

Britain – A Sense of the Past

Wherever you go in Britain you are reminded of the past. The past and the present exist side by side, giving a sense of continuity and tradition and leading to a feeling of stability and a taste for gradual reform rather than drastic and radical change. A Norman castle, a medieval cathedral, an Elizabethan cottage, a Georgian town house and a Victorian terrace house are very much parts of the contemporary scene and not primarily regarded as showcases or museum pieces from a bygone age.

What do you know about events and famous people from British history? Try this quiz before you start reading the text.

History quiz

- A** Winston Churchill was:
- Prime Minister during World War I
 - Prime Minister during World War II
 - Prime Minister between the two world wars
- B** Emmeline Pankhurst was:
- the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic
 - the first woman to be elected an MP
 - a leading suffragette who fought for voting rights for women
- C** Queen Elizabeth I reigned:
- in the 14th century
 - in the 15th century
 - in the 16th century
- D** The Blitz was:
- a German attack on the western front during World War I
 - German air raids on England in 1940–41
 - British air attacks on German towns towards the end of World War II
- E** The Victorian Age was:
- the period 1837–1901
 - the period 1901–14
 - the period 1914–39
- F** Henry VIII, the father of Elizabeth I, married:
- twice
 - three times
 - six times
- G** Stonehenge is:
- an important battlefield
 - a medieval cathedral
 - a place of ancient worship
- H** Florence Nightingale was:
- the founder of the nursing profession
 - a well-known female scientist in the Victorian Age
 - a well-known Victorian novelist
- I** In 1066, an important year in British history,
- English forces occupied parts of France
 - French forces invaded England
 - English forces occupied Ireland

Answers to Quiz

- A** Prime Minister during World War II
B leading suffragette
C 14th century
D German air raids on England
E 1837–1901
F six times
G place of ancient worship
H founder of the nursing profession
I English forces occupied parts of France

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Norman *normannisk*,
[perioden efter 1066]
medieval [medi:vl] *middel-*
alder-

Elizabethan [i, lɪzəbi:θn]
elisabetansk [fra *Elisabeth*
I's tid, 1558-1603]

Georgian [dʒɔ:dʒən] *georgi-*
ansk [fra *perioden 1714-*
1760]

Victorian *viktorsansk* [*perio-*
den 1837-1901]
showcase *montre, udstillings-*
vindue
bygone [baɪɡən] *svunden*

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melting pot *smeltedig*
successive [sək'sesɪv] *på*
hinanden følgende
BC: before Christ
AD: after Christ
conquer [kɒŋkə(r)] *erobre*
fringe [frɪndʒ] *udkant*
heritage [herɪtɪdʒ] *kulturarv*
distinctiveness *særpræg*
referendum *folkeafstemning*
assembly *lovgivende forsam-*
ling

The British Melting Pot

The British people is a result of the successive waves of foreign tribes and peoples that settled Britain in the remote past and made Britain a real melting pot:

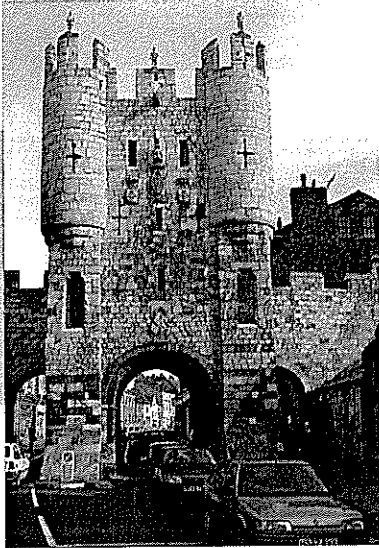
- the Celts who started to arrive from the present-day Belgium in the eighth century BC;
- the Romans: 55 BC to about AD 450;
- the Anglo-Saxons who replaced the Romans and gave name to England, Anglia, Sussex and Essex;
- the Vikings who raided the British Isles for a few centuries from AD 793; and
- the Normans who conquered England in 1066.

CELTS

The Celts brought a simple form of agriculture to what is now England, but were later forced to the fringes of the British Isles, to Ireland, Wales and Scotland. In these three countries the Celtic heritage survives in the languages – Irish, Welsh and Scottish Gaelic, one element in the peoples' strong feelings of national distinctiveness. Welsh and particularly Scottish nationalism has always been strong. In 1997 it was decided by referendum that Wales and Scotland would get their own national assemblies.



Waving the Scottish flag in support of their own Scottish national assembly after nearly 300 years.



A tour of York is a trip through history. The city has remains from Roman and Viking times, a beautiful Norman cathedral and a 14th century Norman city wall with four gates.

impact *påvirkning*
 site [sɑit] *beliggenhed*
 notable [nəʊtəbl] *betydningsfuld*
 remains [rɪmeɪnz] *ruiner*
 hot springs *varme kilder*
 frontier [ˈfrʌntɪə(r)] *grænse*
 Germanic [dʒɜːmænik] *germansk*
 Christianity [ˌkrɪstɪˈænəti] *kristendom*
 monastery [ˈmɒnəstri] *kloster*
 Norse [nɔːs] *norron, nordisk, norsk*
 feudal system [ˈfjuːd(ə)l ˈsɪstəm] *feudalsystem, lens-system*
 in reward for *til gengæld for*
 stronghold *fæstning, borg*

ROMANS

The Roman impact is mainly seen in the sites of important cities. Today's London was established by the Romans near the present Tower of London at a convenient crossing of the Thames. Other notable Roman towns are York, Chester and Bath. Bath has the best Roman remains in the country. Around its hot springs the Romans built extensive baths which are a major tourist attraction today.

