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**The United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland:
a Manual for Country Studies**

**Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
State Institution
“Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University”**

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*A manual for students of foreign languages departments
of higher education institutions*

**Luhansk
SI “Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University”
2013**

УДК 811.111
ББК 81.2Англ – 923
Є51

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Є51 The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: a Manual for Country Studies: a manual for students of foreign languages departments of higher education institutions / S. L. Yeliseyev, T. O. Kupinska ; SI „Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University”. – Luhansk : Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University Press, 2013. – 187 p.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: a Manual for Country Studies is a teaching handout intended for students of foreign languages department, specialities “Language and Literature (English)”, “Philology. English and Oriental language and literature” and “Translation Studies”. The book aims at exploring the United Kingdom by giving the structured and detailed information about its history, geography, political and educational systems, welfare, holidays and traditions, national character and identity.

The content of the book conforms to the requirements of the syllabus of “Country Studies: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” for senior students. It can be used by teachers of English at colleges and secondary schools, and by students of institutes, universities and other educational institutions.

УДК 811.111
ББК 81.2Англ – 923

*Recommended for publishing by the Teaching and Training Council
of Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University
(Record № 4 of 04 dec. 2013)*

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PREFACE

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: a Manual for Country Studies is intended for the learners of English who study the language as their major, and need to know more about the United Kingdom, and who can study British history and culture as the parts of a general English course. The book is structured according to the module-credit system and is divided into two modules. One deals with such major issues of British country studies as geography, national symbols, population, religion, political and educational systems, welfare, holidays and traditions, national character and identity. The second gives a brief historical survey of the United Kingdom, from first tribes on the territory of British Isles up to the modern times.

Each part of the book is followed by a set of assignments (questions, comments, tests and the like) guiding the students in their process of the material comprehension. At the end of the manual there is a list of topics for students' individual work. The authors do not aim at covering everything, but the bibliography at the end provides sources and a guide to further reading.

GEOGRAPHICALLY SPEAKING ...

Geography of Great Britain

The third largest European Union nation behind Germany and France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (in everyday speech often shortened to “the UK”) occupies the greater part of the British Isles, a large group of islands lying off the north-west coast of Europe. The two largest islands are Great Britain, comprising England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, comprising Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic (Republic of Eire). The total area of the archipelago of the British Isles is 315,134 km² and it includes over 6,000 islands of various shape and size. Great Britain and Ireland account for 95,6% of this area, the rest are smaller islands which surround them.

The Isle of Wight is off the southern coast of England. The Isles of Scilly are off the south-west coast of England and Anglesey is off North Wales. The Outer and Inner Hebrides are west of Scotland; the Orkneys and Shetlands are to the far north of Scotland. The Isle of Man is in the Irish Sea and the Channel Islands, which by tradition are also included into the British Isles, lie between Great Britain and France, physically closer to the Continent. The Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are not part of the UK; they are “crown dependencies”, having a certain administrative autonomy. Each has complete internal self-government, including its own parliament and its own tax system. Both are “ruled” by the Lieutenant Governor appointed by the British government and approved by the monarch.

The territory of the country is washed by the Atlantic Ocean on the north-west, north and south-west. It is separated from the continent of Europe by the North Sea, the English Channel (La Manche), the narrowest part of which is called the Straits of Dover (Pas de Calais). The North Sea and the English Channel are often called the “Narrow Seas”, being notoriously known for being frequently rough and difficult to navigate during storms. On the west Great Britain is separated from Ireland by the Irish Sea and the North Channel.

The waters around the country are shallow (approx. 90 m) and provide exceptionally good fishing grounds. The British Isles are known for their greatly indented coastline. Very much indented is the

western coast, especially the coasts of Scotland and Wales. The east coast is less lofty and more regular than the western one.

The United Kingdom is very small compared with many other leading countries in the world – its total area is some 244,100 km² (99% of which is land, the remainder is inland waters – rivers, lakes, ponds, lochs). The northernmost point of the United Kingdom is in latitude 60° North and the southernmost part of Britain is in latitude 50° North. The prime meridian of 0° passes through the Observatory of Greenwich.

In geographical descriptions, Great Britain is usually divided into two major regions – Highland Britain and Lowland Britain. The Highland Britain comprises all those hilly, mountain parts and uplands which lie above 1,000 feet (305 m) and are mainly in the north and the west toward the ocean. Highland Britain includes Scotland, almost the whole of Wales, the Lake District (north-west England), the Pennines (“the backbone of England” or the central upland) and the counties of Devon and Cornwall in the south-western part of England. The soil in many parts of Highland Britain is thin and poor with large stretches of moorland. The highest mountains are in Scotland (Ben Nevis, 1,343 m) and Wales (Snowdon, 1,085 m). Lowland Britain is a rich plain with chalk and limestone hills. The most fertile soil is found in the low-lying fenland of Lincolnshire. The agricultural plain of England lies toward the English Channel and the continent. Most of Britain is agricultural land of which 1/3 is arable and the rest are pasture and meadow. The cultivated lands are highly productive due to the extensive land drainage system.

By the beginning of the XXth century Britain’s timber reserves had been seriously depleted. In the 1960s – 70s forest and woodland occupied only about 9% of the surface of the country. Much has been done to improve the situation and nowadays, about 12% of Britain’s land surface is wooded. In general, the United Kingdom is a good place to practise forestry, because the British Isles are ideal fertile soil and hill sheltered topography. Broadleaves account for 29% of Britain’s woodland, the rest being conifers. Britain’s native tree flora comprises 32 species, of which 29 are broadleaves. In England and Wales the most common trees are oak, beech, ash and elm. In Scotland – pine and birch. 140 reserves are run by Natural England; a further 84 are managed by bodies such as

Forestry Commission and the National Trust. Approximately 60% of forest and woodland belong to private landowners and around 40% (23,000 km²) is publicly owned. More than 40,000 people work on this land. Over 90% of the timber used in the United Kingdom is imported. Britain's industry and population uses at least 50 million tonnes of timber a year.

It is a common knowledge that everything in the United Kingdom is rather small – the longest rivers are the Severn (354 km/220 miles) and the Thames (346 km/215 miles). Other important rivers are much shorter, among them the Tyne and the Wear, the Trent and the Don in England; the Tay and the Dee in Scotland; the Clwyd, the Jaf and Usk in Wales; the Lagan in Northern Ireland. The direction and character of British rivers are determined by the position of the mountains – most of them flow in the eastward direction as the west coast is mountainous. Most of the British ports are situated in the mouths, wide estuaries of rivers. Of great importance for the port activity are tides when the rising water reaches its maximum mark (high tide). Rivers of the country are interconnected with the help of canals, dams and locks, and are of great importance for communication and especially for carrying freight. Mild maritime climate keeps rivers from ice throughout the winter months. The most important ports of the United Kingdom are London, Southampton, Liverpool, Belfast, Glasgow, Cardiff and Milford Haven, British major oil port.

The lakes of the country are numerous but rather small and situated in remote parts of mountainous Scotland and England. They are famous for their unique beauty and scenic surroundings. There are a great number of lakes on the territory of Northern Ireland, where they are called loughs. Lough Neagh is the largest water body of the UK – 383 km² with maximum depth of 25 metres and approximate volume of 3,5 km³ of fresh water. The record-breakers among lakes are in Scotland – Loch Morar is the deepest of the UK's lakes (310 m), Loch Awe is the longest one (41 km) and Loch Ness is the largest by volume and contains nearly double the amount of water in all the lakes of England and Wales combined. Besides it is the home of fabled, notoriously known Loch Ness monster.

A popular holiday destination famous for its lakes, forests and mountains is a region in north-west England, well known as

Lake District or simply the Lakes or Lakeland. The place is also known for its associations with the early XIXth century poetry (Romantic Movement) and writings of W. Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge and others, the so called Lakists.

The lakes and mountains combine to form impressive scenery of extraordinary beauty; the greater part of the territory is occupied by the Lake District National Park, the most visited national park in the United Kingdom with 15,8 million annual visitors. Most of the land in the Park is privately owned. The deepest lake in England, Wastwater, and the largest lake, Windermere, lying in the long narrow basin of the valley are in the Park.

The country is not very rich in mineral resources. Coal was the mineral that contributed much to the development of many industries in the UK. By the absolute deposits of coal Great Britain claims the 6th place in the world and is one of the most important coal basins along with the USA, China, Russia and several other countries. But the majority of pits were closed down under the successive Thatcher governments. The coal basins are mainly concentrated in South and North Wales, in Northumberland, Nottingham, Derby and Yorkshire.

There are tin and copper mines in Cornwall and Devonshire; lead, copper and silver are also mined in Cumberland and Derbyshire. There are deposits of salt in Chester. One of the minerals that is worth mentioning here, considering its practical value, is clay mined in many places of Britain. In Staffordshire it is the basis of the most flourishing ceramics production.

Exploration for natural gas and oil has been going on in Britain, mainly on the shelf (seabed) since the early 1960s. The first important findings of oil and gas in the British sector of the North Sea were made in 1970, but the oil was first brought ashore by tanker in 1975. Now work on the development and production of natural gas and oil is proceeding rapidly – about 1,700 km of submarine pipeline have been built to bring ashore oil from a number of North Sea oilfields.

Lying in middle latitudes Great Britain has a mild and temperate climate. The prevalent westerly winds blowing into Britain from the Atlantic Ocean are rough and carry the warmth and moisture of lower latitudes (the Gulf Stream) into Britain. As the

weather changes with the wind, and Great Britain is visited by winds from different parts of the world, ranging from polar to tropical regions, it is natural that the most characteristic feature of weather in the country is its changeability. There is a popular saying that Britain does not have a climate, it only has weather. But it is certainly true that climate in Britain has a notable lack of extremes: the summer temperature rarely exceeds +32° C or falls below 0° C. When on rare occasions it gets freezing cold, the country seems to be totally unprepared for it – roads are blocked, trains stop working, school pupils have “occasional” holidays and everything stops when there is an inch of snow.

But thanks to the moderating influence of the seas and the ocean extremes are rare, the country enjoys insular climate – humid, cool, mild with no striking discrepancy between seasons. Britain’s rainfall depends to a great extent on topography and exposure to the Atlantic. In the western and northern mountainous regions there is more rain than in the plains of the south and east. The wettest months for the most parts of Britain are from October through January, the driest period is from March through June, though the wind may bring winter cold in May or summer days in October, even November. Droughts occur but rarely and crops are never a complete loss.

It is not possible to deal with the local peculiarities of British climate, for the almost infinite variety of “microclimates” nearly defies description. Anyway, some general principles can be given:

- the further west you go, the more rain you get;
- snow is a regular feature of the higher areas only;
- the winters are in general a bit colder in the east than they are in the west;
- the summer in the south is slightly warmer and drier than in the north.

The popular belief that it rains all the time in Great Britain is simply not true, for instance, London gets no more rain a year than most other European capitals and even less than Rome or Budapest, or Milan.

London. London, the capital of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, is about seven times larger than any other city in the country. About a fifth of the total population of the

UK lives in the so called Greater London area. The City is a financial and business centre of the capital.

Two other well-known areas of London are the West End and the East End. The West End area is known for its theatres, cinemas and expensive shops, with such locations as Oxford Street, Leicester Square, Covent Garden and Piccadilly Circus acting as tourist magnets. The West End is also famous for its fashionable and expensive residential areas such as Notting Hill, Knightsbridge and Chelsea, where properties can be sold for tens of millions of pounds. Here are also historical places and some famous parks such as Hyde Park with its Speaker's Corner, St. James's Park and Kensington Gardens. Buckingham Palace and the Palace of Westminster are also in the West End. The best-known streets here are Whitehall with important government offices, Downing Street, the London residence of the Prime Minister and the place where the Cabinet meets, and Fleet Street, where once most newspapers had their offices. The East End is known as the poorer residential area of central London. It is the home of the Cockney and in the twentieth century large numbers of immigrants settled there. Today the East End is one of the most cosmopolitan areas of the capital.

The area surrounding the outer suburbs of London has the reputation of being 'commuter land'. The majority of 'Londoners' live in its suburbs, millions of them traveling into the centre each day to work. These suburbs cover a vast area of land. Like many large cities, London is in some ways untypical of the rest of the country in that it is so cosmopolitan. Racial variety is by far the greatest in London.

England. England can be subdivided into three main parts: Southern England, the Midlands and Northern England.

Southern England is the county of Kent, which you pass through when travelling from Dover or the Channel Tunnel to London, and is known as "the garden of England" because of the many kinds of fruit and vegetables grown there.

The south-west peninsula, with its rocky coast, numerous small bays and wild moorlands such as Exmoor and Dartmoor, is the most popular holiday area in Britain. The winters are so mild in some

low-lying parts that it is even possible to grow palm trees, and the tourist industry has coined the phrase “the English Riviera”.

Birmingham is Britain’s second largest city and is located in the Midlands. Despite the decline of heavy industry in modern times, factories in the area still convert iron and steel into a vast variety of goods.

Although the Midlands do not have many positive associations in the minds of British people, tourism has flourished in “Shakespeare country” (centred on Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare’s birthplace), and Nottingham has successfully capitalized on the legend of Robin Hood.

The Pennine Mountains run up the middle of Northern England like a spine. On other side, the large deposits of coal (used to provide power) and iron ore (used to make machinery) enabled these areas to lead the Industrial Revolution in the XVIIIth century. On the western side, the Manchester area (connected to the port of Liverpool by canal) became, in the XIXth century, the world’s leading producer of cotton goods; on the eastern side, towns such as Bradford and Leeds became the world’s leading producers of woollen goods.

Many other towns sprang up on both sides of the Pennines at this time, as a result of the growth of certain auxiliary industries and of coal mining. Further south, Sheffield became a centre for the production of steel goods. Further north, around Newcastle, shipbuilding was the major industry.

In the minds of British people the prototype of the noisy, dirty factory that symbolizes the Industrial Revolution is found in the industrial north.

Scotland. Scotland has three fairly clearly-marked regions. Just north of the border with England are the southern uplands, an area of small towns, quite far apart from each other, whose economy depends to a large extent on sheep farming. Further north, there is the central plain. Finally, there are the highlands, consisting of mountains and deep valleys and including numerous small islands off the west coast. This area of spectacular natural beauty occupies the same land area as southern England but fewer than a million

people live there. Tourism is important in the local economy, and so is the production of whisky.

Scotland's two major cities have very different reputations. Glasgow is the third largest city in Britain. It is associated with heavy industry. Edinburgh, which is half the size of Glasgow, is the capital of Scotland and is associated with scholarship, the law and administration.

Wales. As in Scotland, most people in Wales live in one small part of it. It is the south-east of the country that is most heavily populated. The rest of Wales is mountainous. Because of this, communication between south and north is very difficult. As a result, each part of Wales has closer contact with its neighbouring part of England than it does with other parts of Wales: the north with Liverpool, and mid-Wales with the English west midlands.

The area around Mount Snowdon in the north-west of the country is very beautiful and is the largest National Park in Britain.

Northern Ireland. With the exception of Belfast, which is famous for the manufacture of linen (and which is still a shipbuilding city), this region is, like the rest of Ireland, largely agricultural. It has several areas of spectacular natural beauty. One of these is the Giant's Causeway on its north coast, so-called because the rocks in the area form what looks like enormous stepping stones.

Population

In spite of its comparatively "modest" size the United Kingdom ranks about the 14th in the world in terms of population – 63,7 million people with the population density much higher than in other advanced states. The UK had the biggest growth of any country in Europe in the year (2012) and it is now the third largest European Union nation behind Germany and France. The UK had its biggest baby boom since 1972 in the year 2012. The UK's fast population increase can be tracked back to the fact that there were 254, 400 more births than deaths, and net migration levels of 165,000. The country remains one of the greatest attractions for people from Eastern Europe and former colonies and dominions. The statistics predicts that the population will grow by 4 million people over the

next decade (by 2020), 1,9 million of them will be the result of immigration. As for the ethnicity, the English make up 83,6%, Scottish – 8,6%, Welsh – 4,9%, Northern Irish – 2,9%, Indian – 1,8%, Pakistan – 1,3%, mixed – 1,2%, others – 1,6%.

In the XXth century there were many waves of immigration into the United Kingdom and the movement within the country – many people from Wales, Scotland and Ireland settled in England. Thousands and thousands of Russians, Jews, Germans, Hungarians, Poles and Czechs came to the country during political changes in Europe. In the 1950s people from India, Pakistan, Hong Kong, New Zealand and South Africa were encouraged to come and work in the UK as the Commonwealth citizens were allowed free entry, without obtaining visas, until 1962.

As regards the proportion of the urban population, the United Kingdom evidently holds the 1st place in the world. Over 90% of its population live in towns and approximately 80% of the British people live in towns and cities of 100,000 inhabitants or more. Almost 1/3 of the country's population is concentrated in the town districts (metropolitan areas) which comprise numerous merged towns and are called conurbations. The seven major conurbations accommodate a third of the country's population while occupying less than 3% of the total land area. The largest of the seven is the Greater London.

The English language is the official language of the country. About 1/5 of all Welsh people speak Welsh. Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic are still spoken in the parts of the country respectively and nowadays all three languages are officially encouraged and taught in schools. The policy is also to encourage new immigrant communities to continue speaking their own languages as well as English. The children of immigrants are often taught their own languages in schools, and there are special newspapers, magazines, radio and TV programmes in vernacular languages. A sad figure, but almost a million people in the country do not speak English at all or not very well. A survey carried out in the 1980s – early 1990s found that 137 different languages were spoken in the homes of just one district in London. Today the Polish language has become the second most common language in England and Wales with more than half a million speakers.

Religion in Great Britain

Britain is a secular country: the vast majority of English people do not regularly attend religious services. Half of the population has no meaningful connection with any recognizable organized religion; two thirds prefer civil wedding ceremonies to religious ones. Between 40% and 60% profess a belief in God and at least three-quarters believe in some sort of general spirit or life force. Freedom of religious belief and worship is taken for granted in modern Britain.

However, the Anglican Church or the Church of England is still the established church in England and the British monarch is still head of the Church. It is a protestant church within Christianity alongside with Roman Catholic Church, Methodist and Presbyterian, and some smaller churches. Christians make up about 72% of the population, of which about 5 million people position themselves as Catholics; Methodists and Baptists are particularly strong in Wales. In Scotland the Presbyterian Church, based on a strict form of Protestantism taught by the French reformer Calvin, is the established church and completely separate from the Church of England.

Britain's immigrants have also brought with them their own religions which they continue to practise. These are Muslims (2,7%), Hindus (1%), Sikhs (1,2%) and the second largest group of Jews living in Europe. In spite of the great variety of forms of worship, only a minority of people regularly go to church in the UK today. In the last 40 years the number of adult churchgoers has fallen by half while the number of children regularly worshipping in public declined by 80%. According to official figures, the number of worshippers attending church each week fell by 30,000 between the years 2007 and 2009, to 1,3million.

British National Symbols

The Statue of Britannia in Plymouth is the symbol of the UK. It is a personification of the United Kingdom, originating from the Roman occupation of southern and central Great Britain. Britannia is symbolized as a young woman with brown or golden hair, wearing a Corinthian helmet and white robes. She holds Poseidon's three-pronged trident and a shield, bearing the Union

Flag. Sometimes she is depicted as riding the back of a lion. At and since the height of the British Empire, Britannia has often associated with maritime dominance, as in the patriotic song “Rule, Britannia!”

The national anthem of the United Kingdom is “God Save the King”, with “King” replaced with “Queen” in the lyrics whenever the monarch is female. The anthem's name, however, remains “God Save the King”.

The flag of the United Kingdom is the Union Flag called “Union Jack”. It was created by the superimposition of the flags of England (Saint George's Cross) and Scotland (Saint Andrew's Cross), with the Irish flag (Saint Patrick's Cross), which was added to this in 1801. The Welsh flag (The Red Dragon) is not represented in the Union Flag as Wales had been conquered and annexed to England prior to the formation of the United Kingdom. However, the possibility of redesigning the Union Flag to include representation of Wales has not been completely ruled out.

The English Flag is a red cross on a white background. Like other countries with St. George as a patron, the English frequently used St. George's cross as their flag.

During the first Crusade, the Pope decided that knights of different nationalities should be distinguished by different colours of cross. French knights were allocated the Red Cross on white. English knights complained about this, since they considered this to be “their” St George's cross. In 1188 the French King, Philip II of France accepted the claim of the English to the Red Cross on white, and the English and French officially exchanged their respective crosses.

The Scottish Flag is a white saltire on the blue field. According to the legend, in 832 A.D. King Angus led the Picts and Scots in battle against the Angles. They were surrounded and he prayed for deliverance. During the night Saint Andrew, who was martyred on a saltire cross, appeared to Angus and assured him of victory. On the following morning a white saltire against the background of a blue sky appeared to both sides. The Picts and Scots were heartened by this, but the Angles lost confidence and were defeated. This saltire design has been the Scottish flag ever since.

The Irish Flag represents the red saltire on a white background. It was used in the regalia of the Order of Saint Patrick,

established in 1783 as the premier chivalric order of the Kingdom of Ireland, and later in the arms and flags of a number of institutions. After the 1800 Act of Union joined Ireland with the Kingdom of Great Britain, the saltire was added to the British flag to form the Union Flag still used by the United Kingdom.

The Welsh Flag depicts the Red Dragon of Codwallader on a white and green field. The national flag of Wales dates from the 15th century. The dragon as a symbol was probably introduced in Britain by the Roman legions. According to tradition, the red dragon appeared on a crest borne by the legendary King Arthur, whose father had seen the dragon in the sky predicting that he would be a king.

Except the national flags, each UK state has their national days and other identifying symbols that play important parts in the life of the nations.

England celebrates its national holiday on April, 23. It is St. George's Day, the Patron Saint of England. On this day some patriotic Englishmen wear a rose pinned to their jackets. A red rose and an oak tree are the national emblems of England; the red rose from the time of the Wars of the Roses (15th century) and the oak, the symbol of strength and endurance, since the XVIIth century, when the King Charles II hid in an oak tree to avoid the detention by the parliamentarians after his father's execution before safely reaching exile on the continent. The red rose is the emblem of the England national rugby union team and the Rugby Football Union. The colour symbol of the nation is white. Lion is the national animal symbol.

November, 30 (St. Andrew's Day) is regarded as Scotland's national day. On this day some Scotsmen wear a thistle (Scottish national emblem) in their buttonhole as a symbol of defence. The animal symbol of the nation is a unicorn and the colour symbol is blue.

St. David's Day (March, 1) is the church festival of St. David, the patron saint of Wales. The symbols of the nation are a leek and a daffodil, red colour and the Red Dragon.

The national day in Northern Ireland is St. Patrick's Day (March, 17). The national emblem is shamrock, chosen by St. Patrick to illustrate the Christian doctrine of the Trinity to the Irish.

The Coat of Arms is used by the Queen in her official capacity as monarch, and is officially known as her Arms of Dominion.

The shield shows the Royal emblems of 3 parts of the United Kingdom:

- the 3 lions of England (first and fourth quarters);
- the rampant lion of Scotland (the second quarter);
- the harp of Ireland (the third quarter).

POLITICAL LIFE

Britain is a constitutional monarchy: it is ruled by a king or queen who accepts the advice of Parliament. It is also a parliamentary democracy, a country whose government is controlled by a parliament that has been elected by the people. The highest positions in government are taken by elected Members of Parliament, also called MPs. The king or queen now has little real power.

The principles and procedures by which Britain is governed have developed over many centuries. They are not written down in a single document that can be referred to in a dispute. The British Constitution is made up of statute law (= laws agreed by Parliament), common law (= judges' decisions made in court and then written down) and conventions (= rules and practices that people cannot be forced to obey but which are considered necessary for efficient government). The Constitution can be altered by Acts of Parliament, or by general agreement.

The Monarchy

The United Kingdom is officially governed by Her Majesty's Government in the name of the Queen (or by His Majesty's Government when there is a king). The Queen is involved in some acts of government, including summoning and dissolving (= ending) Parliament, and giving the royal assent to new laws. She also formally appoints the Prime Minister, senior ministers, judges and diplomats. She is expected to be completely impartial and not to support any political party. She is also Supreme Governor of the Church of England.

The monarch or sovereign (= king or queen) originally had sole power. Over time, the sovereign's powers have been reduced and, though the present Queen is still head of state and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, she “acts on the advice of her ministers”, and Britain is in practice governed by “Her Majesty's Government”.

The main role of the Queen is as a representative of Britain and the British people. She is a symbol of the unity of the nation beyond party politics. She is also head of the Commonwealth and works to strengthen the links between member countries. Other

members of the royal family assist the Queen in her duties, often in less formal ways. They act as patrons of British cultural organizations and support the work of charities and good causes. Only the Queen alone has more than 600 charity patronages.

The Royal Family. When British people talk about the royal family they usually mean the present Queen Elizabeth II and her family: her husband, Prince Philip, and their children, Prince Charles, Princess Anne, Prince Andrew and Prince Edward, together with their wives or husbands and their children, including Princes William and Henry. The wider family, who gather on ceremonial occasions, includes the Queen's cousins and their children.

The present royal house (= ruling family) is the House of Windsor, popularly known as “the Windsors”.

At present, the heir to the throne is the sovereign's eldest son, even if his or her first child is a daughter. Other sons take precedence in the order of succession before any daughters. There has been talk of this being changed so that the eldest child, male or female, would succeed to the throne and the others would follow in order of age.

Public Attitudes to the Royal Family. During World War II, when London was bombed, George VI and his queen won great public admiration by staying in London throughout the war. The present Queen has also been much respected and her concern for the Commonwealth has strengthened the monarchy.

For many years, people expected the royal family to have high moral standards and to display all the ideals of family life, an attitude which developed in the time of Queen Victoria. Until recently, the public rarely saw the royal family except on formal occasions. They remained aloof (= distant) and dignified, and any family problems were kept private. Many people began to think that the royal family was out of touch with modern attitudes. Some felt that they should be more open about their problems and not try to be different. Others thought that the royal family should express the nation's feelings, that in effect they should become a people's monarchy. Many people liked the combination of glamour and human concern that Princess Diana brought to the royal family and did not want this human touch to be lost.

In response to the criticism the royal family is trying to be more open and the Queen wants to meet a wider range of people. The royal family had already established its own Way Ahead group to consider the monarchy's future. It also has its own Internet site. Since 1993, the Queen has paid income tax on her private wealth and on the part of the Privy Purse used for personal expenses. Her official expenses and the upkeep of the royal palaces are paid for through the Civil List. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh received (until 2013) an annual Civil List grant from the Government to the monarch to meet the expenses of acting as Head of State (£7,9 million for 2011). Separate grants were paid to cover the cost of running the Royal household, set for 2011 at £22 million.

From 2013, the Civil List and the household grant is scrapped in favour of Sovereign Support Grant based on a share of profits from the Crown Estate.

The Crown Estate manages the assets of Britain's reigning monarch. It is not the private property of the monarch, and cannot be sold. Instead, it is run as if it were a business and pays all profit back into the public purse, e.g., in 2009 – 2010 it handed £211 million to the Treasury. The Crown Estate manages a vast property empire – the most recent estimate of their worth was £6,6 billion. The portfolio ranges from such assets as London's Regent Street and Ascot racecourse to 146,000 hectares of farmland, dozens of forests and estates and the majority of Britain's coastline. It has more than 12,000 tenants paying full market rents, including farm rents, harbour moorings and fishery licences. Profits are expected to rise to as much as £450 million by 2020.

The younger royals, however, have lived more public lives and attracted enormous media interest. Royal marriage problems and love affairs became headline news. Alongside a hunger for yet more revelations, traditional respect for the royal family began to decline.

The Future of the Monarchy. The constitutional position of the monarchy has also suffered. It has been suggested that the monarchy is undemocratic and unnecessary. Legal experts argue that getting rid of the monarchy would create serious constitutional difficulties. Defenders of the monarchy claim that the royal family, nicknamed “the firm”, pays for itself because it attracts tourists and

business to Britain. Others say it is an expensive luxury. Many people have no strong feelings. They are used to the present system and, though they might like some aspects of the monarchy to be more modern, they would be reluctant to see any radical changes.

The latest surveys testify that the Britain is a nation made up of moderate monarchists and reluctant republicans – the support for the monarchy has climbed notably since the crisis following Princess Diana’s death. The country is in no mood for revolution. The polls show a large majority think the monarchy is still relevant to national life, makes Britain respected around the world (60%) and is better than any alternative. More people consider monarchy as a unifying national institution than one that divides the country (47% against 36%). A strong majority among people of all political persuasions and social groups think that the United Kingdom would be worse off without the monarchy – 69%, just 22% think the country would be better off getting rid of the royal family. A narrow majority, 57% think there will be a place for a British monarch in 50 years, but only 40% think William and Kate’s descendants will still be on the throne in 2111 (for more details – J. Glover “Monarchy still Broadly Relevant, Britons Say”, the Guardian, April 24, 2011; T. Clark “Queen Enjoys Record Support”, the Guardian, ICM poll, May 24, 2012).

The Government

The government of the United Kingdom, formally called Her Majesty's Government, consists of a group of ministers led by the Prime Minister. Ministers are attached to specialist departments which carry out government policy. Ministers of the Crown, the most senior ministers, are appointed by the Queen or King on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. Other ministers are appointed directly by the Prime Minister. All ministers sit in Parliament, most of them in the House of Commons.

The senior minister in each department is generally called the Secretary of State, e.g. the Secretary of State for the Environment. The minister in charge of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is called the Foreign Secretary. The Home Secretary is in charge of the Home Office. The finance minister is known as the Chancellor of the Exchequer and is head of the

Treasury. The Prime Minister may also appoint a Minister without Portfolio (= without departmental responsibilities) to take on special duties.

A Secretary of State is usually supported by several Ministers of State, who each has a specific area of responsibility, and Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State, often called junior ministers.

The Cabinet. Ministers in charge of departments are usually members of the Cabinet. The Cabinet consists of about 20 ministers chosen by the Prime Minister and meets for a few hours each week at Downing Street. Its members are bound by oath not to talk about the meetings. Reports are sent to government departments but these give only summaries of the topics discussed and decisions taken. They do not mention who agreed or disagreed. The principle of collective responsibility means that the Cabinet acts unanimously (= all together), even if some ministers do not agree. When a policy has been decided, each minister is expected to support it publicly or resign.

The Cabinet appoints committees to examine issues in more detail than the Cabinet has time for. Members of these committees are not necessarily politicians. The Cabinet Office led by the Secretary to the Cabinet, the most senior civil servant in Britain, called the Permanent Secretary, prepares agendas for Cabinet meetings and committees.

The leader of the main opposition party forms a Shadow cabinet of shadow ministers, each with their own area of responsibility, so that there is a team ready to take over immediately if the party in power should be defeated.

Departments of Government. Departments of government are run by civil servants who are not allowed to show favour to any political party. Unlike ministers, they do not have to leave their jobs when the government changes. Many departments are assisted by special groups that give advice and do research. A change of government does not necessarily affect the number and general organization of departments. A new government may, however, create new departments or change the structure of existing ones.

Some departments, e.g. the Ministry of Defence, have responsibility for the whole of the United Kingdom. Others cover only part, e.g. the Department for Education and Employment, which operates only in England and Wales. Until recently, Scotland and Wales each had special departments, called the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office, but both countries now elect their own political assemblies.

Local Government in Britain

For administrative purposes Britain is divided into small geographical areas. The oldest and largest divisions in England and Wales are called counties. In Scotland, the largest divisions are regions. Counties and regions are further divided into districts. Parishes, originally villages with a church, are the smallest units of local government in England. These are called communities in Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland is sometimes known as the Six Counties, but local government there is based on districts. Boroughs were originally towns large enough to be given their own local government. Now, only boroughs in London have political power, which they took over in 1985 when the Greater London Council was abolished.

Counties and districts are run by councils which have powers given to them by central government. A system of local councils was first established in the 19th century, but since then there have been many changes to their structure and powers. During the 1970s, some counties were abolished and some new ones created, including new metropolitan counties around large cities. In 1992 a Local Government Commission was set up to consider whether counties should be replaced by unitary authorities. Counties have a two-tier structure (= two levels of government), with both county and district councils. The county council is the more powerful. Unitary authorities have only one tier of government. The Commission recommended keeping a two-tier system in many places but suggested that some areas, especially large cities, should become unitary authorities. Local residents were given the opportunity to express their opinions. The first unitary authorities were created in 1995. Since then, all of Wales and Scotland and many parts of England have become unitary authorities.

Councils consist of elected representatives, called councillors. They are elected by the local people for a period of four years (in Scotland for three years). Counties, districts and parishes are divided into areas, often called wards, each ward electing one councillor or in some cases more. Most councillors belong to a political party and, especially at county level, people vote for them as representatives of a party, not as individuals. County councils meet in a council chamber at the local town hall or county hall. Councillors elect a chairperson from amongst themselves. In cities, he or she is called the Lord Mayor. Members of the public are allowed to attend council meetings.

Responsibilities. Councils make policies for their area. Decisions are made by the full council or in committees. Policy is carried out by local government officers, who have a similar role to that of civil servants. Local authorities (= councils and committees) rather than central government are responsible for education, social services, housing, transport, the police and fire services, town planning, recreation facilities and other local services. In two-tier counties these responsibilities are divided between county and district authorities.

Councils employ about 1.4 million people. Formerly, staff employed by the council carried out most activities, but now councils often give contracts to private firms. Many local government functions, e.g. rubbish/garbage collection, must be put out to tender (= competed for by private companies). This procedure is called compulsory competitive tendering and is intended to save money. There is an increasing trend away from local authorities providing services directly. The social services department, for example, may decide who needs care and what sort of care they require, but the care itself is often provided by companies or voluntary organizations which are paid by the authority.

Finance. Central government provides a lot of the money spent by councils in the form of grants. It also collects taxes, called business rates, on commercial properties throughout the country and then shares the money out between local authorities according to their population.

Councils also charge local people a council tax. This is the only tax that they are allowed to collect. The council tax has existed since 1993 and is based on the actual value of a person's house. A person living alone can claim a reduction of 25%. Previously, councils obtained money from the rates, a tax based on the size of a house and its value if it were rented. Under this system, people living alone in a large property did badly. Rates varied a lot between councils, and in 1985 the government gave itself the power to set an upper limit on the amount that councils could raise from the rates. This was called rate-capping. In 1989-90 the rates were replaced by the community charge or 'poll tax'. Everyone paid the same, whether they owned or rented property. The community charge was very unpopular and many people refused to pay it. The government still has powers to limit or cap local authority budgets, and this is called charge-capping.

Parliament

In the United Kingdom the institution responsible for making laws, discussing major issues affecting the country and raising taxes is called Parliament. The three parts of Parliament, the sovereign (= the king or queen), the House of Lords and the House of Commons, meet together only on special occasions. Although the agreement of all three is required for laws to be passed, that of the king or queen is now given without question.

The History of Parliament. Parliament comes from the French word “parley”, a discussion. The word was first used in the 13th century to describe meetings between Henry III and his noblemen in the Great Council. At that time, the king used his and his noblemen's money to pay for government and war. Several kings found that they did not have enough money, and so they called together representatives from the counties and towns of England to ask them to approve increased taxes. Over time, the Great Council became the House of Lords, and the people from the counties and towns became the House of Commons. Originally, the king needed only the support of his councillors to pass a law, but by the end of the 15th century members of the House of Commons were taking part in the law-making process.

Control of the money supply by the House of Lords and the House of Commons made it difficult for the sovereign to ignore Parliament's wishes. Ministers were appointed by the sovereign but they needed support in the House of Commons to be able to pass laws and raise taxes. The rise of political parties during the 18th century gave them the means to obtain that support. The involvement of the sovereign in policy-making and administration was gradually reduced, leaving government in the hands of a cabinet, presided over by a prime minister. Since the 19th century, the Government has been the party with the most members in the House of Commons, and the leader of that party has been the Prime Minister.

