

The Eighteenth Century

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Introduction and History of Research

The eighteenth century was a period of remarkable change, nowhere more so than in west central Scotland. The story is bold and exciting, avoiding the trend of national histories, which must dilute the region's success with the slower progress of elsewhere in Scotland. The physical change was from an open landscape to improved and enclosed farms. For the average person it meant a move towards a modern society where individuals, not the weather, controlled daily life.

Most aspects of development were driven by markets. Farming tenants escaped from subsistence agriculture to face the market in growing towns. Life improved gradually, but the speed of change from internal markets was relatively limited and similar to many other regions. Perhaps the greatest strength was in exploiting markets well outside the region, which supported much quicker growth of wealth and development. Quality cotton textiles made for the London market marked a different track from the indifferent linen made elsewhere in Scotland. Much further afield, colonial markets were exploited, creating enormous wealth which permeated all aspects of development. These factors made the region stand out early on a national and international basis. However, it was no different from much of Scotland, with a large rural hinterland. It is thus a challenge to understand the region's history and archaeology in the eighteenth century.

Through the century archaeology was increasingly complemented by written sources, escaping the restrictions of Latin and 'secretary hand', making primary sources available to everyone. Despite the growing availability of written material, the region's heritage cannot be divorced from the landscape. The traditional history of the region has been written from above, with the vast majority of the population relegated to a watching role. Popular research reinforces this, if simply by following clichéd accounts of prominent figures and inventors, who were often equally important for wider achievements.

In resources such as Canmore (which provides Internet access to the database of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland), the density of recorded sites largely mirrors the intensity of urban development. Yet at the start of the century the population was much more evenly spread over the landscape. Thus the challenge is to give as much attention to the region's 70 or so parishes as to the urban centres. This may not be as difficult as it sounds, as through the eighteenth century a close interrelationship developed between country and town.

There are no histories which focus wholly on the region in this period. Apart from political focus on the Act of Parliamentary Union with England of 1707, relatively little has been written about the early part of the century.

Social history collections, such as those displayed at the People's Palace, Glasgow, do not commence until 1750. Dozens of books and articles stretch from late in the century into the 19th century, reflecting the increase in source material with time. The *Statistical Accounts of Scotland* from the 1790s are valuable, but the improving mood diminishes much of what went before. Relatively little early eighteenth-century built heritage survives in many areas, especially the dwellings of the common people. The overall result is that the first half of the century has been unwittingly marginalized, making it one of the 'dark ages' of Scottish history.

Topography, Landscape and Resources

We enter a period where not only the landscape is important, but what lies beneath. The abundant mineral resources in the region lie largely in the hinterland. Mining is often sidelined to industrial archaeology, but its impact affected all aspects of life. The landscape determined the location of much of the early industry, from mines to mills, mostly in rural areas. Larger-scale exploitation would remain untapped until the nineteenth century, due to the restriction of poor road transport.

In national histories the region is often portrayed as the 'poor man' of central Scotland, with wetter weather and heavier clay soils than the east. However, the wet climate was an advantage in water-powered industry. In agriculture, the soil was simply different from the east and three main branches developed, related to the diversity of topography and altitude. Firstly, the lowlands around the river valleys and Clyde Estuary proved suitable for grain crops. The middling area, although poor by the standards of the east coast, came to focus on lucrative pastoral husbandry, serving the growing towns. Finally, the uplands, at elevations exceeding 200m, focused on sheep grazing. Until 1700 the east had dominated agriculture, trade and banking. This century would mark a swing from east to west in most aspects of modern development.

Development: Agriculture, Entrepreneurs, Transport and Markets

The common people and agriculture

At the start of the century the vast majority of the people in the region lived a communal and subsistence existence. Even craftsmen and weavers relied on a small plot of land to grow their own food. Despite this relatively backward situation, gradual improvement was a feature of the early part of the century. Life was still hard, but starvation was a thing of the past, with no severe famines in the first 40 years of the century. Agriculture had begun to break free from a narrow local cycle, becoming more outward looking and commercialized, reaching out to feed the growing settlements.

The most visible changes to the land were the field enclosures from the 1770s. However, they relied on earlier less visible changes to organization, particularly from payment of rents in kind (in livestock, service and grain) to cash. By 1700 most rentals in estates such as Hamilton had changed to cash, but the wider picture needs much more research. The farming tenants gradually had some money in their pockets, with the potential to face market influences outside the closed estate cycle. Associated with this was the decline of communal working of the land and the rise of single tenant farms. Other early and less visible changes occurred in farming practice and rotation. Estate papers have started to reveal more about these, but much less is known about changes to the landscape around the time of improvement, best demonstrated by the tantalizing rig-and-furrow topography which survives in isolated areas.

