

# Celts Ancient and Modern: Recent Controversies in Celtic Studies

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As often happens in conferences on Celtic Studies, I was the only contributor at Helsinki who was talking about archaeology and the Ancient Celts. This has been a controversial subject since the 1980s when archaeologists started to apply to the question of the Celts the changes of paradigm, which had impacted on archaeology since the 1960s and 1970s. This caused fundamental changes in the way in which we treat archaeological evidence, both the theoretical basis of what we are doing and the methodologies we use, and even affecting the sorts of sites we dig and what of the finds we consider important. Initially it was a conflict among archaeologists, but it has also spilt over into other aspects of Celtic Studies in what has been termed ‘Celtoscepticism’. In 2015–2016 the British Museum and the National Museum of Scotland put on exhibitions (Farley and Hunter 2015) based largely on these new approaches, raising again the conflicts from the 1990s between traditional Celticists, and those who are advocates of the new approaches (‘New Celticists’), but it also revived, especially in the popular press, misinformation about what the conflicts are all about.

Celtoscepticism comes from a Welsh term *celtisceptig* invented by the poet and novelist Robin Llywelin, and translated into English and applied to Celtic Studies by Patrick Sims-Williams (1998); it is used for people who do not consider that the ancient people of Britain should be called Celts as they had never been so-called in the Ancient World. Indeed, Strabo said that another Greek author, Hipparchus, had got confused between Celts and Britons. At most the ancient authors say that the Britons were ‘like’ the Celts, but even that implies that the Britons were not Celts. The term Celt was applied to people in Britain for the first time in 1582 by George Buchanan in his history of Scotland, and the concept of Celtic languages, often used as the basis of defining the Celts, only appears early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the writings of Paul-Yves Pezron (1703) and of Edward Lhuyd (1707). This critical approach is nothing new—the inventing of the Insular Celts was discussed a century ago by the Irish historian Eoin Mac Néill (1913–14). What has happened in the meantime is the linking of the Ancient Celts not only with a group of languages, but also with an art style (‘Celtic Art’) and an archaeological ‘La Tène Culture Group’ whose origin was sought in southern Germany in the 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, and whose expansion has been used to document the supposed spread of the Celts (Duval 1977; Megaw and Megaw 1989; Collis 2003/6). All of this was being

brought into question by a number of scholars, mainly English, but also on the continent, for instance in Spain (Ruiz Zapatero 1990, 1993, 1996; Fernández Gótz 2008), Germany (Rieckhoff 2012) and the Balkans (Popa and Stoddart 2014).

The true nature of the debate was, however, masked by a number of misunderstandings and misinformation, some of which is still rife today. One of these is that Celtosceptics such as me were saying that the Ancient Celts never existed. This was simply not true. It is something, I think, first invented by Ruth and Vincent Megaw (1998) at a conference on the Celts held in Cardiff in 1991 at which I had contributed a paper showing the change and increasing precision of nomenclature in the Greek and Latin literature for the peoples who lived north of the Alps, from Hyperboreans to the names of specific tribes in Caesar's *De bello Gallico* (Collis 1997). The Megaws, who had been asked to give the summing up of the conference turned up with a pre-prepared lecture with slides including a completely blank one showing 'John Collis's view of the Ancient Celts'! Their summary bore no resemblance to what I said. The same accusation was also made of Simon James's book on *The Atlantic Celts* (1999) though again he never said this in his article or his book. The article he wrote for *The Guardian* in 1997 was indeed headlined 'The tribe that never was' and said 'the Ancient Celts are a bogus modern invention', but his article referred only to the insular Celts, not the continental (James 1997); it was the journalists who wrote the headlines, not James (pers. comm. 2017), and not with his agreement. However, the belief that it referred to all Ancient Celts became widely disseminated not only among continental scholars but also in the more popular literature, e.g. Ellis 1998/2003 xiv–xxx. It re-emerged recently in the reviews of the British Museum exhibition—'Golden age of art by a Celtic race that never was' (Maev Kennedy, *The Guardian* July 10, 2015), and 'The stunning legacy of a people who apparently did not exist' (Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian*, September 22, 2015). All that was being claimed by people such as me was that the term 'Celtic' in the ancient world was continental, not insular. However, it does also carry implications about the theoretical and methodological basis of how we define the Celts, and this in turn has important political and 'racial' implications as I shall argue below.

