KÁROLY PINTÉR

Introduction to Britain

egyetemi jegyzet

Károly Pintér: *Introduction to Britain*

A textbook for students of English

3rd revised edition

2014

Table of Contents

ELŐSZÓ

Ez a tankönyv a harmadik, átdolgozott és e-book formában történő megjelentetésre előkészített kiadása annak a kötetnek, amely először *Introduction to the Civilisation of Great Britain* címmel jelent meg a Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Karának kiadásában 1998-ban, majd *Introduction to Britain* címmel 2007-ben és 2010-ben is napvilágot látott ugyancsak a PPKE BTK kiadványaként. Az eredeti tankönyvet a szükség szülte: az elsőéves angol szakos hallgatók számára nem állt rendelkezésre megfelelő tankönyv a hasonló című kurzus elvégzéséhez, a hasonló jellegű brit kiadványok ára pedig annyira magas volt (és maradt), hogy úgy éreztem, ilyen anyagi terhet jó szívvel nem rakhatok diákjaink nyakába egyetlen kurzus miatt. Így aztán egyetlen lehetőség maradt: megkíséreltem saját magam megírni a kurzus tankönyvét. Noha eredetileg csupán saját karunk angol szakos hallgatóinak szántam a könyvet, kézen-közön más intézményekbe is eljutott, és a hozzám visszaérkezett vélemények szerint hasznosnak és népszerűnek bizonyult.

Egy országismereti tankönyv jellegéből adódóan időről időre frissítésre, aktualizálásra szorul. Az első kiadás megjelenése óta immár több, mint másfél évtized telt el, ami országismereti jellegű munkák esetében igen hosszú idő, ráadásul az Egyesült Királyságban számos fontos intézményi reform és egyéb változás is lezajlott 1998 óta. A Tony Blair vezette munkáspárti kormány 1997 és 2007 között népszavazás alapján autonóm törvényhozással és végrehajtó testülettel ruházta fel Skóciát és Walest; ugyancsak népszavazással megerősített többoldalú békeszerződést írt alá Észak-Írországban, amely ha teljes békét és stabilitást nem is eredményezett, de legalább véget vetett a vérontásnak és a terrorcselekményeknek; alapjaiban reformálta meg a Lordok Házát; megszüntetett vagy átalakított olyan több évszázados intézményeket, mint a lordkancelláré, ugyanakkor viszont létrehozta a Legfelső Bíróságot, amely ezidáig nem létezett; az angol egyetemek számára pedig engedélyezte a felsőoktatási tandíjak kivetését. A 2010 óta kormányzó David Cameron konzervatív és liberális demokrata koalíciós kormánya alatt is fontos intézkedésekre került sor: népszazásra bocsátották és elvetették a választási rendszer évtizedek óta követelt reformját; 5 évben határozták meg az alsóház két választás közötti "élettartamát"; és Skócia lakói kis többséggel ugyan, de elutasították az ország függetlenné válását.

A fenti reformokat a tankönyv mind részletesen tárgyalja, de természetesen ezen túlmenően is igyekeztem minden lehetséges adatot és információt frissíteni, aktualizálni. Mindemellett a tankönyv célja alapvetően változatlan maradt: **elsősorban magyar anyanyelvű és magyar kulturális hátterű hallgatókat szeretnék tömör, de mégis informatív, áttekintő jellegű és az összehasonlítás módszerével minden lehetséges esetben élő tananyaggal ellátni**.

A jelen tankönyv nem kíván versenyre kelni a hasonló témájú és tartalmú brit kiadványokkal, amelyeket többnyire az Oxford University Press, a Longman és a Routledge jelentetett meg (egy reprezentatív lista az angol nyelvű bevezető végén található). Ezek egytől egyig kiváló, rendkívül felkészült és tájékozott brit szerzők munkái, információbőségben és sokoldalúságban messze felülmúlják azt, amit jelen tankönyv és szerzője nyújtani tud. A fenti munkáknak azonban számos erényük mellett egy nyilvánvaló gyengéjük is van: egyiket sem elsősorban magyar közönségnek szánták, szerzőik nyilvánvalóan nem lehettek tekintettel egy fiatal magyar középiskolás vagy egyetemi hallgató nyelvi szintjére, tájékozottságára, műveltségi hátterére. Meggyőződésem szerint ez az a sajátos didaktikai feladat, amelyben egy magyar szerző által magyar felhasználóknak írt tankönyv hasznosabb, jobb, célravezetőbb lehet, mint az általánosságban külföldiek számára készült brit munka.

Jelen tankönyv elsődleges célja egy olyan kulturális alapműveltség átadása, amelynek birtokában egy felsőfokú nyelvismerettel rendelkező hallgató sikeresebben tud eligazodni a brit politikában, társadalomban és kultúrában, akár személyesen (turistaként, idegenvezetőként vagy munkavállalóként), akár közvetetten (irodalomban, filmen, újságcikkben, fordítóként stb.) találkozik valamely vetületével. Éppen ezért nem törekedhet teljességre, sőt éppen ellenkezőleg: a rendelkezésre álló, szinte áttekinthetetlenül hatalmas anyagot igyekeztem fontossági szempontból szűrni és válogatni, és lehetőleg minél kevesebb felesleges vagy túlságosan aprólékos információval terhelni az olvasókat. Ugyanakkor viszont fontos feladatnak tekintettem az összehasonlító megközelítés minél gyakoribb alkalmazását, hiszen minden idegen kultúrát saját kultúránk 'szemüvegén' keresztül nézünk, ez az a koordinátarendszer, amelyben megkíséreljük értelmezni, elhelyezni az új információkat. Ezt a célt szolgálja az egyes fejezetek elején szereplő *Think of Hungary First!* rész, ahol az adott témakört igyekeztem magyar vonatkozású kérdésekkel körbejárni, és ezáltal az olvasók emlékezetébe idézni azt, amit saját országuk hasonlóságairól és különbségeiről tudnak. A leíró szövegekben is visszatérően utalok a magyar párhuzamokra és különbségekre. Oktatói tapasztalatom alapján meggyőződésem, hogy a brit országismeret sikeres oktatása elsősorban azon múlik, hogy mennyire képesek a magyar hallgatók saját országuk intézményeiről és kultúrájáról rendelkezésre álló tudásukhoz, tapasztalataikhoz kapcsolni az elsajátítandó új ismereteket.

A kulturális műveltség egyik legfontosabb oldala az ún. 'cultural literacy' (magyarul talán kissé furcsán csengő kifejezéssel élve 'kulturális írástudás'), vagyis az, hogy ne csak a nyelvet, hanem az adott kultúrkör legfontosabb fogalmait, kifejezéseit is ismerjük és helyesen értsük, azaz képesek legyünk azokat a megfelelő szövegkörnyezetben és összefüggésrendszerben elhelyezni. Ezt a célt szolgálja az egyes fejezetek végén elhelyezett *Key Concepts* lista, ahol kizárólag azokat (a fejezetek szövegében vastag betűvel jelölt és a szövegben vagy lábjegyzetben részletesen megmagyarázott) a fogalmakat sorolom fel, amelyek ismerete véleményem szerint elengedhetetlen az adott témakör magabiztos áttekintéséhez. **A szövegben vastag betűvel szedett fogalmak** egyben figyelemfelhíváskéntis szolgálnak: ezek **alapos, az adott témakör kontextusába illeszkedő megértése a vizsgára való felkészülés egyik legfontosabb része**.

A tankönyv másik fontos oldala a nyelvi fejlesztés. Noha nyilvánvalóan nem nyelvtankönyvnek készült, a szöveg megformálásában igyekeztem tekintettel lenni egy elsőéves angol szakos egyetemi hallgató nyelvi felkészültségére. Azt ugyan nem állítom, hogy a tankönyv szövege könnyű, hiszen felsőfokú szintű nyelvtani ismereteket és szókincset feltételez, ám lehetőség szerint kerültem a ritka szavakat, a túlságosan választékos kifejezéseket vagy megfogalmazásokat, kivéve, ha azok az adott témakörben nem helyettesíthetők mással. **Szókincsfejlesztő célzattal viszont minden fejezetben aláhúzással jelöltem azokat a szavakat és kifejezéseket, amelyek véleményem szerint hasznosak vagy egyenesen nélkülözhetetlenek az adott témakör tárgyalásához. Ezen szavak kiírása, kiszótárazása és megtanulása nem kötelező, de melegen ajánlott a vizsgára való felkészüléshez.**

A tankönyv témaköreinek gyakorlásához hasznos segédeszköz lehet kapcsolódó aktuális újságcikkek elolvasása és elemzése, amelyben az egyes témakörök fogalmai és az ezzel kapcsolatos problémák konkrétan is megjelennek. Maga a tankönyv azonban ilyen szövegeket nem tartalmaz, részben copyright-problémák miatt, részben pedig azért, mert az ilyen jellegű aktuális szövegek nagyon gyorsan avulnak.

Végezetül egy feloldhatatlannak látszó dilemmával is szembe kellett néznem: egy országismereti tankönyvnek elmaradhatatlan része kellene, hogy legyen a szöveg vizuális

illusztrációja: fényképek, térképek, ismert helyek és személyiségek, stb. Ám ennek az elvárásnak nehéz megfelelni egy olyan elektronikus formátumú tankönyv esetében, amelyet a felhasználók egy része számítógépen, tableten, könyvolvasón vagy okostelefonon fog olvasni (mely készülékek nyilván bármilyen illusztrációt kíválóan meg tudnak jeleníteni), más részük viszont kinyomtatja fekete-fehérben, amely viszont a legtöbb illusztrációt teljesen használhatatlanná teszik. Ezt a csapdát úgy próbáltam áthidalni, hogy az illusztrációkat a minimálisra korlátoztam a tankönyv szövegében, viszont a szerzői honlapomon folyamatosan frissített térkép-, illusztráció és segédanyag-gyűjteménnyel állok az érdeklődők rendelkezésére. Az elérési út: https://btk.ppke.hu/karunkrol/intezetek-tanszekek/angol-amerikai-intezet/oktatok/pinter-karoly/pinter-karoly/kurzusok-courses. Ezenfelül természetesen a *Use the Internet!* részben megadott linkek felfedezését is melegen ajánlom. Remélem, hogy a tankönyv így is hasznosnak és érdekesnek bizonyul majd.

Budapest, 2014. szeptember 3.

Pintér Károly

INTRODUCTION

This book is the third, completely revised edition – and the first e-book version – of my textbook which was first published under the title *Introduction to the Civilisation of Great Britain* by the Faculty of Humanities of Pázmány Péter Catholic University in 1998, and then as *Introduction to Britain* in 2007 and 2010, also by PPCU. The fundamental purpose of the book is still the same: to serve as a textbook for students in 'Introduction to Britain' or 'Introduction to British life/culture/civilisation' courses. It covers major aspects of British geography, government and politics, law, society, education, culture and lifestyle. Its purpose is not to exhaust these topics (which would be impossible anyway) but to contain essential information in a short, condensed form and thus help students prepare for the relevant seminars and exams.

After an introductory first chapter, the four constituent countries, that is, England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are treated in separate chapters, because their history, society and culture show significant differences from those of England. While the book as a whole tries to take Scotland and Wales into account throughout, one has to admit that the majority of the information contained in the volume concerns England. This does not reflect a personal bias, but is rather a consequence of the dominant demographic, economic and political influence of England within Britain. The Republic of Ireland is not discussed in this textbook (except for a brief historical summary in the chapter about Northern Ireland), since it is an altogether different nation whose history has strongly been influenced by England and later the United Kingdom, but it differs from Britain in many ways and its examination would require a separate volume.

The material is arranged in chapters, each of which is meant to survey one larger area of interest. Each chapter begins with the section *Think of Hungary First!*, where some questions are asked in order to orientate students towards the actual topic of the chapter and to turn their attention to parallel problems existing in Hungary. Then (if necessary or applicable) some relevant statistical data are offered under the heading *Information Store*, mostly as background information rather than compulsory material. The *Test Your Knowledge!* section is meant to encourage students to add their own knowledge and experience to the topic under discussion. The *Use the Internet!* section offers some useful and informative sites, where additional information about some aspects of the topic can be found. This is followed by the main part of the chapter, the descriptive text, arranged under headings and subheadings. The chapters are concluded with a collection of the *Key Concepts*, which is a collection of the most important names, institutions and concepts related to the chapter's topic: these concept are printed in **bold** in the main text to draw reader's attention to themselves. There are also words and phrases that are <u>underlined</u> throughout the textbook: these vocabulary items are considered essential to a meaningful and precise discussion of the topic.

Please note that the textbook as a whole is not to be learned by heart! Various parts, for example statistical data, are only included to provide additional information and interesting details. **It is strongly recommended, on the other hand, that the list of the key concepts of each chapter be studied carefully**, since they are the main focus of each chapter: **they provide the first items for a kind of 'cultural literacy', an ability to understand a British newspaper article or a discussion of native speakers about such issues.** Familiarity with the underlined vocabulary items is not compulsory as such, but they provide the verbal tools without which discussion of related topics is practically impossible. When in doubt

concerning 'compulsory' and 'additional' parts of the textbook or key vocabulary items, please turn to lecturers for guidance.

Since the first and second editions of this book, significant changes have taken place in various fields of British social and political life. All the statistical data available have been updated and some of the chapters have been reorganised; nevertheless, important developments are constantly in the making, and a new parliamentary election may change the political situation in Britain from one day to the next. Therefore the textbook should also be supplemented with information from reliable internet sources; a number of such links are provided in each chapter.

While preparing this textbook, I have relied on a number of related British books and publications. The most comprehensive books focusing on modern Britain available to me for the first edition were Peter Bromhead, *Life in Modern Britain* (7th ed. Longman, 1991), David McDowall, *Britain in Close-Up* (Longman, 1993) and John Oakland, *British Civilization: An Introduction* (2nd ed. Routledge, 1991). For the revision, I have also used what is probably the best textbook available on the subject, James O'Driscoll, *Britain. The Country and Its People* (OUP, 1995), as well as John L. Irwin, *Modern Britain: An Introduction* (3rd ed. Routledge, 1994). Additional information was taken from Clare Lavery, *Focus on Britain Today* (Macmillan, 1993), David Maule, *Focus on Scotland* (Macmillan, 1989), M.D. Munro Mackenzie-L.J. Westwood, *Background to Britain* (3rd ed. Macmillan, 1983), Michael Nation, *The Dictionary of Modern Britain* (Oxford University Press, 1991), John Julius Norwich, *Britain's Heritage* (Kingfisher Books, 1993), Adrian Room, *Dictionary of Britain* (2nd ed. Oxford University Press, 1987), and Michael G. Roskin, *Countries and Concepts: An Introduction to Comparative Politics* (2nd ed. Prentice-Hall, 1986). For historical events and concepts, I have relied on John Canon ed., *The Oxford Companion to British History* (OUP, 1997). *The Oxford Guide to British and American Culture* (OUP, 1999) has been at hand throughout the revision as a reliable and excellent guide to concepts and definitions. Several brochures published by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on various subjects also proved helpful, as well as a number of internet resources, for instance reports and summaries of the 2011 UK Census.

I strongly hope that the book will serve not only as a useful tool for studies and the exam, but also as an interesting and entertaining introduction to the curious world of Great Britain.

Budapest, September 3, 2014

Pintér Károly

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I. GEOGRAPHY OF BRITAIN

Think of Hungary First!

What are the most important geographical features (climate, terrain, rivers, hills, resources etc.) of Hungary?

What are the most characteristic geographical differences between Hungary and Britain?

How does geography affect the lives of a country's (e.g. Hungary's) inhabitants?

Which are the major regions within Hungary and what differences exist between them?

Which are the largest Hungarian cities and how big are they?

Information Store

The territory and population of the constituent countries of the United Kingdom – compared to the figures of Hungary

(source: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/uk-census/index.html and http://www.ksh.hu/js/nepszamlalas/grafikonok/03_kotet/)

Country	Territory (square kilometres)	Population (Census 2011; rounded)	Population density (people per sq. km; rounded)
United Kingdom	243,820	63,182,000	259
England	130,427	53,013,000 (83.9 % of the total UK population)	406
Scotland	78,772	5,295,000 (8.4 % of UK total)	67
Wales	20,778	3,063,000 (4.8 % of UK total)	147
Great Britain altogether	229,977	61,371,000	267
Northern Ireland	13,843	1,811,000 (2.9 % of UK total)	131
Hungary	93,030	9,938,000 (2011 Census)	107

The largest urban areas – central cities and their conurbations

(Census 2011; source: Office of National Statistics)

London (12,100,000), Birmingham (2,800,000), Manchester (2,553,000), Leeds–Bradford (1,778,000), Liverpool (1,530,000), Glasgow (1,470,000), Sheffield (1,179,000), Nottingham-Derby (1,170,000), Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1,110,000), Southampton–Portsmouth (856,000), Cardiff–Newport (754,000), Bristol (617,000), Brighton (592,000), Belfast (580,000), Edinburgh (549,000), Leicester (509,000).

Test Your Knowledge!

Have you ever visited Britain? How many British cities have you seen or can you name? Which of them are English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish?

Which are the most famous natural sights of Britain?

Can you name any famous symbols or tourist attractions of Britain?

Use the Internet!

The Wikipedia entry 'British Isles' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Isles) offers a very clear and detailed explanation on the terminological difficulties with overlapping geographical and political names in Britain.

The web site of the British Office of National Statistics has a wide range of information about British population: www.statistics.gov.uk

1. ENGLAND, GREAT BRITAIN, BRITAIN, UK: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

"When people say England, they sometimes mean Great Britain, sometimes the United Kingdom, sometimes the British Isles – but never England." (George Mikes)

Foreign speakers of English, including Hungarians, tend to use terms like 'England,' 'Britain,' Great Britain,' 'UK,' 'British Isles' rather carelessly, as if their meaning was nearly the same. However, since this book wishes to describe 'Britain,' it is necessary to define what is meant by these related expressions.

First, one has to distinguish between geographical and political concepts. Geographically speaking, the **British Isles** are a group of two large and a number of small islands off the north-western coast of continental Europe (which is simply called **'the Continent'**[1] in Britain). The largest of these, which is also closest to the Continent, is called **Great Britain**.[2] The name comes from Latin 'Britannia,' which was probably derived from a Celtic word, and it has been the traditional name for the island since ancient times. The second largest island, west of Britain, is called **Ireland**. The smaller islands have never been very significant.

The political concepts are far more confusing, since they reflect the complicated history of the isles (explained below in the box). The island of Great Britain contains three different historical countries: **England** in the south, **Wales** in the west, and **Scotland** in the north. The island of Ireland is divided into two separate political units: the **Republic of Ireland** or **Éire**[3] in the south, and **Northern Ireland** (often called **Ulster** by the British) in the north. Great Britain and Northern Ireland together form one sovereign nation under the official name of 'the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**,' in short, '**the UK**.' So the UK covers not only the island of Great Britain but the northern part of Ireland as well. Great Britain, however, never includes Northern Ireland: it is strictly the political equivalent of the largest island, that is, England, Scotland, and Wales. Nevertheless, one can often hear British people say that they have a 'British passport' or they are '**British subjects**'.[4] In everyday language, 'Britain' is often used generally and briefly to the whole of country called the UK, probably because people feel that the term 'UK' is too official and abstract, it does not express a true national identity. It is easy to say 'I'm British,' but who would like to say 'I'm UK'? For historical reasons, the UK does not include the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands,

---

[1] *The Continent / Continental*: in British English, Europe without Britain. The term obviously draws a clear line of distinction between Britain and 'the rest of Europe', and it reflects that British people have traditionally not considered themselves fully part of or identical with 'Europe'.

[2] *Great Britain*: The term has a geographical and a political meaning: 1. the largest island of the British Isles; 2. the country created by the union of England and Scotland. Contrary to some beliefs, the name was not invented in 1707 when England and Scotland were united. The adjective 'great' ('*major*') was added to the name 'Britannia' in the Middle Ages to distinguish it from 'little Britain', the peninsula of Bretagne (called 'Brittany' in English) in northwestern France. As a result, the word 'great' originally did not express any positive value judgment about the country.

[3] *Éire* (pronounced /ˈeərə/): The Gaelic (Celtic) name for Ireland.

[4] *British subject*: in British English, it means the same as 'British citizen'. The difference is due to the form of state; since Britain is still a monarchy, all the inhabitants of the country are subjects of the monarch, whereas citizens are normally the inhabitants of a republic (e.g. French, German, Hungarian citizen).

either: these are autonomous communities (so-called Crown Dependencies) with separate administrative and legal systems.

The complicated political history of the British Isles explained in 7 steps

The relationship of the four main countries of the British Isles is impossible to understand without some brief history. At the time of the foundation of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1000 A.D., England and Scotland were already united and separate kingdoms, while Wales was independent of both, but it was not united under one ruler. Ireland, the second largest island, was similar to Wales, since it also consisted of several small regional 'kingdoms'. In the following 800 years, these four countries were gradually united in one political entity called the United Kingdom, but in the early 20th century the majority of Ireland split off to form an independent republic. The main changes in the historical relationship of these countries may be summed up in seven historical steps.

STEP 1: England invaded Ireland (from late 12th century): In 1171, the English king Henry II invaded the east coast of Ireland, occupied Dublin and the surrounding areas, and he was declared by the Pope and recognized by most Irish kings as 'Lord of Ireland'. After that time, all English monarchs laid claim to political control over Ireland, even though in practice most of Ireland remained independent beyond the east coast.

STEP 2: England conquered Wales (late 13th century): Between 1276 and 1284, the English king Edward I conquered the entire territory of Wales and brought it under English rule (we Hungarians are familiar with the story through János Arany's immortal poem "A walesi bárdok"). Since then, the Kingdom of England has always included Wales as a historically distinct region or territory, but the Welsh have preserved their own ethnic and cultural identity. The relationship in the Middle Ages was somewhat similar to that of the Kingdom of Hungary and Croatia.

STEP 3: England conquered Ireland (16th century): The semi-autonomous status of Ireland ended in the 16th century, when, in 1541, the English king Henry VIII summoned a national parliament to Dublin, which proclaimed him King of Ireland. This way, all later English kings automatically became kings of Ireland as well. During the next hundred years, the English monarchs systematically suppressed all resistance of Irish lords and brought the whole of Ireland under English rule. The relationship of the two countries has some similarity to the political situation between Austria and Hungary after 1711.

STEP 4: England and Scotland in personal union (after 1603): Scotland remained a separate monarchy until 1603, when the Scottish king James VI inherited the English throne, and became king of England under the name James I, since the English queen Elizabeth I remained unmarried and died without a child. For a century, the two countries were in **personal union**[5] only, which means that their monarch was the same, but they had two separate parliaments, two governments, two legal systems, etc. So Scotland was still separate from England, but the kings of Scotland ruled the country from London, and became more and more distant from their 'original' native land.

STEP 5: England and Scotland united as Great Britain (1707): The legal relationship between the two kingdoms was changed by the **Scottish Act of Union** (1707), which created a new, united monarchy out of the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland. This new monarchy received the name 'the **Kingdom of Great Britain.**' Since then the term has had a political as well as a geographical meaning. The Kingdom of Great Britain had only one Crown, one monarch, one parliament and one government (in London), so the separate Scottish parliament and government were abolished, and Scottish members were added to the Parliament in London, which became the Parliament of Great Britain. This way, the 1707 Act of Union united the whole of the island of Britain under one monarchy and one government. Therefore, the word 'British' has no proper meaning before 1707, but after this date, it is a mistake to talk about 'English colonies' or 'English monarch/army/navy', since the correct expression is 'British monarch/colony/army/navy etc.'

STEP 6: Great Britain and Ireland united as the United Kingdom (1800): After the creation of the Kingdom of Great Britain in 1707, Ireland remained a separate kingdom ruled by the British monarchs. In 1800, the **Irish**

---

[5] *Personal union*: The loosest form of association between two sovereign states; they remain separate in all aspects but share a common head of state, typically a monarch. It was common in the Middle Ages and early modern Europe, when dynastic marriages often brought a foreign monarch to the throne of another kingdom.

Act of Union created 'the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland**,' in short, '**the UK**.' Similarly to the Scottish Act of Union, the separate Irish parliament and government were abolished, and Irish members joined the British Parliament in London. This way, the two large islands came under a single government. Ever since then, the official name of the country governed from London has been 'the UK.' Curiously, however, the UK never became an adjective, so in everyday language, the people, the monarch, the national institutions are continued to be called 'British'.

STEP 7: Northern Ireland separated from Ireland (1922): Most of the Irish never liked to live under English/British rule, and they rebelled many times against it during their long common history. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Irish demanded some form of autonomous government, or **home rule**, for Ireland, but they were refused. Therefore during World War I they revolted against the London government. Following a bloody civil war, in 1922 Ireland was divided into two political parts. The larger, southern part ultimately became an independent country called '**the Republic**' in everyday British English (since the UK is a monarchy) while the smaller, northern part remained within the UK. Therefore today the official name of the country is 'the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**.'

2. AN ISLAND COUNTRY

The island of Great Britain (excluding Northern Ireland) is almost two and a half times the size of Hungary. More than half of this territory belongs to England, and one-third is occupied by Scotland. Great Britain stretches to roughly 1000 km in the north-south direction (from northern Scotland to southern England) and to almost 500 km from western Wales to East Anglia, but this west-east distance is considerably smaller further north. Great Britain is separated from the Continent by the **English Channel**, the narrowest part of which (about 32 km wide) is called the **Strait of Dover**. North-east Ireland is also very close to Great Britain: it is separated from Scotland by the 21 km wide North Channel. The small sea between the two islands is called the Irish Sea. Apart from that, Great Britain is 'bordered' by the **Atlantic Ocean** to the south-west and the north-west, and the **North Sea** to the east and north-east.

The fact that Britain is an island, separated from the European continent by the sea, has had a huge influence on the history of the country as well as the character of its inhabitants. It is easy to realize this by comparing Britain to Hungary. Britain's borders have never been disputed; the surrounding seas have protected it from foreign invasions (English people like to boast that the last successful foreign invasion against them was the **Norman Conquest**[6] in 1066, almost a thousand years ago!) and kept it away from the wars and conflicts of Europe. Neither Napoleon nor Hitler was able to invade or defeat Britain; the country lost many lives but suffered far less destruction in the two world wars than any other European nation. The closeness of the sea encouraged other developments as well. From the 16th century, after the discovery of the Americas, when the Atlantic Ocean became the centre of international trade routes, Britain developed a huge merchant fleet as well as a powerful navy. As a result, Britain became the greatest sea power in the world by the 18th century, erecting the largest empire in the history of humanity. All these historical developments gave British people a good deal of national pride and a sense of superiority towards other nations, including the rest of Europe.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of the insularity of Britain has been its peaceful, autonomous political, social and cultural development. Although Britain was never culturally isolated from Europe (France particularly had a strong cultural influence over Britain for centuries), the lack

---

[6] *Norman Conquest*: The successful conquest of the English kingdom by William the Conqueror of Normandy, France, and his army. William defeated the English king, Harold, in the Battle of Hastings close to the southeastern coast in 1066. As a result of the Conquest, medieval England received a strong social, cultural and linguistic influence from Northern France.

of foreign invasions and <u>destructive</u> wars allowed the country to shape its own institutions without any outside pressure or <u>compulsion</u>. As a result, British political, social and legal institutions are the result of centuries of continuous, organic development, with only one violent episode – the **English Revolution**[7] – in the 17th century. Britain was the first country in Europe to gradually eliminate the <u>feudal</u> institution of <u>serfdom</u>,[8] in the 18th and 19th centuries it became the <u>cradle</u> of the **industrial revolution** which transformed human lifestyle beyond recognition, and it was the first nation where <u>urbanization</u> brought the majority of the population into towns and cities from the countryside.

In the second half of the 20th century, Britain's relationship to 'the Continent' or Europe changed tremendously. First of all, Britain was forced to admit that it was no longer a world power, and most of its <u>overseas colonies</u> gradually became independent too. The decline of international British power coincided with the rise of the **European Community**[9] (later **European Union**), which was originally a French-German project, and Britain observed it with <u>suspicion</u>. However, the British soon had to realize that the EC offers <u>economic benefits</u> they also needed, therefore they ultimately joined in 1974. While the majority of the British have remained <u>sceptical</u> about the EU, and British governments tend to oppose further <u>integration</u> (e.g. Britain is one of the few countries that refused to join the common <u>currency</u>, the euro), the EU membership has brought Britain much closer to the rest of Europe in mentality and culture.

3. Climate, Hills, Rivers

"In England the weather is an ever-interesting, even thrilling topic, and you must be good at discussing the weather." (George Mikes)

The <u>climate</u> of Great Britain is also primarily determined by the surrounding seas. On the one hand, summers are cooler and wetter than in Hungary since the ocean tends to cool the air and provides a steady <u>supply</u> of <u>rainfall</u>. Winters, however, are milder than in Hungary and (except for northern Scotland or northern Wales) the island is hardly ever covered by lasting

---

[7] *English Revolution (1642–1660)*: Perhaps the greatest political and social upheaval in English history. The tense conflict between King Charles I (1628–1649) and the Parliament of London led to a Civil War in 1642, which ended with the victory of Parliament in 1645. After Charles escaped from captivity and tried to defeat Parliament again with Scottish help in 1647, he was captured, convicted for treason against its own people, and executed in 1649 (the only instance in English history). England was declared a Commonwealth (or republic), but real power was concentrated in the hands of Oliver Cromwell, the commander of the Parliamentary army. Cromwell was made a Lord Protector in 1653, and ruled over the entire British Isles (including Scotland and Ireland) with an iron hand until his death in 1658. After a period of internal anarchy, the executed king's son, Charles II, was invited back to the throne in 1660, and the monarchy was restored (it is called the Restoration in British tradition).

[8] *serfdom*: A typical social institution of the European Middle Ages. Serfs were mostly agricultural labourers who were in permanent servitude, attached to the lord of the land they cultivated. In England, serfdom practically disappeared by 1500, whereas in Eastern Europe, it survived into the 19th century, hampering social and economic modernization.

[9] *European Community* (EC): It was created by the Treaty of Rome signed in 1957 by France, Italy, West Germany, Holland, Belgium, and Luxemburg, as an international economic cooperation. In everyday language, it was often called the 'Common Market'. After the accession of several new members, the integration was reorganized and renamed European Union (EU) in 1993, after the Maastricht Treaty was signed by the member states.

snow. These mild winters are mostly due to the **Gulf Stream**,[10] which passes by the southern coast of Britain on its way from the Gulf of Mexico toward Norway, and keeps much of the island warm during the coldest months. As a result, the climate of the island is characteristically temperate: the temperature rarely goes below -10°C or above 30°C and the monthly averages range between 3-5°C in winter and 11-16°C in summer (of course, both the average temperatures and extreme figures are lower up in Scotland or in the hilly regions of Wales and Northern England). Therefore, Britain is most often characterised by the words 'cool' and 'mild' rather than 'hot' and 'cold'.

Winds in Britain most often blow from the west and the south-west, from the direction of the Atlantic Ocean. These winds bring most of the rain clouds to Britain and, since most of the hills and mountains lie in the west and the north, the west and the north of Britain have the highest annual rainfall (over 2,000 mm per year). In contrast, the south and the east are the driest: East Anglia and the London area have less than 700 mm of rain a year. But even these driest areas have more rain than the average in Hungary (550-600 mm). The national average is over 1,100 mm annually, which means that Britain has roughly twice as much rain in a year as Hungary. None of the seasons can be called 'dry' but the months from March to June are relatively the driest, whereas the period from September to January is the wettest.

For a Hungarian, the weather often looks grey, damp and windy with too little sunshine. The most striking difference is felt perhaps during the British summers, which may have beautiful sunny spells, but it is also not unusual to hardly see the sun for several days. Since winters are also mostly rainy and without snow, Britain often looks like a permanent wet autumn extended for a whole year. The British climate is also famously unpredictable. The weather may change several times even in a single day, and a sunny morning is no reason to leave your raincoat at home. This is probably one of the reasons why the weather has become such a favourite topic – almost a national pastime – of everyday conversation. On the other hand, the climate has its advantages: the lack of extremes and the reliable rainfall is beneficial for agriculture and produces the characteristically lush green colour of the British countryside, which looks so beautiful on a sunny day.

For thousands of years, until about 5000 BC, both Britain and Ireland were part of the European mainland: they became separated from the Continent and each other only at the end of the last Ice Age, when the melting of the huge ice sheets raised the sea level and the area of the present English Channel, the Irish Sea and some of the North Sea was covered by water. These seas are still very shallow, often less than 90 m deep and, similarly, the southern and eastern parts of Britain tend to be flat or undulating lowlands less than 300 m above sea level. Practically all the higher mountains are in the west and the north: the **Scottish Highlands** in northern Scotland, the **Cambrian Mountains** in Wales, the **Pennines**[11] in the north of England, and the **Lake District** in the northwest of England. These are naturally cooler and wetter regions, less favourable for agricultural production, and have always had a much lower population density than the fertile lands of the south and the east.

As a result of the high rainfall, Britain is typically rich in water. Rivers tend to be relatively short but most have enormously long and wide estuaries which are good natural harbours and have been used for such purposes since prehistoric times. The longest river of Britain is the

---

[10] *Gulf Stream*: A warm ocean current originating from the Gulf of Mexico (hence the name) and flowing northeastward across the Atlantic Ocean towards the British Isles and Norway. It is primarily responsible for the fact that Western Europe has a much milder winter climate than other regions on the same latitude (e.g. North America or Central Asia).

[11] *The Pennines* (pronounced /ˈpenaɪnz/): a relatively low range of hills stretching from the northern Midlands to the Scottish border in a north-south direction.

Severn,[12] which <u>rises</u> in Wales and, after making a curve in the English Midlands, <u>flows</u> into the Atlantic; its wide estuary separates southern Wales from the English West Country. The best-known British river, however, is probably the **Thames**,[13] which rises in the English Midlands, crosses England in a south-eastern direction (flowing through Oxford and Windsor on its way), and flows into the North Sea just east of London. Several other large rivers have a large city near its estuary: the city of Liverpool is on the <u>Mersey</u>[14] in northwest England; the city of Hull is on the <u>Humber</u> and Newcastle is on the <u>Tyne</u> in northeastern England; in Scotland, the city of Glasgow is on the <u>Clyde</u> and Edinburgh is on the <u>Forth</u>. There are a number of beautiful lakes in the Scottish Highlands and in the Lake District in north-eastern England.

4. How United is the United Kingdom?

Devolution: the Road to Independence?

As we have mentioned in the brief political history of the British Isles (see box on page 11–12), between 1800 and 1922 the United Kingdom governed both islands under one single parliament and government based in London. The separation of the Irish Free State (later the Republic of Ireland) in 1922 reduced the size of the United Kingdom considerably, and changed its structure of government too, since the newly created Northern Ireland received a significant amount of <u>autonomy</u> from London: a new Northern Irish parliament (popularly called **Stormont**) was <u>established</u> in Belfast and the <u>affairs</u> of Northern Ireland were mostly handled by the regional Northern Irish government. This was the first instance of a new kind of political change within the United Kingdom: the <u>decentralization</u> of political power.

The autonomous government of Northern Ireland provided an example for the two smaller members of Great Britain, Scotland and Wales, to demand a certain degree of <u>self-government</u> for themselves. This movement came to be called **devolution**[15] in Britain, and it was originally <u>advocated</u> by <u>nationalist parties</u> in Scotland and Wales. However, the situation of the two countries was significantly different since Scotland kept some of its own separate <u>institutions</u> (such as their own <u>legal</u> and <u>educational system</u>) even after the <u>political union</u> with England, while Wales has been completely integrated with England since the 16th century (see chapters III and IV for the details of the Scottish and Welsh devolution). While the Welsh mostly put up with political union with England before the 20th century, a significant part of the Scottish public never liked the Act of Union in 1707, and felt nostalgic about the times when Scotland was still a separate kingdom.

The popularity of Scottish and Welsh nationalist movements gradually grew after World War II, but for different reasons. In Scotland, the traditional <u>heavy industries</u> suffered from a huge economic crisis in the 1960s, and the closing of Scottish <u>shipyards</u>, <u>coal mines</u> and <u>steel mills</u>, as well as the high levels of <u>unemployment</u> in Scotland were blamed on the London government by many people. In Wales, the primary concern was the protection of the Welsh

---

[12] *Severn*: pronounced /ˈsevə(r)n/

[13] *Thames*: pronounced irregularly as /temz/, despite the th- spelling at the beginning of the word.

[14] *Mersey*: pronounced /ˈmɜː(r)zɪ/

[15] *devolution* (pronounced /ˌdiːvəˈluːʃn/)*:* The noun derives from the word 'to devolve (power)' which means 'to transfer, to pass on', hence the slightly strange term, which has nothing to do with Darwin's theory of evolution.

language and the cultural tradition and identity of Welsh people against a growing influence of English. As a result of these trends, both the **Scottish National Party (SNP)**[16] and **Plaid Cymru**,[17] the Welsh nationalist party, gained more popular support from the late 1960s. Their most important demand was **home rule** for Scotland and Wales. The **Labour Party** government held a **referendum**[18] in both countries in 1979, but the number of 'Yes' votes did not reach the required amount, so devolution was not put into practice.

Between 1979 and 1997 the **Conservative Party** governed Britain, which strongly opposed devolution, therefore the movement made no progress during that time. In 1997, the Labour Party won the elections again, and immediately held a referendum in both countries about the creation of devolved Scottish and Welsh legislatures and governments. In Scotland, nationalists scored a a sweeping victory as almost 75% of the voters supported an autonomous **Scottish Parliament** and government together with the authority to raise taxes. In Wales, support was smaller: just a little bit more than 50% of voters voted for an autonomous **Welsh Assembly** with far more limited powers than those of the Scottish legislature.

The first Scottish and Welsh elections were held in 1999, and ever since that time, both countries have their own elected law-making body as well as their own regional executive body (the **Scottish Government** and the **Welsh Government**), led by a **First Minister**. The devolution settlement means that the Scottish and Welsh legislatures received 'devolved powers' from the UK Parliament. Any powers which remain with the UK Parliament in London are called 'reserved powers'. Reserved powers include foreign affairs, defence, national security, immigration and naturalization:[19] these are areas about which neither the Scots nor the Welsh may pass any laws. But they have authority in matters of education, health care, social services, transport, environment, and local government.

Since the creation of the Scottish and Welsh devolved governments as well as the reorganization of the Northern Irish government in 1998 (see chapter V), the only part of the United Kingdom that does not have its own separate autonomous government is England, the largest of the four constituent countries. The UK Parliament in London passes laws for the whole country, including England, but there is no separate legislature or executive body for England only. As a result, the UK still cannot be called a federal country like Germany or the United States of America, since certain parts of it have both a national and a regional government, other areas are governed by the national government only. But devolution certainly made the UK a lot less centralized than it used to be in the previous 200 years.

Since 1999, an interesting development has taken place both in Scotland and in Wales: while the Labour Party was the most famous political party at the time of the first elections, the popularity of the nationalist parties has gradually grown. In Scotland, the SNP had managed to take over government by 2007, and they immediately began to campaign for their long-standing goal: the complete independence of Scotland from the United Kingdom. After long and tough debates, ultimately the British government agreed to hold a referendum on Scottish independence on September 18, 2014. The question was "Should Scotland be an independent

---

[16] *Scottish National Party (SNP)*: Political party founded in 1934 with the aim of re-establishing Scottish independence. They won their first seat in the UK House of Commons in 1967. Devolution did not satisfy the party, but they celebrated it as an important step towards a fully independent Scotland.

[17] *Plaid Cymru* (pronounced /ˌplaɪd ˈkʌmrɪ/, English: 'Party of Wales'): Welsh nationalist party, founded in 1925 in order to make Wales an independent country. The party strongly promotes Welsh language and culture. They first managed to get an MP elected to Parliament in 1966.

[18] *referendum*: a general vote by all the people in a country, region or area, to decide a political issue.

[19] *naturalization* /ˌnætʃrəlaɪˈzeɪʃn/: this strange expression means 'giving the citizenship to a person of foreign nationality' in both British and American English. When somebody receives a UK passport, he or she is 'naturalized'.

country?". After a passionate campaign by both the supporters (the SNP and other nationalists) and opponents (the three largest political parties) of independence, the 'No' votes won with a 55% majority. But the London government promised to increase the autonomy of the Scottish devolved government in the near future.

North v. South

If we take Britain as a whole, and ignore traditional regional borders, the most important division within the country is essentially very simple: it is between the **North** (which in this sense includes the industrial West Midlands, Northern England, and all of Wales and Scotland) and the **South** (which in this sense primarily means London and its larger area of influence). The division can be compared to the West v. East division in Hungary, as the western part of the country has always been closer to the more developed regions of Europe and as a result has always been wealthier and more modern than the relatively poorer and more backward eastern part (but a significant difference is that the capital Budapest is not in the west but in the centre of the country, on the boundary between the two main regions). In Britain, the South has always been the closest to continental Europe, especially France and the Netherlands, which belonged to the most developed regions of Europe in the Middle Ages and early modern times. With its more favourable climate, better agricultural opportunities, and the capital London, the South naturally became the centre of economic and political power, and it had a much denser population.

This trend was broken only once, during and after the **industrial revolution** in the 19th and early 20th century, when the closeness of natural resources like coal and water as well as earlier industrial traditions led to the growth of large industrial towns and cities in the North and the Midlands. This development changed the balance of population and increased the social and economic importance of the North. However, after World War II the traditional industries lost their earlier significance and could not compete successfully with their international rivals, which resulted in the dramatic decline of traditional coal mining, the iron and steel, and textile industries. As a result, the old, traditional dominance of the South has returned, where over one-third of British people live.

Nowadays, economic prosperity as well as social development is almost directly proportional with closeness to London. The **Home Counties**, **East Anglia** and the **East Midlands** (for definitions, see chapter II) have always been closer to the centre of political authority and international trade routes, and enjoyed a greater prosperity since the Middle Ages. Regions further away from the capital, particularly Scotland, Wales, and the North of England, have always resented the power of the South.

The difference can be seen in statistical figures as well. Average incomes are higher and unemployment is much lower in the South (although prices and the cost of living also tend to be more expensive in the South). More people go to university and more have middle-class jobs. More have cars and more own their homes. Health is better: fewer people die of illnesses associated with poor living conditions, pollution or bad diet. The better prosperity and the various job opportunities draw many people from the North to the South, especially to the London area.

The social and economic differences are reflected in a sharp political division: the majority of the richer, more middle-class South typically supports the Conservative Party, while the North, especially the big industrial cities, have long been the major bases of the Labour Party (see chapter VII about British politics).

The cultural differences between South and North are also large and manifold. Most of the characteristic and popular features of England and the English are more typical of the southerners. For instance, northern <u>accents</u> of English (including Welsh and Scottish <u>dialects</u>) are very different from standard British English which is based on southern dialects (even though there are many regional and social dialects in the South too). Northerners, Welshmen and Scotsmen are generally more friendly and <u>outgoing</u> than the "typical Englishman" of the South with their polite, <u>reserved</u> and distant manners. Northern communities have a strong <u>sense of loyalty</u> and identity that is less characteristic of the South, with its more mixed population.

It would be a mistake, however, to <u>exaggerate</u> the differences between North and South. Although most British people readily accept that such differences exist, they also <u>emphasize</u> the many features which unite the British, such as the <u>common language</u>, centuries of common history, the <u>national institutions</u> (like the monarchy, the Parliament, the <u>armed forces</u>, the <u>NHS</u>, etc.) as well as the common <u>cultural heritage</u>.

Key concepts

Atlantic Ocean

British Isles

British subject

Cambrian Mountains

devolution

East Anglia

Edinburgh

England

English Channel

English Revolution

European Community / Union

First Minister

Great Britain

Gulf Stream

Home Counties

home rule

industrial revolution

Ireland

Irish Act of Union

Lake District

Midlands

Norman Conquest

North Sea

North—South

Northern Ireland / Ulster

Pennines

personal union

Plaid Cymru

referendum

Republic of Ireland / Éire

Scotland

Scottish Act of Union

Scottish Highlands

Scottish National Party / SNP

Scottish Parliament / Government

Severn

Stormont

Strait of Dover

Thames

the Continent

United Kingdom / UK

Wales

Welsh Assembly / Government

West Country

II. ENGLAND

Think of Hungary First!

What difference would it have made in Hungarian history if Hungary were located on an island?

Compare the role of Budapest within Hungary to the role of London within England! What similarities and differences can you discover?

Where are the most important Hungarian cities within the country? What is their relationship to Budapest?

Information Store

The territory and population of England – compared to the figures of Hungary

(source: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/uk-census/index.html and http://www.ksh.hu/js/nepszamlalas/grafikonok/03_kotet/)

Country	Territory (square kilometres)	Population (Census 2011; rounded)	Population density (people per sq. km; rounded)
England	130,427	53,013,000 (83.9% of the total UK population)	406
Hungary	93,030 (71.3% of the territory of England)	9,938,000 (18.7% of the English population)	107

The largest urban areas within England – central cities and their conurbations

(Census 2011; source: Office of National Statistics)

London (12,100,000), Birmingham (2,800,000), Manchester (2,553,000), Leeds–Bradford (1,778,000), Liverpool (1,530,000), Sheffield (1,179,000), Nottingham-Derby (1,170,000), Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1,110,000), Southampton–Portsmouth (856,000), Bristol (617,000), Brighton (592,000), Leicester (509,000).

Test Your Knowledge!

Have you ever visited England? If yes, have you been anywhere outside London?

Which are the most famous natural sights of England (as opposed to Scotland or Wales)?

Can you name any famous symbols or tourist attractions of Britain?

If you need to name three world-famous Englishmen, which people would be your choices?

Use the Internet!

The web site of the British Office of National Statistics has a wide range of information about population of England: www.statistics.gov.uk

1. ENGLISH V. BRITISH: WHEN TO USE WHICH TERM?

In the Hungarian mind, the concepts of 'England' and 'Britain' are hopelessly confused. Even educated and informed people tend to commit such errors as calling Winston Churchill „the famous English Prime Minister" in Hungarian or referring to the British Empire as „the English colonies". Such mistakes are obviously based on the fact that England is the largest, richest, and politically most influential part of Great Britain, and it was England which conquered or peacefully occupied the other countries on the British Isles. Still, it is crucial to understand the difference of meaning between the two terms, which we will try to sum up in a few simple points:

1. **Government and politics is never 'English', always 'British':** Since 1707, the political union of the Kingdom of England and the Kingdom of Scotland, there has been no separate English parliament or English government – their functions have been taken over by the **British Parliament** and the **British Government**, led by the **British Prime Minister**. Since the position of the Prime Minister developed only during the 18th century, there has never been a single 'English Prime Minister' – every one of them were British Prime Ministers, including Winston Churchill. Parliament, the government, its departments or ministries, as well as its leaders, members and officers should be called 'British' under all circumstances because 'England' as a separate political entity does not exist and has not existed for over 300 years.

2. **National institutions are never 'English', always 'British':** The same rule applies to all public and national institutions in the country: the **British monarch** (even though he/she is both the king/queen of England and Scotland but the two titles are considered inseparable by now), the former **British Empire** (or today's Commonwealth), the armed forces, the **British Museum**, the **BBC**, or even private companies that used to be publicly owned like British Airways or British Gas are never called 'English' because their power, authority or influence is not restricted to England only. The only exception to this rule is the **Bank of England,** which – contrary to ist name – is actually the national bank of Britain but has kept its original name for historical reasons.