Landowners, merchants and entrepreneurs

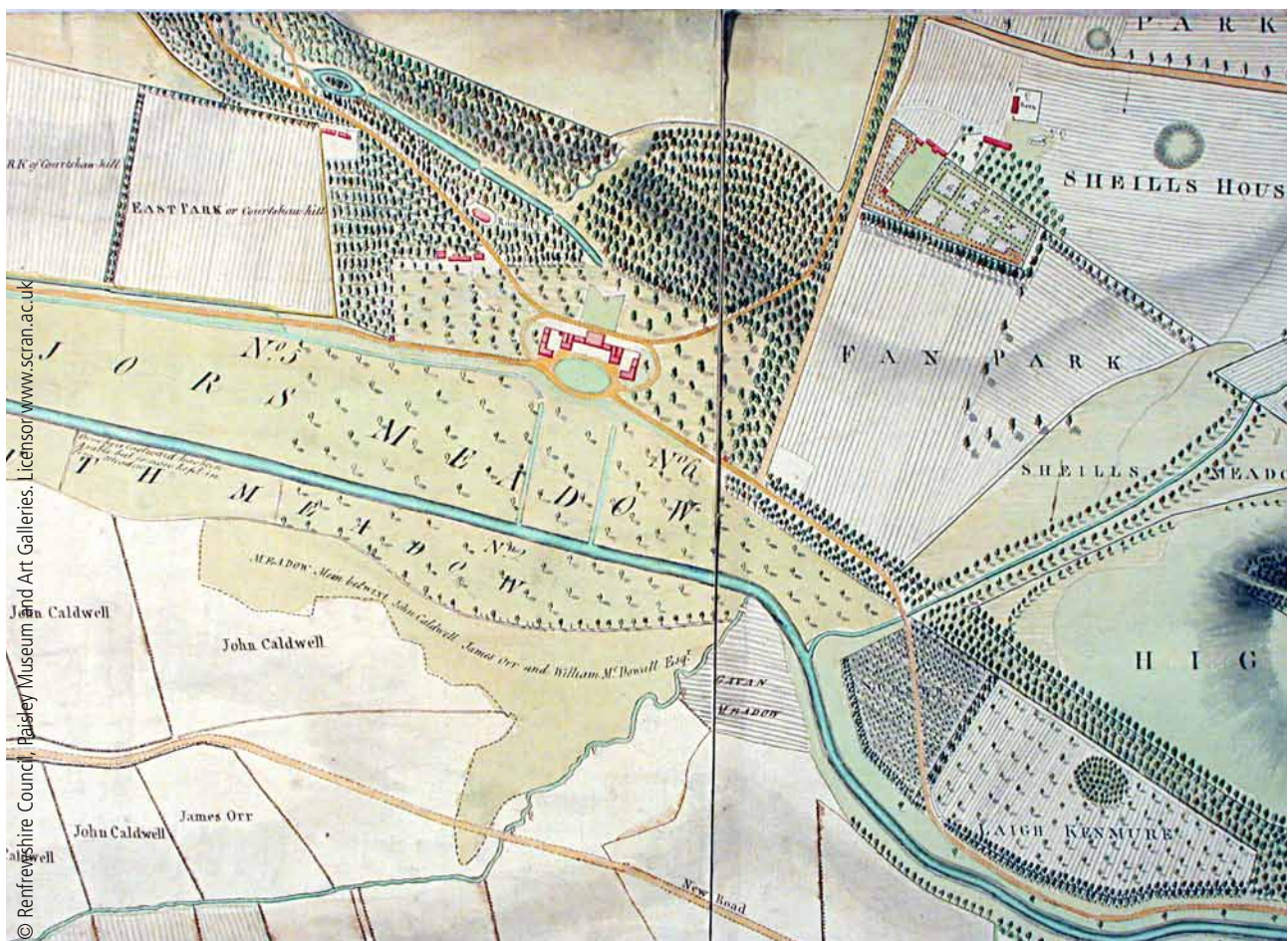
The changes to agriculture were dominated by the landowners whose estates were seen as sources of revenue, no longer of military power. Half a dozen traditional owners were 'large' on a national scale (with individual estates exceeding £2000), including the Duke of Hamilton, the Earl of Eglinton and the ubiquitous Lord Douglas, who had estates in more than a dozen parishes in the region. Among their ranks were newcomers, merchant-industrialist James

Dunlop and colonial planters James Milliken and William McDowall. The merchants sought more from the land than simply farming, plus the kudos and permanence of heritable jurisdiction and lineage for their eldest sons.

Lord Douglas successfully improved his lower estates, including Erskine, Bothwell and Carluke, but the lands in his core seat in Upper Lanarkshire proved much more difficult. Even after improvements, wheat was uneconomic due to the cold. In such high ground, sheep were the solution and the Pates of Harthope (Crawford) used sheep money to purchase Greenbank Estate (Mearns) in 1784, mixing with the better-known merchant-landowners around Glasgow.

Individual landowners with large estates dominated various parishes, including Eaglesham, Petinain and Lamington. Others such as Mearns, Cumbernauld and Lesmahagow had a larger number of smaller owners or 'portioners'. Along with the growing band of single farm tenants, the sons of portioners tended to be more enterprising. The eldest son and heir followed the farming tradition, but from the early 1700s many younger sons were set up as apprentices to urban merchants. The resulting burgeship brought the right to trade through Glasgow and its port. Although

Figure 1. William McDowall's Castle Semple house, facing the drained Castle Semple Loch, from the survey of c. 1780 by John Ainslie.



the city would be the commercial hub, its colonial merchants originated from all over the region and beyond – John Glassford being the son of a Paisley weaver, James Milliken a Clyde seafarer and Richard Oswald a Caithness minister. The century marked a period of enormous potential to rise from relatively humble means to the highest heights.