The House of Commons. The House of Commons, often called simply the Commons or the House, is elected by the adult population of Britain and is responsible to them. Members of the House of Commons are known as Members of Parliament, or MPs. Each MP represents one of the constituencies (= special districts) into which England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are divided. There are about 650 MPs representing constituencies in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Elections must be held every five years, but if an MP resigns or dies there is a by-election in that constituency.

Until the 20th century MPs did not receive a salary, so that only rich people could afford to be MPs. Most MPs are now full-time politicians but the hours of business of the Commons reflect a time when MPs had other jobs. The House does not sit in the mornings, except on Fridays, but starts at 2.30 p.m. and does not finish until 10.30 p.m., and sometimes much later. On Fridays, they finish early for the weekend. MPs spend their mornings on committee work, preparing speeches and dealing with problems from their constituency.

The House of Commons has several rows of seats facing each other. MPs who belong to the Government sit on one side and those from the Opposition sit on the other. There are no cross-benches (= seats for MPs who do not support the main parties). Ministers and members of the Shadow Cabinet (= leaders of the Opposition) sit on the front benches. Other MPs sit behind and are called backbenchers. On the table between them are two wooden

dispatch boxes. Ministers and shadow ministers stand beside them when making a speech. The Speaker, who is chosen by MPs from amongst themselves to preside over debates, sits on a raised chair at the top end of the table. MPs sit wherever they can find room on their side of the House. There are only about 400 seats, not enough for all MPs to sit down at once. The press and members of the public can listen to debates from the Strangers' Gallery.

The House of Lords. The House of Lords consists of Lords Spiritual, i.e. the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and senior bishops (26 in all), and Lords Temporal, i.e. all hereditary peers (92) and life peers (over 600). The total number of people eligible to attend the Lords is about 760 but some get permission to be absent. The Lord Chancellor presides over debates from the Woolsack.

The power of the House of Lords has been reduced over time. Since 1911 the Lords have had no control over financial matters, and since 1949 they have not been able to reject legislation (= laws) passed by the Commons, though they may suggest amendments or delay non-financial bills for a period of a year. At various times people have suggested that the House of Lords should be abolished, or its composition and functions should be changed. In 1999 hundreds of hereditary peers were expelled in an effort to make the body more democratic. Every year new life peers acquire the right to sit in the Lords. The ideas of the House of Lords reform are still in the air, but more and more politicians believe that there is no necessity to change the functions and the role of the House of Lords: it should remain the body of scrutiny and review.

Meetings of Parliament. The word parliament is also used to mean a period of government. Each parliament lasts a maximum of five years and is divided into shorter sessions lasting one year, beginning in October. There are adjournments at night and for holidays.

The State Opening of Parliament takes place at the beginning of each session. Black Rod, a servant of the Queen, knocks on the door of the House of Commons and demands that MPs allow the Queen to come inside and tell them what her Government is planning to do in the next year. The Commons always refuse to let her in

because in the 17th century Charles I once burst in and tried to arrest some MPs. Instead, MPs agree to go to the House of Lords and listen to the Queen's speech there. By tradition, they enter in pairs with an MP from a different party. Parliament is then prorogued (= told not to meet) for a week.

Parliament works in the Palace of Westminster, often called the Houses of Parliament. As well as the two chambers where the House of Commons and the House of Lords meet, there are committee rooms, libraries, offices and restaurants.

Parliamentary Procedure. The party system is essential to the way Parliament works. The Government proposes new laws in accordance with its policies, and the Opposition opposes or tries to amend them, and puts forward its own policies. Detailed arrangements of parliamentary business are settled by the Chief Whips. The Whips then inform party members, and make sure that enough of them attend and vote in important debates. The Whips also pass on the opinions of backbenchers to the party leaders.

Both Houses have a similar system of debate. Each debate starts with a proposal or motion by a minister or a member of the house. This may be about a new law or tax, or about plans for spending money.

Bills. A proposal for a new law is called a bill. It goes through a long process of discussion in Parliament. It is debated in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords and must also be approved by the King or Queen before it becomes an Act of Parliament.

Most laws begin as proposals which are discussed widely before they start their formal progress through Parliament. Members of appropriate professional organizations and pressure groups may be asked for their advice and opinions. Sometimes the government produces a Green Paper, a document that is circulated to members of the public asking for their comments. Proposals may also be set out in a government White Paper to be debated in Parliament.

After the discussion period lawyers draft the proposals into a bill. Bills relating to the powers of particular organizations, e.g. local

councils, or to the rights of individuals, are called private bills. The majority of bills change the general law and are called public bills.

Public bills may be introduced first in either the House of Commons or the House of Lords. Most public bills that become Acts of Parliament are introduced by a government minister and are called government bills. Bills introduced by other Members of Parliament (MPs) are called private members' bills. The bills that form part of the government's legislative (= law-making) programme are announced in the Queen's speech at the State Opening of Parliament.

The Progress of a Bill. Most bills start in the House of Commons where they go through a number of stages: the first reading is a formal announcement only, without a debate. The bill is then printed. The second reading may take place several weeks later. The House debates the general principles of the bill and takes a vote. This is followed by the committee stage: a committee of MPs examines the details of the bill and votes on amendments (= changes) to parts of it. Sometimes, all MPs take part in the committee stage and form a Committee of the Whole House. At the report stage the House considers the amendments and may propose further changes. At the third reading the amended bill is debated as a whole.

The bill is then sent to the House of Lords, referred to by MPs as "another place", where it goes through all the same stages. If the Lords make new amendments, these will be considered later by the Commons. By tradition, the Lords pass bills authorizing taxation or national expenditure without amendment.

MPs or Lords may speak only once in a debate. They stand up and speak from wherever they are sitting. MPs do not use personal names but refer to another MP as 'my right honourable friend' or "the honourable Member for ...". This practice was originally intended to prevent MPs getting too angry with each other.

After a debate the Speaker puts the question whether to agree with the motion or not. This may be decided without voting or by a simple majority vote. If there is a vote this is carried out by a division: MPs vote for or against the proposal by walking through one of two division lobbies (= corridors), one for those in favour (the Ayes) and one for those against (the Noes). The Whips tell members of their party which way they should vote but sometimes people defy

their Whip and vote in the opposite way or abstain. If the Government loses a vote on an important issue it has to resign. Sometimes there is a free vote so that MPs can vote according to their beliefs and not according to party policy, e.g. on issues such as the death penalty. The Speaker announces the result of a vote and says either “The ayes have it” or “The noes have it”. If the number of votes cast is equal, he or she gives a casting vote. Speeches and minutes of debates are published daily in Hansard (the official reports of proceedings and debates of the Houses of Parliament) and may be broadcast on television or radio.

When both Houses have reached agreement the bill must go for royal assent (= be approved by the king or queen). It then becomes an Act of Parliament which can be applied as part of the law. Royal assent is in the form of an announcement, not a signature on a bill. It has not been refused since 1707.

Question Time. One of the liveliest, noisiest times in the House of Commons is Question Time. For an hour each day MPs may ask ministers questions. Questions have to be tabled (= put on the table of the House) two days in advance so that ministers have time to prepare answers. The Government can therefore usually avoid major embarrassment. The trick is to ask a supplementary question: after the minister has answered the original question, the MP who asked may ask a further question relating to the minister's answer. It is then possible to catch a minister unprepared. On Wednesdays Prime Minister's Questions last for 30 minutes. MPs no longer have to ask a standard question about the Prime Minister's official engagements but can immediately ask their “supplementary” question.

Elections to Parliament

Each of the Members of Parliament, or MPs, in the House of Commons represents a particular part of the United Kingdom called a constituency. The country is divided into areas of roughly equal population (about 90,000 people). Cities have several constituencies. MPs are expected to be interested in the affairs of their constituency and to represent the interests of local people, their constituents, in Parliament. Many hold regular surgeries, sessions at which they are

available for local people to talk to them. People may also write to their MP if they want to protest about something.

Anyone who wants to become an MP must be elected by the people of a constituency. Before an election one person is chosen by each of the main political parties to stand for election in each constituency. People usually vote for the candidate who belongs to the party they support, rather than because of his or her personal qualities or opinions. Only the candidate who gets the most votes in each constituency is elected. This system is called first past the post.

In a general election, when elections are held in all constituencies, the winning party, which forms the next government, is the one that wins most seats in Parliament (= has the most MPs), even though it may have received fewer votes overall than the opposition parties.

General Elections. By law, a general election must take place every five years. General elections are always held on Thursdays. After the date has been fixed, anyone who wants to stand for Parliament (= be a candidate for election) has to leave a deposit of £500 with the Returning Officer, the person in each constituency responsible for managing the election. The local offices of the major parties pay the deposit for their own candidates. If a candidate wins more than 5% of the votes, he or she gets the deposit back. Otherwise candidates lose their deposit. This is intended to stop people who do not seriously want to be MPs from taking part in the election.

Before an election takes place, candidates campaign for support in the constituency. The amount of money that candidates are allowed to spend on their campaign is strictly limited. Leading members of the government and the opposition parties travel throughout the country addressing meetings and “meeting the people”, especially in marginals, constituencies where only a slight shift of opinion would change the outcome of the voting. Local party workers spend their time canvassing, going from house to house to ask people about how they intend to vote. At national level the parties spend a lot of money on advertising and media coverage. They cannot buy television time: each party is allowed a number of

strictly timed party political broadcasts. Each also holds a daily televised news conference.

By-Elections. If an MP dies or resigns, a by-election is held in the constituency which he or she represented. By-elections are closely watched by the media as they are thought to indicate the current state of public opinion and the government's popularity.

Voting. Anyone over the age of 18 has the right to vote at elections, provided that they are on the electoral register. This is a list of all the adults living in a constituency. A new, revised list is compiled each year. Copies are available for people to look at in local public libraries. Voting is not compulsory but the turnout (= the number of people voting) at general elections is usually high, about 75%. About a week in advance of an election everyone on the electoral register receives a polling card. This tells them where their polling station is, i.e. where they must go to vote. On the day of the election, polling day, voters go to the polling station and are given a ballot paper. This lists the names of all the candidates for that constituency, together with the names of the parties they represent. Each voter then goes into a polling booth where nobody can see what they are writing, and puts a cross next to the name of one candidate only, the one they want to elect. Polling stations, often local schools or church halls, are open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. to give everyone an opportunity to vote.

After the polls close, the ballot papers from all the polling stations in a constituency are taken to a central place to be counted. In most constituencies counting takes place the same evening, continuing for as long as necessary through the night. If the number of votes for two candidates is very close, the candidates may demand a recount. Several recounts may take place until all the candidates are satisfied that the count is accurate. Finally, the Returning Officer makes a public announcement giving the number of votes cast for each candidate and declaring the winner to be the MP for the constituency.

Who may not vote. The following people are not entitled to vote in parliamentary elections: peers and peeresses, who are members of the House of Lords; people kept in hospital under mental

health legislation; people serving prison sentences; people convicted with the previous 5 years of corrupt or illegal election practices.

Candidates. Any person aged 21 or over who is a British citizen, or citizen of another Commonwealth country or the Irish Republic, may stand for election to Parliament, providing they are not disqualified. These disqualified include: people who are bankrupt; people sentenced to more than one year's imprisonment; members of the House of Lords; clergy of the Church of England, Church of Scotland, Church of Ireland and the Roman Catholic church; a range of public servants (officials, specified by law. They include judges, civil servants, full-time members of the armed forces and police officers and some others.

Political Parties in Britain

The British political system relies on having at least two parties in the House of Commons able to form a government. Historically, the main parties were the Tories and the Whigs. More recently these parties became known as the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. The Conservative Party's main rival is now the Labour Party, but there are several other smaller parties. The most important is the Liberal Democratic Party, which developed from the old Liberal Party and the newer Social Democratic Party. Wales and Scotland have their own nationalist parties, Plaid Cymru (The Party of Wales) and the Scottish National Party. Northern Ireland has several parties, including the Ulster Unionist Party, the Ulster Democratic Unionist Party and the Social Democratic and Labour Party.

Party Support. The Conservative Party is on the political right and the Labour Party on the left. The Liberal Democrats are generally closer to the Labours in their opinions than to the Conservatives. Each party has its own emblem and colour: the Conservatives have a blue torch, Labour a red rose, and Liberal Democrats a yellow bird.

In order to have closer contact with the electorate (= people who have the right to vote in elections), the Conservative Party set up constituency associations, local party offices coordinated by

Conservative Central Office. These raise money for the party and promote its policies. By contrast, the Labour Party began outside Parliament amongst trade unions and socialist organizations, and tried to get representatives into Parliament to achieve its aims. Both parties now have many local branches which are responsible for choosing candidates for parliamentary and local government elections.

Conservative supporters are traditionally from the richer sections of society, especially landowners and business people. The Labour Party originally drew its support from the working classes and from people wanting social reform. It has always had support from the trade unions, but recently has tried to appeal to a wider group, especially well-educated and professional people. The Liberal Democratic Party draws most of its votes from those people who are unwilling to vote for Labour.

Support for the main parties is not distributed evenly throughout Britain. In England, the south has traditionally been Conservative, together with the more rural areas, while the north and inner cities have been Labour. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the situation is complicated by the existence of the nationalist parties. Wales is traditionally a Labour region, though Plaid Cymru is strong. Scotland, formerly a Conservative area, is now also overwhelmingly Labour, though many people support the Scottish Nationalist Party. Support for the Liberal Democratic Party is not concentrated in any one area. In a first-past-the-post system, where the winner in an election is the candidate with the most votes in each constituency, a strong geographical base is important.

At present, political parties do not have to say where they obtain their money. The Labour Party receives a lot of its money from trade unions, whereas the Conservative Party receives gifts from individuals, especially businessmen, and sometimes from people living outside Britain. The Labour Party would like to have a law passed that forced parties to reveal the source of large donations and to prevent money being sent from abroad.

Party Conferences. A party conference is organized each year by the national office of each party, to which constituency offices send representatives. Prominent members of the party give

speeches, and representatives debate party policy. Conferences are usually lively events and receive a lot of attention from the media. They also give party leaders the opportunity to hear the opinions of ordinary party members. Before an election, each party prepares a detailed account of its ideas and intended policies and presents them to the electorate in an election manifesto.

The Labour leader is elected at the party conference by representatives of trade unions, individual members of the party and Labour MPs. The Liberal Democrats' leader is also elected by party members but by a postal vote. But the Conservative leader is elected only by Conservative MPs in a secret ballot.

The Parties in Parliament. In debates in Parliament, MPs from different parties argue fiercely against each other. However, representatives of all parties cooperate in arranging the order of business so that there is enough time for different points of view to be expressed.

The parties are managed by several Whips, MPs or peers (= members of the House of Lords) chosen from within their party. The Government Chief Whip and the Opposition Chief Whip meet frequently and are “the usual channels” through which arrangements for debates are made. Junior whips act as links between the Chief Whips and party members.

The main parties hold regular meetings at which party policy is discussed. Conservative MPs belong to the 1922 Committee which meets once week and provides an opportunity for MPs to give their opinions on current issues. Meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party are generally held twice a week and are open to all Labour MPs and Labour members of the House of Lords. Liberal Democrat MPs and peers also meet regularly. In addition, the parties have their own specialist committees that deal with different areas of policy.

Politics and People

A street survey in Britain would reveal that not many people know who their Member of Parliament (MP) is. Even fewer could name their Euro-MP or any of their local councillors. British people vote at general elections but show little interest in politics at other times. Only if there is a local issue that affects them personally will

they bother to write to their MP or attend a surgery (= a session when people can talk to their MP). Even then, many people prefer to write to a newspaper or organize a protest campaign because they think that this has more chance of achieving results.

At election time there are party political broadcasts on radio and television, in which leading politicians say what their party will do if it wins the election and try to persuade people to vote for them. Many people do not listen. By contrast, special broadcasts on election night are popular, and people stay up late to listen to the election results as they are announced. Experts make predictions throughout the night about the final overall result.

Political parties try to persuade their supporters to become party members so that they can keep in contact with them between elections. However, only a small percentage of the population belongs to a party and takes part in any political activity.

During sessions of Parliament, members of the public may go and sit in the Strangers' Gallery at the House of Commons or the House of Lords. Few people, however, have the time for this. Parts of debates are broadcast on radio and television, but not many people listen regularly. Most rely on news and current affairs programmes, such as the Today programme on Radio 4, to find out what is happening. Newspapers summarize parliamentary affairs in varying amounts of detail. Different papers support different parties, and this affects how they report political policy and events.

The media concentrate more on political personalities than on issues because they know that this is what many people like to hear and read about. The main parties employ advertising consultants to improve their image. Party leaders are often photographed with their families to show how ordinary and respectable they are.

British people would like to think that politicians deserve respect, but they know that they cannot trust the image. Newspapers are full of stories of scandal and sleaze. MPs' private lives are often shown to be less than perfect. So it is perhaps not surprising that many people find it difficult to take politics seriously.

BRITISH CHARACTER

Many visitors to Britain think that because the British do not express their feelings easily they are cold and uncaring. This is the traditional British reserve, a national tendency to avoid showing strong emotion of any kind. Keeping a stiff upper lip, not showing or talking about your feelings, was formerly a sign of strong character, and people who revealed their feelings were thought to be weak or bad-mannered. This attitude is far less common today and people are now encouraged to show or talk about their feelings. Older people and men of all ages often find it especially difficult to express their feelings.

Most British men, and some women, are embarrassed to be seen crying in public. People are also embarrassed when they see somebody crying, and do not know whether it is better to pretend they have not noticed or to try and comfort them. Women are more likely to respond than men and will put their arm round the person or touch their shoulder. Many people now show feelings of affection in public. Women sometimes kiss each other on the cheek as a greeting and people may greet or say goodbye to each other with a hug. Lovers hold hands in public, and sometimes embrace and kiss each other, but many older people do not like to see this. The British are also embarrassed about showing anger. If somebody starts to complain in public, e.g. about being kept waiting in a restaurant, people around them may pretend not to hear and avoid getting involved.

When British people are part of a crowd they are less worried about expressing their emotions. Football crowds sing and they cheer when their side scores a goal. Players now hug each other when they score. Even cricket supporters, who had a reputation for being much quieter, cheer as well as giving the traditional polite applause.

Pubs and Pub Names

It is appropriate that any book on Britain should end where many British people relax at the end of the working day, in that most popular of places for relaxation, the pub. The British pub exercises a special fascination for foreigners.

Public houses date back to the inns and taverns of the Middle Ages, places where local people met and where travellers stayed. They have always been characterised by conviviality, intimacy and an egalitarian atmosphere. They have always been immensely popular.

For many British that feeling persists, but standards vary considerably. They still like to walk into their 'local' and be sure they will meet someone they know. 'In a good pub,' according to The Good Beer Guide, - the greatest attention is given to the drink, and in particular to the beer. Sociability, on both sides of the bar, comes a dose second. A good pub encourages social intercourse and, whatever further services are offered, there is always one bar (and preferably two) to accommodate those people who simply want to drink and chat without distraction or inhibition induced by overbearing decor, noisy entertainment, or intrusive dining.

Pubs are important in the social life of many British people. Pubs serve a range of alcoholic drinks, and also low-alcohol and soft drinks. They used to be visited mainly by men but now women also go, though usually with friends or with their partner. Some pubs are called inns. These were originally hotels and some still offer accommodation.

Most pubs have a choice of bars (= rooms to drink in). Drinks are sold from a counter in each room, also called a bar. The public bar is a fairly plain room with bar stools beside the bar itself and often a pool table and dartboard. The saloon bar has more comfortable seats and is usually quieter. The most popular drinks are beer, lager and, in some areas, cider. Tied houses (= pubs owned by breweries, companies that make beer) sell beers made by the company and sometimes guest beers from other breweries. Free houses, pubs not owned by a brewery, offer beers made by several companies, including real ales made using traditional methods. A few brewery pubs brew their own beer at the pub. Pubs usually also sell crisps and nuts, and many do simple pub meals like scampi and chips or a ploughman's lunch. Others offer more elaborate meals.

Under Britain's licensing laws alcohol can only be sold to people over 18. Children under 14 are not allowed in pubs unless there is a family room, a room without a bar.

People often choose a pub near where they live as their local and go there as regulars several times a week. At lunchtime people may go to a pub with colleagues from work, and in the evening they go with friends. Younger people sometimes go on a pub crawl, visiting several pubs in the same evening. Now that there are tougher laws on drink-driving (= driving after drinking alcohol) many people prefer to walk to a pub near their home.

Pubs have their own character and atmosphere. Some attract young people by playing loud music or inviting live bands to perform. Others have televisions in the bars and show sports games. Some landlords (= pub managers) organize teams to play darts or take part in quiz nights. Theme pubs are decorated in a particular style. The most popular is the Irish pub, which sells Irish beers and plays Irish music. Many village pubs are very old and are the centre of village life. For much of the year they rely on local customers but in the summer they attract people from nearby towns. Pubs with a garden or situated by a river or canal are especially popular.

Before 1988, pubs were only allowed to open at lunchtime and in the evenings, but since then the law has been changed to allow greater flexibility in opening hours and pubs can remain open all day. Most, however, continue to open only at lunchtime and in the evening, closing finally at 11 p.m. When closing time approaches, the barman or barmaid rings a bell and calls out 'Last orders!', to give customers time to order one more drink. After the bar person has called 'Time!' customers are allowed ten minutes drinking-up time to finish their drinks and leave.

Pub Names and Signs. Pubs always have a name, often hundreds of years old. Originally, because few people could read, pubs were identified by the picture on a sign hanging outside them. Today, in addition to a picture, pub signs often give the name of the pub and the brewery that owns it. The signs are brightly painted and attractive. As the signs are easy to see from a distance many people use the names of pubs when giving directions, saying for example: 'Turn left at The Red Lion'.

Some names have their roots in legend or history, e.g. St George and the Dragon, The Robin Hood; names like The Queen's Head, The George and The Duke of Wellington refer to kings and

queens or national heroes, and The Victoria Arms and The Unicorn refer to their coats of arms. Names taken from country life include The Bull, The Plough and The Fox and Hounds. A pub called The Coach and Horses was probably once a coaching inn, where horse-drawn coaches stopped on their journey. More unusual names include The World Turned Upside Down. Modern pubs sometimes make up a humorous name, e.g. The Frog and Lettuce.

The oldest pub in England is said to be The Trip to Jerusalem in Nottingham. Its name is supposed to refer to a tradition that the Crusaders set off from there for the Holy Land.

Food Priorities

The British have a poor reputation for food. Visitors to Britain often complain that food in restaurants is badly presented, overcooked and has no taste. But the best British food is not generally found in restaurants but in people's homes.

British Cooking. Certain foods are considered essential to traditional British cooking and form the basis of most meals. These include bread, pastry (for meat or fruit pies) and dairy products such as milk, cheese and eggs. Potatoes, especially chips, are eaten at lunch or dinner. They are an important part of the traditional meal of meat and two veg (= meat, potatoes and another vegetable). A jacket potato (= a potato baked whole in its skin) with cheese is a popular pub lunch. Because of the increased cost of meat and various health scares many people now eat less meat. Vegetarians (= people who choose not to eat meat at all) and vegans (= people who eat no meat or animal products) are relatively few. After the main course, many families eat a pudding. This was traditionally sponge or pastry cooked with jam or fruit, usually served hot with custard, but it may now be yogurt, fresh fruit or ice cream.

Good plain home cooking, i.e. food prepared without spicy or creamy sauces, used to be something to be proud of. Since the 1970s British people have become more adventurous in what they eat and often cook foreign dishes. Rice, pasta and noodles are regularly eaten instead of potatoes. Supermarkets offer an expanding range of foreign foods, including many convenience foods (= prepared meals

that need only to be heated). Takeaways from Indian or Chinese restaurants are also popular.

People's interest in trying new recipes is encouraged by the many cookery programmes on television. Few older men know how to cook, but many younger men share the cooking as well as other household chores.

Eating Out. When British people eat out (= in a restaurant), they can choose from a wide range of eating places. The busiest tend to be burger bars, pizzerias and other fast-food outlets which are popular with young people and families. In Britain these have largely replaced traditional cafes selling meals like sausage, egg and chips, though most towns still have several fish and chip shops. Many pubs also serve reasonably priced meals.

Many people eat out at Italian, Mexican and Chinese restaurants and at curry houses. Fewer people go to smarter, more expensive restaurants. With the great variety of food available at relatively low prices, eating out is common.

Food and Health. In Britain the government regularly gives advice about healthy eating. The main aim is to reduce the amount of fatty foods and sugar people eat, and to encourage them to eat more fruit and vegetables. Many people still enjoy a fry-up (= fried bacon, sausage and egg with fried bread) but there has been a gradual move towards eating healthier low-fat foods. Health risks connected with, for example, beef or eggs, are discussed by the media. People are also concerned about chemicals sprayed onto crops. Supermarkets sell organic produce (= cereals and vegetables grown without the use of chemicals), but few people are prepared to pay the higher prices for this.

Hobbies and Leisure Activities

The British share the Protestant work ethic (= the belief that hard work is good for people) but have always believed that it is also good for people to have activities outside work. A traditional saying warns that “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”. Many people now believe that making time for relaxation after work is also necessary for the sake of good mental health. Some people, however,

think that leisure time should be spent on worthwhile activities and not just frittered away (= wasted). Children are often encouraged to develop an interest or hobby which they can pick up in their spare time.

Hobbies. Traditional indoor hobbies or pastimes include collecting things, e.g. shells, model cars, dolls, comic books, stamps, coins or postcards. Children also collect sets of picture cards from packets of tea and small toys or models from packets of breakfast cereal. Many collect stickers (= pictures with glue on the back) of football or baseball players or pop stars. They buy packets of these and trade them with their friends, exchanging those they already have for the ones they need to complete the set. Many people continue to collect things as they get older. Formerly picture cards were given away in packets of cigarettes and many of these old cards are now valuable. Now people collect things like beer mats, concert programmes, decorated plates, and antiques. Many people like to do something creative, such as painting or drawing, playing music, knitting or sewing, DIY (do-it-yourself), cooking, or doing crossword puzzles.

Some people have hobbies which take them away from home. Birdwatching is especially popular. So too is flying model aircraft. Other people go to public record offices and churches to research their family history. One very British hobby is trainspotting, which involves visiting railway stations and recording the names or numbers of trains. The range of hobbies now popular is reflected in the number of specialist magazines available in Britain.

Leisure activities. Television and videos provide easy indoor entertainment, and watching television is by far the most popular leisure activity. People also play computer games or use the Internet. Other home-based activities include reading and listening to music. Many people's social lives are closely bound up with their interests. Most towns in Britain have a wide choice of clubs and societies for people to join, including choirs, amateur dramatics groups, film societies, dance clubs and special-interest societies for those interested in art, astronomy, local history, etc. There are usually also classes where people can learn a new skill.

A lot of people go out one or more evenings a week and at the weekend. Children go to youth clubs or visit friends. Adults go to the cinema or theatre, eat out at a restaurant, or, very commonly, go to a pub or bar.

At the weekend many people spend part of their time shopping. For many, shopping for clothes and household goods is a pleasant activity, not a chore. People also visit relatives and friends or invite them to their house. They go to places of interest, such as stately homes and museums, to funfairs, boating lakes and safari parks, and to special events ranging from school fetes to jazz festivals.

Some people like to go away for the weekend and turn it into a short holiday/vacation. Many go to national parks and other country areas, and go walking or fishing. Other people like to go to the beach. British people may have a camper van or caravan.

NATIONAL SPORTS

Many sports now played internationally began in the United Kingdom and several of the most revered competitions in the world are still held there. Many people have a sport as their hobby. The most popular sports that people play include football, basketball, softball, cricket and tennis. Some people play informally with friends, others join a local team. Many companies also have teams which play against each other. Sports such as football, basketball and swimming are cheap and attract a lot of people. Golf and sailing, which are more expensive, tend to attract wealthier people. Bowling and ice-skating are popular social activities among young people.

More unusual sports include orienteering (= running from place to place, following clues marked on a map), paragliding (= floating through the air attached to a canopy like a parachute) and hot-air ballooning.

Cricket. England's national sport is cricket. Cricket is played on village greens and in towns or cities on Sundays from April to August (September). Teams are made up of 11 players each. They play with a ball slightly smaller than a baseball and a bat shaped like a paddle. The most famous cricket team in Great Britain is the England and Wales cricket team, controlled by the England and Wales Cricket Board, is the only national team in the United Kingdom with Test status. Each summer two foreign national teams visit and play seven test matches and numerous one-day internationals, and in the British winter the team tours abroad. The highest profile rival of the team is the Australian team, with which it competes for The Ashes, one of the most famous trophies in British sport. Scotland and Ireland both have their own cricket teams, but the game is not so popular there.

Football (Soccer). Football (Soccer) is the most popular sport in the United Kingdom and it is played from August to May. In the English Football League there are 92 professional clubs. These are semi-professional, so most players have other full-time jobs. Some of British football teams are world famous; the most famous are "Manchester United", "Chelsea", "Arsenal" and "Liverpool". The highlight of the English football year is the FA (Football Association) Cup Final each May that takes place at

Wembley, one of the biggest and most expensive stadia ever built. The event attracts massive audiences, both at the stadium and on television; the event is just one of ten events that are reserved for live broadcast on UK terrestrial television. Tickets for the event sell out fast, and can exchange hands for many times their original face value.

Rugby. The game that is similar to football but played with the oval ball is Rugby. Players can carry the ball and tackle each other. The best rugby teams compete in the Super League final each September. Rugby was considered as a winter sport, but since the late 1990s the elite competition has been played in the summer to minimise competition for attention with football. There are two different types of rugby – Rugby League, played mainly in the north of England, and Rugby Union, played in the rest of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, together with France and Italy, play in an annual tournament called the Six Nations.

Tennis. Tennis is another sport which originated in the United Kingdom. However, it has not flourished there in recent decades: its profile is highly dependent on the Wimbledon Championships, one of the four great world tennis championships and the only one which is played on grass. Wimbledon is the oldest of all the major tennis tournaments beginning in 1877. The rewards of prize money began in 1968 when the total purse allocated was £26,150 (about \$40,000). It is the world's most glamorous tennis event that is held each June and July. Millions of people watch the Championships on TV live. Applications for tickets always exceed the amounts that are available, and applicants are chosen at random for this prestigious event. However, the tournament is the only grand slam event where fans can queue up and get access to some 500 allotted tickets for the events, although it is not uncommon to queue up overnight to secure these tickets.

Golf. Scotland is traditionally regarded as the home of golf. There are over 400 golf courses in Scotland alone. The most important golf club in Scotland is in the seaside town of St. Andrews, near Dundee. There is the major annual golf championship often referred to as the British Open, played on the weekend of the third Friday in July each year. The Open takes place on one of nine

Scottish or English links courses, with an annual prize fund of 4,2 million, with 750,000 being awarded to the winner.

Horseracing. Horseracing, the sport of Kings is a very popular sport with meetings being held every day throughout the year. It occupies a key place in British sport, probably ranking in the top four or five sports in terms of media coverage. The Derby originated here, as did The Grand National which is the hardest horse race in the world. It is held each year in early April at Aintree Racecourse in Liverpool. Run over a distance of 4 miles 856 yards, there are thirty fences that horses are required to jump. Total prize money on offer for The Grand National winners totals 900,000 (2009 prize fund). Horse racing and greyhound racing are popular spectator sports. People can place bets on the races at legal off-track betting shops. Some of the best-known horse races are held at Ascot, Newmarket, Goodwood and Epsom. Ascot is also called Royal Ascot because the Queen always goes to Ascot. It is also the UK's best known display of huge and bizarre hats – courtesy of race goers.

Polo. Another popular sport is polo, brought to Britain from India in the XIXth century by army officers. It is the fastest ball sport in the world. Polo is played with four men on horses to a team. The most famous polo day in the world, the Cartier International Polo event brings together the world's finest polo players, as well as attracting royalty and celebrities and over 25,000 members of the public.

Regatta. In the nineteenth century, students at Oxford and Cambridge, Britain's two oldest universities were huge fans of rowing. In 1829, the two schools agreed to hold a race against each other for the first time on the Thames River. The Oxford boat won and a tradition was born. Today, the University Boat Race is held every spring in either late March or early April. Henley Royal Regatta is another famous rowing competition in Great Britain. It is held every year on the Thames in Henley-on-Thames and takes place over five days over the first weekend each year in July. Attracting international racing crews, the race covers a 1 mile 550 yard stretch of the Thames river in a series of head-to-head knockout races, with the main event being the Grand Challenge Cup for Men's Eights.

Motoracing. Britain is the centre of Formula One, as the majority of the Formula One teams are based in England. In July

there is the British motor-racing Grand Prix at Silverstone circuit in Northamptonshire that is the oldest continuously staged F1 race in the world.

Other British sports that are not so popular but still widespread include table tennis (ping pong), badminton, swimming, martial arts, darts, etc. A lot of people who are interested in sport prefer to watch others play, either at a stadium or on television, rather than play themselves. Baseball, football, cricket, golf and also horse racing are regularly broadcast on television.

Fitness. Most people today take relatively little general exercise. Over the last 30 or 40 years lifestyles have changed considerably and many people now travel even the shortest distances by car or bus. Lack of exercise combined with eating too many fatty and sugary foods has meant that many people are becoming too fat. Experts are particularly concerned that children spend a lot of their free time watching television or playing computer games instead of being physically active. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, there has been a growing interest in fitness among young adults and many belong to a sports club or do sport as their main leisure activity.

In Britain most towns have an amateur football and cricket team, and people also have opportunities to play sports such as tennis and golf. Older people may play bowls. Some people go regularly to a sports centre or leisure centre where there are facilities for playing badminton and squash, and also a swimming pool. Some sports centres arrange classes in aerobics, step and keep-fit. Some people work out (= train hard) regularly at a local gym and do weight training and circuit training. Others go running or jogging in their local area. For enthusiastic runners there are opportunities to take part in long-distance runs, such as the London marathon. Other people keep themselves fit by walking or cycling. Many people now go abroad on a skiing holiday each year and there are several dry slopes in Britain where they can practise.

Membership of a sports club or gym can be expensive and not everyone can afford the subscription. Local sports centres are generally cheaper. Evening classes are also cheap and offer a wide variety of fitness activities ranging from yoga to jazz dancing. Some companies now provide sports facilities for their employees or contribute to the cost of joining a gym.

BRITAIN'S WELFARE

After the Second World War the British government created health and welfare services which have been the core of 'the welfare state'. The welfare state is the system by which the government of a country cares for its citizens through a range of services provided and paid for by the State, including medical care, financial help for poor people and homes for old people. In Britain the term applies mainly to the National Health Service, National Insurance and social security.

National Insurance. The welfare state system has grown over the years, funded mainly by tax, but also through National Insurance contributions, compulsory payments made by all earners and their employers. The money is used by the government for payments (called benefits) to people with very low incomes and others in need. Payments in Britain include the jobseeker's allowance (to unemployed people), income support (to single parents or people without a job), family credit (to working people on low incomes with children), child benefit (to the parents of all children under 16), statutory sick pay (to employees that cannot work because of illness) and housing benefit (to people who have a low income, to help them pay their rent or rates). Payments are made by the Department of Social Security and the Department for Education and Employment. Every adult has a National Insurance number and this number is used by the Department of Social Security to identify people.

The National Health Service. The National Health Service (NHS) was established in 1948 to provide high-quality free medical treatment in hospital and outside. Its fundamental principle was equitable access for all, regardless of wealth.

GP System. The system rests on a network of family doctors, or "GPs" (general practitioners) as they are usually known, with attached nurses and other community-based staff. People may register with any GP they choose, as long as the GP is willing to register them. A GP with a full register might refuse extra patients.