Celtoscepticism questions many of the basic assumptions that are made in Celtic Studies: Why are Scots, Irish, Welsh and Bretons called 'Celts' if their ancestors were not so called in ancient times? If, as is argued, it is because they speak Celtic languages, then why are Celtic languages called 'Celtic'. Why is 'Celtic Art' called Celtic (Collis forthcoming 1)? For archaeologists what is 'La Tène Culture' and why is it equated with 'Celts'? And why do we think the Celts originate from southern Germany or, for some archaeologists and linguists, in southwestern Iberia, and can these claims be justified? All these questions require an understanding of the historiography of the Celts and of Celtic Studies, and this is what I tried to do in my book *The Celts; origins, myths and inventions*, but further progress has been

made since the revised edition was published in 2006, and in this paper I will look at some of the developments in my own thinking in the last few years.

## Defining the Celts

The disagreements between the Celtosceptics and the traditionalists start with fundamental matters like how to define a Celt. For the traditionalists Celts are defined by the language, and within linguistics there are well accepted characteristics which distinguish the Celtic group of languages from other Indo-European groups. It is the next stage where the disagreement takes place, as many linguists argue that speaking a Celtic language is the primary characteristic of Celts. So for instance on the cover of Wolfgang Meid's 2010 book on the Celts he says "'Celtic' is, in the first instance, a linguistic concept", or Graham Isaac (2010:165): "without language there are no Celts, ancient or modern", or Thomas Clancy (2015a; 2015b) in reference to the exhibition *The Celts: art and identity* in the British Museum: "This is the fundamental, defining characteristic of the people who can be called 'Celts' that they spoke or speak, Celtic languages". It is also followed by some archaeologists such as Barry Cunliffe (2010:20) referring to the Ancient Celts: "Celts identifiable presumably in that they were Celtic speakers".

This is simply not true. The classification of languages only starts in the Renaissance, but attempts at this time and up to, and including, Sir William Jones who is wrongly credited as the discoverer of the family of Indo-European languages (Campbell 2000/2006), were confused and often contradictory, and it is not until the rise of the German school of comparative linguistics in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that we have reliable classifications (see van Hal 2014 for discussion of early attempts at classification). What are now called the 'Celtic languages' were originally recognised as a group by George Buchanan (Collis 1999), but he used the term '*Lingua gallica*', while languages labelled '*Linguae celticae*' only formed a subgroup within it (Irish and Scottish Gaelic). Pezron wrongly identified the language of the Bretons as descended from that of the Ancient Celts described by Caesar; Breton has long been recognised as an introduction from Britain in the 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (Snyder 2003), but Pezron (1703) did not include Irish and Scots Gaelic in his book, and it is not until Lhuyd (1707) that all the languages we now call 'Celtic' were included, and he followed Pezron rather than Buchanan in calling them 'Celtic'. Using the language as the defining characteristic for calling people Celts before the 18<sup>th</sup> century is clearly not historically acceptable as the grouping of the languages was simply not recognised.