Education and enlightenment

The merchants' desire for education meant that by the end of the century their sons would take about half the places at the University of Glasgow. Advancement also required the input of middling men with the skills and vision to carry out improvements. Greenock teacher, navigator and scientist John Watt carried out extensive surveys in the late 1720s for more than 40 of the region's main landowners. These included Hamilton, Montrose, Glencairn and Dundonald, plus the earliest of the incoming colonial merchants, Milliken and McDowall (fig. 1). Watt laid out parks and enclosures around their core policies, but was much more than a surveyor. He provided advice on gardens and terraces, developing land as a cultural resource and status symbol. His overriding principle was that 'nature was to be followed, not strained'.

Such enlightened views in the west were just as significant as Edinburgh's more intellectual reasoning, but with a much more practical application. Despite his importance, John Watt is barely known, but was uncle of James, of later steam-engine fame. The family provide an illustration of entrepreneurship and enlightenment through the century. By the 1750s Watt's improvements were evident on Roy's Military Survey of Scotland, as green patches of improved land amid an open landscape.

Resources, infrastructure and transport

The region has some of the best mineral resources in the country, principally coal, lime and ironstone. Lanark's coal supply came from Carluke, Dumbarton's from Knightswood, Biggar's from Douglas and Paisley's from Quarrelton. Despite the rise in coal to 'boil the pot', the largest use was in the burning of lime as a fertiliser, becoming the most important factor in the rapid increase in agricultural yield. The region's several hundred lime quarries, mines and kilns were the highest employers after agriculture (fig. 2). Many sites exploited water power for mine drainage and processing. The lime works at Blackhall (Paisley) and the appropriately named Windyhill (Kilbarchan) used windmills. By the 1790s steam-pumping engines were employed at seven Renfrewshire coal pits and another four around Glasgow. The larger regional lime works were at Campsie, Cumbernauld, East Kilbride, Corseford (Lochwinnoch), Culloch (New Kilpatrick) and Darnley (Eastwood). Each employed up to a hundred miners and lime burners, a notable figure which



Figure 2. Lime Kiln at Cot Castle.

presents a key theme through the century. The most significant changes were driven by new developments which brought a hundred or more workers into a rural area at one time.

The opening up of the market beyond local supply for heavy and bulky minerals depended on transport improvements. Modest upgrades dated from the Turnpike Acts of the 1750s, with some landowners improving local roads and bridges at their own expense, as part of estate improvement. James Milliken features prominently with his colonial money in the 1760s, spending more on roads than any other landowner in Renfrewshire. Wider progress depended on more extensive re-routing in the 1780s to avoid steep gradients. The road quality determined the direction to market, with Lanark favouring the Edinburgh market, despite being closer to Glasgow. Bridge building was equally important, particularly the new crossings of the Cart, the Leven and the Clyde at Inchinnan (1759), Dumbarton (1765) and Hyndford (1773) (fig. 3). James Watt appears early, in his lesser-known role as a designer of the bridges over the Clyde at Rutherglen and Hamilton in the 1770s (fig. 4).

Although the large-scale exploitation of coal and ironstone for heavy industry would be a function of the next century, a few pioneering works tapped mineral-rich areas. Long-standing metal extraction at Leadhills expanded greatly from the mid century,



Figure 3. A detail from Roy's Military Survey of Scotland, 1745–55, showing Dumbarton before the construction of the bridge over the Leven in 1765.

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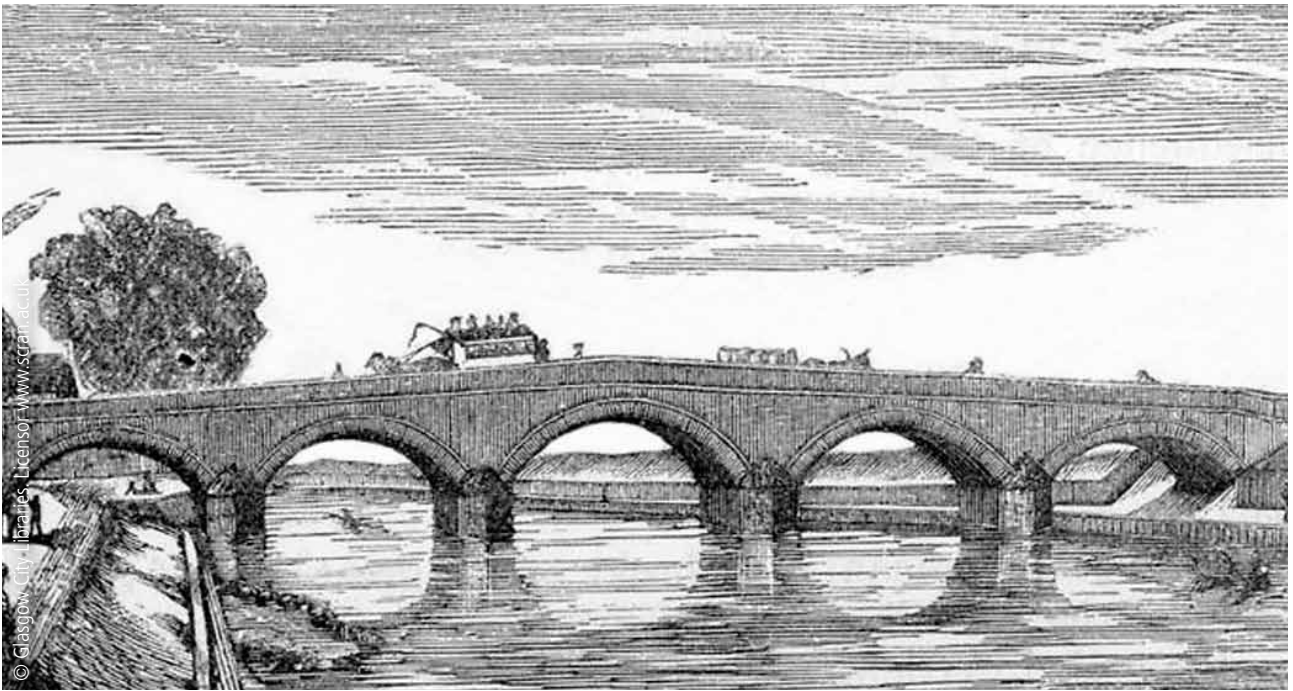


