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Л. А. Ласица, О. В. Евстафияди

## **GREAT BRITAIN: GEOGRAPHY, POLITICS, CULTURE**

Рекомендовано Ученым советом федерального государственного бюджетного образовательного учреждения высшего профессионального образования «Оренбургский государственный университет» в качестве учебного пособия для студентов, обучающихся по программам высшего профессионального образования по направлению подготовки 032700.62 Филология

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Любовь Ласица

**Great Britain: geography,  
politics, culture**

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**Ласица Л. А.**

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Учебное пособие содержит страноведческий материал об истории, географии, политической жизни, культуре Великобритании, а также контрольные вопросы, тесты и задания для практических занятий по дисциплине «География и культура страны основного иностранного языка».

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# Содержание

Введение	5
1 The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: country and people	6
1.1 Geographical position	6
1.2 Names	7
1.3 Statistics	8
1.4 General knowledge about four countries and their people	9
1.5 National symbols of the UK and four countries (the national flag; the Coats of Arms, the national anthem, national holidays and national emblems)	11
1.6 Exercises	17
2 History of Britain: from Early Britain to the Middle Ages	21
2.1 Britain B.C	21
2.2 Early Britain. The Celtic Tribes	22
2.3 The Roman Conquest of Britain	23
2.4 Roman influence in Britain	24
2.5 The Middle Ages. The Anglo-Saxon Conquest of Britain	25
2.6 The Norman Invasion	26
2.7 The medieval period (1066 – 1485)	27
2.8 Exercises	28
3 History of Britain: from the Middle Ages to the Modern Times	32
3.1 The late Middle Ages (13th – 15th century)	32
3.2 The sixteenth century	34
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	35

# **Л. А. Ласица**

## **Great Britain: geography, politics, culture**

### **Введение**

Целью освоения дисциплины «География и культура страны основного иностранного языка» является получение представления о географии, государственном устройстве, культуре, быте, традициях народов, говорящих на изучаемом языке, основываясь на концептуальных и культурологических типах информации о странах изучаемого языка, их истории, социально-культурных особенностях, традициях и быте, а также о языке как отражении и фиксации культуры и о культуре сквозь призму языка. Учебное пособие содержит страноведческий материал об истории, географии, политической жизни, культуре Великобритании, а также контрольные вопросы, тесты и задания для практических занятий по дисциплине «География и культура страны основного иностранного языка».

Изучение дисциплины необходимо для реализации требований, установленных в федеральном государственном образовательном стандарте высшего профессионального образования по направлению подготовки 032700.62 Филология (профиль Зарубежная филология).

Курс рассчитан на 72 часа аудиторной и самостоятельной работы, из которых 34 часа отводится на проработку и повторение лекционного материала учебников и учебных пособий, подготовку к практическим занятиям, коллоквиумам, рубежному контролю и зачету.

Данное учебное пособие разработано в соответствии с рабочей программой дисциплины и предназначено для изучения разделов 1 – 5: «Введение в курс «География и культура страны изучаемого языка», «Государственное устройство, национальные символы Соединенного королевства Великобритании и Северной Ирландии», «Особенности географического положения Соединенного королевства Великобритании и Северной Ирландии», «СМИ, образование, здравоохранение и религия» и «Государственное устройство».

# **1 The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland: country and people**

## **1.1 Geographical position**

On the map you can see that the UK lies to the north-west of Europe. There are 2 large islands and several smaller ones. Collectively they are known as the British Isles. The largest island is called Great Britain. The other large one is called Ireland. Ireland is divided into Northern Ireland (Ulster) and the Irish Republic. The UK also includes more than 5000 smaller islands.

Politically speaking there are 2 states in the British Isles. The first is the Irish Republic or Eire, which governs the most part of Ireland and the other state controls the rest of the British Isles. Its official name is The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Its geographical position is advantageous as it is washed by the Atlantic Ocean in the west, the North Sea in the east. Great Britain is separated from the continent by the English Channel and the Strait of Dover.