3. **Individuals are typically English (or Scottish, or Welsh, or Irish), rarely 'British':** Despite the creation of Great Britain, and later the emergence of the United Kingdom, individuals continued to see themselves and their fellow citizens as belonging to one of the four ethnic groups of the British Isles – English, Scottish, Welsh, or Irish. Of course, there has been a large degree of mixture between these ethnic groups due to internal emigration and intermarriage, but the majority of British people still describe themselves as belonging to one of the four groups above – there has not developed a widespread British ethnic or national identity. The obvious exception to this rule are those who immigrated to Britain – mostly to England – during the 20th century, since they clearly did not belong to any of the old ethnic groups. Therefore, those who describe themselves primarily as British are typically of foreign ethnic background – people whose parents or grandparents came from Europe, India, the Caribbean region, Africa, or Asia (see Chapter IX for details).

> **4. In earlier history, both national institutions and people are English (or Scottish), never British:** Bear in mind that Great Britain as a political concept came into being with the **Act of Union of 1707**. Before that date, the adjective 'British' has no real meaning, because even Stuart kings and queens were 'English and Scottish' at the same time, and everything and everybody else was either English or Scottish (or Welsh, or Irish) but never British. People like King **Henry VIII** or **Oliver Cromwell** were obviously English historical figures.

2. ENGLISH IDENTITY V. BRITISH IDENTITY

Because English people have made up the <u>overwhelming majority</u> of the population of Britain and because they have played a dominant role in the history of Great Britain and the United Kingdom since 1707, it is quite difficult to separate Englishness from Britishness in the last 300 years. Scots, Welsh or Irish people are very sensitive to this distinction and they can be easily offended if they are taken for 'English' or their country mentioned as if it was part of 'England', but English people have made the same careless mistake many times. One of the most famous examples is Admiral **Horatio Nelson**'s final message to the other ships before the historic naval **Battle of Trafalgar**[20] in 1805, when he encouraged his soldiers and sailors with the following words: "England expects that every man will do his duty" – even though the ships under his command belonged to the British navy and many of his sailors were actually not English. English people of the 18th and 19th century often treated other parts of the United Kingdom as if they were mere extensions of England, provoking a lot of anger and dislike among their non-English countrymen.

In the 20th century, especially after 1945, the English identity was affected by two fundamental changes: the large-scale immigration of foreigners, mostly non-whites, to Britain, the majority of whom settled in London and other large English towns, and the devolution of Scotland and Wales. Up to the 1960s, most English people treated the immigrants as foreigners, but when the second generation grew up in the country, speaking fluent English and adopting many of the British cultural traditions, they demanded to be recognized as equals. They came to be called **British Asians** and **British Blacks** – but they are not considered English while mostly living in England, similarly to several other immigrant communities like the Poles who immigrated to the country in large numbers after 2004. The success of the Scottish and Welsh devolution after 1997 gave a great <u>boost</u> to the national pride of these countries, while England received no regional parliament and government, therefore some of the English people feel that they have not been given the same autonomy and home rule received by Scots and Welsh.

Due to the lack of autonomous political institutions, the distinct English identity is mostly based on historical institutions like the **Church of England** (see Chapter XI for details) and the cultural heritage of the country, including historic buildings (castles, churches, manors), great pieces of literature like <u>Elizabethan drama</u> and poetry, as well as paintings and music. For the masses, the primary focus of their English identity is provided by national sports teams, especially the <u>football team</u>, as football is the most popular sport in the country.

---

[20] *Battle of Trafalgar (1805)*: One of the most important naval battles in British history, which took place near the southwestern coast of Spain. The British fleet, commanded by Admiral Nelson, defeated the combined French-Spanish fleet and therefore made it impossible for Napoleon to invade Britain across the sea. Nelson, who died in the battle, became a great national hero and received a victory column and a statue in the middle of Trafalgar Square in central London.

The underline patron saint of England is **Saint George**, whose symbol is displayed on the **English flag** as well: a red cross on white background. The traditional symbol of the country is the **red rose**. Symbols that emerged in the 18th century and later are rarely exclusively English: the cartoon character of **John Bull**, the allegorical female figure of Britannia, or the **British flag** popularly known as the **Union Jack** can be associated at least as much with Great Britain as with England alone.

Milestones of English History before the Act of Union of 1707 in 4 Steps

1. The Anglo-Saxon[21] Period (early Middle Ages)

c. 450–600 AD: **Germanic[22]** tribes from Northwestern part of the Continent – Angles, Saxons and Jutes – invaded the island of Britain and settled in the southern, eastern and central regions of the island. They established several regional kingdoms, which often fought against one another as well as against the local British (Celtic) kingdoms. Some of the local Celtic population was conquered by the Anglo-Saxons and mixed with them, others fled to the west (to Wales and Cornwall) or to the north (to Scotland).

597: The first Christian missionaries arrived in the kingdom of Kent – the archbishopric of Canterbury was founded, the conversion of the pagan Anglo-Saxons began.

865–900: Large Danish (Viking) invasion against the English kingdoms, which destroyed most of them: the kingdom of Wessex – under the rule of Alfred the Great – began to unite English territories.

954: The Kingdom of England united under the Wessex dynasty for the first time: the flowering of Old English literature and culture.

2. After the Norman Conquest (high and late Middle Ages)

1066: The Norman Conquest: William, Duke of Normandy defeated King Harold in the Battle of Hastings close to the southeastern coast and occupied the English throne. As a result of the Conquest, medieval England came under a strong social, cultural and linguistic influence from Northern France.

1215: King John was forced to issue the Magna Carta libertatum, a royal charter in which the king promised to respect the feudal rights of the aristocracy and the church. This document later became the oldest part of the **English Constitution** (a collection of laws and unwritten legal traditions).

1272–1307: **rule of Edward I**, the greatest warrior-king of the English middle ages: **he conquered Wales by 1284 and occupied Scotland as well**, but after his death, the Scots regained their independence.

1339–1453: the Hundred Years' War between England and France: several English kings claimed the French throne and repeatedly occupied large areas in northern and southwestern France, but ultimately they lost all territories except Calais. As a consequence, the cultural influence of France declined, English national identity strengthened.

1455–85: the Wars of the Roses, a series of civil wars between two rival royal houses (the Lancasters and the Yorks) and their supporters.

1485: The Battle of Bosworth, Richard III (the last Yorkist king) was defeated and killed; Henry VII founded the House of Tudor.

---

[21] *Anglo-Saxons* (pronounced /ˌæŋloʊˈsæksən/)*:* The general name of three distinct Germanic ethnic groups which invaded Britain in the 5th and 6th century from northwestern Europe (present Dutch, German and Danish coast) and occupied roughly the present territory of England, although groups of Angles settled in the Scottish Lowlands as well.

[22] *Germanic* (pronounced /dʒəˈmænɪk/): The name of a group of Indo-European languages including English, German, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, and Icelandic. It is not to be confused with the German language and nation, which is only one of the several Germanic languages and groups.

---

3. England under the Tudors: Reformation and Renaissance Culture (16th century)

1509–1547: **rule of Henry VIII**, perhaps the most famous king in English history, who **founded the Protestant Church of England in 1534**.

1558–1603: **rule of Elizabeth I,** the "Virgin Queen", who never got married and therefore died without an heir. Her reign marks a the beginning of a great period of English literature and culture, whose world-famous representative is William Shakespeare.

4. England under the Stuarts: Colonization, Civil War, Revolutions and Constitutional Monarchy (17th century)

1603: Succession of James I of the Scottish royal dynasty of the Stuarts **to the English throne**: personal union between England and Scotland.

1607: The foundation of Jamestown and Virginia colony, **the first English colony in North America.**

1620: The voyage of the Pilgrims to North America: **beginning of Puritan colonies in New England**.

1642–1647: The English Civil War between King Charles I and Parliament, which was dominated by Puritans (Calvinist Protestants opposed to the Church of England).

1649: Parliament had King Charles I convicted for treason and he was executed.

1649–1660: The English Commonwealth (or republic), during which the most powerful man was Oliver Cromwell, the commander of the Parliamentary army, who ruled as Lord Protector over the entire British Isles (including Scotland and Ireland) with an iron hand between 1553–1658.

1660: The Restoration: Charles II, son of the executed Charles I, was invited back to the throne in 1660, and the monarchy was restored.

1666: The Great Fire of London, which destroyed most of the medieval city and allowed a large-scale rebuilding of the capital, including the construction of St. Paul's Cathedral.

1688: The Glorious Revolution: the last Catholic king, James II was removed from the throne by Parliament, and his daughter, Mary II, and her husband, the Dutch William III of Orange were invited to the English throne.

1689: **The Declaration of Rights: the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in England**, which gave practical political power to Parliament.

1701: The Act of Settlement: it regulated the order of succession following the last Protestant member of the Stuart dynasty, nominated the House of Hanover to the throne, and banned Catholics from the English throne.

---

3. Main Regions of England: the South

The territory of England is traditionally divided into three main regions: the **South**, the **Midlands**, and the **North**. This division is based partly on geography, partly on social and political history. The South can further be subdivided into the **South-East, East Anglia,** and the **West Country**.

The South-East and London

The term means essentially the London area and the counties[23] close to the capital. Six of them have a special name: they are the **Home Counties**, which immediately surround London (clockwise from the Strait of Dover: Kent, Surrey, Berkshire,[24] Buckinghamshire,

---

[23] *county*: administrative districts in England and Wales of medieval origin. Their old English name was shire (pronounced /ʃaɪə(r)/), which is still at the end of many county names, e.g. Oxfordshire, Cheshire etc (at the end of names, it is pronounced /ʃə(r)/). In the late 20th century, the neighbourhood of the large cities were separated from old counties and organized into separate administrative units.

[24] *Berkshire*: pronounced /ˈbɑː(r)kʃə(r)/

Hertfordshire[25] and Essex; the former county of Middlesex has been swallowed by Greater London). These – especially Surrey, Kent and Berkshire – are the most elegant and expensive regions in the country. But London's influence extends beyond them to the neighbouring counties to the south and west, such as Sussex, Hampshire and Oxfordshire.

The dominant economic, social and cultural influence in the region is of course **London**. The Thames estuary, being the closest to the Continent, offered an excellent place for sea trade, and gave rise to the largest city in Britain ever since the Romans made it the capital of their province. Since the 16th century, when London's spectacular growth began, it has evolved into the largest city in Europe and one of the largest metropolitan centres in the world. Currently Greater London (which has swallowed a number of smaller neighbouring towns and villages) has over 8 million inhabitants, and its metropolitan area (which includes the surrounding commuter towns) has over 13 million, which is more than the entire population of Hungary! That means that roughly one out of every five people in Britain live in or near London. The capital boasts many of the most famous images foreigners associate with England or Britain, such as the **Tower**, the **Big Ben**, **Trafalgar Square**, the **British Museum**, **St. Paul's Cathedral**, **Buckingham Palace**, the **Tube**, the red double-deckers, the black taxis, the beautiful parks – the list can be long continued.

The **City of London** – the original medieval town west of the Tower on the northern bank of the river – is today an international centre of business and finance, where the **Stock Exchange**, the **Bank of England** and the headquarters of many large business companies are located. The political heart of the nation is **Westminster**, the former royal residence, where the **Palace of Westminster**, also known as the **Houses of Parliament**, and most of the government ministries (see chapters VI and VII for more detail) can be found. This area west of the City is also known as the **West End**, which has traditionally been the more elegant part of London, with many aristocratic palaces and great parks (today, it is also famous for its theatres, cinemas and shopping districts). The **East End**, the neighbourhood of the docks, has always been a poorer, working-class area, whose inhabitants were called **Cockneys.**[26] But today London's population is highly mixed, especially since many political refugees fled to Britain during World War II from Eastern Europe, while after the war Indian, Caribbean and African immigrants arrived from the former colonies to find work and a better life in Britain (more about them in chapter VIII). Greater London has several districts and suburbs, especially in the outer areas, where the majority of the population is non-white (black or Asian).

London is also the most important transportation hub in the country. The Port of London is still the primary destination for cargo arriving by sea, whereas Heathrow[27] Airport west of London is the largest airport in Europe, but there is also Gatwick Airport to the south as well as Luton and Stansted Airports much further away to the north and northeast. Travellers arriving by car or by train from the Continent literally cannot avoid London as all major routes go to or around the capital. The M25, a huge circular motorway around Greater

---

[25] *Hertfordshire*: pronounced /ˈhɑː(r)tfədʃə(r)/

[26] *Cockneys* /ˈkɔknɪ/: Originally, working-class inhabitants of London's East End who were recognizable by their special accent, especially the dropping of the 'h' sound from the beginning of words, e.g. 'ouse' instead of 'house'. Another famous feature of the Cockneys was their humour, especially the rhyming slang they used (substituting a common word with a phrase that rhymes with it, e.g. 'loaf of bread' instead of 'head').

[27] *Heathrow*: pronounced /ˈhiːθrəʊ/, the largest airport in Britain and one of the busiest in the world, located west of London, with five terminals. Many travellers complain that flying to and from Heathrow is far from pleasant: the terminals are overcrowded, people have to walk long distances to reach their flight, and the gate number of their flight is often not announced until immediately before boarding.

London, was completed in 1986 to ease the constant traffic jams around the capital, but the enormous traffic during the morning and afternoon rush hours can clog large sections of the motorway.

Besides the huge metropolis of London, there are few significant towns in the region except the seaside resort of **Brighton** and the large seaports of **Portsmouth**[28] and **Southampton** on the southern coast. **Oxford**, north-west of London, home to the oldest and most famous British university, is usually also considered part of this region, even though geographically it might belong to the Midlands. **Canterbury**, south-east of London, is not large but it has played an important role in English history, since it has been the seat of the most senior archbishops of England since the 7th century. Another world-famous tourist attraction on the western edge of the region is **Stonehenge** near Salisbury[29], a prehistoric stone construction consisting of giant standing stones (some of them are over 4 m tall and weigh 25 tons!) arranged in large concentric circles. In the popular mind, it is usually associated with Celtic culture, but in fact it was built many centuries before the first Celts arrived in Britain, in several distinct phases between c. 2100 and 1500 BC. Its functions are still unclear: most probably it served as a shrine or temple, but its builders left behind no written sources, therefore most historians and archaeologists are left to create their own theories about it.

The West Country

The traditional name 'West Country' in fact refers to south-west England, the peninsula south of Wales which extends out into the Atlantic Ocean: it includes the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, and Somerset. It is an area of rugged coastline, beautiful scenery and pleasant summers, but it has a small population, therefore it has become a favourite holiday destination. Cornwall, the westernmost county, is especially popular among British tourists with its nice small seaside resorts and **Land's End**, the westernmost point of Great Britain. Cornwall has Celtic cultural roots, as the area was for a long time populated by Celts even after the Kingdom of England was established (the last native speaker of Cornish, a Celtic language similar to Welsh, died in the late 18th century). There are also two national parks in the region, Dartmoor and Exmoor, both of them hilly areas covered by peat and bogs, where the natural moorland has been left untouched by agricultural cultivation. The largest cities are seaports, such as **Plymouth**[30] on the southern coast, or **Bristol** on the Severn estuary (but Bristol is considered to be beyond the eastern edge of the West Country).

East Anglia

East Anglia is – as the name suggests – the easternmost part of England, the peninsula north-east of London between the Thames estuary and the **Wash** (the largest bay on the east coast of England), which consists of the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire (and partly Essex). Historically, it was a densely populated area in the Middle Ages and the early modern period famous for its agriculture, but the 18th century brought a demographic stagnation to the region due to the lack of industry and mineral resources. But recently it has

---

[28] *Portsmouth:* pronounced /ˈpoː(r)tməθ/

[29] *Salisbury*: pronounced /ˈsoːlzbrɪ/

[30] *Plymouth*: pronounced /ˈplɪməθ/

become fashionable and prosperous due to its closeness to London. Many retired people move to one of the small <u>seaside resorts</u> of East Anglia to enjoy the relatively sunny climate. Its largest town is **Norwich**,[31] but the most famous is definitely the ancient university town of **Cambridge**,[32] the greatest rival of Oxford since the Middle Ages. There are few notable natural sights in the region, because it is flat and unforested.

4. Main Regions of England: The Midlands and the North

The Midlands

The Midlands are perhaps the most difficult to define though it is obviously the middle of England, the area east of Wales and west of East Anglia. The most problematic task, however, is to draw more or less exact borders, especially to define where the Midlands end and the South or the North begins. A possible dividing line between the South and the Midlands runs from the **Severn estuary** (between Wales and the West Country) north-eastward to the Wash. The line separating the Midlands from the North starts from the northern edge of Wales and can be drawn toward the Wash as well, which means that Nottingham is still in the Midlands, but Liverpool, Manchester or Sheffield are part of the North. Others would argue that the Midlands extend as far north as the **Humber estuary** on the east coast. Either way, the area outlined more or less resembles the shape of a triangle, the centre of which is the huge industrial city of **Birmingham**, the second largest in Britain. There are some other significant industrial towns like **Coventry** and **Leicester**[33] east of Birmingham, or **Derby**[34] and **Nottingham** north of Birmingham.

The Midlands are typically flat with small hills, except for **Peak District** National Park, the southern end of the Pennines, which reach into the North Midlands. The Peak District is an area of hills and moorlands (without really tall peaks), one of the most popular hiking areas in Britain. Another famous tourist attraction of the region is the small town of **Stratford-upon-Avon** south of Birmingham, where **William Shakespeare** was born in 1564 and died in 1616. Tourists can see Shakespeare's birthplace, his tomb in the local church, as well as several other contemporary houses which were owned by Shakespeare's relatives. The Royal Shakespeare Company maintains one large and two small theatres in Stratford to entertain the many tourists visiting the town.

The North

The North Country is the largest and hilliest region of Britain, stretching from the Midlands up to the Scottish border. Traditionally, it began north of the **Mersey** on the west and the **Humber** on the east coast, and its largest county was Yorkshire, named after **York**, the seat of the second oldest English <u>archbishopric</u>. Throughout history, it was a poorer, more backward and less <u>urbanized</u> region than the rest of England, but the industrial revolution in the late 18th and the 19th centuries changed its character fundamentally. Between two great

---

[31] *Norwich:* pronounced /ˈnɔrɪdʒ/

[32] Cambridge: pronounced /ˈkeɪmbrɪdʒ/

[33] *Leicester:* pronounced /ˈlestə(r)/

[34] *Derby*: pronounced /ˈdɑː(r)bɪ/

northern ports, **Liverpool** on the Mersey in the west and **Hull** on the Humber in the east, several big cities developed, forming a great industrial belt. **Manchester** in Lancashire and the twin cities of **Leeds** and **Bradford** in Yorkshire grew large on textile mills, while **Sheffield**, south of Leeds, was world famous for its iron and steel industry. Around these big cities, more than a dozen factory towns emerged during the 19th century, mostly based on textile industry, and their products were exported worldwide at the time. Further up the north-eastern coast, **Newcastle-upon-Tyne** became the centre of another industrial area originally based on coal, iron, steel and shipbuilding.

The spectacular growth of these cities brought prosperity and wealth to the North, and strengthened the regional pride of Northerners, many of whom are fiercely loyal to their region and their hometown. In the second half of the 20th century, however, traditional industries have largely declined, creating enormous economic and social problems in the northern cities which they struggled to overcome during the 1980s and 1990s.

Outside the big cities, especially north of Leeds, the North has a sparsely populated and beautiful countryside. The most significant mountains in England all lie in the North, such as the **Pennines**, which form a north-south backbone across northern England, and the Cumbrian Mountains in north-western England, which include the beautiful **Lake District** National Park, perhaps the most famous natural attraction of England. The highest mountain of England, Scafell Pike,[35] as well as the largest lake, Windermere,[36] is located here. The wild beauty of the mountainous landscape has been immortalized by the Romantic Lake Poets in the early 19th century, who included **William Wordsworth** and **Samuel Coleridge**. Other tourist highlights of the region include two other national parks in Yorkshire, as well as the remains of **Hadrian's Wall**[37] west of Newcastle, the ancient fortification built in the 2nd century to defend Roman Britain against the barbarian tribes living in present Scotland.

5. FAMOUS ENGLISHMEN

English history is rich in internationally famous figures, beginning with **Alfred the Great**, King of Wessex, who defended his kingdom successfully against the invading Danes and became the founder of the united English monarchy in the late 9th century. Other famous English historical characters include **William the Conqueror**, who brought the French-speaking Norman dynasty to the English throne in 1066; **Thomas Becket**, archbishop of Canterbury who was murdered in the cathedral by King Henry II's knights and became the most famous English medieval saint; **Richard I the Lionheart**, one of the most famous knights of medieval Europe who fought in the Third Crusade in the early 1190s; **Edward I**, the "Hammer of the Scots", who conquered Wales and temporarily occupied Scotland as well in the late 13th century; **Henry VIII**, famous for having six wives, had a quarrel with the Pope over his first divorce, which ultimately persuaded him to create a new Protestant Church of England in 1534; his second daughter, **Queen Elizabeth I**, whose long rule in the late 16th

---

[35] *Scafell Pike* (pronounced /ˌskɔːfel ˈpaɪk/): the tallest mountain in England with its 978 m height. Although this figure does not sound very impressive, one should also bear in mind that Scafell Pike is merely about 20 km from the coast and sea level, so the mountain is much steeper than its height suggests.

[36] *Windermere* (pronounced /ˈwɪndəmɪə(r)/): the largest lake in England with its 17 km length and almost 15 sq km total area. With its scenic surroundings, the lake is a popular holiday destination.

[37] *Hadrian's Wall*: A major defence line in northern England built between 122–127 AD by Roman Emperor Hadrian to protect Britannia province from the invasions of the Picts. It was a 120 km long and 5 m high stone wall with forts on every mile. Several sections of the wall can still be seen.

century became a golden age of English poetry and drama; **Charles I**, the only monarch who was convicted for treason and publicly beheaded in 1649; **Oliver Cromwell**, who temporarily turned England into a Puritan Republic during the Commonwealth; **William III of Orange** from Holland, who agreed to the creation of the constitutional monarchy in 1689; **Horatio Nelson**, the victorious admiral in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805; **Queen Victoria**, the longest-reigning monarch in English history; **Winston Churchill**, the British Prime Minister during World War II; and the list could be continued.

England also abounds in famous literary and cultural figures as well as great scientists: **Geoffrey Chaucer**, author of *The Canterbury Tales* (late 14th c.); **William Shakespeare**, perhaps the greatest dramatist of all time (late 16th–early 17th c.); **John Milton**, author of *Paradise Lost* (1674); **Isaac Newton**, one of the greatest physicists of all time (late 17th century); **Daniel Defoe**, author of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719); **Jane Austen**, author of several romantic social novels from the early 19th century; **William Wordsworth, Samuel T. Coleridge, Percy B. Shelley** and **John Keats**, the great generation of English Romantic Poets from the early 19th century; **Charles Dickens**, the greatest novelist of Victorian England; **Charles Darwin**, author of *The Origin of Species* (1859) and the father of evolutionary theory; **H. G. Wells**, author of several early classic science fiction novels around 1900; and the list again could be continued.

Key concepts

Bank of England	Cockney	Severn
Battle of Trafalgar	East Anglia	South-East
BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation)	English flag	St. George
	Hadrian's Wall	St. Paul's Cathedral
British Asians	Home Counties	Stonehenge
British Blacks	Humber	The Big Ben
British Empire	John Bull	The Tower
British monarch	Lake District	the Tube
British Museum	Land's End	the Wash
British Parliament / Government	Mersey	Trafalgar Square
British Prime Minister	Midlands	Union Jack
Buckingham Palace	North	West Country
Church of England	Peak District	West End / East End
City of London	Pennines	Westminster

Significant towns

Birmingham	Cambridge	Hull
Bradford	Canterbury	Leeds
Brighton	Coventry	Leicester
Bristol	Derby	Liverpool

Manchester

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Norwich

Nottingham

Plymouth

Portsmouth

Sheffield

Southampton

Stratford-upon-Avon

York

III. SCOTLAND

Think of Hungary First!

Can you divide modern Hungary into regions according to ethnic groups?

Are there or were there such regions in neighbouring countries?

What is the connection between language and national identity?

What is the difference between 'autonomy' and 'independence'?

What are the current problems of ethnic minorities in the Carpathian basin and what solutions are being proposed?

Information Store

The territory and population of Scotland – compared to the figures of Hungary

(source: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/uk-census/index.html and http://www.ksh.hu/js/nepszamlalas/grafikonok/03_kotet/)

Country	Territory (square kilometres)	Population (Census 2011; rounded)	Population density (people per sq. km; rounded)
Scotland	77,925	5,295,000 (8.4 % of UK total)	67
Hungary	93,030 (119% of the territory of Scotland)	9,938,000 (188% of the population of Scotland)	107

The number of speakers of the Scottish Gaelic language in Scotland

(Census 2011; Source: http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/news/census-2011-release-2a):

58,000 Gaelic speakers = 1.1% of Scottish population

Test Your Knowledge!

Can you think of any famous Scotsmen (historical figures, scientists, writers, actors, musicians, etc.) or any characteristic symbols, images, places or objects that people consider 'typically Scottish'?

Can you think of any movies you saw that took place in Scotland or were somehow connected to the history or culture of this country?

Use the Internet!

A wealth of statistical information about Scottish population can be found on the web site of the Scotland's Census 2011: http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/

Online resources of all kinds about Scotland: http://www.rampantscotland.com/

The web site of the devolved Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ and http://www.scotland.gov.uk/

1. Scotland v. England

Scotland, with its population of slightly more than 5 million people, has about one-tenth as many people as England, in an area more than half as big. This fact explains the <u>controversial</u> relationship between the two countries. Scotland was the only nation besides England which managed to organise itself into a united monarchy and it resisted English invasion <u>attempts</u> for centuries. Scotland was always the 'little brother' of England on the island, who had to keep a watchful eye on its more powerful and often aggressive southern neighbour, while maintaining strong economic and cultural ties with the richer and more developed England. The national symbols of Scotland are the **Scottish flag** displaying the cross of **St. Andrew**, the <u>patron saint</u> of Scotland (white <u>diagonal</u> cross or <u>saltire</u>[38] on a deep blue background), and the **thistle**,[39] a widespread Scottish plant.

Scotland was eventually united with England peacefully in a <u>personal union</u>, when the **Stuarts**, the Scottish <u>ruling dynasty</u>, came to the English throne in 1603. Afterwards, Scots were gradually <u>subordinated</u> to the London government, especially after the **Scottish Act of Union** in 1707, which some Scots refused to accept and even <u>rebelled</u> against the "English rule" (see the brief history of Scotland in the box). During the 18th and 19th centuries, the British government mostly <u>suppressed</u> the independent culture and language of Scotland, but the economy of the country benefited from English dominance. Scotland took part in the **industrial revolution** of the 18th and 19th centuries and gained access to the international market, which improved <u>living standards</u> considerably and contributed to the modernization of society and lifestyle.

In the same period (after 1707), <u>emigration</u> became a typical phenomenon in Scotland. Many Scotsmen moved to England to seek their fortunes, but many others have gone farther from home. It has been estimated that there are over twenty million people of Scottish origin in North America, Australia and other parts of the former British Empire.

The modern Scottish population is <u>ethnically mixed</u> and speaks English (or its special Scottish dialect known as Scots) as their <u>mother tongue</u>, with the exception of a few thousand native Gaelic speakers. The special Scottish identity is primarily historical and cultural, and is not based on a distinct national language.

The greatest political change for Scotland in the past decades was brought about by the political reform idea popularly known as **devolution** (see Chapter I for details). The decisive breakthrough came in 1997, a historic date for the UK, when a <u>referendum</u> was held both in Scotland and in Wales about whether they want to establish their own regional <u>legislatures</u> to manage local affairs. In both countries, the decision was favourable for devolution, but support was much larger in Scotland than in Wales. As a result, the first elections to the new **Scottish Parliament** were held in May 1999.

Devolution is the greatest constitutional reform since the UK was created in 1800, because it changed the highly centralized political system of the country. Scotland continues to elect its MPs to the UK House of Commons in London, but devolution considerably limited the influence of the central government over Scottish affairs. Critics of devolution, mostly Conservatives, have been worried from the start that the reform would encourage the

---

[38] *saltire*: pronounced /ˈsæltaɪə(r)/

[39] *thistle*: pronounced /θɪsl/

separatist movement and may open the door for the disintegration of the UK. Their fears have been proven after the Scottish nationalists won a majority in the Scottish Parliament and began a campaign for a **referendum on Scottish independence**. The referendum was held on September 18, 2014, and after a passionate campaign, 55% of Scottish voters voted against ending their constitutional union with England. Nonetheless, the majority of Scots expect London to broaden devolution powers of the Scottish Parliament and government, and create a new kind of balance between the British government and the interests of Scotland.

2. REGIONS OF SCOTLAND: LOWLANDS V. HIGHLANDS

Scotland has traditionally been divided into two main regions: the **Lowlands** and the **Highlands**. The Lowlands extend from the sparsely populated hilly region north of the English border up to the narrowest part of the island between the Clyde and the Forth estuaries (estuaries are called 'firth' in Scots), which is the most fertile area of Scotland and contains two-thirds of the country's population. The largest Scottish city, **Glasgow,** is built on the Clyde, while the capital, **Edinburgh**,[40] is on the southern shore of the Forth estuary. There are two more significant towns along the east coast, **Dundee** and **Aberdeen**, the latter the largest fishing port of Scotland and also the centre of the North Sea oil industry since the 1970s.

The Lowlands have always been the political, social and economic centre of the country, and its two largest cities, Glasgow and Edinburgh, are old rivals. Edinburgh is Scotland's administrative and legal capital, the former residence of the Kings of Scotland, and nowadays the home of the re-established **Scottish Parliament**. Its attractions include **Holyrood Palace**, the historic palace of the Scottish monarchs, from which a straight road (the so-called Royal Mile) leads up to the picturesque medieval castle on the top of the hill. Between the two landmarks, the old town of Edinburgh displays some of Britain's finest 18th-century streets and squares. The city's annual festival of music and arts is internationally famous. Glasgow's prosperity began in the 18th century when it became a busy port in the American trade. In the 19th century nearby coal mines helped Glasgow to become one of the world's main shipbuilding centres, and the city soon surpassed Edinburgh in population. After World War II, when Glasgow's old industries collapsed, the city has suffered heavy unemployment and social problems, but in the 1990s it began to prosper again, this time as a financial and business centre.

The Highlands are separated from the Lowlands by a somewhat uncertain line, the so-called **Highland line**, which begins a little north of Glasgow in the southwest and runs up to Aberdeen on the north-eastern coast. South and east of this line the land is relatively flat; west and north of the line the mountains begin. The Highlands cover roughly half of Scotland. The greatest division line within the Highlands is the **Loch Ness**:[41] north of it there are the Northwest Highlands, south of it the **Grampian Mountains**. The Highlands are characterised by numerous **loch**s (lakes), scenic mountains and a rugged coastline, but an extremely small population (below 400,000, less than 8% of the entire Scottish population). The largest town

---

[40] *Edinburgh:* pronounced /ˈedɪnbrə/, as if the end of the name were spelled '–borough'.

[41] *Loch Ness* (pronounced /ˌlɒkˈnes/ or Scots /ˌlɒxˈnes/): the second largest lake in in Scotland after Loch Lomond, stretching about 37 km southwest of Inverness. It is a long and narrow lake, very deep (at certain points more than 200 m), and its water is dark and murky. These features, as well as the wild and desolate surroundings, gave rise to the legend of the Loch Ness Monster, nicknamed Nessie.

and traditional centre of the Highlands, **Inverness**,[42] is smaller than any of the four largest Lowlands cities.

Some of the major <u>tourist attractions</u> of the Highlands include the highest peak in Britain, **Ben Nevis**[43] (1344 m), at the western end of the Grampian Mountains; **Loch Lomond** north of Glasgow, the largest lake in Great Britain and a popular <u>holiday destination</u>, which together with the surrounding mountains has been declared a national park by the new Scottish Parliament in 2002; and **Cairngorms**[44] National Park (established in 2003) in the eastern Grampians, which contains the highest peaks of Britain after Ben Nevis, as well as a unique habitat for many <u>species</u> of rare birds and animals. But the green hills covered by <u>heather</u>, the many streams and lakes, the deep valleys, the <u>flocks</u> of sheep and <u>Highland cattle</u> (a special kind of cattle with thick, long fur), as well as the <u>unpredictable</u>, often <u>gloomy</u> and rainy weather give the Highlands its unique character, wherever one goes. Hunting and fishing are popular pastimes in the area.

There is a big cultural as well as geographical difference between the Lowlands and Highlands. The **Lowlanders** have always been English-speaking (see the brief history of Scotland in the box), hard-working, moral, and religious, while the **Highlanders** originally spoke **Gaelic**, and they were typically proud, warlike, fun-loving and carefree. Each group tended to dislike and distrust people from the other region. After the <u>suppression</u> of the **Celtic** Highland culture in the 18th and 19th centuries, the use of Gaelic quickly declined, and it remains in use as the mother tongue of less than 60,000 people according to the 2011 Census, living mostly in remote areas (especially some islands of the **Hebrides**[45] in the north-western edge of Scotland). Although Gaelic enjoys a certain popularity among nationalists as the 'ancient language of the country,' and it is taught in a number of schools, the great majority of Scots speak only English with a variety of regional accents, which are usually recognizable by the strong, rolled 'r'-s and the lack of diphthongs (e.g. 'break' in Scots sounds similar to Hungarian '*brék*'). The traditional Celtic Highlanders' culture survived in the form of the famous tourist attractions of Scotland – the **kilt**, the **tartans**, the **bagpipe** music, **Highland dance**, or **whisky**[46] distillation.

---

[42] Inverness: pronounced /ˌɪnvə(r)ˈnes/

[43] *Ben Nevis*: pronounced /ˌbenˈnevɪs/

[44] *Cairngorms*: pronounced /ˈkeə(r)gɒː(r)mz/

[45] *Hebrides* (pronounced /ˌhebrɪˈdiːz/): two large groups of islands along the western and northwestern coast of Scotland, distinguished by their distance from the mainland as the Inner and the Outer Hebrides. Altogether, there are 790 islands along the Scottish coasts, out of which almost 700 are uninhabited.

[46] *whisky*: originally a Gaelic word meaning 'the water of life', whisky is made of fermented barley and stream water, and matured in oak casks for several years, gaining a brownish colour (young whisky looks like vodka or pálinka). Each Highland town and local region has its own local whisky, called 'malt whisky' if it is not mixed with cheaper grain whisky, and 'single malt' if it is made in one distillery. Malt whiskies are considered the best and the most expensive, but the best-known international brands are blended whiskies. The word 'Scotch' always means whisky in modern English, it can never be used for other Scottish things.

Brief History of Scotland in 5 Steps

1. Picts, Scots, Britons, and Anglo-Saxons (5–10th centuries)

At the time of the Roman Empire, both Britain and Ireland were <u>inhabited</u> by **Celtic**[47] people. When the Romans conquered the southern part of the island in the 1st century AD, they drew the permanent northern border of Britannia province (protected by the famous **Hadrian's Wall**) a little south of the present English-Scottish border. As a result, Scotland was never part of the Roman Empire, and it was inhabited by barbarian tribes the Romans called **Picts**.

When the Germanic-speaking **Anglo-Saxon** invaders arrived from the European continent in the 5th and 6th centuries, they occupied not only the present territory of England but most of the Scottish Lowlands up to Edinburgh, and drove the earlier Celtic inhabitants (the so-called **Britons**) northwestward into south-western Scotland (west and south of Glasgow). At about the same time, Celtic people from Ireland called **Scots**[48] moved into the western part of the Highlands. The Picts gradually mixed with the Scots, and the two nations united in one kingdom during the 9th century. The kings of the Scots, however, for a long time ruled only over the land north of the river Forth, and they occupied the Lowlands with its British and Anglo-Saxon population only after 1000.

2. Highlands v. Lowlands: Gaelic v. Scots (10th century–17th century)

This complicated ethnic history explains many of the differences between the Scottish Highlands and Lowlands. The primary language of the Highlands became **Scottish Gaelic**,[49] brought over by the Scots from Ireland along with most Celtic traditions that have survived into the present. But the majority of the population of the Lowlands was mostly Anglo-Saxon in origin and there the common language became a northern English dialect, which in the late Middle Ages came to be called **Scots**[50] (not to be confused with the name of the earlier ethnic group or the modern people of Scotland!).

The Lowlands attracted more foreign settlers already in the Middle Ages, feudalism took root earlier, towns and cities began to flourish, industry and trade developed. The Highlands, in contrast, remained agricultural and rural: society came to be organized along family alliances, so-called **clans**.[51] Clan members were not necessarily relatives, but they <u>swore loyalty</u> to a powerful local <u>warlord</u>, and after several generations, the sense of <u>kinship</u> became general. Different clans took on the habit of distinguishing themselves by wearing <u>woollen</u> clothes of distinctive colours, usually with a <u>chequered pattern</u>: these colours and patterns are called the **tartan** of a clan. The most famous piece of clothing of Highlanders is undoubtedly the **kilt**, a kind of woollen skirt worn exclusively by men with knee-length socks. Many of the most famous clans had "Mc" or "Mac" at the beginning of their name, which means 'son of' in Gaelic; so even the name of the McDonalds, the MacLeods or the MacGregors suggested that they all share a common origin.

---

[47] *Celts / Celtic people* (pronounced /kelts/): An Indo-European people which spread over much of Europe between 1000–100 BC, including the British Isles around 500 BC. Most Celtic groups eventually came under Roman control, and after the collapse of the Roman Empire, Germanic groups overran former Celtic territories. As a result, the only Celtic nations that survived into the present day live on the British Isles, except for small groups in Brittany (French Bretagne), France.

[48] *Scots (1):* as a plural noun, it is the name of a historical ethnic group originating from Ireland that migrated to western Scotland in the 6th century and gave the country its name. Today, it means the inhabitants of the country in general.

[49] *Gaelic*: pronounced /ˈgælɪk/ or /ˈgeɪlɪk/, a Celtic language spoken originally in Ireland, later carried to Scotland by Irish settlers. Irish Gaelic was once the dominant language of Ireland, but the English colonists systematically suppressed it in education and public life, and its revival began only in the late 19th century by Irish nationalists. Even though the Irish Republic made Irish Gaelic an official language, and all pupils learn it at school, today few people speak it as their mother tongue, mostly in the western part of Ireland. Scottish Gaelic, a language similar to Irish, was spoken in the Highlands until the 18th century, when English authorities suppressed it in favour of English.

[50] *Scots (2):* as a singular adjective, it is the name of several dialects of English spoken in Scotland with lots of special words and highly different pronunciation. It is not Celtic in origin (although it has a number of Celtic loanwords) and not to be confused with Scottish Gaelic, which is an entirely different language.

[51] *clan* (original Gaelic meaning 'children'): an alliance of families or tribes professing kinship through a common ancestor. Kinship between clan members is mostly a historical fiction rather than fact.

3. War of Independence against England (1296–1314)

Many historians believe that the <u>diverse population</u> of Scotland was united only in the **Wars of Independence** against English aggression that took place between 1296 and 1314. The war was provoked by disputes over <u>royal succession</u> after the old Scottish royal dynasty died out, but the real cause was the ambition of King Edward I of England (who by that time had already conquered Wales) to add Scotland to his island empire. The long and hard <u>struggle</u> produced its national heroes and <u>martyrs</u> like **William Wallace**[52] and **Robert the Bruce**. The latter ended the wars by a huge victory over Edward II at **Bannockburn**[53] in 1314, securing Scottish independence for another 300 years, and becoming King Robert I.

4. Personal Union between England and Scotland (1603–1707)

When **Queen Elizabeth I** died <u>childless</u> **in 1603**, the **Scottish King James VI** of the Stuart dynasty inherited the English throne and **became King James I of England** too. James was acceptable for the English because he was a relative of Elizabeth, but also because by this time, Scotland had <u>adopted</u> **Presbyterianism** (the Scottish version of Calvinism; see section on "The Kirk" below) as the national religion, so they were Protestants like the English. But London was always politically and economically more powerful than Edinburgh: James and his <u>successors</u> ruled from London, effectively becoming English. From then onwards the two countries have had the same monarch (not always to the satisfaction of the Scots).

Before the **Civil War**, the Scots first fought against **King Charles I** (because he wanted to reform the Scottish church to make it more similar to the Church of England), then during the Civil War they supported him against the English Parliament. As a result, Oliver Cromwell defeated the Scots and the country was under English <u>military occupation</u> until 1660, when the Scottish Parliament was restored. This further weakened historic Scottish political autonomy.

5. The Act of Union and the Jacobite Uprisings (1707–1745)

In 1707 England and Scotland were formally united as **Great Britain** by the **Scottish Act of Union**. The Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh was <u>suspended</u> (in practice <u>abolished</u>), and the new Parliament of Great Britain <u>assembled</u> in Westminster, with Scottish <u>MPs</u> in the **House of Commons** and Scottish <u>peers</u> in the **House of Lords**. But Scotland has never been united with England in the same way as Wales. Scotland after 1707 kept three distinctive institutions: its own **legal system**, its own **education system**, and **the Kirk**, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. All three are important symbols of Scottish identity and difference from England.

The last wars against the English were fought in 1715 and in 1745–46 during the last **Jacobite**[54] uprisings in the Highlands, because the Highlanders wanted to <u>restore</u> the Catholic Stuart <u>pretenders</u> (son and grandson of **James II**) to the throne of Scotland and refused to accept the Hanoverian British kings. The Highlanders paid a heavy price for their loyalty to the old dynasty: after the uprising was suppressed by the London government in the decisive battle of **Culloden**[55] in 1746, local traditions (wearing kilts and tartans, playing the bagpipe etc.) as well as the use of Gaelic were <u>banned</u>, and the Highlands were forcefully <u>Anglicised</u>. During the 19th century, the traditional Highland clan system collapsed: chiefs sold clan lands, and allowed their clanspeople to be driven off the land. As a result, at least half a million Scots emigrated and Highland traditions became romantic symbols of Scottish history.

---

[52] *William Wallace* (d. 1305, pronounced /ˈwɒlɪs/): Military leader in the Scottish uprising against Edward I of England. He defeated Edward's army at the battle of Stirling Bridge in 1297, but suffered a defeat the next year and was forced to fight a kind of guerilla war against the English. When he was captured, he was brutally executed by Edward, making him the first national martyr of Scottish independence.

[53] *Bannockburn*: pronounced /ˈbænɒkbə(r)n/

[54] *Jacobite*: pronounced /ˈdʒækəbaɪt/, those Scotsmen, mostly Highlanders, who did not accept the succession of the Hanover dynasty to the British (and thus also to the Scottish) throne in 1714, and considered the son of the exiled Stuart king, James II (who was removed from the throne by the Glorious Revolution in 1688) the rightful heir to the Scottish throne (their name suggests their loyalty, 'Jacobus' being the Latin version of James). The movement also had a nationalist, Catholic and anti-English edge as well, because most Jacobites opposed the Act of Union of 1707 as well. There were two major Jacobite rebellions: in 1715 in favour of James, the Old Pretender, and in 1745, in favour of his son, Charles, the Young Pretender. Both relied on the loyalty and fierceness of the Highland clans and both were eventually crushed by the British government.

[55] *Battle of Culloden* (pronounced /kəˈlɒdən/): battle fought between the royal army and Stuart Prince Charles's rebel forces consisting of Jacobite Highlanders in 1746. The decisive defeat of the Jacobites ended the second Jacobite uprising and the hopes of the Stuarts to return to the throne of England or Scotland.

3. THE KIRK

The most important of Scotland's own institutions is **the Kirk**,[56] which is seen by many Scots as a symbol of Scottish national identity. The origin of the church goes back to the **Reformation** of the 16th century. In England, Henry VIII carried out the Reformation by force in the 1530s, and created the Church of England (also known as the Anglican Church), which kept the hierarchy of bishops within the church and replaced the Pope with the monarch as the highest leader. The Scots, under the religious leadership of **John Knox**,[57] a disciple of John Calvin, established their own **Presbyterian**[58] church in 1560. Knox refused the idea that monarchs or the state should have any power or influence over spiritual matters, and as a result, the Kirk is organized far more democratically than the Anglicans. Each local congregation is led by elected church elders, also called presbyters, and local presbyters in turn elect the representatives to higher bodies. The Kirk is governed by the General Assembly, which meets every year in Edinburgh and elects a Moderator as its representative and spokesman, but even the Moderator is not the 'head' of the church in any way. There are no priests and no bishops in the Kirk; church services are performed by ordained **ministers**,[59] who are among the presbyters, but otherwise do not have special privileges within the church.

The Kirk became a national symbol during the 17th century, when the Stuart king Charles I, a supporter of the more conservative Church of England, unsuccessfully tried to force Anglican church practices on the Kirk. In response, the Scots created the **National Covenant**,[60] a document in which they declared that they would not accept the King's intervention into the affairs of the Kirk. This resulted in a war between the King and the Scots, which in turn led to the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642. The staunch defence of the Kirk even against the King made the Church of Scotland a powerful symbol of Scottish nationalism.

The traditional Scottish Kirk followed theological principles similar to other Calvinist churches or the English Puritans. As a result, Scottish Presbyterians were notorious for their frugal and austere lifestyle. The Kirk insisted that the Lord's Day (Sunday) should be devoted to church-going and piety, and all sorts of 'indecent activities' such as playing, dancing, theatre, or pub-going were severely condemned. By the 20th century these rigorous attitudes

---

[56] *Kirk*: pronounced /kə(r)k/

[57] *John Knox* (d. 1572, pronounced /nɒks/): Scottish religious reformer, who created the Protestant Church of Scotland following the teachings of John Calvin. He was a Catholic priest, who converted to Protestantism around 1545. In 1547 he was captured by the French and served as a galley-slave for two years, then lived in exile in England and in Geneva, Switzerland. He returned to Scotland in 1559 and became the leader of the Protestant party. In 1560, the Scottish Parliament officially adopted a Presbyterian form of Protestantism as the national religion of Scotland. Knox had a very bad relationship with the Catholic queen, Mary Stuart, who was ultimately forced to give up her throne and flee to England in 1568.

[58] *Presbyterian* (pronounced /ˌpresbɪˈtɪərɪən/): the official name of the Church of Scotland. The name is derived from the Greek word *presbuteros,* meaning 'elder', and it describes a church led by a group of church elders, or elected members of the community, rather than bishops or other clergymen. Presbyterian theology has been strongly influenced by the ideas of John Calvin, but later it developed differently from other Reformed churches in Europe. Today, practically all Presbyterian churches in the world (e.g. in the USA) have their origin in the Scottish Kirk.

[59] *minister:* In Protestant churches, the most common name of people who have been trained to perform religious services in churches and take care of the spiritual affairs of the local congregation. Ministers are not priests, since they cannot administer special sacraments (like priests in the Catholic or Orthodox churches) and are allowed to get married and have a family.

[60] *National Covenant* (pronounced /ˈkʌvənənt/), a document signed by most of the leading Scottish noblemen as well as many ministers and burgesses in 1638, in which they declared their support for a Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and rejected the church reforms proposed by King Charles I, such as the power of bishops and a more conservative church service. Scottish resistance to the King provoked the Bishops' War (1639–40), in which the Scots defeated Charles I, and forced the King to recognize the Presbyterian character of the Kirk.

have largely disappeared, but it is still fairly typical that shops do not open until 1 p.m. or remain closed all day on Sundays in Scotland.