GPs remain the backbone of the NHS, dealing with the vast majority of ailments, and referring those requiring more specialist

diagnosis to a hospital, or notifying the health visitor of those who need to be monitored at home. Except in an emergency, it is normally the GP who refers a patient to hospital for more specialist care, or for an operation. Most GPs have about 2,000 people on their register, some of whom will hardly ever visit the GP's surgery. Others may be regular callers. A GP is often expected to offer pastoral guidance as well as medical skill. On a normal day a GP might see about 35 patients in surgery, and make up to 10 home visits to those who feel too ill to attend surgery. The strength of the system lies in a good working knowledge of the families and individuals in the catchment area, their housing, lifestyle and employment conditions. Good GPs build up an intimate knowledge of their 'parish', and take into account not merely the specific complaint of a patient but also the patient's general conditions of life. Almost all GPs now operate in small groups of perhaps three or more, employing nurses and other professionals such as physiotherapists or dieticians, so that they can share the administrative load and also offer a wider service.

The NHS is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Health. Since 1996 England has been divided administratively into eight regional health authorities, usually based upon a university medical school. Similar authorities or boards exist in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The entire system is free, with the exception of prescribed drugs, dental treatment, sight tests and spectacles, for which there are standard charges, except for old age pensioners, children under 16 and some other categories for whom some of these items are free. Anyone entering hospital for surgery will receive all their treatment while in hospital, including drugs, free of charge. Over 80 per cent of the costs of the NHS are funded out of the income tax system. The balance is paid for out of National Insurance contributions and from the prescription charges mentioned above.

On the whole the system has worked extremely well, providing care at lower per capita cost than almost any other industrialised country. Foreign health economists admire the NHS above all for its GP system. GPs control referrals to hospital, and therefore costs, and also provide a local register of the population whereby one may engage in all sorts of targeted health

measurements, including vaccination and immunisation. They also admire the NHS for its treatment for all, regardless of the ability to pay; a tax-based funding relating the service to need rather than to income. Finally, they admire its relative efficiency – a characteristic that would surprise the patients in most British hospital waiting rooms.

By 1996 the NHS had been in crisis, partly because of inadequate funding. The annual budget by 1996 was in the order of £42,000 million, but tight funding led to the closure of wards, and waiting lists began to grow.

By that time NHS also faced a serious staffing crisis. This was the result of several factors: a miscalculation over medical school enrolment in the 1980s that led to a 15 per cent fall in trainee doctors between 1988 and 1994; a greater proportion of women health professionals and of these an unexpectedly high number wishing to work part- rather than full-time; low morale among GPs, leading to many older ones taking early retirement. Finally, there was the quite unforeseen impact of stricter immigration laws introduced in 1985. Twenty-five per cent of GPs and many junior hospital doctors are from abroad. The change of law in 1985 brought this source of expertise to a halt.

It conveys an idea of the difficulties Labour inherited in 1997 that two-thirds of the health authorities entered the new financial year (which always starts on 6 April), four weeks before Labour's victory, already in debt. Labour faced the immediate task of finding sufficient money to resolve the crisis it inherited. Rather than subject the NHS to yet more revolutionary changes, Labour decided to modify the system in the hope of retaining its virtues but eliminating its defects. It therefore proposed increasing and restructuring the purchasing power of general practice. It proposed to group up to approximately 50 GPs serving up to 100,000 people, and to give them about 90 per cent of the NHS budget. These groups would choose the best local balance between community nursing (which keeps people out of hospital), direct primary care including the subsidy for prescribed medicines, and referral to hospital (the least cost effective option). It was hoped this would achieve a real shift from institution-centred to person-centred care, and foster strategic planning at the local level. Each group would still make service

agreements with local hospitals. The reduced number of health authorities would receive less than 10 per cent of the NHS budget, and use it for highly specialist treatments like heart transplants. Labour hopes that this will achieve yet more administrative savings while making the NHS more responsive to community needs.

More than 88,000 foreign-trained doctors are registered to work in Britain, incl. 22,758 from Europe. They account for almost a third of the total.

NHS will introduce mandatory language tests for doctors moving to Britain after training elsewhere in the European Union.

Social Security and Social Services. Although 'the welfare state' was created after the Second World War, its origins are a good deal older. In 1907 a reforming Liberal government provided free school meals in its schools. The following year it introduced an old age pension scheme, implicitly accepting responsibility to protect the old from destitution. In 1909 it opened 'labour exchanges' where the unemployed could look for jobs. Two years later it made all working people pay 'national insurance' to provide a fund for those unable to earn either through sickness or unemployment. Thus the crucial principle of the state's obligation to assist the weak in society was firmly established.

The cost of that principle, however, is potentially enormous. The number of people dependent upon social security rose sharply during the 1980s. This was mainly because of the rapid increase in the proportion of the population over the age of 65, who consumed 44 per cent of social security expenditure. But there was also an increase in the unemployed and in dependent single-parent families. A ruthless free-market economy led many middle-aged people to take early retirement, either willingly or unwillingly. By the 1990s barely half the males aged 60 – 64 years old were still in work compared with 90 per cent in the 1960s. Furthermore, 25 per cent of males and 50 per cent of females aged 55 – 59 no longer worked. This reduced the number of contributors to social security and added to its consumers.

Unemployment. Repeated attempts were made during the 1980s and 1990s to reduce the government burden. The Social

Security Act of 1986 sought to reduce costs and target assistance more effectively. It encouraged people to move away from the State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme (SERPS) into private pension schemes. Because of the progressive increase in the proportion of elderly people, the government feared the state would be unable to honour its commitments. The Social Security Act also tried to slim down its system of help to particular categories of people. It refused to recognise those under 25 as homeless, since it argued that people under this age were still the responsibility of their parents. This contradicted the government argument that people should be willing to leave home in order to find work. It also ignored the fact that a substantial number of young homeless were fleeing family conflict, or had been brought up in council care. Sixteen year-old school-leavers became particularly vulnerable since they were not eligible for unemployment benefit until they became eighteen. A growing number ended up sleeping rough.

The reduction of income support or housing benefit undoubtedly put pressure on some to seek employment more actively, as the government intended. The legislation was supposed to end forever the idea that some people could be better off without a job than they would be by going to work. 'Family credit', which sought to 'top up' low pay, was meant to fulfil this intention, but failed to rescue many people from the 'poverty trap'.

On the other hand, from 1993 the Conservative government provided help for those who were not institutionalised but cared for by their families at home. The new policy placed responsibility on local authorities to assess the needs of dependent categories and to provide appropriate assistance in a flexible way. This proved better for the invalid, better for the carer (many of whom in the past suffered great stress), and better for government, since it led to a long-term saving on institutional care.

Labour inherited a major unresolved problem. By the mid-1990s half the households in Britain were on some kind of means-tested benefit. It wanted to avoid raising taxes for extra funding, and adopted a fresh approach, based on the principle of a twin responsibility, that of the community to help those 'who fall on hard times', and the responsibility of all individuals to make their own provision for foreseeable extra costs, for example pensions, social

and nursing care for the elderly. That implied a mixture of public (community) and private (individual) funding provision. When it took office it examined ways to make private provision compulsory. Besides wishing to reduce the community burden, Labour also wished to end the enormous waste of young lives through unemployment. In the words of Frank Field MP, Labour's leading expert on social security, 'Unemployment is both destroying self-respect and teaching that the only way to survive is to cheat. Means-tested benefits paralyse self-help, discourage self-improvement and tax honesty. It destroys social solidarity and polarises society between rich and poor.' Labour began to assist some of the one million young single parents to find work that would guarantee substantially extra money each week.

Homelessness. There is increasing concern about the number of people in Britain who are homeless. Many are forced to sleep on the streets (*BrE* also sleep rough) because they have nowhere else to go. In major cities there are areas known as cardboard cities, where homeless people have built shelters out of cardboard and plastic. The alternative to sleeping rough may be to live in a squat. Squatters can only be evicted by the owner after a formal court order has been obtained.

It is estimated that there are as many as half a million homeless people in Britain. Not all of these sleep rough or squat. Local councils are legally required to find somewhere for homeless people to live, and many are housed in boarding houses or bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Charities such as Shelter, Centre Point and the Salvation Army run hostels for the homeless. Each winter, they also organize campaigns which raise money to provide extra night shelters and soup kitchens (= places giving free hot food).

For many people, homelessness begins when they lose their jobs and cannot pay their rent. Some become homeless as a result of family quarrels, broken relationships, violence, and mental illness. Some homeless people survive by begging. In Britain homeless people have an opportunity to help themselves selling *The Big Issue* magazine: they buy copies of the magazine and sell them at a higher, fixed price to members of the public.

Many people give to charities, or to the homeless on the streets, but some think homeless people are wasters (= spend money carelessly), or are too lazy to work, and are responsible for their own situation.

Special Social Services. Social security is provided by central government, but social services are almost entirely the responsibility of local government. The local authorities are responsible for services to the elderly, for example institutional accommodation (only about 5 per cent of those over 65 live in institutional accommodation) and support services to encourage them to continue to live at home. Such support includes the home delivery of hot meals ('meals on wheels'), domestic help, laundry services and adaptations in the home, for example fixing handrails in the bathroom. Most of these services are either free or heavily subsidised. Many of the 6.5 million who are physically and mentally disabled enjoy similar support, and also counselling on the personal and social problems arising from their disability. Residential accommodation is available for the severely disabled, and for the mentally ill. A fundamental principle, however, has been to encourage, wherever possible, the disabled or ill to stay within the community, rather than enter institutions. Although this sounds self-evidently sensible, in practice it has proved controversial since many of those mentally ill actually needed the care of an institution, and ended up sleeping on the streets as the ultimate result of this policy.

The local authority also has social welfare responsibilities for those with particular problems, such as single parents and children at risk of injury, neglect or abuse at home. It has been recognised that possibly 8 per cent of children suffer some kind of sexual abuse, and that physical violence to children and sexual abuse were related. In certain cases the local authority is empowered to remove children from home if they are considered to be at risk. Local authorities are also required to provide child day-care facilities.

Pensions. Pensions are regular payments made to people who have retired. Most people retire and start to receive a pension when they are about 60 or 65. The amount of money they receive

depends on how much they have paid into their pension scheme and also on the type of scheme.

In Britain, a basic state pension has been provided by the government since 1908 for those who paid National Insurance contributions while they were working, or whose husband or wife paid contributions. Pensions for each generation are paid for out of the contributions of people still working. A problem arising from this arrangement is that more people now live longer but the number of younger people in work has fallen, so that there is less money to pay for pensions.

Many pensioners collect their pension each week from the local post office, using a pension book. Some complain that the state pension does not provide enough money for them to have a reasonable standard of living. People who do not qualify for a state pension, e.g. because they have not paid enough National Insurance, may receive income support if they have no other source of money. War pensions for soldiers injured on duty are also paid by the government.

There are several other kinds of pension which pay larger amounts of money, though people have to pay more towards them. There are many company pension schemes, into which both workers and their employers pay certain amounts. A similar scheme, SERPS (the State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme), was started by the government in 1978 for people who could not join a company scheme. Some people, especially those who are self-employed, belong to private pension schemes arranged through insurance companies. The money paid into company or private pension schemes is invested in the stock market and the pension funds, the organizations that manage this money, are among the most important investors in the City. However, many people who, encouraged by the government, left SERPS and company schemes in the 1980s and took out private pensions, were badly advised by financial organizations and lost money.

Voluntary Work. The local authorities could not possibly carry out these responsibilities without the help of voluntary social services. In fact, over 65,000 registered voluntary organisations exist to provide particular forms of help. A few are known nationally,

serving, for example, the blind, or those with cerebral palsy and other specific problems. The vast majority, however, operate on a local level, supported by volunteers.

During the 1980s voluntary efforts came under greatly increased pressure. The government believed the community, i.e. the churches and voluntary organisations, should shoulder more of the welfare burden, while its social security policy also resulted in increased homelessness and poverty for certain categories. Charity and voluntary organisations came into being to respond to a growing need. It remains to be seen whether Labour will be able to meet the demands of the needy more effectively.

Charities. In late 1990ies there were about 180 000 charities in Britain, with a total income of 18 billion. Charities are independent organizations that help the poor, the homeless, children, old people and animals. They are involved with human rights, education, medical research and conservation of the environment. Many of them began in the time before governments provided any social services, when poor people had to turn to charitable organizations for help. Charities rely on money given by the public, and on help from volunteers in fund-raising and carrying out their activities. Many charities that are now well known throughout the world, such as Oxfam and Amnesty International, began in Britain.

In Britain organizations qualify for charitable status if they are established for the relief of poverty, the promotion of education or religion, or other activities of public benefit, such as good community relations. Many charities ask well-known people, including members of the royal family, to become their patrons, which may encourage people to give money to the charity. Charities do not pay tax on the money they receive, but they are not allowed to make a profit.

Charities in Britain are not allowed to take part in political activity, so some set up a separate pressure group which campaigns on related issues. The Charity Commission keeps a list of charities and advises them. The Charities Aid Foundation helps charities raise money from individuals and companies.

Well-known charities working in Britain include Barnardo's, which helps children, and Age Concern and Help the Aged, which

support old people. Shelter provides food and a place to stay for people who have no home. Several charities are associated with a religious group, for example the Salvation Army and Christian Aid. Some charities support people who have a particular disease, such as Aids or cystic fibrosis, and are involved in medical research to find a cure. The Samaritans give support and counselling over the telephone to people in despair. Several popular charities are concerned with animals, including the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The traditional method of raising money is to organize a flag day. Volunteers stand in busy streets asking members of the public to put money in a collecting tin. In exchange, they are given a paper sticker, formerly a small paper flag with a pin through it, with the charity's name on it. This is sometimes called 'tin-rattling'.

Nearly every town in Britain has at least one charity shop. These are run by volunteer staff and sell second-hand clothes, books and household goods at low prices in aid of charity. Some shops, e.g. Oxfam shops, also sell goods made by people who are benefiting from the charity's work. At Christmas, people often buy charity cards, Christmas cards sold in aid of charity.

In recent years, the telethon has proved an effective method of fund-raising. During an evening of popular television programmes, television stars ask the public to telephone and pledge (= promise) money to the charities involved. The Comic Relief evening in Britain is the most famous. Other fund-raising activities include fetes (= outdoor sales of craftwork, plants, etc.) and jumble sales (= sales of second-hand goods). Sponsored walks, cycle rides, even parachute jumps, are also popular.

A recent source of funds for charities in Britain is the National Lottery. Well over 2 billion of lottery money has been distributed among a large number of charities.

MASS MEDIA

Newspapers, magazines, television, radio, the internet - collectively termed 'the media' - play a vital and influential part of daily life in the UK. They inform and educate, question and challenge and, of course, they entertain. And, with their long tradition of independence and freedom from state control, they boost democratic debate on the issues of the day.

The media have to satisfy a demanding audience. Television viewing remains the most popular home-based pastime among people in the UK; about 97 per cent of households have a colour television set. Radio is now enjoying resurgence, with 90 per cent of the population regularly listening to the radio, a figure that is steadily growing. More daily newspapers, both national and regional, are sold for every person in the UK than in most other industrialised countries. Evidence of the internet's growing significance is the fact that 30-40 per cent of the population are now 'going online' and more than 15 million homes use the internet on a regular basis.

As the growth of the internet suggests, the UK media are being transformed by new technology. In broadcasting, greater diversity has been opened up by the arrival of digital satellite, cable and terrestrial transmission. Already, more than 7 million homes have extended the range of TV services available to them by signing up to digital TV platforms. The roll-out of digital radio is gathering speed.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), while maintaining its long-standing and international reputation as a public service broadcaster, is adapting to meet the commercial challenges of an increasingly competitive media environment under new management, it is launching a range of services for digital television, digital radio and the internet. Its commercial rivals are also using the advent of digital to launch new services. ITV has introduced ITV2 and ITV Sport while Channel 4 has launched E4 and FilmFour. There continues to be a notable increase in the number of independent radio services, both analogue and digital.

In any new legislation, the Government's goal is to balance the need for plurality of service provision and diversity of viewpoint

with the desire of media owners to remain competitive and take advantage of commercial opportunities on the global stage.

Radio

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was founded in 1927 as an independent public corporation. There is no advertising on BBC radio. It is not required to make a profit and its income comes almost entirely from the sale of television licenses which everyone who owns a television has to buy. Although the chairman and governors of the BBC are appointed by the monarch on the advice of the government, government has no control over the BBC's broadcasting police.

The BBC broadcasts radio programmes both at home (within Britain) and abroad (to other countries), its domestic and external services respectively.

The BBC has five national radio channels for listeners in the United Kingdom. **Radio (channel) 1**, broadcasting since 1967, provides mainly a programme of rock and pop music. **Radio 2** broadcasts light music and entertainment, comedy as well as being the principal channel for the coverage of sport. **Radio 3** provides mainly classical music as well as drama, poetry and short stories, documentaries, talks on ancient and modern plays and some education programmes. **Radio 4** is the main speech network providing the principal news and current affairs service, as well as drama, comedy, documentaries and panel games. It also carries parliamentary and major public events. **Radio 5** is largely given over to sports coverage and news. Two particular radio programmes should be mentioned. Soap operas are normally associated with television, but *The Archers* is actually the longest-running soap in the world. It describes itself as “an everyday story of country folk”. Its audience, which is mainly middle-class with a large proportion of elderly people, cannot compare in size with the television soaps, but it has become so famous that everybody in Britain knows about it and tourist attractions have been designed to capitalize on its fame. Another radio “institution” is the live commentary of cricket Test Matches in the summer.

Apart from these national programmes, the BBC also has 36 local radio stations in England and Channel Islands, and six regional

services in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. One of the Welsh stations, Radio Cymru, broadcasts in Welsh. Broadcasts on local radio concentrate on local news and information, together with music, entertainment and educational broadcasts. The public is able to take part in “phone-in” programmes, where listeners speak by telephone to a presenter or guest in the studio.

The main external network of the BBC is the World Service, which broadcasts to almost every country of the world in 37 languages, including English. The main English services include: the World Service in English, which is broadcast worldwide 24 hours a day, with special programmes for African and South Asian audiences; BBC English by Radio and Television, which teaches English as a foreign language; a service that provides recordings of BBC programmes for overseas radio stations. Foreign language programmes, such as the African Service, Arabic Service and German Service, are transmitted to the audiences in the appropriate countries. The government decides which language shall be broadcast by the World Service, and the length of time each service is on the air, but the BBC itself is responsible for the content of the programmes.

As well as the BBC’s local radio stations, there are 62 independent local radio (ILR) stations, which were originally operated by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). Their programmes are similar in content to those of the BBC, but include regular breaks for commercial advertising. In 1993 the IBA’s responsibility for radio was transferred to a new body, the Radio Authority.

the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), the British radio and television broadcasting company that is paid for by the state, not by the advertisers.

the BBC English, a standard form of English pronunciation, aimed at by many speakers of the language in Britain and other parts of the world, used not only within the BBC but also in teaching English in many parts of the world.

the BBC World Service, a division of the BBC which broadcasts radio programmes, esp. news, to many different parts of the world.

the Beeb, a familiar nickname for the BBC (from the pronunciation of BBC).

Big Ben, the large bell in the clock tower of the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, London. The sound of the Big Ben striking is well known to all British people and the tower of Big Ben is often used as a symbol of London or Britain.

Television

Britain's first regular television service opened in 1932, when the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) began transmitting four short late-night programmes a week. The development of television was interrupted by the Second World War, but resumed after it, making its first real impact in 1953 when the BBC televised the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

In 1955 Independent Television (ITV) began transmitting, at first only in the London area. Unlike the BBC, which funded its broadcasting with the revenue from radio and television licenses, ITV derived its main income from the commercial advertising. This arrangement remains today.

In 1964 the BBC began transmitting on two channels, BBC 1 and BBC 2, the latter being mainly for drama, arts and sports programmes. BBC 2 first broadcast in colour in 1967, and BBC 1 and ITV followed suit two years later. A second commercial station, Channel 4, opened in 1962. Like BBC 2, it was intended as a mainly arts and “cultural” service, but with the specific task of catering for minority interests.

Atkinson, Rowan (1955 –), a British comedian and actor known esp. for his leading parts in television programmes *Blackadder* and *Mr Bean*.

Baird, John Logie (1888 – 1946), a Scottish engineer who invented a television system.

Candid Camera, a television programme of the 1950s and 1960s, both in Britain and the US, in which ordinary people were secretly filmed in amusing, difficult, or embarrassing situations. Although the programme is no longer on television, people sometimes use the phrase, “Smile – you’re on Candid Camera!” which was always used to tell people that they were being filmed.

chat show, *BrE* a radio or television show on which well-known people talk to each other and are asked questions. The presenters of chat shows often become extremely famous themselves.

couch potato, *infrm derog* a person who takes little or no exercise, but spends most of their time sitting around, esp. watching television.

the Eurovision Song Contest, a competition show on television in which singers or groups of singers representing European countries sing specially written songs. The Eurovision Song Contest is very popular, but many British people, esp. young people, make jokes about it.

Monty Python, also Monty Python's Flying Circus, a set of British television programmes produced in the 1970s by a team of British male actors and comedians who invented a type of surreal humour. The programmes were made up of short, humorous sketches in which people often behaved in strange, silly, or rude ways.

the Nine O'clock News, a British television news programme broadcast on BBC 1 at 9 p.m. each weekday.

soap opera, also soap *infrm*, a television or radio programme about the continuing daily life and troubles of characters in it, which is broadcast regularly, e.g. two or three times a week, or sometimes every day. In both the US and Britain there are soap operas that have been running for 20 years or more. Most people either like or strongly dislike soap operas.

The most popular soaps on the British TV are *Coronation Street* and *East Enders*.

television licence, (in Britain) an official paper from the government giving permission to use a television in one's home. In Britain it is illegal to use a television in your home without paying for a yearly licence. Money from licences helps the government to pay for BBC programmes.

Press

Newspapers in Britain. British people like reading newspapers. More newspapers are read in Britain than in any other European country. Almost every adult in Britain reads or sees a daily

newspaper, and many people remain loyal to a particular paper for life.

Paperboys and papergirls deliver the newspaper to over 60 per cent of British families every morning. Boys and girls who earn money delivering newspapers must get permission from their parents and headteacher.

National and Local Newspapers. In Britain there are 11 national daily newspapers and most people read one of them every day. There are two types of newspaper in Britain. One is large in size “broadsheet” and has many detailed articles about national and international events. Broadsheets have long articles with lots of information; some pages report international news; the photos and the headlines are not so large. These newspapers are called the serious papers or the quality papers.

The other kind, called the tabloids (or “populars”) are smaller in size, have more pictures, often in colour, and shorter articles, often about less important events or about the private lives of well-known people. The *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* are both tabloids. The *Sun* is the biggest-selling newspaper in England. People who disapprove of the tabloids very strongly sometimes call them the “gutter press”.

The differences between the tabloids and the broadsheets are breaking down. Broadsheets now realize that tabloids are easier to read and hold (a broadsheet newspaper is double the size of a tabloid newspaper). The *Guardian*, a broadsheet, now has a tabloid section. Many of the broadsheets now have stories about famous people. Tabloids used to be cheaper than broadsheets.

Despite the general classification of “quality” and “popular”, the *Express*, *Mail* and *Today* are distinctive enough from the *Sun*, *Star* and *Mirror* to be more accurately defined as “middle market”; in class of its own was the *Morning Star*, founded in 1930 by the Communist Party as the *Daily Worker*.

There are daily or weekly newspaper in all parts of Britain which cover local news as well as some national and international stories. Local papers give information about films, concerts and other things that are happening in the local neighbourhood (e. g. marriages or deaths).

There are also many free local newspapers which are delivered to people's homes whether they ask for them or not. These contain a lot of advertisements and also some news.

Politics. Although newspapers are normally associated with a particular political viewpoint, either of the right or the left, most have no formal links with political parties (the one exception was the *Morning Star*). The views expressed are those of the editor, who is appointed by the proprietor of the newspaper.

People choose the newspaper that they read according to their own political beliefs. Most of the newspapers are right-wing. These are the *Daily Telegraph* (serious newspaper), the *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Star*, *Sun* and *Today* (all tabloids). Among the other serious newspapers are *The Times*, the oldest newspaper in Britain, did not formerly have one strong political view but it is now more right-wing. The *Guardian* is slightly left-wing, the *Independent* is centre and the *Financial Times*, which is printed on pink paper, does not deal directly with political issues, but reports on business and financial news. The *Daily Mirror* (tabloid) is left-wing.

Daily and Sunday newspapers. Daily newspapers are published on every day of the week except Sunday. Sunday newspapers are larger than daily newspapers, often having 2 or 3 sections. There is also often a magazine, called the "colour supplement". All the Sunday newspapers are national. Sunday newspapers are a part of the British way of life. These newspapers are more popular than the daily newspapers. They concentrate on general issues and famous people. Some people spend all day reading the Sunday newspaper.

Serious newspapers include the *Observer* (which is slightly left-wing), the *Sunday Times*, the *Sunday Telegraph*, the *Independent on Sunday*, the *Sunday Mirror*, the *Sunday Express*, the *News of the World* (right-wing and known for containing stories about sex and scandal) and the *Sunday Sport* which is considered to lack much serious information.

Magazines. There are thousands of weekly and monthly magazines in Britain. They can be divided into four main categories:

specialist magazines, such as the computer magazine *PC Weekly*, general magazines, such as the TV listings magazine *Radio Times*, women's magazines and teenage magazines.

Most newsagents display their magazines under different headings, such as “leisure interest”, “sport”, “motoring”, “music and hi-fi”, and “women's interest”.

A heading such as “general interest” or “leisure interest” may cover a great variety of specialized subjects, from photography to gardening, computers to country life, children's comics to “adult” (i.e. sex) magazines. In each area there are usually several competing magazines.

Young people below the age of 18 do not buy newspapers, but they do buy magazines. The favourite magazines of 15-year-olds are *Just Seventeen* (31%), *Smash Hits* (22%), *Shout* (18%), *TV Hits* (16%), *More* (8%) and others (5%).

Most Sunday newspapers publish an accompanying magazine and many daily papers issue one with their Saturday edition. These magazines are included in the price of the newspaper.

Many more girls than boys buy magazines. Their main interests seem to be boys, pop music, clothes and make-up. Teenage girls like reading magazines which are aimed at an older age group. *Just Seventeen* is not only the most popular magazine for 15-year-olds, it is also very popular with 12-year-olds.

The press and the law. There are no specific press laws in the UK. Certain statutes, however, include sections that apply to the press. There are laws governing the extent of newspaper ownership in television and radio companies (see page 18), the transfer of newspaper assets, and the right of press representatives to be admitted to meetings of local government authorities.

There are no specific laws governing the behaviour of the press. Instead it is monitored by an industry body called the Press Complaints Commission.

There are also restrictions on reporting certain court proceedings and on publishing material that could incite racial hatred.

There is a legal requirement to reproduce the printer's name and place of publication on all publications. Copies of all publications must also be deposited in the British Library.

Laws covering contempt of court, official secrets and defamation are relevant to the press. A newspaper cannot publish comments on the conduct of judicial proceedings that might prejudice the court's reputation for fairness before or during the proceedings, nor can it publish anything that might influence the result of a trial. The unauthorised acquisition and publication of official information in areas like defence and international relations, where such disclosure would be harmful, are offences under the Official Secrets Acts 1911 to 1989. Most legal proceedings against the press are libel actions brought by private individuals.

Publications of advertisements are governed by wide ranging legislation, including public health, copyright, financial services and fraud legislation. Legal restrictions are imposed on certain types of prize competition.

The Internet

The internet is among the most far-reaching of recent developments in electronic communications. It now plays a pivotal role in the provision and dissemination of information and entertainment.

Broadly speaking, the internet is a loose collection of computer networks around the world - it links thousands of academic, government, military and public computer systems, giving literally millions of people access to a wealth of stored information and other resources. No one owns it - there is no centralised controlling or regulating body. To access - or send out - information an internet user needs only a computer with the necessary software, a telephone and a modem (which allows computers to talk to each other over a telephone line).

The system dates from the 1960s, when it began life in the military and academic communities in the United States. But it has only assumed widespread significance in commercial and consumer terms during the last five years.

For most people, it is the World Wide Web (www or Web) that has given the Internet its user appeal and accessibility. The World Wide Web was invented by British scientist Tim Berners-Lee,

and became available on the internet in 1991. The Web now consists of millions of pages or 'sites' on the internet that can be viewed by a browser (a programme that provides a window in a computer screen on which the pages are displayed). Users can move from page to page (called "surfing") in search of whatever information or service they are after.

In terms of internet household penetration, the UK has one of the most developed markets in Europe (comparable in size with Germany). Around 15.6 million people go 'online' every month in the UK. The most popular destinations are web portals like www.MSN.com, www.Yahoo.com and www.Freeserve.com, which provide a wide range of news and entertainment content. In July 2001, for example, 7 million people visited the Microsoft-owned www.MSN.com.

With around 30 per cent of the UK connected to the internet, the medium has become a real alternative to more traditional media. And many publishers and broadcasters have established their own sites on the World Wide Web. The most comprehensive of these is the BBC's website www.bbc.co.uk, which attracts 2 million people a month.

Other popular broadcaster-based websites are www.CNN.com and www.Sky.com, that attract around 275,000-290,000 users a month. Leading UK radio companies like Capital and GWR have also spent heavily on establishing websites that can narrowcast music as well as provide the usual mix of text and visual content.

Among newspaper publishers, the most successful website is *The Guardian's* Guardian Unlimited, which reaches 370,000 people a month. However, *The Times*, *The Financial Times* and *The Telegraph* also have popular sites. Regional newspaper publishers have also been busy. Aside from the launch of Fish4 (see below), more than 700 regional newspaper websites have been created by individual newspaper titles, which hope to build subsidiary businesses on the back of trusted print brands.

Between 1998 and 2000, the internet attracted heavy investment from most UK media owners. But few have generated any meaningful revenues from these activities. Online advertising is

stagnant and proved difficult for media owners to impose subscriptions on visitors to their websites.

There is some hope that the internet will become a major channel for banking, shopping and pay-as-you-play games, but these markets are still undeveloped. Some media owners expect classified advertising to migrate to the internet. For example, regional newspaper owners have clubbed together to launch an internet service called Fish4, which displays thousands of small ads (jobs, cars, property, etc.) that have been gathered from local newspapers all over the country.

As a result of problems in making a profit from the internet, many media companies are being forced to cut back on their internet investments and wait and see how the market develops. Most analysts believe that the market will not really take off until there is widespread availability of high-speed internet connections (broadband). This will allow media owners to distribute more attractive content – including video footage – via the World Wide Web. The BBC recently announced plans to invest heavily in broadband.

EDUCATION

Education is a subject about which many British people care deeply. Most believe that the state should provide education free of charge and to a high standard. Recently, there has been a lot of debate about students having to pay their own fees at university, as well as their living expenses. Some people are afraid that poorer students will not receive enough financial help and will be discouraged from going on to higher education.

The British education system aims to educate the whole person, so that each child develops his or her personality as well as gaining academic knowledge. Most primary and secondary schools offer a range of extra-curricular activities (= activities outside normal lessons), including sports, music, community service and trips to places of interest. Secondary schools also give careers advice and help students to prepare for having a job by arranging short periods of work experience with local businesses.

Standards in Education

Formerly, individual schools decided how much time they would give to each subject, but since 1988 the subjects to be taught in all state schools in England and Wales have been laid down in the National Curriculum, which also sets programmes of study in a range of subjects. The National Curriculum does not apply in Scotland, and schools there are free to decide how much time they devote to each subject. Independent schools as well do not have to follow the National Curriculum, though many do.

According to the National Curriculum children's education from 5 to 16 is divided into four key stages. Key stage 1 covers ages 5 – 7, key stage 2 – ages 7 – 11, key stage 3 – ages 11 – 14 and key stage 4 – ages 14 – 16. Throughout the stages children have to study the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and also the foundation subjects of technology, geography, history, art, music and physical education. Older children take a foreign language. At key stages 1 and 2 pupils study English, mathematics, science, technology, history, geography, art, music and physical education. A modern foreign language is added at key stage 3. Pupils at key stage 4 must study English, mathematics, science, physical education,

technology and a modern foreign language and may take several other subjects. In Wales the Welsh language is also studied. Detailed guidance about what children should be taught is given in official programmes of study. A disadvantage for teachers has been the increase in the number of documents they are expected to read and the reports they have to write.

Attainment targets are set within each subject and pupils' progress is checked at the ages of 7, 11 and 14 when they complete standard assessment tasks (SATs). Pupils are graded into eight levels for all subjects except art, music and physical education. At the age of 16, at the end of key stage 4, pupils take GCSE exams (=exams for the General Certificate of Secondary Education), which are also based on material covered in the National Curriculum, or take exams for the Scottish Certificate of Education in Scotland. Some may take GNVQs (General National Vocational Qualifications) in work-related subjects. Some students go on to study for A levels in three or four subjects, but no less than in five subjects to apply for a university place. If children struggle to reach the required standard because they have learning difficulties, their parents may ask for them to be statemented, e.g. given an official document saying that they have special educational needs.

Young people are expected to show respect for their teachers and obey school rules. Pupils who misbehave may be punished, e.g. by having to stay behind after school. Corporal punishment, being smacked or caned, was outlawed in 1986 in state schools and in 1999 in the private sector. Sometimes students get into more serious trouble, e.g. by being violent or through using drugs, and risk being expelled (= told to leave permanently).

Many people worry that the education system fails to make sure that all children reach minimum standards of literacy (= reading and writing) and numeracy (= number skills), and there are often demands for more attention to be paid to the three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic). Standards at individual schools are watched closely by parents and the government. Schools are visited regularly by OFSTED (the Office for Standards in Education) inspectors, and schools whose pupils are not making adequate progress or in which discipline is poor risk being closed down. School performance tables are published annually to show how well students in individual

schools have done in tests and exams. These ‘league tables’ enable parents to compare one school with another, but many people feel that it is unfair to base a comparison on exam results alone.

Educational standards are often said to be falling. This usually happens after GCSE and A level results are announced: if there are a lot of students with high grades people say that the exams are too easy. Others think that standards are rising and that it is now much harder to achieve good grades.

Schools in Britain

Although British law requires all children to be in full-time education from the age of 5, an increasing number of children under 5 receive pre-school education. Some go to playgroups several times a week and take part in structured play (= play with some educational purpose) with other children of the same age. Others go to a nursery school from the age of 2 or 3 or to the nursery department or kindergarten of a school. The availability of pre-school education varies from area to area, and parents often have to pay for it.

Primary Schools. Most children go to state schools near their home. Depending on where they live, children receive their primary education at an infant school from age 5 to 7 and then at a junior school until they are 11. Others attend a primary school that combines infant and junior schools (5 to 11). They enter the reception class as ‘rising fives’, just before their fifth birthday. Most primary schools are mixed, taking both boys and girls.

At primary schools pupils are divided into classes according to age. A class teacher teaches most subjects, but some schools have specialist teachers for music or technology. Pupils at primary schools do not usually have homework but may take part in after-school clubs. Their progress is tested by their teacher through standard assessment tests (SATs) set nationally at the ages of 7 and 11.

Most schools start the day with assembly, a religious service, after teachers have marked the register. Parents, though, may have their child excused from the service.

Secondary Schools. At about 11 children begin their secondary education at a comprehensive school, a grammar school or a high school, depending on their ability, their parents' wishes, and what schools there are nearby. Some are single-sex schools. In a few areas children go to a first school at the age of 5, a middle school at 8 and an upper school from 13 onwards. In a few cities children can go to a city technology college, a school partly funded by industry.

Secondary education used to be selective, i.e. secondary schools accepted children based on their performance in an exam called the eleven-plus. Grammar schools and high schools, which concentrated on academic subjects, creamed off the best pupils. Those who failed the exam went to secondary modern schools which taught more practical subjects. In the 1960s it was thought that 11 was too young an age for a child's future to be decided in this way. It was also clear that the eleven-plus reinforced social divisions, as most children who passed the exam were middle-class. As a result selective education, and with it the eleven-plus, was ended in many areas. Secondary moderns and many grammar schools became comprehensive schools offering a broad education to students with a wide range of abilities. Some grammar schools and high schools became independent. A few areas kept a selective system based on an eleven- or twelve-plus exam.