Figure 4. James Watt's bridge over the Clyde at Rutherglen, built c. 1775.

as did the copper mines above Greenock, both using water power. The west's first cast-ironworks at Wilsontown (Carnwath 1779) was on a site containing the four necessities of iron ore, coal, lime and building stone. Similar works started at Clyde (1786), Omah (1789) and Shotts (1794). By contrast the first malleable-ironworks at Smithfield (Kelvinhaugh 1732) and Dalnotter (Old Kilpatrick 1769) used raw materials imported from the Baltic, but were sited beside waterfalls to power their slitting, grinding and stamping mills.

The canals were the most obvious improvement for transportation of bulky goods, although their effect

was restricted to relatively narrow corridors. James Watt was again prominent, planning various routes for the Forth and Clyde Canal (1767), the White Cart navigation (1772) and Paisley Canal (1773), plus a wagon-way alternative. Of those that were actually built, Watt personally managed the construction of the Monkland Canal (fig. 5), which finally reached Glasgow in 1790, the same year as the Forth and Clyde Canal met the Clyde at Bowling.

Glasgow's growing colonial trade depended on its connections with the Atlantic, but until the end of the century only small vessels could reach the Broomielaw, on the north bank of the Clyde close to the centre of

Figure 5. The Monkland Canal, which was completed in 1790.





Figure 6. Greenock harbour in 1786.

the city. Surveys by many engineers sought to deepen the Clyde, including those undertaken by James Watt in the late 1760s. Atlantic trade depended largely upon Port Glasgow, and in 1771 Watt completed his most successful engineering project at its harbour, followed by works to Greenock's harbour and water supply (fig. 6). Lighter trade goods, particularly textiles, used more diverse trade routes. In the 1750s Paisley textiles were sent to the lucrative London fashion market by road to Boness or Alloa, by ship via the Forth, then down the east coast to the capital.

External markets: textiles

Beyond farming, textile manufacture had by far the biggest impact on the life of the average person in the region. At the start of the eighteenth century, most of the weavers, smiths and tailors lived outside the burghs and villages in scattered settlements or 'fermtouns'. Weaving gradually became controlled by urban merchants who 'put out' yarn, then collected the finished cloth. Gradually it became a waged occupation, with most weavers living in settlements. The overall effect on population change was as significant as agricultural improvements.

Just as the colonial market would be at the heart of Glasgow's efforts, the London fashion market became the focus of fine weaving. Scottish linen had always sold well in England, but was of indifferent quality. Specific parts of west central Scotland developed a policy of improving quality, not simply increasing output. By the 1740s an element of centralization was growing in hand-powered weaving manufactories, particularly in Renfrewshire. Wider sources of power, particularly water power, had traditionally been applied to mine drainage, grinding grain and waulking cloth and leather (fig. 7). From its beginnings in 1727 the Scottish 'Board of Trustees for Manufacture' decided that rapid increases in output would depend largely on applying water power to textile machinery.

The first lint mill in Paisley (1726) paved the way for the 60 or more built to encourage flax growing, with half of Lanarkshire's mills situated in the remote Upper Ward. Lint mills had limited success and employed only a handful of workers; the first really large employers in the textile industry were the bleachfields and printfields, bringing the significant 100 or more workers into an area at a time.

Surveyor and entrepreneur John Watt laid out the earliest bleachfields at Dalquhurn (Cardross) and Grays Green (Old Monkland) in the 1720s. Among the most significant were the bleach and printfields at Pollokshaws and Dawsholm, printing not only linen but cotton. Two areas came to dominate: Dunbartonshire on the Leven and Renfrewshire's Cart Basin, which had at least a hundred fields, the largest employing more than 1000 workers. The industry stimulated other branches of manufacturing such as the soap-works in Glasgow and Paisley and the alum works at Campsie and Hurler to fix dyes. The bleach and printfields were particularly important in the 'finishing' processes, which were crucial to the appearance and sale value of fine textiles.

Figure 7. The waterwheel at Craig Mill, South Lanarkshire, a 19th-century replacement of an earlier wheel.





Figure 8. The waterfall at Busby with the foundations of Busby Upper Cotton Mill, built 1778, in the foreground.