For me the commonly used defining characteristics of Celts can be ranked in a 'hierarchy of conservatism of change': genetics is the most conservative, followed by ethnicity; then language, followed by social structure and religious beliefs; and

finally material culture as the most ephemeral (Collis 2010). These are different types of data, so not directly inter-changeable and cannot be used as a proxy for one another, i.e. language does not necessarily define ethnicity, and though genetics may influence ethnicity (e.g. the colour of one's skin or the physiognomy of the face), they are not the same. Genetic make-up usually changes slowly and takes many generations, indeed will not affect the whole of a given population whereas material culture can change several times in an individual's life-time and the new ideas adopted by many communities at the same time. Thus in archaeology, if we cannot use archaeological data (e.g. material culture) as a proxy for ethnicity or for language, then looking for 'origins' using archaeological data is pointless. We can however compare them, e.g. to what extent is the spread of La Tène ('Celtic') Art influenced by language?

For many archaeologists there was a change in the aims of mainstream archaeology in the 1960s–1970s (Trigger 1989). Firstly there was a rejection by many western archaeologists of the Philology/Language based 'Culture-Historical paradigm' of Gustaf Kossinna (1911) and Gordon Childe (1929) in which the main aim was defining 'Culture Groups' or 'Cultures' to document 'racial' origins, migrations, etc. It meant that there was a major emphasis on chronology to date these supposed events (e.g. the origin and expansion of the Germans and of the Celts). Instead under the 'New Archaeology' there was greater emphasis on economic and socio-economic questions, e.g. urbanisation, trade, agricultural and industrial production (my own doctoral thesis was on urbanisation in the later Iron Age in temperate Europe, Collis 1984, and my early excavations were primarily dealing with economic reconstructions of agricultural systems using animal bones, seeds, etc.). But there was also an interest in cultural change, e.g. the increasing complexity of society, its causes and evolution, with classifications such as bands, tribes, chiefdoms, states, based mainly on American anthropological theories of social evolution, the so-called 'Processual Archaeology'. We were also investigating long-term processes like changes in landscape, environment and settlement patterns, looking at ideas like 'core-periphery models', 'world economies' and 'central place theory' taken over from anthropology and geography. This in turn led to changed methods of fieldwork, with techniques like field walking and 'open area' excavation (Collis 2001).

It was not merely a change in emphasis, but the basic tenets of the 'Culture-History' approach were also under attack. Ultimately its theoretical basis lay in racist and colonialist ideas of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which were to reach their most extreme form in Germany in the 1930s where the Nazis were trying to differentiate a German 'master race' from lesser groups of humans. They used language to distinguish Germans from Slavs, physical characteristics such as the shape of the nose, or ancestry ('blood') to distinguish Jews from Aryans,

and envisaged racially 'pure' Germanic groups in danger of contamination by interbreeding with 'racially inferior' groups such as the Jews and Slavs. In archaeology, they used 'Culture Groups' defined by burial rites, settlement types and styles of pottery and ornaments to identify these racial groups following the ideas of Gustaf Kossinna, who, though he died in 1931 before the Nazis came to power, was looked up to as the 'father' of Nazi prehistoric archaeology (Stampfuss 1935). It is against this background that we need to query the correlation of 'Celts = Celtic languages = La Tène Culture Group'. Some scholars rejected this concept of race (e.g. de Navarro 1936:237 'I should state at the outset that I employ the word "Celtic" in no racial sense, but merely to describe peoples who, in the period I am concerned with, are thought to have spoken Celtic languages'). For others it was fundamental (e.g. Jacobsthal 1944:160 'In my opinion the whole of Celtic art is a unit. It is the creation of one race, the Celts').