Nowadays, the Kirk is still considered the national church, but the majority of the Scottish people no longer belongs to it. In the 2011 Census, 32% of the Scottish population <u>declared themselves to belong</u> to the Church of Scotland, while 37% did not <u>identify</u> with any churches and 7% did not state any <u>religious views</u>. Still, the Kirk considers it its duty to be present in every Scottish community. The second largest church in Scotland is the Roman Catholic, particularly in the southwest near Glasgow, where many Irish settled in the 19th century. In 2011, 16% of the Scottish population identified themselves as Roman Catholic, and there are areas where more than one-third of the population belong to the church. Several other Protestant churches are present in Scotland, but their membership is low.

4. EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

The Kirk played a very important cultural role in Scottish history ever since its establishment. From the beginning, the church <u>insisted</u> that all adults in Scotland should learn to read and write so as to read the Bible themselves. This <u>priority</u> gave rise to a strong education system, which was for a long time more democratic than in England. Until the 19th century, England had only two universities, Oxford and Cambridge, available mostly for the sons of rich men, while Scotland there were four universities by 1600 – **St. Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen,** and **Edinburgh** – full of hard-working poor students. St. Andrews, founded in 1411, is the third oldest British university, and its <u>prestige</u> was further increased when Prince William, the second <u>heir</u> to the British throne after Prince Charles, chose to attend it between 2001 and 2005, <u>graduating</u> with an MA in Geography.

The modern Scottish education system is similar to the English (described in chapter X), but not identical with it, and it is regulated by the acts of the Scottish Parliament, rather than the British Parliament in London.

<u>General education</u> is <u>compulsory</u> and free for all children between the ages of 5 and 16. Optional <u>pre-school education</u> between the ages of 3 and 5 is provided by <u>local authorities</u>. General education is divided into two <u>cycles</u>. **Primary schools** start at the age of 5, and offer a seven-year programme to the age of 11, while the compulsory education of **secondary schools** lasts for four years, from age 12 to 16. Education beyond the age of 16 is <u>optional</u>, but about the great majority of pupils make use of it. The <u>school-leaving exams</u> are different from the English, so Scottish pupils do not take GCSEs and A-levels (see chapter X), but comparable exams under different names. **Independent schools**, although they exist in Scotland as well, play a far less important role in general education than in England, since less then 28,000 pupils attended the 100 Scottish independent schools in 2013, which makes up about 4% of Scotland's 674,000 pupils. There are more than 360 <u>denominational schools</u> or <u>faith schools</u>, which are almost exclusively Catholic, but are funded by the government.

After secondary school, pupils can choose from 19 <u>higher educational institutions</u> in Scotland, out of which there are 14 campus universities. The four 'ancient' universities, listed above, are the most popular and prestigious, but most of the others are also located in Edinburgh and Glasgow, the two largest cities. Scottish <u>undergraduate</u> university courses typically last for four years, unlike in England where the standard length is three years. The four 'ancient' universities have the privilege of issuing **Master's degrees** at the end of the four years, even though students at other institutions normally get only a **Bachelor's degree** at the end of their undergraduate studies.

Another significant difference of Scottish higher education is that the Scottish Parliament decided not to follow the English example and did not introduce compulsory <u>tuition fees</u> at Scottish universities when the so-called top-up fee (see chapter X again) was passed by the London Parliament, beginning from 2006. As a result, Scottish students studying in Scotland do not have to pay anything except a single sum upon <u>graduation,</u> and the same applies to students coming from other EU countries (including Hungary!). But since English students are <u>charged</u> as much as £9000 a year at English universities, the Scottish government decided to allow Scottish universities to set comparable tuition fees for English students, probably because they were afraid of a onslaught of English students at Scottish institutions.

5. DEVOLUTION AND POLITICS IN SCOTLAND

Ever since the early 20th century, when the **Labour Party** emerged as the other major party in Britain besides the **Conservative Party**, it found many <u>supporters</u> in the big industrial areas of the Lowlands where most of the people live. Since the 1960s, Labour has had more votes and won more <u>parliamentary seats</u> than the Conservatives at every single <u>national election</u> in Scotland. At the elections of 1997, the Conservatives lost all their seats in Scotland, only to regain a single one in 2001, which they have kept in 2005 and in 2010. In the past 20 years, the biggest <u>political rival</u> of Labour in Scotland is no longer the Conservative Party, but the **Liberal Democrats**, who have gained significant popularity in the countryside. But the major <u>urban areas</u> such as the Glasgow-Edinburgh area continue to elect Labour MPs.

As a result, several Scottish politicians have played important roles in the Labour Party. The two latest Labour **Prime Ministers** have both been Scotsmen. **Tony Blair,** Prime Minister between 1997 and 2007, was born in Edinburgh to Scottish parents, and although he grew up in Durham, northern England, he returned to an Edinburgh independent secondary school as a teenager. **Gordon Brown,** Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Blair government and Blair's successor as Prime Minister between 2007–2010, is a son of a Church of Scotland minister, born and raised in Scotland, graduating from the University of Edinburgh, and representing Scottish constituencies in the British Parliament all through his career.

Despite the popularity of the Labour Party in Scotland and the influence of Scottish politicians within the party, the most important political development in the recent history of Scotland has been the **Scottish devolution**, or the re-establishment of the autonomous Scottish Parliament and Government. The idea of the Scottish devolution was not new; in fact, a significant part of the Scottish public and even some Scottish Members of Parliament opposed the Act of Union in 1707, and the **Jacobites** took up arms for Scottish independence (see the 'Brief history' section in the box). The English political elite tried to solve the problem of growing Scottish nationalism and discontent by the establishment of the **Scottish Office** in London in 1885. The leader of the Scottish Office, who became a Secretary of State (a government minister) in 1926, was responsible for the separate Scottish legal system as well as for Scottish education, agriculture, local government and health care.

Nationalist tensions in Scotland were temporarily suppressed by WWII, but the huge economic crisis beginning in the 1960s in Scotland increased discontent with the centralized British government. The closing of Scottish shipyards, coal mines and steel mills, and the consequent high levels of unemployment in Scotland were blamed on the London government by many people. As a result, Scottish national feeling has continued to grow since 1945. In

the late 1960s the **Scottish National Party (SNP)**[61] began to attract serious support, and their most important demand was **home rule** for Scotland. Since the Labour government was worried that they would lose their support in Scotland and their small majority in the British Parliament, they decided to satisfy nationalists and offered the chance of autonomy and an elected legislature for Scotland. A **referendum**[62] was held in **1979**, but the number of 'Yes' votes did not reach the required limit, so devolution was not put into practice.

Since from 1979 to 1997 the Conservatives governed Britain, who strongly opposed devolution, Scottish nationalists had no opportunity to raise the issue again. But Margaret Thatcher's policies alienated the majority of Scots even more, as unemployment reached record heights during her government. In 1997, the Labour party won the elections and promised to hold a new referendum concerning the establishment of a Scottish legislature. The **referendum** was held in September **1997**. The result was a sweeping victory of Scottish nationalists as well as the Labour government: 74.3% of the voters supported an autonomous Scottish Parliament together with the authority to raise special taxes. Labour, the Liberal Democrats and SNP all supported the 'Yes' vote, only the Conservatives opposed it, and they suffered an embarrassing defeat.

The devolution settlement meant that Scotland has a parliament with 'devolved powers' within the United Kingdom. Any powers which remain with the UK Parliament at Westminster are called 'reserved powers'. Devolved powers, matters such as legal system, education, agriculture, and health, are under the exclusive authority of the Scottish Parliament. Reserved powers, such foreign affairs, defence, national security, immigration laws and naturalization are dealt with at the British Parliament in Westminster. The Scottish Parliament passes bills without any further approval by the Westminster Parliament. A very important authority of the Scottish Parliament is the power to alter the rate of tax within Scotland (something the Welsh or the Northern Irish Assembly cannot do).

Besides the separate Scottish legislative, there is also a separate **Scottish Government,** headed by the **First Minister**, who appoints all the other Ministers. The Scottish Government has taken over many of the former responsibilities of the Scottish Office, but the Scottish Office was not abolished, because Scotland needs to be represented in the UK government concerning reserved matters.

The **Scottish Parliament** is also called 'Holyrood,' because its new building (completed in 2004) is in that district of Edinburgh. It consists of 129 elected representatives known as **Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs)**, who are elected for four years, under a **proportional representation**[63] system, which is not used in the British parliamentary elections (see chapter VII on British electoral system). The first elections were held in 1999, and the majority was gained by the Scottish Labour Party, which governed in a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. The election in 2007, however, brought a surprising result: the

---

[61] *Scottish National Party (SNP)*: Political party founded in 1934 with the aim of re-establishing Scottish independence. They won their first seat in the UK House of Commons in 1967. Devolution did not satisfy the party, but they celebrated it as an important step towards a fully independent Scotland.

[62] *Scottish referendum of 1979*: The bill of Scottish devolution was passed by the British Parliament in 1979, but the bill required a referendum: devolution had to be accepted not only by the majority of those voting, but at least 40% of all the registered voters. The majority of the Scottish electorate voted for devolution, 32.9% in favour, 30.8% against it, but the required majority was not achieved, so devolution was not introduced.

[63] *proportional representation (PR)*: any electoral system that tries to reflect proportions of voters' preferences in the proportions of party factions in the legislature. Under a PR system, a party receiving 25% of all votes should receive approximately 25% of all seats in the legislature. The simplest such system is a party list system, when voters do not vote for individual candidates, only for lists set up by parties, and each party sends a number of MPs into the legislature according to the proportion of votes they received.

Scottish National Party won the most seats, overtaking Labour by a small <u>margin</u>, and formed a minority government with **Alex Salmond,** the long-time leader of SNP, as First Minister.

In 2011, the SNP won absolute majority in the Scottish Parliament with 45% of all votes, and used this mandate to push for a referendum on Scottish independence. After long negotiations, the London government agreed to the idea in 2012, and the Scottish government set the date of the referendum on September 18, 2014.

The supporters and the opponents of independence both <u>waged</u> a passionate <u>campaign</u>. The SNP argued that income from the <u>North Sea oil industry</u> would make Scotland rich and would <u>compensate</u> for the lost <u>subsidies</u> from the London government. Opponents of independence, which included all the three national parties, pointed out that the loss of the <u>British pound</u> could provoke an economic crisis, and a newly independent Scotland would have to apply for entry into the EU as a new state. Ultimately 55% of voters voted for keeping Scotland in the United Kingdom, so the issue of Scottish independence is at least postponed for a few decades.

6. FAMOUS SCOTS

Scottish scientists, doctors, writers, and politicians played a very significant role in British history and culture, many of them moving to England or the United States in search for better career opportunities, therefore few people know that they were Scottish in origin. In the 18th century, the so-called Scottish Enlightenment made great contributions to European culture. Its representatives included philosopher and historian **David Hume**, as well as **Adam Smith**, founder of the liberal or **laissez-faire**[64] economic thought, author of the classic *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). Scots also distinguished themselves in science and practical inventions: **James Watt** perfected the steam engine in the 1760s and 1770s; Scottish-born American **Alexander Graham Bell** patented the telephone in 1876; and Sir **Alexander Fleming** discovered the <u>antibiotic</u> medicine penicillin in 1928, for which he received the Nobel Prize.

The two greatest Scottish figures of Scottish literature, who are also considered national heroes, are the poet **Robert Burns** (1759–1796) and the novelist Sir **Walter Scott** (1771–1832). Burns, the son of a simple farmer, was considered a revolutionary poet in his time because he wrote about ordinary people and everyday themes in Scots, the local English dialect, while the Neoclassical poetry of his age preferred dignified topics and elegant rhetoric. Burns captured the democratic spirit, lively humour and national pride of ordinary Scotsmen, which made his folksy, Romantic poems very popular. Perhaps his most famous song is **Auld Lang Syne**,[65] which is sung not only by Scotsmen but by other English speakers on New Year's Eve. **Burns' Supper**[66] is a popular celebration among Scots worldwide.

---

[64] *laissez-faire* (pronounced /leseɪ feə/, in English 'let it go'): the main principle of classical liberal economic thought, suggesting that a nation's economy functions best with the least possible restriction or intervention by the government. Adam Smith and others believed that an unlimited free market regulates itself because individuals will pursue their own self-interests, creating a dynamic balance. The idea was very useful in the 18th and 19th centuries to remove feudal barriers to industrial production and free trade, but the 20th century proved that free market without state intervention cannot prevent monopolies or worldwide economic depressions.

[65] *Auld Lang Syne* (pronounced /oʊld læŋ saɪn/): Perhaps the most famous poem by Robert Burns, which became popular all over the English-speaking world because it is traditionally sung right after midnight on New Year's Eve. The phrase is in Scots, and can be translated into English as 'long time ago' or 'once upon a time'.

[66] *Burns' Supper*: A dinner party usually held on 25 January, the birthday of Robert Burns. Guests eat Scottish national foods, primarily haggis (boiled sheep's stomach stuffed with the sheep's heart, liver and lungs, mixed with oatmeal, onion, and

Walter Scott is considered the inventor of the historical novel, and many of his most successful stories were based on famous events in Scottish history. His first novel, *Waverley* (1814) dramatized events of the 1745 Jacobite uprising, and it was ultimately expanded into a whole series of novels taking place in early 18th century Scotland. Scott was enormously popular in the 19th century, and even though his long stories are less often read today, he is still a symbolic figure of Scottish culture. Among other things, his Romantic (and partly fanciful) image of the Highlands made traditional objects of Highland culture (tartan, kilt, bagpipe, etc.) popular among Lowlanders, and this way made them universal symbols of Scottishness in the 19th century.

Besides them, several other notable Scottish writers became famous in the late 19th century, such as **Robert Louis Stevenson,** author of *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), or Sir **Arthur Conan Doyle**, creator of the brilliant detective, Sherlock Holmes.

In contemporary popular culture, Scotland is mostly represented by actors. Probably the best-known Scottish actor is **Sean Connery**, who became famous worldwide as the first actor who played James Bond in several movies in the 1960s. But Connery remained successful in his later career, even winning an Oscar in 1987. He is well-known for his support of the SNP and the independence of Scotland, often appearing at public ceremonies wearing a kilt. The most famous Scottish actor from the younger generation is **Ewan McGregor**,[67] who first achieved international fame as the leading character in the movie *Trainspotting* (1996), a story of young heroine addicts living in Edinburgh that was based on the successful novel of contemporary Scottish writer Irvine Welsh.

---

spices), while listening to Burns' poem 'Address to a Haggis', drink Scotch whisky, and usually hear one or two speeches commemorating Burns' life and poetry. The evening is concluded with singing 'Auld Lang Syne'.

[67] *Ewan McGregor*: pronounced /juːən məˈgregə(r)/

Key Concepts

ancient university

Anglo-Saxons

Auld Lang Syne

bagpipe

Battle of Bannockburn

Battle of Culloden

Ben Nevis

Britons

Burns' Supper

Cairngorms

Celts / Celtic

devolution

First Minister

Grampian Mountains

Hebrides

Highland dance

Highland line

Highlands / Highlanders

Holyrood Castle

home rule

independence referendum

kilt

Kirk / Presbyterian Church

Jacobites

laissez-faire

Loch Lomond

Loch Ness

Lowlands

Member of Scottish Parliament / MSP

Picts

proportional representation / PR

Scots (people)

Scots (language)

Scottish Act of Union

Scottish Government

Scottish flag

Scottish Gaelic

Scottish National Party / SNP

Scottish Parliament

St. Andrew

Stuart dynasty

tartan

thistle

whisky

Significant towns

Aberdeen

Dundee

Edinburgh

Glasgow

Inverness

St. Andrews

IV. WALES

Think of Hungary First!

Can you divide modern Hungary into regions according to ethnic groups?

Are there or were there such regions in neighbouring countries?

What is the connection between language and national identity?

What is the difference between 'autonomy' and 'independence'?

What are the current problems of ethnic minorities in the Carpathian basin and what solutions are being proposed?

Information Store

The territory and population of Wales – compared to the figures of Hungary

(source: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/uk-census/index.html and http://www.ksh.hu/js/nepszamlalas/grafikonok/03_kotet/)

Country	Territory (square kilometres)	Population (Census 2011; rounded)	Population density (people per sq. km; rounded)
Wales	20,778	3,063,000 (4.8 % of UK total)	147
Hungary	93,030	9,938,000 (2011 Census)	107

Number of Welsh speakers according to Census 2011

People who can speak Welsh: 562,000 (19%)

People who can speak, read and write Welsh: 431,000 (15%)

Test Your Knowledge!

Can you think of any famous Welshmen (historical figures, scientists, writers, actors, musicians, etc.) or any characteristic symbols, images, places or objects that people consider 'typically Welsh'?

Can you think of any movies you saw that took place in Wales or were somehow connected to the history or culture of this country?

Use the Internet!

A wealth of statistical information about the Welsh population can be found on the web site of the Office of National Statistics: www.statistics.gov.uk

Online resources of all kinds about Wales: http://www.data-wales.co.uk/ and http://www.britannia.com/celtic/wales/

The web site of the devolved Welsh Assembly: http://www.wales.gov.uk/

1. WALES V. ENGLAND

There are slightly less than 3 million Welsh, and they have struggled hard to maintain their distinct identity under centuries of English rule. Wales never was a <u>sovereign kingdom</u> like Scotland, so the Welsh lack such symbols of independent history as an ancient capital, a royal dynasty, or a parliament, when defining their national identity. National symbols include the green and white **Welsh flag** with a red dragon, and the **leek** and the **daffodil** as national emblems. The <u>patron saint</u> of Wales, **St. David**, actually lived and worked in the country in the 6th century. His popularity resulted in the fact that David is still a very common Welsh first name and Davis is a typical Welsh surname.

The Welsh consider themselves the <u>descendants</u> of the <u>Romanised Celts</u>, also called **Britons**, who lived in Great Britain before the Anglo-Saxon invasion (see the brief history of Wales in the box), therefore they think of their culture as the most ancient on the island. Wales ultimately came under English rule by the end of the 13th century, and remained part of the Kingdom of England ever since. But the Welsh population was more <u>homogeneous</u> than the Scottish, and Wales was united over the centuries by its Celtic culture and the **Welsh language**, which is still the most widely spoken Celtic language in Europe. Wales was luckier than Scotland or Ireland in one aspect: since after the Middle Ages the Welsh never rebelled against English rule, the English left them alone, and did not try to suppress the native Welsh language. Wales also benefited from English dominance economically: industrialisation after the 18th century and access to the international market through England improved <u>living standards</u> considerably and contributed to the modernization of Wales – while working against the survival of the distinct Welsh culture.

The modern Welsh population, just like the rest of the British, is <u>ethnically mixed</u> and practically everybody speaks English fluently. Far more people consider themselves Welsh than the number of Welsh speakers, so the special Welsh identity also has historical and cultural elements, and is not based exclusively on language.

The greatest political change for Wales in the past century was brought about by the political reform idea of **devolution** (see chapter I). Demand for devolution first emerged in the 1970s, championed by nationalist parties and organizations. Similarly to Scotland, more and more people became dissatisfied with the London government and wanted more influence over their own affairs, demanding some form of **home rule**. The decisive breakthrough came in 1997, when a **referendum** was held both in Scotland and in Wales about whether they want to establish their own regional <u>legislatures</u> to manage <u>local affairs</u>. In Wales, just over 50% of voters supported the idea, and as a result, the first elections to the new **Welsh Assembly** were held in May 1999. Since then, the Welsh Government is responsible for several aspects of life in Wales.

2. REGIONS OF WALES

Wales is located on a <u>peninsula</u> in the west of the island of Britain, surrounded by the sea from the north, the west and the south. Most of its territory is <u>mountainous</u>, covered by the **Cambrian Mountains**, which run in a north-south direction across Wales. The highest peak

of the mountains is **Snowdon** (1085 m) in the north, and its area is called **Snowdonia**[68] National Park. There are two other national parks in Wales: the Brecon Beacons,[69] a range of mountain peaks, in the south, and the Pembrokeshire Coast[70] in the southwest. The highland areas are famous for their beautiful <u>scenery</u>, the green hills, clean streams and many rare plants and animals, but their population is very small. About two-thirds of the Welsh population lives along the narrow southern coast and in the valleys of the rivers that flow down from the hills. As a result, the south is the most densely populated area of the country. The capital, **Cardiff**, and **Newport,** the largest Welsh port, are located southeast on the Severn estuary, while the second largest Welsh town, **Swansea,**[71] lies further west along the southern coast.

Brief History of Wales in 3 Steps

1. From the Romans to the English

Wales was part of the Roman province of Britannia, even though the Romans probably controlled only the southern and the northern coasts, and left the **Celtic tribes** in the hills alone. The Romans brought Christianity to Wales in the 4th century, where it survived in a <u>monastic</u> form even after the invasion of the island of Britain the <u>pagan</u> Anglo-Saxons in the 5th and the 6th centuries. The Welsh successfully resisted the Anglo-Saxons (who later formed the English nation), and as a result, Wales is the only country in Great Britain whose population remained predominantly Celtic for centuries. Resistance to the English was helped by the mountainous terrain, which made the country both unattractive and difficult to conquer. For the same reason, Wales was never united under one native dynasty: local princes and lords dominated in various parts of the country.

2. The English conquest and its aftermath (after 1284)

It was only in the 13th century, under the growing English threat, that two princes, both called Llywelyn, briefly managed to extend their authority over the whole of the country. But they could not long resist the English conquest: King **Edward I** (well-known to Hungarians through János Arany's poem) conquered Wales by military force between 1276–84. In order to control the <u>rebellious</u> Welsh, Edward built several huge castles in the country, which today are among the most famous tourist attractions. Edward also wanted to <u>pacify</u> the Welsh in another way: he made his eldest son, the future Edward II, **Prince of Wales** in 1301, to emphasize that Wales is still a separate country. This has become a tradition: the monarch's eldest son and <u>heir to the throne</u> always receives the title, even though in practice it has little to do with Wales. Queen Elizabeth II's eldest son, Charles, was ceremoniously invested Prince of Wales in 1969 in **Caernarfon**[72] **Castle**.

Even after Edward's conquest, English control was relatively loose: the landlords were mostly English but the majority of the population remained Welsh-speaking. The country was fully united into a single political and administrative system with England by **Henry VIII** in 1536. <u>Counties</u> were set up similarly to England, English <u>common law</u> was extended over Wales, English became the official language in public administration and the courts, and the Welsh came to be represented in the English Parliament, so Wales became an integral part of the Kingdom of England. Nevertheless, the Welsh sense of difference survived into the 20th century.

3. The industrial revolution and the decline of the Welsh language (19th–20th century)

Until the 19th century, Wales was a rural country with a small population and little economic significance; its economy was based mostly on <u>raising sheep</u> and selling wool. In the 19th century, however, huge amounts of coal were discovered in the southern valleys. As a result, **coal mining** became one of the most common

---

[68] *Snowdon / Snowdonia*: pronounced /ˈsnoʊʊdn/ and /snoʊˈdoʊniə/

[69] *Brecon Beacons*: pronounced /ˌbrekən ˈbiːkənz/

[70] *Pembrokeshire*: pronounced /ˈpembrʊkʃə(r)/

[71] *Swansea*: pronounced /ˈswɒnzi/

[72] *Caernarfon*: pronounced /kəˈnɑː(r)vn/

occupations in Wales. The closeness of coal led to the development of heavy industry, especially <u>steel making</u> and <u>shipbuilding</u>, and the new industrial towns attracted most of the rapidly growing population to the south. As a result, by 1900 only 20% of the population lived in villages, as opposed to 80% a century earlier, and **Cardiff**, previously a small town, quickly became the largest city of Wales.

Welsh nationalism emerged during the 19th century, partly as a reaction against urbanization and the increasing influence of the English language and culture in the cities. It centred on the cultivation of the native Welsh language and the revival of medieval Welsh cultural traditions, especially in poetry and music. Political nationalism emerged in the 1890s with the demand of some form of autonomy for Wales. The first success of the nationalists was the <u>disestablishment</u>[73] of the Anglican Church of Wales in 1920, which meant that Anglicanism was no longer the official church in the country. The first nationalist political party, **Plaid Cymru,** was founded in 1925, but achieved considerable popularity only after World War II.

3. LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN WALES

The Welsh identity has been preserved by the Welsh language, which is one of the Celtic languages, but differs considerably from both Scottish and Irish Gaelic. The language is distinguished by its <u>curious spelling</u>, especially the frequent use of 'll', 'dd', 'ff' (these all denote a single consonant in Welsh), and the unusual use of the 'w' (pronounced /u/) and 'u' (pronounced /i/) letters. This is the reason why the Welsh name of Wales, *Cymru*, is pronounced /ˈkəmri/. Despite its exotic spelling, Welsh is an Indo-European language and is therefore a closer relative of English than e.g. Hungarian.

Despite the many centuries of English rule, Welsh remained the first language of the great majority of the common Welsh population until the 19th century, even though English was the only language in public administration, in the courts and in the schools too. The Bible was translated into Welsh in 1588, which helped stabilize the spelling and the grammar of the language. As English workers settled in the Welsh industrial towns in the south during the 19th century, English began to <u>replace</u> Welsh as the primary language in the <u>urban areas</u>, but it remained strong in the <u>rural</u> north and west. During the 20th century, however, Welsh began to decline rapidly due to the effect of the English-speaking mass media, radio and television. In 1901, over 50% of the country's population still used Welsh as their first language, but by 1961 this figure fell to 25%, and by 1981 to 19%.

During the 1960s, the government was persuaded that the survival of the Welsh language requires active political efforts as well. The Welsh Language Act of 1967 guaranteed the right of Welsh inhabitants to use their <u>native language</u> in courts and in public administration. BBC started regional Welsh language radio and television programs, and nowadays BBC Radio Cymru broadcasts exclusively in Welsh, while BBC Channel 4's regional version broadcasts about 12 hours of television programs in Welsh every day. There is no Welsh-language daily newspaper, but several weekly and monthly Welsh-language magazines exist. In 1993, English and Welsh were officially declared equal in public use, and the Welsh Language Board was created to promote the use of Welsh in schools and public institutions, and support the publishing of books in Welsh (about 500-600 books are published in Welsh annually). Public documents and notices as well as all <u>public signs</u> are both in Welsh and English. For instance, Cardiff is also called Caerdydd on signposts. All over Wales the study of the Welsh

[73] *disestablishment:* In English, it means the opposite of the establishment of a church, in other words, the former official or privileged church will no longer enjoy special favors by the state. After the creation of the Church of England, the English monarchs made it the established (state-preferred) church in several other countries, like Wales, Ireland or some of the American colonies (but not in Scotland!)

language has become compulsory in primary schools, though many of the English-speaking children do not remember much beyond the correct pronunciation of place names.

Out of the country's population, about 2 million people (66%) identified themselves as Welsh at the 2011 census, so about one-third of the population of Wales (more than 1 million people) have no Welsh cultural identity and obviously do not speak Welsh at all. Out of these 2 million people, about 500,000 uses Welsh in everyday life; most of them live in rural north, west and mid-Wales. Typically, the proportion of Welsh speakers gets higher as one moves further away from the English border or from the big southern cities. This number seems to have been stabilized over the past twenty years: the proportion of people able to speak Welsh has increased from 19% to 21% by 2001, largely among schoolchildren, probably thanks to the compulsory Welsh education in schools. By 2011, however, the proportion of speakers declined to 19% again, and those who can also read and write in Welsh make up only about 15% of the population, which suggests that despite all efforts of the Welsh government, the Welsh-speaking community is unlikely to grow in the near future.

Welsh-language literature looks back to very old and rich traditions, especially in poetry, which flourished in the Middle Ages. Welsh poets called **bards** were composing poems following traditional Welsh patterns, and competed at **eisteddfod**s,[74] or poetic competitions and festivals, where they usually sang their poems and accompanied themselves on Celtic harps. This bardic tradition declined by the 17th century, but the nationalist revival in the late 18th and early 19th centuries revived the institution in a modernized form. The National Eisteddfod, a festival of Welsh music and poetry, was reintroduced in 1880 and since then it has been held each year.

The cultural revival produced other national institutions, such as the **University of Wales** (founded in 1893), and the National Library and Museum of Wales (1907). The National Library and the most prestigious college of the University are both located in the small town of **Aberystwyth**[75] in west Wales, a centre of Welsh education and culture.

There are other distinguishing features of Welsh culture, involving also the majority of Welsh population who are no longer able to speak the Welsh language. One of these is religion: the Catholic Church of Wales was reformed together with the Church of England in the 16th century and officially became Anglican (see chapter XI), but other, **Nonconformist**[76] Protestant churches became far more popular in the 18th and 19th, primarily the **Methodists** and the **Baptists**. These churches emphasized local community life and encouraged choir singing, which is considered a national art in Wales. In the 20th century, rugby football also became a national sport in Wales, even though soccer is played by more people.

---

[74] *Eisteddfod* (pronounced /aiˈsteðvɒd/): traditional poetic competitions for Welsh bards, held since the 12th century and re-introduced during the 19th century as part of the revival of Welsh language and culture, held alternatively in South and North Wales. The annual festival (Eisteddfod) of Llangollen is an international festival of music and dancing with no links with the Welsh bardic tradition; it is conducted in English.

[75] *Aberystwyth*: pronounced /ˌæbəˈrɪstwɪθ/

[76] *Nonconformist*: Any Protestant churches and sects who did not accept the doctrines and rituals of the Church of England, the official church in England (did not conform to the Anglican church'). The term was invented in the 19th century and referred to such Protestant groups as the Methodists, the Baptists, the Presbyterians (outside Scotland), the Quakers, or the Salvation Army.

4. DEVOLUTION AND POLITICS IN WALES

Since the 16th century, Wales had no autonomous institutions on its own like Scotland, and it was under English influence in government, law and education. So, the ordinary Welsh had few opportunities to express their difference from the dominant **Anglo-Welsh**[77] culture of the rich land-owning class. In the 19th century, passive resistance to English domination took two forms besides the use of the Welsh language: the preference for Nonconformist churches instead of the Anglican Church promoted by the London government, and the support for the Liberal Party, rather than the Conservative Party, the party of the ruling English establishment. When the Labour Party emerged in the early 20th century, the industrial areas in southern Wales became strong supporters of Labour, and several Welsh politicians had a successful career within the party (see 'Famous Welshmen' section).

Political nationalism also developed during the 20th century, with the foundation of **Plaid Cymru**,[78] the nationalist Welsh party. From the start, their political basis was the Welsh-speaking regions of rural Wales, especially in the west and the north. Their popularity rose with the economic crisis beginning in the late 1950s which hit the Welsh industrial areas very hard. Mining and the steel industry experienced huge problems, more and more mines had to be closed, and unemployment reached record heights.

The London government responded to the rise in Welsh national feeling in 1964 by the creation of the Welsh Office and the appointment of a Secretary of State for Wales. In 1974, Plaid Cymru gained three seats in Westminster, and joined forces with the Scottish National Party to campaign for the creation of a **Welsh Assembly** in Cardiff. In 1979, a **referendum**[79] was held at the same time in Wales and in Scotland, but in Wales, the nationalists suffered an embarrassing defeat, because the majority of the population rejected the idea of an autonomous Welsh government. Plaid Cymru lost some of its popularity as a result.

In 1997, together with the Scottish referendum, a new referendum about a separate Welsh assembly was held again. This time, the proposal won, but only by a hair's breadth: 50.3% of those voting supported the creation of the new Welsh Assembly (a majority of less than 7,000 votes), and only half of the total electorate of Wales participated. There are several reasons for the lower level of enthusiasm for a separate Welsh legislature: a significant proportion of the population has no Welsh identity, and also many people were worried that a separate Welsh Assembly will not be able to promote Welsh interests within the central government. Inhabitants of north-western Welsh-speaking Wales were also afraid of the transfer of power to Cardiff, the representative of primarily industrial and commercial interests showing less respect to the sensibilities of the more rural population in the North.

In May 1999, the 60 members of the Welsh Assembly were elected for the first time by a system of proportional representation. The head of the Welsh government is called **First Minister**, and he can appoint other secretaries. The current First Minister is Carwyn Jones (since 2009), leader of the Welsh Labour Party, while Plaid Cymru is the largest opposition

---

[77] *Anglo-Welsh*: People who live in Wales but speak only English and do not have a Welsh cultural identity or do not feel any community with Wales. They are mostly English people who moved into the country. They make up as much as one-third of the population of Wales.

[78] *Plaid Cymru* (pronounced /ˌplaɪd ˈkʌmri/, English: 'Party of Wales'): Welsh nationalist party, founded in 1925 in order to make Wales an independent country. The party strongly promotes Welsh language and culture. They first managed to get an MP elected to Parliament in 1966.

[79] *Welsh referendum of 1979*: The bill of Welsh devolution was passed by the British Parliament in 1979, but the bill required a referendum: devolution had to be accepted not only by the majority of those voting, but at least 40% of all the registered voters. The majority of the Welsh electorate voted against devolution, 11.8% in favour, 46.5% against it.

party. The Assembly, unlike the Scottish Parliament, does not have the power to make primary legislation: it has only secondary legislative power, i.e. it can only influence the way laws passed by the Westminster parliament are executed in Wales. It also has a narrower range of responsibilities than the Scottish legislature: the UK parliament remained responsible, besides the reserved issues mentioned for the Scottish Parliament, also for the police and the legal system in Wales. The Welsh Assembly, unlike the Scottish Parliament, cannot modify the level of taxes within Wales. The Assembly's responsibilities include education, health and social services, economic development and culture.

Critics of devolution, who tend to be mostly Conservatives, are worried that the reform encourages separatist movements and may open the door for the disintegration of the UK. Separatist nationalism, however, is much weaker in Wales than in Scotland, because a considerable proportion of the population does not have a Welsh identity.

Politically, Welsh nationalism is considerably weaker than the Scottish. Although Plaid Cymru is currently the second biggest party in the Assembly, its long-term goal of complete independence for Wales as well as its ethnic nationalism make them unattractive for those people who do not speak Welsh and do not have a Welsh identity. These Anglo-Welsh make up about one-third of the total population of the country, living mostly in the larger cities and along the English border. The Labour Party continues to be the most popular in Wales, while the Conservatives are supported only in areas where much of the population is English in origin. The Liberal Democrats, although present in Wales too, have the fewest members in the Assembly.

5. Famous Welshmen

In 2003 and 2004, there was an online opinion poll on the 100 Welsh Heroes site (http://www.100welshheroes.com/en/homepage) to find the greatest and most popular figures of Welsh history and culture. More than 80,000 people participated, and the results give an interesting picture of the Welsh.

The person who received the most votes is a politician, Aneurin Bevan, who was an influential figure of the Labour Party after World War II, and created the National Health Service in 1948 as Minister of Health. Other politicians who finished in the top ten include **David Lloyd George**, leader of the Liberal Party and Prime Minister of Britain during World War I, as well as two former leaders of Plaid Cymru, little known outside Wales. Neil Kinnock, leader of the Labour Party for a decade during the 1980s, was not included in the list, probably because he lost three elections against the Conservatives.

In the arts, the most famous figure is **Dylan Thomas**, whose difficult and highly rhetorical poems enjoyed great popularity in the 1940s and 1950s. Thomas, a famously heavy drinker, died in his thirties, but his poems as well as his short stories, essays, and amusing autobiography, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (1940), did a lot to promote Welsh life and culture internationally. Another Welsh intellectual renowned all over the world is Bertrand Russell, perhaps the greatest 20th-century British philosopher.

The most famous Welsh actor is **Richard Burton**, who achieved great success both in the theatre and on film in the 1960s and 1970s, even though most people probably remember him for his stormy relationship with Elizabeth Taylor. Oscar-winning actor **Anthony Hopkins** was also born and raised in Wales, but he disappointed his many Welsh fans when becoming a US citizen in 2000. A popular actor of the younger generation is **Catherine Zeta Jones**,

who, despite living in the USA, is very proud of her Welsh origins. The most famous Welshman all over the world, however, is probably the singer **Tom Jones**, who has been an internationally successful entertainer for more than forty years.

Key Concepts

Anglo-Welsh

bard

Britons (historical ethnic group)

coal mine

Cambrian Mountains

daffodil

devolution

eisteddfod

First Minister

leek

Nonconformist

Plaid Cymru

Prince of Wales

referendum

Snowdon / Snowdonia

St. David

University of Wales

Welsh Assembly

Welsh flag

Welsh language

Significant towns

Aberystwyth

Cardiff

Newport

Swansea

V. NORTHERN IRELAND

Think of Hungary First!

What are the largest Christian churches in Hungary?

Is there a strong tension between Catholics and Protestants in Hungary?

How did the borders of Hungary change after World War I and what were the consequences?

Information Store

The territory and population of Northern Ireland – compared to the figures of Hungary

(source: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/uk-census/index.html and http://www.ksh.hu/js/nepszamlalas/grafikonok/03_kotet/)

Country	*Territory (square kilometres)*	*Population (Census 2011)*	*Population density (people per sq. km; rounded)*
Northern Ireland	13,576	1,811,000 (2.9 % of UK total)	131
Hungary	93,030	9,938,000 (2011 Census)	107

The religious division in Northern Ireland

(2011 Census, http://www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/key_stats_bulletin_2011.pdf):

Protestant denominations:	48%
Catholics:	45%
Other religion:	1%
No religion or not stated:	6%

Test Your Knowledge!

Can you think of any famous Irishmen (historical figures, scientists, writers, actors, musicians, etc.) or any characteristic symbols, images, places or objects that people consider 'typically Irish'?

Can you think of any movies you saw that took place in Northern Ireland or were somehow connected to the history or culture of this country?

Use the Internet!

A wealth of statistical information about the Northern Irish population can be found on the web site of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency: http://www.nisra.gov.uk/

A resource web site about the history of the Northern Irish conflict: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/

The web sites of the Northern Irish Assembly and the Executive: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ and http://www.nics.gov.uk/

1. NORTHERN IRELAND V. GREAT BRITAIN

Northern Ireland is fundamentally different from the other parts of the United Kingdom, since it is not a historically distinct country, but an <u>artificially separated</u> part of Ireland, which exists in separation only since 1922, and so it has no traditional regions either. The central flat area, which includes **Lough Neagh**,[80] the largest freshwater lake in the UK, is surrounded by hilly areas.

The purpose of the creation of Northern Ireland was to keep the majority of the Protestant inhabitants of Ireland, the so-called **Anglo-Irish**,[81] within the UK, but a large number of Catholic Irish remained British subjects as well. Ever since, there has been strong opposition between the pro-British Protestants and the pro-Irish Catholics, and this opposition <u>determines</u> everything else in Northern Irish life. A <u>substantial part</u> of the population has never been satisfied with the fact that Northern Ireland is part of the UK, and they feel no sympathy or community with the English, the Scots or the Welsh. Democracy has also been severely limited in Northern Ireland since local politics had traditionally been dominated by Protestant **Unionists** who have suppressed the Catholic minority. After the so-called 'Troubles'[82] (riots, armed conflicts and terrorist acts) in Northern Ireland began in the late 1960s, the autonomy of the region was suspended by the British government, resulting in even more hatred and distrust between Catholics and Protestants, making political solutions very difficult.

Northern Ireland also lacks national symbols: the so-called **Ulster Banner** was used until 1973, but then it was abolished by law as the official flag of the province, probably because it was too similar to the flag of England, even though some Protestants continue to use it. Most Catholics would prefer the use **the flag of the Irish Republic** with its vertical green-white-and-orange stripes, but that is unacceptable for Protestants, because it disregards the separate status of Northern Ireland. Some have suggested **St. Patrick's Cross**, a diagonal red cross on white background, which was used before World War I for the whole of Ireland, to be used as the flag of Northern Ireland, simply because it is a neutral symbol. But currently, the only official flag of Northern Ireland is the UK flag, generally called **Union Jack**.

The passionate debate concerning such a seemingly <u>minor issue</u> as the flag shows the deep <u>division</u> between the two religious communities in the province, as well as their <u>stubborn refusal</u> to accept a compromise even in <u>symbolic matters</u>. This bitter conflict is rooted in the history of Ireland; therefore a short summary of Irish history is necessary for a better understanding.

---

[80] *Lough Neagh*: pronounced /ˌlɔx ˈneɪ/ or /ˌlɔk ˈneɪ/

[81] *Anglo-Irish* (pronounced /ˌæŋgloʊ ˈaɪrɪʃ/): Widespread name for Protestants in Ireland, referring to the fact that their ancestors immigrated from England or Scotland (actually, the majority of them have Scottish origin).

[82] *The Troubles*: In British and Northern Irish usage, a widespread short name for violent conflict between Northern Irish Protestants and Catholics, which started around 1969 and ended with the peace treaty of 1998.

Brief History of Ireland in 5 Steps

1. A Celtic island (before 12th century)

The inhabitants of Ireland are Celtic in origin and their original language is **Irish Gaelic** (which is highly similar to Scottish Gaelic). They were <u>converted</u> to Christianity by **St. Patrick** in the 5th century, who became the patron saint of the island. According to tradition, St. Patrick used the **shamrock** to explain the nature of the Holy Trinity to the Irish, and therefore the plant has become a national symbol too. For centuries, Christianity existed in relative isolation on the island and developed its own unique traditions, based on monasteries. In the early Middle Ages, Ireland consisted of several regional kingdoms, so it was not politically united.

2. Slow English conquest (12–16th century)

English king Henry II intervened in a struggle between local Irish kings in 1171, and made himself recognized as Lord of Ireland, marking the beginning of the English influence over Ireland. Various English adventurers colonized the eastern parts of Ireland, but most of the island remained in practice independent beyond the areas around Dublin. This eastern, English-controlled edge of Ireland was known for centuries as 'The Pale'.

3. The 'Plantations' and the conflict between Protestants and Catholics (16th-17th century)

In 1541, Henry VIII summoned the first Irish Parliament to Dublin and had himself proclaimed King of Ireland, and during the next hundred years, English rulers brought the whole of Ireland under their systematic rule. While England and Scotland both turned Protestant during the 16th century, Ireland never accepted the Reformation and remained firmly Catholic. In order to strengthen their political and economic control over Ireland, first Henry VIII and later English monarchs encouraged tens of thousands of Protestants, both English and Scottish, to settle in the more fertile parts of Ireland, and <u>donated</u> them land which had been <u>confiscated</u> from rebellious native Irish clans and lords. The largest '<u>plantations</u>', as they were called at the time, occurred during the reign of James I and under Oliver Cromwell's rule in the Commonwealth period (1650s). By 1700, the Protestant settlers, also called **Anglo-Irish**, became the majority in **Ulster**, the north-eastern region of Ireland. Elsewhere, Protestants remained a minority, but they owned about 80% of all the land in Ireland, whereas most Catholics became <u>tenants</u> who rented their land from Protestant owners.

The Catholic Irish made repeated attempts to <u>overthrow</u> English rule throughout this period. Perhaps the most famous of these took place in 1690, when the Catholic Stuart king, **James II**, after having been removed from the throne of Great Britain, tried to establish a separate kingdom in Ireland, but his army was defeated in the **Battle of the Boyne**[83] by the forces of the new British king, William III (also known as **William of Orange**).

After the attempt to create a separate Catholic Irish kingdom failed, <u>vengeful</u> Protestants increased the <u>suppression</u> of Catholics. During the 18th century, the social and political division between Protestants and Catholics became even deeper in Ireland. Protestants owned most of the land in the country; most Catholics could only be tenant farmers of Protestant landlords; Catholics were forbidden to be elected into the Irish parliament in Dublin or hold any public office. The Anglican Church was established in Ireland as well, even though the great majority of the population was Catholic.

4. The Irish Act of Union and the Struggle for Home Rule (1800–1918)

After another Catholic uprising, the **Irish Act of Union** in 1800 united Ireland with Great Britain by abolishing the separate Irish Parliament in Dublin and creating the United Kingdom. Irish MPs and Lords were sent to the two houses of the British Parliament in London.

---

[83] *Battle of the Boyne*: Symbolic battle in Irish history, because its outcome determined the future of Ireland for more than two centuries. James II, who was openly in favour of Catholicism over the Church of England, was removed by Parliament from the British throne in 1688 (in the so-called Glorious Revolution). James fled to Ireland, where he hoped to establish a separate Catholic kingdom, relying on the majority support of the local population. Parliament invited William of Orange from Holland (Orange is a region within Holland) to the British throne, who also wanted to take possession of Ireland. James's forces met William's near the River Boyne in 1690, and the Catholics suffered a decisive defeat. The battle has very different significance for the two sides: for Catholics, it was a national tragedy that prevented Irish independence for a long time; for Protestants, it was a great victory that secured the dominance of Protestants in Ireland for another 200 years.

Despite the Act of Union, Catholics never gave up their ideal of an independent Ireland. Catholics were <u>emancipated</u> by law in 1829, which meant that they could finally vote and be elected to Westminster, which gave Catholic Irish Nationalists a chance to argue their cause in London.

Anti-English feelings were increased after the catastrophic **Great Famine**[84] in 1845–48, which resulted in mass <u>starvation</u> of poor Catholics and the emigration of many to the USA. Irish Nationalist MPs began to demand self-government, or **home rule**,[85] but radical nationalists organized underground resistance movements with the hope of overthrowing British rule by force.

After decades of political struggle, the Home Rule Bill was passed in 1914, but it was not carried out because of the outbreak of World War I. It was bitterly opposed by the Protestant majority of the people in Ulster. They did not want to be included in a self-governing Ireland dominated by Catholics. In 1919, a war of independence broke out between **Republicans** (Catholics who favoured an independent Irish republic) and the forces of the British government. The Protestants **Unionists** (who preferred to maintain the union with Great Britain) supported the British in the conflict.

5. The divided Ireland (since 1922)

After a two-year war of independence, the island was <u>partitioned</u>. In 1922 the greater part became the **Irish Free State**, effectively independent from Britain, which in 1949 declared itself a sovereign **Republic of Ireland**. The six northern counties in Ulster, where Protestants were in majority, remained within the United Kingdom under the official name of **Northern Ireland**. Northern Ireland continued to elect MPs to the UK parliament, but they gained their own parliament, prime minister and autonomous government responsible for internal affairs, so Northern Ireland received the home rule long demanded by Irish Nationalists. The division of the island, however, cut off a substantial number of Catholics from the Irish Republic; originally about 30% of the total Northern Irish population was Catholic, but their proportion grew by the end of the 20th century. The Protestant–Catholic conflict remained the greatest problem of Northern Irish politics after 1922.

2. ORIGINS OF THE NORTHERN IRISH CONFLICT

During the 20th century, the politics of Northern Ireland was determined by the <u>hostility</u> between Protestants and Catholics. Every election between 1922 and 1972 for the Northern Irish Parliament, or **Stormont**,[86] was seen as a referendum about Ulster's future – whether it should remain part of the United Kingdom, as the Protestants insisted, or become part of the Irish Republic, as many Catholics wanted. The Protestant majority was determined to keep the Catholics completely out of government. The Protestants feared that any Catholic participation in government might lead to their province's <u>reunification</u> with the Irish Republic, which they wanted to prevent by all possible means.