By the 1770s the Cart Basin had become an integrated textile manufacturing region, encompassing all stages of manufacture for the English luxury market. From this decade the region also pioneered the first truly integrated factory industry in Scotland: powered cotton spinning. Again, the big change was marked by bringing several hundred workers into a rural area at one time. Busby was the first due to its spectacular waterfall (fig. 8), followed by Dovecothall (both 1778), then Johnstone Old and Laigh mills (1782–3). By the time David Dale visited the site for New Lanark, his future partner Richard Arkwright had already visited the Renfrewshire mills and been made a freeman of Paisley.

Glasgow is usually given credit for having 40 water-powered cotton mills by the 1790s. However, such premature enlargement of eighteenth-century

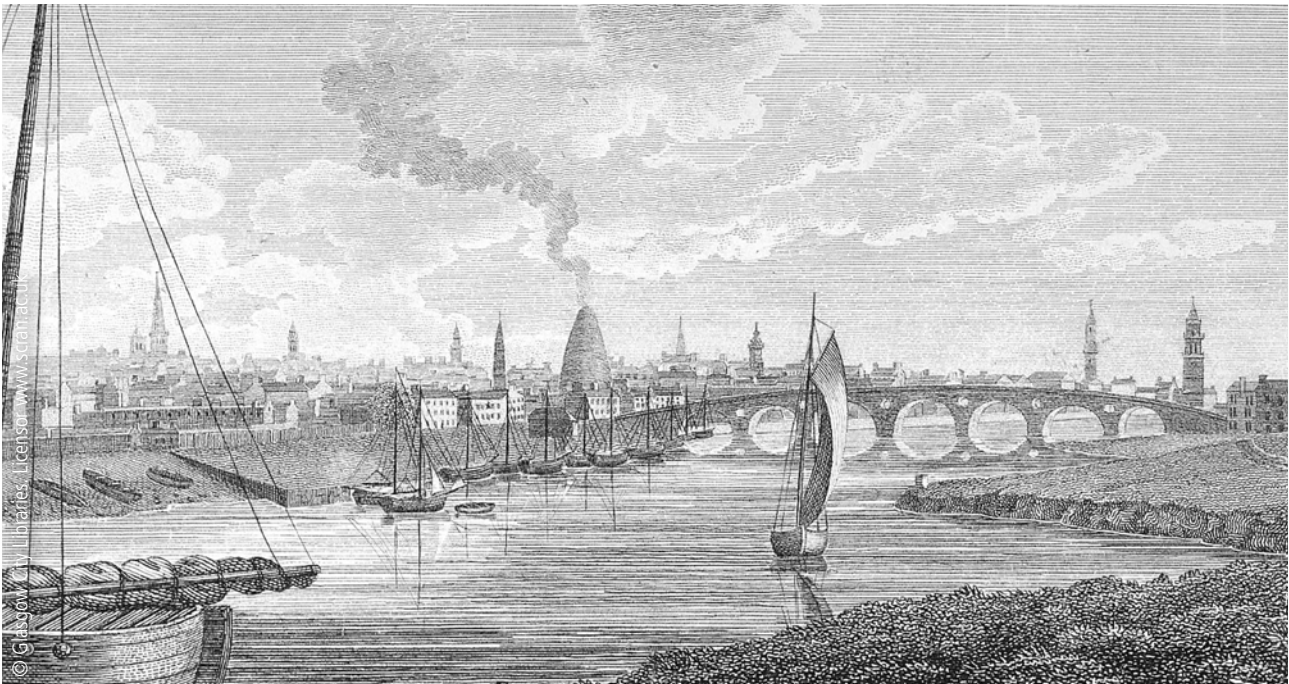
Figure 9. Johnstone Old Cotton Mill, dating from 1782.



Glasgow to encompass a 20-mile radius is a common distortion, masking the fact that all but one of the mills were in Renfrewshire. This county had half the 80 or so largest Scottish mills by 1795, including Crosslee, the four mills at Johnstone and Linwood Mill, the biggest in Britain. Further afield, New Lanark is the popular survivor, but its mills are rebuilds from the next century. The A-listed Johnstone 'Old' Mill is from an earlier generation and was the oldest survivor in Scotland until destroyed by fire in 2010 (fig. 9). In 1798 Renfrewshire's Underwood Mill ordered the first Boulton and Watt steam engine in Scotland, paving the way for the urban steam-driven cotton mill on any street corner. As with heavy industry, Glasgow and Paisley's urban cotton and thread mills are a story for the next century, with the advent of James Watt's rotary steam power.

Despite the importance of powered manufacturing to increase output, at the end of the century most textile workers were still employed in hand-loom weaving. Even in the emerging mining settlements, weavers were often the largest group of employees. Old Monkland and Hamilton had several hundred weavers, Kirkintilloch and Rutherglen 200, Cadder and Larkhall 100, with numbers gradually decreasing thereafter into the hinterland.

The overwhelming dependence of early industry on water resources began to affect the environment. In Kirkintilloch and Campsie the rivers were soured and stained with mine effluent. Dead trout floated on the surface, and downstream the bleachers had to



filter the water before use. The bleachers and printers were equally guilty, with the string of works down the Levern Water turning the river red. Some effects were much wider and it was claimed that the channelling of the Clyde was reducing the spawning of trout much deeper in the region.

