared strikingly similar causes and took very similar forms the consequences for Scotland and Ireland were rather different. Her essay provides a focal point for the others in this volume, but their direction also owes something to the desire to ensure that identities in the parliamentary context are considered in much more than merely national terms.

A number of important points emerge from this volume, but three are dealt with by almost all authors. The first and most obvious point is that the unions were limited in scope and were palpably not incorporating – as Kidd has put it, 'It would be a teleological error to view Britishness in terms of the *union achieved* to the exclusion of the *union denied*'.³² Most obviously, citizenship continued to be exclusive, something felt most sorely by Irish Roman Catholics but which, as Taylor shows, was also of growing concern in a colonial and imperial context, not least because of the idea of virtual representation was badly battered by American independence. Also important was the fact that many national distinctions remained intact, especially in terms of law, institutions and culture. Ditchfield, for example, powerfully demonstrates how the relationship between

the Anglican Church and parliament set England apart from Scotland and conformist from non-conformist within England. One crucial point that emerges is that not only did the three kingdoms have very different legal traditions, but each had available different alternatives to the use of parliament. From the modern perspective it is easy to assume that statute is at the heart of parliament. But the supremacy of parliament should not be read to mean that other institutions could not provide an alternative means for the redress of grievances. In Scotland, for example, Harris shows how the General Assembly and the Convention of the Royal Burghs were both used in some of the ways that parliament was in England and Wales. Even in England many disputes might be settled by a judicial decision in a central court rather than by passing a statute.

The second point developed in this volume is that, depending upon the issue, parliament required or encouraged not only different arguments but different voices. It was a site of national deliberation, but much of what it considered or did originated from local or what might loosely be called 'sectional' initiatives. Those initiatives, however, often resulted in outcomes which applied nationally but were more appropriate to some sections or areas than to others. Crucially, parliament was concerned not with identities but with interests. And if the importance of the national interest was always allowed and always pre-eminent, many issues concerned quite different interests. Sweet brings this point out well in her essay, showing how local interests struggled to define themselves clearly and to make themselves entirely complementary to the national interest. There was, moreover, nothing certain about interests either, for they might be constructed for tactical reasons, brought into use for a specific occasion and just as quickly put aside. So, it suited landowners in England and Scotland to invent themselves as a landed interest from time to time, but this lacked conviction and their counterparts in Ireland felt no need to indulge in the same imaginings. Identities and interests might be easily invented and to that extent might be chosen, but to work they had to be plausible, both to the anticipated 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Those which were implausible, either because they were unintentionally fragile or intentionally ephemeral, might subject their more robust counterparts to cynical and unreasonable doubt from onlookers.

As the first two points suggest, the final general conclusion to emerge from these essays is that utility of 'national identity' as a way of understanding how people in the period conceived of themselves and their relationship to the state is not as clear and certain as might be first thought. National identity was one amongst a number of geo-political communities people might belong to, albeit a very important one. David Armitage is particularly at pains to show its limitations when considering the role of parliament in international terms in the eighteenth century. Just as with religion, certain legal discourses did not frame themselves in national terms. Some identities fell within ideas of nationhood, but others cut across them. Indeed, contemporaries were often happier employing a language of interests than a language of identities. Moreover, in the period covered by this book it is clear that not only was there a tension between English,

Irish, Scottish and Welsh identities and Britishness, but that the older national identities were themselves contested. Famously, Defoe satirised the polymorphous, even polyglot, nature of Englishness in the early eighteenth century. But what it meant to be Irish, Scottish and, to a lesser extent, Welsh were similarly uncertain, something parliament played a part in because it was a site of so much sectionalism.³³

Superficially, the parliamentary unification of the British Isles in this period created a unitary state. What this volume shows is how conditional and uncertain that unity was. Unification produced a highly complex state which was difficult to use and hard to imagine as a whole. So if there were, as Colley and others have shown, major points of common concern which bound together people of different backgrounds and interests, the most important unitary institution, the Westminster parliament, was not unambiguously one of these. It remained an institution predicated upon exclusion and difference. It united, but fundamentally it also divided and as such was a major break on the development of national identities. Even at the ideological level, the idea of Westminster as the defender of liberty and the fount of authority attracted some but repulsed others.

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to Joanna Innes for comments on a draft of this introduction.
- 2 Throughout, 'British Isles' is used only as a geographical expression.
- 3 E. Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Oxford, 1983); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge, 1990).
- 4 Notably by A. D. Smith in *National identity* (1991) and *Myths and memories of the nation* (Oxford, 1999).
- 5 H. Seton-Watson, *Nations and states: an enquiry into the origins of nations and the politics of nationalism* (1977); B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (1983).
- 6 For an introduction to which see A. Hastings, *The construction of nationhood: ethnicity, religion and nationalism* (Cambridge, 1997).
- 7 Seton-Watson, *Nations and states*, 1.
- 8 For a recent heavily referenced overview see J. C. D. Clark, 'Protestantism, nationalism, and national identity, 1660–1832', *Historical Journal*, xliii (2000), 249–76.
- 9 J. G. A. Pocock, 'The limits and divisions of British history: in search of the unknown subject', *American Historical Review*, lxxxvii (1982), 311–36; a recent survey is provided in G. Burgess (ed.), *The new British history: founding a modern state 1603–1715* (1999). As has been noted, particular historical questions require setting different geo-political or national boundaries; what matters is the nature of the question. There is nothing inherently superior about a British and Irish perspective over, say, English, European, Atlantic or imperial perspectives. Given appropriate questions all are valid.
- 10 See L. Colley, *Britons: forging the nation 1707–1837* (1991) – a pivotal study; R. G. Asch (ed.), *Three nations – a common history? England, Scotland, Ireland and British history, c. 1600–1920* (Bochum, 1993); S. G. Ellis and S. Barber (eds), *Conquest and union: fashioning a British state, 1485–1725* (Harlow, 1995); A. Grant and K. J. Stringer (eds), *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history* (1995); L. Brockliss and D. Eastwood