Secondary schools are much larger than primary schools and students may have to travel longer distances by school bus or public transport. Most secondary school students wear school uniform. Students in each year may be divided into groups based on ability. Classes are taught by teachers who have specialist knowledge of a particular subject. Students continue to study subjects in the National Curriculum and take SATs at 14, and then work towards GCSEs in as many subjects as they can manage, often eight or ten. Some students leave school at 16 but many, especially those hoping to go to university, stay on for a further two years in the sixth form or go to a sixth-form college to study for A levels in at least five subjects. Some secondary schools now offer more practical courses leading to GNVQs as an introduction to work-related skills.

In Scotland students take the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE). The standard grade, which is roughly equivalent to GCSE, is taken at 16 at one of three levels, and the higher grade is

taken at 17. Students take five or six subjects as Highers and may then take A levels.

School Organization. The academic year starts in September and is divided into three terms. Pupils have holidays at Christmas and Easter and during the summer, and short breaks at half-term. National GCSE and A level exams take place in May and June.

Most schools have a five-day week, from Monday to Friday. The school day begins around 9 a.m. and ends around 3 p.m. for the youngest children, and 4 p.m. for older ones. School lessons usually last for 35 – 40 minutes each. Most schools have a time table of 40 lessons per week. These lessons are often grouped so as to allow for longer periods especially in practical subjects. There is a break of 15 or 20 minutes in the morning and sometimes also in the afternoon. Many children take a packed lunch from home; others have school dinner, a cooked meal at the school for which parents have to pay.

Parents may support their children's school by joining the PTA (Parents' and Teachers' Association). They meet teachers at regular parents' evenings to discuss their child's progress.

State Schools. Most children go to state schools. Until 1988 these were all responsible to a Local Education Authority (LEA). LEAs obtain their funding from central government and the council tax. In 1988 secondary schools and larger primary schools were encouraged to opt out of LEA control and become grant-maintained. Grant-maintained schools receive money direct from central government and run entirely by a board of governors consisting of parents of pupils and members of the local community. Grant-maintained schools are free to change their status, so a comprehensive school may choose to become a grammar school and admit only brighter students, as under the old system. In Scotland and Northern Ireland most schools are still managed by local authorities.

Independent Schools. Children of richer parents go to independent schools run by private organizations, for which their parents have to pay high fees. Younger children may attend a private

preparatory school (or prep school) until the age of 13 and then to an independent school or a public school.

Public schools, despite their name, are not part of the state education system in most of Britain. (In Scotland, which has a separate education system from the rest of Britain, the term public school refers to a state school.) Only about 5 – 6% of children attend independent public schools, and their parents have to pay fees that may amount to several thousand pounds a year. A small number of children from less wealthy families win scholarships, in which case their fees are paid for them.

Many of Britain's 200 public schools are very old. They include Eton, Harrow, Winchester and, for girls, Cheltenham Ladies' College and Roedean. Public schools were originally grammar schools which offered free education to the public and were under public management. This was in contrast to private schools which were privately owned by the teachers. Since the 19th century, the term public school has been applied to grammar schools that began taking fee-paying pupils as well as children paid for from public funds.

The majority of public schools are boarding schools where students live during term-time. Most have a house system, with boarders living in one of several houses under the charge of a housemaster. In a few schools younger pupils have to do small jobs for the senior pupils. This is sometimes called fagging.

Public schools aim for high academic standards and to provide pupils with the right social background for top jobs in the Establishment. A much higher proportion of students from public schools win university places, especially to Oxford and Cambridge Universities, than from state schools. Former public school students may also have an advantage when applying for jobs because of the 'old school tie', the old boy network through which a former public school pupil is more likely to give a job to somebody from a public school, especially his own public school, than to someone from a school in the state system. Some people send their children to public school mainly for this reason; others believe public schools provide a better education than state schools. Larger teaching hours (a broader curriculum, subjects taught by specialist teachers, better facilities for specialist rooms for science, information and communication

technology subjects, music, sport and religious observance – that distinguish a public school education. The teaching day in most schools is one hour longer than the minimum recommended in state schools. Very often they have regular classes on Saturday. And, in spite of having generally shorter terms than state schools, their teaching year is at least 100 hours longer the recommended minimum. Public schools have at various times also been associated with strict discipline, bullying and occasionally homosexuality.

Some parents may send their children to private schools, even if this is against their principles, because they think that their children will receive a better education.

Special Schools. Special schools cater for people with special educational needs, though many parents of disabled children prefer them to attend an ordinary school. Some primary and a few secondary schools are supported by the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Church. There are also some Islamic schools. A small number of children attend music schools or language schools where academic studies are combined with special music or language lessons.

Further Education

A smaller percentage of British students go on to further or higher education than in any other European country. Many students go to university and study for a bachelor's degree. Others study for a certificate or diploma at a college of further education.

Further education in Britain means education after GCSE and GNVQ exams taken around the age of 16. It includes courses of study leading to A levels which students take at their school or sixth-form college. Some students go straight to a college of further education which offers a wider range of full- and part-time courses. Further education also includes training for professional qualifications in nursing, accountancy and management, and in fields such as art and music. The term higher education is used to refer to degree courses at universities.

Many students in Britain take vocational training courses in fields such as building, engineering, hairdressing or secretarial skills. Colleges of further education offer courses leading to NVQs

(National Vocational Qualifications) and other certificates and diplomas. Work-related courses are designed with advice from industry, with the aim of producing students who will have the skills employers require. On longer courses students may do placements (= periods of work) lasting several months with companies. On other courses, called sandwich courses, students divide their time between periods of paid work and periods of study. A common arrangement is for students to get day release from their work to attend college one or two days a week over several years. Some students do a formal modern apprenticeship, learning their skills on the job and attending college part-time.

The British government is keen to persuade more young people to remain in education as long as possible in order to build up a more highly skilled, better educated workforce. Over 700000 people take part-time further education courses at around 500 institutions, while another 700000 are accepted as full-time and sandwich course students.

Vocational Training. Vocational training is intended to give people the skills and knowledge they need to perform a particular job, and involves practical instruction as well as theory. Most vocational training takes place not in universities but in colleges of further education and in colleges specializing in art, accountancy, etc. Some secondary schools now also offer an introduction to vocational training.

NVQs are qualifications that can be obtained by people already working in a particular industry. Colleges of further education run courses to provide a theoretical background. NVQs are awarded on the basis of practical work, spoken and written tests, and coursework. There are five levels, from Foundation to Management. Since 1992 many students in schools and colleges have been working for GNVQs, as an alternative to GCSEs and A levels. GNVQs cover similar areas to NVQs and are intended as introductions to a particular field of work and the skills required. Students can choose from over 500 subjects. At the lowest of its three levels, Foundation, a GNVQ is equivalent to a GCSE.

Universities and Colleges. After school about $\frac{1}{3}$ of British students go to university. They apply to several universities through UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admission Service) and receive offers of a place on condition that they achieve certain grades in their A levels.

Most universities receive some money from the state. The oldest and most famous are Oxford and Cambridge. Other much respected universities include London, Durham and St Andrew's. Some universities such as Birmingham and Manchester are called redbrick universities because they were built in the 19th century with brick rather than stone. The newer universities have their buildings grouped together on a campus.

A first degree, which is usually an honours degree, generally takes three years. Most courses end with exams called finals. Results are given as classes (= grades): a first is the highest class, seconds are often split between upper second and lower second, and below that is a third. Graduates may add the letters BA (Bachelor of Arts) or BSc (Bachelor of Science) after their name. Some graduates go on to study for a further degree, often a master's degree or a doctorate.

Students in Britain formerly had their tuition fees paid by the state and received a government grant to help pay their living expenses. Now, they receive only a loan towards their expenses, and from 1999 most will also have to pay 1 000 a year towards tuition fees. The new arrangements have caused a great deal of concern both among students and among members of the public who believe that education should be free.

At most British universities the academic year is divided into three terms. Students study a main subject throughout their degree course, which is usually a mix of compulsory courses and electives. Teaching methods vary between universities. Most students have lectures and seminars (= discussion groups) and there are practices for those doing a science subject. At some universities students have individual tutorials or supervisions.

In Britain a professor is the person in charge of a department or a senior member of staff. Other teaching and research staff are called lecturers. Junior academic staff may be called research associates.

Youth Organizations

Young people in Britain have a wide choice of clubs and organizations to join. Some clubs concentrate mainly on sports or public service or are connected with a particular religion, though most provide a range of activities. Parents are often keen to support local clubs because they believe they will keep their children off the streets (= stop them from hanging around doing nothing in particular) and out of trouble. But although many children like to go to clubs, older teenagers are often less interested in organized activities and prefer to go to the cinema or a sports centre, or to a club (= nightclub) or bar, when they feel like it.

Scouts and Guides. Among the best-known youth organizations in Britain are the Scout Association and the Guide Association. They have a total of about 1,5 million British members. In the Scouts boys and girls have an opportunity to learn practical outdoor skills such as map-reading and camping. In the Guides, which is only for girls, the main focus is on practical and social skills. Both associations encourage young people to become responsible citizens.

Religious Groups. In Britain young children may go to a Sunday school where they learn about the Bible. Older children may join a church youth group. These offer sports and social activities, as well as discussion of religious and moral issues. The Boys' Brigade and Girls' Brigade encourage Christian values and their members do voluntary work in the community. Most British universities have a Christian Union.

In the UK there are Muslim and Jewish youth groups, and groups linked to other religions.

Service Organizations. In Britain a lot of community work done by young people is organized through schools, and students visit elderly or disadvantaged people on a regular basis. Some children join the Junior Red Cross or the Badgers, the junior branch of the St John Ambulance Brigade, and learn first-aid skills.

School and College Clubs. Schools have lunchtime and after-school clubs for a range of subjects. Many schools also have student bands, choirs and sports teams. Universities and colleges have subject-based societies to help students on the same course get to know each other.

Many towns have clubs for young people interested in dance, drama and music. Some activities, such as youth orchestras, are supported by grants of money from local or national government. Many organizations in Britain now apply for National Lottery money to buy equipment or pay for a hall.

National societies for people interested in archaeology, natural history, astronomy, etc. have sections for young people. Members of these groups receive magazines and also have a chance to go on field trips or visit museums.

In Britain local youth clubs offer social activities ranging from snooker and discos to visits to the theatre. Many towns also have leisure centres which run sports programmes for young people in school holidays. Outward Bound centres offer adventure sports such as rock-climbing and canoeing.

Some young people have the opportunity to take part in environmental projects combined with travel and adventure through Raleigh International. The Youth Hostels Association, which has branches in many countries, encourages young people to travel by offering them cheap accommodation.

Members of many youth organizations take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, which offers medals for achievement in community service and physical recreation.

Adult Education

Some people return to education later in life and attend evening classes run by adult education institutes. Adult education, sometimes called continuing education, includes courses of general interest at all levels, vocational training for jobs in industry, and academic study for a degree.

In Britain most general interest courses are part-time and commonly consist of evening classes held once a week at local colleges, schools and community centres. Some classes are also held during the day. Courses offered include both academic and

recreational subjects, e.g. Spanish, local history, yoga and pottery. Students have to pay, but people who are unemployed may get a reduction or go free. Most classes are organized by local adult education institutes or by the Workers' Educational Association. There are about 1500 centres for adult education in Britain. Some universities also have a department of continuing education, which runs courses and organizes residential summer schools. In the mid 1990s about 1,6 million people, of whom 70% were women, attended evening classes.

Some people return to college as mature students and take full- or part-time training courses in a skill that will help them to get a job.

Open Learning. Some adults who do not go to college or university when they leave school may wish to do so later in life but find they cannot because of work or family commitments or lack of money. The development of open learning, the opportunity to study when it is convenient for the student, has increased the opportunities available to many people. Open learning schemes enable people to take educational courses at any level through part-time study at home when it is convenient for them and obtain recognized qualifications without having to leave their job. Open learning is sometimes called distance learning, because most students do not go to an educational institution for classes but study in their own home.

Open learning was formerly restricted to book-based learning and correspondence courses but now includes courses on television, CD-ROM or the Internet, and self-access courses at language or computer centres. At an informal level, open learning may include learning a language through watching television programmes and studying an associated coursebook. Open learning leading to A levels, professional qualifications and degrees, is often based on correspondence courses, though such courses existed before the term open learning became popular in the 1970s. Students taking correspondence courses receive printed materials through the post and send essays to a tutor to be marked. On other postal courses students receive all the course material at once and work through it entirely by themselves. Some courses are now offered through the Internet or by subscription to a series of television programmes.

Although students have to pay to do the courses the total cost is much less than if they were to give up work to study full-time.

The best-known open learning institution is the Open University (OU), which was founded in 1969. It accepts students from Britain and from other countries in the European Union. Students can be of any age and, if they do not have the standard qualifications for entering university, they take an access course before starting their degree. Teaching is by a mixture of printed materials, and television and radio programmes. Students study at home and post their work to their tutors. Many go to monthly tutorials at study centres in their home town, and they may also attend summer schools. Most students take part-time degree courses lasting four or five years, though there is no time limit. Postgraduate and professional courses are also offered. By the mid 1990s the OU had around 200,000 students and its success has led to similar organizations being set up in other parts of the world.

HOLIDAYS

The United Kingdom is a country with great traditions and customs many of which are centuries old. However, there are fewer public holidays in Great Britain than in other European countries. Even New Year's Day was not an official public holiday in England and Wales until quite recently. The United Kingdom even has no national day holiday marked or celebrated. The lack of a formal founding date and no constitution may be the reason for the lack of a national day.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, public holidays are also called bank holidays, and the two terms are often used interchangeably, although strictly and legally there is a difference. **Bank holidays** are holidays when the banks as well as most of the offices and shops are closed for the day. **Public holidays** are holidays which have been observed through custom and practice.

Bank holidays may be declared by statute or by Royal proclamation that is often used to move a bank holiday in a given year and to create extra one-off bank holidays for special occasions (e.g., The Royal Wedding in 2011, when there was a special holiday on Friday, 29 April, to celebrate the wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, or in 2012, there was a special holiday on Tuesday, 5 June, to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Elizabeth II).

There are currently eight public holidays in England and Wales: Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Day, Spring Bank Holiday and Summer Bank Holiday. In addition to these ones, Scotland has St. Andrew's Day and Northern Ireland celebrates St. Patrick's Day and Battle of the Boyne (Orangeman's Day) as the public holidays. Most of these holidays are of religious origin, though it would be right to say that for the greater part of the population they have lost their religious significance and are the days on which people relax, eat, drink and have fun.

Public Holidays

New Year's Day – January, 1 (called Hogmany in Scotland) is a great public holidays in the United Kingdom. It marks the start of the New Year in the Gregorian calendar, the official

calendar used in Great Britain. It is preceded by New Year's Eve (December, 31), that is not a public holiday but many people hold or attend parties in the evening to see the old year out and to welcome the new year. All over Britain there are parties, dancing, singing, shows and fireworks to ring in the new. At midnight when Big Ben strikes, everybody joins hands and sings "Auld Lang Syne", a poem by the Scottish poet Robert Burns.

In Wales and in the north of Britain almost all children are allowed to stay up until midnight, or are woken up then, so that they can watch the customs which let the Old Year out and bring the New Year in. In several places, both the front door and the back door are opened to assist the Old Year's departure and the arrival of the New. Money, especially silver money, is placed outside the door, and bread and a piece of coal are put out as well to ensure health, wealth, and happiness to the household when fetched in the next day. In many English homes, as well as Scottish, people await the first-footer who, when he arrives, is welcomed with the warmest hospitality. It is a good thing everywhere if he is a man "tall, dark-haired, and handsome". Another good tradition is to write New Year resolutions. These are promises to themselves that they will lead a better life in some way in the coming year. Many people prefer to have a quiet day on January 1, which marks the end of the Christmas break before they return to work.

Good Friday is a public holiday in Great Britain. The date of this holiday changes every year, because it's the Friday before Easter Sunday. On Good Friday Christians remember the day when Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross. Why the day of suffering is called "Good"? This word may be a different spelling or rendering of "God" or it may have another, now lost, meaning of "holy". Another theory is that the tragedy of the crucifixion of Jesus brought great "good" to his followers.

People who regularly attend church will probably attend a special church service on Good Friday. For other people, it is a day off work in the spring. Some people use the day to work in their gardens, while others take advantage of the long Easter weekend and the school holidays at this time of year to take a short vacation. It is

traditional to eat “hot cross buns” on Good Friday. Moreover, people prefer to eat fish instead of meat.

Easter Day. It is the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the March equinox (it is usually celebrated in March or April, sometimes in May). Easter is the oldest and the most important Christian Festival, the celebration of the death and coming to life again of Jesus Christ. For Christians, the dawn of Easter Sunday with its message of new life is the high point of the Christian year.

In Britain, it's a time for celebrating the start of spring and giving and receiving presents which traditionally take the form of an Easter egg. The idea of Easter eggs goes back to the time of ancient Persia and Egypt and was also a part of the culture of the Germanic tribes of Europe. It is believed that eggs were laid by Eostre's pet hare. The egg was easily taken over by Christian culture to symbolize new life. Just as a chick breaks out of its shell, so too, Jesus emerged from His tomb. Easter eggs are coloured or otherwise decorated in a wide variety of techniques, including dyeing, painting and etching. The eggs may be fresh or boiled, eggs laid by chickens or other birds, chocolate eggs or eggs made of other materials. Many children believe that the Easter bunny or rabbit comes to their house or garden to hide eggs. They may search for these eggs or find that the Easter bunny has left them in an obvious place. Another tradition is Easter cards, which arrived in Victorian England, when a stationer added a greeting to a drawing of a rabbit. The cards proved popular.

Easter day, like Christmas day, is also associated with special food. Boiled eggs are traditionally served at breakfast, and then Easter cards and gifts may be exchanged. Roast lamb is the traditional meat for the main meal on Easter Day. It is served with mint sauce and vegetables. The traditional Easter pudding is custard tarts sprinkled with currants and flat Easter biscuits. Simnel cake is baked for tea.

May Day (or Early May Bank Holiday in Scotland) is usually celebrated on the first Monday in May. It was considered as a Roman festival honouring the beginning of the summer season. Now it has become a day to campaign for and celebrate workers' rights by

participating in large marches that are held mostly in London. Traditional English May Day celebrations include Morris dancing, crowning a May Queen and dancing around a Maypole. Other traditions include making floral garlands and decorating houses with flowers and leaves.

Spring Bank Holiday is a time for people in the United Kingdom to have a day off work or school. It falls on the last Monday of May. Some people choose to take a short trip or vacation. Others use the time to walk in the country, go to picnics, catch up with family and friends, visit garden centres or do home maintenance. Some festivals are also held.

Summer Bank Holiday is on the last Monday of August. In Scotland it is on the first Monday of August. This day marks the end of the summer holidays for many people who return to work or school in the autumn. Some people take trips or short vacations during the three day weekend. For others, it is another opportunity to work in their gardens or carry out home improvements. Thousands of trippers come to seaside towns near London, such as Southend, to have fun. There is also much boating activity on the Thames, regattas at Henley and on other rivers.

In London the Notting Hill carnival is held. This is the largest street festival in Europe, begun in 1965 among the West Indian community in London as a celebration of the end of slavery in the West Indies. It has grown every year since that time and is now a major tourist attraction in the capital. More than a million people each year attend the festival, including visitors from overseas as well as other parts of Britain. The festival includes a carnival parade of as many as 100 bands in fancy dress; some of the costumes are so elaborate that they take many months to plan and prepare.

Christmas Day – December, 25. Christmas is an annual celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ all over the world. In Great Britain this day was a festival long before the conversion to Christianity.

The holiday begins on December, 24; this day is called Christmas Eve. It is not a public holiday in the United Kingdom but

it is a day of preparations for the Christmas season. The Christmas season includes the public holidays on Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day and January 2 (Scotland only). Everything is in a great rush, offices and public buildings close at 1 p.m., but the shops stay open late. Public transport is crowded with people travelling from all over the country to be at home with their families to celebrate Christmas. Streets and squares are beautifully decorated with coloured lights and Christmas trees. The biggest Christmas tree is placed in Trafalgar Square in London, it's an annual present given to the city by Norwegian people to thank for the help during World War II.

There are many Christmas symbols. These include leaves and berries from the holly tree and mistletoe bush, pine trees, candles and small lights. Figures associated with the season are Father Christmas or Santa Claus, the baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the other characters from the Nativity story. Presents and Christmas food, such as turkey, Christmas pudding and mince pies also symbolize Christmas. A special mention should be reserved for the robin red breast. This small bird, with its red feathered breast, is at its most beautiful in the middle of the winter and is often seen as a decoration on Christmas cards, wrapping paper and cakes.

To people all over the world, Christmas is a season of giving and receiving presents. In some European countries, Father Christmas, or Saint Nicholas, comes into houses in the night and leaves gifts for the children. Saint Nicholas is represented as a kindly man with a red cloak and long white beard. Children wake up early to find a stocking full of small presents on their bed. Other presents, opened when everyone is together, are arranged around the Christmas tree, which is usually decorated with multicoloured lights.

Another important custom of Christmas is to send and receive Christmas cards, which are meant to help express the sentiment of the season. Some are religious in nature; others are more secular. Many churches hold special services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Some also organize shelter, company and food for the homeless or those who need help. Others hold events for people who wish to return to the spiritual aspects of Christmas and turn away from the commercial aspects of modern Christmas celebrations.

Boxing Day – December, 26 (also called St. Stephen's Day in Scotland). It is usually spent in front of TV recovering from Christmas Day. It is a non-working day all over the country; when it falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the following Monday is a public holiday. Explanations on the origin of this day vary. One is that it was the day on which landowners and householders would present their tenants and servants with gifts (in boxes), another is that it was the day in which the collecting boxes in churches were opened and the contents distributed to the poor. In modern times, it is an important day for sporting events and the start of the post-Christmas sales. Traditionally, using dogs to hunt for foxes was a popular sport amongst the upper classes. Nowadays, fox hunting is outlawed. Horse racing and football (soccer) are now popular sports. Another popular tradition in big town and cities is to visit the pantomime where once again anyone can be entertained by the stories of Cinderella, Puss in Boots, etc.

As it was stated above, Northern Ireland has two more public holidays. They are **St. Patrick's Day**, Irish national holiday, celebrated on March, 17 with great parades in large cities, the wearing of the green, especially shamrocks as a national Irish emblem, and drinking Guinness (traditional drink of Ireland), and **Orangemen's Day** (on or after July, 12) to commemorate the Battle of Boyne by holding walks and marches.

In Scotland, **St. Andrew's Day**, celebrated on November, 30 is the national holiday that is also a bank holiday. Some people have a day off work in Scotland. In Edinburgh, there is a week of celebrations, concentrating on musical entertainment and traditional ceilidh dancing. There is a lot of folklore associated with St Andrew's Day, particularly around young women, who hope to marry. At midnight, as November 29 becomes November 30, young women prayed to be shown signs about their future husbands.

Other British holidays are also important and outstanding, enriched by great customs and traditions. Among them are:

Twelfth Night – January, 5. The celebrated night before Epiphany; there is a tradition to take down your Christmas tree to avoid having bad luck. Annual celebrations are held in the Bankside

area of London by Shakespeare's Globe, in London. It is a celebration of the New Year, mixing ancient Midwinter seasonal customs with contemporary festivity.

Burns' Night – January, 25. The birthday of Scotland's most famous poet, Robert Burns (1759-1796), celebrated with great festivity by the Scots. Burns Suppers are traditional celebrations on this day.

Candlemas Day – February, 2. This day marks the middle of the winter season – from the shortest day of the year to the Spring Equinox. This day also celebrates the cleansing of Mary forty days after the birth of her son Jesus.

St. Valentine's Day – February, 14. This is the day of everybody who is in love. People send a Valentine's card to someone they love, fancy, admire or secretly like. Usually you don't sign your name. The person who receives the card has to guess who sent it.

Shrove Tuesday. It has traditionally been one final day of preparation before Lent starts (which is traditionally a time of fasting). Nowadays it is more commonly known as Pancake Day and is the perfect excuse to eat so many pancakes that you can hardly stand up. Events are held in towns all over the UK, pancake races are held up and down the country. After the Shrove Tuesday the ***Ash Wednesday*** begins. It is a 40-day period known as Lent. In Christian churches there are services in which ashes are used to mark a cross on people's foreheads.

St. David's Day – March, 1. It is the Welsh holiday to celebrate the man, Dewi Sant, who spread Christianity throughout Wales. Many people pin a daffodil or leek to their clothes and some, especially children, wear traditional costumes. A lot of Welshmen attend special church services, parades, choral recitals or Welsh literature readings. Schools plan celebrations, often involving choirs, on the day.

Mothering Sunday (Mother's Day) is a holiday traditionally observed on the 4th Sunday in Lent. People visit their mothers and grandmothers and give them flowers and small presents. If they cannot go they send cards.

April Fool's Day – April, 1. The first day of April ranks amongst the most joyous days in the juvenile calendar. You can play tricks and do practical jokes on people, even on teachers. When they

discover the joke, you say, “April Fool!” You have to play the joke before 12 o’clock midday, otherwise the joke is on you. Its timing seems related to vernal equinox, when the nature fools mankind with sudden weather changes from showers to sunshine. British media loves to do April Fools’ jokes each year. Some of the best include stories about a spaghetti tree, Big Ben changing to a digital clock and finding penguins that could fly. For just a few hours the whole Kingdom goes mad.

St. George’s Day – April, 23. It’s the church festival of St. George, regarded as England’s national day (although not an official bank holiday). According to the legend, he was a soldier in the Roman army who killed a dragon and saved the princess. On this day some patriotic English people go to parades and wear a rose pinned to their jackets. In some regions national English flags (a red cross on a white background) are flown on homes and pubs.

Shakespeare Day – April, 23. On this day all enthusiasts of William Shakespeare, who was one of England’s greatest poets and dramatists, celebrate the holiday by holding pageants at Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, where Shakespeare was born; in many schools special thematic lessons are given for students to learn more about the great playwright and his literary heritage. The greatest fans, including the British Shakespeare Company, have campaigned for Parliament in the United Kingdom to officially recognize national Shakespeare Day. The main symbols of this day are: The Globe Theatre, an image of the poet on a postage stamp or on a portrait; and symbols from his plays, such as a rose (“Romeo and Juliet”), a human skull (“Hamlet”), and blood, ghosts and witches (“Macbeth”).

The Monarch’s Official Birthday – the second Saturday of June. Despite the present-ruling monarch, the Queen Elizabeth II, was born on 21 April, 1926, she celebrates this day privately. The Sovereign’s Birthday is officially celebrated in Britain on the second Saturday in June by the biggest royal event of the year, “The Trooping the Colour”. It is a military parade and march-past marked by carrying of the Flag. The official name is “the Queen’s Birthday Parade”.

Father’s Day – the third Sunday of June. It is a day to honour fathers and grandfathers. Many people make a special effort to visit their fathers or to send them a card or gifts. However, many

people consider this day as just a commercial invention – and not a very successful one either. Millions of British fathers don't even know that they have a holiday.

Summer music festivals. Holding outdoor music festivals is a relatively new part of contemporary British life, stemming from the rock festivals of the 1970s, when hundreds of thousands of people would gather for a weekend in a park or country setting to listen to contemporary rock musicians. These festivals, which in the past were seen as a sign of the decadence of youth by many older people in Britain, are now accepted as a natural part of the British summer. Today thousands of young people attend rock festivals at Reading, Cambridge and Glastonbury. They camp out in all weathers to enjoy a holiday, good music, and the company of friends. The original idea has developed and includes all musical genres. It is now possible to find festivals that cater for fans of many different types of music including, amongst others, reggae, country and western music, jazz, folk, bluegrass. For example, *the Leeds and Readings Festivals*, the above mentioned *Notting Hill Carnival*. *The Edinburgh Festival Fringe* is the largest arts festival in the world; *the Liverpool Fringe Festival* aims to “give a fresh new voice to Liverpool music” and showcases local artists at venues across the city. *The Edinburgh International Festival* presents a rich programme of classical music, theatre, opera and dance in six major theatres and concert halls and a number of smaller venues, over a three-week period in late summer each year. *The Glenn Miller Festival* is the largest swing, jazz and Jive music festival in the UK, and is held at the historic RAF Twinwood Airfield where Glenn Miller (the WWII American band-leader) took his last flight. *The BBC Proms* is Britain's most celebrated classical music festival continues into the bank holiday weekend, with performances at The Royal Albert Hall and Cadogan Hall.

Halloween – October, 1. Halloween has its origins in pagan festivals in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. In the past, people believed that the spirits of dead people appeared on this day. In the evening there are a lot of parties, or fancy dress parties. Today children celebrate Halloween by dressing up as witches and ghosts and going “trick or treating”. They go out in groups and knock on people's doors, shouting “Trick or treat!” People usually give them

sweets or small presents as a treat. Houses are decorated with pumpkins with candles put inside. There are various symbols associated with Halloween: the colours, orange and black, are very common; pumpkin lanterns, witches, wizards, ghosts, spirits and characters from horror films. Animals associated with the festival include bats, spiders and black cats. Halloween is the night above all others when supernatural influences prevail.

All Saints Day – November, 1. This occasion honours all the saints in Christian history, particularly those who do not have their own special feast day. Some people attend special church services on this feast day. ***All Souls Day – November, 2*** is closely associated with All Saints Day. It is the day to remember and pray for deceased family members and friends. Some people visit the graves of dead family or friends.

Guy Fawkes Night (Bonfire Night) – November, 5. In Britain, people light bonfires and let off fireworks on 5th November. Traditionally this is done to remember the time when Guy Fawkes, Britain's most famous terrorist, tried (but failed) to destroy the British Houses of Parliament and the King of England James I with gunpowder in the XVIIth century. The plot was discovered and Guy Fawkes was hanged. People nowadays make models of Guy Fawkes and burn them on big bonfires.

Remembrance Day (Poppy Day) – the second Sunday of November. This day commemorates the dead of both world wars and of more recent war conflicts. On and before this day money is collected in the streets in behalf of charities for ex-service and women. The people who donate money are given paper poppies to pin to their clothes. No politician would be seen on this day without a poppy. The Queen, the Prime Minister and other dignitaries lay wreaths and observe a minute's silence (at 11am) at the Cenotaph to commemorate those who gave their lives for their country in both world wars. Afterwards, the Bishop of London takes a short service of remembrance.

Module Test 1

I Choose 3 problems from the suggested list and write 3 short essays (up to 300 words each):

1. Monarchy. Its role and future.
2. Electoral system in the UK. The formal arrangements, campaign and polling day.
3. Party system. Major political parties, their past and present.
4. How a Bill of Parliament becomes an Act of Parliament.
5. Central and local government: responsibilities, cooperation and conflict.
6. The Church of England and other Christian churches in the UK.
7. The Welfare system and its main problems in today's Britain.
8. Types of newspapers and differences between them.
9. Broadcasting in the United Kingdom. The BBC and IBA.
10. Housing in the country. Public and private sectors, and their partnership.
11. Secondary education in the state-run and private sectors. Advantages and disadvantages of each.
12. Types of Universities and degrees awarded.

II Choose the best option A, B, C or D:

Variant 1

1. What countries does the United Kingdom consist of?
 - a) England, Scotland, Wales
 - b) Great Britain and Northern Ireland
 - c) England and Scotland
 - d) Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic
2. Which is the smallest of four nations?
 - a) England
 - b) Scotland
 - c) Wales
 - d) Ireland
3. Ben Nevis is situated in ...
 - a) England
 - b) Scotland
 - c) Northern Ireland
 - d) Wales

4. What river is the longest in Britain?
 - a) the Thames
 - b) the Tees
 - c) the Tyne
 - d) the Severn
5. How many lakes are there in the Lake District?
 - a) 10
 - b) 5
 - c) 16
 - d) 20
6. Oilfields are concentrated mainly in:
 - a) the Atlantic ocean
 - b) the English Channel
 - c) the North Sea
 - d) the Irish Sea
7. Conurbation is a ...
 - a) metropolitan area
 - b) energetic declaration against something
 - c) use of wrong name
 - d) solid part of earth's crust
8. Which of the four nations' flag is not incorporated in the flag of the UK?
 - a) England
 - b) Scotland
 - c) Wales
 - d) Ireland
9. What do Welshmen wear on St. David's Day?
 - a) a rose or a daffodil
 - b) a shamrock or a thistle
 - c) a leek or a daffodil
 - d) a thistle or a leek
10. What proportion of the population of Britain lives in England?
 - a) more than 80%
 - b) less than 60%
 - c) about 40%
 - d) almost 70%
11. The present royal house is the House of ...
 - a) Stuarts

- b) Windsors
 - c) Tudors
 - d) Oranges
12. Which statement is the correct one? The Queen ...
- a) rules and governs
 - b) reigns but does not rule
 - c) reigns and rules
 - d) rules but does not reign
13. The cabinet is headed by ...
- a) the Speaker
 - b) the Permanent Secretary
 - c) the Prime-Minister
 - d) the Lord Chancellor
14. The official reports of proceedings and debates of the Houses of Parliament are published daily in ...
- a) Reuters
 - b) the Daily Mail
 - c) Hansard
 - d) the Time
15. What is the smallest union of local government?
- a) borough
 - b) county
 - c) shire
 - d) parish
16. How often are the elections held in the UK?
- a) once in five years
 - b) once in four years
 - c) once in three years
 - d) once in six years
17. Anyone over the age of ... has the right to vote at elections.
- a) 18
 - b) 21
 - c) 16
 - d) 24
18. What is the nickname of the Liberal Party?
- a) the Whigs
 - b) the Elephant
 - c) the Tories

- d) the Liberals
19. What is the name for the money that workers pay regularly so that they can get free medical treatment and state pension?
- a) national insurance contributions
 - b) old-age funding payments
 - c) state security deductions
 - d) charities
20. In the UK the term “Welfare” does not apply to ...
- a) National Insurance
 - b) National Health Service
 - c) Social security
 - d) Joint Intelligence Committee
21. What London street is famous as the centre of British journalism?
- a) Leicester Square
 - b) Fleet Street
 - c) Downing Street
 - d) Bond Street
22. Where does BBC television get its income from?
- a) advertising
 - b) private companies
 - c) the government
 - d) Reuters
23. Which of this is not regarded as a “quality” newspaper?
- a) The Guardian
 - b) The Sun
 - c) The Times
 - d) The Daily Telegraph
24. Good “A”-level results in at least ... subjects are necessary to get a place at University.
- a) 3
 - b) 4
 - c) 5
 - d) 6
25. Most British children between the ages of 11 and 16 go to ... schools.
- a) comprehensive
 - b) grammar
 - c) technical

- d) secondary modern
- 26. ... of British children go to independent schools.
 - a) More than 90%
 - b) About 50%
 - c) Less than 10%
 - d) Almost 25%
- 27. Spiritual head of the Church of England is ...
 - a) Monarch
 - b) Archbishop of Kent
 - c) Archbishop of Canterbury
 - d) Pope
- 28. Which sport is considered as the national British sport?
 - a) golf
 - b) soccer
 - c) cricket
 - d) polo
- 29. Public Holidays (Bank Holidays) in Britain do not include:
 - a) New Year's Day
 - b) Easter Monday
 - c) Christmas Day
 - d) St. Valentine's Day
- 30. The National Day of Scotland is ...
 - a) St. Andrew's Day
 - b) St. George's Day
 - c) St. David's Day
 - d) St. Patrick's Day

Total: 30 marks

Your score: ____ marks

Variant 2

- 1. What countries does Britain include?
 - a) England, Scotland, Wales
 - b) England and Scotland
 - c) Great Britain and Northern Ireland
 - d) England, Wales

2. Which of this is not acceptable short name for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland?
 - a) England
 - b) The United Kingdom
 - c) Great Britain
 - d) Britain
3. The Lake District is situated in ...
 - a) England
 - b) Scotland
 - c) Northern Ireland
 - d) Wales
4. Most of British rivers flow in the ... direction.
 - a) southward
 - b) eastward
 - c) westward
 - d) northward
5. What range of hills is known as the “backbone of England”?
 - a) the Adirondack Mountains
 - b) the Appalachian Mountains
 - c) the Ozark Mountain Range
 - d) the Pennine Chain
6. The further you go ..., the more rain you get.
 - a) south
 - b) north
 - c) east
 - d) west
7. What city is the largest in Scotland?
 - a) Aberdeen
 - a) c) Glasgow
 - b) Edinburgh
 - c) Newcastle
8. Inland waters occupies ... of the total area of the country.
 - a) 10%
 - b) 1%
 - c) 15%
 - d) 25%
9. What is the emblem of the world famous Edinburgh Festival of Music and Drama?