Colonial trade

The tobacco trade is a celebrated part of the region's history, with imports growing from the 1740s. It is impossible to overstate the importance of this to Glasgow, which by 1771 had become the biggest tobacco port in Europe (fig. 10). Yet tobacco was a relatively short-lived success, which peaked on the eve of the American War of Independence in 1775. Only ten per cent of colonial merchants were involved and tobacco has diverted attention away from other success stories. Many general commodities merchants built their own manufactories to fill their ships, such as Robert Allason, a middling colonial merchant, who built his own bakery, 'tannery', weaving factory and herring curing works in Port Glasgow for exports in the 1740s. Much more detail remains buried in merchants papers and accounts.

Tobacco's role as an entrepôt trade centre meant that most imports were immediately re-exported, with little direct benefit to local industry, beyond a few snuff mills. A century before tobacco peaked, Glasgow merchants began importing sugar from the Leeward Islands. This lasted much longer than tobacco, and directly stimulated industry. Some of Glasgow's earliest manufactories were its four sugar houses established by the early eighteenth century. From the 1760s, processing began to move down to Greenock, which would latterly become a world-leading sugar port. Sugar had much wider benefits, stimulating the baking, brewing and distilling trades. Cotton imports

Figure 10. The River Clyde at Glasgow's Broomielaw in 1797. At this time the river was shallow, so many small boats or 'lighters' were needed to bring goods to the city from Greenock and Port Glasgow.

had even greater impact, becoming the raw material for the factory industrialization of the region.

The century was the heyday of water power, and mill sites in the region were growing in demand for a variety of processes beyond textile manufacture. Paper mills indicated the growing need for business documents, books, packaging and newspapers. At least half a dozen were established: at Cathcart and Netherlee by 1700, Millholm in 1730, Balgray, Dalmuir and Dawsholm in the 1740s and New Kilpatrick by 1793. In many towns artisans evolved into small businessmen, such as at Hamilton, where the leather trade expanded to supply the colonial market. Glassworks appeared at Broomielaw in the 1730s and Dumbarton in 1776, their kilns being the first industrial landmarks to dominate eighteenth-century engravings of the towns (fig. 11). Again the glassworks served the English and export markets.

Figure 11. The conical kilns of Dumbarton Glassworks in 1832, with Dumbarton Rock and Castle in the background.



The manufacture of colonial exports stimulated industry all over the region. The outgoing goods and the lucrative imports were the visible parts of the celebrated Atlantic trade, but conceal the much darker 'middle leg' of the triangle. Involvement in slaving rarely features in the region's history, but many of its merchants were personally involved, particularly in plantation life and slave control. These included two who feature most prominently through the century, William McDowall and James Milliken, who began as overseers on slave plantations in the Caribbean in the 1690s. The only visible black people in the region were the fashionable slave boys of the merchants, half of whom were unhappy enough to run away. A great deal of work remains to be done to uncover this very dark aspect of the region's hitherto celebrated colonial success.

People and Society

From 1707 the Union had a major impact on trade and politics, but at parish level the kirk and landowner were much more influential than either Edinburgh or London. Early in the century, landowners such as Maxwell of Williamwood held local courts to collect rents and settle differences. Religion provided an outlet for indirect protest over the landowner's overwhelming control, which encompassed everything from factor, sheriff, Member of Parliament and schoolmaster right through to choosing the parish minister. When patronage was reinstated from 1712, many gradually left the kirk to join the rival Relief and Secession churches. Protest occasionally erupted into full scale revolt, such as in the 1760s against the Duke of Hamilton at Shotts, when he used the army to enforce his legal right of patronage. Most locals subsequently left the parish church for a rival sect. Despite the splits, the various branches tolerated one another in most areas, but Roman Catholics were almost entirely absent from the region, with less than a dozen recorded in the 1790s. Growing urbanization would gradually allow escape from the dominance of the landowner and the parish kirk and toleration of wider beliefs.

Civil unrest still erupted occasionally, notably the Malt Tax riots of 1725, resulting in violence not only in Glasgow, but also in Paisley and Hamilton. Despite its dominance of wider Scottish history, the rise of Jacobitism in 1715 and 1745 had negligible support in the region. More sustained protest awaited the growth of the urban working population, particularly in Paisley with riots over weaver's wages from the 1750s. Medical advances, inoculation and improved water supply gradually benefited health; on the downside, overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and rising infant mortality in settlements hindered this. Industrial diseases, particularly respiratory problems, were also growing due to the dust in mines and the stour in cotton mills.

Most aspects of industry and improvement were based on a variety of skills, from basic reading and writing to book keeping, scientific learning and invention. At

merchant level, information was shared in the Glasgow and Paisley coffee houses. By the 1790s, weaving was entering its 'golden age', where culture and literary societies blossomed. At burgh and parish level, education was provided by the grammar and local schools, but again industry would have a detrimental effect. Although some mill towns such as Blantyre in South Lanarkshire provided education, many child workers were simply too tired at the end of the working day to take advantage of schooling. The picture was not all bad and escape from the land meant a growth in leisure time. Compared with the old subsistence life, the overall effect for most people by the end of the century was a remarkable increase in standard of living.