The <u>discrimination</u> against Catholics characterized everyday life in Northern Ireland. Protestants constituted the majority of industrial and business employers, and they practically dominated in the police, local governments and the administration of the country. After World War II, the political <u>segregation</u> of Catholics was made worse by an increasing economic crisis which affected the traditional heavy industry, primarily shipbuilding, especially in the

---

[84] *Great Famine* (also known as 'Potato Famine'): The Irish population grew very intensively in the 18th and early 19th centuries, from 3 million in 1750 to more than 8 million by 1845. The primary food for the poor Catholic masses was potato, which was destroyed by a fungus disease and produced very bad harvests in 1845–48. Mass starvation followed, in which close to 1 million people died, and another 1 million emigrated to the US. As a result of further mass emigration, Irish population fell to 4.4 million by 1900.

[85] *Irish Home Rule*: The primary demand of Irish Nationalists from 1870, meaning the re-establishment of some sort of autonomous Irish Parliament with its own legislative powers. One of their political ideals was the settlement between Hungary and Austria in 1867, and until World War I most Irish believed that Home Rule could solve the pressing problems of Ireland within the United Kingdom.

[86] *Stormont*: Popular name of the Northern Irish Parliament between 1922–1972, and the Northern Irish Assembly since 1998, due to the fact that it is located in the Stormont Estate in Belfast. Stormont Castle, a building on the Estate, is the official meeting place of the Northern Ireland Executive.

capital, **Belfast**. Since the Catholics were much poorer than the Protestants, they suffered much more from unemployment and social problems.

In 1968 the Catholics, backed by moderate Protestant sympathisers, began a civil rights movement of peaceful street demonstrations to protest against their lack of political rights. They demanded fair participation in political and economic life. Radical Protestants confronted them, provoking riots in the streets. The Northern Irish police force (the so-called Royal Ulster Constabulary, or RUC), which consisted almost entirely of Protestants, was unable to keep order, and they were accused of discriminating against Catholics instead of protecting them. Barricades were built around Catholic communities in Belfast and **Derry** (or **Londonderry**, its official and preferred name for Protestants), the second largest city. The violence soon resulted in deaths, some caused by the police, but most by the **paramilitary groups**[87] in each community.

The UK government sent British army troops to Northern Ireland in 1969 to maintain law and order, but instead, the disorders increased. To most Catholics, UK troops symbolised the traditional English dominance and Protestant oppression of Ireland, so they considered them enemies just like the Protestants. In 1969–72 the UK governments tried hard to persuade the Protestant politicians to agree to political reforms which might be acceptable to the Catholics, but made little progress. In 1972, the most serious and infamous episode took place, the so-called **Bloody Sunday**, when British soldiers shot 14 Catholic demonstrators dead on the streets of Belfast. It was a signal for radical Catholics that the only choice left was armed self-defence against British aggression. Soon after, the Northern Irish government was suspended and the province brought under direct rule by the London government. During the next few years the number of deaths increased rapidly, among both the government forces and the civilian population.

The British government tried in vain to find a political solution to the conflict in some form of power-sharing between Protestants and Catholics: Protestants refused to give up any of their political privileges because they were afraid that it would start a process leading to the reunification of Ireland, while Catholics were suspicious of the honesty of the British government. Extremists on both sides made matters worse by inciting hatred and distrust. The Catholic paramilitary organization, the **Irish Republican Army**, or **IRA**,[88] swore to wage a war on Britain and Protestants until Northern Ireland becomes part of the Irish Republic. They received secret financial help from the Republic as well as from Catholic Irish-Americans in the USA, and managed to collect secret stockpiles of modern weapons, including firearms and explosives. By the 1980s, the IRA developed into one of the most professional terrorist organisations in the world, and they regularly planted bombs in London and other English cities to force concessions out of the British government. Perhaps the most infamous attack was the bombing of a hotel in Brighton in 1984, in which the Conservative Party held its conference. Five people were killed, but Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher escaped without

---

[87] *paramilitary groups*: armed groups of people organized and commanded in a way similar to armed forces, but without being members of any official armed force. In Northern Ireland, the most infamous such group is the Irish Republican Army, or IRA, but there are several Protestant paramilitary groups similar in organization and militancy, such as the Ulster Defense Association (UDA) or the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).

[88] *Irish Republican Army (IRA)*: It was founded in 1919, during the Irish Civil War, to fight a guerilla war against the British government. After the partition of the island, it continued to linger on demanding a united Ireland, but its activity was small. In 1969, after the first riots in Belfast, the IRA was revived as a terrorist organization attacking Protestant and British government targets. After 1981, it began to cooperate more closely with its political arm, Sinn Fein, which gained popularity among Northern Irish Catholics. For a permanent solution of the Northern Irish conflict, it would be essential for the IRA to give up violence which they promised to do in 2005, but a smaller, more extremist wing, called 'real IRA', promised to fight on.

injuries. The British government reacted with more troops and arrests of suspected IRA supporters.

3. The Two Sides and Their Attitudes

The Protestant **Unionists**, or **Loyalists**, consider **Ulster**[89] (as most Protestants prefer to call Northern Ireland) <u>inseparable</u> from the rest of the UK, and emphasize their loyalty to the British monarch. They used to treat the whole crisis in Northern Ireland as a police problem, in which the government should arrest and imprison criminals and terrorists who murder innocent people and cause destruction and chaos. For a long time, they refused to accept the necessity of political reforms and sharing power with Catholics, and even after they did accept the idea in principle, they demanded the end of violence and the <u>disarmament</u> of the IRA before any significant reforms could take place.

The Catholic population has always felt that they were cut off from Ireland illegally and unjustly. They feel more Irish than British and some of them, the **Nationalists** or **Republicans,** would prefer to be part of the Irish Republic. Their movement was originally inspired by the civil rights movement of American blacks, and they often compared their situation of political <u>exclusion</u> and <u>second-class citizen</u> status to blacks in the American South. They insist that their cause is honest and just, they fight for their rights and equality against the <u>hostile</u> Northern Irish and British governments. They also like to emphasize that they did not start the violence, only defended themselves against the aggression of Protestant groups and the Protestant police, as well as the British army troops. During peace negotiations, they typically demanded substantial reforms first before they would discuss the <u>disarmament</u> of the IRA, which they consider simply an organization for radical self-defence.

Both sides have their own distinctive colours: the Catholic Nationalists use **green** (the traditional symbol of Ireland, also called the "Emerald Isle" for its rich green vegetation) whereas Protestant Unionists use **orange**, which refers to **William of Orange** (or William III), King of Britain, the Protestant hero of the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. The anniversary of the battle (in July each year) is an occasion for Protestants to commemorate the event and "King Billy" with great processions or parades in several Northern Irish towns. The so-called "marching season" is organized by the **Orange Order**, a strongly unionist Protestant organization whose members are commonly called **Orangemen**, and whose activities are considered arrogant and provocative by Catholics.

The majority of the Northern Irish population have never participated in street fighting and they disapprove of the actions of the radicals. But the continuing violence on the streets <u>polarized</u> public opinion: the majority of both Protestants and Catholics felt that they must support their own community and separate from the other. As a result, Northern Ireland became a completely <u>segregated society</u>. Each larger town has Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods, sometimes separated by fences and walls, and the inhabitants of one district simply never enter the other. Each community has its own workplaces, schools, shops, pubs,

---

[89] *Ulster*: (pronounced /ˈʌlstə(r)/) Traditional name for a region in Northern Ireland, which used to be a separate kingdom in the early Middle Ages. English and Scottish Protestants were encouraged by the British crown during the early 17th century to migrate to and settle in Ulster. As a result, Ulster became the only region within Ireland by 1700 where the number of Protestants exceeded the number of Catholics. When Northern Ireland was separated from the rest of the country in 1922, six of the original nine counties of Ulster – areas with the largest Protestant concentration – were included. Afterwards, the name 'Ulster' was preferred by Protestants to emphasize that it is an entirely different country from 'Ireland'.

and they try to avoid each other as much as possible. Under such circumstances of mutual distrust, cooperation and compromise is very difficult to achieve.

Regardless of the segregation of the two sides, <u>moderates</u> and <u>extremists</u> on both the Catholic and the Protestant sides have different views on the conflict. Many moderate Catholics dislike the division of the island and the dominance of Protestants, but recognise that the union of Northern Ireland with the Republic is practically impossible as long as the Protestant majority would not agree to it. These moderate Catholics have supported the **Social Democratic and Labour Party** (**SDLP**), which wants Ulster eventually to become part of the Irish Republic by democratic and lawful means. SDLP was the majority party among Catholics from the 1970s to the late 1990s, always getting a few MPs elected to the British Parliament.

In the 1980s the radical political wing of the IRA, **Sinn Fein**,[90] began to participate in elections, after they realized that their terrorist tactics do not bring their desired purpose – the union of the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland – any closer. They remained radical in their rhetoric and strategies, defending IRA terrorist actions as necessary and the only possible way to force the British government to give up control over Northern Ireland. Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein's leader, was elected to the British Parliament in 1983, but he refused to take his seat because he did not recognize the legitimacy of British rule over Northern Ireland (ever since, all elected Sinn Fein MPs have remained absent from Westminster). Although Sinn Fein denied any direct connection to the IRA, the British government refused to negotiate with Sinn Fein, accusing them of assisting IRA terrorist actions, and most of the public saw them similarly.

On the Protestant side, the **Ulster Unionist Party** (UUP) has traditionally been the most popular, and they governed Northern Ireland from 1922 to 1972, the suspension of the autonomous Northern Irish parliament. It has generally been a moderate party but determined to keep Ulster within the United Kingdom, while preserving (or restoring) its autonomous government. In the British Parliament, they were closely allied to the Conservatives until 1974, when after a long debate, the UUP rejected the Conservative government's power-sharing proposal.

After the outbreak of violence, in 1971 a more radical Protestant political party was founded by a fundamentalist Protestant minister, Ian Paisley, under the name **Democratic Unionist Party** (DUP). Paisley has been an MP in the British Parliament since 1970, and he has become well-known for his stubborn refusal to any political compromise with the Catholic minority. He also has links to Protestant paramilitary organisations, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), which use violence and terrorism to advance their aims.

From 1972 to the mid-1990s successive UK governments have tried to find a 'political solution' to the Northern Irish problems, that is, a solution acceptable to most Catholics and most Protestants. Several strategies have been tried, with little or no success. The IRA refused to accept anything short of Ulster becoming part of the Irish Republic, and the Loyalists refused any measure that allowed the Catholics to share power.

---

[90] *Sinn Fein* (pronounced /ˌʃɪn ˈfeɪn/, Gaelic: 'we ourselves'): Originally founded around 1900 as a group of Nationalist reform clubs led by journalist Arthur Griffith, it became a nationalist political party and won the first Irish parliamentary elections in 1918. The party split in the 1920s and those extreme radicals who did not accept the separation of Northern Ireland kept the name, becoming the political wing of the IRA, doing propaganda and collecting funds for the movement. In the 1980s, it entered the political arena in Northern Ireland, gaining support among Catholics and becoming more moderate, although it never cut its ties with the IRA.

4. THE END OF THE CONFLICT

The first breakthrough came in 1994–95, when the IRA – together with the Unionist paramilitaries – was persuaded to declare a ceasefire. After that, a long-standing taboo was broken: the British government invited Sinn Fein to the negotiations about the future of Ireland, in which other Northern Irish political parties participated as well. Although the talks were suspended again in 1996 when the IRA broke the ceasefire, the Labour government of Tony Blair was determined to achieve a breakthrough in the Northern Irish problem, and they took up negotiations again.

In April 1998, after a long series of negotiations, the **Good Friday Agreement** (also known as the **Belfast Agreement**) was signed by representatives of all major Northern Irish parties as well as the British and the Irish governments. Subsequently, both the Irish and the Northern Irish voters accepted the terms of the agreement at a referendum with an overwhelming majority. The agreement set up a **Northern Ireland Assembly** and a **Northern Ireland Executive**, led by a **First Minister**. Although the names are identical with those of Wales, the powers given to the autonomous Northern Irish government were much stronger, more similar to the Scottish Parliament and Government.

The novelty of the agreement was that it gave up the traditional principle of majority government, and introduced **power-sharing** in every government position. The largest parties of the Assembly (two Protestant parties, the UUP and the DUP, and two Catholic parties, the SDLP and Sinn Fein) all send members to the Executive in proportion to the number of their seats in the Assembly. Each minister in the Executive is assisted by a separate committee, in which membership is again distributed to parties in proportion to their strength in the Assembly. The leader of the largest party (in 1998 it was the Ulster Unionist Party) became the First Minister, but he must make every decision with the agreement of the **Deputy First Minister,** who was the leader of the second largest party (in 1998 it was the Catholic SDLP). David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, and John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to achieve the agreement in 1998.

The Good Friday Agreement finally ended the 30-year long period of '**the Troubles**', three decades of violence and terrorism, which has persuaded the majority on both sides that there is no other solution than a compromise to the Northern Irish problems. All sides had to give up something of their earlier positions. The Irish Republic changed its constitution and officially ended its traditional claim to govern the entire island, including Northern Ireland. The peaceful attitude of the Republic softened up Sinn Fein and the IRA, since much of their financial and moral support used to come from the South. The US government and Irish-American politicians also supported peace and negotiations and condemned IRA violence. Opinion polls showed that more than half of Ulster's Catholics did not want to live in a united Ireland and had never supported the IRA.

On the other side, the British Government confirmed that they would agree to any solution in Northern Ireland supported by the local population, and had no intention to keep Protestant Unionists in power or insist on the maintenance of the United Kingdom. Protestants had to realize that the British government had grown tired of all the problems and costs that Northern Ireland represents, and was no longer willing to tolerate the stubbornness of the Protestants who represent a tiny minority of UK population. Demography works against the Protestants too, since Catholics have a higher birth rate, and their proportion has grown from 30% to over 40% by 2000. Once they lose their majority, the Protestants can no longer refuse to exclude Catholics from political representation of power.

Elections were held for the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1998, and in 1999 the Assembly started to work. But the first decade of the devolved Northern Irish government proved difficult. Ian Paisley's DUP rejected the Agreement and refused to participate in the Executive Committee as long as Sinn Fein was allowed to join. Sinn Fein also proved problematic: even though they supported the Agreement, the IRA was slow to turn in their weapons, and in 2002 several Sinn Fein members were arrested and accused of spying for the IRA. The UUP resigned from the Executive Committee in protest, and in October 2002, the Assembly was suspended and the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland began to govern the country by direct rule from London again. The crisis of the execution of the Good Friday Agreement strengthened radicals on both sides: the DUP overtook the UUP and became the largest Protestant Party, while Sinn Fein also became more popular than the SDLP.

The situation changed when the IRA announced in 2005 that it has completely disarmed itself, turning in all secret weapons. Talks began in 2006 about setting up a new Executive Committee with the participation of both Sinn Fein and DUP. The new Assembly was elected in 2007, and the seemingly impossible happened: Ian Paisley, leader of DUP became First Minister, while Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Fein occupied the position of Deputy First Minister. To everybody's surprise, the two radical parties – formerly arch-enemies – have remained in joint government ever since. Since 2011, the First Minister has been Peter Robinson of the DUP, and the Deputy First Minister has been Martin McGuinness, leader of Sinn Fein. It seems that the popularity of the IRA and Protestant paramilitary groups has been decisively undermined and violence has finally given way to political negotiations. This allowed the British government to finally withdraw their troops from Northern Ireland, leaving the maintenance of law and order to the Northern Irish police force and putting an end to the long intervention of the British army since 1969.

5. FAMOUS NORTHERN IRISH AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF THE TROUBLES

Most of the well-known Northern Irish figures are politicians, leaders of the Catholic or the Protestant side. One exception is the poet **Seamus Heaney**,[91] who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995. The Catholic Heaney supported the Nationalists, but in the early 1970s moved to Dublin, Ireland, and became a university professor there. His poetry is not concerned with politics; he deals with everyday Irish life and universal moral problems. Probably the most famous Northern Irish actor is **Liam Neeson**,[92] who started his acting career in Belfast, and achieved international fame in the role of Oskar Schindler in the Oscar-winning movie *Schindler's List* (1993). He also played the title role of a famous Irish Nationalist leader and martyr in the movie *Michael Collins* (1996). Another famous Northern Irishman is legendary football player **George Best**, who won the European Cup with Manchester United in the 1960s, and is generally considered the greatest footballer in Northern Irish history. When he died in 2005, his funeral was attended by an estimated 100,000 people in Belfast, and Belfast City Airport was named after him.

---

[91] Seamus Heaney: pronounced /ˌʃeɪməs ˈhiːnɪ/

[92] Liam Neeson: pronounced /ˌlɪəm ˈniːsn̩/

Northern Ireland is mostly known internationally due to the long-standing violent conflict, which inspired several books, films and other cultural reflections. One of the most powerful representations of the cruelty of the Northern Irish conflicts is the movie *In the Name of the Father* (1993), which is based on the true life story of the so-called Guildford Four, people convicted and imprisoned for an IRA terror attack although they were innocent. Two famous songs by Irish bands also reflected on Northern Irish hatred and violence: 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' (1983) by *U2* and 'Zombie' (1994) by *The Cranberries*.

Key concepts

Anglo-Irish

Battle of the Boyne

Bloody Sunday

Democratic Unionist Party / DUP

First Minister – Deputy First Minister

Good Friday Agreement / Belfast Agreement

Great Famine

Irish Act of Union

Irish Gaelic

home rule

Irish Republican Army / IRA

Lough Neagh

Northern Ireland Assembly

Northern Ireland Executive

Orange Order / Orangemen

paramilitary groups

Republic of Ireland

Republican / Nationalist / green

shamrock

Stormont

St. Patrick

the Troubles

Unionist / Loyalist / orange

Sinn Fein

Social Democratic and Labour Party / SDLP

Ulster

Ulster Banner

Ulster Unionist Party / UUP

William of Orange

Significant towns

Belfast

Londonderry / Derry

VI. CROWN AND PARLIAMENT

Think of Hungary First!

What kind of governmental system exists in Hungary?

When did the current Hungarian Constitution come into being?

Can you mention any current political debates in Hungary which are connected with the Hungarian Constitution?

What are the fundamental political institutions in Hungary? What relationship do they have with one another?

Can you find the equivalents of the British institutions described below in Hungary?

Who currently hold the highest political offices in Hungary?

Information Store

Official name of state: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Form of government: Constitutional monarchy with two legislative houses

Chief of state: Sovereign (since 1952, Queen Elizabeth II from the House of Windsor)

Head of Government: Prime Minister (since 2010, David Cameron, Conservative Party)

Capital: London

Official language: English

Monetary unit: 1 pound sterling (£) = 100 new pence

Number of MPs (Members of Parliament) in the House of Commons since 2005:

Country	Number of constituencies/MPs
England	533
Scotland	59
Wales	40
Northern Ireland	18
United Kingdom	650

Test Your Knowledge!

Have you ever seen a photo of the Houses of Parliament? Where is it? What is the name of its famous clock tower?

Where does the British monarch normally live? In case of her death, who comes next to the throne?

How many members of the royal family can you name? What made them famous?

Do you know anybody by name from the House of Commons or the House of Lords? What is he or she famous for?

Use the Internet!

The official web site of the British monarchy, containing all sorts of information about the Royal Family: www.royal.gov.uk

The official web site of the British Parliament: www.parliament.uk

1. THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BRITISH CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY

Britain is a **constitutional monarchy**,[93] without a written constitution. This strange situation is quite surprising since Britain is famous for being the oldest constitutional democracy in the world and has been a model and an example for many other countries all over the globe. Yet the historical development in Britain has never created any single legal document which is the highest law of the land and describes the fundamental institutions of the state, their spheres of authority and their relationship to one another – as it happened in the USA and later in many other countries, including Hungary.

British people often refer to 'the constitution,' but they mean a variety of different things under the phrase. Several **Acts of Parliament** (also called 'laws' or 'statutes') are considered to be part of the constitution, some of which are centuries old, while others may be very recent. Then there are various '**conventions**' which are traditionally accepted rules and procedures but they have never been written down in law; these practices are based mostly on precedent, that is, on historical tradition. Since neither the Acts nor the conventions enjoy any special legal protection (they are not listed or described anywhere as 'part of the constitution'), Parliament is free to change any aspect of 'the British constitution' by a new Act, which then becomes part of the constitutional tradition. Actually, this is remarkably similar to the 'Hungarian constitution' as it existed before 1947, the adoption of the first written Constitution of the Hungarian Republic, since 'the constitution' of the Hungarian Kingdom up to the 20th century was also a complex collection of ancient and recent laws as well as practices established through the centuries.

The **unwritten constitution** of Britain has decisively influenced the entire system of government and the political practice of the country. Since 'the constitution' is not protected from modifications by legal restrictions as in other countries (e.g. in Hungary two-thirds of parliamentary MPs have to agree to any modifications; in the US, beyond the two-thirds majority in Congress, three-fourth of all states have to ratify amendments), the British constitution is more flexible, easier to change and adapt to new circumstances. This can be an advantage on occasion, but there is also a danger that the current government which has a majority in the Commons may change the constitutional framework any way they want, and there is no legal limit that would prevent them from modifications that may be opposed by the majority of the country. To take an extreme example: nothing would prevent the British Parliament to abolish the monarchy from one day to the next, and they are not required to ask the people about it. On the other hand, a lot of things are not written down in any law (e.g. there are no rules about the exact powers of the Prime Minister, or the fundamental civil rights of British people), so certain guidelines or legal guarantees that are taken for granted in other countries are simply missing in Britain. The only safeguard against such dangers is the

---

[93] *constitutional monarchy*: a form of state in which the head of state is a hereditary monarch, but his or her powers are limited by a written or unwritten constitution. The constitution defines the powers of the most important institutions of the state and describes the procedures of how these institutions should exercise their powers. In modern constitutional monarchies, monarchs have very little practical power, their functions are mostly legal and symbolic. Legislation is usually in the hands of an elected legislature, which delegates executive powers to a Prime Minister or a similar head of government.

strong democratic spirit of both the politicians and the public, as well as the observation of all unwritten conventions that are meant to protect democracy.

The most important political institutions of Britain are **the Crown**, **Parliament** and the **Government**. The relationship between them is a result of a complicated historical development which needs to be briefly described.

Brief History of Modern British Government in 4 Steps

Step 1: The Civil War and the Commonwealth – first conflict between the Crown and Parliament (1642– 1660)

During the early 17th century, Parliament – especially its lower house, the **House of Commons** – began to question the unlimited power of the monarch (the so-called **divine right of kings**[94]) to govern the kingdom any way he wanted. Parliament demanded the power to decide certain crucial issues, especially they insisted on approving new taxes. When King Charles I refused to accept such limitations on his royal power and wanted to dissolve the House of Commons, the **Civil War** broke out between King and Parliament in 1642, which ultimately led to the conviction and execution of the King for treason in 1649 and the military dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell, who ultimately even disbanded Parliament.

Step 2: The Restoration of the monarchy (1660–1688)

Cromwell's brutal dictatorship caused a general disillusionment about republican government without a monarch and people yearned for a stable form of government. In 1660, the executed king's son, Charles II, was invited back to the throne and his powers were restored intact: in theory, he could do anything his father could. Charles, however, learned from the experiences of his father, and he generally governed the country in cooperation with Parliament.

Step 3: The Glorious Revolution[95] **(1688–89)**

In 1685, Charles was followed on the throne by his younger brother, James II, who did not understand that he should not ignore Parliament. His biggest mistake was trying to promote Catholicism in a Protestant country, which alienated most of his loyal supporters. Parliament was so alarmed by a possible restoration of the Catholic church that they decided to remove James from the throne. James had a Protestant daughter, Mary, married to William of Orange, stadholder (governor) of Holland. In 1688, Parliament invited William to the English throne together with his wife. The new king was forced to accept Parliament's conditions: in 1689, Parliament passed the **Bill of Rights**,[96] which is one of the most fundamental documents of 'the British constitution.' It limited the power of the Crown and greatly increased the authority of Parliament. The hereditary monarchy was maintained, but the law required the approval of Parliament for almost every important decision. It was also established that members of the House of Commons had to be regularly re-elected (though at that time only a fraction of the population had the right to vote).

---

[94] *Divine right of kings*: It is a political and theological doctrine about the legitimacy of monarchs. It claims that monarchs receive the right to rule and govern their subjects from God, therefore they are only responsible to God for their actions and decisions, but may not be questioned by any earthly authority. In other words, the power of kings is not subject to the will of the people: neither the church, nor the aristocracy or Parliament or any other institution may restrict their powers. It typically served to justify absolute monarchies in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries.

[95] *Glorious Revolution* (1688–89): Following the conflict with James II, Parliament invited William to the throne, formally together with his wife, who was the next heir to the throne. William landed in England with an army, and James was forced to flee to France. Parliament declared the throne vacant and offered it to William and Mary. William III managed to succeed to the throne without bloodshed, hence the exaggerated term 'glorious revolution'. The price he paid for his crown was the limits placed on his power by the Bill of Rights.

[96] *Bill of Rights* (1689): An Act of Parliament specifying the rights of Parliament and their members, and limiting the powers of the Crown and the monarch. Its most important tenets: the Crown must not impose taxes, set up courts or a standing army, without the approval of Parliament; MPs have full freedom of speech in Parliament; they cannot be imprisoned without a trial; the monarch must be Protestant and take a coronation oath to protect the Church of England.

> **Step 4: The development of the constitutional monarchy (18ᵗʰ century)**
>
> The Bill of Rights only talked about the powers of the King and Parliament but did not create any specific institutions for the government of the country. In practice, day-to-day governing was the task of the king's **ministers**,[97] who originally had nothing to do with Parliament; the king could choose anybody he liked. However, it soon became clear that the ministers could not work effectively and get the laws they want through Parliament unless they were approved and supported by the majority in the House of Commons. As the House consisted of two parties, the best solution was to choose ministers from the party which held a majority of the seats, since these people could command the support of the others. In the early 18ᵗʰ century the chief minister came to be called **Prime Minister**, and it soon became a convention that all other ministers were appointed on the Prime Minister's advice – in other words, the Prime Minister told the monarch who to appoint. This is how the **Cabinet**, the body of leading ministers, came into being. The fundamental elements of the British constitutional monarchy have remained the same ever since, but many other factors have changed: most importantly, all adults received the right to vote by the early 20th century and as a result, new political parties became popular.

2. THE CROWN

The institution of the monarchy in Britain is more than one thousand years old: the kingdom of England came into existence in the 10ᵗʰ century under the Wessex dynasty out of earlier, smaller Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Since then, kings, queens and dynasties have followed each other, but the continuity of the monarchy was broken only once by the republic of Oliver Cromwell that lasted only eleven years (1649–60; see brief history of British government above). The monarchy is <u>hereditary</u>, which means that the oldest male child, or if there are no sons, the oldest female child of the monarch succeeds to the throne. Acts of Parliament prescribe that the monarch must be Protestant (so that is also part of 'the constitution'). The <u>reigning</u> monarch, **Queen Elizabeth II**, came to the throne in 1952, so she has recently celebrated her <u>diamond jubilee</u>, that is, the 60th anniversary of her accession to the throne. She seems to have a good chance to break the record of Queen Victoria, who ruled for 64 years in the 19ᵗʰ century. She has many <u>residences</u> in the country, but the two most famous ones are **Buckingham Palace** in London and **Windsor Castle** on the Thames, west of London, which gave the royal family its present name.

The Political Role of Monarch – Theory and Practice

The position of the monarch in a modern constitutional monarchy is contradictory, because there is a huge difference between legal theory and political practice. In legal theory, the monarch has enormous powers: she is <u>head of the executive</u> (that is, the government) and of the <u>judiciary</u> (that is, the system of justice), Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and <u>commander-in-chief</u> of the armed forces. Besides all these functions, she is also the head of the **Commonwealth**,[98] and head of state of 16 other states, including Canada, Australia, and

---

[97] *minister* (Latin: 'servant'): Originally, it meant a servant of the king, that is, a leading politician who received some important office from the king. After the Glorious Revolution, ministers gradually became servants of Parliament rather than the king, since they were chosen from the MPs of the majority party, and appointed by the king on the Prime Minister's advice.

[98] *Commonwealth* (pronounced /ˈkɒmənwelθ/): an international organization created in 1931, whose members are the United Kingdom and its former colonies, now independent nations, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, South Africa, Nigeria, as well as dozens of other countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean region and the Pacific. Nowadays, its role is mostly symbolic. Its Hungarian name is '*Nemzetközösség*', and it should not be confused with the republic created in England after the execution of Charles I in 1649, which was also called 'Commonwealth' at the time.

New Zealand. When Queen Elizabeth opens Parliament every autumn (since 2012 early summer), she makes a speech (the so-called **Queen's Speech**) about what 'her government' wants to do in the following year. In theory, she could appoint anybody to any of the Cabinet positions: there is no law which would tie her hands. She <u>summons</u> and <u>dissolves Parliament</u>, and no bill passed by Parliament can become law until she has signed it. Thousands of things in Britain, from prisons to warships, have 'Her Majesty's' (in short, HM) in their name: theoretically, they are all 'owned' by the monarch. When somebody is accused of a crime at court in Britain, they are accused by 'the Crown,' because the monarch <u>embodies</u> the authority of the law.

The practice of everyday politics, however, is very different. Since 1689, the monarch's sovereign powers have been very strictly limited by the constitutional theory that is summarized by the well-known slogan that '**the monarch reigns but does not rule'**. That means that the monarch exercises almost all her powers 'on the advice of the Prime Minister,' in other words, the Prime Minister tells her what to do. It is in fact the Prime Minister who tells when Parliament should be dissolved, who should be appointed for positions in the government, in the courts, in the armed forces, or in the Church of England. The Prime Minister decides when to <u>declare war</u> on or <u>make peace</u> with an enemy power, and also when to open and dissolve Parliament. The Queen's Speech, by which she opens a new Parliament, is also written by the government and authorized by the Prime Minister. The monarch's approval to a bill – the so-called **royal assent** – has not been denied since 1708, so for three hundred years the monarch has automatically approved every single law passed by Parliament. Even the most formal functions of the monarch, like giving honours, such as **peerages**[99] and **knighthoods**;[100] or to pardon convicted criminals, are directed by the government.

What is the function of the monarch then? First of all, she is the symbol of the unity of the nation and the stability of the government, who remains permanently in her position while governments and Prime Ministers come and go. It is considered very important that the monarch should be 'above politics,' that is, she does not support any of the parties and does not participate in political debates.

The monarch also plays a more practical role. The Queen receives a copy of state papers and other important documents every day, and she is visited about once a week by her Prime Minister to be <u>consulted</u> on matters of national life. Since 1952 the Queen has regularly met twelve Prime Ministers, so she has a lot of knowledge and experience in government, even though mostly as an observer. Former Prime Ministers described her as well-informed and more prepared than many politicians. Her other major task is representing Britain abroad, as she is probably the best-known British personality worldwide. She regularly visits foreign countries, meeting other monarchs and <u>heads of state</u>, as well as prominent citizens. British constitutional experts believe that the monarch's role could also become very important in case of an extraordinary political situation. For example, if a government turned <u>dictatorial</u> and wanted to pass very bad and unpopular laws threatening democracy, the monarch could use her power of royal assent to refuse to sign these bills, which then could not become law. But such a situation is unlikely to arise as Britain has had a stable and democratic system of government for a very long time.

---

[99] *peerage*: one of five aristocratic titles donated by the monarch, which until recently gave the right to people to sit in the House of Lords (for details, see the 'House of Lords' section). The owner of a peerage is called a peer.

[100] *knighthood:* A rank of honour donated by the monarch, which entitles its owner to be addressed 'Sir,' e.g. 'Sir Paul McCartney.' Women who receive the knighthood are addressed 'Dame', e.g. 'Dame Agatha Christie.' It does not provide any special privileges, and it is not to be confused with a peerage, which is a much higher honour.

The Monarchy and the Public

Despite the obvious contradiction between democracy and monarchy, the Royal Family has remained popular in Britain. Although most people are aware that the monarch has no significant political role, they still respect or even admire her as a <u>personification</u> of national identity and national values, and they love the colourful traditions associated with the monarchy. There is a respectful, almost religious attitude to the Queen. She is rarely criticized in public, but even then the tone of the criticism is expected to be polite and deferential. The royal family is a well-known symbol and attraction of Britain abroad; the royal residences attract millions of tourists each year. A number of books are published in Britain each year on the royal family, and popular magazines all over Europe frequently cover British royalty.

The modern image of the British monarchy was created in the 19th century, during the long reign of **Queen Victoria**.[101] The Hanoverian dynasty in the 18th century was not particularly popular, and the general public knew very little about the kings beyond rumours of alcoholism or <u>extramarital affairs</u>. Queen Victoria, however, made the life of the royal family public with her books on their holidays in Balmoral Castle, Scotland. The Queen's devotion to her husband, Prince Albert, and their large family made the royal family both popular and a <u>moral example</u> to follow. Victoria's <u>successors</u> worked hard to preserve the high respect of the public. During World War II, George VI was admired when he refused to leave London during the German air attacks on the capital, even after Buckingham Palace was hit, and visited the badly bombed parts of London.

Elizabeth II, who succeeded to the throne in 1952 at the age of 26 as a beautiful young woman, also enjoyed widespread popularity and universal respect in her early reign. The popular dailies and magazines covered the life of the royal family in great detail, including the birth and upbringing of her four children. The wedding of her eldest son, **Prince Charles** and **Lady Diana Spencer** in 1981 was an international media event, watched by millions of people on TV worldwide. The young couple, especially the beautiful princess who came from an aristocratic family, captured the romantic imagination of the public, and 'Lady Di' became an international celebrity and the hero of the ordinary British people.

Opinion polls in the 1980s showed that almost 80% of the population was strongly in favour of the monarchy, and probably fewer than 10% were opposed to it. During the 1990s, however, a series of scandals shook the royal family and damaged its reputation very badly. Charles and Diana had two sons, **Prince William** (born 1982) and **Harry** (born 1984), but by the late 1980s their marriage gradually fell apart. The popular press was ready to publish every small sign of their growing alienation. Eventually it turned out that they both had secret love affairs, which first Diana, then Charles made public in authorised biographies and TV interviews. In 1992, the couple officially separated, and they divorced in 1996. The majority of the public sided with Diana, who was seen as a victim of a distant and cold royal family and a stiff husband who never really loved her. Diana's new, independent life, however, was cut tragically short by a fatal car accident in Paris on August 30, 1997, in which both she and her boyfriend, Dodi al-Fayed, died. Britain as well as the whole world was shocked and an almost unprecedented wave of national <u>mourning</u> followed. After a few days of public

---

[101] *Queen Victoria* (reigned 1837–1901): The longest-reigning monarch in British history, who originally came from a small German princely family. She married a German prince, Albert, who died much earlier than her, and Victoria continued to mourn him for the rest of her life. They had nine children, and the girls married into several other royal families in Europe, so the old Victoria was nicknamed "the grandmother of Europe". Her public image as a faithful, loving wife, devoted mother, and dutiful queen greatly influenced the moral values of Victorian Britain.

silence, under pressure from the public, the Queen expressed her sadness in an extraordinary live television speech, which had never occurred in the history of the royalty before. Diana's funeral procession through central London was attended by over a million people and broadcast on television worldwide.

As a result of his marital failure and scandals, Charles has lost much of his earlier popularity and some people would not like to see him on the throne, especially after he married his lifelong lover, Camilla Parker-Bowles, in 2005. Conservative royalists think that a future monarch must not be married to a divorced woman he had had an extramarital relationship with; liberal-minded people believe that they deserve to be officially married after being loyal to each other for decades. There were even speculations whether it is possible to leave Charles out of the royal succession and put his son William on the throne right after Elizabeth, although such an event is unlikely. In the meantime, two other royal marriages, those of Prince Andrew and Princess Anne (Charles's younger brother and sister), had also split up. All in all, the popularity of the monarchy and the royal family has fallen significantly in the 1990s.

The image of the royal family improved with the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilees (the 50th and 60th anniversary of her accession to the throne) in 2002 and 2012, which was celebrated with spectacular events nationwide. The marriage of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, a woman of common (non-aristocratic) family background, in 2011, was also received with great excitement and celebration. Since then, their first child, George, has been born, so there are currently three generations of heirs to the throne lining up behind Queen Victoria.

Besides the scandals, other kinds of criticism also targeted the royal family. In the 1990s, the royal finances became a topic of public discussion. The monarch and her household, her official travels and receptions as well as the maintenance of Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle, are financed by Parliament in various forms, even though the Queen has a significant income (estimated around £10 million) from her inherited private estates, which is used for paying her private expenses. The total fortune of the royal family amounts to hundreds of millions, but most of of this property cannot be sold (castles, jewellery, art works, etc.). After the royal family was criticized as too expensive for the British taxpayers, in 1992 the Queen voluntarily agreed to pay income tax after her private income just like all other British citizens and to make royal finances public. In 2011, the state support for the official duties of the monarch was reformed by law: since 2012, the royal household has received the Sovereign Grant, which covers all official costs (staff and employees, foreign travels, etc.) as well as the maintenance of the royal palaces. The value of the grant is set at 15% of the total revenue from the Crown Estate (royal land and properties managed by the Treasury in the name of the monarch since 1760), which equalled about £36 million in 2013. This was explained by a royal official in such a way that the Queen cost 61p, or the price of two pints of milk, for every British person a year.

There is a small but active republican movement in Britain, demanding the abolition of the monarchy and the election of a head of state. Few people seriously believe that the monarchy should be abolished, but many think that the royal family should reform its attitude and mentality in a modern age. That is the reason why the press and the public follow the career of William and Harry, now both young adults, with particular interest. William seems to be a model young man, but Harry has had scandals involving drunkenness and rowdy behaviour.

3. WESTMINSTER – THE SEAT OF PARLIAMENT

In Britain, Parliament is widely known as '**Westminster**', since it is housed in the Palace of Westminster in central London. The British Parliament is <u>bicameral</u>, which means that it consists of two 'houses': the **House of Commons** and the **House of Lords**. The two houses are not equal in power: the House of Commons, even though it is the lower house, has much more influence than the Lords, because the independent power of the unelected House of Lords has been seriously limited in the 20th century.

The Brief History of the English Parliament

The English Parliament is a very old, medieval institution, dating from the 13th century. The name comes from the French word *parler*, or 'to speak', since originally it was a place where the king discussed the important issues and problems of the country with his **royal council**, whose members were the most powerful noblemen and church leaders. After **Magna Carta** (1215), kings were expected to gain the approval of the influential noblemen to their most important decisions, especially if they needed more money and wanted to levy new or higher taxes. This is how Parliament came into being. In 1295, King Edward I invited the representatives of the **counties** and the **towns** to his Parliament as well, which became a model for later Parliaments.

From mid-14th century, the noblemen and the bishops began to gather separately, forming the **House of Lords**, while the representatives of counties and towns, the ordinary gentlemen and citizens, came to be called the **House of Commons** (most other European monarchies had similar Parliaments, including Hungary up to the end of World War II). The names of two houses became common in the 16th century.

By the 16th century, it had become usual that the important decisions of the monarch were also approved by Parliament. However, the monarch at that time was still free to issue orders and decrees without asking Parliament, or not to summon Parliament for years if he wished. However, Parliament, especially the House of Commons, expected to take part in political decision-making by the early 17th century, and when King Charles I decided to ignore Parliament, the conflict of King and Parliament became tense (described in the box above as 'The Brief History of British Government'). Because of its financial power, its ability to raise or withhold money, the House of Commons eventually gained dominant influence in all issues over both the monarch and the Lords. This long and gradual development was completed by the Glorious Revolution and the creation of the constitutional monarchy in England (later Britain).

The House of Commons

When British people speak about 'Parliament,' they usually mean its lower house, the House of Commons (in short, '**the Commons**'). This is also reflected by the term they use for members of the Commons, who are called **Members of Parliament**, or **MP**. Each MP represents one single electoral district, called **constituency** in Britain. The boundaries of the constituencies are drawn in such a way to guarantee that each constituency has roughly the same number of voters (nowadays, c. 70,000 per constituency). For this reason, boundaries are revised and modified about every ten years. The number of constituencies is not fixed either, it changes with the population and it might be modified by Parliament itself. Currently there are 650 constituencies and the same number of MPs, 533 of which represent constituencies in England, 59 in Scotland, 40 in Wales, and 18 in Northern Ireland. Ironically, the Commons <u>debating chamber</u> has room for about 400 members only, so it is impossible for all MPs to sit down at once, but it is unusual for all members to be present at any one time. Many MPs work in other rooms of the Commons, participating in <u>committees</u> and meetings that are also part of the parliamentary process.

Historically, British MPs were not elected for a fixed period of time, only a maximum <u>term</u> was fixed for each Parliament, which was five years. It was the government's (in practice, the Prime Minister's) right and responsibility to ask the monarch to <u>dissolve Parliament</u> and announce a new <u>general election</u>, and the Prime Minister could do this at any time within the five-year period. Since this power gave the government significant political advantage because the governing party could choose the most suitable period for the election, in 2011 a new Act was passed, which created <u>fixed five-year terms</u> for future Houses, beginning with the new parliamentary election of 2015. Future elections should be held on the first Thursday of May of the appropriate year.

The shape of the Commons debating chamber is different from most European legislative chambers: it does not look like a slice of pie or a horseshoe – which suggests the presence of several political parties from left to right – but it is a long, rectangular hall with five <u>rows of benches</u> on each side facing each other across the floor. At the far end, there is the Speaker's high chair; the **Speaker** presides over the Commons. The members of the <u>majority party</u> who support the government sit on the Speaker's right, and on the other side sit those who oppose the government. The front benches on the right of the Speaker are reserved for members of the **Cabinet** and other Ministers, officially called '**Her Majesty's Government**.' On the other side, the front row on the Speaker's left is occupied by spokesmen of '**Her Majesty's Opposition**,' known as the **Shadow Cabinet**.[102] In the higher benches behind members of the Cabinet and the Shadow Cabinet on both sides sit MPs who have no leading role or special task within their party; these ordinary MPs are called **backbenchers**. Apart from the frontbencher–backbencher distinction, there is no permanent seating plan, all MPs sit wherever they like or wherever they find a free seat. There is a long table between the two front benches, and on top of the table there are two wooden desks, the so-called <u>dispatch boxes</u>. Members of the Cabinet or the Shadow Cabinet stand behind their dispatch box when making a speech in order to consult their written notes, but backbenchers speak from wherever they are in the chamber, usually without notes.

The arrangement of the benches clearly suggests a traditional **two-party system**: MPs are either behind the government or against it; they are not expected to be neutral. The Commons has seen some very aggressive and violent debates in the past: a red line on the floor in front of each front bench still marks the limit – a little more than two swords' lengths – beyond which a Member may not approach the opposite benches so that fights can be prevented.

The Speaker is also an MP chosen by the House. He or she (there has been a female Speaker as well) is responsible for order in the House, calls on MPs to speak, orders votes at the end of debates, and is required to be absolutely <u>impartial</u> towards parties and individual MPs. Speakers normally remain in their position as long as they wish, even if a new election has changed the governing majority in the Commons. Although first elected to Parliament as a party MP, a Speaker must officially leave his or her party until the end of his or her job, when he or she usually retires to the House of Lords. The Speaker is assisted by three deputy speakers. MPs are paid decent salaries (about £67,000 in 2013) and they receive allowances to cover various costs (paying for staff, travelling and residence in London, etc.) but many MPs could earn more outside the Commons.

---

[102] *Shadow Cabinet*: Those MPs from the Opposition side who would probably form the Cabinet if their party were in power. Each member of the Shadow Cabinet mirrors or 'shadows' the function of a Cabinet member: there is a Shadow Home Secretary, a Shadow Defense Secretary etc., who speak in their party's name if a matter related to their area of responsibility comes up for debate in the Commons. The Shadow Cabinet has no official function; it exists merely to show voters that the opposition is prepared and ready to take over the government if necessary.

The life of Parliament is divided into periods called <u>sessions</u>, running normally from October to October with breaks during public holidays and a long summer holiday in August and September. At the end of every session Parliament is '<u>prorogued</u>'; this means that all business which has not been completed is abandoned, and Parliament cannot meet again until it is formally summoned by the Queen. If a general election is held in the spring or summer, the normal rhythm of the sessions is interrupted.

The beginning of a new session is called the **State Opening of Parliament**. It is a spectacular ceremony, beginning with the procession of the Queen in her carriage from Buckingham Palace to the Palace of Westminster. After the Queen is not allowed to enter the House of Commons,[103] she occupies her throne in the House of Lords, where MPs from the Commons also follow her, standing crowded together at the end of the chamber opposite the throne. The Queen reads out the **Queen's Speech**, which is a document prepared by the government, in which the government summarizes what it plans to do during the next parliamentary session. The members of the House of Commons then go back to their own chamber, and a debate on this speech begins, lasting for several days. At the end there is a vote on proposed government policy, which the government has to win in order to continue working, or otherwise it would have to resign or ask for a general election.

On weekdays, the House of Commons starts working at 2.30 p.m. and continues into the night, usually at least until 10.30 p.m. but often even longer. On Fridays, they start in the morning but finish earlier so that MPs can travel back to their constituencies in the country. The first hour is usually **Question Time**, an invention of the British Parliament, during which any MP may ask a question of a government minister, who usually answers within one or two weeks. Then comes the period for debates. After an MP has made a proposal (or moved a motion), the House debates it and finally decides whether to agree or to disagree with it. At the end of every debate the Speaker asks the House to vote on the proposal that has been debated. There are two ways to vote. Ordinarily, MPs who are present simply shout 'Aye' (Yes) or 'No,' and the Speaker decides which response was louder. If anybody questions the Speaker's decision, however, a more complicated voting process comes. It is called a **division**[104] because it is done in an old-fashioned and – especially in the 21st century – very curious way: MPs vote by walking through one of two corridors, called 'lobbies,' next to the Commons chamber while officials count them. The **'Aye' lobby** runs down one side of the chamber, the **'No' lobby** down the other side. MPs are given eight minutes to walk through one of the lobbies before the entrance doors are locked. Division bells ring all over the building and even in nearby buildings (including some pubs) to remind MPs of division time (although nowadays text messages probably serve the same purpose better). MPs often vote without having heard a debate, and even without knowing exactly what the question is; they know which way to vote because they are directed by party **whips**[105] standing outside the

---

[103] This is a tradition reaching back to the 17th century, the beginning of the English revolution: King Charles I, who was in bitter conflict with Parliament, entered the House of Commons by force in 1642 and tried to arrest several MPs who were the leaders of the opposition. Since then, the monarch is not allowed to enter the House of Commons.

[104] This method of determining what the majority of the Commons supports was obviously invented in the distant past, when electronic voting and other modern devices were not available. An electronic voting machine like the one used in the Hungarian Parliament is probably impossible to use in the House of Commons since British MPs have no personal desks or permanent seats, where they could 'push their button'. Counting the MPs as they walk through the division lobbies is slow, but it is still the safest way to prevent cheating.

[105] *whip*: several MPs in each party whose job is to keep discipline among the MPs of their party, ensure that they attend debates and tell them how to vote; basically, they are the managers of the party's MPs. The Chief Whip is the highest-ranking whip, equivalent of the leader of a party faction in other (e.g. Hungarian) parliaments. The name itself comes from fox hunts, where whippers-in are people responsible for the pack of dogs chasing the fox.

doors of the division lobbies. MPs are normally expected to 'follow the party line,' and vote the way their party would like them to.