On the one hand the kind of isolation of the country makes its geographical position different from European countries; on the other hand it has influenced the formation of the main characteristic feature of British people. That is their love for privacy.

## 1.2 Names

The official name of the country is The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

It has several shorter names:

- The United Kingdom – used at European vision of Song Contest, at the United Nations and in the European Parliament;

- the UK – used in every day speech;

- Great Britain – heard in the Olympic Games;

- GB is written on stickers on cars;

- Britain – used in writing and speaking;

- Albion – a word used in some poems. It was the original Roman name for Britain. It may come from the Latin word *albus*, meaning white. The white chalk cliffs around Dover on the south coast are the first thing to be seen when you cross the sea from the European land.

- Britannia – the name that Romans gave to their southern British province (which covered the area of present-day England).

## 1.3 Statistics

The UK occupies the territory of 244 830 sq. km. Its population (statistical data of 2007) is 61 million people (table 1).

Table 1

<b>Countries</b>	<b>Population, mln</b>	<b>Nationalities, %</b>
England	51,1	The English – 81,5
Scotland	5,1	The Scotts – 9,6
Wales	3	The Welsh – 1,9
Northern Ireland	1,8	The Irish – 2,4
UK total	61	Others – 2,8

Compare with the following data: population of Russia – 142 mln; population of Germany – 81,8 mln; population of France – 65,4 mln.

Languages which are spoken in the UK are English, Scottish, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish.

The capital of the UK is London. The largest cities are London (7,64 mln.), Birmingham (2,27 mln.), Manchester (2,250 mln.).

The UK is a constitutional monarchy. The head of state is the Queen – Elizabeth II.

The currency unit is Great Britain pound (GBP), which consists of 100 pence. The statistics shows that the country is not large, but the majority of people lives in England (the part of island conquered by Anglo-Saxons) and speaks English. The other parts of the UK (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) are much smaller than the dominant one.



## 1.4 General knowledge about four countries and their people

There are 4 countries that the UK consists of. They are England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. England is the largest and most populated part of the UK. The capital of England and the UK is London.

Scotland is the most northern of four countries in the UK. It occupies the territory of about 80 thousand sq. km. and is not so densely populated as England. The capital of Scotland is Edinburgh.

Another constituent part of the UK is Wales, situated along the western side of the island. The capital of Wales is Cardiff.

Northern Ireland is the smallest part of the UK and occupies the north-east of the island of Ireland, only one-sixth of its territory. The capital of Northern Ireland is Belfast.

There are four nations on the British Isles: English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish. They are different.

If you remember from history of Britain, the four nations were different racially. The people in Ireland, Wales and highland Scotland belonged to Celtic Race; those in England and lowland Scotland were mainly of Germanic origin. This difference was reflected in the languages they spoke. People in the Celtic areas spoke Celtic languages: Irish, Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh. People in the Germanic areas spoke Germanic dialects (including the one which has developed into modern English). The nations tended to have different economic, social and legal systems.

In 1800 the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland became a single state when the Irish Parliament was joined with the Parliament for England, Scotland, and Wales in Westminster. However, in 1922, most of Ireland became a separate state.

Today these differences have not completely disappeared. People of 4 nations feel their identity very strongly. It is safest to use Britain when you talk about where they live and British as the adjective to describe their nationality.

**The signs of national identity** of people who live in four countries of the UK are the following (see table 2).

**Characteristic names** (both surnames and first names). The prefix 'Mac' or 'Mc' in surnames (such as McCall, MacCarthy, MacDonald) is always either Scottish or Irish. The prefix 'O' (as in O'Brien, O'Hara) is distinctly Irish. The prefix 'P' can be found in many Welsh surnames (Prichard). A very large number of surnames (for example, Davis, Evans, Jones, Lloyd, Morgan, Price, Rees, Williams) suggest Welsh origin. The most common surname in both England and Scotland is actually 'Smith'. The prefix 'Mac' means 'son of' and people with this name usually feel they belong to the same family or clan. 'O' means 'the family of'. The Prefix 'P' comes from the Welsh word 'ap (or ab)', which also means 'son of'. Thus for example a Welsh surname Prichard is the same as English Richardson (the son of Richard).