This idea of a package encompassing language, art and social structure indicating a way of life and thinking that permeated all members of a 'race', something decided at birth, lingers on for instance in the work of Barry Cunliffe (1983, 1984) in which he constructs an ideal hierarchical 'Celtic Society' based on a combination of Caesar's description of Gaul in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the written sources from early Christian Ireland in the 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. This social structure could then be imposed on the presumably Celtic-speaking society that lived in southern England in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Thus, the hill-fort of Danebury was seen as the residence of a 'chief' or 'king' even though there was no evidence that the inhabitants of the hill-fort were of higher status than the people living on the smaller settlements. At the Museum of the Iron Age in Andover where the Danebury finds are exhibited, there is the model of a 'Celtic warrior' who is wearing objects from all over Europe from 5<sup>th</sup> century BC Bavaria and Champagne to 1<sup>st</sup> century BC objects from East Anglia in Britain (depicted on the cover of *Current Archaeology* April 2004). These approaches presume that we can take anything from anywhere to reconstruct ancient Celtic societies as long as they spoke a Celtic language. Such an approach to the Celts leads on to the platitudes, generalisations and 'racial stereotyping' that we find in the classical literature of Greece and Rome, but also in 19<sup>th</sup> century depictions of the Celts (warlike, drunk, spiritual, etc.). Even referring to 'The Celts' as though they form some sort of unity invites such stereotyping which should play no part in our studies of the past, and fails to cover the great variation of the culture of ancient Celtic-speaking peoples, from the urban settlements of the Celtiberians, which share more in common with Mediterranean urbanism, to the more tribal and rural settlements patterns of Ireland and northern Britain in early medieval times. It also fails to recognise the very real differences among modern populations of Celtic speakers for whom national identity (Welsh, Irish, etc.) is more important than the larger category of 'Celt' (e.g. Martyn 2016).

## Celts past and present

I think that it is important to make a clear distinction between the Ancient and Modern Celts; they are different phenomena (though linked as speakers of Celtic languages) and we need to study them in different ways. For the Modern Celts I would suggest that we can use language to define them (though some Celticists are unhappy to use the word except as a linguistic term); indeed, as they are a living phenomenon, we are justified in making our own definition and this can be changed over time, though who makes the decision about who is or is not a Celt? The most widely accepted definition is as ‘Speakers of Celtic languages or whose recent ancestors spoke Celtic languages’, so it can be self-defining, but how do we deal with groups like the Galicians and Asturians in northwestern Spain who claim they are Celtic, even though it is at least fifteen hundred years since Celtic languages were spoken in those areas (Zarandonna 2015). What are the opinions of modern Celtic-speaking communities, or can the modern Celts be defined by outsiders such as me?

For studying the Ancient Celts what criteria do we use to define them? The choices are: only from the usage of ancient authors; by language like the Modern Celts; or by material culture as has been claimed by archaeologists. As an archaeologist I reject the third possibility as I discussed above. I also reject the second, because there was no classification of languages in the classical world, and languages tended to be named after the people who spoke them; so, Britons spoke *lingua Britannica*, not *Celtica* or *Gallica* even though the similarities might be recognised. But there is also the problem of people who spoke what we call a Celtic language, but where the people considered themselves, or were considered by others, to belong to another ethnic group. So the Celtic-speaking people around Marseille were considered to be *Ligydes* (Ligurians); Tacitus says the *Treveri* on the Mosel considered themselves to be *Germani*; and there is also the case of the Celtic-speaking inhabitants of Britain and Ireland, the *Britanni* and *Hiberni*. Also, using the name Celts for speakers of Celtic languages in the early medieval period is to misrepresent history; in that period there was no-one who considered themselves to be Celts or were thought by their contemporaries to be Celts; the name had disappeared. Using the term wrongly hides historically important processes like the disappearance of the people called Celts at the end of the Roman period, and the reappearance of the term in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Thus, we are left with the first possibility, that we use the classification of the ancient writers. Here the question is what were the criteria used to define Celts, and how was the word used by each writer and in what context? An example of the problem is the ancient city of *Narbo*, the modern Narbonne. Stephen of Byzantium says that the earlier writers Strabo and Marcian called the city a *polis keltike* (Νάρβων ἑμπόριον καὶ πόλις Κελτική) but it is in an Iberian-speaking area,

and it lies west of the Rhone which was considered in one of the Massiliote sailing manuals to be an area inhabited by Iberians, not Celts. Often the term has been taken as ethnic, ‘a city of the Celts’, but it is more likely to be a geographical or administrative term (i.e. ‘in Narbonese Gaul’) rather than ethnic (Gayraud 1981, Collis 2003/6, 2010). In late Roman sources such as Ammianus Marcellinus we encounter a fighting unit called *Celtae seniores*, again often taken to be ethnic, but it has to be seen in the context of units given nick-names such as *Petulantes*, *Sabini*, *Latini* and *Invicti* very much as modern rugby and baseball teams are given names (Rance 2015).