A draft law is called a **bill.** Each bill goes through three 'readings' in the House of Commons. The 'first reading' is a simple announcement in the chamber that the bill has been published in printed form. The 'second reading', usually a few weeks later, is a full debate in the House. If necessary, the bill is sent to a committee which considers **amendments**[106] proposed by MPs. At the 'third reading' the amended bill is considered in its final form, and usually MPs vote on it. Then the bill is sent to the House of Lords, where it has to go through a similar procedure. Once a bill has been passed, or approved, by both houses, it is sent to the Queen for royal assent. The **royal assent** is a necessary last step for a bill to become an Act of Parliament, or official law, but in practice, it is a formality, since the royal assent has not been refused since 1708.[107]

There are various types of bills. **Public bills** are the most important pieces of legislation, since they modify national laws and are usually introduced by the government. Before public bills are introduced, the government often publishes a so-called '**white paper**', a report that sums up the government's ideas and concepts about a particular issue, and explains what legal changes would be necessary. Private bills concern certain local governments or private organizations, and are usually not important for the general public. Private Members' bills are proposals introduced by individual MPs without government support; they have little chance to become and Act of Parliament, but a few of them receive the support of the majority.

The House of Lords

The upper chamber of Parliament, the House of Lords, has never been an elected or democratic body. People become members of the Lords through their special rank. Traditionally, there have been two kinds of membership in the House of Lords: the so-called **Lords Spiritual**,[108] or the archbishops and senior bishops of the Church of England, and the **Lords Temporal**,[109] or the most important noblemen, to so-called peers.

A **peer** is a person who holds an aristocratic title, the so-called **peerage**. There are five ranks within the peerage, with a different name for a man or a woman (who may be the wife of the peer or, in the 20th century, the owner of the peerage herself); they are listed in the table below:

---

[106] *amendment*: In legal language, a proposal to change or add to the original text of a document, e.g. a bill. When amendments are accepted, British people say 'the text has been amended' (i.e. modified, changed).

[107] The last monarch to refuse royal assent to a bill was Queen Anne (1702–1714), and the bill was the Scottish Militia Bill. Anne was advised to refuse her assent because many were worried about the loyalty of a Scottish militia right after the Act of Union. No monarch has vetoed a bill passed by both Houses of Parliament since then.

[108] *Lords Spiritual*: The term is very old, but it is a simple inversion meaning 'spiritual lords,' in other words, those members of the Lords who are professional churchmen. When Henry VIII created the Church of England in the 16th century, Anglican bishops occupied the seats of the former Catholic bishops in the House of Lords, and the Catholic Church or other, Nonconformist Protestant churches not represented there.

[109] *Lords Temporal*: The term is very old, but it is a simple inversion meaning 'temporal lords,' in other words, those members of the House of Lords who are not professional churchmen, but belong to the secular nobility.

Male rank	Female rank
Duke /dju:k/	Duchess /ˈdʌtʃɪs/
Marquess /ˈmɑ:(r)kwɪs/	Marchioness /ˌmɑ:(r)ʃəˈnes/
Earl /ɜ:(r)l/	Countess /ˈkaʊntɪs/
Viscount /ˈvaɪkaʊnt/	Viscountess /ˈvaɪkaʊntɪs/
Baron /ˈbærən/	Baroness /ˈbærənɪs/

Each of these titles was originally given by the monarch to a man in return for some great service or merit; they are usually combined with a place name, like the Duke of Buckingham, or the Earl of Oxford. Peerages were <u>hereditary</u>, so the eldest son or, if he had no sons, the closest male relative of the peer <u>inherited</u> the title when the peer died. If the peer had no male relatives at all, the peerage returned to the monarch, who usually gave it to a completely different family. Some peerages are very old, of medieval origin, others were created recently. These hereditary peers constitute the British <u>aristocracy</u>, possessing a lot of wealth and social privilege.

By the mid-20th century, peerages became so numerous (over 700), that the honour itself was losing its value. Therefore, in 1958, Parliament created a new sort of peerage, the so-called **life peerage**. **Life peers** also receive their title from the monarch (all of them are barons or baronesses), but they cannot pass it on to their children, it only lasts for their own lifetime only. So life peers do not really become aristocrats: they are typically people who have distinguished themselves in public life and received life peerage as a reward for their outstanding career. Former Prime Ministers and ministers, Speakers of the Commons, senior civil servants, the best judges of the country and similar people are the typical life peers.

Life peers were typically far more active in the Lords than hereditary peers, many of whom never even once visited the House because they were not interested in politics. As a result, there was a strange situation in the House of Lords, because in theory about 1200 people could be present at the sessions and vote on bills (the majority of them hereditary peers), but in practice less than half of those took part in the work, some visiting only occasionally when their party urged them to vote on an important issue. In 1999, the Labour government decided to reform the House of Lords by removing the automatic right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the Lords. The House of Lords did not want to accept this bill, therefore a temporary compromise was devised: 92 of the hereditary peers were elected by the whole House to stay on for an unspecified time.

To summarize, the House of Lords currently (in 2014) consists of the following groups:

1. The 26 Lords Temporal, that is, the two Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the 24 most senior bishops of the Church of England. They are all members of the House of Lords only until retirement.

2. 92 hereditary peers elected to stay in the Lords in 1999. If any of them dies, his heir does not inherit the right to sit in the house, but a <u>by-election</u> is held to elect another hereditary peer into the House of Lords to maintain their number.

3. Life peers, whose number constantly changes, since some of them die, while new life peers are created. They make up the majority of the Lords; their number is currently well above 600.

The House of Lords was traditionally presided over by the Lord Chancellor, who was always a member of the Cabinet, roughly equivalent to a minister of justice in a European country, while also being a leader of the highest court of appeal in England (another function of the House of Lords until recently). So he had important positions in the legislative, the executive and the judicial branches of government at the same time. In order to avoid such an overlap of power, the Constitutional Reform Act of 2005 removed the Lord Chancellor from the top of the House of Lords. Since 2006, the House of Lords is led by an elected **Lord Speaker** (since 2011, she has been a woman, Baroness D'Souza).

The appearance of the Lords chamber is similar to that in the Commons, with rows of benches facing each other, and government and opposition Lords sit on the appropriate side. But the Lords chamber is more lavishly decorated than the Commons, and includes the throne of the monarch, from where she delivers the Queen's Speech at the opening of each Parliamentary session. The Lord Speaker or his deputy sits on the 'Woolsack' below the throne (a sort of large cushion stuffed with wool). Another difference from the Commons is that there are 'cross-benches' for independent, non-party peers.

Since peers are not elected and cannot be removed from the house, their party allegiance simply means a declaration of personal preference, which they can change any time they want. The House of Lords traditionally had a large majority of Conservative peers, since most hereditary peers were more sympathetic to the Conservative Party. The removal of most hereditary peers in 1999 has significantly changed the balance of parties in the house, because the great majority are now life peers, many of whom have connections to the Labour Party. But regardless of their party preferences, peers tend to be more critical of government proposals than MPs in the Commons, since they are free from direct political pressures and may vote according to their own convictions rather than party policy.

This is exactly why many people believe that the House of Lords, even though its present form is clearly archaic and outdated, fulfils a useful role in the British political system. They are able to represent the voice of public opinion and oppose or at least criticise a government that can rely on an overwhelming majority in the Commons to pass any bill they want. The atmosphere in the Lords is also better than the Commons, in which mutually hostile members of the Conservative and Labour Parties confront each other. In the House of Lords common rules of politeness are well observed.

Power relations between the two Houses

Although the name of the Commons and the Lords would suggest that the Lords are more powerful, in reality the opposite is true. Ever since the Bill of Rights made Parliament the supreme governing body of Great Britain, the Commons had a crucial power: they controlled laws of taxation and the budget, because they represented the great majority of the tax-paying population. The weight of the Commons increased with the Reform Acts[110] of the 19th century, because MPs not only represented the general population in theory, but they were

---

[110] *Reform Acts*: Four Acts passed during the 19th and early 20th century (1832, 1867, 1886, 1918), each of which reformed the system of election to the House of Commons, and extended the franchise (the right to vote) to new social groups. As a result, while less than 10% of the adult population had the right to vote in the 1820s, by the 1920s practically all adults (including women) could vote for their MPs.

actually elected by the majority of the people. The House of Lords, however, still had the right to reject bills passed in the Commons, and they used this power, especially in case of liberal reforms as the majority of the Lords were conservative aristocrats.

The conflict between the Commons and the Lords over supremacy led to the Parliament Act of 1911, which explicitly limited the legislative power of the Lords. The Act declared that 'money bills', or bills authorizing the Government to spend money or collect taxes may go directly to the Queen for royal assent after passing the Commons, with or without the approval of the Lords. Any other bill must pass both Houses, but if the Lords do not agree to a bill passed by the Commons, the Commons may approve it again in the next session and send it for royal assent. Thus in practice, the Lords can do nothing more than delaying the enactment of a bill for up to one year. They have veto power in one single issue: they can reject any bill in which the Commons would like to extend its own life beyond the maximum five years specified by law. The introduction of life peers in 1958 further weakened the independent power of the Lords, since the great majority of life peers were active as politicians or public officials in the past, therefore they respected the power of the Commons.

As a result, nowadays the House of Commons is obviously the supreme legislative body of Britain. As it was described in the section about the British constitution, the Commons is not limited by a written constitution, therefore they can pass any law they want or change any of the existing laws. The House of Lords cannot prevent them from doing so (they can only slow down the process by delaying controversial bills), and the monarch never denies the royal assent. Even the courts cannot challenge the legislation of Parliament (unlike in Hungary, where the Constitutional Court may declare certain acts unconstitutional).

Actually, even the delaying power of the Lords has rarely been used in the last one hundred years, as the Lords were usually careful not to get into open conflict with the democratically elected Commons. There is a convention, or unwritten rule, followed by the Lords that they would not vote against bills proposed by the government party's election manifesto, since their voters gave them a clear mandate to carry out their program. The role of the Lords, therefore, is primarily to warn governments of the dangers of their actions, to point out defects in bills or voice public criticism. They have the right to propose amendments to bills or introduce bills on their own but few of them get accepted in the Commons.

The "Elective Dictatorship" of the Commons

Just as the Commons dominates the lawmaking process, the government dominates in the Commons. In theory, MPs represent their constituency and their interests, but in practice, they usually win their seat with the help of one of the parties, therefore they are expected to follow the instructions or expectations of the party. Since the current government commands a majority of MPs in the Commons, they may pass any laws or carry out any policies for five years, as long as they can ensure the support of the backbenchers in the Commons. An experienced British politician once said that Britain's parliamentary system is in practice a form of "**elective dictatorship**".

The situation is slightly different if the government has only a narrow majority in the Commons (as e.g. John Major's Conservative Cabinet had between 1992 and 1997) or if the governing majority consists of a coalition of two parties. This is very rare in British politics, but it occurred after the 2010 election, because David Cameron could only command a majority of the MPs with the support of the Liberal Democrats, the third largest party in the Commons. In such cases, the Prime Minister cannot automatically count on a victory in the

Commons, because if a few disagreeing MPs voted against the government, the proposed bill would not pass. Such situations require more negotiations within the parliamentary majority and even with the opposition to ensure support for the government's initiative.

The almost unlimited power of the Commons could also be limited by a reformed and stronger upper house. The reshaping of the House of Lords has been discussed ever since Labour won the 1997 elections, but ultimately the Labour government could not produce a generally acceptable proposal for a new upper house. The politicians of the Commons do not want a second elected chamber for obvious reasons: it would threaten the present constitutional powers of the Commons. It is one thing for the Commons to reject legislative amendments by an unelected House of Lords, since they do not represent the people. It would be quite much more difficult for the Commons to reject the amendments of an elected chamber, so a democratic upper house could be a counterweight to the overwhelming power of the House of Commons.

Probably that is why Tony Blair's government proposed an appointed upper chamber. That would not be the kind of reform most people would like to see, however, because any kind of appointment procedure would be suspicious and would provoke charges that the upper house consists of people friendly with the government. This conflict is very difficult to resolve, and as a result, the reform of the Lords has not made any progress for almost a decade.

Key concepts

Act of Parliament

amendment

backbenchers

bill – public bill

Bill of Rights

Buckingham Palace

Cabinet

Commonwealth (20th century)

constituency

constitution – unwritten constitution

constitutional monarchy

convention

the Crown

division – Aye lobby / No lobby

Glorious Revolution

hereditary peer

House of Commons

House of Lords

Lady Diana

life peer

Lord Speaker

Lords Spiritual

Lords Temporal

Member of Parliament / MP

minister

Queen Elizabeth II

Queen's Speech

Question Time

Parliament / Westminster

peerage – peer

Prime Minister

Prince Charles

Prince William

royal assent

Shadow Cabinet

the Speaker (of the House)

State Opening of Parliament

two-party system

whip

white paper

Windsor Castle

VII. THE CABINET, THE PARTIES AND THE ELECTIONS

Think of Hungary First!

What is the relationship between the government and Parliament in Hungary?

How does the Prime Minister in Hungary gain its position?

Who can be a minister in Hungary? What conditions are there?

How many parties are currently represented in the Hungarian Parliament? What are the distinguishing features and characteristic ideas of each party? Are there any regional differences in the support of each party? Which groups of the population tend to prefer one or another party? Since 1990, how many governments were made up of more than one party?

How are Hungarian MPs elected? How many ballots does a voter fill in? Do you have to be a party member to gain a seat?

What political changes do you expect in the near future? Are you satisfied with the present level of Hungarian democracy?

Information Store

Prime Ministers of Great Britain since 1945:

Clement Attlee (1945–51, Labour)

Sir Winston Churchill (1951–55, Conservative)

Sir Anthony Eden (1955–57, Conservative)

Harold Macmillan (1957–63, Conservative)

Sir Alec Douglas-Home (1963–64, Conservative)

Harold Wilson (1964–70, Labour)

Edward Heath (1970–74, Conservative)

Harold Wilson (1974–76, Labour)

James Callaghan (1976–79, Labour)

Margaret Thatcher (1979–90, Conservative)

John Major (1990–97, Conservative)

Tony Blair (1997–2007, Labour)

Gordon Brown (2007–2010, Labour)

David Cameron (2010– , Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition)

Test Your Knowledge!

What do you know about Prime Minister David Cameron? What did he do before he became the leader of his party? What is his personal and family background?

Do you know anything about the Prime Ministers of the past? What decisions can you connect to their name?

What do you know about the two major British parties? What are their major political principles?

Use the Internet!

For a detailed description of the procedures of British general elections, see the fact sheets published by Parliament itself at http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_publications_and_archives/factsheets.cfm

The official web site of the British Prime Minister, with links to all government departments: http://www.number-10.gov.uk/

The official web site of the British Conservative Party: http://www.conservatives.com/

The official web site of the British Labour Party: http://www.labour.org.uk/

The official web site of the Liberal Democratic Party: http://www.libdems.org.uk/

1. WHITEHALL – THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT

In Britain, the official name of the government is '**Her Majesty's Government**,' since all ministers are appointed by the monarch. But in a modern constitutional monarchy, the government receives its power and authority from Parliament, primarily from the House of Commons. The leader of the government is called **Prime Minister**. There is no written law specifying who can be Prime Minister of Great Britain, or what his or her exact powers are. Even the term itself has not become official until the 20th century, although 'first ministers' existed at least since the 18th century. In theory, the monarch could ask anybody to be the Prime Minister, but in practice, the person must be able to form a government supported by the majority of the Commons, so he or she should be a member of Parliament. In the 19th century, many Prime Ministers were peers and members of the House of Lords, but in the 20th century all Prime Ministers came from the House of Commons.

The modern convention is that after a general election, the Queen invites the leader of the majority (or the largest) party represented in the Commons to form a government. The Prime Minister recommends all other ministers to be appointed by the monarch. Government ministers always come from Parliament, mostly from the House of Commons, and they all continue to represent the constituencies which elected them (this practice is slightly different from Hungary, where government ministers are not required to be MPs as well). In legal theory, the government is nothing more than an extended arm of Parliament, delegated to perform duties which are different from the making of laws. The executive part of the government is often called **Whitehall** in newspapers and by the public, because most of the ministries can be found along or near Whitehall, a road running from Trafalgar Square to Parliament. The small street containing the residence of the Prime Minister, Downing Street, also opens from Whitehall.

Vocabulary problems: minister v. *miniszter*, secretary of state v. *államtitkár*

The British term 'minister' can be misleading for Hungarians, since in Hungary, the definition of a '*miniszter*' is that he or she is in charge of a ministry, except for a few persons called '*tárca nélküli miniszter*' (in English, 'minister without portfolio'). This is not the case in Britain, where the term 'minister' is used in a far wider sense. The monarch appoints about 100 MPs to work for the government, usually in one of the ministries, which are officially called **government departments**. In everyday language and in the press, all these people are called **ministers** in Britain. They occupy the front benches on the government side in the House of Commons. In Britain, however, several ministers work in the same department in various leading positions, and there are also ministers who have no connection to any department. The highest-ranking minister in charge of a government department is officially called **Secretary of State**, while the other ministers assisting him or her are called **Ministers of State** (similar to an '*államtitkár*' of a Hungarian ministry), and the lowest ranking ministers are called **Parliamentary Under-Secretaries** (roughly the equivalent of a '*helyettes államtitkár*' in Hungary). These subordinate ministers are collectively called '**junior ministers**', where 'junior' refers to their rank in the hierarchy, not their age, while Secretaries of State can be called '**senior ministers**.'

To sum it up: in Britain, one ministry or department has several ministers (MPs appointed by the Prime Minister to work there), and the Secretary of State is the highest in rank among them, he or she is the leader of the ministry / department. In Hungary, the person leading the ministry / department is the only person called '*miniszter*' and all other political positions within the ministry are fulfilled by '*államtitkárok*' és '*helyettes államtitkárok*'. Therefore, the correct Hungarian translation of the British Secretary of State for Defence is '*védelmi miniszter*', but a junior minister of the same government department is the equivalent of a Hungarian '*államtitkár*' or '*helyettes államtitkár*'.

The term 'ministry' is an unofficial expression in British English, and is not normally used in the official names of departments. The ministry responsible for education is called Department for Education, and its head is the Education Secretary. There are a few exceptions. Usually the oldest departments have more traditional names: the **Home Office** is led by the Home Secretary, the **Foreign Office** by the Foreign Secretary, and the leader of the **Treasury** has a very strange name: **Chancellor of the Exchequer**,[111] although he is simply the secretary of state responsible for finance. For some strange reason, however, there are two departments that are officially called ministries: the **Ministry of Defence** and the newly established **Ministry of Justice**, headed by the **Lord Chancellor** (see chapter VII for details). Altogether, there are about twenty departments; their number and name changes from time to time.

The core of the government is called **Cabinet**, the closest equivalent of the Hungarian expression '*kormány*.' The size and composition of the Cabinet is not fixed; its members are invited by the Prime Minister. There are usually about twenty people in it, the Secretaries of State and a few other senior ministers. The most important government decisions are usually made in the Cabinet, which meets about once a week in the Prime Minister's residence at **10 Downing Street**. He or she lives on the top floor together with the family, while the neighbouring buildings are used by other secretaries of state and the Cabinet staff.

The Prime Minister is the most powerful person in Britain. Theoretically, he or she is only the first among the monarch's servants (as the name suggests), but in practice the Prime Minister has far more power than anybody else in the Cabinet. He or she has the exclusive power to appoint all ministers, and to dismiss any of them at any time. He or she makes the most important decisions, approves ministers' proposals and government bills to be sent to the

---

[111] *Chancellor of the Exchequer* (pronounced /ˈtʃɑːnsələr ɔv ði ɪksˈtʃekə(r)/): The title originates from the fact that in the Middle Ages the Exchequer was the office responsible for collecting royal revenues that were counted before him on a chequered cloth. Although the Exchequer as an institution was abolished in the 1830s, the leader's title remained unchanged.

Commons. He or she <u>makes</u> all the <u>appointments</u> which in theory the monarch is responsible for, including judges, military officers, even Church of England bishops (even if the PM is possibly not even Anglican!). Since the Prime Minister is always the leader of the majority party, he or she can normally rely on the firm support of the House of Commons.

There is no maximum limit for how long the Prime Minister may remain in office: practically, as long as he or she is re-elected and enjoys the support of the party. The Prime Minister can lose his or her position in two ways. In the first case, the governing party loses so many seats at the general elections that its majority disappears in the Commons; then the former opposition party, which enjoys a majority now, can form the new government. In the second case, the Prime Minister loses the support of his or her own party, and they elect somebody else to be the leader of the party and the government. The second case is quite rare, but it happened for example in 1990, when Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher became so unpopular that her own party decided to replace her with John Major. An unusual change in the top position happened in 2007 as well: Tony Blair decided to <u>retire</u> as Prime Minister after ten years and passed his position on to his former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown. Although Blair was not removed by his own party, his decision was not entirely voluntary. There were voices in the Labour Party as well in the public media urging his <u>retirement</u>, especially after he lost a lot of his earlier popularity due to Britain's involvement in the Iraq War. Gordon Brown lost his position at the general election of 2010, so the Conservatives returned to power after 13 years with David Cameron as new MP.

In 2012, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition decided to end the tradition that allowed the Prime Minister to set the date of the new parliamentary election by asking the monarch to dissolve Parliament. Under the new act, election is to be held every five years (the next is due to take place in 2015). But between any two regular elections, the opposition may force a new election by initiating a **vote of confidence**, which is basically a test to find out whether the majority of the Commons still supports the Prime Minister and his or her government. If such a vote is lost by the government, new general elections must be held immediately, but both major parties have an equal chance of winning or losing it. The latest example for a successful vote of confidence was in 1979, when the Conservative opposition managed to defeat the Labour government and win the following election, bringing Margaret Thatcher to power.

All ministers share <u>collective responsibility</u> for government policy as a whole. Therefore, the British convention expects ministers to show complete <u>loyalty</u> to the government on all occasions, whether in Parliament or at an interview. Ministers are not allowed to publicly disagree with any aspect of the government's policy, even though within the Cabinet there may be huge arguments about a particular issue. If a minister feels that he cannot agree with the government's policy, he or she is expected to resign. After <u>resignation</u>, the former minister may explain his or her reasons, and then criticise the government from the parliamentary back benches.

2. HOW THE BRITISH ELECT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The House of Commons is one of the oldest Parliaments in Europe, and also the most conservative in many ways. This conservatism shows in the electoral system as well, which is based on a rather simple principle: each community elects one representative to serve as its **Member of Parliament** (MP) until the next general election. Historically, there was a distinction between towns and counties, but nowadays both urban and rural areas are

uniformly divided into **constituencies**.[112] The size of these constituencies can be very different: in a densely populated city like London, there are several constituencies consisting only of a few streets, while in sparsely populated rural areas in Scotland, one single constituency may cover an enormous area. To ensure fair representation, the boundaries of the constituencies are reviewed roughly every ten years. Currently there are 650 seats in the Commons, one MP representing about 60,000 to 90,000 voters. The **franchise** (right to vote) was gradually extended to more and more adult men during the 19th century by several Reform Acts, but all adult men and women received it only in 1918, which greatly helped the Labour Party to become a major party afterwards. Women could not vote until 1918, and their minimum age limit was higher until 1928. In 1970 the minimum voting age for both genders was reduced from 21 to 18. Nowadays, only children, convicted criminals, and the mentally ill are excluded from voting, as well as peers who have the right to sit in the House of Lords. An interesting aspect of the British election rules is that besides British subjects, all citizens of Commonwealth countries or the Irish Republic resident in the UK may also vote at the general elections.

Any British subject above the age of 18 can be a candidate for any seat, except for peers and Church of England clergymen who are represented in the House of Lords, as well as some other groups of people disqualified by law (state employees, such as judges, civil servants, army and police officers). Unlike in Hungary, where a candidate has to collect a certain number of signatures from ordinary citizens, in Britain all you need to do is to deposit a certain amount of money (£500) and present no more than 10 signatures from people living in the constituency, and your name will appear on the ballot. The deposit is meant to discourage frivolous candidates who have no serious intentions. Party candidates are paid for by their own party. If the candidate receives at least 5% of the votes in the constituency, they will get their money back. There is no need to live in the constituency you want to represent; in fact, less than half of the candidates are local residents. If an MP dies, resigns his seat, or receives a peerage, a **by-election**[113] is held to replace him.

Britain has no central and official register of its residents like Hungary does, therefore people have to be registered as residents of the constituency if they want to vote. The registers are updated each autumn, and every householder is obliged by law to give the name of every resident who is over seventeen and a UK subject. Accuracy of the registers is crucial to guarantee that all people who want should be able to vote where he actually lives.

Voting is not compulsory, but the turnout is traditionally high: a general election traditionally attracted more than 70% of the electorate, but the election of 2001 represented a negative record: turnout fell below 60%, rising only slightly in 2005, and it reached 65% in 2010.

The First-Past-the-Post System

On polling day (the day of the election), which is traditionally a Thursday, voters go to the nearest polling station, where they are given a ballot paper (often just called 'ballot'). It contains the list of all the candidates who wish to represent that constituency in the next Parliament. Voters should choose one candidate they like most and put a cross next to his or her name. Then they drop their ballot into the ballot box. **Secret ballot** means that nobody

---

[112] *constituency*: pronounced /kənˈstɪtjuensɪ/

[113] *by-election*: an election held at any other time than the general election, it is made necessary by the death or resignation of an MP.

else is allowed to see whom each voter chose. To guarantee voters' privacy, people fill in their ballots in separated <u>polling booths</u>.

The British electoral system is probably one of the simplest in the world: in each constituency the candidate who gains the most votes will become a Member to the Commons. There are no further requirements, and there is no run-off election[114] for the best two or three candidates. In many other countries (e.g. in Hungary before 2014), **absolute majority** (more than 50% of all votes cast) is required for a candidate to win the seat in the first round, but not in Britain. In a British constituency, it is enough to have more votes than that of any other candidate (called **plurality** or relative majority). If there were a <u>tie</u> between the two best candidates, a separate by-election must be held in that particular constituency. The British call this system '**first-past-the-post**': the phrase refers to a horse race where the horse that first reaches and gets past the post (a wooden pole marking the finish line) is the winner of the race. The race is indeed decided fast: a few hours after the <u>polls</u> have been <u>closed</u>, constituencies begin to announce the results and by next morning, the complete results are known. As soon as the results have been made official, the new Prime Minister is appointed by the Queen, and if the governing party has lost its majority, the old Prime Minister has to move out of 10 Downing Street immediately.

The system is doubtless simple and easy to understand but it is far from being fair: all the votes that are cast for other candidates than the winner are 'wasted' from the point of view of the elections since they do not help any candidate to get to the Commons, and the winner who has usually received considerably less than 50% of all votes will represent the whole constituency. Critics of the system usually point out the huge <u>discrepancies</u> between the proportion of the national vote collected by one party and their number of seats in the Commons.

Let's take the 2005 and the 2010 election results as examples.

2005:

Party	Seats won	Proportion in the Commons	Share of popular votes
Labour	356	55.1%	36%
Conservative	198	30.7%	33%
Liberal Democrat	62	9.6%	23%
Other	30	4.6%	8%
Total	**646**		

In 2005, Labour gained a comfortable majority in the Commons even though they received far less than half of all votes nationwide. At the same time, the Conservatives – who collected only 3% less votes nationwide than Labour – had hardly more than half of as many MPs in the Commons as Labour. Such <u>distortions</u> are the outcome of the first-past-the-post system, where the candidates of one popular party may win in many constituencies with a few more

---

[114] *run-off election (*also called *run-off voting): popular name for two-round election systems in which victory in the first round requires absolute majority (more than 50% of all votes cast). In case nobody achieves an absolute majority (the more common case), a run-off election (a second round) is held in which only the two or three best candidates (those who received the most votes in the first round) are allowed to compete again. In the run-off, a plurality is enough, so the candidate with the most votes wins.

votes than the second candidate, whereas the votes gained by the second or third best candidates do not count. In an extreme case it may even happen that the winning party in the elections gets fewer votes nationwide than its largest opponent.

The real losers in this system are the smaller parties, like the Liberal Democrats, who were supported by almost one-fourth of the British voters, still they own less than one-tenth of the seats (even though this has been the most successful election result in their history), because it is extremely difficult to defeat the candidates of both large parties in a constituency. In other countries like Hungary, this distortion is partially balanced by a party list system, under which national votes are added up and some of the seats are distributed among parties in proportion to their overall share of the popular vote.[115] Smaller British parties have long demanded an electoral reform to create some form of **proportional representation (PR)**, but neither of the two major parties like the idea since it would reduce their own power in the Commons.

2010:

Party	Seats won	Proportion in the Commons	Share of popular votes
Labour	258	39.7%	29%
Conservative	306	47.1%	36%
Liberal Democrat	57	8.8%	23%
Other	29	4.4%	12%
Total	**650**		

The 2010 elections produced a rare result in the House of Commons: a **hung parliament**, or a parliament in which no party has absolute majority. The Conservatives received 36% of the popular votes nationwide (the same proportion that Labour had in 2005), but they only won 306 seats, 50 less than Labour did five years earlier. They would have needed 20 more seats to command the majority of votes in the House of Commons. Therefore they were forced to enter into a coalition with the Liberal Democrats, who won 57 seats (5 less than in 2005) with almost exactly the same amount of votes nationwide. This was the first coalition government in Britain since World War II!

The Failure of Electoral Reform

The LibDems joined the coalition on condition that the current electoral system would be reformed to reflect voting preferences more faithfully. The Conservatives were not enthusiastic but they were forced to agree in order to form a majority government. As a result of the LibDem demands, a nationwide referendum (the second nationwide referendum in British history!) was held in 2011 on whether to replace the existing first-past-the-post system with the **alternative vote (AV) system** in which voters do not vote for a single candidate but they set up a preference list by numbering each candidate (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.). When votes are counted and nobody receives absolute majority, the candidate with the least No. 1 votes is

---

[115] *popular vote*: The number of votes cast by all the voters in a certain area or region. A nationwide proportion of popular votes matters in some electoral systems (like in Hungary, where parties send candidates from their lists to Parliament on the basis of popular votes), but it may be irrelevant in others (like in Britain, where votes are added up separately in each constituency).

eliminated from the race, and his or her original ballots are transferred to those candidates that were specified as No. 2 preferences on the ballots. The process goes on until one candidate receives absolute majority or 50% plus one vote as a result.

Out of the national parties, the Liberal Democrats supported the new electoral system while the Conservatives – their coalition partners – opposed it. Labour did not adopt an official position, but the majority of Labour politicians did not support the new system. The result of the referendum was an overwhelming support for the current system: 68% of voters voted against the new system (the overall turnout was 42% of all voters). It was a major disappointment for the Liberal Democrats, while the two largest parties were clearly happy with the outcome, since the current first-past-the-post system helps to maintain the traditional British **two-party system**. Commentators think that the failure of the reform proposal was due to several reasons: the new system was seen as too complicated by many people, its opponents argued that hung parliaments would be more probable in the future, and the Liberal Democrats and their leader Nick Clegg were also quite unpopular at the time.

Both Conservatives and Labour claim that the existing electoral system is better and they provide several arguments. The distortion of the present system is a virtue rather than a defect, since it produces a stable government with a clear majority in the Commons for up to five years at a time. In European countries where some form of PR is practiced, elections tend to bring several smaller parties into parliament and create unstable coalition governments, giving huge influence to small parties whose votes are needed for parliamentary majority. The first-past-the-post system gives the people a clear choice between two alternative sets of leaders and policies. Since each party wants to attract as many votes as possible, therefore their programmes are likely to avoid political extremes.

Opponents of the current system point out that a choice between only two parties at an election may be no better than a choice between two evils. A large number of people vote only for a negative reason, to keep one or other of the two major parties out of power, or they do not bother to vote at all because they know that smaller parties have no real chance to get into power. In case of a proportional system some of them might participate and vote for their favourite party. Small parties would represent a wider range of interests and bring new viewpoints into the Commons.

The failure of the reform of the British electoral system is somewhat surprising given the fact that since 1999, the devolved legislatures in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been elected under proportional electoral systems. The Scottish and the Welsh systems are slightly similar to the Hungarian: voters in each constituency vote for parties as well as candidates, and while each constituency elects one member to the regional legislatures, about one-third of the seats are given to registered political parties. They set up lists of candidates who can get into parliament in proportion to the votes given to parties. In Northern Ireland, there are no regional party lists, but each constituency elects six representatives to guarantee that both Protestant and Catholic members are sent from the same area to the Assembly.

The opposite extreme in electoral system is represented by the European Parliamentary elections, where there are no constituencies at all: people may only vote for national party lists and not for individual candidates, but this system is considered too impersonal and 'faceless' by many British who tend to distrust EU institutions anyway.

3. THE PARTIES

Parties are interesting institutions in Britain since until very recently there was no legal definition to what a 'party' was. The British electoral system knew only constituencies and individual candidates, who by law did not need the support or backing of any political party to become MPs. In practice, of course, the political party system emerged as early as the 18th century, and since the first half of the 19th century it has been essentially a two-party system, which means that two major parties have alternated with each other in government. Today, this two-party contest is between the **Conservative Party** (in short, '**the Conservatives**' or the '**Tories**') and the **Labour Party** (in short, '**Labour**,' without 'the' and in singular). The Conservatives are the older party of the two: the modern Conservative Party came into existence in the mid-19th century, while Labour replaced the Liberal Party as the other largest party only after World War I, when all factory workers received the franchise.

The Conservatives

The Conservative Party has always been a right-of-centre party, and as its name suggests its traditional guiding principle: the idea of resistance to change of the fundamental constitutional framework and preservation of old traditions and institutions. It is usually symbolized by blue colour on election maps and charts. Conservatives have been the strongest supporters of the monarchy and the royal family, the British Empire, and the strong armed forces in order to protect British interests all over the world. Conservatives like to emphasise the importance of law and order, the maintenance of a strong police force and tougher sentences against crime. Conservatives have maintained very close links with the upper classes and the aristocracy, and the majority of hereditary peers are Conservative in their party preference.

The present character of the Conservative Party has been strongly shaped by Prime Minister **Margaret Thatcher**, who was in power for the longest time in the 20th century, between 1979–1990. Thatcher took over government at a time when Britain was in a deep economic crisis and she was determined to solve the country's problems. Her recipe was remarkably similar to what Hungarian governments after 1990 did in Hungary: privatisation of state-owned industries and services to increase competition and economic efficiency. Thatcher fundamentally opposed government intervention in the economy and preferred instead an almost completely free-market economy, such as the one existing in the United States. Her philosophy was essentially neoliberal: to create a stable economic climate by low rates of inflation and taxation. Lower taxes encourage individuals and businesses to increase productivity, while the government should reduce its social spending to control inflation.

Thatcher successfully sold to private owners many publicly owned production and service companies, for example British Telecommunications (BT), British Gas, British Airways, Rolls Royce, and many others. Even British Rail was divided into regional companies and sold individually to private entrepreneurs. She wanted to free these areas from government control and increase economic freedom, and also to persuade ordinary individuals to buy shares in these enterprises. In both she was largely successful, turning Britain into a 'share-owning democracy.' Between 1979 and 1992 the proportion of the population owning shares increased from 7 to 24%.

Another notable success of '**Thatcherism**' was her program of home ownership: she sold off tens of thousands of publicly owned council flats to their tenants at reduced prices. One newspaper called it "the greatest gift of wealth to the working class in British history." Today,

about two-thirds of British flats and houses are owned by their occupants, which is a higher figure than even in the United States. According to sociologists, this move increased Thatcher's popularity enormously among the lower classes and helped her to get re-elected even at a time of high unemployment rates. Critics, however, point out that the sale of council flats left no cheap housing for poor people to rent and the construction of new council houses was completely abandoned.

Thatcher had even more controversial decisions, especially when she refused to subsidize[116] companies and industries that could no longer produce profits. During her government, most of the traditional industries (iron and steel, textiles etc.) collapsed in Britain, coal mines were closed and unemployment doubled to 11% by 1986. In general, Thatcher's policies increased the gap between the richest and poorest all over the country. As the popular slogan went, '**the rich got richer, the poor got poorer**.' Also, most of the South benefited from Thatcher's policies, while other regions, especially the industrial North, Scotland and Wales were mostly on the losing side. The reduction of government spending also affected state schools and hospitals very negatively.

Although Thatcher is no longer the leader of the Conservatives, they have largely followed the principles established by her ever since. As a result, the party's support tends to lie with the wealthy middle class, and they receive most of their money from major business and financial institutions. Part of Thatcher's legacy is a strong sense of patriotism or nationalism, which is often expressed in the form of distrust with the development of the European Union. A significant number of Conservatives, called **Eurosceptics**, oppose further integration of Britain with the EU because they claim it would lead to the loss of sovereignty and 'foreign government' from Brussels. For example, they have been campaigning strongly against introduction of the euro in Britain in the 2000s. Recently, David Cameron has raised the possibility of a future referendum on maintaining Britain's membership in the European Union, which would raise the possibility of a member country departing from the Union, an unprecedented decision in the history of the organization. The party is often accused of xenophobia,[117] because it urges measures to keep illegal immigrants and asylum-seekers[118] out of Britain.

Outside Parliament the party has more than a million individual members who pay annual subscriptions, with an association for each constituency. The most important function of an association is to choose the party's candidate for the next election, and then to keep in close touch with him as an MP if he is elected. An MP who votes the 'wrong' way in Parliament may be asked to explain his action to a general meeting of the association, and the ultimate sanction is a decision to adopt another candidate at the next election.

After the Conservatives lost the general election in 1997, the party underwent a deep crisis. Several new party leaders came and went, but none of them managed to significantly increase the party's popularity. As a result, Labour won three general elections in a row, something that had never happened before in British history. According to political analysts, the crisis had several roots: Labour had moved from the political left to the centre, taking over most of

---

[116] *to subsidize sth, a subsidy*: Money spent by the government to support state-owned industries and companies.

[117] *xenophobia* (pronounced /ˌzenəˈfoʊbɪə/): Hatred or distrust of foreigners, especially immigrants who came from another country.

[118] *asylum-seeker* (pronounced /əˈsaɪləm ˈsiːkə(r)/): People from another country, typically outside Europe, who seek asylum, or protection and refuge, in Britain claiming that they are discriminated and persecuted in their homeland for ethnic, religious or political reasons. Many British people are distrustful of asylum-seekers, accusing them of misleading authorities, while their real intention is simply to immigrate into Britain for economic reasons.

the Conservatives' economic program (including privatisation, respect for free market, low taxes etc.). On the other hand, the issues emphasized by the Tories – mostly opposition to the EU and asylum-seekers – did not appeal to the majority of British voters. Furthermore, they could not find a dynamic and charismatic new leader who could give an attractive public image to the party, the way Tony Blair did to Labour. Ultimately, in 2005 the party elected a new leader, **David Cameron**, who possessed the dynamism and the youthful image necessary to win over voters. The worldwide economic crisis in 2008 also deeply shook Britain, causing the Labour government to lose much of its earlier popularity, and this helped to bring the Conservatives into power following the 2010 general election.

Labour

The Labour Party began around 1900 as a political organization of the **trade unions**,[119] which wanted to campaign for the universal suffrage.[120] When this was achieved in 1918, Labour became the preferred party of millions of industrial workers all over the country, so almost instantly it emerged as the second largest party of Britain. It has traditionally been a left-wing party, speaking for the lower classes and demanding more social justice and the achievement of well-being and opportunity for all members of society. It is usually symbolized by red colour on election maps and charts. Although it has never been officially Marxist and never advocated the overthrow of existing system of government by a violent revolution, Marxist ideas have influenced many members of the party, especially during the Cold War.

Labour first came into power alone in 1945, immediately after the end of World War II. Prime Minister Clement Attlee's government passed several fundamental reform acts in the next few years, laying the foundations of the so-called **welfare state**: a system by which the government provides economic and social security for the population through free health services, old age pensions and benefits for the disabled, sick or unemployed. In the economic sphere the Labour government followed the principles of economist **John M. Keynes**.[121] The government nationalised (took into the ownership of the state) the most important public services (water, gas, electricity, and telephone), the key industrial sectors (steel, coal-mining, railway, airlines) and some fundamental institutions (Bank of England). The reforms carried out by the Labour government proved successful and popular, since they increased the general standard of living, and gave more assistance to the lower classes than they had ever enjoyed.

---

[119] *trade union*: An organization of workers or employees working in similar jobs or the same area of the national economy (e.g. coal miners, railroad workers, teachers, etc.). The primary purpose of trade unions is to protect the interests of their members against employers and fight for higher wages, shorter working hours and better conditions at the workplace. Their primary weapon to put pressure on employers and the government is the strike, or the refusal to take up work until trade union demands are met.

[120] *universal suffrage* (pronounced /ˈsʌfrɪdʒ/): The right of all adults to vote at parliamentary elections. In most Western countries, it was achieved only during the 20th century.

[121] *Keynes, John Maynard* (1882–1946): English economist, whose ideas served as the basis of the socio-economic policies of Western European welfare states. The Great Depression (1929–33) persuaded Keynes that a free market economy cannot provide proper regulation for the economy through the competition between producers. He came to the conclusion that a capitalist society can only survive if the government controls, manages and even plans much of the general shape of its economy. Keynes' idea was that consumption on a national level had to be encouraged by the state budget, by government investments, by social benefits to the poor and needy layers of society and by appropriate tax policies. If the majority of the society has more money to spend, consumption increases and the economy prospers, while there are fewer social tensions and problems. In order to have enough money for such government expenditure, progressive taxation systems have to be introduced, which means that richer people have to pay higher taxes, and some of the income generated in this way can be distributed among the poor, in the form of unemployment benefits and similar measures.

The state as the owner of key industries could keep unemployment low. The maintenance of the 'welfare state' was tacitly accepted by the subsequent Conservative governments as well.

The British welfare state got into a deepening crisis in the 1970s, as Britain's economic performance was getting worse. Heavy and textile industry and manufacturing, Britain's traditional strengths, were in decline, but the strong trade unions successfully demanded higher wages and protested against layoffs of workers. The Labour government was unable to persuade its own voters about the necessity of painful reforms, so they were ultimately defeated by the Conservatives of Margaret Thatcher in 1979.

Labour had to wait 18 years to win another election, losing four elections in a row. The series of painful defeats persuaded the party that its traditional programme of the public ownership of major industries and economic planning is no longer popular: in the early 1990s, with the rise of '**New Labour**', a younger generation of politicians, the party's profile changed considerably, leading to their huge victory at the 1997 elections.

The trade union movement, which founded the Labour Party, was for a long time very influential in the shaping of party policy since trade unions provided the party with most of its money, and each union leader was able to cast a vote for its entire membership. The system has been criticised, inside the party as well as outside it, for giving a great deal of power to the few hundred leaders of the biggest unions, and therefore it was revised in the early 1990s to make the party more attractive to voters. During the 1980s the old left wing of the party advocated the withdrawal of Britain from the European Union, massive new nationalisations, and other radical left policies. By the 1990s, however, Labour's policies had come much closer to those of the Social Democratic parties in much of Western Europe. The New Labour, led by **Tony Blair**, moved towards the political centre, and many of its proposed policies were no longer particularly left-wing. Blair's government gave up the idea of nationalisation of major industries, as well as central economic planning. It accepted the dominance of the market economy and less central control. During its 13 years in government, Labour supported full participation in the European Union as essential to the country's political and economic future, even though they refused to join the euro zone, and had different ideas about the future of Europe than Germany or France.

Tony Blair's Labour government initiated major constitutional reforms: they held successful referenda about Scottish and Welsh devolution, brought about the Good Friday Agreement to end the long and violent conflict in Northern Ireland, reformed the House of Lords to reduce the influence of the hereditary peers, and created a new Supreme Court of England. During the 2000s, Britain became one of the economically most prosperous countries in the EU, with a solid GDP growth and much lower unemployment than other major European nations. Tony Blair's popularity, however, was severely shaken by the war in Iraq after 2003, which the Prime Minister joined on the side of the US despite the opposition of a large part of the British public, especially among Labour voters. Although he did not lose the 2005 elections, the majority of Labour was significantly reduced. The Blair government also received a lot of criticism for failing to improve the bad state of British health care system and for introducing tuition fees in higher education. After the worldwide economic crisis put an end to British economic prosperity in 2008-09, Labour lost the 2010 general election and Gordon Brown, who succeeded Blair as Prime Minister in 2007, was forced to step down. The current leader of the party (in 2014) is Ed Miliband.

Other Parties

The Liberal Party, which was one of the two major parties during most of the 19th century, lost much of its popularity to Labour after 1918. In 1988 the old Liberals merged with the new Social Democratic Party to create the **Liberal Democratic Party** (often called **LibDems**). The are a moderate center-left party whose policies and voters tend to be closer to Labour than to the Conservatives. The new party has been working hard to become a serious competitor to the 'Big Two,' and they achieved considerable success at the 2005 and the 2010 elections, where they collected 23% of the national votes and gained almost 10% of the seats in the Commons. Their greatest disadvantage is the first-past-the-post system, because they need to defeat the candidates of both major parties to get an MP into Parliament. They are most successful in Scotland, where the Conservatives are very weak, and the Liberal Democrats have become the alternative to Labour, especially in the Highlands. They also won several districts in the West Country and in Wales.

Following the 2010 elections, they formed a coalition government with the Tories, who did not have a majority to govern the country on their own. This was the first opportunity for the LibDems to join the government, and Nick Clegg, the party's leader, became deputy Prime Minister. Their popularity has been much weakened by their participation in the government, since the Conservatives carried out a restrictive economic program, reducing government expenditure, which was unpopular among LibDem voters.

In the the last few years, a new national party has gained popularity among British voters: the **UK Independence Party (UKIP)**, which was founded in 1993 primarily to oppose Britain's membership in the European Union. At the 2014 European parliamentary election, they shocked the public by defeating both the Conservatives and Labour with over 26% of all votes! They won 24 seats in the European Parliament, which is one-third of all British seats in the institution. While the significance of the European parliamentary election should not be overestimated since it attracts only about one-third of British voters and it is conducted under a very different electoral system than the British general election, there is a real chance for UKIP to replace the Liberal Democrats as the third largest party at the 2015 election.

Also in 2014, they gained their first MP to the Commons, a former Conservative who decided to switch for UKIP and won his constituency at the following by-election again. The party, which has been led by Nigel Farage since 2010, has been described as a right-wing populist party, but they claim to represent traditional conservative and libertarian values. They stand for lower taxes and public spending, would withdraw from the European Union and maintain only a free trade agreement with it, and would limit immigration to the country. Most of their support comes from England, they are not popular in the other parts of the UK.

Other smaller parties in the Commons include the Scottish National Party and its Welsh equivalent, Plaid Cymru, as well as the Protestant and Catholic parties of Northern Ireland, which were discussed in chapters III, IV and V, respectively. They usually succeed in winning a few seats in their countries.

People and Political Parties

The examination of the electoral results since 1979 shows a growing north-south division in the way people vote. There has always been a majority of Conservative voters in England, and particularly in the South, while Labour's strongholds have tended to be in the industrial centres of the Midlands and the North, as well as Scotland.

This pattern has grown stronger during the last 30 years. If we look at the electoral map of the 2010 elections, we can see that the rural constituencies all over England are mostly blue – this is the traditional colour of the Tories. Since these are the largest but sparsely populated constituencies, a superficial observer may believe that the Conservatives actually dominate the Commons. However, Labour usually wins in practically all large cities in the industrial North and the West Midlands, as well as in South Wales and the Scottish Lowlands. Labour's red colour dominates much of London as well. Since these are the population centres of Britain, Labour can come close to the Conservatives in the overall outcome.