First names can also be indicative. The Scottish form of 'John' is 'Ian' and its Irish form is 'Sean' (although all three names are common throughout Britain).

There are also nicknames for Scottish, Irish and Welsh men. For example, you can address a Scottish friend as 'Jock', whatever his first name is. Irishmen are called 'Paddy' or 'Mick' and Welshmen are known as 'Dai' or 'Taffy'. If the person is not a friend the nickname can sound rather insulting.

**National dress.** Perhaps the most famous national costume in Britain is the Scottish kilt with its distinctive tartan pattern. The kilt is a woollen skirt with a lot of vertical pleats. The kilt is worn around the waist, with the pleats at the back and the ends crossed over at the front and secured with a pin. Each Scottish Clan or family has its own distinctive tartan pattern, made up of different colours.

Sometimes tartan trousers or trews are worn instead of a kilt.

Women do not have their own distinctive national dress in Scotland, although tartan fabrics are widely used in clothing, and the kilt is also worn by women.

Although England is a country rich in folklore and traditions, it has no definite 'national' costume. The most well-known folk costumes are those of the Morris dancers. During the summer months people can see them in many country villages performing folk dances that once held ritualistic and magical meanings associated with the awakening of the earth.

The costume varies from team to team, but basically consists of white trousers, a white shirt, a pad of bells worn around the calf of the leg, and a hat made of felt or straw, decorated with ribbons and flowers. The bells and ribbons are said to banish harm and bring fertility.

Welsh National dress is not as famous as Scottish National dress. Still they do have a National women's costume, in fact there isn't really a National costume for men although recently a tartan has been created and tartan trousers or kilts are often worn.

The Welsh National Costume for women was designed by an influential lady, Lady Llanover, who lived in Gwent South Wales.

The Welsh costume consists of a tall hat, a long frilled white cap worn under the hat, a white blouse, a red flannel shawl, a long skirt made of wool with a black and white chequered pattern, a starched white apron sometimes edged with lace, black woolen stockings, and black shoes.

Early Irish dress, based on Gaelic and Norse costumes, consisted of trews for men, worn with a fringed cloak, or a short tunic for both men and women, worn with a fringed cloak. Saffron yellow is an important feature of Irish costume. This style of dressing was prohibited in the 16th century to suppress the distinctive Irish dress and so overcome Irish reluctance to become part of England. A strong tradition of wearing this folk costume is not observed in Northern Ireland today.

The traditional Irish costume is now associated with the bright flamboyant costumes worn by traditional Irish dancers.

**N ational character.** There are certain stereotypes of national character which are well-known in different countries.

British people are considered to be reserved, polite, well-bred and they love privacy. People of each country (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland) have their own characteristic features that make them different from each other.

The English are said to be cold, polite, quiet, but possessing a great sense of humour, a special 'English type' of humour, often difficult to understand for foreigners. The English are known to be very conservative in their political and social views.

The Scots have a reputation for being careful with money; they are more selfconscious about their nationality than the Englishmen. The Welsh are highly-gifted in the art of poetry and drama. They speak fluently and confidently. The Welsh are a nation of singers. The Irish are supposed to be great talkers.

**N ational musical instruments.** The harp is a musical instrument of both Ireland and Wales. The bagpipes are regarded as distinctively Scottish (though a smaller type is also used in traditional Irish music). The Northumbrian small pipes are considered to be English.

The four nations who live in the UK differ from each other, perhaps that is why when they are asked who they are they are proud to answer – at first they are the English (or the Welsh, or Scotsmen or the Irish) and only then they are the British or the citizens of the UK.