- a) the poppy
 - b) the thistle
 - c) the daffodil
 - d) the leek
10. Who is the patron of England?
- a) St. Patrick
 - b) St. Andrew
 - c) St. George
 - d) St. David
11. What language is the most widely spread in Great Britain after English?
- a) German
 - b) French
 - c) Polish
 - d) Russian
12. In which way is Britain unusual among XXIst century states? It does not have:
- a) the written constitution
 - b) the monarch
 - c) the prime minister
 - d) the parliament
13. Which of the functions is not typical of Parliament?
- a) making laws
 - b) providing money for government through taxation
 - c) giving honours such as peerages and knighthoods
 - d) examining government policy, administration and spending
14. About ... people are the members of the Cabinet of ministers.
- a) 45
 - b) 20
 - c) 100
 - d) 400
15. Who chairs debates and other proceedings in the House of Commons?
- a) the Black Rod
 - b) the Speaker
 - c) the Chief Whip
 - d) the Lord Chancellor

16. Who elects the members of the House of Commons?
 - a) the Queen
 - b) the electors
 - c) the Prime Minister
 - d) the House of Lords
17. General elections are always held on:
 - a) Sundays
 - b) Tuesdays
 - c) Thursdays
 - d) Saturdays
18. Any British citizen aged ... may stand for election to Parliament, providing they are not disqualified.
 - a) 18
 - b) 21
 - c) 16
 - d) 24
19. The money used by the government for payments to people with very low incomes and others in need is called ...
 - a) the national insurance
 - b) the benefits
 - c) the Christmas bonus
 - d) the general taxes
20. Which of this is not regarded as a “popular” newspaper?
 - a) The Guardian
 - b) The Sun
 - c) The Star
 - d) The Daily Mirror
21. What British national radio channel broadcasts rock and pop music?
 - a) Radio 1
 - b) Radio 3
 - c) Radio 4
 - d) Radio 5
22. The academic year in University is divided into ... terms.
 - a) 2
 - b) 3
 - c) 4
 - d) 5

23. According to the National Curriculum education from 5 to 16 is divided into ... key stages.
- a) 4
 - b) 2
 - c) 5
 - d) 3
24. Children begin their secondary education at the age of about ...
- a) 7
 - b) 11
 - c) 14
 - d) 16
25. School performance tables (“league tables”) are published ...
- a) twice a year
 - b) thrice a year
 - c) once a year
 - d) every four years
26. What is the official religion in the United Kingdom?
- a) Catholicism
 - b) Methodist Church
 - c) Anglicanism
 - d) Baptism
27. Which of these does not belong to British Bank Holidays?
- a) New Year’s Eve
 - b) Easter Monday
 - c) Good Friday
 - d) Boxing Day
28. When is Bonfire Night celebrated?
- a) October, 31
 - b) November, 5
 - c) November, 7
 - d) December, 1
29. Which state of the United Kingdom is traditionally regarded as the home of golf?
- a) England
 - b) Wales
 - c) Northern Ireland
 - d) Scotland

30. The Darby, The Great National, The Royal Ascot are British famous ... competitions.

- a) motoracing
- b) horseracing
- c) polo
- d) regatta

Total: 30 marks

Your score: ____ marks

THE BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Invaders and Settlers

Britain was the first capitalist country, a pioneer of modern industrial civilisation. But it is important to remember that, while ancient civilisations flourished in Africa and Asia, then in Greece and Rome, life in Britain was still primitive. In the history of world civilisations Britain was a very late starter

The earliest human remains found in Britain show that there was life before the Ice Age, but this was ended by the ice sheets and glaciers which covered Britain as far south as the Thames valley. The modern settlement of Britain began in the New Stone Age (Neolithic times) with tribal groups coming from the Iberian peninsula. They came by sea between 3,000 BC and 2,000 BC, settling near the coasts of south and west Britain as well as in Ireland. They brought with them the agricultural methods which had been developed around the Mediterranean coasts, the raising of cattle and the planting of wheat. As the lowlands of Britain were still covered with forests, these settlers lived on hills such as the chalk uplands of southern England.

Soon after the Belgae came to Britain the Roman empire was extended to the homelands of the remaining Belgae in the area of what is now northern France and Belgium. These tribes were stubborn in defence of their independence, and the irresistance was supported by those Belgae who had come to Britain. Julius Caesar therefore brought troops to attack Britain, and raided the country in 55 and 54 BC. Not until a hundred years later did the Romans follow up these first raids with an invasion in 43 AD and the occupation of most of Britain.

The expanding Roman Empire was concerned simply with exploiting the natural wealth of conquered lands, including the people, who provided slave labour. Fertile lands like Britain also gave the Romans more space for settlement. The military conquest of Britain was soon achieved, but there was a revolt in 69 AD led by Queen Boadicea, when London and two other Roman towns were burned down. After this revolt had been crushed there was no more opposition in occupied Britain, but the resistance of the tribes in the

far north (now Scotland) prevented occupation of most of that area. Indeed, the Romans had to build two walls for their defence across Britain, one not far from the present Scottish border and one further north, beyond Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Roman civilization in Britain lasted for about 400 years and left many traces in towns and roads. Architecture was one of the main achievements of the Romans, and many stone buildings were constructed. After the Romans left many of these were completely destroyed by new farming settlers with no use for towns. The straight roads, which crossed the country, primarily for military use, were another feature of Roman life. Technical progress under the Romans was very limited except in building. With plenty of slave labour there was no incentive to look for labour-saving improvements in technique. Better weapons were developed but better ploughs were not considered important. Roman exploitation meant above all the increased mining of mineral wealth: iron, tin, copper, gold.

In 407 AD Roman legions were withdrawn from Britain to defend Rome and soon the Roman Empire collapsed and there were more and more raids from across the North Sea and then the occupation of much Britain by Germanic tribes.

The new invaders of Britain came during the 5th and 6th centuries from the area later known as Northern Germany and Denmark. They were the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. The new settlers, together with a few of the native population, formed the English people. A large part of the native population were driven from their land and retreated to the west into the present Wales or Cornwall, or north into Scotland. In these parts of Britain the mainly Celtic population have kept alive their own traditions and culture.

Socially and economically it was an advance to a more developed social order. The tribal societies produced a feudal type of society in which the lower classes had a degree of independence in working on their own land, while in return they had to produce a surplus for their lords.

The duties of serfs were first based on tribal tradition, modified as the feudal system developed. With the extension of the feudal system and the conquest of other lands by feudal kings, the role of military force became more open and important. This feudal system was based on the new methods of agriculture developed by

Germanic tribes with the equal division of land, each man having strips in different fields, so that everyone had some of the best land (for example, near rivers) and some of the worst. The local centres of population were villages (later called manors) with a military purpose, for defence, as well as being centres of agricultural life.

The peasant producers, even with less independence as feudalism developed, had far more incentive than slaves had to invent labour-saving devices and increase their productive efficiency. Hence the economic and social progress made in the Anglo-Saxon period, as well as later, after the Norman Conquest. Crop rotation was developed for example; water-mills came into use, and then windmills. Horseshoes, better harness for horses, fixed rudders on ships and the wheelbarrow were all feudal innovations. Feudal society was mainly agricultural with a natural economy, producing for use rather than exchange. It extended over Western Europe for the next thousand years, up to the fifteenth century.

With the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon (which may now be called English) kingdoms, seven, at first, social classes were more clearly defined and private property in land was firmly established. The thane was the first title given to feudal lords and the ceorl, a free peasant in the Germanic tribes, was becoming more and more like the feudal serf. The institution of kingship gave one man central power in the developing feudal system. An important part in social organisation was played by the church, once it had spread all over Britain. From Ireland Christianity spread across the north of England. Meanwhile, the Pope sent St. Augustine to convert the English. He landed in Kent in 597 and soon re-established the church in the three kingdoms in south-east England. Differences between the two types of Christian church led to a meeting at Whitby (Yorkshire) in 664, when representatives of both sides met to find a basis of agreement. The victory went to the Roman Christians, with their highly organised and disciplined church, based on Roman law and suitable for a feudal system which was gradually producing a centralised state. As the church still had a monopoly of literacy, the priests became the bureaucracy of the feudal system, dominating in particular the establishment of feudal property rights. In the course of this process they made the church one of the strongest and wealthiest landowners. Its centralising influence, however, was socially and

economically a progressive factor, as was its encouragement of trade and other links with the continent. The growth of learning, even if restricted to a small class, was important. Beautiful manuscripts were produced in the monasteries and in one of these lived and worked Bede, the first English historian and one of the most learned men of Europe up to his death in 735.

During the ninth century came new invasions of Vikings, also called Northmen, Norsemen or Danes. They came from Denmark and Norway across the North Sea, gradually occupying the north and east of England, which became known as the Danelaw, as well as parts of Scotland and Ireland. Their success was due to the disunity of the English kingdoms, and to the invaders' better military organisation and equipment. They cleared large areas of forests and built large ships, showing such military and naval strength that the English kings in the south obeyed demands for payments to the Danes, called "Dane-geld".

Towards the end of the century Wessex became the centre of resistance to the Danes. King Alfred succeeded in keeping the Danes out of Southern England with a high level of military organization and a national army, as well as the creation of fortified burghs which were in fact the first English towns. From resistance to the Danes Alfred went on to counter-attacks, capturing London in 886 AD. After Alfred's death the trend towards English unity continued and the Danelaw was gradually recaptured. The Danish and English population mixed and a new national unity began to emerge. Alfred's successors became kings of England, while the former kingdoms were shires (later called counties) with local lords called earls. Feudalism was developing more and more into a national system. The 10th century saw the peaceful development of England.

Early in the 11th century the Danes came again with King Canute at head; he ruled over the whole of England (1016 – 35). He was followed by an English king, and then came a conflict over the succession to the throne. King Harold took the throne in 1066, but Danish family ties with their related people in Normandy gave king William a claim to the throne. He crossed the channel and defeated King Harold near Hastings in Sussex.

The new king, known as William the Conqueror, claimed all the land of England and imposed a more centralised form of

feudalism. The Norman lords were appointed as his tenants, but loyalty to the king was sworn not only by these tenants, in return for the land granted to them, but by all their sub-tenants as well. There was a new difference added to the normal feudal class divisions; the new ruling class spoke Norman French and in the course of time added many new words to the English language. Some of them showed clearly the social division behind the use of new words; while the English serfs looked after sheep, for example, the meat belonged to their Norman lords, hence “mutton” from the French “mouton”. Similarly beef from “boeuf”, pork from “pore” and veal from “veau”.

The political system which developed under the Normans was not altogether new, but a much more centralised form of feudalism, with a stronger state. This was a contrast to the continent, where there were strong local lords fighting intermittent wars among themselves, and only nominally acknowledging the supreme control and ownership of their lands as being in the hands of a king. In England the lords were granted their land by a powerful king whose wealth and military power overshadowed those of any possible rivals.

Norman rule brought stronger military control over the people of England. Castles were built in or near important towns as a safeguard against revolts. This was necessary because the new ruling class increased the exploitation of the serf so that there was a double resentment against the new foreign rulers. An economic and social survey of the country was made by about 1086 in the Domesday Book. This showed that the population of England was about two million, most of them being unfree villains or serfs. The standard of living of many of these people was lowered by their exclusion from royal forests, which were reserved for hunting by the king and his lords.

The stronger and more stable Norman state was a historic step forward for England, ending centuries of insecurity and fear of foreign invasion. The feudal system could now advance more or less peacefully to its full development, which was achieved in the next three centuries. This advance was itself the basis for future social and economic developments which in turn ended the feudal system to replace it by capitalism. The new stability of England meant that less

time had to be wasted on military service and organisation, so that more time could be devoted to production and trade. Towns developed still further, with greater division of labour and the growth of specialised crafts, particularly in building and trade. Wool became an important export and its production was in time going to bring a revolutionary change in the economic system. Progress in agriculture included the use of windmills and, in the 12th century, the wider use of iron ploughs and scythes. As production increased and the surplus wool provided a very profitable export, the church was able to get more money from landowners and merchants. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a large number of cathedrals and fine churches were built. After the Norman Conquest trade with France and Flanders expanded. Trade with the Middle East, disturbed by Moslem invaders, as well as the conquest of new lands by feudal barons and poor peasants, lay behind the Crusades, which started in 1096. Among the results for England were a development of direct trade with Italian ports and the introduction of new commodities from the Orient, e.g. sugar, a new supplement to the old sweetener, honey. Towns grew as centres of trade with their own fairs and markets. When they were rich enough they paid money to the king for a Charter, which made them independent bodies, free of feudal duties to local lords. This process spread in the second half of the twelfth century and early thirteenth century, when Henry II, Richard I and King John needed money for wars. Charters were granted, for example, to London about 1130, to Bristol in 1154, Oxford in 1191, Ipswich in 1200 and Exeter in 1208.

William and later Norman kings had taken over a lot of the administrative system and legal structure of Saxon England. The king continued to call his Great Council together, a meeting of feudal lords which gave the king information on the state of the country and which had to raise money for him. Henry I (1100 – 35) created a new central administration of justice and finance by royal secretaries. Henry II (1154 – 89) established a king's army. The legal system was improved with a division of the country into 6 districts in which the king's judges travelled "on circuit". Trial by jury was introduced in 1166 with the idea of bringing suspected persons before the king's courts.

It was under Henry II that Ireland was first invaded and from then on it was gradually taken over by the English as their first colony. English kings wanted to impose more taxes to pay for their wars in the 12th and 13th centuries. Resentment grew as more taxes were imposed on free towns. King John “Lackland” (1199 – 1216) treated the barons despotically and lost a war in France which meant the loss of Normandy and other provinces. The barons forced him to meet them at Runnymede, near Windsor, on June 15th 1215.

With armed force well in evidence, they made the king agree to their demands set out in Magna Carta (the Great Charter), demands producing a balance of power between the king and his Great Council. This document is revered as the foundation of the liberties of the freemen of England, guaranteeing them a fair trial by their peers, or equals. Far more important was the agreement of the king not to impose new taxes without the consent of the barons.

This agreement was broken by King Henry III in 1258, and again the barons met in the Great Council, which decided to take financial powers out of the hands of the king. In 1265 de Montfort, in the king's name, called the first Parliament. This was a new kind of assembly, including not only the lords but two knights to represent each county and two burgesses or citizens from each town. The new body was more than just a meeting to consent to taxation; it was a body helping to decide what taxes should be imposed.

By the 14th century the continued growth of trade was more dependent on production by craftsmen, with the development of commodity-money exchange stimulating more commodity production.

The wars of that period reflected the changing economic system. While England was fighting in Wales and Scotland to add to the possessions of the king and the barons in the customary medieval way, other wars were wars of a new kind, trade wars. The Crusades have already been mentioned. The Hundred Years' War (1338 – 1453) was partly aimed at the normal feudal target of extra land to exploit, and partly at securing political domination over Gascony, the south-west region of France, which then supplied most of England's wine and salt, and over Flanders, the centre of the wool industry and the main customer for English wool.

In these wars there was less and less reliance on feudal duties to provide the manpower for long campaigns. Barons preferred to pay a cash contribution to the king and war became a new trade, with soldiers hired at 3d a day for archers and 6d a day for mounted troops.

Criticism of the Church had grown alongside rising feeling against other landowners. The Popes lived in France during most of the fourteenth century, when England was at war with France, and so patriotism reinforced anti-Papal ideas. John Wycliff began to criticise the wealth and laziness of the monks from about 1370 and his followers, called the Poor Preachers, or Lollards (including the famous John Ball), went further and preached ideas of primitive communism. They used as their main text the lines: "When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?"

The rate of profit was high and capital accumulation was rapid. But in the second half of the fifteenth century the growth of trade was restricted by a currency crisis throughout Europe. Gold and silver were in short supply and the urgent search for new sources of these precious metals was one of the stimuli behind the voyages of discovery at the end of the century.

Another important stimulus was the increasing danger and difficulty met in the overland routes to the "gorgeous east", as Wordsworth described it, the source of silks, spices and precious stones. The Middle East was overrun by the Turks, who captured Constantinople in 1453. England, Spain and Portugal were all eager to break the almost exclusive monopoly of eastern trade held by Venice, by finding new trade routes. The Portuguese pioneered the routes around Africa. Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1497 and finally reached India in 1498, his first voyage showing a profit of 6,000 per cent, no mean stimulus for further efforts. Meanwhile, Christopher Columbus sailed west to go round the world to the East Indies. In 1492 he found the West Indies and then Central America. The greatest advantages from the age of discovery came to England, which pioneered the exploration and settlement of North America. John Cabot sailed from Bristol in 1497 and opened the route to this continent for later English settlement.

In political life Members of Parliament (MPs) won greater freedom to speak openly and critically with their assertion of "parlia-

mentary privilege" from 1455. This was a principle which gave MPs the right to speak freely in the House of Commons without any fear of legal action for libel. This right has been an important part of democracy ever since.

During this time of intellectual advance, William Caxton brought to England in 1476 the new process of printing which Gutenberg had invented in Germany in 1445. Nobles and merchants were becoming more literate and the demand for books was now greater than could be met by the old methods of copying manuscripts. Printing was not only important for the spreading of science and culture, but was soon to develop into an important weapon in the battle of ideas, which was to be waged through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

By the end of the fifteenth century important changes in methods of production and in productive relations were taking place in England. This new form of economic activity was linked with the growth of the bourgeoisie, money-commodity relations and wage-labour. These developments were leading to social changes which were beginning to affect the balance of forces in feudal society and which would soon bring the bourgeoisie into a leading position.

Renaissance in Britain.

By the end of the 15th century political conditions had become more favourable for bourgeois development in England. The Tudor kings and queens (1485 – 1603) restored the central control of the state but ruled with the support of a rising bourgeois class. This class was based in the main on the wool trade. Their great need was security at home and abroad for the development of manufacture and exports. In return the bourgeoisie received encouragement and help for the development of trade, such as subsidies for shipbuilding and others. J.D. Bernal commented on this period: "The Renaissance and the Reformation are two aspects of the same movement to change the system of social relations from that based on a fixed hereditary status to one based on buying and selling commodities and labour". The Renaissance meant a turn away from tradition to a scientific examination of the world and the enjoyment of art and culture, particularly painting, poetry and music.

A little later Shakespeare's plays were to epitomise the Renaissance: they reflect the questioning of authority, religious and secular, and the new confidence of the individual which was to characterise the growth of bourgeois society. The richness of Shakespeare's language and range of expression indicates how widely the Renaissance had extended the horizons of man's knowledge.

Science was developed by the bourgeoisie, particularly for the needs of trade, as with the ship's compass, a Chinese discovery brought to Europe through Italy, and lenses for telescopes, invented in Holland.

Education had developed without direct control by the state. The Church had had almost a monopoly of literacy and education until the Reformation when Henry VIII disbanded the monasteries (1536-39). Apart from the monastery schools there had been since the thirteenth century the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge. In addition, a few schools had been founded which were not confined to pupils from one area, but were open to a wider public, so they were called "public schools". The first established was Winchester in 1382, followed by Eton, founded in 1440, but most public schools and older grammar schools were founded in the sixteenth century after the monastery schools were closed.

The new army of landless beggars was swollen by the breaking up of the private armies of the nobility after the end of the Wars of the Roses in 1485, and further increased by the 10,000 servants turned out when the monasteries were dissolved by Henry VIII between 1536 and 1539. This central feature of the English Reformation produced important social changes, as land was given or sold to the rising gentry, supporters of the king and key people in the development of capitalist production, especially of woollen cloth.

Gradually the unemployed were absorbed by the growth of commerce and new industries.

England suffered less from religious fanaticism than did the continent, but high feelings developed in the second half of the sixteenth century, when Catholicism was seen to be linked with the efforts of Spain to conquer England. Protestantism was added to patriotism, creating a powerful force. The Protestantism of the merchant capitalists was also linked with anti-feudal feelings, strong

hostility to reactionary Spain and to the Catholic section of the nobility in England. Fear of Catholic plots against the Queen led to the execution of Mary Stuart, a Catholic granddaughter of Henry VIII, in 1587. When the Spanish Armada was defeated in 1588 it was as much a victory for the rising bourgeoisie as for England. The English fleet was mainly an assembly of ships provided by the merchants at their own expense. After that date the bourgeoisie began to be conscious of its own strength, to feel less dependence on the monarchy, and to show its independence in Parliament. With the growing strength of the bourgeoisie the alliance between the Crown and the bourgeoisie began to weaken, and the Crown retreated more and more towards the reactionary nobility. Elizabeth and the Stuart kings after her felt that their position depended on the maintenance of a balance of power which they saw threatened by the increasing strength of the bourgeoisie.

Trade was rapidly expanding, English colonies were founded along the north-east coast of America. Enormous profits were made, partly from trade and partly from piratical attacks on Spanish treasure ships. Drake's voyage round the world (1577 – 80) marked the beginning of English attacks on Portuguese possessions.

The social and economic changes in Tudor England had inflicted great hardship on many thousands of people in the interests of free enterprise. By the middle of the 17th century the economic power of the bourgeoisie had developed enough to make the members of the House of Commons stronger and richer than the members of the House of Lords. This shift of power was the basis for the success of the English Revolution. The stress in Puritanism was on the duties of the individual, rather than on the social group. Individualism was stressed and reflected in the support for a belief in individual salvation, the importance of the individual character and a pride in individual success.

The Stuart kings of the early 17th century outraged Parliamentary opinion by a swing back towards toleration of Catholics and friendship with Spain. The Gunpowder plot (1605), when a group of Catholic fanatics tried to blow up Parliament when the King was there, made Popery more widely unpopular.

The weapon of censorship was used more often and harshly. The Puritans were religious critics of dictatorial churches, not at first

political group. They believed in personal contact with God, to whom they felt directly responsible, without the need of control by bishops. This theological democracy led to support for Parliamentary democracy. When Charles I attempted to impose taxes and raise forced loans without the agreement of Parliament, the Puritans were the forefront of the fight to resist the tyranny. An open struggle developed between the divine right of kings and the divine right of private property.

These demands for more religious and political freedom were accompanied by developments in science. Scientific ideas were expressed in a new materialist philosophy developed by Francis Bacon (1561—1626), who wrote, “What is most useful in practice is most correct in theory”. The ideas in his book “New Atlantis” inspired his followers to found the “College of Philosophy” in 1645, under Cromwell’s rule. This scientific centre was merged after the Restoration into the new Royal Society. Rationalism was also expressed in the works of John Locke (1632—1704) to justify the bourgeois revolution. Against the traditional views of obedience to a divinely-appointed king he put forward the right of (property-owning) citizens to control their state. In physics and mathematics, Isaac Newton (1643—1727) was an outstanding figure.

To understand these vital struggles we must stress again the Puritan background of Cromwell’s supporters, but recognise within this general trend many differences. When Cromwell’s army had won the first civil war, by 1646, these differences gave rise to serious conflicts. On one side were the big landowners and rich merchants, the conservative Presbyterians; on the other, the more radical small producers, gentry and peasants, who were mostly Independents, that is, members of several small religious sects, each believing in toleration for any form of religion except the Catholic Church, which they saw as counter-revolutionary. Parliament was composed of the larger property owners and they soon established Presbyterianism as the state religion, with laws to suppress the Independents. Opinion in the army, where democratic discussion was part of their way of life, swung to the left and support for the Levellers grew.

In the spring of 1649 a group of Diggers began to dig up the waste land in several places in Surrey, Kent and the- Midlands, but all these attempts were stopped by armed force. Some of the

regiments affected by the ideas of Levellers or Diggers were sent to Ireland, where many soldiers died in battle or remained as settlers. Other former Levellers became members of the Society of Friends a very democratic religious sect, whose members sat together for services with no priest or leader.

They were pacifist, totally opposed to the use of force, and were derisively called “quakers” by critics, who thus suggested that they would shake with fear rather than fight. But this name was accepted proudly, and Quakers have since been a highly respected sect in Britain, often prominent in campaigns for social and political reforms.

Cromwell represented more than anyone else the gentry, the developing capitalist landowners. It was in their interests and with their support that he defeated radical revolts. The English Revolution brought not only internal victory for the English bourgeoisie. Its international position too was strengthened in its struggles against trade rivals and in comparison with its nearest bourgeois competitor, Holland.

After the death of Cromwell in 1658 the gentry moved towards one of the important compromises in British history, a consolidation of the forces of the property-owning classes. Gentry and large landowners saw their basic unity of the interests and achieved the compromise of 1660, the restoration of a Stuart king. The exiled Prince Charles accepted the throne and became Charles II. He promised stability of property, religious toleration and pardons except for those directly concerned with his father’s execution. Charles II made no claim to divine right; he knew that he ruled by permission of the landlords and merchants.

Charles II acted slowly and carefully to make the Tories stronger. His brother James II, who succeeded him in 1685, unwisely tried to go too far towards restoring Catholicism. He isolated himself completely and the Whigs united with some Tories to invite to England Prince William of Orange, a Dutch prince who had married Mary, the Protestant daughter of James II. When William landed in England in November 1688, James fled to France. Parliament appointed William and Mary king and queen in February 1689, when they accepted the conditions laid down in the Declaration of Rights; this was later embodied in the Bill of Rights and made law in

October of that year. This made it clear that Parliament was to be the supreme power in the state, controlling finance, the army and the appointment of judges. There was to be freedom for Puritans, or Nonconformists, to worship in their own churches. A few years later books and newspapers were freed from censorship when Parliament did not renew the Licensing Acts. This ensured the safe development of the first daily newspaper, the "Universal Daily Register", established in 1685 and renamed "The Times" in 1785. This remodelling of the state, to complete the process begun in the English Revolution forty years before, was effected by a compromise between different sections of the owning classes. It was a peaceful process, involving no popular actions or risings, and was therefore highly esteemed by the bourgeoisie. It has been recorded in English history as "The Glorious Revolution".

The eighteenth century saw the development of government by a Prime Minister and his Cabinet, nominally controlled by Parliament but really controlling Parliament as long as their party held a majority there. As this is still the central feature of British Parliamentary government it is important to see how it grew up. In 1714 George I succeeded to the throne, as great-grandson of James I, but he came from Hanover, knew nothing of English affairs nor the English language, and was very willing that the leader of the Whigs in Parliament should govern for him. This leader was Robert Walpole, an enterprising landowner from East Anglia. He became in fact the first Prime Minister in British history, although he was never known by this title. He began the modern system of government through a group of Ministers under his leadership, instead of leaving administration in the hands of the king and his officials, as hitherto.

Bourgeois democracy was developing well, for the bourgeoisie. But the extent of real democracy was very slight. In the middle of the eighteenth century about 245,000 men in England had a vote and they had to record their votes in public. A Tory historian, L.B. Namier, has admitted that "probably not more than one in every twenty voters at county elections could freely exercise his statutory rights." In the countryside squires, with powers they exercised as Justices of the Peace, ruled almost as absolute despots in their villages.

The new constitutional monarchy was the creation of the Whigs and they were in control of Parliament almost without a break until 1783, though there was a temporary revival of the king's power over Parliament under George III after 1760. By the middle of the eighteenth century the Whigs, under a new Prime Minister, William Pitt, aimed at a further expansion of British colonies at the expense of the French in India, where fighting started in 1746, and in North America, where the war soon resulted in the acquisition of Canada. Victory was won partly by the better arms and equipment Britain could afford, and the stronger navy which was vital for colonial expansion; partly by the use of British finance to win over and subsidise continental allies. First Austria fought against France (1740 – 48), then Prussia under Frederick II opposed France in the Seven Years' War (1756 – 63). These European struggles diverted French attention and strength, making British colonial conquests easier. The rivalry with France brought on by the expansionist policy of Britain was to be an important factor in determining the attitude of Britain to the French Revolution.

In the course of this period England had become Britain. Wales was conquered after nearly two centuries of fighting by Norman lords. The old Welsh festival of the Eisteddfod was forbidden after 1283, not to be revived until the twentieth century. In 1301 King Edward had his baby son named Prince of Wales in an effort to win the support of the Welsh for their English rulers. This title has been given ever since to the first-born son of the reigning king or queen in Britain. In 1536 came the Act of Union, placing Wales under the English crown, destroying the Welsh constitution and laws and even making the Welsh language illegal.

Scotland had taken even longer to subdue. After centuries of fighting, right up to Tudor times, the countries were united under James VI of Scotland, who became James I of England when Elizabeth died in 1603 without leaving a direct heir. There were some disturbances, mainly by Highlanders who wanted to defend their tribal society against bourgeois development coming from England. In 1707 troops were sent to the Scottish border to force the Act of Union upon an unwilling Scotland. After George I of Hanover became king in 1714 there was a Jacobite rising in 1715, which was easily crushed. In 1745 another rising was defeated at the battle of

Culloden, near Inverness. The government then destroyed the tribal system of the Highland clans who had given most support to the rising. Many new chiefs were appointed and the land which had previously been the common property of the tribes or clans was given to these chiefs as their private property. During the 18th century they turned vast areas into profitable sheep farms. Crofters were evicted; thousands emigrated to Canada or the USA and many more went to Glasgow or other industrial towns.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the new bourgeois state in Britain, established by the English Revolution of the seventeenth century, was consolidated. Economic and colonial expansions were going ahead very well. However, even before the industrial revolution produced the modern working class, wage labourers began to combine and to strike.

The development of capitalism was already producing class struggles which were to increase tremendously in the period of social upheaval which saw the birth of the new factory system and the establishment of industrial capitalism.

The Birth of Industrial Capitalism (1760 – 1832)

Modern industrial capitalism was produced by the industrial revolution, which transformed commodity production by developing factories using steam power and machinery for mass production. The basic industries for this development were coal and iron. In the middle of the eighteenth century the production of iron in Britain was falling steadily, as its forests were being used up to provide charcoal for smelting the iron ore. Britain was then actually importing iron from Sweden and Russia. In 1760 a revolutionary advance in technique was seen; the use of coke for smelting iron ore, quietly developed for many years, was revealed to the world as a commercial possibility in a large new ironworks. The future of the iron industry, and of coal, was assured. In the course of developing these industries, new inventions led to power-driven machinery, factory production and industrial capitalism.

James Watt patented his steam engine, used mainly for pumping, in 1769. An improved version, produced in 1782, was used for driving machinery in factories and was to be the key to industrial

progress for the next century. By 1800 it was used in coal and copper mines, foundries, breweries and cotton mills.

With the use of coke for smelting, iron production began to rise more rapidly. New uses were found for it; iron rails were first laid in 1769, the forerunners of the railways (incidentally called "iron roads" in practically every other language); the first iron bridge was built over the River Severn in 1779 and the first iron ship sailed there in 1790.

All these changes helped to increase the expanding export trades. Woollen cloth had been the main export of England, but in the eighteenth century the new cotton cloth became more important and the British cotton industry rose as the Indian domestic industry was deliberately destroyed with the help of an Act in 1700 prohibiting the import of cloth from India. Cotton exports also rose as more cotton cloth was used to barter for slaves in Africa, and the slaves not only brought great profits to merchants but also increased the production of cotton on the plantations in the Americas.

The rising demand for cotton cloth led to improvements in production. Weaving was made twice as fast by Kay's flying shuttle, invented in 1733, first used for woollen cloth and then for cotton. The resulting rise in the demand for yarn led to Hargreaves' "Spinning Jenny" in 1766. Spinning was made even faster when water power was used in 1769. But these new machines took production to the factory stage, and ended any chance of survival for the domestic workers. In 1785 steam power was used to drive spinning machines. The future clearly lay in factories needing expensive equipment, far beyond the reach of handicraftsmen. The day of the industrial capitalist was dawning. Cotton was the first industry to reach this stage, as the incentives there were greatest; for several decades into the next century cotton provided about half the total value of British exports, and the cotton factories set the pace for the development of other industries.

The capital needed for the developments in coal mining, iron-making and cotton factories was available from the huge profits made earlier in the wool and slave trades, in the plunder of America and the West Indies, and then from the profits made in these new capitalist industries.

But these capitalist industries needed factory workers to work for wages. There were two main sources. First, the small craftsmen and producers, who were ruined by the competition of the more efficient and cheap factory production.

The second source of wage labourers was from the countryside. Agriculture had seen many changes through the eighteenth century; it was still Britain's largest industry and was increasing its output to meet the growing demand for food, not only in the towns, but for exports to Europe. Progress had been made with the help of Dutch methods, adopted in England after the Dutch Prince William became king in 1689. The use of turnips, a new rotation of crops, winter fodder to keep more cattle alive from one year to the next, and better breeding of sheep and cattle all led to more food, which kept pace with the huge expansion of population towards the end of the century and well into the next. Farming machinery improved too, with iron ploughs and seed drills, and all these improvements needed quantities of capital and large farms. Rich landowners had the former; now they proceeded with a new enclosure movement to ensure the latter.

The new enclosures turned the communally cultivated open fields and the commons where villagers had kept animals and geese into large compact farms. In the reign of George III (1760 – 1820) there were over 3,000 Enclosure Acts passed by Parliament and something like four million acres (roughly two million hectares) were enclosed. Enclosure Acts required the consent of four-fifths of the owners of land in any parish concerned, but this consent was often obtained by pressure, bribery and fraud. Most smallholders and villagers soon spent the small sum given as compensation for their land and became labourers on the large new farms or workers in the factories. The aim of the landlords was to increase their profits by creating new, efficient farming units. But one of the main results, as new methods could produce more with less labour, was to squeeze many villagers out of the countryside and leave them, like the handicraftsmen, no alternative but factory work.

As American colonists began to defy the British authorities, notably with the “Boston tea party”, British troops moved in and the colonists prepared to fight. Further inspiration for their cause was provided by Tom Paine, an English radical who had settled in

America and whose book “Common Sense” spread like wildfire and became the bible of the American soldiers in the next year or two. When the fighting had started, the colonists adopted the Declaration of Independence on 4th July 1776, with the aim of winning support in other countries for their struggle against Britain. The most famous clause in this revolutionary document said: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

After an American victory in 1777 France, Spain and Holland joined in the war, cutting off the British forces from supplies coming by sea. In 1783 the British government had to recognise the independence of America.

In spite of the loss of the American colonies, colonialism was already an important asset for British trade. India, for example, was turned from an exporter of cotton goods to a big customer for Lancashire cotton. Europe had always imported more from the east than was returned; for the first time the tide of trade started to flow the other way. In addition to this advantage, direct exploitation of India was ensured by a new system of land taxation, which increased the burden on a very poor peasantry. The province of Bombay, for example, was conquered by 1818 and within four years the taxes levied on the occupiers of land were doubled. The old system of taxation had stopped at a limit of one-third of income; the standard basis for the new British method was one-half. Old-fashioned plunder of colonial lands was continuing and providing more capital for British industry. James Cook sailed to Australia and opened up this new land for British colonists. Britain’s first colony, Ireland, was now providing an important supply of cheap labour, especially for unskilled work in the construction of canals and roads.

French and British colonial interests had met and clashed in North America and India. The Seven Years’ War (1756 – 63) was won by Britain, enabling her to establish her position firmly in Canada and India. The latter country was largely controlled by the East India Company, whose trade was so profitable that the British government insisted on taking its own share of the plunder and a share in the administration. Forty years later (1813) the trading monopoly of the East India Company was ended and a Govern-

General appointed over this huge territory. British India was on its way to becoming “the brightest jewel in the British crown.”