Labour's strongholds have always been the great cities, which have lost population in the last decades to residential areas in the countryside. Consequently, Labour had to increase its support substantially among the middle class in order to win some of the safe Conservative seats in the south. Politically, it meant – and Tony Blair understood the message – that Labour had to approach the political centre and give up most of those left-wing policies which were unattractive to a large part of the middle class population.

While the geographical divide has increased, the class divide has diminished. In the past Labour could count on the solid support of manual and most skilled workers throughout the country. The proportion of the working class, which constituted half of the electorate in 1964, fell to one-third by 1983, while the middle class – managers, professionals, supervisors and white collar workers – increased from one-third to half of the electorate in the same period. This has reduced the political importance of the working class, and nowadays all the major national parties have to win a substantial amount of middle-class votes in order to gain a majority in the commons.

The decline in voting loyalty by class has also resulted in a decline in overall loyalty for the two major parties. In 1951 97% of the popular vote went to the two largest parties, but by 2010 this had fallen to 65%. Negative voting has become quite fashionable: people go to vote to keep a disliked party out of power. The lower turnout at the most recent elections signifies a more alarming development: a large proportion of the population is not interested enough in politics to go to vote, or does not feel that the present system gives them a real opportunity to express their political preference. According to opinion polls, voter apathy is particularly strong among the youngest generation, which is a bad sign for the future.

4. THE CIVIL SERVICE

When people speak of 'the Government,' they always think of the ministers, who are politicians. But in fact, the great majority of government employees are not ministers; most of the work in government departments and other government institutions is done by professional **civil servants**.[122]

The modern **Civil Service** was established in 1855, when politicians realized that the staff of government departments should be chosen on the basis of talent and merit rather than political preference. So Parliament established the Civil Service Commission to recruit civil servants on the basis of competitive examinations. Since then, civil servants are expected to be strictly impartial between parties and keep their distance from party politics. Civil servants must not

---

[122] *civil servant*: The term might be misleading for Hungarians but it has nothing to do with '*polgári szolgálat*', a form of military service in Hungary. The closest equivalent in Hungarian is '*köztisztviselő*'. Members of the police, local government employees, or those who work in state education and health care institutions are not considered civil servants in Britain, so it does not mean the same as '*közalkalmazott*' in Hungarian.

be party members, candidates for a seat in Parliament, and should not support any party in their public appearances. <u>Political neutrality</u> is crucial, because civil servants remain in their position when the old government is replaced by a new one. Civil servants must be as loyal to an <u>incoming</u> government as to the <u>outgoing</u> one, and they are expected to carry out the policies of the government with equal efficiency, no matter what their personal opinion is.

In the Civil Service hierarchy, the most senior civil servant is the <u>Cabinet Secretary</u>, the head of the Cabinet Office, who works directly for the Prime Minister. Each department has its top civil servant, who is usually called **Permanent Secretary** (to distinguish him or her from political secretaries). He or she is in daily contact with the Secretary of State and the other ministers working in the department, and his or her primary task is to turn politicians' ideas into practice. The civil servants prepare <u>reports</u>, <u>draft government bills</u> and <u>white papers</u>, turn Acts of Parliament into specific action plans. They also advise politicians, but the final decision – and the political responsibility for it – rests with the minister.

Civil servants employed in the ministries are all university graduates, and many of them were among the best students. They are selected in several stages with exams measuring their <u>competence</u> and suitability. The most important expectation of a civil servant is not <u>expertise</u> in one particular area, but rather problem-solving skills, the ability to understand assigned tasks quickly and devise solutions, and willingness to work in a hierarchy. They are typically employed for life, but they do not work in the same department all through their career. One of the important principles of the Civil Service is that the professional staff should move from one department to the other at regular intervals, so that they gather more experience and develop a more complex idea of how government works. There is also a Civil Service College, where they receive special training for their job.

In 2013, the Civil Service employed nearly 450,000 people in Britain. Originally, most civil servants worked in government departments, but the modern welfare state greatly expanded the civil service. More than 100,000 people work for the Department for Work and Pensions, taking care of old-age <u>pensions</u> and <u>social benefits</u>. Almost 50,000 work for the Ministry of Defence as <u>civilian employees</u> (not professional soldiers). Many others collect taxes and other duties, work at courts, supervise education, or run prisons. The new devolved Scottish and Welsh governments also employ civil servants.

There is a widespread idea in Britain that the country is really run by civil servants, who are professional experts, while the politicians, who are amateurs, cannot really do much else but follow the advice of civil servants. This idea was popularized by a British comedy series in the 1980s, *Yes, Minister*, in which the minister was portrayed as stupid and power-hungry, and he was cleverly manipulated by the senior civil servant. Others also suspect that the Civil Service has an essentially conservative attitude and dislikes radical reforms, and civil servants can actually prevent the political plans from becoming reality. There is little evidence to prove these suspicions. The Civil Service has a high reputation for being fair and loyal, corruption is extremely rare. A successful civil servant is rewarded by high pay, state honours (including a life peerage for some) and a good pension.

Key concepts

10 Downing Street	alternative vote system / AV	Cabinet
absolute majority		Civil Service / civil servant
	by-election	Conservative Party / Tories

constituency

Eurosceptics

first-past-the-post system

Foreign Office – Foreign
Secretary

franchise

government department

Home Office – Home
Secretary

hung parliament

Labour Party

Liberal Democratic Party /
LibDems

Member of Parliament /
MP

minister (senior – junior)

Ministry of Justice – Lord
Chancellor

nationalisation ←→
privatisation

New Labour

Parliamentary Under-
Secretary

Permanent Secretary

plurality / relative majority

popular vote

Prime Minister

proportional representation
/ PR

secret ballot

Secretary of State

Thatcherism

trade unions

Treasury – Chancellor of
the Exchequer

two-party system

UK Independence Party /
UKIP

vote of confidence

welfare state

Whitehall

VIII. LEGAL SYSTEM IN ENGLAND

Think of Hungary First!

What do you know about the Hungarian legal system? Have you ever been inside a Hungarian court?

Who decides the guilt of an accused person in Hungary? What governs the decisions of Hungarian courts?

What is the role of the Hungarian Supreme Court (*Kúria*) and the Constitutional Court?

How can somebody become a lawyer or a judge in Hungary?

What is the attitude of the public to the Hungarian police? How efficient are the police in Hungary?

Test Your Knowledge!

Can you think of a movie or a TV series in which a British courtroom was shown? What characterized it? In what way was it different from a Hungarian courtroom?

Can you think of a detective story you have read or seen on TV that takes place in Britain? How was the police presented in it?

Use the Internet!

The official home page of the Ministry of Justice: http://www.justice.gov.uk/

The official home page of Her Majesty's Courts Service, the official supervisor of the English court systems: http://www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/

The official home page of the English judiciary: http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/

Information about Magistrates' Courts: http://www.magistrates-association.org.uk/

The official home page of the Crown Prosecution Service: http://cps.gov.uk/

Information about solicitors on the home page of the Law Society: http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/home.law

Information about barristers on the home page of the Bar Council: http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/

The official home page of the Police Federation: http://www.polfed.org/

1. THE LEGAL SYSTEM OF ENGLAND AND WALES

The <u>legal system</u> of Britain is not uniform. There are three different territorial systems: England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. As usual, there are historical reasons for this situation. After the Acts of Union of 1707 and 1800, Scotland and Ireland have preserved their autonomous legal systems, so the United Kingdom never had a unified and standardized legal system. Since the great majority of the British population (about 88%) is subject to the first system, the detailed description below is concerned with English legal practice only. The Scottish and Northern Irish systems are similar as far as legal principles and theory are concerned, but the names and <u>hierarchy of courts</u>, as well as the <u>rules of procedure</u>, are considerably different. Therefore, it is a mistake to speak about 'British law' or 'the British legal system'; in this respect, the three countries should be treated separately.

Common Law

English law differs from other countries in Europe in several crucial aspects. The two basic elements of English law are **common law**[123] and **statute law**.

Statute law consists of Acts of Parliaments (generally called 'statutes') passed by the legislative and signed by the monarch. They do not significantly differ from similar written legal rules in other countries. The unique aspect of English law is common law, which could more appropriately be called case law, because it is in essence nothing else but a huge collection of past court cases and decisions of judges. These earlier cases are used as a source of law in England, so judges can compare their own case with earlier cases and if there are similarities or parallels between the facts of the current case and some earlier ones, the decisions in the earlier cases can be used as guidance in the new case. In legal language, earlier cases serve as **precedents** to apply to the case at hand when there is no applicable statute (Act of Parliament). Precedents also have an important role within the court system. Lower courts are bound to follow the decisions of the higher court.

Common law is a typical example of English conservatism and respect for old traditions. It is basically an institution from the Middle Ages, when written laws were rare, and most judges relied on old customs as well as their own common sense. From the 13th century on, some of the notable cases as well as the judges' decisions were written down in order to serve as precedents for other judges all over the country. Over the centuries, a large body of cases was piled up, from which typically both sides of the case could find precedents supporting their claim.

In other European countries, legislatures created systematic **criminal codes** and **civil codes**[124] during the 19th and 20th centuries, following the example of Napoleon's civil code in 1804. The criminal code defines all punishable crimes and offences, and specifies the maximum and minimum possible punishments, whereas a civil code is a systematic collection of rules governing legal relations between private citizens and organizations. These codes replaced earlier case and precedent law, and they are the sole sources of law in most Continental countries whose legal systems are based on Roman law, including Hungary.

In contrast, such systematization of law never happened in England. As Parliament passed more and more Acts, almost all criminal law has been covered by statutes. In other words, nearly all actions for which a person may be punished are specifically forbidden by some statute or other, and the statute usually specifies the range of penalties. It is almost as though there were a sort of criminal code scattered in a large number of laws. Most of civil law (e.g. law concerning property, contracts, or damages), on the other hand, is still predominantly covered by common law. As a result, lawyers have a crucial role in an English court, because they have to find the best precedents out of thousands of earlier cases to support their client's claim and persuade the judge.

---

[123] *common law*: The term comes from the Middle Ages, when the kings tried to establish the same legal practice throughout the whole kingdom instead of the various practices of local feudal courts. By the late 13th century, the king's 'common law' was administered in all royal courts, hence the modern name.

[124] *criminal code* and *civil code*: The Hungarian equivalents are '*Büntető törvénykönyv*' (BTK) és '*Polgári Törvénykönyv*' (PTK).

Criminal Case and Civil Case

Legal cases are normally divided into two kinds: civil and criminal. A **civil case** is started by an individual who wants some kind of <u>compensation</u> for a certain loss or damage. Civil cases include <u>disputes</u> over property or <u>inheritance</u>, unfulfilled <u>business contracts</u>, divorces, suits for <u>libel</u>, etc. The person who <u>sues</u> somebody else is called a **plaintiff**; the person who is brought to court is called a **defendant**. The most typical form of compensation is <u>damages</u>[125] (a certain amount of money in return for the <u>injury</u> suffered by the plaintiff) but several other kinds of compensation are possible.

A criminal case begins when somebody has committed a harmful deed against society in general. In such a case, it is usually the state (in England, the Crown) that <u>prosecutes</u> a **defendant**, in other words, <u>brings criminal charges</u> against the person in court. Criminal offences were traditionally classified as <u>misdemeanour</u>,[126] which covered less serious deeds (e.g. pickpocketing, shoplifting, vandalism, trespassing, traffic offences etc.), or <u>felony</u>, which included very serious offences (e.g. armed robbery, rape, drug trafficking, murder, arson). In the current English system, these traditional names have been replaced by the terms **summary offence** and **indictable offence**.[127] A summary offence is a sort of <u>petty crime</u> that can be tried and settled without a jury, before a magistrates' court (see 'Criminal Courts' section below). Summary offences are not punished by more than one year of imprisonment; the most typical punishments are <u>fine</u>, <u>probation</u> or <u>community service</u>. An indictable offence requires an <u>indictment</u>, or a formal charge by the prosecution authority, due to the seriousness of the crime. Indictable offences are always tried by a <u>jury</u> and punished by <u>prison sentences</u>.

2. CRIMINAL COURTS

Magistrates' Courts

There are two levels of criminal courts in England and Wales. The lower level is represented by **magistrates' courts**, another unique institution of the English legal system. Magistrates' courts deal with the summary offences and handle about 95% of all criminal cases. They are typically led by magistrates, who bear the ancient title **Justice of the Peace (JP)**.[128] A magistrates' court normally consists of three Justices of the Peace. The unique aspect of the JPs is that they are not legal professionals but <u>voluntary officials</u>, who perform their duty in part time, without salary (they receive only <u>allowances</u> for expenses like travelling and food). They are ordinary people who have no legal degree, although they get some <u>legal training</u> after appointment. Each magistrates' court includes a **Clerk** as well, who is a <u>professional lawyer</u> (mostly a solicitor; see 'The English Legal Profession' below). His job is to make sure that magistrates follow legal rules, and he also advises magistrates about specific legal problems, but ultimately the magistrates decide cases on their own.

---

[125] *damage / damages*: The two words look similar but their meaning is very different: damage (sing.) means some harm (physical or other) suffered by a person or an object; damages (plural) means a sum of money to be paid in compensation for some injury caused to somebody else.

[126] *misdemeanour:* pronounced /ˌmɪsdɪˈmiːnə(r)/

[127] *indictable offence / indictment*: pronounced /ɪnˈdaɪtəbl əˈfens/ and /ɪnˈdaɪtmənt/

[128] *Justice of the Peace (JP)*: JPs were first appointed in the 14th century. They were royal officers in the country responsible for maintaining peace, arresting criminals and also hearing criminal cases. Until the 20th century, JPs were required to own a certain amount of property, and they were typically country gentlemen, wealthy burgesses or clergymen.

Persons charged with a summary offence are <u>summoned</u> before the local magistrates' court. The heaviest punishment that a magistrates' court can impose is six months' imprisonment or a fine of up to £5000. Prison sentences are actually quite rare; magistrates prefer <u>community service</u> and <u>probation</u> orders. The more serious cases (indictable offences) are sent for trial to a <u>crown court</u>. Magistrates' courts also deal with <u>juvenile offenders</u> (there are special Youth Courts for this purpose) as well as civil cases involving divorce and family disputes (in the Family Courts).

JPs are appointed to their positions by the <u>Lord Chancellor</u> on the advice of local appointing committees. There are no particular requirements except a <u>clean criminal record</u>, intelligence, and common sense. There are some 28,000 JPs in England and Wales; most of them are white middle-class or upper-middle-class people, and the majority are retired (former doctors, teachers, army officers etc). The typical magistrate is a respectable member of his or her local community who volunteers to become a magistrate because it is considered a position of honour and prestige. Recently, the government has made efforts to recruit more people under 50, more non-whites and more people without university education, in order that the composition of local magistrates should represent local society more faithfully. In London and some other large cities, where there are a lot of cases to deal with, some magistrates' courts are led by <u>district judges</u> (DJ), who work full time and have a degree in law, but there are only about 200 of them.

Magistrates' courts are sometimes criticized for their inconsistent application of laws. Certain magistrates are very kind and patient with even repeated offenders; others have a tendency to impose harsh punishments for minor offences. But the majority in England considers it very important that people who committed small criminal deeds should be judged by others from their own community, who are more familiar with local life and situation, than by professional judges. In fact, magistrates' courts perform a valuable service by settling most of the petty criminal cases and freeing crown courts to deal with serious cases only.

Crown Courts

Crown courts constitute the second level of the criminal justice system, where indictable offences are heard. People convicted by a magistrates' court can also <u>appeal</u> to the local crown court. There are 78 crown courts in London and the larger towns of England and Wales. They have a hierarchy; the highest in rank and the most famous is the <u>Central Criminal Court</u> in London, popularly known as the **Old Bailey**.

Crown courts are always led by a professional judge who is called **circuit judge** because many of them work at more than one court, especially in the countryside. At crown courts, the final decision is made by the **jury**, which is another characteristic English institution of medieval origin. The jury consists of twelve ordinary citizens, who are selected at random from the population. The most important function of a jury is to ensure as far as possible that nobody is <u>convicted</u> because of the <u>prejudice</u> of one single person, the judge. The jury is seen as a major guarantee of a <u>fair and unbiased trial</u> and therefore the right to a <u>trial by jury</u> (except for minor criminal cases) is one of the most important civil rights in England. Another special characteristic of crown courts is that the two sides – the <u>prosecution</u> and the <u>defence</u> – are represented by a special kind of lawyer called <u>barrister</u> (see 'The English Legal Profession' section).

Crown courts are also distinguished by certain traditional formalities. For instance, judges wear <u>robes</u> of a distinctive colour and white <u>wigs</u>, while barristers representing the

prosecution and the defence also have to appear in black robes and another, shorter type of wig. All participants in the courtroom are expected to address the judge as 'Your Honour'.

Courts of Appeal

If a person is convicted by a crown court, he or she may appeal to the Court of Appeal. Appeals may be made on grounds of fact (something important neglected or unknown at the trial), or law (the statute or precedent has been applied incorrectly), and they may be directed against the sentence only (it is too harsh), or against both the sentence and the conviction (the defendant insists the he or she is innocent). In the Courts of Appeal there is no jury; experienced judges examine the case and they either uphold the decision of the lower court or quash (invalidate) the conviction, change the sentence, or order a new trial.

The highest court of appeal in England used to be the House of Lords, which was another unique feature of the English legal system. Among the life peers, there was a special group called Law Lords, ten retired senior judges, whose task used to be to handle appeals from lower courts. In 2005, however, Parliament passed the Constitutional Reform Act, which established a **Supreme Court of the United Kingdom**. The new Supreme Court began to work in 2009. It is the final court of appeal for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but not for Scotland. Furthermore, it is also a legal forum for disputes between the devolved legislatures and the Westminster Parliament.

3. CRIMINAL PROCEDURE

A criminal case always starts with a criminal offence which is investigated by the police. Once they have sufficient evidence against a particular person, they usually arrest the suspect. If somebody is arrested, he or she must be brought before a court (usually a magistrates' court) within 24 hours for lesser offences and within 96 hours for more serious crime (but in that case, the police have to get an arrest warrant from a court after 36 hours). The court's task is to determine whether the criminal charge against the arrested person is supported by sufficient evidence. If the court decides that there is not enough evidence to keep the person in custody, he or she must be released. A person who thinks that he or she has been arrested unlawfully may apply to the High Court for a **writ of habeas corpus**.[129] A writ of habeas corpus orders that an arrested person must appear before the court which determines whether he or she has been arrested for a serious reason. The habeas corpus is one of the fundamental civil rights which guards the individual against illegal imprisonment and, in this way, against the tyranny of the state.

If the court approves of the arrest and the charge, arrested persons are either kept in custody (in prison or police jail) or released on bail. The court may grant or refuse bail. Being released 'on bail' means that the accused person is set free until the trial, and between court appearances, in return for a certain amount of money deposited at the court. Bail is granted to

---

[129] *habeas corpus* (pronounced /ˈheɪbiəs ˈkɔ(r)pəs/): Latin phrase meaning "you should have the body" [brought before a court]. It comes from the opening phrase of a medieval writ, or legal order, which demanded that an arrested person held in prison must be brought before a court of law so that the court can decide whether he or she is being held legally. Habeas corpus is one of the most important guarantees of people's personal freedom in both Britain (where it is part of the law since 1679) and in the United States.

those people who are not considered dangerous to society and who are unlikely to escape in the meantime.

A criminal case is normally brought to court by a special state organisation, the **Crown Prosecution Service** (CPS). The CPS consists of professional lawyers and is independent of the police even though it co-operates closely with them. The CPS decides whether there is enough evidence against the suspect to take him or her to court. All indictments are made in the name of the Crown; since legal cases in England are always named after the two parties involved (e.g. Smith v Doherty), in criminal cases one side is always abbreviated as 'R', which stands for 'Regina', or the Queen (e.g. R v Jones).

The court proceedings begin when the charge is read out to the **defendant** and he or she is asked: "How do you plead?" The answer is called a **plea**: it is either '**guilty**' or '**not guilty**.' If someone pleads guilty, he or she admits to having committed the crime he or she is charged with. In this case, the prosecution presents the details and the facts of the case, and the judge or the magistrates pronounce **sentence** – prison, fine, probation or other punishment.

If the plea is 'not guilty' there must be a **trial**, which means that the two sides – the **prosecution** and the **defence** – have to produce their evidence and their witnesses to prove their case. At crown courts, the first step of the trial is to set up a jury. A certain number of citizens are chosen at random from the local electoral register and they are ordered to come to the court. Twelve people are chosen at random from the waiting group to serve as a jury for the trial, but both the prosecution and the defence can exclude several of them. Jurors must not know anything about the accused person or the current case and should not show any sign of bias.

When the trial begins, the barrister speaking for the Crown – the so-called 'prosecution counsel' – describes the crime with the help of questions answered by witnesses who may then be questioned by the barrister supporting the defendant, the so-called 'defence counsel.' Some of the prosecution witnesses may be police officers reporting what they saw, and present their evidence of fingerprints or searches. The defence counsel then calls witnesses for the defence, who testify before the court and with their testimony they try to prove the innocence of the defendant. The defendant may also be a witness in his or her own case if that seems useful. It is very important that the judge remain an impartial observer throughout the trial. His or her primary task is to ensure the fairness of the trial, therefore he or she does not question any of the witnesses, but maintains order and discipline in the courtroom, excludes certain witnesses or rules out certain evidence if considered irrelevant to the case, etc. The trial is therefore a kind of contest between the prosecution and the defence to persuade the jury about their version of the truth.

When the presentation is finished, counsels on both sides make closing speeches, and finally the judge sums up the case for the jury, and informs them about relevant points of law. The jury then retires to reach their **verdict**, that is, to decide whether the defendant is innocent or guilty. A fundamental legal principle is that everybody must be presumed innocent until their guilt is proved "beyond a reasonable doubt" (or admitted by the defendant). This means that the jury must declare the defendant 'not guilty' even if they are merely uncertain about his or her guilt or do not consider the available evidence enough to convict the defendant. Earlier the jury had to come to a unanimous decision, that is, all twelve of them had to agree on the 'guilty' or 'not guilty' verdict. In the past, if they could not all agree (this is often called a 'hung jury'), the judge had to declare a mistrial, and a new jury had to be set up, which means that the whole trial had to be started again. Today the jury's decision is accepted if at least ten of the twelve people can agree. If the jury's verdict is 'guilty,' the judge pronounces the sentence as if the plea had been guilty. The judge has no authority to refuse or change the

verdict of the jury, but he or she can informally influence them previously by the way he or she summarises the case. The jury's decision is therefore 'final': it can be overturned only by a higher court of appeals and only with detailed justification. Another important legal principle is that nobody can be charged with the same offence twice: it means that if a person was once declared 'not guilty' by a jury, the prosecution has no right to appeal and the defendant cannot be tried again with the same charge.

4. Civil Courts and Procedure

The lowest civil courts are called county courts. There are about 300 court districts in England and Wales, each with a county court (they are not connected to modern counties). The leaders of county courts are the same **circuit judges** who also lead crown courts, and they are often responsible for more than one court, although they tend to specialize in criminal or civil cases. Circuit judges are always legal professionals, but do not always work full time: sometimes a barrister has a part-time practice as a circuit judge. In county courts, the circuit judge usually hears cases and makes decisions alone, without the assistance of a jury or other people. Apart from the fact that they are led by a professional judge, the role of the county courts is similar to magistrates' court in criminal cases: they deal with the minor, less important cases and pass significant cases (over the value of £50,000) on to the High Court.

The **High Court of Justice** is located in London and divided into several divisions according to the different kinds of legal disputes. Appeals from the High Court may be made to the Court of Appeal and ultimately to the Supreme Court.

Civil litigation (bringing a case to court) is similar to the criminal procedure in the sense that there are two sides – the plaintiff and the defendant – represented by barristers who are trying to prove their point. In civil cases, the contest is between two private parties; the 'Crown' is not involved on behalf of either side. In civil cases there is no jury either; it is the judge who listens to the arguments and makes the decision. Civil cases are often very complicated and this fact tends to make civil trials very long and expensive. The high cost of litigation often deters less wealthy people from suing others, and opposing parties often try to settle disputes out of court in order to save the time and money involved in a trial.

5. The English Legal Profession

Another special feature of the English legal system is that, unlike in most other countries, there are two kinds of lawyers: **solicitors** and **barristers**. All young lawyers who have graduated from university must choose to become either one or the other. The main difference between them is that the primary job of solicitors is to deal with the legal matters of their clients, while barristers are 'court lawyers': their special expertise lies in representing people before the higher courts (crown courts and the High Court).

People who need the professional assistance of a lawyer go to solicitors. Solicitors usually have permanent clients, and they take care of people's legal problems. A typical solicitor's work includes buying and selling houses, executing wills, checking contracts and other legal documents, assisting divorces and legal separations. There are about 100,000 solicitors in England and Wales who practise in firms or partnerships. Young lawyers who wish to become solicitors have to complete a post-graduate legal practice course and then work as a trainee in a firm for at least two years before they can join the **Law Society**, the professional

organization of solicitors, and become established solicitors themselves. Interestingly, people without a degree in law may also become solicitors in England, but they have to study up to six years for the qualification.

Until 1990, a much criticised ancient rule forbade solicitors to act as advocates in the higher courts, that is, to represent the plaintiff or the defendant above a magistrates' court or county court. So if a civil or criminal case went before a crown court or the High Court, the client's solicitor had to hire a barrister to act as advocate in the court. This categorical ban was relaxed by an Act of Parliament in 1990, and nowadays a solicitor may act as an advocate before a higher court after additional education and specialized training. Such solicitors are called solicitor-advocates, but their number remains very small.

Barristers are a smaller and more privileged body of the legal profession: there are about 15,000 of them in England and Wales, and they have kept many medieval traditions. Every barrister belongs to the **Bar**, an old legal society which until 1990 had a monopoly that only its members could appear as advocates before higher courts in England and Wales. The Bar consists of four legal associations in London which are called **Inns of Court** (Lincoln's Inn, Gray's Inn, Middle Temple, and Inner Temple). These are similar to colleges at Oxford or Cambridge, and every barrister has to join one of them. The Inns of Court provide education and training for young lawyers who have to pass the so-called Bar examinations. After that, the young lawyer is 'called to the Bar,' that is, he or she is accepted as a barrister by the Inn of Court he or she belongs to.

Barristers have always been forbidden to have permanent clients, and until 2004 they could not be hired (or 'instructed,' as they say) directly by an individual. A barrister received a 'brief' on the case from the client's solicitor, and acted as the client's counsel during the trial or the court proceedings but his job ended when the court's decision was announced. This ban has been slightly relaxed by the Bar in 2004, so some barristers – after special registration – may 'go public' and accept cases directly from individuals, but it has not become a widespread practice yet. The fundamental distinction, however, remains: barristers cannot represent anybody outside a courtroom; that job remains the monopoly of solicitors.

Barristers are typically self-employed: they do not form partnerships like solicitors, but they often share office and administrative staff with other barristers in their so-called 'chambers.' This is where a young barrister starts to work as a 'pupil' of established barristers. Young barristers earn very little, but once they have built up experience and a reputation as an effective advocate in the higher courts they can earn a great deal. The best barristers receive the title 'Queen's Counsel' (QC). They can charge the highest fees and have the best chance of becoming a judge.

For barristers have one more advantage over solicitors: they have a chance to become judges. In England, no young lawyer after graduation may choose to become a judge, as it happens in Hungary. All circuit and High Court judges gain their position after they have worked at least ten years in the courts as barristers. This is a very useful practice, since barristers regularly represent both sides in criminal and civil cases, so by the time they are appointed a judge, they have widespread experience about how a court works. Once appointed they cannot be removed from office except by a joint decision of the two Houses of Parliament, which very rarely happens. Becoming a judge in a higher court is a desired career dream of many barristers. High Court and Court of Appeal judges are the most respectable people in the judicial hierarchy, which is expressed by certain formalities: they wear special types of robes, and are addressed in the Court as 'My Lord' or 'My Lady.' The Law Lords of the Supreme Court are selected from among them.

Ministry of Justice

The English courts and lawyers have a strong tradition of independence from the government. The **Lord Chancellor**, who was at the same time the head of the House of Lords and of the highest court of appeal in England, performed most of the tasks of a justice minister: he appointed judges, QCs and magistrates, and dealt with judicial matters in the Cabinet.

The situation changed greatly in 2007, when a brand new Ministry of Justice was established. The new government department has taken over and institutionalized many of the former functions of the Lord Chancellor as justice minister. Besides the appointment of judges, it is responsible for the entire judiciary in England and Wales, it supervises the prison system, and maintains relations with the devolved legislatures of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The leader of the new department bears two titles: he is both 'Secretary of State for Justice' and 'Lord Chancellor.' At the same time, the Lord Chancellor ceased to have any function or connection to the House of Lords. As a result, the new Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, appointed Jack Straw as the new head of the Ministry, who is the first Lord Chancellor for a long time without a peerage.

6. POLICE

One of the most popular images of Britain is the British policeman with the characteristically odd helmet. Ordinary policemen are called **constables**, and identified by the abbreviation PC (for 'police constable'). Until the recent terrorist threats in London, British policemen were famous for not carrying guns on normal duty, but after the terrorist attack on the London Underground in July 2005, police patrols were armed not only with revolvers but occasionally also with machine guns.

Police forces in Britain are not centralised, like in Hungary. The division between legal systems within the UK also applies to police forces, which are divided into three separate jurisdictions (England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland). But even within England, territorial police organizations are independent from one another, each headed by a **Chief Constable** (loosely similar to a Hungarian '*rendőrkapitány*'). Each Chief Constable is appointed by and responsible to the territorial police authority, a committee consisting of councillors from local governments, magistrates and independent members. The central government gives local authorities a certain amount of money to cover part of the cost of policing, and the Home Office approves or refuses the appointments of Chief Constables, but each Chief Constable is responsible for all operational and administrative decisions. They do not accept direct instructions or orders from the police authority, nor from the Home Secretary.

Greater London (with the exception of the City of London) is the responsibility of the **Metropolitan Police**, the oldest police force in Britain set up by Sir Robert Peel (then Home Secretary) in 1829. After the Metropolitan Police was established, public safety quickly improved, which made policemen very popular and earned them the nickname '**bobby**' (from 'Robert', the first name of Peel). Ever since then, the Metropolitan Police is supervised by the Home Secretary, but its head is called the Commissioner. It is the largest police service in the country employing about 31,000 people. One section, called Specialist Operations (SO), provides certain national police services, such as the protection of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister, and members of the government, as well as anti-terrorist activities. The Metropolitan Police also maintains the national record of all criminals and crimes (its

acronym is HOLMES), which is accessible to local police forces as well. The famous **Scotland Yard** is the <u>headquarters</u> of the Metropolitan Police; the name derives from the street, opening from Whitehall, where the first headquarters building stood in the 19th century. In the 1960s, the headquarters moved to a new location, and was renamed New Scotland Yard.

Unlike police in many other countries, the British policeman traditionally enjoyed a trusted, respected and friendly relationship with the public. Local PCs learned their neighbourhood and enjoyed the friendship and trust of the public. It was also a source of pride that almost alone in the police world, the British bobby was unarmed.

This traditional image changed considerably in the 1970s and 1980s. The English police had to face new problems and difficulties, especially the terrorist attacks of the IRA and ethnic <u>riots</u> of non-white minorities in several impoverished inner-city areas, but <u>football hooliganism</u> was also a major challenge to the police. The police responses were heavily criticized for their brutality and their occasional offence against the civil rights of individuals, and signs of institutional racism that often fuelled race riots since the early 1980s. Typical examples include keeping suspected terrorists <u>in custody</u> without <u>arrest warrant,</u> or racist prejudices and attitudes against non-white people. The English police scored a major success by removing football hooligans from stadiums by the 1990s, and IRA bombings also ended after the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, but after the 2005 terror attack in London <u>Islamic militants</u> present a new threat on <u>public safety</u>.

Key concepts

the Bar	judge → sentence	writ of habeas corpus
barrister ←→ solicitor	jury → verdict	
bobby	Justice of the Peace / JP	
Chief Constable	Law Society	
circuit judge	Lord Chancellor	
Clerk	magistrates' court	
common law ←→ statute law	Metropolitan Police	
county court	Ministry of Justice	
criminal/civil code	Old Bailey	
criminal law ←→ civil law	plea – to plead guilty / not guilty	
crown court	police constable / PC	
Crown Prosecution Service	prosecution ←→ defence	
defendant ←→ plaintiff	Scotland Yard	
High Court of Justice	summary offence	
indictable offence	Supreme Court of the UK	
Inn of Court	trial	

IX. BRITISH SOCIETY

Think of Hungary First!

On what grounds can a nation be divided into various social groups?

What are the major social 'classes' in Hungary? How do you define a class and what characteristics determine an individual's class status?

Do minorities (ethnic and other) enjoy equal rights with the rest of the population?

What kind of social benefits can Hungarians receive from the state? Are they available for everybody?

How does free health care function in Hungary? How are the health care and the old-age pension systems financed?

What reforms are under way and what effects will they have?

Information Store

Overall population of the United Kingdom: 63,182,000 (Census 2011; rounded)

rate of growth: c. 0.5% per year since 2001 (c. 375,000 people)

Social indicators (2012/2013 data, Office of National Statistics):

total fertility rate (children born to childbearing woman): 1.94 in England, 1.88 in Wales, 1.67 in Scotland, 2.02 in Northern Ireland

mortality rate (deaths per 1000 population): 8.9 in the UK, 8.7 in England, 10.2 in Wales, 10.3 in Scotland, 8.1 in Northern Ireland

life expectancy: UK: 78.9 years (men) and 82.7 years (women)

England: 79.0 years (men) and 82.8 years (women)

Wales: 78.1 years (men) and 82.1 years (women)

Scotland: 76.5 years (men) and 80.7 years (women)

Northern Ireland: 77.7 years (men) and 82.1 years (women)

proportion of population over 65 (2012): 17% in England, 18% in Wales, 18% in Scotland, 15% in Northern Ireland

ratio of working-age population (16 to 64) to state pension-age population (above 65) in 2012): 3.21

net international migration into the UK (2012): 182,000 people (between 2004–2011, the same figure has been consistently over 200,000)

median household total wealth (2012): £224,300 in England, £207,400 in Wales and £165,500 in Scotland (no data available about Northern Ireland)

proportion of low-income population (2012): 16% of individuals in England, 19% in Wales, 15% in Scotland and 21% in Northern Ireland.

proportion of children living in low-income households (2012): 18% in England, 23% in Wales, 17% in Scotland and 23% in Northern Ireland.

The population of the United Kingdom by ethnic group (Census 2011):

Ethnic group	Number of people	Percentage of Total population
White	55 million	87.1
Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	1.2 million	2.0
Indian	1.5 million	2.3
Pakistani	1.2 million	1.9
Bangladeshi	450,000	0.7
Chinese	430,000	0.7
Other Asian	860,000	1.4
All Asian or Asian British	4.4 million	7.0
All Black / Black Caribbean / Black African / Black British	1.9 million	3.0
Other ethnic groups	580,000	0.9
All minority ethnic population	8.1 million	12.9
All population	63.2 million	100

The resident UK population by nationality (2013 estimate):

British	EU14 (EU members before 2004)	EU10 (EU members that joined after 2004)	Non-EU
57.6 million (92.1%)	1.2 million (1.9%)	1.4 million (2.1%)	2.4 million (3.8%)

Test Your Knowledge!

How do people of different class appear in British movies and films? Can you think of typical pieces of clothes associated with a certain class?

Can you think of a movie or a novel taking place in Britain in which non-white people were featured? How were they presented in the story?

Use the Internet!

The National Statistics Online has an incredible amount of useful and interesting information about every aspect of British population: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/

A site devoted to the greatest Black Britons: http://www.100greatblackbritons.com/

A community web site for Black Britons: http://www.blacknet.co.uk/

A community web site for British Asians: http://www.ukasian.co.uk/

1. BIRTHS, DEATHS AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION

According to the 2011 Census, the overall population of the United Kingdom is more than 63 million people, which makes it the 15th largest in the world and the 3rd largest in Europe. Overall population density is 259 inhabitants per square km, which is well above the EU average of 153 per square km, or the Hungarian density, which is about 107. England is the most 'crowded' part of the UK, with 406 people per square km, whereas all other parts of the UK fall below the national average. But even within England, the distribution of the population is uneven (as discussed in chapter I) and concentrated in large cities: almost 90% of British people live in towns.

The population continues to increase slowly, by about 0.5% per year, that is, by 300,000 to 400,000 people. This increase is occurring mostly in England; therefore the already dominant weight of England is constantly growing at the expense of the other members of the UK. Since the late 1990s, international migration into the UK has been an increasingly important factor in population growth. Since 2004, when Eastern European countries joined the EU and its citizens gained the right to migrate to Britain to work there, the net annual migration into the country jumped to over 200,000 people, and stayed at that level for almost a decade. 2012 was the first year when the same figure fell below 200,000, which means that more than half of the annual population growth comes from the immigration of foreigners.

Population increase was an enduring feature of Britain during most of the 19th and the early 20th centuries, when British population grew at an astonishing rate (from 10.5 million to 30 million between 1801 and 1901) as a result of improved agricultural production and better nutrition, healthier life conditions and improved medical care, all of which contributed to the reduction of the **death rate** (the number of deaths per 1000 population), while the **birth rate** (the number of live birth per 1000 population) remained high. This population increase, however, slowed down in the second half of the 20th century. After the '**baby boom**'[130] that followed the end of World War II, the birth rate declined considerably, reflecting various changes in the lifestyle and values of British society, similarly to other modern societies in Western Europe.

Sociologists point out many reasons behind this decline: the majority of couples get married later (in their late 20s) and postpone the birth of their children; the average size of families has become smaller (only 15% of all families have three or more children); contraception and abortion have become widespread. Much of the natural increase is due to ethnic minority families (most of whom live in England within the UK), whose birth rate is generally higher than that of white families.

The decline of the birth rate, together with the low death rate, greatly changed the overall structure of the population. The British population is currently one of the oldest in Europe, and is slowly getting older. The proportion of young people has fallen, and the number of elderly people has grown. In 1971, 25% of the population was under 16 years of age, whereas retired people over 65 years constituted 13% of the population. By 2008, the proportion of the young fell slightly below the proportion of the old, as the latter grew to 18%, partly because

---

[130] *baby boom*: Popular term in Britain and the USA for the large number of children born immediately after World War II, probably due to the fact that most soldiers returned home from the war. 'Baby boomers' are a particularly numerous generation, who are currently approaching retirement age, and their retirement will probably cause problems for the pension and health care systems.

the life expectancy is constantly growing. This trend very significantly influences health care service as well as the pension system.

Britain is also changing ethnically. The traditional image of the white British society is still popular abroad, but it is very far from the actual realities. After World War II, black people from the Caribbean and Asians from the former colony of India were recruited to fill job vacancies in British industry and manual jobs. As a result, non-white groups of various origins constitute almost 13% of Britain's population, or more than 8 million people, according to the 2011 Census. They are concentrated mostly in large urban centres, particularly in London, Birmingham, Leicester, Leeds and Bradford.

2. FAMILY

The patterns of family life in Britain have followed the general European trends since 1945. After divorce laws were liberalized in 1971, the number of divorces grew rapidly. Nowadays, about 42% of marriages end in divorce, typically within the first 10 years. As a result, families became far more unstable, and the number of children living with only one parent (typically the mother) greatly increased. Sexual morality was also transformed: the great majority of teenagers attend mixed schools, they usually have sex before marriage, there are far more pregnancies and births outside marriage, which is no longer accompanied by shame and social stigma for the single mother and her child. Since the 1960s, it has also become common that couples live together without marriage; in British English, this is called '**cohabitation**'.

As a combined result of all these social trends, in 2010 only about 63% of all children lived in a married couple family. About 24% lived in lone-parent families (that means with a single mother or father – in 9 out of 10 lone-parent families the mother is the only adult member of the household) and another 13% lived with an unmarried cohabiting couple. 46% of all families included only one child, 39% had two children, and 15% had three or more children, which shows that the average size of families is getting smaller. Actually, 29% of all households consist of a single person, in other words, in these households a person lives alone, without a family or a partner, while only 20% of all households contained four or more people.

All these figures suggest the same underlying trend: the weakening of family ties. In Britain, living together with or close to one's parents is not common. British people are strongly individualistic, they do not keep in close touch with their extended family (grandparents, uncles and aunts, cousins, etc.). Young people, when they marry, tend to move far away from their parents and other relations, often to different towns. Many people are forced to move from one town to another several times due to their career, which also makes regular contact with parents difficult. As a result, the majority of children hardly know their grandparents at all. Old people, once they are too frail to take care of themselves, typically move to a nursing home, because they do not expect their children to take care of them.

3. SOCIAL CLASS

Members of a society can be divided into groups according to various characteristics, but the traditional and best-known social classification is the division into social classes. The term 'social class' does not sound good to Eastern European ears, since it has inevitable Marxist

associations, but in Britain, where Marxism always remained a minority ideology, the concept is very common and widespread. The most common division uses three categories: upper, middle and working or lower class. Most people have an idea what kind of people belong to each category, but their definition is not easy.

An individual's class may be determined by a number of factors: his or her family origin and upbringing, income and wealth, job, education, lifestyle, manners, appearance and (especially in Britain) dialect and accent. In the 19th century, when the three groups were first distinguished, the working class constituted the large majority (about 70%) of the total population, and they were easily distinguishable by all the features mentioned above. During the 20th century, differences in wealth and social status became smaller. Compulsory general education gave a chance to working class children to go to university and enter the middle class, while manual workers in general received higher wages, moved into better homes and many of them melted into the middle class. As a result, the proportion of the working class continuously fell and the proportion of the middle class grew, and by the second half of the 20th century the middle class gave the majority of British society. On the other hand, the traditional aristocracy has lost some of its prestige and most of its political privileges with the gradual development of mass democracy. British society has also become far more democratic in its attitudes: while in the 19th century people of 'low birth' were treated with disdain in an 'elegant' society, nowadays most people judge others by their personality and behaviour rather than family background.

The overwhelming majority of the population is classified according to occupation, falling into two broad groups, as in other industrialised societies: the **middle class** (or **white-collar workers**),[131] which is often subdivided into lower, middle and upper sections; and the **working class** (or **blue-collar workers**),[132] within which skilled and unskilled workers form two large subgroups.

The middle class has traditionally meant those people who do not do heavy manual labour as part of their job. The distinction between lower- and upper-middle class is usually defined by education and occupation. The lower-middle class includes people who work in offices (often called 'clerical workers'[133] in Britain) or run a small shop, but typically do not have a university degree. The upper-middle class people are **professionals**[134] with a well-paid job and a prestigious social position (e.g. judges, lawyers, doctors and senior civil servants). By the late 20th century, sociologists introduced an intermediate category as well, the so-called middle-middle class, implying people with professional qualifications whose jobs are less well-paid and their social standing is lower (such as schoolteachers and lower-level company managers). In Britain, the middle class has often been accused of snobbery, that is, they looked up to the traditional aristocracy with unconditional respect and admiration, and their secret desire was to imitate their lifestyle, while they looked on people of lower social status with contempt and derision. This is far less characteristic of most middle-class people nowadays, especially as many of its members have working-class origins.

A special phenomenon within the middle class is the so-called **yuppie**.[135] The word refers to those ambitious young people working usually in business who are primarily motivated by

---

[131] *white-collar worker*: The name refers to the white shirt office workers were traditionally required to wear at work.

[132] *blue-collar worker*: The name refers to the blue overall manual workers traditionally wore at factories and workshops.

[133] *clerical worker*: In this context, it means somebody doing some sort of administrative work in an office. 'Clerical' here is the adjective of 'clerk,' and has nothing to do with clerics or religion.

[134] *professional*: As a noun, it means a person qualified in one of the professions. A profession is a career requiring higher education, such as law, medicine or architecture.

[135] *yuppie* (pronounced /ˈjʌpi/): The acronym stands for 'young upwardly mobile person.'

professional and material success. Yuppies work hard, often overtime, make quite a lot of money already at a relatively young age, which they often spend on showy, extravagant things like expensive cars, lavish flats or useless objects. The name has a negative, derisive overtone.

The traditional working class emerged in Britain during the early 19th century. Most workers came from countryside villages to work in one of the many industries that developed spectacularly in Britain during the Industrial Revolution. There were generations of workers who worked in the same textile mill, shipyard or coal mine all their lives. Their fight for political participation was successful by the early 20th century, as in 1918 universal suffrage was introduced in Britain, and the Labour Party grew large as the party of workers. After 1945, however, fundamental economic changes began in the British economy, which ruined most of the traditional industries. Many factories and mines were forced to close, others modernised their production and needed far less manpower.

As a result of all these economic changes, the traditional working class has become much smaller. Many industrial workers had to find jobs in the service sector, the largest employer of the modern economy, and they had to learn new skills. The adaptation was hard especially for unskilled workers who are most threatened with long-term unemployment and poverty. Skilled workers, on the other hand, often make enough money to rise into the middle class.

The **upper class** is the most stable group of society, as few people get into or fall out of this category. The upper class used to be called the 'leisurely class,' because their wealth was large enough to allow them the comfort of living without a permanent job. Some of them are aristocrats with titles who possess large landed estates, others are owners of prosperous companies. The majority of them do not personally manage their property but leave it to professional business executives (upper-middle class) and devote their lives to expensive hobbies and pursuits (travelling, hunting, horse riding, yachting, etc.). The richest 1% of British society is estimated to own about one quarter of the nation's wealth, while the lower half of the British population owns only 5%.

Members of the upper class tend to live an exclusive lifestyle. Their children all go to public schools, usually the more famous ones, and then are educated at Oxford or Cambridge. They are rarely seen in public, except for ceremonial occasions, such as the Royal Ascot horse race. Some are active in politics (e.g. in the House of Lords) or organise various charities and foundations for some benevolent purpose like saving the rain forests or supporting HIV-positive patients.

Accents

Accents have a special role in British social life and communication. Britain, like all countries, has a variety of regional accents. But in Britain, the way people speak also reveal their class status. Therefore, people who had an ambition to rise in society made great efforts to change their pronunciation and acquire a 'proper' accent.

The 'British accent' that is considered the model to be imitated in language education all over Europe, including Hungary, is called **received pronunciation (RP)** in Britain because it is originally nobody's natural accent. It is typically a way of speaking people learn at school, especially in public schools and at university. RP is based on the south-eastern dialect originally spoken around London, but today, it is the accepted dialect of the national elite. In the 20th century, BBC required all announcers and reporters to speak with an RP accent, that's why it is also called 'BBC English.'

Upper class people tend to speak a version of RP from birth, but most British people can hear the subtle difference between an 'acquired' RP accent and an upper-class accent, called 'marked RP.' The accent learned at public school or at Oxford university is also recognizable. Many people consider these versions of RP artificial and affected.

The great majority of British population (c. 95%) does not speak RP as a native accent. Traditionally, Labour Party politicians were among the few people who deliberately did not learn RP and spoke in public with their original accent to sound more familiar and attractive to their working-class voters. Scottish, Welsh and Irish people are usually also conscious to preserve their accent in order to indicate their national identity. In the past twenty years, even BBC began to employ people who speak with a tinge of a regional accent. The strongest accents are normally heard on TV during sports programs, especially from football commentators, who typically have a working-class background and are rarely educated beyond secondary school. In the North, each large city has its own distinctive accent, although some are embarrassed about it, because they have working-class associations. Non-white minorities, for example Caribbean blacks or people from India, also have their own characteristic accents when speaking English.