## 1.5 National symbols of the UK and four countries (the national flag; the Coats of Arms, the national anthem, national holidays and national emblems)

**Flag** is a visiting card of any country, which symbolizes its sovereignty and reflects its history. In the 14-th century the first national flag was St George's cross – a red cross on a white background, as St George is a patron saint of England.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century was time when relations between England and Scotland changed. These two countries were united by Jacob Stuart in 1603. The national symbols had to be changed. It was necessary to combine two crosses: a red cross on a white background of St George's flag and a white cross on a blue background (St Andrew's cross – flag of Scotland). This new flag was created and became national in 1606 and was called 'Union Jack'.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of January in 1801 the union of England and Ireland was claimed. It was necessary to make changes in the National flag and Emblem. This time the flag got new red diagonal lines from St Patrick's cross. Since 1801 the flag wasn't changed and it's possible to see it on the flags of former British colonies.

So the national flag of the UK is The Union Jack. It is the combination of the cross of St. George, of St. Andrew, of St. Patrick.

The origin of the term 'Union Jack' is uncertain. It may come from the name of Jacob Stuart (James I) who originated the first union in 1603. Jack is a short name of Jacob. Another alternative is that the name may be derived from a jack, a small flag at the bowsprit flown only by ships of the Royal Navy during the reign of Charles II (1660 – 1685); the term 'jack' once meant small.

The Welsh dragon does not appear on the flag because when the first Union Flag was created in 1606, Wales was already united with England from the 13th century. Wales was a Principality instead of a Kingdom.

In November 2007, a Welsh MP, Ian Lucas, asked parliament why Wales is not represented in the Union Jack. He thought it wrong, that the British flag, so-called Union Jack, includes now flags only of three countries – England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In his opinion, in new design of a flag there should be a symbol of Wales – a red dragon. Now you can see Ian Lucas' version of the Union flag with Wales represented.

Representatives of conservative party declared that his initiative would not receive support. However the minister of culture of Great Britain – laborite Margaret Hodge supported the idea of changing the design of the British flag. But till now this question hasn't been discussed in the government.

**The Coat of Arms** of the UK is one of the national symbols (picture 1).

On the left, the shield is supported by the English Lion. On the right it is supported by the Unicorn of Scotland. (The unicorn is chained because in mediaeval times a free unicorn was considered a very dangerous beast (only a virgin could tame a unicorn)).

The Royal Arms we see today appeared over nine centuries ago, when Richard the Lion heart chose three lions to represent England.



Picture 1 – The Coat of Arms of the UK

The main element of the Arms is the shield which is divided into four quarters. The first and fourth quadrants represent England and contain three gold lions passant (in plain English, three gold lions with their right forepaws raised and their heads facing the viewer on a red field; the second quadrant represents Scotland contains a red lion rampant on a gold field; the third quadrant represents Ireland and contains the gold harp of Ireland on a blue field. Wales is not represented on the shield and Coat of Arms because it was recognized as a Principality.

The Royal Coat of Arms contains the motto of British Monarchs and the motto of the Order of the Garter. The motto of the Sovereign is 'Dieu et mon Droit' (French for 'God and my right').

The motto was first used by King Richard I in 1198 and adopted as the royal motto of England in the time of Henry VI. The motto appears below the shields of the Royal Coat of Arms.

The motto of the Order of the Garter is 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' (French for 'Evil to him who evil thinks'). Order of the Garter was the highest order of English knighthood, founded by Edward III in 1344. According to the tradition, the garter (a piece of elastic worn round the top of a stocking or sock in order to prevent it from slipping down) was that of the Countess of Salisbury, which the king placed on his own leg after it fell off while she was dancing with him. The king's comment to those present, 'Honi soit qui mal y pense' (shame be to him who thinks evil of it), was adopted as the motto of the order.

The national **anthem** is 'God Save the Queen'. The British National Anthem originated in a patriotic song first performed in 1745. It became known as the National Anthem from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

On official occasions the first verse is sung, as follows:

God save our gracious Queen!  
Long live our noble Queen!  
God save the Queen!  
Send her victorious,

Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us,  
God save the Queen.