Settlement patterns: cities and hinterlands

Manufacturing in the period was an industry in the countryside, the main feature being the large number of growing settlements. In distinct sub-regions such as the Cart basin, nearly 20 villages were planned or developed randomly, and are still the basis of the built up area. From the 1750s, a string of bleaching and weaving hamlets spread down the Lavern water in Neilston parish, gradually merging into the town of Barrhead. In 1780 the planned mining and textile town of Johnstone was founded on a virgin site and within a decade, thanks to its six water-powered cotton mills, would become the largest planned town in Scotland. Renton in Cardross, planned in 1782, had 1200 residents within a decade, more than half the parish population. Airdrie grew from only 300 in 1760 to a planned town of 2000 people by the end of the century.

By 1780 Glasgow and Paisley were the densely populated commercial hubs, but were only beginning to stretch much beyond the medieval strips of their high streets. The big towns would not themselves become major centres of industry until the following century. In 1791 the two centres shared half the population of the entire region: Glasgow city with more than 40,000 and by 1800 rivalling Edinburgh and Paisley with more than 30,000, overtaking Perth, Dundee and Aberdeen to become third town in Scotland. The people were still widely spread, but focused within numerous scattered settlements. The traditional burghs and market towns lagged far behind the two leaders. Even the old centres of Dumbarton and Lanark were struggling to reach a population of 3000 by the 1790s, and Hamilton bemoaned Paisley's tenfold lead.

Overall, despite having less than five per cent of the area of Scotland, by the end of the century the region contained 15 per cent of the population, despite its large rural hinterland. The great increase through the century was well beyond what was possible from natural reproduction, and relied largely on incomers to the region. Although the 'Highland Clearances' were a function of the mid nineteenth century, in the early part of the century the quickest growing town was Greenock, thanks to migrants coming south via

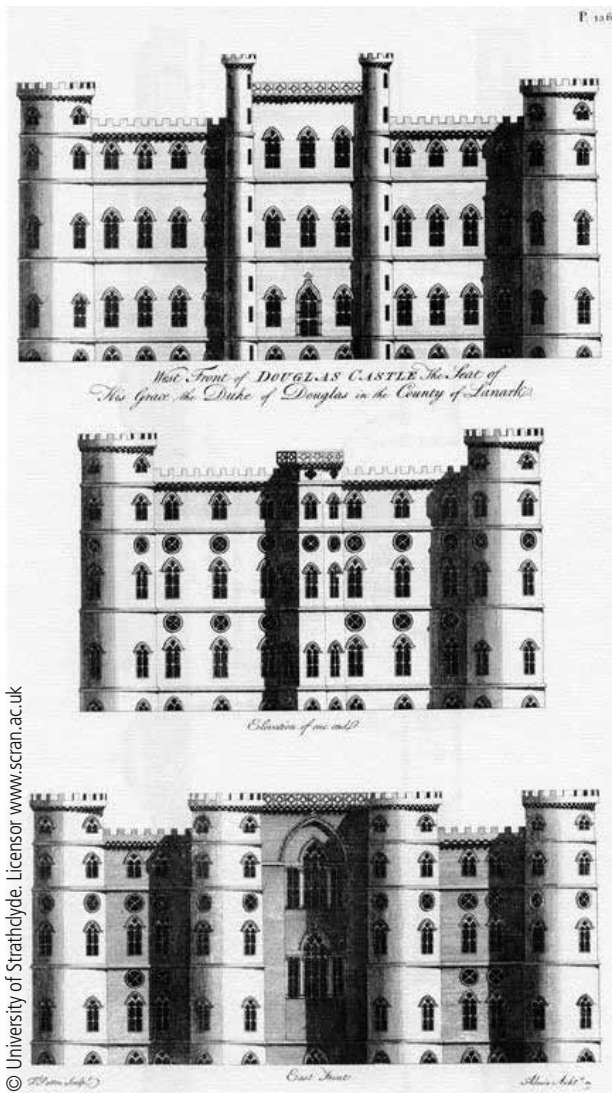


Figure 12. Elevations of Douglas Castle by John Adam, from 1757.

the sea lochs of Argyll. In the 1750–90 period textile manufacture gave Renfrewshire the highest population increase in Scotland, with many coming from Argyll, Cowal and Inveraray, effectively the southern fringe of the Highlands. The Gaelic kirks founded in Glasgow, Paisley and Greenock from the 1770s provide further evidence of migration, but much research remains to be done for the early part of the century.

Large numbers of Highlanders, particularly females, also came on a seasonal basis, initially for agriculture, but latterly to the bleachfields, where parishes such as Neilston built special ‘women houses’ to accommodate them. A feature of the region was the large number of women and children employed in the textile industry. By mid century, half the urban workforce were often women and children, including women and girls in bleachfields and thread mills, and boys working as weavers’ draw boys. Such employment opportunities for women and children favoured larger families and younger marriage, further stimulating population increase.

Large-scale Irish immigration was a feature of the next century, but again significant numbers came over earlier, many with textile skills. This worked both ways and the region’s textile manufacture was so successful that a group of merchants expanded elsewhere. The Orrs of Paisley took groups of local weavers and bleachers to establish large works near Belfast and Dublin from the 1780s. The picture was not always rosy, and frequent downturns in trade prompted many in the 1770s to consider emigration to the Americas, particularly from the Clyde ports.