At the end of the eighteenth century, however, the West Indies were the most profitable of British possessions. Their trade with Britain was far higher than the Indian trade, and British investments had reached about £70 million in the West Indies, against £ 18 million in the Far East, including India. The rich planters in the West Indies were closely linked with the slave trade and merchants in Britain.

The Napoleonic Wars, between 1793 and 1815 stimulated industry, particularly textiles for uniforms and iron products for weapons, while the stopping of imports from Europe led to rising food prices and bigger profits for the farmers and landlords. But poverty was also increased by the bad harvests of 1789 – 1802 and by the cost of the war against France.

The cost of the war, met as usual by loans for the first few years, rose so much that from 1799 it was met by taxation, with the introduction of a new measure, income tax. Taxation took money from small producers and farmers, and from the ordinary consumer, to increase the wealth of the moneyed classes who made fortunes out of the war, and who were guaranteed a good income from the loans they made to the government.

Population had been growing through the eighteenth century, with better food supplies, immigration from Ireland (which was to increase more rapidly in the next century) and progress in hygiene, including the introduction of cheap, washable cotton clothing. Towns grew more rapidly than did the rural population, as peasants always had a careful eye on the numbers their land could support. At the end of the century the demand for child labour in the cotton mills further stimulated the increase in population. Only later, as the new towns grew much larger, did conditions become so bad that the average expectation of life fell.

As the enclosure movement succeeded in turning smallholders into farm labourers or factory workers, there was growing poverty in the countryside. Prices went up and profits rose during the Napoleonic Wars especially, but the wages of labourers were kept down. With peace in 1815 came lower wages for the labourers, but rents and food prices remained high. Corn Laws kept

the price of wheat up by forbidding imports if the price of wheat fell below a certain level. Riots occurred in East Anglia when houses and wheat were burned, clashes with troops took place and many labourers were hanged or transported. Wages then began to rise, but standards were still low. In the generation or so which saw the worst of the enclosure movement, farm workers who had been used to beef, bread and beer were reduced to living on potatoes and tea. Many just managed to exist by claiming poor relief in their parish, but from about 1820 workhouses were used in many places, making relief conditional on families being split up inside the workhouses (separating men, women and children). Children were taught the basic discipline needed for factory work.

A change in Tory tactics was seen, however, after the death in 1822 of Lord Castlereagh, Tory Foreign Secretary, who was so widely hated for his support of repressive policies that the London crowds cheered when his body was being taken to Westminster Abbey for burial. New tactics of a more liberal appearance were developed, keeping direct coercion and armed force as a last resort. This tactical change was in line with the skilful policy of “an iron hand in a velvet glove”, developed by the British ruling class in the course of centuries of experience. The effect was to make the repressive powers of the state even more efficient. Sir Robert Peel, as Home Secretary, organised police forces, instead of using troops to crush disorders. His first force was formed in London in 1829 and the policemen were called “Peelers” or “Bobbies” after him. The name Bobby is still used in Britain. A part of the new tactics was the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824, giving the workers freedom to form legal trade unions, though this step was partly due to pressure by the Whigs, who needed the working class as allies in the struggle for Parliamentary reform.

When unions were thus made legal they became stronger. Legality increased the number of unions, and their determination to fight. Strikes swept across Britain from London to Glasgow. The miners and ironworkers of South Wales again joined in strike action, but their bosses brought in troops to crush the strike. The workers fought back with arms they had made themselves, but they were beaten and their leader, Dick Penderyn, was executed in 1831.

During this whole period the labourers who had lost their commons tried to make up for this loss by poaching game on the landlords' estates. New laws were passed to increase punishments, and after 1817 most poachers were sentenced to transportation to Australia, which usually meant for life, as no return fares were paid. But poaching still increased through the twenties, and in the three years 1827 – 1830 more than 8,500 poachers were convicted. Besides low wages, the labourers had a new complaint as threshing machines were introduced, threatening to deprive them of their usual source of extra income at harvest time. A new stage of struggle was reached in 1830 when a rising started in August with the destruction of threshing machines, and spread rapidly across the south and east of England. Demands were made for a living wage, but the movement had no stable organisation behind it, and was quickly suppressed.

From the earliest years of the nineteenth century there had been a number of local co-operative societies. Some were set up to break a monopoly of millers, to provide cheap and pure flour for their members. Others started shops in opposition to the “tommy” shops owned by factory owners, whose profits were added to by the high prices they charged in their shops. Many others were inspired by the aims of Robert Owen. He improved conditions in his own factory, and surprised other capitalists by becoming even more successful than before. After 1815, when there was widespread unemployment, he produced plans for “Villages of Co-operation” to be built by the government, in which workers would work together and share the proceeds of their labour. Several experiments on these lines were made by groups of workers in London and Scotland, who formed Co-operative Societies of Producers. Other groups opened co-operative shops in order to raise funds to start a co-operative community. By 1830 over three hundred such local co-operative societies had opened shops. The Utopian aims of these early societies were soon found to be impracticable. Communities founded by Owen in England, Scotland and America did not survive for long.

Some developments helped to divert workers from revolt against capitalism. One of these was a revival and extension of religious activity which continued the traditions of the Puritans, traditions which had survived in many towns. In this revivalism the

name of John Wesley stands out. An active, crusading preacher, who was rejected by the Established Church, he travelled widely, preaching mostly in the open air, and delivering about fifteen sermons a week between 1738 and 1791. He founded the Methodist movement, to spread the Puritan virtues of diligence, sobriety and frugality among ordinary people. His teaching had the appeal of respectability for the capitalists; he said, "We ought not to prevent people from being diligent and frugal; we must exhort all Christians to gain all they can, and to save all they can; that is, in effect, to grow rich." But his church also produced quantities of honest, obedient workers. A naval officer from the "Victory", Nelson's ship in the Napoleonic Wars, wrote: "There was a set of fellows called "Methodist" on board of the "Victory" and these men never wanted swearing at. They were the best seamen on board. Every man knew his duty and every man did his duty." Methodists were usually found on the side of the government, rather than leading class struggles, though there were militant exceptions, especially in the factory towns of northern England.

The simple chapels, the absence of elaborate ritual, appealed to ordinary practical British workers. The emotionalism of the revivalists, and their many imitators later, gave a welcome change from the drabness and coldness in the hard lives of the new proletariat. The vision of escape from these conditions was offered in the poetic words of William Blake (1757 – 1827), whose "Jerusalem" is still the official song of the Co-operative Women's Guilds: "And did the Countenance Divine Shine Forth upon our clouded hills? And was Jerusalem built here Among these dark Satanic mills? Bring me my bow of burning gold! Bring me my arrows of desire! Bring me my spear! O clouds unfold! Bring me my chariot of fire! I will not cease from mental fight, Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand, Till we have built Jerusalem In England's green and pleasant land."

In the situation, when the bourgeois owners of new capitalist industries, whose interests were not properly represented in Parliament, demanded a reform of that institution, they were able to win mass support.

The movement for reform had been developing for half a century, but had been set back for over twenty years by the wave of

reaction following the French Revolution. In 1831 the House of Commons was still constituted as it had been since the Middle Ages, with two representatives from each county and two from each borough. The property qualification for voters restricted the suffrage to about one man in twenty. Some boroughs had declined in the course of centuries until they were small villages or hamlets, with only a handful of inhabitants. These were the notorious “rotten boroughs” whose Members of Parliament were clearly the nominees of the local landowner. Large new industrial towns like Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield, on the other hand, remained without representation in Parliament, which was over-weighted with landowners, unrepresentative and corrupt. The industrial capitalists wanted a reform to protect their interests and facilitate the expansion of the new industrial system.

The Reform Bill was passed by the Whig majority in the Commons in 1831. The House of Lords, with a Tory majority, voted against the Bill. At once there was a national outcry. Public opinion was roused to violent demonstrations against the aristocracy and opponents of reform. The bourgeoisie had been successful in winning allies on a very wide scale. The month of October saw mass demonstrations in Birmingham and London. In Derby the prison was stormed and prisoners released. Nottingham Castle was burned down. In Bristol crowds flocked to Queen Square. The house was attacked, the centre of Bristol remained in the hands of the people for three days. Many large houses were burned, prisoners released, but finally troops were used to attack and disperse the crowds. The “Bristol Riots” frightened the Bristol lords sufficiently to stop them voting against reform when the Bill came up again next year. The same fear was shared by many other lords, and the Bill was passed in June 1832 to become an Act of Parliament. The right to vote was extended to about one man in seven. But it was still confined to men with £10 freehold property, a substantial sum in those days. The extended suffrage, and the new seats in Parliament given to the growing industrial towns, shifted the balance of power in the state more in favour of the factory-owning capitalist class.

This political advance for the newest section of the bourgeoisie, the industrial capitalists, was a fitting climax to the revolutionary economic advances they had made in the industrial

revolution. The new factory system and the agricultural revolution had largely eliminated the small independent producers, peasants or handicraftsmen. Ownership of the new factories and farms was concentrated in the hands of large landowners and industrial capitalists, the latter being a very energetic, practical and ruthless class. Standing between the old aristocracy and the working classes, they became known as the middle class. This makes some books on nineteenth century history a little confusing for the modern reader. But whatever its name, middle class, capitalist or bourgeois, this was the class which had shot into a leading position in the economic life of Britain.

Britain's industry was now well ahead of that in any other country. Others looked to Britain, not only for an example to follow, but also for the equipment needed to develop similar industries. Steam engines and machinery, mainly for cotton manufacture, were exported to the USA and Europe. This was the start of what was to become a very important economic development.

All Power to the Capitalists (1832 – 1850)

Social changes in these two decades speeded up the formation of the proletariat, a process which was greatly helped by the use made of the increased political power which the new capitalist class won in 1832. The capitalists fought for the Reform Act with clear class aims. This Act gave the industrial capitalists more political power, with the extension of the right to vote and the creation of over 60 new seats in Parliament for representatives of industrial towns.

In the next few years the capitalists showed that they knew how to use this power to extend their own freedom. But the extension of democracy, which their supporters in the reform movement had hoped to see, was no part of their programme. Voting was still done in public and bribery was open and universal. This was the system satirised by Dickens in "Pickwick Papers", with his description of the election at Eatanswill. Capitalists were interested in power, not in democracy. One of their spokesmen, Adam Smith, the economist, wrote in his book "The Wealth of Nations" (1776): "Civil government, in so far as it is instituted for the security of

property, is in reality instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor.”

The main aim of the new Parliament was to extend freedom for capitalist development and to increase the efficiency of the state machine. Freedom for capitalism meant first of all the restriction of freedom for the former craftsmen and peasants. This was clearly shown in the Poor Law of 1834. Up to that time many hand-weavers and other craftsmen, with incomes steadily driven down by the competition of factory-made goods, clung to their old way of life with the help of poor law grants. People with no income or a very small income had grants (of cash or food) given to them by the parish authorities, to help them maintain their families at a minimum, almost starvation level. This enabled many craftsmen and peasants to resist the economic pressures driving them towards the factories or mines. It was to break this resistance that the new Poor Law Act was passed. Under this Act relief grants were no longer to be paid out in cash or food for the poor to take home. Relief was to be given only inside a workhouse. All had to work for their keep, often at senseless tasks like stone-breaking. The children were trained for the new harsh discipline of the factories, in conditions exposed by Charles Dickens in "Oliver Twist" and later described by Arnold Bennett in "Clayhanger".

From London and the south of England batches of children from these workhouses were transported to factory towns in the north and given the fine title of apprentices.

True, the Factory Act of 1833 prohibited night work for children in the textile industry, and limited work for those under thirteen to nine hours a day. But the law remained largely on paper.

Even worse were the conditions in which children and women worked in the coal mines, until this was stopped by an Act in 1842.

Behind the new Poor Law were the terrible threat of the breaking up of families and a future of virtual slavery for the children. This threat was used to drive the poor into the factories, as the only way of keeping their families together. Another factor which drew more workers into expanding industries was the development of the railways. A new period of rapid economic advance began, soon to be known as "the railway age".

Profitable as well as useful, the railways spread quickly across the country. They provided a convenient avenue of investment for the huge profits already being made by industry.

The progress made in this period and the rapidly rising profits of industry were in striking contrast to the miserable conditions of the people in Britain. The Poor Law of 1834 speeded up the herding of wage-workers into the new towns, where conditions were bad. Whole families spent their time working in hot, unhealthy factories or in dark, dirty and dangerous mines. They came home to overcrowded hovels with primitive sanitation. The water supply, even in London, was still taken from the river into which sewage was being poured. Cholera and other diseases were the inevitable result.

With the rapid development of transport and industry came a new impetus for exports. Some of the increased profits were exported for investment in the USA, France, and other countries. Following these capital exports came the trade in capital goods. British trade extended round the world, and its security was ensured by naval control of key points such as the Cape of Good Hope, Ceylon, Singapore and Hong-Kong. At that stage of history naval supremacy was considered more important than the occupation of colonies.

While extending its colonial possessions in India, and seizing Hong-Kong, Britain still dominated its oldest colony, Ireland. The Irish lived almost entirely on potatoes and when this crop failed in 1847 there was a catastrophic famine. In four or five years about one million people died and another million emigrated. Many of these went to the USA, providing a valuable addition to the labour force urgently needed in that expanding country.

In Canada, however, a different kind of development was seen. The English and French colonists there rose in separate revolts in 1837. Britain was afraid of losing Canada and so gave the colonists more powers of self-government, showing that it had learned something from the loss of the American colonies in 1783.

Further developments in the state after 1832 included Acts which ordered the setting up of police forces in boroughs in 1835, and in counties in 1839. Slavery was abolished in the British Empire, as an obsolete form of exploitation, in 1834. The legal system was

modernised, and in 1832 a number of offences taken off the list of 223 crimes for which the death penalty had been imposed; the result of this undue severity in the law had only been to make juries reluctant to convict people of many of these small crimes. In 1835 prison reform began, with the aim of giving each prisoner his own cell.

The attention paid by the ruling class to questions of “law and order”, especially the new development of police forces in towns, was directly connected with the increasing social and political struggles of the working class in that period. In the period of struggle for the Reform Bill the growth of trade unions had continued. In addition to a quantitative growth there were attempts at new kinds of organization. First came national associations, to unite local unions for the same grade or craft. In 1829 cotton spinners from England, Scotland and Ireland met in conference to set up the Grand General Union of the United Kingdom. The National Association for the Protection of Labour was established as a Trades Union, or union for all trades, aimed at uniting the whole working class. This body soon had 100,000 members and a weekly journal with a circulation of 3,000. But it was too ambitious a project for the inexperienced working class of that time, and it did not last very long.

The greatest popular movement of the next decades was Chartism, the movement for the People’s Charter. This was the product of the London Working Men’s Association, which produced a petition in 1837 containing the six points which were the basis of the “People’s Charter” published in the spring of 1838:

1. Universal Manhood Suffrage (a vote for every man over 21). It is interesting to note that in the first draft of the six points votes were demanded for men and women, but in the course of discussion women were excluded). Manhood suffrage was achieved by 1918 and votes for all women only in 1928. The voting age was reduced from 21 to 18 in 1969.
2. Vote by Secret Ballot (this was achieved in 1872).
3. Payment of MPs (this was achieved in 1911).
4. Abolition of Property Qualification for MPs (achieved in 1918).
5. Equal Electoral Districts (obtained gradually 1885-1918).

6. Annual Parliaments (not achieved. The maximum interval between general elections in Britain is still five years. The date when Parliament is dissolved and new elections held is decided by the government in office).

The petition was taken to all parts of the country as soon as it was first produced in 1837, and in the same year over a hundred towns set up their own Working Men's Associations on the London model. The final version, embodied in the above six points, was contained in the "People's Charter" adopted on the 8th of May 1838. Chartism was a working-class movement, though its leadership contained also some middle-class people.

The National Charter Association was formed, with an elected executive committee and a membership organised in 400 local sections and paying dues. This was the first proletarian mass party. It also had a paper, "The Northern Star". A second petition was prepared, with economic demands, higher wages and shorter hours, added to the political points.

This second petition won enormous support from workers suffering the effects of one of the early crises of capitalism. Hundreds of thousands were out of work, and the wages of those working were cut again and again. The petition received 3,315,000 signatures; this was well over half the number of adult men in Britain. Parliament rejected the petition in May 1842 and the reaction of workers in the militant north was as bold as it was unexpected. Here, where the class struggle was most fierce, trade unionists were generally active supporters of the Chartist movement. There were already a number of strikes in progress against cuts in wages. Meetings of strikers now voted for resolutions demanding that, "all labour should cease until the People's Charter become the law of the land." Lancashire industry was stopped by a general strike. This was a potentially revolutionary situation, but the leaders of the Rational Charter Association were not prepared to seize the opportunity. They were out of touch with the trade unions. With a divided leadership, with no funds to carry on the strike, with troops sent in to crush the strikers, and with no support from the south of England, the strikers were forced back to work.

With the defeat of the attempted general strike in 1842 the peak of mass struggle for the Charter had been passed. The division

in the movement between the proletarian north and the moderate middle-class leadership in London was fatal. From then on the workers in the textile industries, the first developed capitalist industries, showed less faith in the Chartist movement and began to concentrate more on trade union activity.

This trend was strengthened, too, by the boom associated with the railway age. The extension of railways was speeded up in the forties, bringing the total mileage to over 4,000. The modern railway system was then founded. Apart from the advantages of a new, faster and cheaper transport system, there were even more important economic results. The production of rails, locomotives and trains needed huge amounts of iron and steel, heavy machinery and labour. This demand stimulated such a rapid development of the capital goods industries that it has been described as nearly a second industrial revolution. Between 1830 and 1850 the output of coal trebled, rising from 15 to 49 million tons. The production of iron also trebled. The engineering industry grew rapidly, laying the basis for the next stage of expansion after 1850, when Britain became the “workshop of the world”.

The rapid growth of industry demanded a growing number of skilled workers, whose relative scarcity offered them the chance of organising to press for higher wages. This was the basis for an increase in the number and strength of trade unions, a movement which was to be even more important in the next decade. But already in the forties the turn of the most advanced and literate sections of the workers from Chartism to trade unionism was an important factor in the decline of Chartism.

In 1848 came the last petition, with about two million signatures. This was still a fine achievement, and this time one voice could be raised in the House of Commons in its favour. But the government rightly judged that the strength of the movement was past its peak. Pretending to be afraid of revolution, they massed 100,000 troops with artillery and an even larger number of special constables to defend Parliament. London was turned into an armed camp, with more troops than the British army had provided for the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Parliament rejected the petition and the government attacked Chartist meetings all over the country and

arrested many leaders. The mass movement subsided from this time, although the organisation was maintained for some years.

The importance of the Chartist movement was enormous, although none of the six points was won immediately.

After the collapse of Chartism as a mass movement in 1848 a great change took place in the working-class movement. This showed itself mainly as a swing from mass political activity to the more limited work of trade unions. And the nature of trade unions was at the same time changing fundamentally. This was the result of a process that had developed over a decade. After the defeat of the strike movement in 1842, and the disappointment of trade unionists who were ignored by the political movement they had wanted to help, many dreams collapsed. The workers in trade unions were looking instead for a policy that would bring more practical results. At the same time, the railway boom led to expansion of the basic industries and a new period of rapid economic growth. Two results followed. First, there was an increased demand for labour but especially for skilled labour. The key men in industry, with the skills on which the machine age depended, were in a strong bargaining position when they pressed for better wages and conditions. Second, the success of the capitalist system became more and more clear. Every year that passed put the owning class in a stronger position and made earlier dreams of revolution seem Utopian.

The golden age of capitalism certainly brought progress for many people; prosperity for the owners of industry and the land; better Working conditions and higher wages for a small (but increasing) number of skilled workers; greater opportunities for workers to move or emigrate in search of better jobs; but the majority of the people, in unskilled or casual work, in servants' attics or on the farm, saw very little, if any, of the benefits of progress.

With the acceptance of the capitalist economic system came an acceptance of the laws of the capitalist market. The laws of supply and demand, the importance of scarcity in keeping prices up: these were the guiding lines for the new policies. Labour was now seen as a commodity, to be sold to the employers on the best possible terms.

Instead of strikes, unions were concerned to develop new forms of negotiation, such as conciliation and arbitration boards or

committees, where union representatives and employers could try to settle disputes.

In the turn from class struggle to peaceful work, a vital part was played by the idea of the Friendly Society. Unions took on functions already developed by Friendly Societies; insurance to help their members with payments during unemployment, sickness, retirement and for funerals. Indeed, from 1851 onwards more and more unions devoted most of their finances to these aims.

In this period the Whigs had become the Liberal Party, led by William Gladstone. They were still, as in 1832, closely linked with merchants and industrial capitalists, were interested in further Parliamentary reform and from time to time showed a radical trend as they tried to widen their mass support.

The Tory Party, divided and defeated in 1846, had been reformed by a brilliant leader, Benjamin Disraeli. He brought together the traditionally Tory landowners and the new forces of finance-capital, ending what he had called “the unhappy quarrel between town and country.” In the coming years the Tory Party became the voice of the dominant section of the ruling class and the genius of Disraeli was to reconcile the landowning aristocracy to their new role of junior partner in the state. The Tory Party was re-united by 1867, when it formed the first modern party organisation, based on Parliamentary constituencies, the “National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations”. The modern two-party system then began to develop.

The strengthening of the capitalist state machine was continued in this period. The County and Borough Police Act of 1856 made police forces compulsory in all counties and insisted on a minimum level of efficiency for all police forces. The Home Office was to define this level and inspect local forces; only if its inspectors were satisfied would local forces get their grants from the government. This was the beginning of a system of financial grants to help local councils; very slow progress was made in this direction until the 20th century, but then grants became an important factor in developing and controlling local government services.

The Civil Service was reformed gradually. In 1855 competitive examinations for entry were started, but each department held its own tests and little real change was seen. Only in 1870 was

patronage abolished and competitive examinations made compulsory. The examination ensured that only sons of the ruling class would enter the top grades of the civil service, as only they had the necessary education. A further check was the interview, where social background was more important than knowledge.

In education important reforms were made when the needs of industry and trade demanded mass literacy for workers and better education for the managerial class. The system of grants for elementary schools, as laid down by the Education Department in 1839, was replaced in 1861 by a system called "Payment by Results". One-third of the grant was now to depend on the attendance of pupils and two-thirds on the results of their examinations in reading, writing and arithmetic. Working-class leaders demanded a national, free, compulsory, unsectarian system of education. In Britain, the term unsectarian was used to mean independent of any religious sector doctrine. In the first general meeting of the League the General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters said, "It is no use trying to mix up a national education with any portion of religion, however small the dose."

Although religion was increasing its influence through this period, the Chartist influence can still be traced in these radical secular demands, which were also endorsed by the second Trades Union Congress in 1869. This pressure helped to win the Education Act of 1870. This Act promised to provide elementary education for every child and set up School Boards to organise schools in districts where there were not enough. The aim was severely practical: children were to be taught enough to understand and follow simple instructions, to make themselves understood, to calculate simple measurements, weights and money. Provision of schools was one thing, however; getting children into them was another, and further Acts had to be passed to make attendance at school compulsory (1880), but only in 1891 free for all children.

By the middle of the century it was becoming clear that Britain's lead in trade was no longer unchallenged and muddling through was no longer good enough. It was widely said that England had the worst educated middle class in Europe. This was in contrast to the better Public Schools such as Rugby or Eton. A commission was set up in 1861, and after seven years the Public Schools Act was

passed, reforming the organisation of some of the older schools and bringing a number of grammar schools up to Public School status to serve the needs of the growing ruling class.

The old universities were clearly training grounds for the top people in what is now called "The Establishment". They were reserved for members of the Established Church until 1854 (Oxford) and 1856 (Cambridge), when Dissenters were allowed to enter and take a degree, although they were not allowed to take higher degrees, nor to join the teaching staff, for another twenty years.

In foreign affairs the main achievement of the whole Victorian era was Britain's avoidance of any involvement in wars in Europe, apart from the Crimean War against Russia in 1854 – 56. This war was seen as a defence of Turkey in order to maintain the security of vital routes through the eastern Mediterranean to India and the Far East. The Crimean War revealed many weaknesses in the army. Reforms in the army followed and were speeded up under the stimulus of fear when Prussia won a series of military victories in the sixties. The sale of commissions (i.e. appointments as officers) was stopped in 1870; officers were to be selected for better reasons than wealth alone. Meanwhile, Britain went on extending its colonial empire. Canada expanded as far as the Pacific Ocean and became a self-governing Dominion within the British Empire in 1867. In India several Native States were annexed and in 1853 the Indian Civil Service was made more efficient by making entry dependent on competitive examination instead of patronage. The colonisation of Australia, especially after the gold rush of 1848, and of New Zealand, was intensified. Trade in West Africa was developed by the Royal Niger Company from their base at Lagos, established in 1862. Trade spread more and more widely and the export of capital meant that other countries, not only the colonies, became more dependent on Britain. Egypt, for example, developed cotton plantations with British capital during the cotton famine in the years of the American Civil War (1861 – 65). Then followed the building of railways, bridges, canals and new docks at Suez and Alexandria. In 1869 the Suez Canal was built with French capital but the majority of shares were bought by the British government in 1875. In this period every effort was made to persuade the British people that colonisation was aimed at helping the backward peoples of the world. In reality,

however, the first Indian War of Independence was brutally suppressed in 1857 – 59, while the second Opium War was being fought to force the sale of Indian drugs and British cotton on China.

The period of Victorian prosperity was indeed the golden age of British capitalism. British industry was well ahead of all rivals, trade and profits reached record levels and there was such an abundance of new capital for investment that Britain managed in a quarter of a century to export nearly 500 million pounds. This foreign investment was the beginning of vital changes in the economic development of British capitalism, changes that were to lead to the age of imperialism. The capitalist state machine was being modernised and the days of critical social and political problems seemed to be over. The working-class movement was working peacefully within the established order. The optimism and self-confidence of capitalism were reflected in the works of Darwin, Spencer, John Stuart Mill and Samuel Smiles. But the illusion of unlimited peace and progress was soon to be shattered.

Crisis and Imperialism (1871 – 1917)

The golden age of British capitalism, when it dominated the markets of the world, came to an end in the eighteen-seventies. Strong rivals began to challenge the monopoly of Britain. The USA had recovered from the Civil War, while in Europe the Franco-Prussian War came to an end, opening the way for the rapid industrial growth of France and the newly-united Germany. From 1871 this competition was so marked that it helped to produce an economic crisis starting in 1873. This turned into a long period of stagnation called “The Great Depression” which lasted, with several intermittent crises and partial recoveries, until 1896. The effect for Britain was a severe setback to economic expansion. In the previous period British exports had increased fourfold in twenty-five years; in the slump of 1873 – 79 they fell by 25 per cent, and only in 1890 did they regain their 1872 level.

This period of crisis lowered the profitability of British industry, which in any case had been established long enough to begin to feel the effects of the normal capitalist tendency to a falling rate of profit. These factors together drove British capitalists to turn

more and more to the export of capital, to investment in other, less developed countries offering a higher rate of profit. This trend had begun even while Britain was still the “workshop of the world”, but now it was intensified. The colonies were the obvious first place for capital investment, and the search for new fields for investment led to the drive to conquer still more colonies. Britain played a leading role in this development, but there was keen competition from Germany, France, Spain and Portugal, for example, in the division of Africa.

Banking capital increased, especially in connection with credits for international trade. In fact it was linked much more with trade, and with the position of the pound as the leading international currency which made the City of London the financial centre of the world, rather than with industry. New capital for industry was more generally produced from the profits of industry itself through re-investment. Thus there developed a divergence of interests between industrial capital and banking capital.

Coal and cotton retained their position as Britain's chief exports for a few more decades, but this basis was more and more insecure. British agriculture was hit hard by the imports of cheap wheat from America, frozen meat from New Zealand and Australia, and butter from Denmark and Holland. Farm workers numbered nearly a million in 1881 but only 689,292 in 1901.

The distortion of the economy was reflected in employment figures. Between 1851 and 1901 the proportion of the population employed in the basic industries fell from 25 to 15 per cent, while a higher proportion were employed in commerce, distribution, domestic service and the luxury trades.

During the whole period Britain's first colony, Ireland, had been hard hit by low agricultural prices. Discontent stimulated the movement for independence and in 1873 the Home Rule League was founded. A famine in 1879 led to revolts against high rents extorted by English landlords. New forms of struggle were used, including the action taken against a Captain Boycott by the whole population in a certain area, none of whom would work for him, speak to him or bring him any supplies. This brought a new word into the English language, and this successful action helped to impress the British government so much that in 1881 it passed a Land Act to modify the

worst exploitation of Irish tenants. In the next decades Irish MPs in the British Parliament worked in alliance with the Liberal Party towards winning a limited amount of independence. A Liberal government brought in a Home Rule Bill in 1886, but this split the party and led to the fall of the government. A new Bill was not proposed again until 1912.

Another important example of imperialist exploitation was seen in Egypt, where foreign investment amounted to £80 million by 1875, most of it coming from Britain, who in that year bought the majority of shares in the Suez Canal. On this capital the Egyptian government had to pay £ 6 million a year interest out of a total state income of £ 10 million a year. This was an outstanding example of a semi-colony paying a heavy price for British development of its resources. But this price was too great to be borne quietly and a Nationalist Party seized power in 1881. Britain created artificial disturbances as an excuse for landing troops, and occupied Egypt in 1882.

The troops were withdrawn in 1956, after seventy years of “temporary” occupation.

South Africa had been extended by taking over the independent settlements of the Boers, farmers of Dutch descent, when diamonds and gold were discovered in the region. The Boer War, 1899—1902, showed British troops unable to deal with the guerilla tactics of the Boers, and victory was only won when the British destroyed the Boer farms and herded the women and children into concentration camps, where many thousands died of disease.

The “Empire on which the sun never sets” produced immense wealth for the ruling class of Britain. Some of the advantages of colonialism dropped, like crumbs from the rich man's table, into the hands of the skilled workers, and a lesser amount for the great mass of the poor and unskilled. But among these workers, and much more so among colonial workers, the depth of poverty remained in striking contrast to the wealth of the few.

The majority of the workers had experienced bad conditions during the whole period. At the end of the eighties, a detailed survey of the condition of the workers in London was made and it proved that more than a million people – 32% of the population of London –

lived under circumstances which did not provide the minimum requirements of bare physical existence.

It is important to remember that there was widespread poverty and discontent, even when the organised workers had accepted their position in capitalist society and confined their struggle to limited, economic aims. Parallel with concessions made to the trade unions came social and political concessions, made mainly by Liberal governments. In 1871, for example, Bank Holidays were introduced, giving four days of holiday each year for all workers. Until that time workers only had Sundays free. In 1872 came the Secret Ballot in elections.

Concessions were made to the trade unions by Acts in 1871 and 1875, giving them some protection for their activities. The Act of 1911 established the supremacy of the House of Commons over the House of Lords, and the Act of 1885 made good progress towards equal electoral districts and introduced the single-member constituency. The party machines became stronger and more centralised. This tendency was noticeable, too, in Parliament, where power was more and more concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Local government was made, formally at least, more democratic in the same period. In 1880 the property qualification was removed for town councillors and two years later town or borough councils were allowed to undertake services in their own area, such as gas, water, electricity, trams, libraries, hospitals and museums.

The extension of Parliamentary and local democracy was made safe as well as desirable by the changed outlook of large sections of the key workers. The revival of socialist ideas in the eighteen-eighties was a danger signal. Coming at a time when more and more people were becoming literate, this made the battle of ideas once more of the highest importance.

The depression of the seventies, bringing mass unemployment and widespread poverty to the attention of the nation, ended a period which has been called the "long sleep" of the British workers. The ideas of socialism seemed to have been forgotten since Chartist activities a quarter of a century before. But now the illusion of permanent progress under capitalism was shaken. There was a

revival of questioning of the social order, and a renewed readiness to consider socialist criticisms of capitalism.

In the nineties a propaganda group developed in the industrial midlands and north. This was the Clarion Cycling Club, whose members used to cycle round the countryside, taking copies of their paper, the "Clarion", to sell in towns and villages, as well as holding meetings wherever possible. The "Clarion" was edited by Robert Blatchford, a great propagandist and a professional journalist. He wrote a pamphlet, "Merrie England", which sold a million copies in a few years, spreading widely a clear class appeal: "We want England for the English. We want the fruits of labour for those who produce them. This is not an issue between Liberals and Tories, it is an issue between Labourers and Capitalists."

In 1884 the Fabian Society was born. This was begun by middle-class intellectuals, the most prominent of whom were Sidney and Beatrice Webb, George Bernard Shaw and, later, H.G. Wells. They formulated the theory of "gradualness", hoping to infiltrate socialist ideas into the state machine and the existing bourgeois parties until the system would be slowly changed to socialism. They accepted bourgeois economics and the theory of a neutral state; they fought against Marxist ideas and provided theoretical arguments for the future right-wing leadership of the Labour Party.

From the eighties, Bernard Shaw wrote prose and drama to shock the conventional and to advocate simple socialist ideas. John Galsworthy, a lawyer and a Tory, wrote plays attacking class inequality, in particular the different treatment of rich and poor by British justice. H. G. Wells, in the novels "Mr. Polly" and "Kipps", criticised some aspects of society but in his few directly political works he saw the solution in the wise rule of progressive intellectuals, a truly Fabian concept.

The first feature of this whole period after 1880 was the work of a number of small socialist groups. Their aim was propaganda for socialism. They organised activities in the same way as religious sects, preaching to the workers. Hence the term "sectarianism", a style of work which left a gap between the propagandists and the workers concerned with everyday problems.

Most of the early socialists stood aloof from the day to day struggle, not seeing that struggle could produce a class-conscious

leadership to fight for socialism. Blatchford, for example, wrote, "Let us once get people to understand and desire socialism, and I am sure we may very safely leave it to them to secure it."

Parallel with the revival of socialist ideas came a growth of trade union demands for working-class representation in Parliament. One factor behind the demand was the extension of the franchise in 1884, which made the working-class vote important. The capitalist parties began to court the votes of workers, and this awareness of their importance stimulated some workers to demand their own place in Parliament. Young socialist members of the unions added to this pressure.

Meanwhile, there had been some changes in the trade unions. The long depression of the seventies brought to an end a long period of steady wage increases. These had been given as the skilled workers' share in the prosperity of the bosses. Now the golden age was over; any real advance in wages had to be fought for. True, the position of the workers was made easier by the general fall in prices, which went on until the discovery of gold in South Africa in 1895. But from then on, rising prices brought back the need for all sections of workers to fight more strongly if they were to maintain their conditions, let alone improve them.

Throughout this period there was good reason for new developments in trade union policy. Even the respectable new model unions had to fight, while the underprivileged unskilled workers were now beginning to organise and fight. The organisation of the unskilled workers was a great step forward in the history of the British trade union movement. It happened not only because of the economic effects of the long depression which ruined thousands of workers, especially in London; it was also stimulated and given leadership as a result of the revival of socialist ideas in the eighties.

The break-through came in 1888 with a strike by the girls in Bryant and May's match factory. This was a surprise not only because the factory was one of hundreds in the East End of London long regarded as unorganisable; it was also a shock to see the first success for unskilled workers won by women and girls, before there was any real movement for equal rights for women. The success of this strike, led by socialists and given wide publicity, encouraged other sections to organise. The gas workers were next. They won a

reduction of hours from twelve to eight per day, another big stimulus to further trade union organisation. London dockers then struck for 6d. a day, the famous “dockers’ tanner”, and inspired the whole working class with mass picketing, marches and collections for the strike fund. After five weeks they, too, won, and a flood of strikes then swept the country. Trade union organisation spread among the dockers, gas workers, railwaymen, busmen, carters, employees of town councils and unskilled workers in factories. Within a year the total number of trade unionists had doubled. This great step forward was called the “New Unionism”.