The National Anthem is played:

- whenever the Queen makes a public appearance;
- by the British Broadcasting Corporation every night before closedown;
- at the end of all Remembrance Day services;
- Medal ceremonies for Team GB (representing all countries);
- England and Northern Ireland football matches (the Scottish use Flower of Scotland, the Welsh use Land of my Fathers).

The UK does not celebrate one particular **national holiday**. Each country of the UK has its own national day, which is celebrated in the honour of its patron saint. The national day of England is St. George's Day, celebrated on the 23<sup>d</sup> of April in the honour of St. George, the patron saint of England.

He is known as the conqueror of a dragon. According to the legend in the neighborhood of some pagan town there was a dragon which killed people just for fun. Every day he was brought a new victim: a young boy or girl. When it was time for a governor's daughter, St George was passing by and he decided to save the girl. And he did it. According to some versions the dragon was struck down with a pray and became obedient. It believed in the power of kindness and the girl brought it to the town. The citizens of the town were so delighted by the power of religion, that were christened. St George was known to be a knight in a white cape with a red cross on it.

This holiday is not a bank holiday and people work on this day. The flag of England is raised on St George's Day, some people wear a red rose or clothes with the images of the English flag.

The national day of Wales is St. David's Day, celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March in honour of St David, the patron saint of Wales.

He was a Celtic monk, who lived in the sixth century. He spread the word of Christianity across Wales. The most famous story about Saint David tells how he was preaching to a huge crowd and the ground is said to have risen up, so that he was standing on a hill and everyone had a better chance of hearing him.

St David's Day is commemorated by the wearing of daffodils or leeks. On St David's Day, some children in Wales dress in their national costume. The national flag of Wales, depicting a fiery red dragon against a green and white background, is also flown.

The national day of Scotland is St Andrew's Day, celebrated on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November. St. Andrew was one of Christ's twelve apostles. Some of his bones are said to have been brought to what is now St. Andrews in Fife during the 4th century. Since medieval times the X-shaped cross upon which St. Andrew was supposedly crucified has been the Scottish national symbol.

The national day of Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland is St. Patrick's Day, celebrated on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March. Saint Patrick was a patron saint of Ireland and the founder of Irish Christian church. They say he lived in the end of 4<sup>th</sup> – in the beginning of 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. The most famous story about Saint Patrick is him driving the snakes from Ireland. The day is marked by the wearing of shamrocks.

St Patrick's Day is celebrated with parades in the large cities; people wear the green and drink Guinness traditional drink of Ireland). Guinness is another symbol of St Patrick's day.

National days are not celebrated in the same extent as National Days are in a number of other countries. Only St Patrick's Day in Northern Ireland (and the republic of Ireland) and St Andrew's Day in Scotland (from 2007) are taken as an official holiday. All the other national days are normal working days.

Each of the constituent countries of the United Kingdom has a traditional **national floral symbol**. The national emblem of the United Kingdom is the red rose.



The national flower of England is rose. The flower has been adopted as England's emblem since the time of the Wars of the Roses – Civil wars (1455 – 1485) between the royal house of Lancaster (whose emblem was a red rose) and the royal house of York (whose emblem was a white rose).



The national flower of Wales is the daffodil, which is traditionally worn on St. David's Day. The vegetable called leek is also considered to be a traditional emblem of Wales. There are many explanations of how leek came to be adopted as the national emblem of Wales. One is that St David advised the Welsh, on the eve of battle with the Saxons, to wear leeks in their caps to distinguish a friend from an enemy. According to another legend St. David ate only bread and leek.



The national flower of Scotland is the thistle, a prickly-leaved purple flower which was first used in the 15th century as a symbol of defense. According to the legend it saved the country from enemies. Once a boat with Scandinavian Vikings landed on the Scottish shore in order to rob Celtic villages. A group of Scottish soldiers moved to meet the enemy on their way to the village and in the evening the Scots decided to spend night in the field because they didn't expect Vikings attack at night. But cunning enemies wanted to kill all Scots when they were sleeping, so Vikings walked barefoot to move quiet. But one of them stepped on a thistle and shouted with pain. It awoke the Scots and they could fight with Vikings. Since then it became a symbol of Scotland. It is used as an amulet of good luck.



