The Celts

Origins
Who were the Celts?

“The Celts were a group of related tribes linked by language, religion and culture that gave rise to the first civilization north of the Alps. They emerged as a distinct people in the eighth century BC, about the time that Homer was composing his Iliad and Odyssey, the Olympics were starting, and the legendary Romulus and Remus were founding Rome.”

(National Geographic Magazine: Volume 15 #5, May 1977)
The Celts did indeed develop a civilization and it flourished, not only in Ireland or on the British Isles, but first and most significantly on continental Europe.
In the period between 700 BC and 100 AD, Celtic tribes thrived in France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. During that time, Celtic culture crossed the English Channel and the Irish sea and took root. On the continent, Celtic culture merged with Roman customs and traditions, sometimes losing its Celtic identity altogether. In England, Celtic culture gave way to Romans, Angles, Saxons, Vikings and Normans.

Except for the remote parts of Scotland and Wales, only Ireland remained a Celtic stronghold.
To begin with, the Celts had no great material civilization to be discovered as did, for example, the civilization of ancient Babylon.  

The Celts were nomads and their society was un-nucleated*.  

They were illiterate in their own language. However, there are some classical references (usually made by Christians in later centuries) to ancient tribes, chieftains and place names. The former two have been found on old coins and the place names exist still today.

*nucleate - form around a central area: a nucleated village.
The Celtic world differs from other ancient civilizations in that it has survived. It has survived in the form of language, in the oral literary traditions, folktales, superstitions and in the Celtic spirit.
Celtic is a branch of the language tree known as INDO-EUROPEAN, a tree that took root about 4500 years ago somewhere between the Carpathian Mountains of Eastern Europe and the Ural Mountains of Russia. Indo-European is the most prolific language tree in the world. All of the Indo-European languages have words in common. Various branches flowered into such tongues as Greek, Latin, Germanic and Slavic. Some of these limbs developed off-shoots. From Latin came Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Rumanian.
Celtic Language Family Tree

Goidelic (Q - Celtic)

An t-Seana Gaidhlig
Old Irish

Scottish Gaelic
Irish Gaelic
Manx Gaelic

Brythonic (P - Celtic)

Breton
Cornish
Welsh

son - mac
son - map