In the second half of the XIX century only a minority of workers received much of a direct advance in their conditions through higher wages. The majority, most of the unskilled workers, had to be content with an indirect advance given them by a general fall in prices. This was a passive method of getting progress, but an attractive one for those who could see little hope of improvement by other means. It turned the attention of millions of workers to the importance of lower prices, that is, to their interests as consumers. This tendency strengthened the growth of the co-operative movement. Incidentally, it also increased the support of workers for free trade, the policy of the Liberal Party, as well as for the annexation of colonies which could provide cheap food and materials. The link of co-operation with colonialism was seen clearly in the co-operative movement's purchase of tea plantations in India early XXth century. The movement reached its first million members in 1891, its second million in 1903 and its third in 1914, the total in each case being significantly more than the total trade union membership.

In the same period began the auxiliaries, the social and educational bodies financed by the trading societies. The largest and most important auxiliary was the Women's Co-operative Guild, set up in 1883.

In 1899 the British Trade Union Council (TUC) called for a conference, attended by delegates from trade unions (forming the great majority of delegates), the Fabian Society and some other groups. It decided to establish the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), an alliance of trade unions and socialist societies, with a federal constitution. It had no socialist aims, only the basic aim of

working for independent working-class representation in Parliament, so that trade union rights could be better defended. This shows the federal structure, the LRC being a federation of affiliated organisations, the great majority of these being the trade unions. This structure remained exactly the same when the name of the LRC was changed to "Labour Party" in 1906. In spite of many later changes, the basic element in the organisation, its overwhelming majority of members being in the affiliated trade unions, has remained the same down to the present day.

The beginning of the Labour Party owed much to the work of socialist propagandists, but the main force behind the new party was the trade union movement. It was not formed as a socialist party, as the continental parties had been; it was formed above all to protect the legal rights of the unions. The conference voted for a proposal that working-class representatives in Parliament should form "a distinct Labour group who shall... agree upon their policy, which must embrace a readiness to co-operate with any party which, for the time being, may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interests of Labour."

The Conservative, or Tory, Party came into its own in this period. Disraeli not only revived and re-organised the party, but he also introduced new ideas for social reform to catch working-class support and votes. These ideas included measures on working-class housing, public health, factory legislation and trade unions. The active leadership of Disraeli helped to set the Tories on the path to becoming the representatives of finance capital, in power from then on more often than not. One of his significant successes was his use of the Rothschild Bank to buy a majority of the Suez Canal shares for the British government in 1875.

The Liberal Party went into a decline from 1886, when it split over the question of Home Rule for Ireland, a policy adopted by Gladstone after the serious troubles in which the technique of the boycott was first used. Joseph Chamberlain led a rebel group of imperialist-minded Liberals to vote against the Home Rule Bill and Gladstone's government fell. Within ten years Chamberlain was Colonial Secretary in a Tory government and active in prosecuting the Boer War, having been for many years a close friend of Cecil Rhodes, the leading coloniser of South Africa and Rhodesia.

Throughout, the era of imperialism feelings of extreme patriotism and jingoism were fostered. The word jingoism itself came from a popular song of 1878: "We don't want to fight, but by Jingo if we do, We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money, too."

In literature this period saw a flood of stories of romantic adventure, often set in India or Africa, which appealed to thousands of readers because of their contrast to the drab routine life of factory workers and the new suburban population of clerks and other black-coated workers. R. L. Stevenson wrote "Treasure Island" in 1882, and "King Solomon's Mines" written by Rider Haggard in 1885 gave a stirring picture of central Africa, Joseph Conrad wrote of adventures on the high seas. But the most popular of these writers was Rudyard Kipling, novelist, poet and author of fascinating tales for children. In his "Plain Tales from the Hills" (1887) he praised the efforts of Britain to take civilisation to India, but this was balanced by some criticism of the English and a deep respect for the Indian people. His poem "Mandalay", describing the romantic east as recalled by an ex-soldier, became a very popular song.

At the same time other writers offered escape from the unattractiveness of everyday life in other directions. Conan Doyle began his immortal series of Sherlock Holmes stories in the nineties, endowing the foggy bleakness of Baker Street, London, with a romantic glow. A glimpse of the wonders that science might bring in the future – as well as some of the dangers – were expressed in the novels of H. G. Wells, "The War of the Worlds" and "The First Men in the Moon" (1901) for example. Much popular literature, like the popular press then beginning, offered vicarious excitement without danger, a sensationalism that appealed to masses of readers and incidentally promoted feelings of military grandeur and contempt for "natives" and foreigners, feelings that were a psychological preparation for imperialist wars.

One of Kipling's poems, "Big Steamers", was a direct appeal for a big navy to protect Britain's far-flung trade routes.

Educational progress in this period meant first of all Acts to make the Education Act of 1870 more fully effective, with compulsory school attendance in 1880 and free schooling in 1891. The working-class movement continued to press for educational

advance. In 1883 the Democratic Federation demanded "Free compulsory education for all classes, together with the provision of at least one wholesome meal a day in each school." On the other hand, new demands for secondary education were heard in the nineties from the business world, too. Complaints came from offices in the City of London that they had to employ thousands of German clerks for want of English ones. In 1897 the TUC demanded "that the school age be raised to sixteen years, and such maintenance provided by the state as shall place secondary education within the reach of every worker's child." This was far in advance of the ideas of any government for many years to come; in fact, secondary education for all had to wait until 1945 and the school-leaving age was only raised to twelve years in 1902 and not until 1973 was it raised to sixteen.

The beginning of the twentieth century brought new crises for Britain, both in its internal development and its position on the international arena. The Boer War (1899 – 1902) stimulated the first signs of public opposition in Britain to the aggressive colonialist policies of the ruling class, involving not only some working-class organisations but even sections of the Liberal Party. In general, however, imperialist policy was still supported by the great majority of the population.

By this time the development of imperialism on a world scale was leading to serious inter-imperialist rivalries. Britain had by far the largest empire, followed by France, with Germany and Italy a long way behind. The central conflict of interests was between Britain and Germany, resulting in a change of Britain's foreign policy. Instead of the traditional rivalry with France, which had lasted for several centuries, British policy was now dominated by fear of German imperialist expansion. Conservative governments abandoned the aims proclaimed by the Liberals of peace and economy in government expenditure, the policy of a country concentrating on commercial expansion, described by a contemporary as "splendid isolation". The new policy was to build the "Entente" or alliance with France in 1904, extended to include Russia in 1907. This alliance was ranged against the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy. With the prospect of wars naval power became more important than ever. A naval race began between Germany and Britain from about 1895.

At the same time improvements were made in the efficiency of the British Army, with the creation of the Territorials as a reserve force, and preparations for the immediate mobilisation of an army of 100,000 that would be available to go to France as an expeditionary force in the event of war. These plans were worked out from 1905 onwards in secret talks with French military leaders, of which even the majority of the Cabinet knew nothing.

Parallel with the new foreign policy there came new thoughts about the traditional policy of free trade, and Joseph Chamberlain persuaded the Tory Party to abandon this policy in the face of fierce international competition for markets.

While inter-imperialist rivalries were rapidly leading towards world war, crises were developing within the British empire as nationalist movements aiming at independence were making progress in India and Egypt. Even more dramatic were the developments in Ireland. The Liberal government, partly dependent on the support of Irish MPs, promised a limited amount of independence to Ireland in a Bill passed by the House of Commons in 1912. But this Bill was vetoed by the House of Lords, thus delaying its becoming law for a further two years. The Tories then prepared to use force to keep Ulster, the province including the industrialized north-east corner of Ireland, largely settled by English and Scottish Protestants, out of a free Ireland.

Two years later, at Easter 1916, when Britain's army was occupied in war on the continent, the Irish nationalist movement tried to take advantage of this position by declaring the independence of Ireland and seizing power in Dublin. A few brave rebels, organised in the Irish Citizen Army led by James Connolly, held the centre of Dublin for a week against thousands of British troops, but the revolt was then crushed and its leaders executed.

The First World War was a dramatic development towards the general crisis of the 1920s – 1930ies. The British empire, threatened by rivals, had to fight for its life. Although it survived, its former supremacy was lost. For a country long regarded as the strongest in the world, a country which had become used to fighting only relatively backward and weak peoples, the grim struggle of the world war was a rude awakening. The easy optimism of the first few months gave way to gloom as the war turned into a stalemate in the

trenches, with a continual and growing slaughter that was gradually seen to be useless. The romantic patriotism felt by many in the early stage of the war was reflected in the work of poets such as Rupert Brooke. The later revulsion against the war was bitterly expressed by Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon among others. Sassoon was an officer who won the Military Cross in 1916 and, after being wounded in 1917, wrote to his colonel giving his reasons for refusing to serve further in the army: "I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it... I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest."

The war itself demanded more and more human sacrifices. By 1916 it was necessary to introduce conscription to maintain the flow of soldiers to the trenches on the western front. For Britain, the war at sea was vitally important, as imports, especially of food, had to be safeguarded. The convoy system was introduced and the war against U-boats became a matter of life and death. The cost of the war, with debts piling up internally and to the USA, was another factor deepening the crisis in Britain.

Britain Loses the Lead (1917 – 1933)

The Soviet appeal for peace was very effective and led to a great increase in anti-war propaganda. Although the crisis was not as deep in Britain as it was in France and Germany, new forms of struggle were seen. By the end of the war soldiers were militant enough to mutiny in several places, demanding speedy demobilisation. When war-weary troops were sent to Archangel to fight against the new Soviet Republic in 1918 they too mutinied and had to be brought back to England, temporarily stopping British intervention against the Soviets.

During the war popular pressure for better education had increased. The Education Act of 1918 raised the school-leaving age to 14 and promised other advances, but the economic crisis after the war led to cuts instead of progress. The Labour governments of 1924 and 1929 planned secondary education for all, and the raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen, but these plans, too, were scrapped with the economy cuts of 1931.

Other reforms were introduced under the pressure of rising democratic and socialist feelings stimulated by wide opposition to the war and by the Russian Revolution. In 1918 the right to vote was extended to all men over 21 and to women over 30. This was a compromise, aimed at satisfying the demands of the suffragette movement which had used violent and unorthodox tactics in their campaign to win votes for women. The work of women during the war in factories and offices, in transport and hospitals, had established their right to social and political equality. The compromise, however, was clearly unsatisfactory and votes for women at 21 were eventually granted in the Equal Franchise Act of 1928. But, to balance the reforms in 1918, a reactionary step was taken with the introduction of the system of making the nomination of a parliamentary candidate conditional upon the payment of a £150 deposit which was only returnable if the candidate polled one-eighth of the total votes cast.

In the economic field, Britain had already lost her first place as an industrial nation by 1914. This change in the balance of forces was accelerated during the war when the USA made vital progress, while Britain, France and Germany were devoting their efforts to destruction. The USA established its position as the chief creditor of the world, a position which Britain had formerly held. The war was followed by a short boom, then an economic crisis in 1920 and a slow recovery from 1922. But during this temporary recovery up to 1929 Britain's industrial production did not manage to reach the 1913 level. The figure of unemployment remained at over a million, and whole areas were left to rot. These were the centres of basic industry where unemployment was particularly heavy (Lancashire, South Wales and the Clydeside), officially called "Distressed Areas".

The serious economic problems facing Britain were aggravated by the nature of Britain's economy, which remained largely parasitic. Capitalists were 'still more concerned with getting easy profits from colonies or backward countries than with modernising and developing the basic industries of their own country. To meet the competition of newer, more efficient countries their chief method was to increase the exploitation of British workers. This policy was soon to result in fierce class struggles. But the fight for survival in a world of sharpening international

competition was also leading to the growth of monopolies. Britain was now beginning to follow the trend to monopoly already seen in the newer, more dynamic world powers. The bulk of production in shipbuilding, for example, was in the hands of ten huge firms, chemicals in one, aluminium in one, cement in two, artificial silk in one and soap in one. But Britain was still relatively backward in this aspect of economic development. It was the newer industries that were more fully centralised, just as the newer capitalist countries had a higher degree of monopoly. Iron and steel, a key basic industry, was in the hands of ten firms, in Britain, but only five firms in Germany and three in the USA. The aims of all monopolies were the same, as expressed in the report of an official Committee on Trusts in 1919: "We find that there is at the present time in every important branch of industry in the United Kingdom an increasing tendency to the formation of Trade Associations and Combinations, having for their purpose the restriction of competition and the control of prices."

As the monopolies grew, some of them joined up in international groups. One of the most famous and powerful was the group of chemical trusts which emerged in the nineteen-twenties. Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) in Britain, Du Pont in the USA and IG Farbenindustrie in Germany.

The British Empire remained the pride and joy of the rulers of Britain. It was the field for most of their foreign investment, producing a return of £200 million a year in interest payments, more than the total profits from British exports. The empire was also the main source of food and raw materials, and their prices fell even lower in this period, helping to maintain the standard of living in Britain. Even in the empire, however, crisis was developing. In India there were mass movements of civil disobedience, organised by the Congress Party under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The British authorities countered by encouraging the development of the Muslim League, stimulating racial divisions to weaken the movement for independence.

The only part of the empire to achieve some success in its struggle for independence was Ireland. In the general election of 1918 the survivors of the 1916 rising, who had set up a new party called "Sinn Fein" won an overwhelming majority. Instead of going as MPs to Westminster, they met in Dublin and set up an Assembly

of Ireland, proclaiming a Republic of Ireland in January 1919. The British government declared the Assembly illegal and flooded Ireland with troops. Two years of a brutal war against the Irish people failed to crush their resistance, so the British divided Ireland by the Government of Ireland Act (passed 1920 to come into force in 1921). 26 counties in the south were allowed to form the Irish Free State (later renamed the Republic of Ireland), while 6 out of the 9 counties in Ulster were retained in Britain, which then assumed the new title of "The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland".

After the war, in addition to industrial struggles, came a new political crisis. The British government gave active support to wars of intervention against the new Soviet Republic. Direct intervention by British troops had been stopped by mutinies at Archangel in 1918. Later came the historic solidarity actions of London workers on May 10th, 1920. Dockers refused to load ammunition destined for Poland (then fighting against the Soviets) into the "Jolly George" and coal-heavers refused to load coal into the ship. The "Hands Off Russia" campaign reached its climax three months later. On August 3rd, when the Red Army had thrown the Polish armies out of the Ukraine and was advancing towards Warsaw, Lord Curzon, British Foreign Secretary, sent a note to the Soviet government threatening war if the advance of the Red Army were not halted.

On the following Sunday protest demonstrations were held all over Britain, many of them adopting the demand for a general strike in the event of war, a demand issued by the newly-formed Communist Party. The next day, August 9th, a joint meeting of the TUC, Labour Party executive and Parliamentary Labour Party warned the government that "the whole industrial power of the organised workers will be used to defeat this war". They set up a Council of Action, and throughout Britain 350 local Councils of Action were organised, mainly on the basis of trades councils.

The result: there was no war with Soviet Russia. The government conveniently forgot its threat of war, and even advised the Polish government to stop its military attack against Russia and to make peace.

During this period the work of government continued to become more and more complex. The direct involvement of the state

in economic affairs led from the world war onwards to the first steps in the turn to state monopoly capitalism. One result of this development was a greater tendency for Acts of Parliament to lay down only the main lines of policy, leaving government departments to work out the details. This method of administration gave increased power to top officials in the Civil Service. It thus became more important than ever to ensure that these positions were kept in safe hands; safe, that is, as far as the protection of ruling-class interests was concerned. The system of recruitment through open examinations seemed likely to allow the danger of middle-class or even working-class people getting into the higher grades of the Civil Service, as secondary education had been extended by the provision of scholarship for some of the brightest children. An answer to this danger was found by giving more marks for the interview, in which the social position and outlook of the candidate could be easily checked. By this means the old-boy network has ensured that Public School men and women have continued to fill the great majority of positions at the top of the state machine. This was part of the modern development of the Establishment, the small group of the ruling class dominating public life in Britain. The strengthening of the state was carried a stage further with the passing of the Emergency Powers Act of 1920. This Act has been used several times to enable the forces of the state, including the army, to intervene in industrial disputes.

During the World War I the Liberal leaders had formed a coalition with Tories and a few Labour representatives. The coalition broke up in 1922 and the Liberal Party then declined rapidly as a parliamentary force. Its place was taken by the Labour Party, which quickly became the official opposition, or alternative government. The Liberals only postponed their decline for a few years after the war by the sale of honours (titles such as knighthoods or peerages) to businessmen in return for contributions to party funds. The scandal grew so obvious that in 1925 Parliament had to pass the Honours (Prevention of Abuses) Act. After the end of the Liberal-led coalition in 1922 Britain was governed by the Tories, except for two short intervals of Labour government. The first came after a general election in December 1923 when the Labour Party became the second largest party in the House of Commons (with 191 MPs against 258 Conservatives and 159 Liberals), but it formed a

government relying on Liberal support. This lasted only from January to October 1924.

A new programme for council house building was introduced and unemployment benefits were increased. On the other hand, strikes were suppressed by force, coercion was maintained in India and a new technique was introduced in Iraq (a semi-colony), the bombing of civilians to terrorise them into paying taxes. The urgent need to expand Britain's trade even led MacDonald, one of the most anti-Soviet leaders, to recognise the Soviet Union and make a trade agreement.

In 1919, too, the Peace Treaty of Versailles was signed. Britain and France tried to cripple Germany permanently as an economic and military rival. Before long the short-sighted vindictiveness of the economic clauses was seen to be a failure and the policy of reparations was rapidly reversed. The German economy was then rebuilt through the Dawes Plan, largely with American capital. Another important step in building western unity came in 1925 with the Treaty of Locarno. Britain and Italy joined in guaranteeing Germany's western frontier, but refused the French proposal to guarantee Germany's eastern border. This showed clearly the British aim of diverting German expansion towards the east. In 1927 the Tory government accused the Soviet trade delegation in Britain of political activities and broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

This Tory government, from 1924 onwards, carried through a harsh policy of putting the burden of economic depression on to the backs of the workers. The Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin said in 1925, "All the workers of this country have got to take reductions in wages." He chose as his first target the miners, traditionally the best organised and most militant section of the British working class. In July 1925 the mine-owners ended their agreements with the miners and proposed wage cuts. The miners rejected this proposal and all other trade unions promised immediate support. The solidarity of the working class made the strike overwhelmingly successful. In fact its success surprised everyone and greatly strengthened the self-confidence of the organised workers.

In 1927 the TUC accepted the offer of a new system of consultation with leaders of big monopolies on methods of

rationalisation in industry. This policy was called Mondism, after the name of its originator, Sir Alfred Mond, boss of Imperial Chemical Industries. The TUC leaders claimed it would lead to increased efficiency and higher wages. In fact, it led to increased output by fewer workers, more exploitation and unemployment. But the glorious vision of planned capitalism had so bemused the trade union leaders that, in the middle of the disastrous world economic crisis, the TUC Congress of 1931 passed a resolution which began, "This Congress welcomes the present tendency towards a planned and regulated economy in our national life..."

The working class was not so enthusiastic about capitalist planning. The bitterness following the general strike and its betrayal, the anger against bosses who took their revenge after the strike, raised class feeling to a height which ensured a great advance in the Labour vote at the general election of 1929. Now the Labour Party emerged as the strongest party in Parliament, with 288 seats against 250 for the Tories and 53 for the Liberals. But the second Labour government again depended on Liberal support for its majority in the House of Commons.

Against the background of the rapidly sharpening world crisis the Labour government was content with planning small reforms, such as the raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen, but before such plans could be put into operation the government cut down its expenditure, trying to solve the crisis in the traditional way. As the financial crisis reached its peak in 1931, the prime-minister MacDonald accepted the views of the City of London and international bankers on the need for drastic cuts in government expenditure, including pay cuts for teachers, civil servants and the armed forces.

The whole period after the World War I was marked by a strong feeling of revolt against old traditions and authorities, moral, religious, political and economic. The unorthodox became the fashionable thing. The support given by churches to the war had disillusioned millions with organised religion. Instead of Sunday church-going, new habits were formed; rambles, camping, youth hostelling, outings by cycle, car or motor-cycle, picnics, open-air dancing to gramophones. Old ideas of "Victorian morality" were ridiculed. Individual freedom was the new ideal. Women wore the

shortest dresses hitherto seen, and men changed into open-necked shirts for week-end leisure activities.

Radio and films brought new forms of mass entertainment and propaganda, with increasing American penetration into British life as Hollywood became the capital of the Western film world. Social crisis was reflected in literature. G. B. Shaw and John Galsworthy continued to write plays and novels with a strong note of social criticism. The novels and poems of D.H. Lawrence shocked prudes of older generations by their open discussions of sex. From Ireland came a new revolutionary voice, that of Sean O'Casey. On the other hand there was a negative and pessimistic view put forward by those who saw the rot but were unable either to see or to face their responsibilities for the future. The American-born poet T. S. Eliot epitomised this attitude in his poem "The Waste Land" in 1922. This literary reaction, like the political reaction of Fascism, exposed the hatred aroused in the ruling class by the growing strength of the democratic and socialist movements throughout this period.

Fascism and War (1933 – 1945)

The world economic crisis of 1929 – 33 was followed by a period of very slow recovery. Unemployment in Britain did not fall below a million until a year after the start of the Second World War. Although the economic crisis had passed, its political results dominated the thirties.

In Britain, the "National Government" consolidated its position and was re-elected in the general election of 1935; Hitler came to power in Germany; Fascists in France attempted a coup in 1934 and a government of "National Union" was set up; Austria fell under Fascist dictatorship in March 1938; only in the USA was the development of state monopoly capitalism in the "New Deal" of President Roosevelt accompanied by some democratic features and a more realistic policy against Fascist aggression. The swing to the right and spread of Fascism was followed naturally by an increase in aggression (Manchuria, China, Abyssinia [Ethiopia], Austria, Spain) and preparation for war. In the non-fascist countries like Britain, USA, and France, the monopolies pressed for appeasement, or encouragement of the Fascist powers, with the aim of turning their aggression against the Soviet Union.

Against this background events in Britain may be seen as an important part of the world struggle, particularly with the leading part played by Neville Chamberlain, Tory Prime Minister, in carrying through the policy of appeasement. But even before he became Prime Minister (1937) this policy had started. From 1934 the government gave export permits for aircraft engines to be sent to Hitler Germany, a vital help in developing Goering's Luftwaffe in defiance of the Versailles Peace Treaty. In 1935 the Anglo-German Naval Agreement allowed Hitler to expand his fleet and to build as many submarines as Britain had, in spite of the Versailles ban on submarines for Germany. At the same time the government encouraged the aggression of Japan against China and Italy against Abyssinia. In 1936 it adopted the policy of "non-intervention" to prevent help being given to the Spanish Republican government. Events like Hitler's re-occupation of the Rhine-land and occupation of Austria passed without protest from Britain, so it was no surprise that Chamberlain betrayed Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938.

The British people were misled into accepting the Munich Agreement by government actions designed to spread the fear of an immediate war. Army reservists were called up, air-raid shelters were built and gas-masks distributed to the civilian population. Then Munich was presented as a victory for peace, giving the government time to increase its military strength to be better prepared for war if it should come. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Munich, and the subsequent occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, gave Hitler more arms than Britain produced in the next year. It gave him a better strategic position and ended the possibility of united defence by Britain, France and the Soviet Union, who together could have stopped Hitler in 1938.

Meanwhile, economic recovery was seen mainly in the southern half of Britain, especially in the area around London where new industries developed. Cars, aircraft, chemicals and electrical goods offered a better return on investments than the older, neglected industries. With the relative boom of the thirties and the drift of population to the south, house building increased, both for local councils and for private sale.

The main political problem in the thirties was the fight against Fascism and war, the struggle to prevent Fascist aggression

across the world from Manchuria to Spain, and the fight to stop the growth of Fascism in Britain. British Fascism was never a large movement, but it was well endowed with money and could have become dangerous. Spectacular Fascist rallies, with thousands of supporters brought by train from all parts of Britain, were met by calls to “drown Fascism in a sea of working-class activity”. One rally in Hyde Park in 1934 was surrounded by over 150,000 anti-fascists, in spite of the Labour Party appeal, printed in the “Daily Herald”, of “Don’t Go”. The greatest failure of Sir Oswald Mosley’s Blackshirts (officially called the British Union of Fascists) was in October 1936, when they planned a provocative march through London’s East End. The police refused to ban the march, so workers rallied from all over London to join the East Enders in blocking every main road in that area with a total of a quarter of a million demonstrators. When the Blackshirts assembled, the police told them they had decided to ban the march.

When Chamberlain flew to Munich in 1938 the Labour Party joined the Tories in Parliament in supporting his betrayal of Czechoslovakia and peace. They refused to support a united front against Fascism and made no effort to stop the appeasement policy which led to war. This policy clearly aimed at turning Hitler’s aggression towards the east. A British Foreign Office memorandum of May 22nd, 1939, made public only after the war, said, “... it was essential, if there must be a war, to try to involve the Soviet Union in it.” And at the Labour Party conference in 1939 Ernest Bevin (one of the trade union leaders, later to become British Foreign Secretary) said that we should “pool the great resources of the world” and offer Germany, Italy and Japan “a place in the sun”. As late as July 1939 the British government was still carrying on negotiations with Hitler for granting him a loan of £1,000 million. On July 24th Dirksen, German Ambassador in London, reported to Berlin that “close relations with Germany are still Britain’s most desired object, as opposed to the alternative of a war, carried on with the greatest reluctance.”

The British people accepted the war in September 1939 as a struggle against Fascism. They were soon to be disillusioned. Britain and France gave no help to Poland, in spite of their “guarantees”, hoping that Hitler would continue his drive to the east. Their Munich

policy of appeasement was not yet abandoned, and after the defeat of Poland the British and French armies remained inactive on the western front. This period was called “the phoney war” and it lasted until April 1940, when Hitler attacked Norway and drove out a small British force. The dreams of the men of Munich were now smashed: the war was coming west. The House of Commons forced Chamberlain to resign after a stormy debate and Winston Churchill became Prime Minister on 10th May 1940, the day on which Hitler opened his offensive on the western front. The rapid defeat of France, the evacuation of the British Army from Dunkirk and the air attacks on Britain during the summer, all these suddenly made the war a matter of life or death for Britain.

Churchill had for long been in a minority section of the influential politicians who recognised the danger to Britain's independence presented by Hitler. He had disagreed with the policy of appeasement and stood for the defence of the national interests of Britain. He was warmly accepted by most British people as the embodiment of national resistance. He was a strong personality, a powerful and inspiring leader. He spoke with a mixture of simple words and grandiose phrases, an individual style that was very effective. His first speech to the House of Commons as Prime Minister on 13th May 1940 began:

“I would say to the House, as I have said to those who have joined this government, “I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.”

By the autumn the bombing of Britain settled down into a steady pattern of nightly raids on London, Coventry and other cities, popularly called "the blitz". In the spring of 1941 the raids ended as Hitler moved his forces across Europe to the east to prepare for the invasion of the Soviet Union.

On 22nd June 1941 this invasion took place and the same evening Churchill broadcast, “Any man or state who fights against Nazidom will have our aid. Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe.” This was a clear rejection of the ideas of the men of Munich. However, the difference in policy was more apparent than real, and the basic outlook of Churchill was reflected in the restricted military aid given to his new Soviet allies. A similar declaration by Roosevelt two days later showed the improvement in

the external position of the Soviet Union then compared with 1939. The division of the world states into two belligerent camps created the conditions for an antifascist coalition. Some positive steps were taken, particularly after the USA entered the war in December 1941.

The American President Franklin D. Roosevelt was in favour of a second front in Europe, as he made public after his first meeting with Molotov (Soviet Foreign Minister) in Washington in the summer of 1942, but pressure from Churchill and from American business interests resulted in Anglo-American plans for a second front being continually postponed. This policy was a contradiction in fact of the friendly greetings exchanged when the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship had been signed in May 1942.

In October Churchill wrote his notorious "Memorandum to the Cabinet about post-war problems", only made public in 1949, in which he said, "It would be a measureless disaster if Russian barbarism overlaid the culture and independence of the ancient states of Europe." He went on to suggest that after the war there should be a "Council of Europe", including Germany but excluding the Soviet Union. This shows the roots of the cold war and of the formation of NATO. The key issue was the opening of a second front in the west and this was talked about for nearly two years before it finally came on 6th June 1944.

The strategy of Churchill was first of all to defend the British Empire (North Africa and the Suez Canal being vital points for this policy) and in the second place to attack Europe through Italy and move into eastern Europe so as to limit Soviet influence in post-war politics. Both these policies delayed the second front until the western powers were forced to act by the speed of Soviet advances in the east. Britain and the USA then wanted to ensure that they took part in the final defeat of Hitler Germany so as to make certain of having some influence in the post-war settlement in Europe. Even during the war these political aims were shown in practice by Churchill when, for example, with the support of Ernest Bevin he took soldiers from Italy to send them into Greece to attack the resistance forces because they were under Communist leadership.

The Second World War was a heavy economic strain for Britain. Production had to be concentrated more and more on complicated and costly new weapons, while the war at sea forced a

reduction in imports to essentials only. Foreign investments had to be sold, to pay not only for imports but also for supplies needed by British troops in Africa and India. Britain also borrowed money and trebled her foreign debts during the war.

The difficulties of feeding Britain during the war led to rationing of essential foods, and priority vitamin supplies for children. Ironically, the result was that a greater proportion of children in Britain were better fed during the war than before. Another social result of the war, which surprised many intellectuals, was the keen response of workers to cultural events provided by the government to maintain morale in factories and the armed forces; concerts, plays and other “highbrow” entertainments won many thousands of new supporters. Much more significant was the tremendous respect won by the Soviet Union and the Red Army in the winter of 1941-42, a respect which never entirely disappeared even during the worst days of the cold war.

Strikes were made illegal under Order 1305, which remained in force for five years after the war, but no employers were prosecuted for sabotage of the war effort. Central planning of war production was established to meet the new demands of the war machine. Supplies of raw materials and manpower were controlled. The government gave orders for weapons and supplies direct to factories. This planning machinery could have been the basis of democratic control of industry by the Labour government in 1945 if it had really wished to advance in that direction.

The importance of the mass media had increased, too. In the thirties a mass circulation had been achieved by several papers. Lord Beaverbrook's “Daily Express” had a circulation of nearly two million in 1930, over 2,5 million by 1940 and over 3 million by 1945. The “Daily Mail” and “Daily Herald” sold around two million each in the thirties, while the “Daily Mirror” reached this figure by 1945. During the war censorship not only restricted military news, but was used to limit criticism of the government.

Educational progress, such as the plan to raise the school-leaving age to 15, had been held up by the economy cuts in 1931. During the war good work was done by the Council for Educational Advance, in which were united Labour movement organisations and educational bodies. Their mass pressure helped to produce the

Education Act of 1944 which promised secondary education for all children; the raising of the school-leaving age first to 15 and then to 16; increased provision of nursery schools; free meals for all children; and county colleges to provide one day's education a week for young workers up to the age of 18.

Britain in Deepening Crisis

After 1945 with the defeat of the Fascist states came a number of important changes in the world balance of power. The standing of the Soviet Union had been increased immensely. In many colonies the war had brought new liberation movements into action and the struggle for independence was growing rapidly.

The USA firmly established its leading position, though Britain, in spite of being weakened by the war, still stood in second place. Germany, Italy and Japan seemed for a time to have been eliminated from the great powers, but by 1963, with American help, West Germany was to take the second place and push Britain back to the third. During the post-war period Britain slipped back in economic strength and importance. The basic reasons were first, it maintained and extended the export of capital, diverting investment from the basic industries at home which badly needed new capital. This led to a slower rate of growth in industrial production. Second, it adopted military commitments, partly in the colonies but mainly in Europe, on a scale much greater than that of its allies in NATO, thus adding to a permanent balance of payments crisis. These factors must be remembered in considering the whole following period.

The USA had emerged from the war hardly affected by the losses and damage which had weakened the countries more directly involved. The strength of the pound, for long the main currency of the world, was waning; the new position of the dollar as the basic world currency had been established at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 which set up the International Monetary Fund.

Even in relation to parts of the empire such as India, Britain was now in a weaker position. She had had to sell about half of her foreign capital investments to pay for the war, and in addition had to borrow money widely. It would need several years to regain Britain's financial domination of the empire, and by that time the new balance of political forces was to bring even more serious problems.

In that situation Britain tried to maintain its position by accepting the role of junior partner of the USA. This was the background to the policy euphemistically described as a “special relationship” with the United States in the notorious Fulton speech (March 1946) of Winston Churchill. British industry had been neglected in favour of capital investment abroad; it was technically backward, especially in the basic industries, and its exports had not paid for imports for most of the previous century. The difference had been met by the huge flow of super-profits back to Britain. Now, however, these interest payments coming into Britain were cut by half, due to the sales of capital during the war. A further strain was the cost of military bases and supplies around the empire. Before the war these costs had been paid by colonial governments; now costs were higher, and would have to be paid more and more by the British government, as the old colonial system collapsed.

Economic advance, even if slower than in other countries, started after the war on the basis of a normal replacement boom. Post-war rebuilding and new housing developments, due to state initiative as much as to private enterprise, were followed by the development of new industries, including man-made fibres, television and automation equipment. In addition the armaments industry was maintained and even expanded. Another important economic factor was some much-needed modernisation of derelict basic industries, mining and railways, previously starved of capital because of low profit rates. These industries were nationalised and capital investment then provided by the state while private capital was being exported to get higher rates of profit abroad. During this period taxation was increased mainly in the form of indirect taxes such as Purchase Tax (a forerunner of the Common Market's Value Added Tax) which meant an increasing cut in the real wages of workers. All these factors helped to maintain boom conditions for about twenty years. There was a high level of public spending on labour and materials. The arms race associated with the cold war involved heavy government expenditure.

1945 brought a record majority in Parliament for the Labour Party, founded on bitter working-class memories of pre-war unemployment and on the enthusiasm for socialism brought by the war-time achievements of the Soviet Union. This pressure for

advance towards socialism was felt so strongly inside the whole working-class movement, including the Labour Party that its 1945 election manifesto, "Let Us Face the Future", declared that, "The Labour Party is a Socialist Party, and proud of it. Its ultimate aim is the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain."

The new Prime Minister, Major Clement Attlee, was the first Labour leader with an absolute majority in Parliament. Most people in Britain thought that his first Acts of Parliament, nationalising the coal industry and the railways, were steps towards socialism. On the contrary they were steps to bring neglected basic industries more up to date to give better service to other capitalist industries. The interests of the ex-owners were carefully protected, with the award of generous compensation in the form of shares carrying a 4 % dividend as a *first* charge on the nationalised industries.

The monopolies were given direct economic help through new government departments and "independent" boards or committees such as the Department of Economic Affairs, the Industrial Reorganisation Corporation and the Prices and Incomes Board. Representatives of the monopolies sat as "experts" in these bodies, while retired civil servants and ex-officers were given important positions by monopolies to strengthen their links with departments responsible for giving large orders to industry.

The role of the state was extended more and more, the machinery of government became larger. The power of the Prime Minister was increased, as he now had to fill about a hundred ministerial offices, giving him 100 MPs directly dependent on him for their comfortable positions, and a wide influence on many more MPs who might hope to reach such a position – if they behaved well. These appointments were (and are still) in the hands of the Prime Minister alone; there was no question of collective leadership or of democratic discussion in the formation of a government. In fact, the Ministers appointed have often been very different people from those who had been "Shadow Ministers", elected democratically by the Parliamentary Labour Party when the party was in opposition. Clement Attlee was horrified during the general election campaign of 1945 when Churchill alleged that, if the Labour Party won the election, they would break parliamentary tradition by having a government controlled by the Executive Committee of the Labour

Party. Attlee denied this. No democratic control by an elected committee was in his mind; and he went on to continue the tradition of one-man leadership.