The national flower of Northern Ireland is the shamrock, a three-leaved plant similar to clover. An Irish tale tells of how Patrick used the three-leaved shamrock to explain the Trinity. He used it in his sermons to represent how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit could all exist as separate elements of the same entity. His followers adopted the custom of wearing a shamrock on his feast day.



## 1.6 Exercises

### Exercise 1 Can you answer these questions?

- 1) What is the official name of Britain?
- 2) Which are the biggest and the smallest countries of the UK?
- 3) What animals are represented on the national Coat of Arms?
- 4) What is the name of the national flag?
- 5) What saints patronize each country of the UK?
- 6) What are the national plant symbols of each country of the UK?
- 7) Who is the head of the state?
- 8) What is the national currency unit in Great Britain?

### Exercise 2 Test yourself: choose the most suitable answer.

- 1 A patron Saint of England is...:
  - a) St George;
  - b) St Patrick;
  - c) St David;
  - d) St Andrew.
- 2 A symbolic plant of Wales is...:
  - a) A red rose;
  - b) Leek / a daffodil;
  - c) Thistle;
  - d) Shamrock.
- 3 Who is the current monarch?
  - a) King George;
  - b) Queen Elizabeth II;
  - c) Queen Elizabeth I;
  - d) Queen Elizabeth III;
- 4 What country is not presented on the National Coat of Arms?
  - a) Scotland;
  - b) Northern Ireland;
  - c) Wales;
  - d) England.
- 5 What is the national currency of the UK?
  - a) The euro;
  - b) The dollar;
  - c) The pound;
  - d) The ruble.
- 6 What animal is presented on the National Coat of Arms?
  - a) A dog;
  - b) A snake;
  - c) A Horse;
  - d) A Unicorn.
- 7 What is the national motto of the UK?
  - a) Be strong;
  - b) God and my right;
  - c) In God we trust;
  - d) God save the Queen.

8 What country is called Eire?

- a) The republic of Ireland;
- b) Northern Ireland;
- c) Wales;
- d) England.

9 When is St David's Day usually celebrated?

- a) March 1;
- b) November 30;
- c) March 17;
- d) April 23.

10 What is the English flag called?

- a) Union Patrick;
- b) Union Jack;
- c) Lines and Crosses;
- d) Uncle Sam.

**Exercise 3** Complete the table 2 with necessary information.

Table 2 – Symbols of Identity

<b>Name</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Northern Ireland</b>
<b>Capital</b>				
<b>Population</b>				
<b>Patron Saint</b>				
<b>Flag</b>				
<b>Plant</b>				
<b>Animal</b>				
<b>Surnames</b>	The most common Smith	Davis, Evans, Jones, Rees	Prefix 'Mac' 'Mc' MacDonald Smith	Prefix 'Mac' 'Mc' Prefix 'O' O'Hara
<b>First names</b>	John		Ian	Sean
<b>Nick names</b> Only by friends		Dai Taffy	Jock	Paddy Mick
<b>Clothes</b>				
<b>Musical instrument</b>				
<b>Characteristics</b> Stereotypes of national character		The Welsh –	The Scots –	The Irish-
<b>Old names of the countries (Roman names)</b>	These names are used today in scholarly	Cambria	Caledonia	Hibernia Erin-poetic name

<b>Name</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Northern Ireland</b>
	classifications and the names of organizations			The Emerald Island

Did you know?

- There are over 30,000 John Smiths in Britain.
- After the 1745 rebellion, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie, the government made it illegal for Scotsmen to wear kilts. The ban remained in force until 1832.
- English (official) and Gaelic are the main languages of Scotland.