## A periodisation of the Celts

For the purposes of analysis the term Celt and the language can be divided into a number of phases which require different methodologies to study them:

***Prehistoric Celts.*** We know there were people called Celts before written records appear in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC because, if we accept the information of the oldest sources, Hecataeus and Herodotus, they locate Celts in southwest Iberia, in central France (inland from Marseilles) and probably in southern Germany. Likewise inscriptions in Celtic languages, perhaps going back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC are to be found in northern Italy, southern France, northeastern France, and possibly in Spain. We also have a certain number of place and river names, which probably go back to this time as well. Thus people called Celts and Celtic languages were already widespread across Europe by the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and it must mean that the expansion of both the languages and the ethnic group (not the same thing!) belong at latest to the Early Iron Age, but probably much earlier. Models of Celtic expansion such as linking it with the spread of La Tène Culture or Art in southern Germany in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and later are clearly not sustainable.

***The Ancient Celts 500 BC – AD 500.*** References to the Celts in the Ancient World occurred over a period of about a thousand years (Collis 2003/6), from around 500 BC (Hecataeus) to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD (Sidonius Apollinaris). We have no definition of a Celt other than stereotypes and a description by Caesar of the geographical area they occupied in Gaul, but there are two authors who considered themselves to be in part at least Celts: the poet Martial from *Bilbilis*, near modern-day Catalayud in Spain) and Sidonius Apollinaris, bishop of Clermont-Ferrand in the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century AD, and there is also the historian Pompeius Trogus of the tribe of the Vocontii, which was certainly Celtic-speaking and probably a Celtic tribe. Under the Roman Empire people of Celtic origin prospered, and one, Avitus from the Auvergne, became emperor in Rome, and another Flavius Rufinus aimed at becoming emperor of the eastern empire, but was assassinated by his troops (Collis 2009). Identifications of Celts were made by the ancient authors,

and cannot be re-written—using the modern definition of language is ‘presentism’ and causes unacceptable anomalies (e.g. the Celtic-speaking Ligurians around Marseilles). Inscriptions in Celtic languages start in the mid-first millennium BC, and continue into the Early Roman period at sites such as Botorrita in Spain and La Graufesenque in southern France. The names of individuals with Celtic names on inscriptions (Rabould and Sims-Williams 2007, 2009) and place-name evidence also give us information about areas which were once Celtic-speaking (Sims-Williams 2006), but individuals moved around, especially in the Roman army, and many major settlements with Celtic endings are linked with early imperial Roman names—*Augustonemeton*, *Augustodunum*, etc., so these are only a rough guide to the pre-Roman situation. Some elements of La Tène Art appear in Early Roman versions, not, I suspect, as some sort of resurgence in an anti-Roman context as is often claimed, but as an official acceptance of the style in much the same way as the native gods were absorbed into the Roman pantheon.

**Medieval AD 500-1500.** The last classical author to mention the Celts is Isidore of Seville in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, but already by then the Celts seemed to be historical. References to them virtually disappear for the next thousand years, and no people from this period considered themselves to be Celts, or were so considered to be by others. Among the rare uses of the term is a Byzantine author using *Celtae* to refer to the Franks taking part in the Crusades (Chapman 1992). It is thus ahistorical to refer, for instance, to speakers of Celtic languages in areas such as Ireland at this time as ‘Celts’, and it is best to refer to them by contemporary names or their modern translations such as Irish, Breton, Cymry, etc., and to avoid terms which are derived from this misnaming, like ‘Celtic Art’ and the ‘Celtic Church’, etc. The indigenous inhabitants of Gaul were now all called *Galli* so even in France the name ‘*Celtae*’ had died out. However, along the Atlantic the languages that are now called Celtic, did still survive, along with some terms like Druid and the name of the god Lug. To what extent Early Christian Art (Insular Art) retained motifs such as the triskele from prehistoric art rather than as a re-invention is problematic, but some of the characteristic elements such as knotwork are certainly taken over and developed from Late Roman art (Goldberg 2015).