The built environment

The landowners’ drive for improvement was marked by the tearing down of many medieval castles and houses including Johnstone, Castle Semple, Pollok, Mugdock and Douglas (fig. 12). The landowners and incoming merchants rebuilt fashionable mansions, often mirrored by their town houses in the same ‘merchant villa’ style. The Shawfield Mansion in Glasgow epitomized the merchant progression, housing Campbell and McDowall the sugar magnates, followed later by Glassford the ‘tobacco lord’ (fig. 13).

Amongst the most common museum artefacts are Communion tokens, and the churches are the largest group of listed monuments from the period. The sheer number of survivors are a testament to the ongoing disruption. Even more prolific, but much less well preserved, were the common houses of the bulk of the population. Widely scattered longhouses and cot houses were abandoned and replaced by courtyard farms, mostly on a more modest scale than in the agrarian east. Like the old tower houses, most survivors are in upland locations, where agriculture and development has been less intense. In recent years the remains of many pre-improvement dwellings have been recorded, particularly in Eaglesham parish and at Barrhouse (Neilston), but much remains to be done before the last remnants disappear. In the main centres few eighteenth-century houses remain, but in rural villages the most common

Figure 13. The Shawfield Mansion, Glasgow’s earliest Palladian town house, built c. 1710.





Figure 14. An 18th-century weaver's cottage, Kilbarchan, Renfrewshire.

survivors are the weavers' cottages, most dating from the later part of the century (fig. 14).

Equally important, but much less obvious, are the physical alterations to the landscape, including lades, old roads, tramways, kilns and mineral workings. In many parts the humps and scars of small deserted mines and lime works are as common as abandoned settlements, but are even less well recorded. On the Eaglesham moors several kilometres of lades mark the manmade power supply for the village cotton mills. The site of Wilsontown Iron Works was almost lost under forestry, but interest has now rekindled to understand the site and the early but intensive mineral extraction (fig. 15). Various parts of the Monkland canal can still be traced, including its branch canals to mineral workings.

Summary and Recommendations

In summary, the background to most well-known events in the period was more subtle than the popular view presented to date. Local research and fieldwork has a very large part to play, as much more lies untapped than has ever been dipped into or published.

Reflecting the comments above, most of the big themes, including colonial trade, agricultural improvements and industry, are well-covered in the last quarter of the century, but there is a dearth of research into the earlier period, especially before 1750. A great deal of valuable individual studies have been published, but they need to be brought together to understand events in the region as a whole.

The biggest outstanding questions are about the organization and physical changes to the region before the accepted period of improvement. Much of the potential lies in estate papers, surveys and deeds, but a comprehensive account needs new skills which combine history, archaeology and fieldwork. Curiosity about an eighteenth-century urban building can usually be satisfied by published sources. Interest in the much wider rural area requires finding a map, donning hiking boots and, after visiting the site, visiting a library or archive.

Figure 15. The site of Wilsontown Iron Works, showing a series of circular bell pits.



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Further reading

The Transformation of Rural Scotland by TM Devine (1994, Edinburgh) includes detailed studies of agricultural improvement in Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire.

James Watt, His Time in Scotland 1736–1774 by RL Hills (2002, London) explores Watt's achievements in the region, well beyond his steam engine fame.

Changing Population Distribution in the Cart Basin in the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, by NA McIntosh in *Transactions of the Institute of Geographers* (1956).

David Dale of New Lanark by DJ McLaren (1984) is a notable example of the many useful biographical studies of successful individuals.

The South Clyde Estuary (1986) and *The North Clyde Estuary* (1992) by FA Walker provide a summary of buildings in the region, including those from the eighteenth century.

John Watt: An Eighteenth Century Surveyor, by J Moore in *Renfrewshire Local History Forum Journal* (vol. 10, p. 5) explores the work of an early land surveyor in the 1720s.

The standard *Agricultural Accounts*, including J Naismith (1798) on Clydesdale (Lanarkshire) and J Wilson (1812) on Renfrewshire, provide a great deal of useful information beyond farming improvements.

Unfolding Fermtouns – Rural Buildings on Roy's Military Map, by SM Nisbet, in *Scottish Local History* (no. 76, Summer 2009).

The History of the Shire of Renfrew by W Semple (Paisley, 1782) is an example of one of the better early county histories, extending beyond the landed elite to describe the changing landscape.

Land Ownership in Scotland c. 1770 by L Timperley (1970, Scottish Record Society) gives an essential overview of the main landowners in the region.

History of Rutherglen and East Kilbride (1793) and *General View of the Agriculture of Dumbarton* (1794) by David Ure are unusually detailed for their time.

The *Old Statistical Account* of the 1790s provides the most comprehensive source for the late eighteenth century, written by the minister of every parish in the region.

Online resources

- www.rcahms.gov.uk/canmore.html
Internet access to the database of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, which provides information, site details and images for archaeological, architectural, maritime and industrial sites – including many mentioned in this article.
- <http://maps.nls.uk>
The National Library of Scotland's map site includes eighteenth-century maps of Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and Dunbartonshire.
- www.archive.org
The complete text of John McUre's *History of Glasgow*, written in 1736 and reprinted in 1830, is available from this website – search for 'History of Glasgow' within 'Texts'.
- <http://rlhf.info/rlhf-journal/>
A paper about John Watt by John N. Moore is available on the website of the Renfrewshire Local History Forum. It is listed on the RLHF Journal page as 'Watt, John: 18th Century Surveyor'.