- The official animal of Scotland is Unicorn.
- The motto of Scotland is ‘No one provokes me with impunity’.
- Scottish surnames are divided in two main categories, namely Gaelic names and Germanic names.
- The official languages of Ireland are Irish and English.
- The most popular purchases made by tourists in Ireland are blackthorn walking sticks, Guinness glasses, Waterford Crystal and Aran Isle sweaters.
- The Welsh are the direct descendants of the Roman-era inhabitants of England and Wales, who were displaced and confined to the hilly and rocky western fringe of Britain by the Anglo-Saxons in the 5th and 6th centuries. The English name for Wales originates from the Germanic word Walha, meaning stranger or foreigner, which is related to the word Gaul. The French and Italian word for "Wales" is Galles, while the Spanish is Gales.
- Welsh, a Brythonic Celtic language, is ancestral tongue of Welsh people. Nowadays 750,000 people claiming a self-reported competence in Welsh (21,7 % of the population of Wales).

## **2 History of Britain: from Early Britain to the Middle Ages**

### **2.1 Britain B.C**

About three thousand years B.C. many parts of Europe including the British Isles, were inhabited by a people called the Iberians. The Iberians used stone weapons and tools. They could polish stone and make smooth objects of stone.

In some parts of modern Britain one can see a number of huge stones standing in a circle. These are the monuments left by the earliest inhabitants of the country. The best-known stone-circle named Stonehenge dates from between 1900 and 1600 B. C. The stones are 8.5 metres high and weigh about 7 tons.

No one can tell how these large stones were moved, or from what places they were brought. Stonehenge is still a mystery to scientists.

There are a lot of legends connected with the Stonehenge. Some believed that the early British kings, killed by their enemies, were buried here; others think that Druids made it to house their pagan rites. Some say it was used for sun worship. It may have been a Temple for some form of worship – or a Court of Justice – or a Hall for ceremonial meetings of tribal chiefs.

## **2.2 Early Britain. The Celtic Tribes**

During the period from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B. C. a people called the Celts spread across Europe from the east to the west. Some Celtic tribes – the Iberians, the Picts, the Scots and the Britons –invaded Britain. The Picts penetrated into the mountains on the North; the Scots settled in the North beside the Picts. Powerful Celtic tribes, the Britons, held most of the country, and the southern half of the island was named Britain after them. The Iberians were unable to fight back the attacks of the Celts and were driven westwards into the mountains what is now Wales.

The Greeks were the first to mention the British Isles. They wrote about the Phoenicians, great sailors and traders, who used to come to the British Isles for tin. They called the British Isles the Tin Islands.

Julius Caesar described the country and its inhabitants in his ‘Commentaries on the Gallic War’. He tells us that the Celts were tall and blue-eyed. They wore long moustaches but no beards.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century B. C. they lived in tribes, and were ruled by chiefs, or kings, whom all the tribesmen obeyed. In war-time the Celts wore skins and painted their faces with a blue dye to look fierce. They were armed with swords and spears. The Celts fought fiercely in the battle.

## **2.3 The Roman Conquest of Britain**

Two thousand years ago while the Celts were still living in tribes the Romans were the most powerful people in the world. Roman society was divided into the class of slaves and the class of slave-owners. The slave-owners put down the uprisings of the slaves with the help of the army. The army also helped the slaveowners to protect their riches against foreign enemies and to conquer new lands and to seize more slaves. The Romans conquered all the countries around the Mediterranean Sea.

In 55 B. C. a Roman army of 10,000 men with Julius Caesar at the head crossed the Channel and invaded Britain. The Celts saw their ships approaching and rushed to attack the invaders in the sea. Their hair and moustaches were dyed red and their legs and arms were painted blue. With loud shouts they attacked the Romans and the well-armed Romans had to retreat to Gaul (France).

In 54 B. C, Caesar again came to Britain, this time with larger forces (25,000 men). The Celts fought bravely for their independence but they were not strong enough, in spite of their courage, to beat the Roman. The Romans defeated the Celts in several battles. Some of the chiefs submitted and promised to pay tribute to Rome. But the promised tribute was not paid.