All in all, in Britain the general rule is: 'Open your mouth and I'll tell who you are!' The great majority of the population, including ordinary and uneducated people, has a remarkable talent to spot the distinctive characteristics of other people's accent, which usually reveal both their regional origin and their class or their level of education. Foreigners have practically no chance to 'blend into' a company of British people; no matter how hard they try to polish their pronunciation, even a slightest accent reveals their identity to a native speaker immediately.

4. IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

Brief History of Immigration to Britain in 3 Steps

Step 1: Immigration before 1945

In the 18th and 19th centuries many **Irish** labourers immigrated into Britain to build the canals and the railways, and later to work in the ports and the factories. They were often targets of social discrimination due to their Catholicism and poverty, but they integrated into British society relatively easily since they were British subjects and they all spoke English. Citizens of the Irish Republic still enjoy a special privilege in Britain: they are not treated as foreigners by the authorities. They have the right to settle down and find a job, they can even vote at Parliamentary elections without being British citizens. As a result of this generous policy, probably as much as a million people living in Britain have Irish origin.

Indian immigrants arrived in England from the late 17th century, mostly seamen serving on the ships of the East India Company. By the late 19th century, an estimated 70,000 people of Indian origin lived in Britain, mostly seamen and household servants, but also wealthy businessmen, students, soldiers and diplomats. In the late 19th century, **Jews** fleeing persecution in the Russian Empire began to arrive in large numbers in Britain. Although the majority moved on to the United States and other countries, at least 100,000 of them settled in the country, forming distinct communities in North London.

Before and during World War II, significant numbers of German and European Jews fled to Britain from Nazi persecution, many of them becoming famous scientists, scholars, artists or public personalities. Some of them were of Hungarian origins, such as the conductor Sir George Solti (Solti

György), the humorous writer George Mikes (Mikes György), or the economist Nicholas Kaldor (Káldor Miklós). The social integration of Jewish immigrants has been very successful. Anti-Semitic attitudes or remarks are extremely rare in Britain today, and such voices are unanimously rejected by the entire political and social elite (more about Jews in chapter XI). Emigrants from other occupied countries (Poles, Czechs, French people etc.) also found shelter in Britain during the war, and some of these refugees chose to stay in the country after the war.

Step 2: Immigration from the Commonwealth after 1945

The majority of the ethnic minority communities living today in Britain immigrated to the country from outside Europe. As the British Empire began to break up after the war (especially after 1947 when British India became independent and immediately broke up into the Republic of India and Pakistan), Parliament passed a law in 1948 in which they allowed all citizens of the British Empire to settle down and work in the United Kingdom without a visa. Therefore, most of the post-war immigrants up to the 1990s came from countries of the British Commonwealth.

The earliest immigrants were black immigrants from the **West Indies** or the **Caribbean islands**,[136] mostly from Jamaica or Trinidad, who were invited by government agencies to fill vacant manual and lower-paid jobs in the post-war British economy. The majority of them settled in London and Southern England. They were followed by immigrants from the **Indian subcontinent**[137] during the 1950s and 1960s, who are usually called 'Asian' or '**British Asian**' by white British people. Many of the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants found jobs in textile factories or in other industries, but they also opened corner shops or Indian restaurants. By the early 1960s, more than a 100,000 immigrants arrived each year, and the majority of British society became alarmed that the immigration of coloured people from the former Empire would grow even more intensive. Therefore the Immigration Acts of 1968 and 1971 introduced restrictions. All Commonwealth citizens were classified as aliens, and only those were allowed to immigrate who had a work permit or if they or one of their parents or grandparents were born in Britain. These measures reduced Commonwealth immigration but did not stop it: at least 50,000 people each year continued to arrive until the late 1990s.

Step 3: Immigration after 2000

Immigration continues to be a sensitive political issue in Britain, even though the number of such people arriving in Britain is far smaller than in other European nations such as France or Germany. In the early 2000s, the conservative side of the public demanded measures to limit the arrival of **asylum-seekers**,[138] many of whom were suspected to wish to enter Britain for economic reasons (looking for a better life) rather than because they were persecuted or discriminated in their home country.

After 2004, when several Eastern European countries joined the European Union, the patterns of immigration changed: since Britain did not impose limits to the free movement of labour force from the new members of the EU, tens of thousands of European immigrants began to arrive from Eastern Europe, primarily from **Poland**, to find jobs in Britain. This flow of Eastern European immigrants was reduced slightly after 2008, when the worldwide economic crisis reduced the number of available jobs in Britain, but began to grow again after 2010, since the depressed labour markets forced a lot of Southern and Eastern European people (including many Hungarians) to look for better-paid jobs in Northwestern Europe, and Britain continues to be a favourite target country. Between 2004 and 2012, at least 1.5 million people came to Britain from other EU countries, but about half of them returned to

---

[136] *West Indies*: a historical name for the Caribbean islands lying off the coast of Central America; the most important British possessions in the Caribbean region were Jamaica and Trinidad. The name derives from Columbus's mistaken belief: he thought to have reached the Western shores of India when landing in Central America.

[137] *Indian subcontinent*: A collective name for those independent countries – India, Pakistan and Bangladesh – that were created after the British colony of India ceased to exist in 1947. The term is used to distinguish the geographical area from the Republic of India, which is considerably smaller.

[138] *asylum-seeker* (pronounced /əˈsaɪləm ˈsiːkə(r)/): Refugees from a foreign country who claim refugee status (also called asylum) due to war, persecution or other disadvantages in their homeland. Their claim has to be investigated by authorities, but they can be refused if they cannot prove that they are actually political refugees.

their home country after a certain period. Still, the growing trend worries many people in Britain, who complain that Eastern Europeans take away jobs from native citizens and drive wages down.

Until 1981, anyone who was born in Britain had an automatic right to British citizenship, and this loophole was often utilized by illegal immigrants to get citizenship for their children. Since then, only those children can claim British citizenship who were born in Britain and whose father or mother is a British subject. Naturalisation (the conferring of British citizenship) of other people is up to the Home Secretary.

Non-white minorities

Non-white minorities constitute about 13% of the total population, and their proportion is likely to rise further in the first half of the 21st century due to their higher birth rate and continuing immigration. Today, there are altogether more than 8 million non-white people in Britain. More than half of them are **Asians**, predominantly from the **Indian subcontinent**, and another 25% are **blacks**, half of whom came from the **Caribbean region**, and half from the former African colonies of Britain. The third largest group is the **Chinese**, mostly from **Hong Kong**, which was a British colony until 1997. Until 2011 they were classified as a distinct group but recently – and correctly, as far as geography is concerned – they have been included in the 'British Asian' category, but in everyday language people usually mean "Indian-looking people" under that term. A significant group, more than a million people identified themselves at the Census as 'mixed,' which means that they have partly white and party non-white ancestry.

It is a mistake to look at these groups as 'immigrants' or 'aliens'. More than half of them were already born in Britain, and at the 2001 Census, more than 75% described their ethnic identity as 'British' or 'English' (the majority preferred to describe themselves as 'British'). The vast majority lives in London and the big cities of the Midlands and the North. The majority of Muslims and Hindus at first arrived in Britain with English as their second language; **Afro-Caribbeans** spoke English (or more exactly, their special dialect) as their mother tongue.

The term 'Asian' hides a great religious and cultural diversity, since Asians can be divided into at least three large groups on the basis of their religion. The largest group is the Muslims, mostly coming from Pakistan and Bangladesh, followed by Hindus and Sikhs from India (although some of the Indian immigrants were also Muslim; for details on religious groups, see chapter XI). Different groups came in different periods and settled at different places. Many Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants moved to the industrial cities and towns of the West Yorkshire area (Leeds, Bradford and surrounding towns) to work in the local textile factories. Others moved to the West Midlands, especially Birmingham and Leicester, and worked in heavy industry. Many professional Hindus were recruited to work as doctors in English hospitals. A large Asian community settled in London to work for public services.

Culturally, Asians are typically associated with two things in Britain: the **Indian restaurant** and the **corner shop**. Indian restaurants (many of which are actually run by Pakistani or Bangladeshi people) can be found in practically every British town or city and they improved the bland British cuisine tremendously. No wonder that a former government minister declared chicken tikka masala (a popular British Indian dish) to be more popular than the traditional English fish and chips. Asians have taken over many of the small shops in cities, which were driven out of business by large supermarkets. Each shop is run by a family and they keep it open late in at night and on Sundays, this way offering a very useful opportunity for shopping when most other shops are closed.

Although the majority of Asians came very poor, by now many have found their way into the British middle class. Hindus excel in education, having better grades in secondary school examinations than native British children. Many of them become professionals: doctors, lawyers, even university professors. Successful Asian businessmen are also quite common. Pakistanis are traditionally excellent cricket players, and some of the immigrant children now play for England. Some Asians became famous in Britain, e.g. the writer Salman Rushdie (see chapter XI), or the actor Ben Kingsley (born Krishna Pandit Bhanji), who won an Academy Award for his title role in the movie *Gandhi* (1982).

Immigrants from the Caribbean typically found jobs in public transport and manual trades. The majority of them settled in London, especially in the western and southern part of the city. Most of them had little or no education or qualifications therefore they could get only low-paid jobs and cheap housing, usually in some decaying inner-city area which had been abandoned by whites. They were also strongly affected by economic recessions. In some respects the people from the Caribbean have had experiences similar to those of American blacks who have moved to northern cities of the United States. They also experienced unofficial segregation and high unemployment for unqualified young black people.

In British culture, Caribbean immigrants are associated with **sports** and **music**. Many Caribbean blacks had a great career in athletics (e.g. Linford Christie in 1992 won Olympic Gold Medal at the 100 meter sprint or Kelly Holmes in 2004 won both the 800 and the 1500 meter races), football, or boxing (Lennox Lewis was world heavyweight champion). The Caribbean influence on modern British pop music and popular dance has been very strong at least since the 1970s when reggae and ska came into fashion. There are a number of successful black pop musicians and performers. The annual Notting Hill Carnival, held in west London in August by Caribbeans since the 1960s, is now a major event in the city.

The integration of non-white immigrants was far from smooth. They arrived in an almost exclusively white society which had seen hardly any non-white faces before. White British attached the label 'black' to all non-whites (including Asians), and treated them with suspicion and distrust. In the 1960s Parliament passed the first Race Relations Acts in order to eliminate racial discrimination. The 1976 Race Relations Act forbade discrimination in employment, housing, education and other areas, and banned the publication of any material inciting racial hatred. The law set up an official Commission for Racial Equality to investigate charges of illegal discrimination.

The situation of racial minorities has been the subject of heated political debates ever since. Depending on their political stand and point of view, some people claim that the root of the problems is the racism and widespread discrimination by the majority white society, while others blame the ethnic minority communities for their unwillingness to integrate. Ethnic tensions first came to the surface in the early 1980s, when black race riots broke out in South London and some other poor inner city slums, while right-wing skinheads regularly clashed with Pakistani youths. Extreme right-wing and explicitly racist political organizations were founded, such as the **National Front** and the **British National Party**. The ethnic minority communities, especially blacks, complained about the racist attitudes of the authorities, primarily the police. After a long period of relative calm, violent riots broke out in several northern textile towns, including Bradford, in 2001; this time Muslim youths raided shops, burned down houses and clashed with the police, sending a strong message that the integration of ethnic minorities, especially in impoverished industrial cities where their former job opportunities disappeared, is far from being solved.

The roots of the problem appear to be social and cultural. Difficulties for ethnic minority children become obvious when they go to school, since many live in deprived inner city areas

where the quality of the schools is worse than elsewhere and where teachers may have lower expectations. Their families often do not encourage and support them to work hard at school, and they end up without qualifications or marketable skills. A special problem of Muslims is the closed culture of many Muslim communities which try to isolate themselves from the majority culture as much as possible. Afro-Caribbeans have the most difficulties at school, followed by Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Unemployment among Afro-Caribbeans, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis is often twice or three times as high as among whites. Interestingly, however, Indians and Chinese have no problems with integration and they often do better in formal education than many white children.

Ethnic minorities traditionally supported the Labour Party, which was more sympathetic to the problems of the ethnic minority communities than the Conservatives. But an increasing number of successful Asians have begun to vote Conservative. A few enter Parliament; others enter local government where they have stronger representation. According to a 2013 report, there are 27 MPs of minority origin in the House of Commons.

5. THE BRITISH WELFARE STATE

Britain was the first nation to lay the foundations of the modern **welfare state**. In the immediate post-war years the Labour government recognised that it should ensure that nobody lacks the basic necessities of life as a result of poverty, unemployment, old age or sickness. The author of the original plan, Lord Beveridge, wanted to provide existential security "from the cradle to the grave." In order to fulfil this responsibility the state created the health and welfare services which have become the core of the welfare state.

The operations of the welfare state are in three main areas:

1. **National Health Service**: provides free or nearly free medical care for everyone. It is financed partly by weekly contributions paid by people who are working, but mainly by the state budget out of general taxation.

2. **National Insurance**: pays old age pensions and social benefits for people who lost their job or unable to work due to sickness. All working people contribute a weekly amount to the National Insurance Fund, which receives supplementary contributions from the state budget out of the revenue from taxation.

3. **Social benefits**: supplementary benefits for people whose incomes are below the poverty level, for families with children, for single mothers, etc.

The system of all these assistance schemes for the old, unemployed or poor is generally called '**social security**.'

The National Health Service

The **National Health Service (NHS)** was established in 1948 to provide free medical treatment by family doctors and in hospitals. The guiding idea was that all citizens should have access to proper medical care and treatment regardless of their wealth and social position. To achieve this, the Labour government nationalised British hospitals, and the great majority of British doctors became employees of the NHS.

The basis of the system is the nationwide network of <u>family doctors</u>, known as **general practitioners (GPs)**. These family doctors work alone or in partnerships in larger urban medical centres. People may register with any GP they choose. GPs keep full records of all treatments and <u>drugs</u> administered to the <u>patient</u>, become familiar with their housing, lifestyle and employment conditions. Each GP is paid a fixed amount after each registered patient. People who are ill go first to see their GPs who treat minor illnesses themselves; when necessary, GPs go to see patients in their homes. Except in the case of an <u>emergency</u>, it is normally the GP who <u>refers a patient to hospital</u> for more specialised care or for an operation. People do not go directly to hospital unless they are victims of accidents or their condition requires urgent treatment. The whole system is remarkably similar to the Hungarian '*háziorvos*' network, with the significant difference that offering tips to a doctor is completely unknown in Britain; they are simply considered to be doing their job.

The entire system is free for patients, with the exception of <u>prescriptions</u> (there is a fixed prescription charge) and the prescribed drugs, <u>dental treatment</u> and glasses; but old age pensioners and children under 16 do not have to pay even for these. Anyone entering hospital for <u>surgery</u> receives all treatment while in hospital, including drugs, free of charge. Hospital doctors and nurses are NHS employees. Over 80% of the costs of the NHS are funded out of the income tax system, since the National Insurance contributions are far from being enough to cover the cost.

When the National Health Service was established many people – especially doctors – argued that the nation's finances could not afford the cost. The cost was indeed high enough to start with, but it has been rising faster than inflation, mostly because new and more expensive treatments and diagnostic methods have been invented. Another important factor increasing the costs of the NHS is the ageing population, since the growing number of old people have more health problems. Another recurring complaint against the NHS is the large and slow bureaucracy, especially the infamous <u>waiting lists</u>. People suffering from illnesses that do not threaten their life have to wait up to six months for a routine operation.

As the NHS is Europe's largest employer, with more than 1.3 million staff, and operates with a £100 billion budget, any reform effort has to start carefully and slowly. The Blair government, as part of the devolution of Scotland and Wales, separated NHS Scotland and NHS Wales, which came under the supervision of the new devolved legislatures. Various complicated reforms were introduced to improve <u>cost efficiency</u>. Although the NHS is often criticized, British people also feel a sense of pride about the fact that their health care system is one of the most democratic in the world. Recently, there has been a shortage of qualified doctors in NHS-run hospitals, and the British government began to recruit doctors from various EU countries, including Hungary. The relatively modest salary of an NHS-employed doctor is a huge attraction when compared to the typical payment of a Hungarian hospital doctor.

People are not obliged to use the National Health Service, and there have always been private doctors and hospitals, treating people who had a private health insurance. About one-tenth of the population now pays for their own insurance and uses private specialists and private hospitals.

Social Security

Since 1946, every person who is working has to make a National Insurance contribution every week. Some of the contribution is paid by the employee, and some of it by the employer,

similarly to Hungary. The deficit of the fund (contributions do not cover the costs) is paid out of general taxation.

The largest expense of the social security system is the **retirement pension**, or '**old age pension**' as it is popularly called. Anybody is entitled to it from the age of 65 (provided he has made his weekly contributions to the fund), but the age limit is gradually increasing as the population is getting older: a person who is currently 50 years old may not retire before the age of 67. The normal rate of pension is regularly increased with inflation, but is rather low in comparison with some other Western European countries (currently it is maximized at around £450 a month). Many people use some private method of saving some extra money for their old age. Some people have life insurance policies. Most companies and trade unions have pension funds, from which the employee receives an additional pension after retirement.

People who become unemployed, or are unable to work because of sickness, also receive payments from the National Insurance Fund. The amount of time for which a person is entitled to **unemployment benefit** or **sickness benefit** (up to about twelve months) also depends on contributions into the insurance fund.

The third group entitled to help from social security is people with a "proved need" (such as difficult social conditions, physical or mental disability, etc.). Their need is examined by local offices of the Department of Social Security. These benefits are given without conditions like contribution to the insurance fund. A weekly allowance is paid after every child, regardless of the parents' income. There are also special allowances for single parents. Children living below the poverty level are entitled to school meals at reduced prices or free of charge.

By the end of the 1980s social security cost twice as much as the NHS. This was because of the increase in unemployed and elderly people, and the substantial increase in those considered poor. The Conservative government tried to reform the social security system, primarily with the purpose of reducing expenditure. The Social Security Act of 1986, which came into force in 1988, sought to reduce the burden on government, and to target assistance more effectively. It encouraged people to move away from the state pension scheme into private pension schemes. This was because, with the progressive increase in the proportion of elderly people, the government feared that the state would be unable to fulfil its obligations. The Act also tried to slim down its system of help to particular categories of people: the purpose of the legislation was to end forever the old idea that some people could be better off without a job than they would be going to work.

Although the Labour Party has traditionally attached more importance to the provision of effective social security, the new Labour government has found reforming the system as difficult as the Conservatives found it. It is extremely problematic to create a simple but fair system which effectively helps people become self-reliant and economically independent.

Key concepts

Asian / British Asian

asylum-seeker

Bangladeshi

birth rate / death rate

blue-collar worker

British National Party / BNP

cohabitation

Indian

the Indian subcontinent

middle class

National Front

Pakistani

professionals

received pronunciation / RP

upper class

West Indies / Caribbean Islands

West Indian / Caribbean / Afro-Caribbean

white-collar worker

working class

yuppie

general practitioner / GP

National Insurance

National Health Service / NHS

social security

welfare state

X. EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

Think of Hungary First!

At what age can pupils enter primary and secondary school in Hungary?

What are the main types of secondary schools?

How important is the role of private education in Hungary?

How can students enter university? What are the costs of university education in Hungary and what assistance can students receive?

Is the educational system becoming more democratic or more elitist in Hungary?

Information Store

The English state education system in chart form:

School Year	Age	Types of Schools		
Reception	5	Infant School 5-7	Primary Schools 5-11	
Year 1	5-6			
Year 2	6-7			
Year 3	7-8	Junior Schools 7-11		
Year 4	8-9			
Year 5	9-10			
Year 6	10-11			
Year 7	11-12	Grammar Schools or Comprehensive Schools	Secondary Schools	
Year 8	12-13			
Year 9	13-14			
Year 10	14-15			
Year 11	15-16			

School Census figures about state-maintained schools in England in 2013:

Total number of English school pupils: 8.2 million

Number of pupils in state-maintained schools: 7.5 million

Number of pupils in independent schools: 580,000

Proportion of pupils eligible for free meals at school (indicator of disadvantaged social background): 18%

Proportion of pupils of ethnic minority origin in state-funded schools: 28% in primary schools, 24% in secondary schools

Proportion of pupils whose first language is other than English in state-funded schools: 18% in primary schools, 14% in secondary schools

Occupation of full-time first-degree higher education graduates in England after graduation in 2012/13:

58% were working full-time

13% were working part-time

  7% combined work and studying

12% were involved in further studies

  6% were unemployed

  4% travelled or did something else

Average annual salary of fresh graduates: £20,000

Test Your Knowledge!

Can you name a famous school or university from England? What is this place famous for? What comes to your mind about English schools or universities?

Use the Internet!

The official home page of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (created in 2007): http://www.dfes.gov.uk/

The official home page of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (created in 2007): http://www.dius.gov.uk/

Information about a typical English primary school: http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/ourschool/

The official home page of UCAS, the organization responsible for handling and processing all higher education applications in the UK: http://www.ucas.com/

Information about student finances in Britain:
http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/index.htm

1. ENGLISH (NOT BRITISH) EDUCATION

Similarly to the legal system, there is no uniform educational system in the UK either: Scotland and Northern Ireland preserved their autonomy in education and their traditions differ in various ways from the system in England and Wales. This chapter focuses on the English system because of its dominant role within the UK. For a brief description of the Scottish educational system, see chapter III.

Brief History of English General Education in 4 Steps

Step 1: Before 1870

Until the late 19th century, education in England was characterized by a huge contrast. On the one hand, the country had a number of famous and prestigious schools, some of them centuries old, which provided very high quality education to their pupils – in return for a high <u>tuition fee</u>. On the other hand, there was no <u>system of general education</u> in the sense that the majority of the population had no access to schools, and if they learnt to read and write at all, they were often taught by their parents or themselves. Most schools were <u>maintained</u> by churches, but the Church of England did not consider it a main priority to educate the common people, therefore the English school system lagged behind the Scottish concerning the quality and availability of general education.

The state had practically no role in education until the late 19th century. Individual kings and queens founded various schools, especially <u>secondary schools</u>, but these institutions were maintained from <u>grants</u> and tuition fees, or by some other institution, like the church.

Step 2: Between 1870 and 1945

In 1870, the first Education Act was passed by Parliament. This Act set up <u>school boards</u> all over the country, which were responsible for providing <u>elementary education</u> for children between 5 and 10. This became the basis for a <u>compulsory</u> and free general education system, maintained primarily not by the central government but by <u>local governments</u>, who had full freedom to determine the content of the education (the so-called **curriculum**) as well. But the gap between the wealthy and the poor still remained, since poor children had no access to fee-paying secondary education after they finished their free <u>primary school</u>. The state tried to provide <u>scholarships</u> for poor children and established some <u>state-financed</u> secondary schools, but the large-scale expansion of state secondary school system started only after World War II.

On the other hand, fee-paying secondary schools experienced a great development during the second half of the 19th and the early 20th century. Several famous school reformers laid down the principles and practices of **public schools** (see 'Independent schools' section below), which not only gained a great <u>reputation</u> all over the country but became a symbol of England internationally as well. Middle-class families sent their children to these fee-paying **boarding schools**, where the teaching of moral and patriotic values were as important as the quality of education. As a result, a comparatively small but high-quality private sector emerged which produced the majority of the British political and social elite.

Step 3: Between 1945 and 1965

After 1945, Labour governments were dedicated to reduce the disadvantages in the English education system and to provide better opportunities for working-class children. They raised the <u>school-leaving age</u> gradually to 16, and divided the compulsory education into two stages, primary and secondary, dividing them at age 11. Many former church schools became partly or entirely state-financed, while the local authorities received more additional state money to improve their schools. Two kinds of state secondary schools, the <u>grammar schools</u> and the <u>secondary modern schools</u>, were established: the former prepared pupils for higer education, while the latter trained them for a <u>skilled job</u>. In the last year of their primary school studies, children were required to take the

so-called **11+ examination**.[139] Those who did well at the exam entered grammar schools (about 25% of all state school pupils), while those who failed went to secondary modern schools, where they received mostly vocational education. The idea was that every child should find the most suitable school depending on their abilities rather than the financial background of their parents. This division was highly similar to the Hungarian distinction between '*gimnázium*' on the one hand, and '*szakközépiskola/szakiskola*' on the other, except that in Hungary before 1990, children and their parents could choose between schools rather than forced into one or another on the basis of some exam.

Step 4: Between 1965 and the 1990s

By the 1960s, the system proved unsuccessful in the sense that it did not effectively eliminate social differences in education. Experience had shown that children coming from middle-class families were typically successful at the 11+ and went on to grammar schools, while the majority of working-class pupils failed the exam and ended up in secondary modern schools, without a realistic chance to get into higher education. About 70% of all schoolchildren were educated in secondary modern schools, with poor results. Many critics attacked the 11+ exam, arguing that children's intellectual abilities cannot be reliably measured at such an early age (some children develop later); it is rather the advantaged or disadvantaged family background that is reflected in the results. Other critics pointed out that the streaming (grouping by talent and abilities) of pupils at a very early age deprives less talented pupils of the opportunity to be motivated and inspired by their brighter class mates.

Therefore, the new Labour government in 1964 introduced a new type of secondary school, the **comprehensive school** (see 'State schools' section below). Since the reorganization of earlier grammar schools and secondary modern schools into comprehensives was optional for local education authorities, the reform was slow and gradual, but by the 1980s about 90% of secondary school pupils attended comprehensives, so this type became the dominant form of state secondary school. The secondary modern schools have almost entirely disappeared, because they did not have a good reputation, and were turned into comprehensives. Many grammar schools, on the other hand, refused to 'go comprehensive,' and 'opted out' of the state sector, becoming independent day schools.

2. STATE SCHOOLS AND FINAL EXAMS

For a long time, schooling was compulsory for eleven years in England, for all children between age 5 and 16, but in 2013, the school-leaving age was increased to 17, and from 2015, to 18 years. The compulsory period is divided into a **primary** and **secondary** stage. The primary cycle lasts from age 5 to 11, and takes 6 years to complete. Children enter **infant school** first and spend two years there. It is slightly similar to the last years of a Hungarian '*óvoda*' in the sense that there is little formal education: children are getting used to the community and the school environment. English children start school so early primarily because there is no nationwide system of **nursery schools** in England. In 1990, only about 60% of children attended nursery school at the age of 4, which was the worst figure in the EU. As a result, many mothers cannot return to work until their child enters school.

Formal education starts at the age of 7 in **junior schools** (but in some areas infant schools and junior schools have been combined into a uniform primary school), and goes on for four years until the age of 11. English primary schools are nowadays characterized by less emphasis on frontal teaching (teacher talking to the classroom) and give more opportunity for group activities, when children sit around tables and the teacher supervises their work. The underlying idea is that in this early age, children's skills should be developed rather than their amount of knowledge.

---

[139] *11+ examination*: An assessment test administered to English pupils in state primary schools between 1944 and 1964. It consisted of a maths test, an essay on a common topic and a test on general reasoning. Results at the test in practice functioned as an entrance exam to the more academic grammar schools, since pupils who scored poorly were typically rejected by grammar schools. Although it was abolished nationwide, but some counties, such as Lincolnshire and Kent, have preserved it as an entrance exam to the county's state grammar schools.

Almost all pupils switch schools around age 11, and continue their studies in a **secondary school** for five years. If they choose a state secondary school, it is typically a **comprehensive school**, introduced by the Labour government in the 1960s. The main idea of comprehensive schools was to educate children of all abilities without selection, because it was recognised that the division of pupils into two types of schools at an early age deprived the majority of the chance to join higher education. Comprehensive schools are co-educational or mixed, teaching girls and boys together in the same classes. Today more than 90% of all children receive their secondary education in comprehensives, although the name has become a synomym of "low quality" and therefore from the early 1990s both Conservative and Labour governments began various school reforms to improve the comprehensive system (see next subchapter below).

Compulsory secondary schools traditionally ended at the age of 16, and practically all school-leaving pupils take the **General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)**. This was designed in the late 1980s to give a chance to children of all interests and abilities to pass in at least some subjects corresponding with their talents. Children usually take as many as 6 to 8 subjects; the most common ones are English, Mathematics, and Science, but many other options are available, such as History, a foreign language, Geography, Economics, separate Science subjects like Chemistry, Biology, or Physics, ICT,[140] Music, Art and Design, Citizenship studies, Home Economics,[141] and several others. Students are evaluated on a 7-grade scale, on which A is the best grade and G is the pass grade; failure is marked with a U (unclassified). These examinations are not very difficult and few pupils fail, but if they want to continue their studies, they need at least a C in most subjects. GCSE is comparable to Hungarian '*középszintű érettségi*' in the number of subjects students take and the general difficulty of the exam itself. An important difference between GCSE and '*érettségi*' is, however, that GCSE certificates are partly awarded on the basis of examinations, and partly on previous class work and homework (worth at least 25% of the final grade). This assessment is meant to provide a more balanced result (not based on one single performance of the student), but, according to critics, gives more opportunity for cheating (especially when homework is evaluated).

GCSE, however, does not qualify pupils to enter higher education. Therefore, students with university ambitions stay in school for two more years, and this final stage of their studies is called the '**sixth form**.'[142] During sixth form, pupils specialise in three or four subjects, and after two years of preparation take the **GCE Advanced Level**, or '**A-level**' examination. A-level exams are somewhat similar to the new type of Hungarian '*emelt szintű érettségi*' (and probably served as a model for the Hungarian system), except that they include two years of specialized preparation during which students are not required to study anything else except their chosen subjects. A-level exam tests in humanities do not have short question-and-answer sections as in Hungary. In humanities subjects like literature or history, A-level students have to write several longer essays by hand on various specific topics. In 2005, the most popular A-level subjects were English, General Studies,[143] Biology, Mathematics, and Psychology, but

---

[140] *ICT*: Abbreviation of 'Information and Communication Technology', in other words, computer skills.

[141] *Home Economics*: This curious subject was invented for pupils with little intellectual ambition, originally in the USA. It is meant to teach practical skills related to the household, such as nutrition and health (how to eat healthily), child development, cooking, interior decoration, sewing, family economics (how to manage family finances) and the like. It is still predominantly taken by girls who do not plan to go to university.

[142] *sixth form*: The origin of the term goes back to earlier English school terminology, when pupils of each year were called a 'form', and secondary school years were numbered from 'first form' to 'fifth form,' matching ages 11 to 16. The final 'sixth form' was optional for pupils older than 16, but this is changing with the increase of the school-leaving age to 18.

[143] *General Studies*: Another curious subject, only available as an A-level course. It was developed originally as a substitute humanities course for science-oriented students for whom traditional subjects were too difficult. The course focuses on the

foreign languages, other science subjects, Computing, Sociology, Media Studies and Business Studies were also common.

Another curiosity of the A-levels is that the tests are prepared and evaluated by five independent examination boards which are authorized by the Department of Education but not controlled by it, so it is not the 'Ministry' that prepares exam tests. The candidates remain anonymous throughout the evaluation process – not even their names appear on the papers. A-levels are evaluated on a 5-grade scale from A to E, with U as the mark of failure (earlier it used to be F).

A-levels serve as the entrance exam for universities. Most universities require at least a C in all three subjects, but usually expect a better grade in the subject that is most related to the student's chosen university subject. The best universities only accept students with straight A grades. Since the average A-level results have shown a continuous rise in the last 20 years, there are more and more complaints that A-levels are no longer suitable for selecting the best students, and a new best grade (like A* or 'A-star') should be introduced to distinguish the best of the best. Others criticize the exam itself for 'grade inflation' (evaluators are more willing to give better marks than earlier) and too predictable questions and tasks, which make it easier for students to prepare for them. The most prestigious universities, like Oxford and Cambridge, have their own oral interviews to select from a host of straight-A students who would like to study there.

Church primary and secondary schools are also considered part of the state sector, since they are largely financed by the state as well. The religious bodies provide only a very small part of the costs, and in return determine the content of religious teaching, and influence the appointment of heads and some other teachers.

The academic year usually begins in September, and is divided into three **terms**, separated from each other by the Christmas and Easter holidays (about two or three weeks) and four or five weeks in late summer, although the exact dates vary from area to area. Furthermore, in the middle of each term there is normally a one-week holiday, known as 'half term.'

Day schools work Mondays to Fridays, from about 9 a.m. to between 3 and 4 p.m. Lunch is provided and parents pay most of the cost unless their income is low enough to entitle them to free children's meals.

School Reforms and Their Impact

Nowadays, discussion of education in Britain tends to be dominated by two problems: the quality and effectiveness of education on the one hand, and its effects on inequality and privilege in society on the other. Out of the two major parties, the Conservatives are typically more concerned with the quality of schools, whereas Labour tends to put more emphasis on reduction of social inequality through education.

In England, comprehensive schools have been the subject of intensive debates ever since they were introduced by a Labour government in 1965. By now, even most Labour politicians admit that comprehensive schools mostly failed to produce the expected results. They continued the tradition of earlier secondary modern schools where pupils obtained sufficient

development of critical thinking through discussion and essays about current issues, such as international politics, the environment, social problems, and the like.

education for <u>manual</u>, <u>skilled</u> and <u>clerical</u> <u>employment</u>, but the <u>academic</u>[144] <u>expectations</u> were modest. Traditional <u>single-sex</u> **grammar schools** which prepared pupils for university or some other form of higher education often chose to leave the state system, and became **independent schools** (see below) or <u>foundation schools</u>, which meant that they still received state money but were no longer supervised by local education authorities. This way, they could avoid turning themselves into comprehensives. All in all, the comprehensive school system did not achieve its main purpose, namely, to provide good education for the majority of children from all <u>social backgrounds</u>. The comprehensive reform unintentionally reinforced an educational elite which only the children of wealthier parents could hope to join.

In 1988 the Conservative government, worried by the poor performance of many pupils, introduced another reform to improve academic quality through greater central government control. The main tool for this purpose was the introduction of a **National Curriculum**, which made English, Mathematics, Science and a modern foreign language compulsory up to the age of sixteen. Until then, <u>local authorities</u> had almost complete freedom in deciding what subjects to teach children and how long. The National Curriculum also introduced <u>assessment tests</u> at ages 7, 11, 14 and 16, to survey children's <u>knowledge</u> and <u>skills</u>. The last of these is the school-leaving exam, which was renamed GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education). The government also began to publish school performance statistics in order to inform parents about the quality of the schools. The underlying idea was that parents should have enough information to choose the best schools for their children, and schools attracting more pupils received more money.

The New Labour government that came into power in 1997 considered education one of its main priorities. Their major <u>initiative</u> was the encouragement of **specialist schools**, which means that secondary schools (mostly comprehensives) work out a program to specialize in a certain broad subject (Art, Humanities, Science, Business, Technology, Music etc.), setting specific targets for themselves to be achieved. They are also expected to raise a certain amount of money from <u>private sponsors</u> (<u>business firms</u>, <u>charitable foundations</u> etc.). In return, they receive additional <u>funding</u> from the government for new teachers and equipment. Specialist schools seem to be successful, their pupils <u>score</u> about 10% better at GCSE exams than non-specialist schools. There were over 3000 specialist schools in England by 2010, when the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government decided to end the program. The experiment was criticized by the left wing of the Labour party as well because they saw it as the reproduction of the two-tier system again, with better-financed and underfunded schools.

The most recent reform idea is that of **academies**, which were initiated by the Labour government in 2000, but received a lot of support from the current Conservative-LibDem government, and as a result, their number has greatly expanded. Academies are similar to specialist schools in the sense that they are maintained by the state and their curriculum has a stronger focus on one or more areas, and they may also receive additional money from private sponsors (rich people, companies, universities, etc.). It is chiefly their organization and management that distinguishes them from standard state secondary schools: they are established as a trust, with a board of trustees to oversee the management of the school, and the trust belongs directly under the Department for Education, not under the local

---

[144] academic /ækəˈdɛmɪk/: As an adjective, in English it is used as a synonym of 'educational, school-related', e.g. 'academic year', or it refers to a person or institution that is oriented toward traditional scientific and scholarly subjects: 'academic school', 'academic child'. Since Britain has no Academy of Science like Hungary, British people do not associate this word with the highest-ranking scientists and scholars like Hungarians (who should be called 'academicians' in English).

government, which usually means better funding opportunities. By 2014, over 3000 schools turned themselves into academies, many of them former specialist schools.

The continuous reform efforts in state-funded general education are usually reactions to independent examinations of educational attainment, which show that Britain is lagging behind most other Western European nations in several respects.

3. INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

The term '**independent school**' was invented in England after the establishment of the state secondary school system in 1944 to distinguish fee-paying schools that are independent from local or central government support from state schools financed by taxpayer money. Independent schools all maintain themselves without the support of the state, from tuition fees, grants from rich individuals, as well as from income derived from the school's property. 'Private school' could have been a more obvious term, as such schools are normally called private schools elsewhere (e.g. in the USA or in Hungary), but in England it would have created a lot of confusion due to the strange meaning of the old term 'public school.' As usual, the reasons are rooted in English history.

The history of private education goes back to the Middle Ages. The earliest schools were boys' schools maintained by the Church and their primary aim was to educate them to become priests. Still today, many independent schools are near cathedrals and churches in England, even though they are often no longer connected to the Church of England. From the 15th century onwards, several new schools were founded by rich individuals or by monarchs to offer a more versatile and humanistic education. Some of these were called **public schools** to emphasise that they were open to the public and available to boys from any part of England, as opposed to small, local, private schools reserved for certain individuals. The term was never very clearly defined. Still today, there is some confusion around it, because different people call different schools 'public schools.' But in England, 'public schools' are always fee-paying schools outside the state sector, so public schools are actually all private schools! This usage is contrary to the modern meaning of 'public' (which is usually understood to mean 'publicly financed,' e.g. public schools in the USA), and a unique expression in English culture.

There are typically two types of independent schools: **boarding schools** and **day schools**. Boarding schools offer board and accommodation besides education, so pupils study and live there as well, visiting their families normally between terms only. English boarding schools were usually established in the countryside or in small villages, far from large cities. From the 19th century, the term 'public school' was used mostly (but not exclusively!) to these fee-paying boarding schools. Day schools do not offer board and accommodation; pupils arrive in the morning and go home in the afternoon. Independent day schools were built within towns and cities and they provided a local educational facility for the children of wealthy burgesses. They were typically called **grammar schools** because Latin grammar was a major subject there, but some independent day schools (especially the oldest and most prestigious ones) are often called 'public schools' as well, which is very confusing for a foreigner. Public boarding schools were typically more expensive than grammar schools since boarding cost far more than education; therefore these public schools were available only to the sons of the wealthy and aristocratic people, the upper and the rich middle classes.

The golden age of the public and grammar schools was the 19th century. Many new schools were founded, together with a whole range of girls' schools, and they developed their own

characteristic educational and value system (see below). In 1868, Parliament passed a Public School Act regulating the activities of nine of the oldest and most famous schools, and these are often cited as the 'classic' public schools. They included Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Winchester, Westminster and Charterhouse, all boarding schools, but also included two day schools. Later on, headmasters of the most respectable fee-paying schools created the Headmasters' Conference (HMC), and another widespread definition identifies the approximately 200 schools belonging to the HMC as public schools.

After the state secondary school system was established in 1944, the term 'grammar school' was also used for those state secondary schools that offered the most high-quality education and prepared pupils for higher education. Many of these grammar schools later became comprehensives, but others remained unchanged. As a result, a grammar school in England may be state-financed or independent as well; the term itself permits both. Since grammar schools are day schools with a strong education oriented towards higher education, they are the closest equivalent to a Hungarian '*gimnázium,*' and indeed, the Hungarian term is usually translated into English that way.

The major boarding schools, or 'public schools' in the narrow sense, are a uniquely and peculiarly English institution, and most of them are situated in the South of England. Children usually enter public schools at the age of 13, and continue their studies till the age of 18, so the school takes six years to complete. Since public school pupils all prepare to continue their studies at a university, they almost never leave school at the age of 16.

Public schools receive their pupils partly from state schools, and partly from small fee-paying **preparatory schools** (commonly called 'prep schools'), which are attended by children aged 7-13. **Prep schools**, many of which are also boarding schools, were specifically created to prepare pupils for a public school, hence their name. Public schools accept pupils on the basis of competitive entrance examinations, which can be tough in the case of the most prestigious schools. Family background is less important than one or two hundred years ago, when the children of aristocrats were automatically admitted; but nonetheless it does matter. Tuition fees vary greatly, but the most famous schools are very expensive: **Eton,** for instance, charged £11,500 per term, that is, £34,500 for a whole year, for the 2014/2015 academic year. Since not all public school students come from rich families, some parents start saving for their child's public school education right after birth. Most schools offer scholarships to some of their pupils, usually talented children coming from a relatively poor family. These children have to pay less or no tuition at all. More than a tenth of all pupils in these schools have scholarships of this kind.

What do public schools offer in return for these sums? First of all, highly qualified teachers (usually called 'masters'), and more personal attention to each pupil's individual needs. Class sizes are small in public schools and individual tutoring is a standard practice. The educational program is more rigorous and demanding than in most state schools. Public schools have full freedom to shape their curriculum any way they want: the National Curriculum does not apply to them, although their pupils also have to pass A-level exams to enter universities. Traditionally, public school curricula emphasized classical languages and culture (Greek and Latin authors were read in the original), but in the late 20th century, schools began to modernize, devoting more time and attention to such subjects as science and computer technology.

The most characteristic and peculiar aspect of public schools, however, is their way of life. Since pupils spend most of the academic year at school, travelling home only between terms (during Christmas, Easter and from late July to September), their character is strongly shaped by the community of the school. The character-building quality of public schools was strongly

emphasized in the 19th century, which contributed to their popularity. Victorian parents expected public schools to turn their sons into perfect gentlemen: religious, moral, loyal to the Queen and the Empire, disciplined, dutiful, and athletic. These were the qualities expected of good doctors, lawyers, army officers, or colonial officials. The actual quality of education was considered far less significant than today. Students were divided into 'houses,' and each house was led by one or more prefects who were older pupils. Before the 1960s, prefects were notorious for maintaining severe discipline, often beating or humiliating younger pupils, which was considered a useful way to teach them discipline and obedience. Another popular method of developing team spirit and endurance was team sports, some of which were practically invented by public schools. **Rugby football** is named after Rugby School, where the rules were developed in the mid-19th century. Cricket and rowing also remain popular sports in public schools.

Although beating and bullying have been outlawed, public schools like to emphasize and maintain other traditions. For example, pupils have to wear traditional uniforms in several schools (although uniforms are required in practically all English schools, state or independent), and more formal dress is required for dinners which are eaten together in large dining halls. Although public schools are typically run by charitable foundations and are not connected to any church, each public school has a chapel (usually Church of England), where services and concerts are regularly held. Pupils are encouraged to explore their interests in art, theatre or music. Discipline is still strong compared to state schools; pupils may be punished by detention within the school or they may be expelled for more serious offences (e.g. drug use or violence). Public school pupils typically acquire a characteristic accent, a special variety of RP (see 'Class' section in chapter VIII), which is recognized by most educated native speakers. In the past, single sex public schools also had a bad reputation for homosexuality, but as schools become more open and many of them admit girls too, this has become far less common.

Until about 1970 nearly all the independent schools were for boys or girls only. However, since then more and more of the former boys' schools have begun to take in girls as well, and the majority has become mixed. Some of the oldest schools (e.g. Eton) are still reserved only for boys. Meanwhile, most girls' schools continue without boys.

In the past twenty years, about 7% of the school population has attended independent fee-paying schools, and this proportion has remained more or less unchanged. Although the popularity of private education is on the rise, partly because of the poor performance of the state sector, but independent schoolsare careful not to open their gates too wide but preserve their exclusive character.

Public schools have a controversial reputation in England. On the one hand, most people recognize their high academic standards; but on the other hand, they also resent them because they maintain a sense of class division and aristocratic elitism in a democratic society. Public school graduates who grow up in a fairly closed and sheltered environment are sometimes mocked for their lack of knowledge of ordinary society. They are also suspected of forming a closely-knit network of 'old boys' who tend to support one another in their later careers. Old Etonians, for example, are typically over-represented in leading political positions. Some of the values of traditional public schools have also been criticized, for example their preference for humanities and arts, and disdain for science and business. This conservatism was certainly characteristic of Victorian public schools, which were deliberately placed in the rural countryside to avoid the 'corrupting influences' of the big city, but nowadays it is probably one of the many outdated stereotypes surviving in the public mind. One thing seems certain:

independent schools will continue to play a significant role in educating and training the future social and political elite of England and Britain.

4. HIGHER EDUCATION

Currently, there are approximately 100 universities in England alone, large and small, the majority of them very young, offering a wide diversity of courses and programs. However, two hundred years ago, in the early 19th century, England had only two universities. This fact alone shows that higher education in England has undergone a tremendous development and expansion, especially during the late 20th century. The reasons were the same as the development of general education. As English society became more democratic and social differences were reduced, more and more people completed secondary schools and demanded a chance to earn a <u>university degree</u>.

In England and in the rest of Britain, the standard higher educational institution is called **university**. Universities were founded by <u>royal charters</u> or by Acts of Parliament and they issue their own degrees. They all receive direct <u>grants</u> from the central government[145] (therefore they are usually called 'public university') but they are not owned by the state; in fact, their institutional independence is closely guarded. Each has a council as its effective governing body (composed of professors, lecturers' and students' representatives and local notables) and a <u>vice-chancellor</u> (appointed by the council) as an academic chief. Councils have a large degree of autonomy concerning internal organization and affairs.

College has predominantly two meanings in British English. It can be an institution that is part of a university but has a certain level of autonomy, developing its own courses, having its own teaching staff and buildings, etc. Old universities characteristically function as a federation of autonomous colleges (e.g. Oxford, Cambridge or London). Colleges have their own reputation and fame, and it is not at all the same whether somebody attended this or that college of the same university, because the professors, the courses, and even the overall quality of the program can be very different.

Also, there are various technical and other colleges, which offer **further education** courses (the term means education after secondary school, but below the level of a university course). There is at least one such college in every town, altogether some 500, big and small, specialised or more general, mostly maintained by their local education authorities. Some of their students do full-time courses, but the majority have jobs and attend classes in the evenings, or on one or two days a week, preparing themselves for various diplomas or certificates. These courses may be suitable for people who have left school at sixteen, or at a higher level. The variety of colleges and courses is so great that it is impossible to make general statements about them. The students are of all ages, including older people developing new skills. But such colleges are not to be confused by universities or university colleges, because their academic level is much lower and the degrees they offer are not very prestigious or valuable.

---

[145] There is only one university in England which does not receive any government grants, the University of Buckingham, founded in 1976. It supports itself fully from tuition fees and donations, so it is the only 'private university' in the country, but the majority of its students come from outside the UK.

Brief history of English universities in 5 Steps

Step 1: Ancient universities: Oxbridge

England's two ancient universities, **Oxford** and **Cambridge** were both founded in the 13th century, and they had no rival for 500 years. No wonder that they enjoy an extraordinary reputation both in Britain and all over the world. Today '**Oxbridge'**, as the two together are known, educate less than one-tenth of Britain's total university student population. But they continue to attract many of the best brains, and they still have a special pre-eminence, as well as many unique characteristics (see 'Oxbridge' section below).

Besides these two ancient universities, however, Scotland also has four ancient universities: St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh, all founded in the 15th and 16th centuries. (see chapter III for details).