**Modern Celts AD 1500/1700 onwards.** With the Renaissance and a shift in interest from the genealogies of the nobility to the origins of ethnic groups, which would lead on to the formation of nation states, there was a raised interest in the ancient peoples mentioned in the Bible and in classical sources. It was in this context that Celts make their re-appearance, but the only source of additional information to identify the groups and their descendants was considered to be through the study of their languages. The Celts and Gauls were one of the peoples identified from the classical sources and so attempts were made to identify elements of their language (e.g. Boxhorn 1654)), and, as the still extant ‘Celtic’ languages became

better known to scholars, the affinities for instance between Welsh and the ancient languages of Gaul were recognised. Thus language became the major diagnostic in the recognition of the supposed descendants of the Ancient Celts, and with the work of Edward Lhuyd, Celtic languages became the pioneer subject for developing what was to become ‘Comparative Linguistics’. Thus the accepted definition of Celts became speakers, or people whose recent ancestors were speakers, of ‘Celtic’ languages. This was boosted firstly in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century with the birth of the Romantic Movement, and later, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of ‘race’ for which language was the main criterion, along with physical appearance (Collis 2007). Thus in the 1930s the Nazis were defining the differences of Germanic peoples from Jews and Slavs using language, measurement of facial characteristics and family origins, based on a concept of ‘purity’ of race and ‘contamination’ caused by intermarriage, the mixing of ‘blood’. Most of these ‘racial’ characteristics were believed to be inherited and fixed at birth, ideas still employed by racist extremists such as Anders Behring Breivik.

## The future

For many aspects of Celtic Studies this development in archaeology is not relevant, but it should have an impact when we attempt to write the history of the Celts. As I have stated, it means that we can ignore the standard interpretations of the origin and the spread of the Celts, either from southern Germany (Duval 1977, Megaw and Megaw 1989), or from Iberia (Cunliffe and Koch 2010; Koch and Cunliffe 2013, 2016); archaeology is simply incapable of solving this question. I would suggest that it also presents problems when looking at the origin of the language, but that is a matter for linguists to decide. What I do urge is that in the teaching of Celtic Studies, defined as the study of all aspects of the history and culture of Celtic speaking peoples, the historiography of Celtic Studies should be taught as an essential component. Perhaps we can then all agree on what terms like ‘Celtic’ mean in specific cases such as the naming of the language group, and this should clearly indicate what we can and cannot do with such information (Collis, forthcoming 2).

It was also argued both by Thomas Clancy (2015b) and by one of the anonymous reviewers that using the term ‘Celtic’ for periods such as the early medieval period along the Atlantic seaboard is no different from what we normally do, imposing names and classifications retrospectively which the people at the time would not have recognised, like Iron Age for a period before the Roman conquest. One example used was the First World War which was only so named retrospectively after the beginning of the Second World War. For me, they are not comparable. ‘The Great War’ was the term used at the time, but if the Second World War had

also been termed ‘The Great War’ it would have caused confusion about which war we were talking about. Alternatively instead of talking about First World War, inter-war and Second World War (equivalent to my tripartite Ancient Celts, no Celts and Modern Celts) we could have considered the whole of the period 1918–1945 as one ‘Great War’ ignoring the relatively peaceful period in Europe from 1918 to 1939 which is the equivalent of using ‘Celtic’ for all three phases. This, for me, is the problem of imposing the term ‘Celtic’ with its modern meaning on earlier periods when it had a different, or no, meaning. The word had already been appropriated by Classical writers, and therefore the modern name should not be imposed on the Ancient World. This is why I use the terms ‘Ancient’ and ‘Modern’ to distinguish between different phenomena, and I avoid using Celtic where it is appropriate. Claims that most people, especially linguists, know what they mean and so there is no ambiguity, is simply gainsaid by reading the literature, both academic and popular, of the last century and a half where confusion is rife.