Advice from the king, however, was another matter. Like MacDonald in 1931 Attlee was open to suggestions from on high. After winning the election in 1945 Attlee went to see King George VI about the formation of his government, and the king suggested Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary. Although Attlee had planned to give Hugh Dalton that position he did in fact give it to Bevin. Constitutional traditions like this were maintained, even at the expense of his own party. The Bank of England was nationalised in 1945, but all the old directors were reappointed, and their reactionary financial policies went on unchanged.

Another undemocratic part of the constitution maintained by Labour as well as Tory governments was the House of Lords. The greatest restriction of their powers had been imposed by a Liberal government in 1911, barring the Lords from any veto of a Finance Act, and limiting their delaying powers on other laws to two years. In 1949 this power of delay was further reduced to one year, but the House of Lords was left as a potentially dangerous weapon dominated by the Tories. But the right-wing leaders of the Labour Party have gone on regarding the state machine as standing above parties and classes. Its servants, they say, are all impartial, working in the interests of the whole people. No wonder that Labour governments, accepting the guidance of top civil servants, have produced basically the same policies as Tory governments.

Nowhere was this "bi-partisan" policy shown more clearly than in the field of foreign affairs. As soon as the results of the 1945 election were declared and the Labour government was formed, Attlee and Bevin went to the Potsdam Conference to replace Churchill and Eden. The result was noted by Mr. Byrnes, American Secretary of State, in his autobiography: "Britain's stand on the issues before the conference was not altered in the slightest... this continuity of policy impressed me." Winston Churchill had already foreshadowed this continuity before the elections, when he told the House of Commons in June that he and Attlee had "always thought alike on the foreign situation", and that "although governments may change and parties may quarrel, yet on some of the main essentials of

foreign affairs we stand together. The continuity of policy was in fact directly contrary to the Labour Party's election programme "Let Us Face the Future", which had been adopted by the Party Conference in May 1945, and which started the section on foreign policy with these words: "We must make sure that Germany and Japan are deprived of the power to make war again. We must consolidate in peace the great war-time association of the British Commonwealth with the USA and the USSR. Let it not be forgotten that in the years leading up to the war the Tories were so scared of Russia that they missed the chance to establish a partnership which might well have prevented the war."

Instead of this, Bevin went straight from the Potsdam Conference to join in the US policy of "western unity" against the Soviet Union. Continuity was again shown when the Labour government accepted as its guide to foreign policy the speech of Winston Churchill at Fulton, Missouri, on 5th March, 1946.

He appealed for the unity of "the English-speaking peoples in peace as they did in war" and asked for "a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States." The nature of this "special relationship" soon became clear. Britain had to borrow money from the USA and so became an automatic supporter of whatever the American government chose to do. In the United Nations Organisation, in the Central Control Commission in Germany and in West Berlin, in international economic and diplomatic matters, everywhere Britain danced to the tune of the USA. The Potsdam Agreement was ignored in the western zones of occupation, until finally Germany was split and the Federal Republic established in September 1949. NATO was established on 4th April 1949 and described by Ernest Bevin as "a powerful defensive arrangement" and "not directed against anyone".

Britain's military role as a junior partner of the USA was that of an "unsinkable aircraft carrier". The occupation of Britain by American bombers began in July 1948 when sixty planes came over, according to the official government announcement, "... for a short period of temporary duty as part of the normal long-range flight training programme." But this was a deliberate deception of the British people. Attlee and Bevin admitted later that they had already agreed to give bases for atom-bomb planes to the Americans.

Military unity was seen in the formation of NATO in 1949, but economic rivalry was shown as soon as fighting had stopped, when the USA suddenly cut off its war-time economic help for Britain and asked for immediate cash payment for all goods received. This was the beginning of pressure on the pound that led finally to a sharp devaluation in 1949. Another alarm sign was the start of the break-up of the British Empire. India was the first country to win its independence. Mass strikes were followed by a mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy and only when it seemed likely that the army would also revolt did the British government act quickly to grant independence in 1947. Even so, the British managed to divide the country into two states, India and Pakistan, in accordance with the classic strategy of “divide and rule”. The division was “justified” by the religious differences between Hindu India and Moslem Pakistan, but the split had its roots as far back as 1906, when the Moslem League was formed with British encouragement to divide the Indian movement for independence.

At home, only the first two years of the Labour government satisfied most of its supporters. Nationalisation was believed to be a step towards socialism. A National Health Service was introduced, insuring all workers against illness and providing free medical treatment. Housing programmes of local councils were encouraged by government grants and low-interest loans. By 1948 economic difficulties led to a “wage-freeze” policy, demanded by the government and accepted by the trade unions out of loyalty to the Labour Party. Socialist ideas were more and more openly rejected by Attlee's government, and the new policy of a “mixed economy” was proclaimed, defined as 20% nationalised industry and 80 % privately owned.

In the upswing of the British economy during the fifties, the value of company shares trebled as profits rose rapidly; in contrast, the money value of wages doubled, but rising prices meant that the real value of wages only went up by 44 % in the decade. Public expenditure was kept down; not one new hospital was built, schools and youth clubs were neglected and inadequate salaries resulted in a continuing shortage of nurses, social workers and teachers. Full employment meant also a shortage of lower-paid workers, especially in the health system and public transport, and the government found

a new solution by encouraging the immigration of coloured workers from the colonies, mainly at first the West Indies.

The British Empire itself was now breaking up. After the loss of India and Pakistan, Britain held down other colonial peoples by force for as long as possible. Only when it became inevitable did British governments (Tory or Labour) grant political independence. Some of the main dates in this process were: Egypt 1951, Ghana 1957, Cyprus and Nigeria 1960, Kenya 1963.

The fifties saw in Britain the development of new industries and of new methods of automatic control of machines, called automation. This was linked with very profitable scientific and technological revolution. The demands of industry now led to the doubling of the number of British universities and colleges, and of the number of students, within twenty years. This expansion of higher education was very impressive, but was no more than what was achieved in other advanced states. Within this expansion, the increase of state-controlled colleges (of technology etc.), described as the field of further education, was greater than the increase in the universities, higher education proper. This meant that the main increase was in the cheaper form of advanced training, the section most closely linked with the needs of industry. A second significant point was that the social inequalities of the education system remained practically unchanged. There was very little advance in the proportion of working-class children going on to higher education. Most of the increase was accounted for by children of professional and middle strata.

For the schools, however, the growing openings into higher education brought a new stimulus, side by side with pressure from the labour movement, for real secondary education for all. The 1944 Education Act had promised secondary education for all, but this aim had been nullified by the Ministry of Education experts, who had divided secondary schools into three groups; the already existing grammar and technical schools, and the new "secondary modern" schools.' The latter took about three-quarters of all children, those who failed to pass the "eleven-plus" examination which selected pupils to go to the grammar and secondary technical schools. The "sec. mod." schools were from the start seen as second-class establishments and, in spite of the heroic efforts of dedicated

teachers; they made a mockery of the promise of secondary education for all.

Many progressive teachers and parents soon saw that the achievement of real secondary education for all demanded a common school for all children from the age of eleven, a school which could be called comprehensive. The first area to organise secondary education entirely in comprehensive schools was Anglesey, the island off the north-west coast of Wales, a county with strong radical traditions. From 1949 all pupils in its state schools went at eleven into comprehensives, and after a decade their examination results showed a striking superiority over the position in other counties where pupils were divided between grammar and other schools.

In the period of the fifties the position of Britain in the world was no longer as strong as it had been. Competition was increasing sharply, not only from the USA, but in particular with the re-emergence of West Germany and Japan as industrial powers with growing exports. Economic power was being concentrated in three centres; the USA, Japan and Western Europe, the latter being more closely integrated with the formation of the European Economic Community (EEC), or Common Market, by the Rome treaties of 1957, coming into effect on 1st January 1958. At that time the British ruling class was still self-confident enough to feel no need for joining the Common Market. Instead, it relied on its links with ex-colonies in the Commonwealth, and on a new economic grouping called the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) formed in 1960 and including Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland and Portugal.

Just as Britain seemed to be at the top of a rising wave, a new economic instability began to be felt. Almost as soon as Britain had refused to join the Common Market second thoughts became necessary, and in the middle of 1961 Britain applied to join.

Economically the new stage was marked by slower expansion, then stagnation. This was accompanied in the later sixties and even more in the seventies by inflation, and this combination of problems was given the new name of stagflation. As the crisis sharpened more rapidly from about 1966-67 unemployment began once again to grow alarmingly until in the mid-seventies it passed the million mark. This was associated with international difficulties for

Britain, competition in world markets holding back the expansion of British exports, while the balance of payments was kept negative by the continued export of capital and by heavy military expenditure abroad. This negative balance resulted in another serious devaluation of the pound in 1967 and again in 1972, this time by the indirect method of letting the pound “float” freely on the international money market, though the “floating” actually meant a steady sinking of the pound’s value. By 1976 it was worth about half its 1972 value.

Britain's application to join the Common Market in 1961 did not succeed as it was vetoed by France. This happened again in 1967, when the application was made by Wilson's Labour government. The final successful application will be dealt with later. Deepening crisis and rising class struggles at the end of the fifties meant that the end of the Tories’ “affluent society” was in sight. A revolt against the nuclear arms race was also developing with the establishment of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in January 1958 and its Easter marches associated with Aldermaston from 1958 onwards. The broad peace movement was linked also with the Anti-Apartheid campaign and the Movement for Colonial Freedom (since renamed Liberation).

With the development of the scientific and technological revolution, the cost of new technical advances was often beyond the capacity of even the biggest monopolies and required financial assistance from the state. Examples of this were seen in atomic power stations, supersonic aircraft (Concorde) and computers. The state paid the enormous costs of research and experiment, but when profitable production was possible the project was handed over to the monopolies. Similarly, the state spent many millions on new motorways so that road transport firms could use them profitably. This was an important economic aspect of the rapidly growing integration of the state with the monopolies.

The advance of British state monopoly capitalism, however, has taken place under the shadow of the dominant power of the USA. Between 1950 and 1967 American investments in Britain rose from £300 million to £2,000 million. This total represented about 10 % of the total capital, in British industry, but its importance was even greater than this figure showed, as American investment was concentrated in technologically advanced and rapidly growing

industries. For example: petroleum refining and distribution 40% in American hands, computers 40%, motor cars 50 %. A partial alternative to this American domination, particularly after the loss of the colonial empire, was seen by the ruling class in a closer unity with Western Europe in the Common Market. This became more and more urgent as Britain's crisis deepened. The Cabinet applied for Britain's entry into the Common Market, and this was publicly announced on 2nd May 1967. But once again the application was rejected.

During this period of technological change the “white collar” unions, catering for professional, scientific and administrative workers, grew stronger and played a more active part in the trade union movement. By 1968 these unions contained two million out of the total of nearly nine million affiliated to the TUC. One outstanding union of this type was the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs (ASTMS), formed by the amalgamation of the Association of Scientific Workers with the Association of Supervisory Staffs, Executives and Technicians (ASSET). Another was the National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO) which affiliated to the TUC only in the mid-sixties. These newer unions generally played a progressive and militant role.

The National Union of Teachers (NUT), by far the largest of the teachers' organisations, had been considered more of a professional association than a trade union. Within a decade the union rapidly changed its educational and political outlook, supported the struggle for comprehensive schools, organised official strikes for a pay rise in the winter of 1969—70 and then affiliated to the TUC. These developments were reflected in a wider interest taken by the TUC in educational and cultural questions. In 1960 resolution No. 42 at the TUC dealt with union-sponsored cultural activities, and this was followed by the formation of Centre 42, with which the name of Arnold Wesker was associated. An alternative working-class culture was very slow in developing, though Unity Theatre managed to survive in London. But the unions gave little active support to Centre 42, forcing it to rely on help from commercial interests which eventually took it over. Other contradictory trends appeared in the sixties, beginning with the legal

battle which allowed "Lady Chatterley's Lover" to be printed in Britain. One result of this victory was a flood of cheap pornographic paper-backs, a sub-culture coming to a large extent from the USA. The cinema soon followed the new trend, making it almost obligatory to have a nude bedroom scene in new films. Finally, the theatre ended the censorship system which had forbidden nudity on the stage, and the new freedom was exploited by sensationalist shows like "Hair" and "Oh! Calcutta". For many people, especially intellectuals, this new "freedom" was seen as a revolt against bourgeois morality. At the same time came a dramatic development in fashions, when Mary Quant of London invented the mini-skirt in 1967. This innovation was to be watched with great pleasure by men all round the world in the next few years.

The crisis from around 1966 – 67 thus affected economic, social, political and cultural life very deeply. The hopes of social progress under a Labour government were once again dashed to the ground as Wilson applied the traditional bourgeois solutions for his economic and financial difficulties. Social services were cut, but not arms expenditure. The devaluation of the pound in 1967 increased the prices of food and raw materials, putting up the cost of living while the government was trying to hold down wages. The working-class movement replied with protests by the TUC and Labour Party conferences, as well as by militant trade union action to maintain wages. But this positive struggle involved only a minority of the most class-conscious workers. The mass of the workers were disappointed, disillusioned and many turned away from political action. Local elections in 1967 saw a sudden drop in the Labour vote, allowing the Tories to win a majority in many local councils, including old Labour strongholds like London and Coventry. Even more significant was the drop in the individual membership of the LP from about a million in 1952 to 700,856 in 1969.

One last important development at the end of the sixties was the outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland. Ever since the division of Ireland in 1921, when Northern Ireland was retained under British rule, the Irish Catholic minority, about 40% of the population there, had suffered from discrimination in jobs, education, housing and political representation. In the mid-sixties a movement against these injustices was organised by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights

Association (NICRA). As the economic crisis sharpened, a diversion was found in extremist Protestant activities, including attacks on civil rights demonstrators and acts of terrorism such as burning houses and placing bombs in shops, pubs and other buildings. In 1969 continuous violence became a serious problem and the British government sent in troops, who were welcomed at first as a peacekeeping force. Very soon, however, the troops concentrated on suppressing the Irish Catholics and protecting the right-wing extremist Protestants, mainly of English or Scottish descent. This caused a violent reaction among many Irishmen, leading to a split in the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the official organisation maintaining its aim of a political solution, while a break-away section called the Provisional IRA (or Proves) turned to the same sort of violence and terrorism that the Protestants had started.

The foreign policy of the Tory government in the early 1970ies was based on getting into the Common Market, a desperate step to help a declining British economy, which since 1963 had fallen from 3rd to 5th place in the capitalist world. Britain's third and final application was forced through the House of Commons on 28th October 1971. Britain, Denmark and the Republic of Ireland were allowed to join the Common Market on 1st January 1973 and from then on Britain's balance of payments became even more negative and prices rose faster, especially after the introduction of the Value Added Tax in 1973.

By-products of this “turn to Europe” included the use of Centigrade figures as well as Fahrenheit in weather forecasts and the introduction of a decimal coinage (100 new pence, or 100 p, to the pound) in 1971. Decimilisation of weights and measures has since been introduced in stages.

In home affairs the Heath government at once took up the attack on trade unions and introduced an anti-trade union Bill. It became law as the Industrial Relations Act of 1971. The working class did not accept this law peacefully and for three years there were continual struggles against it. First came a national strike of miners in 1972 which forced the government to relax its wage-freeze policy and grant the miners a pay increase three times as high as its first offer. This encouraged other unions to fight the wage freeze, and 1972 recorded a higher number of strikes than any year since 1926,

the year of the General Strike. In Northern Ireland the violence between Protestant and Catholic extremists escalated during the seventies, with two to three hundred people dying each year. The situation had got beyond the control of the local government in Northern Ireland and in 1972 the British government took over direct control of this province. With the rapidly growing crisis unemployment soon shot up to a million. In 1973, to offset the unemployment among school-leavers, the government put into effect the long-delayed raising of the school-leaving age to 16.

Other results of the deepening social and political crisis were a variety of new movements fighting for special sectional interests, such as school students and black immigrants. The widest of these movements was the Women's Liberation Movement, increasingly active in the seventies. The groups that came together to form this movement opened the eyes of many thousands of women to the discrimination they suffered because of their sex. A far wider consciousness of their economic and social oppression emerged and there was an active revolt against sexism in advertising, for example. Some important victories included the winning of the legal right to free abortion (1968), although this principle was often sabotaged in principle by the obstruction of some doctors. In International Women's Year (1975) the Equal Pay Act came into force and Parliament also passed the Sex Discrimination Act, making discrimination between men and women unlawful in employment and various other fields. Both these Acts, however, required continuous struggle to make them effective.

The Background of Thatcherism

But entry into the Common Market did not result in sudden prosperity. The quadrupling of oil prices in the mid-1970s caused a surge in manufacturing and transport costs, and set off a ten-year period of monetary inflation in which the earning power of the pound sterling fell dramatically. In 1976 the danger of a collapse of the pound forced the Labour government of James Callaghan to seek a loan of \$3.9 billion from the International Monetary Fund and impose heavy cuts in public spending. Price rises and wage demands on an unprecedented scale were accompanied by a severe rise in unemployment,

reaching over two million by 1980 and three million by 1983. The commitment of government to manage the economy stalled with the economy itself. Industrial unrest erupted on a wide scale with fears of a return to the depths of 1932. A 'winter of discontent' in 197 – 79 helped to oust the Labour government and brought in the Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher, the first woman prime minister in British history, and a politician convinced about what needed to be done. “Thatcherism” was more an attitude of non-compromise and non-conformity with received opinion than a coherent strategy, but for the first time since 1945, a new political philosophy emerged. Armed with the subversive ideas of Sir Keith Joseph’s Centre for Policy Studies, she set about knocking down the already shaky structure of a mixed state-capitalist economy. Market forces, not government provision, were now to drive the nation forward, on the rails of monetarism – stabilising the economy by tight control of the money supply. This in turn required a continued decrease in government spending. Thus the unemployment of the 1980s was not, like that of the 1930s, the result of laissez-faire economics but of a determined policy.

The Thatcher Years

Mrs Thatcher's mettle was tested by the Argentinian occupation of the Falkland Islands, one of the residual fragments of the empire, in April 1982. A variegated armada of warships and merchant vessels was dispatched to the South Atlantic to restore British possession. The war was not without its risks and the Argentinians' French-made Exocet missiles sank or heavily damaged several British ships. Under controversial circumstances the nuclear submarine HMS Conqueror torpedoed and sank the Argentinian battleship General Belgrano. But the islands were retaken and Mrs Thatcher's prestige reached a high point. Though inevitably seen by some as a last twitch of British imperialism, the Falklands campaign was more than that. It was generally accepted as just and necessary. Argentina was a dictatorship; it had invaded illegally. The task of ousting its troops, no more and no less, had to be faced.

The “Iron Lady’s” second term of office, from 1985, pushed forward the doctrine of privatisation – nationalised or part state-owned

industries were broken up and sold to become private companies. Councils which since 1945 had built thousands of houses and flats to rent, were compelled to sell them. Harold Macmillan, Tory prime minister from 1957 to 1963, later Lord Stockton, an elder statesman, protested in typical terms and to no avail about 'selling off the family silver'. Deregulation was an important element in the Thatcherist onslaught. Bus services competed at minimal fares on busy routes until only the one with the deepest pockets survived; then the fares went up. Mrs Thatcher found a new equivalent to the Argentine leader, Galtieri, in the leader of the mine workers, Arthur Scargill, who took his members out on a long, bitter and sometimes violent strike in 1984-85. The events of this campaign, with "flying pickets" concentrating on certain sites, and massed police assembled in response, had some of the characteristics of civil warfare. Many civil libertarians were worried by the forceful role played by the police. Thatcherism was hostile to trade unions and a number of laws were passed to limit their activities, notably that of "secondary picketing". Union membership slumped from 13 million in 1980 to under 7 million in 1999. In the end the miners had to yield against a government that had almost the whole press, and most public opinion, on its side. The government's hope of creating a nation of shareholders, with people buying shares in privatised utilities like British Gas and British Telecom, did not materialise. But a stock exchange boom did, and many people became extremely rich. Mrs Thatcher won a third consecutive election in 1987, helped by the economic recovery of the "boom". Then in October 1987 the stock market crashed. The pound came under pressure on foreign exchanges, and interest rates went up to 15 per cent, a penal rate for those who had bought houses at inflated prices during the boom years and now faced much larger mortgage payments. The government's attempt to replace the out-of-date rating system for local taxation by a community charge based on individuals rather than property proved to be a disaster. Mrs Thatcher's implacable opposition to closer integration within the European Community also alienated the strong pro-Europe wing of the Tory party. The policy of reducing direct taxation and keeping down government spending had led both to a huge deficit in the balance of payments, and to a visible deterioration in the

quality of schools, hospitals and public transport. Population groups whose lack of purchasing power put them beyond the interest of market forces, like pensioners and many working mothers, were protesting about their neglect. In 1990 opposition within her party and her cabinet to Mrs Thatcher resulted in a successful challenge to her leadership, and she resigned.

Social Liberalization and the Erosion of Class Distinctions

Within English society, there were trends which some regarded as progressive and liberalising, and which others saw as a pattern of moral and social decline. What was indisputable was a greater openness about matters previously considered taboo in public discussion. A failed prosecution in 1960 of D.H. Lawrence's novel of four decades earlier, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, also cleared the way for many less literary and more sexually explicit works to be published. Homosexuality, always an element in private life, its practice almost always subject to extreme penalties, was legalised in 1967 ten years after the publication of the Wolfenden Report which recommended its decriminalisation. The official censorship of plays was dropped in 1968, though a law against blasphemy remained. Sexual mores generally were relaxed, and related matters discussed in public often in great detail. Abortion, once illegal except under special circumstances, was legalised, and the contraceptive pill radically changed birth-control methods. Divorce, which had been frowned on and made difficult by both church and state, was made very much easier to obtain, and the divorce rate increased dramatically.

Those who deplored these trends often demanded that the government give a moral lead; Harold Macmillan, as premier, responded that that was a matter for the bishops. The church, however, was an institution on the sidelines and the only bishops to be noticed were those who advocated a new theology which seemed far from the Thirty-nine Articles of Anglicanism. The Church of England sponsored a new translation of the Bible and a new Prayer Book, intended to reflect modern language and modern life, but they did not seem likely to enjoy the respect and longevity accorded to their predecessors. In 1994, in response to long tapping at the door, the church also finally admitted women to the priesthood. The Non-conformist churches had had women

ministers for some time before. In part it was a response to the decline in male candidates for the clergy; now in religion as in medicine, it seemed likely that women would eventually outnumber men. By the end of the century, with civil weddings allowed to happen virtually anywhere, and with cremation the increasingly favoured method of disposal of the dead, many of the population would never enter a church at all.

Though in the census of 2001, 71,7 per cent of the population described themselves as Christian, religious observance seemed to be moving towards something like the cult of the pre-Christian Roman Empire, a matter of forms and ceremonies, presided over by the leaders of society and not of much account to the population other than some pious country folk. Many would not even avail themselves of the formality of civil marriage. In 2001, there were over three million households consisting of a co-habiting couple or a one-parent family (many of these involving a divorced rather than an unmarried parent), compared to seven million conventional family households. The enormous growth in the number of unmarried mothers, together with the great increase in divorces, made the one-parent family socially acceptable among all classes. The stigma attached to “illegitimate” birth disappeared. This dramatic change in the social composition of England had occurred within a period of hardly more than thirty years. Though it was inevitably treated as a “breaking down of social forms and traditional practice, it was not yet clear what new kinds of bonds and structures were being formed within this unscripted and entirely spontaneous trend, and to what extent it would change the concept or sense of “Englishness”. The concept of “class” itself suffered some erosion in the storm. At the end of the twentieth century, the terms upper, middle and working class still had some relevance to life in England. Everyone knew what they meant. But the words had little practical significance except perhaps for a small section of the “upper class” and for the declining numbers who still considered themselves to be “working class”. Almost everyone else was in the middle, a vast group which could be split, fragmented, analysed in any way the observer could desire, but whose subdivisions all had too much in common to be truly separate from one another in the way of the former class distinctions. Time seemed to be running out for the few remaining social-revolutionary class warriors: the system itself was likely to expire first. Economic divisions were wide but increasingly unrelated to class. A small group, the directors of large companies and

employees of some financial trading companies, aroused envy and hostility by their very large salaries and pay-offs; a culture of mutual self-provision, as effective as anything seen in the eighteenth century, was rampant among remuneration committees and non-executive directors. The social commentator, Will Hutton, railed against “an opted-out overclass, uncommitted and disconnected from the aspirations and moral judgements of their fellow-citizens” (The Stakeholding Society, 1999). Another high-earning small group attracted more public favour, even if it could be short-lived or invasive: these were the stars of sport and screen, who (often willingly) paid the price of public revelations of their private lives in return for the opulent lifestyle of the super-rich. But whereas the lifestyle of the wealthy had once been completely different from that of the rest of the population, now the difference was of cost and degree. Mass travel to sun-baked beaches offered everyone what had been the experience of only the very rich, or very adventurous, before the era of the wide-bodied jet plane. Class was no barrier to power, wealth or status: and to attain any one or more of these, only a very moderate ability was sometimes necessary.

England at the Turn of the Millenium

Mrs Thatcher’s successor in 1990 was a compromise-figure, John Major, whose low-key style was very different but who was a faithful Thatcherite in policy. British involvement in the American-led Gulf War of 1991 helped Major to election victory in 1992, but the chaotic period ensuing, when the value of sterling crashed, interest rates were briefly pushed up to absurd levels and Britain pulled out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism system, destroyed faith in his government and also shattered Conservative morale. By 1995, after eighteen consecutive years in power, and faced by the efficient and aggressive ranks of New Labour under Tony Blair, the Conservatives went down to a defeat even greater than that of 1945. Indeed, in the last years of the twentieth century, the Conservatives lost their reputation as the party that was sensible with the country’s money, and instead became identified with “boom-and-bust” management; and the Labour Party, previously hampered by a “tax-and-spend” label, became seen as the home of financial rectitude. To achieve this, it had a plan, in which a central part was the control of monetary inflation. In a theatrical but effective gesture in 1997 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon

Brown, handed control of interest rates, hitherto a government responsibility, to the Bank of England. The rest of the plan involved continuance of its Conservative predecessor's spending cuts and limitations, until the government's accumulated "war-chest" eventually began to be dispensed, under such rigorous controls that many projects were delayed. Although the Labour Party and the trade unions remained in alliance, the unions were disappointed to find that much of the legislation of the Thatcher years, against secondary and sympathy strikes, was going to remain in force. The government was at pains to show that it was not hostile to the business world while also, in fields such as overseas aid, showing a more positive commitment to help the underdeveloped countries than any of its predecessors. On both sides of the old political divide, observers could tot up plus and minus marks, depending on their points of view, while the New Labour government itself, again more than any before it, tried to subject every area it controlled, from primary schools to police forces, from ambulances to air traffic controllers, to a regime of targets, assessments, rewards and penalties. This attempt to make the country, in a popular current phrase, "get its act together" was pursued with impressive vigour, even if it was found vexing and sometimes counter-productive in the workplace. As Great Britain, certainly not yet New Britain, came to celebrate the end of a millennium, the government's own effort to address the occasion, the exhibition-cum-spectacle staged in the vastly expensive

Greenwich "Millennium" Dome, was awarded a very moderate mark by the people. There was no "Festival of Britain" spirit. Those who remembered World War II were old age pensioners by now, and feeling themselves a neglected and unappreciated section of society. With no great recent national struggle to look back on, but only the political and social legacy of fifty-five years of relative peace, defined by "post"-words: post-imperial, post-industrial, post-modern – it was still unclear what the "pre"- word, or words, might be, that would signify Britain's, and England-within-Britain's, direction and significance in the twenty-first century.

Module Test 2

I Choose 3 problems from the suggested list and write 3 short essays (up to 300 words each):

1. The Roman period – from Caesar’s expeditions to the last days of Roman rule (55 BC – 410 AD)
2. The Germanic invasions (410 – 1066)
3. Norman England (1066 – 1485). The feudal system. “Magna Carta” (1215)
4. Renaissance in England.
5. The Civil War. Republic. The Glorious revolution.
6. The XVIIIth century Britain
7. The formation of the Empire.
8. The interwar Britain (1918 – 1939)
9. The United Kingdom after World War II (1945 and on)
10. Highlights of English music – from Tallis and Byrd to Britten
11. Theatre life in the UK. Types of theatres.
12. English school of painting – movements and genres.

II Check your knowledge of the people, facts, events and write down the information you know about the following notions:

Variant 1

1. Quality papers
2. Speaker’s Corner
3. Commonwealth
4. Public schools
5. The Tower of London
6. The BBC
7. Conurbation
8. The Union Jack
9. Christopher Wren
10. Scotland Yard
11. By-election
12. “The Globe”

13. Thistle
14. NHS
15. Constituency
16. Hadrian's Wall
17. The Albert Hall
18. Woolsack
19. Edward Elgar
20. Question time
21. The Falklands crisis
22. "The Whip"
23. The Lake District (school)
24. Life peers
25. General strike
26. Prince of Wales
27. "Harrods"
28. W. Churchill
29. GCSE
30. The policy of appeasement

Total: 30 marks

Your score: ____ marks

Variant 2

1. Henry Purcell
2. Act of Supremacy
3. the Proms
4. Age of discretion
5. Eton
6. the Samaritans
7. Glyndebourne
8. Benjamin Britten
9. Ordinary Level
10. Subsidized theatre
11. Established church
12. The Open University
13. Marginal constituency
14. Loch Ness monster

15. Pancake race
16. Lambeth Conference
17. Wimbledon
18. Oxbridge English
19. Laurence Olivier
20. Royal Assent
21. Henry VIII
22. Poppy Day
23. Archbishop of Canterbury
24. Reuters
25. “Angry Young Men”
26. William Caxton
27. Covent Garden
28. Magna Carta
29. Greenwich
30. Sherlock Holmes

Total: 30 marks

Your score: ____ marks

List of Projects and Individual Work

1. The faults and merits of British educational system.
2. The Commonwealth – its history and future.
3. Economic successes and failures of the Tory governments (1979 – 1997)
4. Nationalist aspirations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
5. The Trade Unions in the post-war years (1940ies – 2000s)
6. The BBC. Its special position in the UK and the rest of the world.
7. Post-war urban sub-cultures (Teds, Mods, Rockers, Bikers, Skinheads, Punks and the rest).
8. The beginning of the cinema in Britain. Film-making in the inter-war period.
9. British cinema in the post-war years (1950ies and on).
10. English music (1850ies – 1950ies). Names and movements.
11. Music and Arts festivals in the UK.
12. The legal system in England and Wales.
13. Churches and religions in Britain.
14. Sport – a national passion. Sports and gambling.
15. Art galleries and museums of the UK.
16. Landscape architecture (gardening).
17. British engraving of the XVIIIth century.
18. English school of the landscape painting of the XVIIth – XIXth centuries.
19. British pop-art.
20. British alternative music (1950ies and on).
21. Architecture in the UK. Main styles. From Norman to Post-modern styles.
22. English Impressionism.
23. Social security and services in the United Kingdom.
24. Famous schools and universities of the country.
25. Food and drink. Attitudes, customs and traditions.

**List of Examinational Problems on Country Studies
(The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)**

1. Symbols and general features.
2. Geographical position and borders.
3. Natural features. Climate.
4. Natural regions, notable peaks, major rivers and lakes, major islands.
5. History: Prehistory.
6. History: the Roman Period.
7. History: the Germanic invasions.
8. History: the Medieval Period.
9. History: the Renaissance Era.
10. History: Revolution-Restoration period.
11. History: the Birth of Industrial capitalism (1760ies – 1850ies).
12. History: Victorian Britain.
13. History: the 20th century.
14. History: the British Empire and its end.
15. The People: population, vital statistics, major languages, ethnic groups, major religions.
16. Economy: chief agricultural products, chief mined products, chief manufactured products, foreign trade, imports/exports/main trade partners.
17. Government: form of government.
18. Constitution, sovereign, political system, voting qualification.
19. Education: system of education, all levels of education and degrees earned.
20. Outstanding UK schools and Universities.
21. Major cities: city name/population/places of interest.
22. Holidays and customs.
23. British Sports.
24. Life style.
25. Arts and Letters in the UK. Theatre. Music. Cinema. Literature. Festivals.

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Анотація

Методичний посібник „Об'єднане Королівство Великої Британії та Північної Ірландії: підручник з країнознавства” призначено для студентів факультету іноземних мов спеціальностей „Мова та література (англійська)”, „Філологія. Англійська і східна мова та література” та „Переклад”. Посібник має за мету надати студентам загальне уявлення про історію, географію, політичний устрій, системи освіти та охорони здоров'я Великої Британії, а також про свята, традиції, ідентичність та національний характер Британців. Зміст посібника відповідає вимогам навчальної програми з курсів „Країнознавство Великої Британії” та „Лінгвокраїнознавство” для студентів старших курсів. Методичний посібник може використовуватися викладачами середніх загальноосвітніх шкіл та коледжів, а також викладачами та студентами інститутів, університетів та інших навчальних закладів.

Аннотация

Методическое пособие «Соединенное Королевство Великобритании и Северной Ирландии: учебник по страноведению» предназначено для студентов факультета иностранных языков специальности «Язык и литература (английский)», «Филология. Английский и восточный язык и литература» и «Перевод». Цель пособия – дать студентам общее представление об истории, географии, политическом устройстве, системах образования и здравоохранения Великобритании, а также о праздниках, традициях, идентичности и национальном характере Британцев. Содержание пособия соответствует требованиям учебной программы курсов «Страноведение Великобритании» и «Лингвострановедение» для студентов старших курсов. Методическое пособие может использоваться преподавателями средних общеобразовательных школ и колледжей, а также преподавателями и студентами институтов, университетов и др.

Summary

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: a Manual for Country Studies is a teaching handout intended for students of foreign languages department, specialities “Language and Literature (English)”, “Philology. English and Oriental language and literature” and “Translation Studies”. The book aims at exploring the United Kingdom by giving the structured and detailed information about its history, geography, political and educational systems, welfare, holidays and traditions, national character and identity. The content of the book conforms to the requirements of the syllabus of “Country Studies: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” for senior students. It can be used by teachers of English at colleges and secondary schools, and by students of institutes, universities and other educational institutions.

Навчально-методичне видання

ЄЛІСЄЄВ Сергій Леонідович
КУПІНСЬКА Тетяна Олександрівна

ОБ'ЄДНАНЕ КОРОЛІВСТВО ВЕЛИКОЇ БРИТАНІЇ ТА ПІВНІЧНОЇ ІРЛАНДІЇ: ПІДРУЧНИК З КРАЇНОЗНАВСТВА

*Навчально-методичний посібник для студентів
факультету іноземних мов вищих навчальних закладів*

Англійською мовою

Методичний посібник „Об'єднане Королівство Великої Британії та Північної Ірландії: підручник з країнознавства” призначено для студентів факультету іноземних мов спеціальностей „Мова та література (англійська)”, „Філологія. Англійська і східна мова та література” та „Переклад”. Посібник має за мету надати студентам загальне уявлення про історію, географію, політичний устрій, системи освіти та охорони здоров'я Великої Британії, а також про свята, традиції, ідентичність та національний характер Британців.

Зміст посібника відповідає вимогам навчальної програми з курсів „Країнознавство Великої Британії” та „Лінгвокраїнознавство” для студентів старших курсів. Методичний посібник може використовуватися викладачами середніх загальноосвітніх шкіл та коледжів, а також викладачами та студентами інститутів, університетів та інших навчальних закладів.

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Комп'ютерне макетування – Т. О. Купінська
Коректор – О. Г. Калініна

Здано до склад. 04.11.2013 р. Підп. до друку 04.12.2013 р.
Формат 80x64 1/16. Бумага офсет. Гарнітура Times New Roman.
Друк ризографічний. Ум. др. арк. 10,87. Наклад 300 прим. Зам. № 220.

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Свідоцтво суб'єкта видавничої справи ДК № 3459 від 09.04.2009 р.