Step 2: University of London

England's third oldest university, the **University of London** was chartered in 1836. It basically combined two colleges, University College and King's College London, into a university, but since then, it has integrated various other colleges in London, and became by far the largest university in the country (excluding the Open University), with more than 130,000 full-time students and some 50,000 part-time students in all. It is a federal organization consisting of more than 30 member colleges and institutes, including such world famous places of learning as the London School of Economics or the Royal Holloway College. Imperial College, renowned for its science and engineering and medical education, decided to become independent from the University in 2007.

Step 3: Redbrick universities (late 19th–early 20th century)

Higher education continued to expand all though the late 19th and early 20th century. The University of Wales was established in 1893 (by now it has split into its constituent city universities). In the same period, a number of colleges were founded in the big industrial cities of England, which had had no higher education institutions (such as Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham, Newcastle, Liverpool and Bristol). They first prepared students for external degrees awarded by the University of London, but by the first half of the 20th century, they were granted charters as full universities, issuing their their own degrees. They came to be called (after the characteristic Victorian style of their buildings) **redbrick universities**.

Step 4: Plate glass universities and the Open University (1960s)

During the 1960s redbrick universities expanded fast, but more than a dozen completely new universities were founded in addition, all of them establishing campuses on the edges of historic towns or in the countryside. Some of these were named after counties or regions rather than old cities, for example Sussex, Kent, York, East Anglia and Strathclyde, and were called **plate glass universities** because of their modernist architecture.

At about the same time, the highly successful **Open University** was founded in 1969, which provides every person in Britain with the opportunity to study for a degree, without leaving home, by means of correspondence courses. It is particularly designed for adults who want to make up for opportunities they missed earlier. It utilizes radio and television, and also local study centres. Currently it has about 250,000 students, which makes it the largest university in Britain, and one of the largest in the world.

Step 5: New Universities (since 1990s)

During the 1990s, some thirty technical colleges were raised to the newly-invented category of '**polytechnics**,' higher educational institutions below the rank of universities, which focused mostly on applied sciences and technology in their educational programmes. This category, however, ceased to exist, because in 1992 all former polytechnics were given the freedom to become universities, which almost doubled the total number of English universities at the time. In addition, a number of further education colleges have gained university status in the last 10-20 years, so the total number of universities has exceeded 100 in England alone. These institutions are nicknamed '**new universities**' – a term that can have a slightly negative overtone, because former polytechnics and recently promoted colleges have a significantly lower academic standard than older, well-established universities.

That development explains why one can find two or three different universities in the same English city: typically one of them is a 'redbrick university' with 19th or early 20th century origins, and the other started out as a college of some sort, achieving the rank of university some time in the last 30 years.

University Courses and Degrees

Those who want to enter an English university have to pass at least three A-level examinations or some equivalent exam. In their <u>application</u>, they can specify up to five courses in different universities. <u>Applicants</u> are chosen either on the basis of the grades obtained at their 'A level' examinations or – if there are too many outstanding applicants with straight-A grades - on the basis of personal interviews with lecturers. Nobody is allowed to apply both to Oxford and Cambridge in the same year, because there are so many applications to these two places that the staff would be unable to conduct all the personal interviews. All university applications are administered centrally by an organization called <u>UCAS</u>, which is funded by, but independent of the government.

University education is divided into two parts, **undergraduate** and **graduate courses**. Students start their undergraduate course in their first year: after at least three years of full-time study and passing their university examinations, they receive their 'first' or undergraduate degree, usually (but not always) a **Bachelor's degree**. Traditionally, there were two types of Bachelor's degree: a student became either a **Bachelor of Arts (BA)** or a **Bachelor of Science (BSc)**. Recently, with the multiplication of universities and courses, there are a wide range of bachelor's degrees, from Bachelor of Education (BEd) to Bachelor of Music (BMus) and Bachelor of Engineering (BEng). These three-year degrees are also called **undergraduate degrees** because they normally do not qualify their holder for any job without at least one further year of study: they are simply the lowest academic degree available. Bachelors' degrees are usually awarded on the basis of class work, several examinations or a long written thesis.

The graduate course consists of one or two years involving some original research and a substantial dissertation, and ends in a **Master's degree**, traditionally a **Master of Arts (MA)** or **Master of Science (MSc)**. Nowadays, there are a number of different Master's degrees available. But older universities have some strange practices: in Oxford and Cambridge, for example, the three-year undergraduate BA degrees are automatically converted to MA degrees after seven years, without any formal coursework. Students of the natural sciences (e.g. Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry or Engineering), on the other hand, receive Master's degrees as an undergraduate degree in Oxford, because the university does not issue BSc as a first degree.

A Master's degree qualifies <u>graduates</u> for most jobs. Some students choose to continue their studies with a **postgraduate course**, which usually does not involve traditional classes at all, but consists mostly of original research and individual consultations and tutoring. Postgraduate studies are usually completed with a **doctorate**, usually called **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**, which is awarded in all academic disciplines, even to science students. Oxford and Cambridge, as usual, have different terms, e.g. a doctoral student of humanities receives a postgraduate degree called a Doctor of Letters (DLitt). Doctorates are not really considered part of normal university education, because only future university staff members or high-ranking specialists need such a degree.

Each university has its own organisation, but usually there are several larger units called '<u>faculties</u>' or '<u>schools</u>' or sometimes 'colleges,' each containing a group of <u>departments</u>. The <u>university staff</u> has three ranks. The lowest-ranking and usually youngest staff members are called **lecturers**. They are usually chosen from the best young graduates of the universities, and are expected either to possess a doctorate in their chosen field, or to obtain one in the near future (this category includes both '*tanársegéd*' and '*adjunktus*' of a Hungarian university). A

lecturer who publishes research papers and other works that are received positively by the academic community may be promoted to the rank of **reader** (which is roughly the equivalent of a '*docens*' in Hungarian terminology). The highest possible rank is the **professor**, who usually has a 'chair,' and he or she is the head of the department.[146] In England and Britain, new professors are often invited from other universities where they have already established an excellent reputation.

University courses consist of lectures to large groups, seminars for about ten, and laboratory or tutorial groups for three or four students. Students are required to write many essays or seminar papers, which may be discussed in the group meetings. The number of courses students are required to attend in a term is typically far lower than in Hungary, but each course demands more individual work (reading, writing, presentations, etc.).

Student Life and Finances

After World War II, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, higher education in Britain experienced spectacular growth, and the number of students increased dramatically. Dynamic development was possible because university education was free (fees were nominal and often covered by the students' local government), and public universities financed themselves from government grants. The government also wanted to encourage university studies with the introduction of **student grants**. Grants are the most common form of financial support for a university student, mostly coming from the local government of the student's permanent residence, in order to help pay for housing, food, books and other maintenance costs. The amount of grants was generous at first, but as the number of students continued to grow, the government had difficulty supporting them all. In the 1980s, they introduced **means testing**, which meant that the student's <u>social and family background</u> (especially the family's wealth and <u>per capita income</u>) was checked and grants were only awarded to students with relatively modest background. This immediately reduced the number of students who received a grant, while the amount of the grant (in real terms) was also significantly smaller than before.

In order to help struggling students, **student loans** were introduced. The specialty of these loans is that they have a very low interest rate tied to inflation and students do not have to pay them back until they have finished their studies and found a decent job. Students are automatically eligible for c. 75% of the maximum loan and receive the rest on the basis of the student's financial background as well as the location of his or her university (London is far more expensive than the rest of the country) and whether he or she lives at home or away from home. Thus the amount of loan available for each student is determined individually, varying between £2,600 and more than £6,000 a year. The whole system (apart from individual income assessment) is very similar to the Hungarian '*diákhitel,*' which is not surprising since British experts helped the Hungarian government to develop the Hungarian program.

The greatest change of university financing, however, came in 2005 with the introduction of **tuition fees** in English higher education. The Labour government decided that students should undertake a higher share of financing their higher education by introducing a so-called 'deferred fee,' which means that – similarly to student loans – tuition fees are paid by students once they have graduated and have a job with an annual salary above a certain amount (in 2014, this amount was £21,000 a year). It was left to universities to decide how much they

---

[146] Note that in Britain, 'professor' is a special honour given only to the most outstanding members of the university teaching staff, while in the USA, all university educators are generally referred to as 'professor.'

charge but the maximum amount was set at £3,000 a year. Since the maximum amount was fixed, the new type of tuition fee was nicknamed in the press 'top-up fee.' Students below a certain family income do not have to pay the fee, and they are also entitled to increased grants and loans. Since then, the maximum limit of annual tuition fee was increased to £9,000, so they have tripled within a decade.

The introduction of top-up fees created a huge storm in British political life, and has remained a controversial issue ever since. A significant group of Labour Party MPs opposed the fee, and the Act barely received the majority in the House of Commons in 2005. Students also criticized it, arguing that graduates will be burdened with a huge amount of loan (partly from the fee, partly from maintenance loans) when they start their working career. The government argued, on the other hand, that students currently at university do not have to pay any extra fees, and their future earnings should be more than enough to repay the fee. The rate of payment is maximized at 9% of the gross earnings and repayment starts only above a minimum level of salary, so they will not be overburdened. They also emphasized that university education is financed by all taxpayers, including those who never attended university; therefore the current system is fairer because a larger part of the costs falls on the beneficiaries of higher education. Nonetheless, critics are worried that less wealthy young people will be frightened by the higher costs and will not apply for a university place at all.

A curiosity of the tuition-fee debates is that the devolved Scottish Parliament refused to introduce tuition fees at Scottish universities, so Scottish students can still study free of charge, but English students who apply to Scottish universities must pay the same amount that they would pay at an English institutions. Both Scottish and Welsh students (the average incomes are significantly smaller in both countries) are entitled to grants from their own devolved governments to cover their tuition fees if they go to an English university to study.

The great majority of English students go to universities far from their homes (even when there is a local university offering the same course). It is part of the English tradition of individuality and independence that students want to separate from their families and start their own life as soon as possible, even if they are financially supported by their parents. For students who used to go to boarding schools it is natural to live separate from their family. In England, students crowding buses and trains to travel home to their parents for weekends are a completely unknown phenomenon. Students normally visit their family between terms and during the summer holiday. Each university has halls of residence with enough room for all or most of the first-year students, but few for the older ones. For their last years of study most live in rented flats.

Oxbridge

Oxford and **Cambridge** occupy a special and privileged position within English and British higher education. They are the two oldest and internationally most famous universities, and they have traditionally produced Britain's social, political and cultural elite. As recently as 1950 these two together had almost as many students as all the other English universities outside London. Now they have less than 10% of all university students, but the predominance of Oxford and Cambridge graduates among the elite is still significant.

Oxford and Cambridge are both mid-sized cities (with a population of c. 130,000 each) in the English Midlands, not very far from London. Oxford lies on the Thames, while Cambridge on the River Cam. The university in Oxford is slightly older than in Cambridge, with origins going back to the 12th century, while Cambridge was founded by a group of Oxford

professors, but by the end of the 13th century, both universities had been established. In most respects they are similar to each other, but differ greatly from other universities. Until the late 19th century Oxford was dominated by the Church of England, and only Anglicans could graduate from the university. It has been traditionally stronger in the <u>arts and humanities</u> and more of its graduates had successful careers in politics and public life. Cambridge, on the other hand, has established an excellent reputation in <u>natural sciences</u>.

Both universities consist of more than 30 separate **colleges**. Each college looks like a small university in itself, since each has its own teaching staff, governing body, a number of different courses, and each college decides which applicants they accept. As a result, each college has its own character, strengths and weaknesses, for example one college is famous for its History programme, while another is particularly good in Biology. About half of the colleges have medieval origins (each was founded by some king, bishop or rich aristocrat); the rest were founded later (there are some very recent postgraduate and other specialised colleges). Typically, the old colleges are the most famous; their historic buildings are scattered along the streets of the centre of the two towns. Each traditional college consists of a <u>hall</u>, a <u>chapel</u>, common rooms, library, lecture rooms, and <u>residential buildings</u> where the majority of the freshmen but few of the older students and some staff members live, everybody in his or her own separate room. The buildings are always arranged around one or two rectangular yards called '<u>quads</u>' (from 'quadrangle'). The most famous colleges in Oxford are Christ Church, Magdalen¹⁴⁷ College, All Souls College and New College; in Cambridge, Trinity College, King's College, St. John's College and another Magdalen College.

Students apply not to Oxford or Cambridge University for entry, but to a specific college. They receive the greater part of their education at their own college, therefore it is quite important to choose the proper college. Each college has between 200 and 400 undergraduate students and around thirty or more **fellows** (colloquially called '<u>dons</u>'), who teach small groups. The traditional method of teaching is <u>tutoring</u>: each college student has an individual consultant, called a **tutor** (this can be a fellow or an elder student), who meets him or her usually once a week, gives out <u>assignments</u>, reads essays, answers problems, gives advice. This direct and <u>personal guidance</u> can greatly enhance the academic performance of a student. Nearly all the fellows (called by some other title in a few colleges) are also university lecturers or professors, and are paid partly by the university, partly by their colleges. The leader of each college may be called by several different names (such as rector, provost etc.) depending on the tradition of the particular college. All the colleges now take both men and women students, except for a few which were founded exclusively for women. This has not always been the case: the most conservative colleges began to admit women only in the 1980s.

For lecture courses, which are centrally organised, students go to other colleges or to the central lecture rooms, which are also used for the university's examinations. Teaching and research in sciences are done mainly in university laboratories. Oxford's Bodleian Library and the Cambridge University Library are both entitled by law to receive free of charge a copy of every book and journal published in the United Kingdom, therefore these two university libraries are the richest in the country after the National Library. All students receive the same university degree regardless of which college they attended, and they are entitled to use the Latin abbreviation 'Oxon.' (for Oxford) or 'Cantab.' (for Cambridge) after their name.

---

[147] *Magdalene*: As a college name, it is pronounced /ˈmɔdlɪn/

Until the late 20th century, the great majority of both Oxford and Cambridge students came from expensive public schools and independent schools, for which both universities were widely criticized. This exclusiveness of Oxbridge has since changed somewhat, and nowadays a little more than half of all students come from state schools, but that still means that independent school pupils have relatively much better chances to get admitted. Together with the public school system, Oxbridge maintains an exclusive, narrow and traditional culture, and its graduates are predominant among the social and political elite of the country. Prime Minister Tony Blair was often criticized that, despite being the leader of a left-wing party, he was educated in an Edinburgh independent school and earned his degree of law at Oxford. He is far from being alone: the majority of the Prime Ministers of the 20th century studied at Oxford, as did a number of ministers, civil servants, judges, barristers, and many other high-ranking people. The list of famous English writers with Oxford degrees is also impressive (e.g. Oscar Wilde, Lewis Carroll, Graham Greene, J.R.R. Tolkien, Aldous Huxley, and many others). Cambridge, on the other hand, educated some of the greatest British scientists, including Isaac Newton, Lord Kelvin, and James Clerk Maxwell. Many famous contemporary actors and comedians studied at Oxford or Cambridge, for example the entire Monty Python group (except for the American Terry Gilliam), Emma Thompson, Hugh Grant, or Rowan Atkinson.

Key concepts

11+ examination

academy

A level

ancient university

autumn/spring/summer term

Bachelor's degree

Bachelor of Arts / BA

Bachelor of Science / BSc

boarding school ←→ day school

comprehensive school

doctorate / PhD

fellow

further education

General Certificate of Secondary Education / GCSE

grammar school

independent school

infant school

junior school

lecturer / reader / professor

Master's degree

Master of Arts / MA

Master of Science / MSc

means testing

National Curriculum

new university

nursery school

Open University

Oxford / Cambridge

plate-glass university

preparatory school / prep school

primary school / cycle ←→ secondary school / cycle

public school

redbrick university

rugby football

sixth form

specialist school

student grant

student loan

term

tuition fee

tutor

undergraduate course / degree ←→ graduate course / degree ←→ postgraduate course / degree

university ←→ college

XI. RELIGION

Think of Hungary First!

Which are the largest churches in Hungary? Can they be linked to any particular region, ethnic or social group within Hungary?

What actual proportion of the Hungarian population are practising members of any church?

How has the position of the Hungarian churches changed since 1990?

Can you mention any denominations or sects that have appeared in the country recently and gained significant following?

Information Store

The current Archbishop of Canterbury: Justin Welby (since 2013)

The current Archbishop of York: Dr. John Sentamu (since 2005; born in Uganda, the first black archbishop in the Church of England)

The current Catholic Archbishop of Westminster: Cardinal Vincent Nichols (since 2009)

Figures of the 2011 Census about religious affiliation in Great Britain:

	England and Wales		Change compared to 2001 Census	Scotland	
	No of people	Percentage		No. of people	Percentage
Christian (all groups)	33.2 million	59%	- 4 million	2.85 million	54%
Muslim	2.7 million	5%	+ 1.2 million	77,000	1.4%
Hindu	800,000	1.4%	+ 240,000	16,000	0.3%
Sikh	420,000	0.7%	+ 80,000	9,000	0.2%
Jewish	260,000	0.4%	no change	6,000	0.1%
Buddhist	250,000	0.4%		13,000	0.2%
Any Other	240,000	0.4%		15,000	0.3%
No religion	14.1 million	25%	+ 6.4 million	1.94 million	36.7%
Not stated	3.9 million	7%		368,000	7%

(Note that questions in the Scottish Census were different, asking people which denomination they belong to, whereas the English Census simply asked 'What is your religion?' and denominations were not asked)

Test Your Knowledge!

Can you name one or more churches that were founded in England? Can you name the founder(s)?

Which is the largest church building in Britain? Where is it?

Who is the most respectable church leader in Britain?

Use the Internet!

The official home page of the Church of England: http://www.cofe.anglican.org/

Census 2011 results and other statistical information about religion: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/detailed-characteristics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt---religion.html#tab-Measuring-religion

1. RELIGION IN A SECULAR AGE

During the 20th century Britain, as most other European societies, has become largely **secularised**[148] in its world view and religious habits. A significant part of the population consists of declared **atheists**,[149] humanists or **agnostics**:[150] they are not baptised and they normally get married and buried without church ceremony. The majority of society considers themselves Christians: according to the 2011 Census, about 57%, or 36 million people in Great Britain, excluding Northern Ireland. This number, however, fell by almost 4.5 million since 2001, which clearly shows that the popularity of all Christian churches is shrinking among the British. And even the majority of those who profess themselves Christians do not have strong ties with any of the local church congregations and do not attend church services regularly. Opinion polls suggest that only about 17% of the adult population of Britain belongs actively to one of the Christian churches, and this proportion continues to decline.

There are two tendencies opposite to the decline of the membership of Christian churches. On the one hand, the proportion of those who describe themselves as not religious according to the 2011 Census is over 16 million, or more than 25% of the total British population, and their number has grown by almost 7 million since 2001. On the other hand, about 4.8 million people, that is, 7.6% of the population of Great Britain belongs to one of the non-Christian religions; more than half of them (about 2.8 million) are **Muslims**, which is the largest religion in Britain after Christianity.

Today there is complete freedom of religious practice, regardless of religion or sect. But it was not always so. After both England and Scotland became Protestant in the 16th century (but adopted two different creeds), whereas England's traditional enemies, Spain and France, remained Catholic, Catholicism came to be regarded as the arch-enemy of England (and later Britain). Catholics were discriminated and occasionally even persecuted in Great Britain, and strong anti-Catholic feelings survived into the 20th century. Other Protestant churches that were different from the two dominant ones were similarly discriminated; neither they nor Catholics were allowed to work in public offices until 1829. Disagreements about religion, especially about the doctrine of the Church of England, played a central role in the English Civil War (1642–1660), and religious conflicts influenced British politics until the late 18th century.

---

[148] *secular / secularized* (pronounced /ˈsekjʊlə(r)/): worldly, not concerned with religion

[149] *atheist* (pronounced /eɪˈθiːɪst/): somebody who denies the existence of God

[150] *agnostic* (pronounced /æɡˈnɒstɪk/): somebody who believes that the existence of God cannot be known with certainty

The legal emancipation of **Nonconformists**, Catholics and Jews took place gradually during the liberal atmosphere of the 19th century. Since then, Great Britain has been famous for its tolerance for all religions and beliefs, including non-Christian ones like **Hinduism** and Islam, which arrived in Britain with immigrants from the former colonies after World War II. Although the established churches have preserved their preferred legal status, religion is no longer a political issue, and churches do not play a significant political role. It is interesting to note that in Great Britain there has never been a major political party officially linked to any church or Christianity in general, like the Christian Democratic Parties in many other European countries. Although the Church of England was traditionally closer to the Conservatives in its political views, the Conservatives never represented a religious world view in their party policies. Religious people do not have a typical party preference either; they tend to be conservative in moral questions, such as marriage, family values, or homosexuality, but they are also concerned about poverty and social inequality, a traditionally left-wing political issue. Religious affiliation and intolerance, however, still plays a heavy political role in Northern Ireland (see chapter V).

2. THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

There are two **established churches**[151] in Britain: the **Church of England** (or **Anglican Church** as it is sometimes called), and the **Church of Scotland**. The Church of England has had a very important role in English history, politics and culture since the 16th century, and its development mirrors the development of the nation.

Brief History of the Church of England in 5 Steps

Step 1: Henry VIII and the creation of the Church of England

The Church of England is unique among Protestant churches in its origin since it separated from the Roman Catholic Church not because of religious disagreements, but due to a political conflict. King **Henry VIII** (1509–1547) and his wife Catherine had a daughter but no son. Henry was worried that, if he died without a son, the succession to the throne would be disputed. When it was unlikely that his wife would have another child, Henry tried to persuade the Pope to grant him a divorce (more precisely, the annulment of his marriage). For various reasons, the Pope refused his request. After Henry's lover, **Anne Boleyn**, fell pregnant, Henry was determined to make his future child a legal heir. He appointed a new **Archbishop of Canterbury** (leader of the English church) without the Pope's approval, who divorced him from his wife and married him to Anne, but to his huge disappointment, Anne gave birth to another girl, Elizabeth. In 1534 Parliament passed the **Act of Supremacy**, declaring the King head of the Church of England instead of the Pope. Henry only had a son by his third wife (he would marry three more times), but in the meantime, the English church had been separated from the Catholic Church.

The real irony of this story is that Henry did not like the ideas of the Reformation, and a few years earlier had written a pamphlet in which he protected the seven sacraments against Martin Luther. The pope was so grateful for the royal support that Henry received the papal title 'Defender of the Faith.'[152] While Henry was alive the

---

[151] *established church*: In English, to 'establish a church' means providing legal preference and government support for a church, in other words, making it a state church. In the past, the Church of England was established in Wales, in Ireland, and in several North American colonies, but never in Scotland. Establishment of a church does not mean that the majority of the population actually belongs to that church (e.g. in Ireland the Church of England was always a minority church), but it might mean disadvantages and discrimination for other believers (e.g. exclusion from public offices).

[152] The title is still used, and appears as 'F.D.' (*Fidei Defensor*) on British coins.

Church remained conservative in <u>doctrine</u>,[153] generally more Catholic than Protestant, except that it rejected the authority of the Pope. But Protestant sympathizers within the church already began to demand more radical reform. Two further significant changes occurred under Henry's rule. He ordered all English <u>monasteries</u> to be <u>dissolved</u> (abolished) and their vast properties <u>confiscated</u>. This further weakened the church and strengthened the King. Besides that, the first official English-language translation of the Bible was published and made available to the people.

Step 2: Elizabeth I and the consolidation of the Church of England

After Henry died, there was a period of confusion, until his second daughter, Elizabeth I, became Queen in 1558. Under her rule, the Church of England consolidated itself as a 'moderate' Protestant church, opposed to Catholicism, but more conservative (therefore closer to Rome) in doctrine, organisation and <u>liturgy</u>[154] than any other major Protestant church. This created a peculiar situation: the Church of England was in conflict with Catholics but also with other, more radical Protestant groups and movements, which criticized Anglican doctrine as 'popish,' still too similar to Catholicism. The Queen – like most later monarchs – considered the Church of England a political tool in their hands: they wanted to unite the entire English population in one church, and keep it under their control. As a result, the Church of England tolerated a wide scale of beliefs and doctrines, from the almost Catholic to the very radically Protestant, which were generally called **Puritans** at the time. Puritans in the 16th and early 17th century remained mostly within the Church of England, because they hoped to reform it from within and turn it into a church that they preferred.

The standard Anglican liturgy and doctrine was summarized in the **Book of Common Prayer**, first published in 1549 but revised several times. It specified such crucial things as how <u>Communion</u> should be celebrated by Anglicans, described <u>baptism</u>, marriage and burial ceremonies, and added a large number of prayers for various occasions – all in English. The other most important book for Anglicans was the standard translation of the Bible, which was sponsored by King James I and first published in 1611; it is generally called the **King James Version** or the **Authorized Version**. Both books had tremendous impact on the development of the English language, since practically all literate English people read and used them until the late 19th century.

Step 3: The troubled 17th century: the Civil War, the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution

Conflicts within the Church of England contributed greatly to the tensions between the conservative King Charles I and the Puritan-dominated Parliament, which finally erupted into a Civil War in 1642. After the victory of Parliament, the doctrines of the Church of England were reformed to turn it into a strongly Calvinist, Puritan church (bishops were removed, the Book of Common Prayer banned, etc). After the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the original Book of Common Prayer was also restored and devout Puritans were excluded from the established church. The **Test Act**, passed in 1673, was intended to keep both Catholics and **Dissenters** (a new name from all non-Anglican Protestant groups) out of Parliament and political power. The Glorious Revolution in 1688–89 also had a religious aspect: the Anglican majority of Parliament wanted to remove the Catholic James II from the throne to protect the Protestant character of the national church.

Step 4: The 18th century: the Church of England as a 'broad church'

After almost two centuries of religious conflicts and wars, the 18th century brought relative peace and stability in the life of both the Church of England and other Christian churches in the country. The dominance and the politically preferred status of the Church of England was not questioned; the greatest national enemy was still Catholicism, which was barely tolerated in the country (especially in Ireland), but non-Anglican Protestant churches were allowed to prosper in the country as long as they took and oath of loyalty to the Crown. During the 18th century, they were collectively called Dissenters, but the negative overtone of the name made it unpopular, so in the 19th century they came to be called **Nonconformists**. Several new Nonconformist churches were founded in Britain during the 17th and 18th century: the **Quakers**, the **Baptists**, and the **Methodists** were established as distinct groups next to the **Congregationalists** and **Presbyterians** (the more direct heirs to the original Calvinist doctrines of the Puritans). In order to keep as many within the established church as possible,

---

[153] *doctrine*: In theology, it means a principle or a system of teachings that is considered official by a church. The word 'dogma', which is a synonym, is rarely used in English, because it has a negative overtone, while 'doctrine' is neutral.

[154] *liturgy* (pronounced /ˈlɪtədʒi/): detailed rules of how public worship or church service should be conducted; its synonym is church ritual. It can differ greatly in various Christian churches.

the 18 th century Anglican theologians all supported the idea of the '**broad church,**'[155] which allowed people of different doctrinal persuasions to worship within the Church of England. This compromise in the character of the Church has been a fundamental feature ever since.

Step 5: 19th and 20th century: gradual decline of influence

After the Test Act was abolished in 1828, Nonconformists and Catholics became equal in public life to Anglicans, and their popularity significantly increased: in 1851, the Census revealed that the total number of Anglican worshipers was only barely larger than the total attendance of all other Christian churches in the country (Nonconformists and Catholics combined), and about 40% of the entire population did not regularly attend church. The Church of England was never very popular in Ireland or Wales, and by 1920 it was disestablished in both countries (so it no longer enjoyed financial support or legal preference to other churches). In many northern industrial towns, Nonconformists were more popular than the Anglican church, and the Catholic church also began to grow more popular (especially in cities with heavy Irish immigration, like Liverpool or Glasgow).

The decline sped up during the 20th century: both the number of regular attenders at church services and the number of Anglican clergy shrank rapidly throughout the century, despite all efforts of the church leadership to slow or halt the decline.

Organisation

Ever since 1534 the monarch has been the head (officially the Supreme Governor) of the Church of England. As a result, the Church of England is 'established,' or official, since it is supervised by the Crown itself. Nowadays, this fact does not mean much except that there are direct links between the government and the Church (the monarch appoints the archbishops and the bishops on the advice of the Prime Minister, while the senior bishops still sit in the House of Lords), but nobody is discriminated any more for not being a member of the established church.

Acts of Parliament forbid anybody to be crowned if he or she is not a member of the Church of England. For any Protestant this conversion is usually not a problem (there are several examples of it in British history), since the Church of England already includes a wide variety of Protestant belief. However, the monarch is forbidden by law to be a Catholic, and if the heir to the throne decided to marry a Roman Catholic it would cause a constitutional crisis, and the heir would probably be forced to abdicate (give up the throne). The monarch is crowned by the senior Anglican clergyman, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

One of the conservative features of the Church of England is that it has kept the church hierarchy inherited from the Catholic Church, with archbishops and bishops. Practically all the dioceses are early medieval in origin, and the bishop's seat (Latin *cathedra*) usually features a beautiful medieval cathedral. The highest spiritual leader of the Church of England is the **Archbishop of Canterbury**, head of the oldest diocese[156] (founded in 597 A.D.) in the country; his official title is 'Primate of All England.' Besides being the senior clergyman[157] of

---

[155] *broad church*: a form of Latitudinarian theology in the Church of England, which argued that disputes in doctrine, liturgy and church organization are relatively unimportant, different ideas and practices have their place within the Church. Broad church supporters emphasized moral values, individual piety, and the role of human reason aided by the Holy Spirit to find religious truth. The broad church attitude became the dominant theology of the Church of Englan in the 18th century, after a century of religious wars and conflicts in England.

[156] *diocese* (pronounced /ˈdaɪəsɪs/): in Catholic and Anglican churches, a large religious district for which a bishop is responsible; its synonym is 'bishopric.'

[157] clergyman (pronounced /ˈklərdʒɪmən/): in English, it can be used for any priest or minister of any Christian church.

England, he is also the leader of the southern and larger of England's two church provinces, as well as a symbolic head of the international Anglican community. The second highest ranking clergyman is the **Archbishop of York**, who is the head of the northern ecclesiastical[158] province of England. These two provinces are divided into 44 (30+14) dioceses, each with a cathedral and under the charge of a bishop. Each diocese is composed of parishes, the basic unit of the organisation of the Church. Each **parish** has a **rector** or a **vicar**, the equivalent of a Catholic priest (Anglican clergymen can be generally called 'priests,' unlike in other Protestant churches). Although bishops typically observe celibacy,[159] vicars may marry. The clergy are not paid by the state, but by the Church, to which the congregation usually contributes.

As the head of the Church of England, the monarch appoints all the archbishops and bishops of the Church, but even in this case she follows the recommendation of the Prime Minister, who may not be an Anglican at all. In practice, a large committee consisting of church leaders and lay church members nominate two persons for the vacant position and the Prime Minister has the right to choose between them. All Anglican clergy must take an oath of allegiance to the Crown.

In England the terms 'Anglican Church' and 'Church of England' are synonyms, but outside England the adjective 'Anglican' means something slightly different. There are a number of Anglican churches all over the world, typically in areas which were formerly parts of the British Empire, from Canada to India and Australia. These churches are organized into a loose affiliation called the **Anglican Communion**. The Archbishop of Canterbury is the symbolic leader of the Communion, but he has no power over the churches outside England; they are completely independent and self-governing. Once in every ten years the Archbishop of Canterbury invites all the bishops of the Anglican Communion to a conference at Lambeth, the Archbishop's Palace in London.

There are about 70 million Anglicans belonging to the Communion, the great majority of them living outside England; for example, more Nigerians than English regularly attend the Anglican Church. In the US, the Anglican church is called Episcopal Church (probably because after the War of Independence Americans did not want to keep the original 'English-sounding' name), which is a small but socially respectable church traditionally associated with the upper classes of New England. George Bush Sr., President of the United States between 1989 and 1993, is perhaps the most famous member of the church. There are Episcopal Churches in Scotland, Wales and Ireland, which are members of the Anglican Communion, but are not 'established' churches and have small local memberships.

The cathedrals and hundreds of smaller churches, built between the 11th century and King Henry VIII's time, are England's greatest architectural heritage. But the state does not take responsibility for the maintenance and the renovation of the buildings, which has to be covered by the church out of its income and voluntary contributions. That is why the church was forced to introduce entrance tickets for tourists to many churches, e.g. Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral or Canterbury Cathedral.

---

[158] *ecclesiastical* (pronounced /ɪˈkliːzɪˈæstɪkəl/): adjective meaning 'of / about / concerning a church or a clergyman'

[159] *celibacy* (pronounced /ˈselɪbəsɪ/): The traditional ban on the clergy from getting married, still valid in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Groups within the Church

The Church of England has been a '**broad church**' with a wide variety of belief and practice partly because it is a national church and as such, it has been trying to unite as many Protestants within itself as possible. Its status as an established church under the authority of the monarch also prevented internal splits and the formation of rival churches, which so often happened with other Protestant churches. But the various groups with different theological and liturgical views always had an uneasy relationship within the church, and often tried to pull the church towards either radical Protestantism or Catholicism. In the 17th and 18th centuries, these two groups were called '**low-church**' and '**high-church**' advocates; in the 19th century they were termed **Evangelicals**[160] and **Anglo-Catholics**.[161]. The Evangelicals greatly emphasise the role of the Bible as the source and basis of all faith and practice, and tend to interpret it literally, that is, they believe that everything written in the Bible is true word for word. They dislike the church hierarchy and the traditional ceremonies, and instead stress the importance of personal devotion and conversion. They also demand an active participation of all members of the congregation, including missionary work. The Anglo-Catholics give greater weight to Church tradition (including the hierarchy of archbishops and bishops) and Catholic practices (liturgy), and are far more sympathetic to the teaching and practice of the Roman Catholic Church.

During the 20th century, a third group emerged within the Church of England, which is generally called liberal. Liberal theologians urged the reinterpretation of several old doctrines and practices of the Church, since theology has to develop with the times and adapt itself to the changing society. Liberals can also be described as modernists; they advocated such reforms as the ordination[162] of women as priests, which was finally introduced after a lot of debate and argument in 1994. Since 2000, there have been intensive debates about whether women should be allowed to become bishops in the church. Most recently, the amendment was voted on by the General Synod of the Church in 2012, but it failed to receive the required two-thirds majority, therefore it cannot be voted on again before 2015. Another sensitive issue is the position of homosexuals in the church, especially after the American Episcopal Church elected a gay bishop, which provoked considerable outrage in other Anglican churches. In 2007, the General Synod declared that "homosexual orientation in itself is no bar to a faithful Christian life or to full participation in lay and ordained ministry in the Church and acknowledge the importance of lesbian and gay members of the Church of England participating in the listening process as full members of the Church."

As the examples above illustrate, the Church of England is characteristically a church of compromise and tolerance. It learned the lesson from its stormy history that disagreements in belief cannot be resolved by force or authoritarian decisions, therefore it prefers to live with disagreements of belief. Most of its members are quite happy with the arrangement. For an outsider, this practical attitude of 'live and let live' within the same church may look strange, but for Anglicans it is quite natural. When new bishops are nominated, the committees try to

---

[160] *Evangelical* (pronounced /ˌiːvənˈdʒelɪkəl/): The term in English means a movement within Protestantism, not restricted to any single church, which emphasizes the central role of the Bible in Christian faith, personal conversion and devotion, and an active spread of the 'true faith' to others. It should never be confused with the Hungarian term '*evangélikus,*' which refers to the Lutheran church in Hungary.

[161] *Anglo-Catholic*: The term may sound misleading, but this group belongs to the Church of England, not to the Catholic Church Their preferences in doctrine, liturgy and other traditions, however, brings them very close to Catholics (with the possible exception of the role of the Pope). In fact, some Anglo-Catholics from time to time decide to join the Catholic Church. A very famous Anglo-Catholic of the 20th century was the poet T. S. Eliot.

[162] *ordination/ to ordain*: the act and ceremony of making a person a priest (in the Catholic and Anglican churches) or minister (in Protestant churches)

make sure that all wings of the Church are represented among the bishops, and the archbishops are expected to be unifying figures who keep their distance from controversial opinions, so they can be acceptable to all others.

3. THE OTHER CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

Free Churches

Ever since the Church of England was created in 1534, there were Protestant groups who were dissatisfied with the way it was organized, and with the doctrines and liturgy adopted by the church. For a while, they tried to reform the Church from the inside, claiming that they would like to 'purify' it from the remains of Catholicism. These radical Protestant groups came to be called **Puritans** by the early 17th century. After their radical demands were rejected by the monarch and the leadership of the Church, they began to organize themselves into separate churches. During the English Civil War, a form of Puritanism became the state church under Oliver Cromwell, but after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the Anglican Church was brought back with its traditional doctrines. After that period, those Protestants who were not willing to join the Church of England and continued to hold different views were officially and legally discriminated (they could not work as public officials, the number of their churches was restricted, etc.), but they were allowed to exist and practice their faith. They were collectively called **Dissenters**[163] in the late 17th and 18th, then **Nonconformists**[164] in the 19th century. The former Dissenters or Nonconformists, that is, Protestant churches other than the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, today are commonly called the **Free Churches**. They have various doctrines and liturgical rules, but they share some common features. None of these churches have bishops, or 'episcopacy,' and their ministers can be both men and women. The main denominations today are: the Methodists; the **Baptists**; the **United Reformed Church** (created by the union of the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches of England in 1972); and the Salvation Army. They are typically characterized by an Evangelical set of values.

The largest church, the **Methodist** movement, was started by **John Wesley** in the 18th century. He was originally a clergyman of the Church of England, who did not criticize the doctrines of the Church of England but felt that it neglects its Christian duties (the pastoral care of people's souls) and the needs of the ordinary people. He began to travel around the country, preaching in open air, and gathered many followers with his religious enthusiasm. Methodism became particularly popular in Wales, but today it has far more members in the USA than in Britain. The **Salvation Army** was also founded by an Englishman, William Booth, a former Methodist minister, in 1870s, and focused on helping and converting the poor. Despite their quasi-military organization and strict moral rules, they had very democratic views, and they were among the first groups that allowed women to preach. Besides these churches, there are many other smaller denominations; some of them are American in origin, like Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, or the Seventh-Day Adventists.

---

[163] *Dissenter*: The term is derived from the verb 'to dissent,' which means 'to disagree' (with the doctrines of the Church of England)

[164] *Nonconformist*: The term suggests that these Protestant groups do not conform to the doctrines of the Church of England. It essentially means the same as 'Dissenter,' but the older term became very pejorative by the late 18th century, and they wanted to replace it with a neutral word.

In Scotland, the established church is the Church of Scotland or Kirk. For its detailed history and description, see chapter III.

Catholics

Between the foundation of the Church of England in 1534 and the emancipation of Catholics in 1829, the few Catholics who remained in England were legally discriminated and viewed with suspicion. Anti-Catholicism became almost a hysteria after the **Gunpowder Plot**[165] in 1605, in which a group of Catholic conspirators planned to blow up the building of Parliament together with King James I. Afterwards, all English Catholics were considered potential traitors and spies of Spain or France. Fear from the return of Catholicism was a major reason behind the removal of James II and the Glorious Revolution in 1688, which created the constitutional monarchy in England.

The church hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church was not fully re-established in Britain until 1850. Since 1850 the Roman Catholic Church has grown rapidly, and surveys have shown that there may be more active churchgoers among English Catholics than among the much larger group of Anglicans. A considerable proportion of British Catholics have an Irish background, since many Catholic Irish people immigrated to Great Britain during the 19th century to work in the big industrial cities. The Catholic Church also did missionary work among working-class people in the late 19th century, further increasing their flock. In the late 19th and early 20th century, a number of Anglo-Catholics from the Church of England also converted to Catholicism, among them several famous writers, such as G.K. Chesterton, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. Another well-known 20th century English writer, Anthony Burgess, was proud to be born and raised as a Catholic. Recent liberal-minded reforms of the Church of England (particularly the introduction of female ministers) also led to some loss of membership, since many of the conservative members opposed to the changes converted to the Roman Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church naturally did not get its old cathedrals and bishop's seats back, as they are occupied by the Church of England. The highest-ranking English Catholic priest is the **Archbishop of Westminster**, who is based in London. His archbishopric see, Westminster Cathedral built in the late-19th century oriental style evoking Byzantine basilicas, can be found to Victoria station. There are a number of other Catholic archbishops and bishops. It is sometimes said that Roman Catholic priests are among the main Irish exports to England.

4. OTHER RELIGIONS

Apart from Christianity, there are four other religions with a substantial number of adherents in Britain. These are usually either immigrants or the descendants of immigrants.

---

[165] *Gunpowder Plot*: A plot of young Catholic radicals to blow up Parliament during its opening ceremony on November 5, 1605, while the king was also present. They were betrayed, captured and executed. The event gave rise to 'Guy Fawkes' Night', a popular celebration in England for centuries, during which a symbolic figure of the leader of the plot was burned on a bonfire.

Jews

The oldest is the Jewish community, with about 270,000 people, but the majority of them do not practice their faith. Only about 80,000 are actual synagogue[166] members. Today the Jewish community in Britain is ageing and shrinking, due to assimilation and a relatively low birth rate.

Jews have a strange history in England, since all Jews were expelled from the country by King Edward I in 1290, and they were not officially allowed to return until 1656 by Oliver Cromwell. Their number remained small until the 19th century, but after the Catholic emancipation they began to demand similar rights. Although the conservative House of Lords opposed the bill, finally the first Jewish MP was allowed to take the oath in 1858. During the late 19th century and first half of the 20th century Britain became a safe haven for German and East European Jews, who fled from persecution in Russia, Poland and later, Nazi Germany. Since World War II, however, few Jews have immigrated to Britain; a large part of the community have begun to marry non-Jews or abandoned their religion. There is considerable variety within religious Jewish groups, ranging from rigidly orthodox to the more or less liberal or 'progressive' synagogues. Therefore there is no universally acknowledged religious leader among British Jews.

Muslims

Among all the non-Christian religious groups, by far the largest is the **Muslim** community, with about 2.8 million followers according to the 2011 Census. This number has grown spectacularly in 10 years, by more than 1.2 million. Such a large increase is impossible without a sizeable amount of immigration; and indeed, Census figures show that more than half of all Muslims living in Britain (about 53%) were born outside the country. Two-thirds of all British Muslims originate from Asia, the largest source countries being Pakistan (38%) and Bangladesh (15%), both former parts of the colony of British India. About 10% of all Muslims are black, probably coming from African countries (also former British colonies) with sizeable Muslim populations, such as Nigeria or Tanzania.

Muslims are also the youngest group among all religious communities: nearly half of all Muslims are under 25 and 88% are under 50, which is diametrically opposite to the ageing Christian community. This is partly due to immigration, partly to the much higher birthrate: although their overall proportion within the general British population is 4.4% (5% within England), but more than 9% of pre-school age children are Muslim.

The first Muslim settlers appeared in Britain in the late 18th century, mostly sailors who were recruited by the East India Company, and settled in port towns later. But large-scale immigration began after World War II from Pakistan and Bangladesh, formerly part of British India. They settled partly in London, partly in the northern industrial towns, working in the textile industry (see chapter IX for details). Their number has been increased by other immigrants from Arabic countries like Egypt and Iraq, and also by African blacks who practice Islam.

Nowadays, in certain London boroughs one-third or one-fourth of the population is Muslim (e.g. in Tower Hamlets and Newham). A quarter of the population is Muslim in sizeable cities like Bradford and Luton; they make up over 20% in Birmingham, nearly 20% in Leicester,

---

[166] *synagogue* (pronounced /ˈsɪnəˌgɒg/): name of a place of worship among Jews, equivalent to a church for Christians.

15% in Manchester, all former industrial cities. The great majority of the Muslim population lives in England, their proportion in the rest of the UK is negligible.

Muslims in Britain first came to national attention in 1988, following the publication of Salman Rushdie's[167] novel *The Satanic Verses*. One of the characters of the book is the Prophet Muhammad represented as bargaining with God over the content of His illumination. Some conservative Muslim leaders considered the book blasphemous, and tried to use its condemnation for political purposes. Next year the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini announced that Muslims had a religious duty to execute Rushdie. As a result, Muslim youngsters in Birmingham carried out the public ritual of Rushdie's (symbolic) execution, while many other Muslim individuals and organizations protested against it. Rushdie had to go into hiding with police protection, and has been living in secret for a long while. The Rushdie controversy highlighted the fact that the Muslim community in Britain includes a wide range of opinions, from the liberal to the strictly fundamentalist, who loudly agreed with Khomeini's call. It also alerted politicians, sociologists, and intellectuals in general as well as the public that, in spite of the official support of 'multiculturalist society,' this ideology may also have its inherent limits.

The next shock came in June 2005, when a group of radical Muslims (Pakistani in origin, but all born and raised in Britain) blew up bombs in the London Underground and on a bus, killing 52 people. The British public was forced to realize that fundamentalist terrorist threat exists within the country, because many second- or third-generation young Muslims feel alienated from mainstream British society due to poverty, unemployment and the lingering racism still present in the white majority society, and they came under the influence of radical fundamentalist clerics.[168] The British participation in the Iraq war also angered many Muslims living in the country. The government has tried to cooperate with Muslim organizations such as the Muslim Council of Britain to control fundamentalist influences in mosques.

Hindus and Sikhs

Hindus and Sikhs both immigrated to Britain from India. Hinduism is the majority religion in the Republic of India, but Hindu immigration was considerably smaller than Muslim influx. According to the 2011 Census, there are about 800,000 **Hindus** in Great Britain, which represents an increase of more than 200,000 since 2001. However, most experts believe that the increase mostly comes from the fact that more of them declared their religion to Census officers. A significant proportion of Hindu immigrants were wealthy, middle-class families who looked for better opportunities in Britain, and their children became professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and university professors. Hindus do not separate themselves from the rest of society as much as Muslims do; they tend to integrate quickly and easily with mainstream society, while maintaining their cultural identity.

Sikhs are a special religious group, centred in Northern India. Their religion, which uses elements of Hinduism and Islam, developed in the 16th and 17th centuries. Religious Sikh men are easy to recognize since they wear a turban and they do not cut their hair, beard or moustache for religious reasons. They immigrated mostly to London and the West Midlands after World War II, and worked hard to emerge from poverty. According to the 2011 Census,

---

[167] *Salman Rushdie* (born 1947): British writer, who was born in Bombay, India, into a Muslim family. His most successful novel was *Midnight's Children* (1981), which takes place in the Indian Subcontinent. He is considered one of the greatest living novelists in English literature.

[168] *cleric*: In modern English, this word is typically used for non-Christian religious leaders, especially for Muslims.

there are about 420,000 Sikhs in Great Britain. They are a peaceful and tolerant minority, who do not come into conflict with the majority society.

Key concepts

Act of Supremacy

agnostic

Anglican Communion

Anglo-Catholic

Archbishop of Canterbury / Archbishop of York

Archbishop of Westminster

atheist

Baptists

Book of Common Prayer

broad church

Church of England / Anglican Church

Church of Scotland / Presbyterian Church

Congregationalists

Dissenters / Nonconformists

established church

Evangelical

Free Churches

Hindu / Hinduism

King James Version / Authorized Version

low church ←→ high church

Methodists / John Wesley

Muslim / Islam

parish

Puritan

Quakers

rector / vicar

secular / secularization

Sikh

Test Act