Another major tourist attraction is Hadrian's Wall, a defensive wall stretching coast-to-coast from Tyne to the Solway Firth in the North of England. It was built as the northern frontier of Roman Britain.

ANGLO-SAXONS

The Anglo-Saxons were Germanic tribes from northwestern Europe. Present-day English has developed from the language of the Anglo-Saxons. Christianity was established in Britain in the first centuries after the Anglo-Saxon invasion.

NORSEMEN AND VIKINGS

The ruins of the monastery on Lindisfarne in Northumbria, which is the first recorded place of Viking plunder, serve as a reminder of the Norse influence. The Jorvik Centre in York is another.

The Viking period in British history came to an end when King Harald of Norway was defeated at Stamford Bridge a few miles east of York in 1066 by Anglo-Saxon forces who were in turn beaten by Norman invaders a fortnight later.

NORMANS

The Norman victory in 1066 at the Battle of Hastings led to the introduction of the feudal system in England. William of Normandy gave his French-speaking followers land in reward for their support.

Norman castles are found in many places around Britain. One fine example is Arundel Castle, west of Brighton, built in the late 11th century as a stronghold to control the south coast.

During this period most of the magnificent cathedrals were also built – Canterbury, York, Salisbury, Winchester, Lincoln, Ely, Durham, Westminster Abbey, to name some of the most familiar.

succe
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 Span
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Tudor and Stuart England (c. 1500–1700)

The Tudor family ruled England from 1485 to 1603 and were succeeded by the Stuarts from Scotland. Hampton Court Palace, near London, was built in this period.

The reign of Queen Elizabeth in the latter part of the 16th century saw the rise of England as a naval power. Great trading companies were established, and overseas settlements soon followed. Religious emigrants, known as Puritans, sailed to North America and established the first successful colony in 1620. There were several clashes with the Irish, and after a brutal massacre in the 1640s, the Irish were finally defeated in 1690.

The Great Plague (1665) killed almost 70,000 of London's inhabitants, and a year later the Great Fire destroyed most of the city. Out of the ashes emerged several beautiful churches and buildings, among them St Paul's Cathedral.

Georgian England (1714–1830)

England and Scotland were united in 1707 with one Parliament serving both countries. When the British turned to a German royal family for their new king, George I, in 1714, Parliament established its superiority over the King in running the country. The beautiful 18th century town houses are called Georgian after the names of the four kings who reigned until 1830. Blenheim Palace, near Oxford, was built for the Duke of Marlborough after his victory over French and Austrian forces during the Spanish War of Succession (1701–14). The British obtained control over Gibraltar during this war.

In the latter part of the 18th century, the transformation of Britain from an agricultural to an industrial nation started. Inventions in the coal, iron and textile industries drastically changed the landscape of Britain, doubling the population from 7 million to 14 million between 1760 and 1830 and turning the country into the workshop of the world in less than a hundred years.

19th Century Britain

All the wars fought for territorial conquest around the world led to the establishment of the British Empire.

The Act of Ireland united Britain and Ireland in 1801. English landowners brought their Protestant faith with them, and the tension between the prosperous and the exploited led to numerous rebellions against the British.

France lost or gave away most of North America shortly

succeed [sək'si:d] *efterfølge*
 naval power [nəvəl] *flådemagt*
 trading company *handels-*
selskab
 plague [pleɪg] *pest*
 superiority [su:piəri'ɔ:ɪtɪ] *det*
at være overordnet
 Spanish War of Succession
den spanske arvefølgekrig
 transformation *forvandling*
 empire [em'paɪə(r)] *imperium,*
verdensrige

before and during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars (1789–1815). France and Napoleon were finally defeated at Waterloo, on the outskirts of Brussels in Belgium, and there is a railway terminus in London to remind the British of the victory in 1815. Ten years earlier the legendary Admiral Nelson had beaten the French navy off the coast of Spain, a victory to which Trafalgar Square in London pays tribute.

THE VICTORIAN AGE

The latter part of the 19th century takes its name after Queen Victoria (reigned 1837–1901) and is primarily associated with industrial expansion and imperial glory.

Built around this time were Crystal Palace, the Albert Hall, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Science Museum and the Geological Museum – all in London and all emphasizing the importance attached to technology, the natural sciences and the progress of civilization.

When Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India in 1877, the British Empire was at its peak, and India was regarded as the “brightest jewel” in the Crown.

Britain in the 20th Century

The two world wars and the gradual dismantling of the British Empire are probably the most influential events for the country in the 20th century.

Whereas World War I was mainly fought in the trenches in northern France between 1914 and 1918, World War II was an onslaught against humanity. No place was safe, and all walks of life and all ages were affected. The German air raids damaged or destroyed no fewer than 3.5 million houses in London alone.

The 1950s and 1960s saw a drastic increase in immigration to Britain from former colonies. India was given independence in 1947 and divided into India and Pakistan. This started a process which culminated fifty years later when Hong Kong was handed back to China after having been under British control since 1842. At the end of the century only a few colonial strongholds remain – Gibraltar, captured from Spain in 1704 and the Falkland Islands, which were attacked by the Argentinians in 1982. Northern Ireland has remained British after the partition of Ireland in 1922, and is still kept within the United Kingdom by a Protestant pro-British majority.

pay tribute to [peɪ 'trɪbjʊt]
hylde
 imperial glory *imperiets*
storhedsstid
 proclaim [prə'kleɪm] *udråbe*
 empress *kejserinde*
 dismantling *opløsning*
 trench [trentʃ] *skyttergrav*
 onslaught *voldsomt angreb*
 humanity [hju:'mænəti] *men-*
neskeheden
 walk of life *samfundslag*
 culminate *kulminere*
 partition *deling*