We also need to agree on what are the acceptable theoretical and methodological approaches to the Celts. Whereas the worst failures have been primarily in archaeology, it is important that linguists and others should also recognise the origin of their concepts, like defining Celts in the past as speakers of ‘Celtic languages’. We need to recognise that the definitions which have been used up until fairly recent times have shared origins with those of extremist groups such as the Nazis, and so when dealing with extreme racists we must not be open to the criticism that they are only using the same methodology as we are using in our academic discourses. In scientific studies the use of terms such as ‘race’ belongs to the past, and we cannot use a single criterion such as language to define ‘racial’ groups such as the Celts or the Germans. It is to confuse genetic inheritance with aspects of Celts which are culturally-learned behaviour, and are not things that are dictated by our inherited genes.

We also need to learn how to combat misinformation, not only in methodology, but simple factual errors such as ‘Celtosceptics’ being anti-Celtic and that they do not think the Celts existed. This has been going on for half a century and yet it is still rife within Celtic Studies and especially the media. It also means to a certain extent rewriting the history of Britain and Ireland. We need to be clear about who ‘owns’ this history. One of the main complaints about the British Museum exhibition was that it was devised by Anglophone archaeologists, and very few Celtic speakers were involved, indeed it has been suggested that the whole exhibition should have been centred around the Celtic languages (‘Prof Clancy concluded with his own vision of how the exhibition could have been. He would have begun with the linguistic definition of Celtic, shown maps where we have evidence of Celtic speaking peoples, (Clancy 2015b), whereas it was laid out largely on a chronological scheme starting from the 6th–5th centuries BC up

to the modern day, and in the London exhibition with a map in the first room (based on one of mine) showing where we have evidence of people called ‘Celts’ in the Ancient World. We can perhaps agree that more should have been made of the language and culture of the Welsh, Irish and Scottish Gaelic speakers, and the thread of language, which links the Ancient and Modern Celts, but I would suggest that the Celticists could not have put on such an exhibition. For the Ancient Celts, the main areas of study are in Archaeology, Art History and Ancient History, and the greatest expertise in these is to be found among an international group of scholars most of whom, like me, do not speak any Celtic languages let alone being brought up in Celtic-speaking communities. I would suggest that the history of ancient Celtic speakers is part of our shared European history and culture. My own home town of Winchester (*Venta Belgarum*) first appears as a defended site (Qualmann *et al.* 2004) constructed by, we assume, Belgic people who spoke a Celtic language, but its history is more relevant to me as an archaeologist than any modern Celtic speakers. How many modern Celticists have been to the key sites associated with the Ancient Celts – Hallstatt, La Tène, Numantia, Alesia, Gergovia or Ayrat – and who is to investigate and write the history of these sites, or investigate their history, or topics like urbanisation, trade, art, culture change, etc.? There should be no divide between us, and there should be no resentment when it seems that the message put across in such exhibitions and books is dominated by people whose first language is English, French, German, Czech or Spanish. It should not be interpreted in terms of political, economic and cultural dominance as in a centre-periphery type of model, though these often racist approaches do occur in the literature both the past and the present. Some of us at least are trying to move beyond that. So I hope that dialogue between the various interest groups will be ones of mutual co-operation and open discussion, a recognition of different viewpoints and expertise that we share with one another rather than use to foster mutual antagonism. So, the question is, where do we go from here?

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