Nearly a hundred years later, in 43 A. D. a Roman army invaded Britain and conquered the South-East. The Celts fought fiercely against the Romans who never managed to become masters of the whole island. They were unable to conquer the Scottish Highlands. From time to time the Picts and the Scots from the North managed to invade the Roman part of the island and burn their villages.

## 2.4 Roman influence in Britain

To defend their province the Romans placed their legions in Britain. Straight roads were built so that the legions might march quickly, whenever they were needed, to any part of the country. These roads were made so well that they lasted a long time and still exist today. Bridges of stone were constructed wherever a road crossed a river. Besides, to guard the province against the Picts and Scots who lived in the hills of Scotland, a high 'Hadrian's Wall' with forts was built in the North.

The civilized Romans were city dwellers, and as soon as they had conquered Britain they began to build towns, splendid villas, public baths as in Rome itself. Every Roman town had a drainage system and a good supply of pure water. Great tracts of forests were cleared, swamps were drained, and cornfields took their place.

But together with a high civilization the Romans brought exploitation and slavery to the British Isles. Rich Romans had villas in the country with large estates, which were worked by slaves. Prisoners of war were sent to the slave-market in the Roman Empire. The Romans made the free Celts clear forests, drain swamps, build roads, bridges and walls for defence. The noble Celts adopted the mode of life of their conquerors. They lived in rich houses and spoke Latin, the language of the Romans. But ordinary Celts lived in their tiny huts, they spoke their native Celtic tongue and they didn't understand the language of their rulers.

The Romans remained in Britain for about four centuries and during that time Britain was a Roman province, governed by Roman governors and protected by Roman legions.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century the uninterrupted struggle of slaves against their owners greatly weakened the Roman Empire. Early in the 5<sup>th</sup> century the Roman legions were recalled from Britain to defend the central provinces of the Roman Empire from the attacks of the barbarian Germanic tribes. They never returned to Britain.

Though the Romans lived for four centuries in Britain, their language didn't influence the English language. There are only several place names of Roman origin: Chester, Lancaster, Gloucester, which are variant of the Roman word castra (a military camp).



## **2.5 The Middle Ages. The Anglo-Saxon Conquest of Britain**

After the Roman legions left Britain the Celts remained independent but not for long. From the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century they had to defend the country against the attacks of Germanic tribes from the Continent. The Saxons and the Angles began to migrate to Britain. At first they only came to plunder. They landed from their boats, drove off the cattle, seized the stores of corn, and were off again to sea before the Celts could attack them. But after some time they returned again and again in larger numbers, and began to conquer the country.

The British natives fought fiercely against the invaders and it took the Angles and the Saxons more than a hundred and fifty years to conquer the country. The Celts went to the mountains in the west of the isle (now Wales) and settled there. In the course of the conquest many of the Celts were killed, some were taken prisoners and made slaves or had to pay tribute to the conquerors.

In the southern and the south-eastern parts of the country the Saxons formed a number of kingdoms – Sussex (the land of the South Saxons), Wessex (the land of the West Saxons, and Essex (the land of the East Saxons). Further north were the settlements of the Angles who had conquered the greater part of the country. In the North they founded Northumbria, Mercia was formed in the Middle, and East Anglia – in the east of England. The new settlers disliked towns, preferring to live in small villages. During the war they destroyed the Roman towns. The art of road-making was lost for many hundreds of years.

The Saxons and the Angles gradually united into one people and made up the majority of the population in Britain. Their customs, religion and language became predominant. Only the Celts who remained independent in the West, Scotland and Ireland spoke their native tongue. The conquerors called them ‘welsh’ which means foreigners.

In 829 under the rule of King Egbert all the small Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were united to form one kingdom which was called England from that time on.

Soon Anglo-Saxons had to defend their country against new enemies. The enemies were the Vikings who came from Scandinavia. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century they settled the extreme north and west of Scotland and some coastal regions of Ireland. King Alfred, Saxon king of Wessex fought them in the battle, but he couldn't drive them away and had to let them have part of the country, called Danelaw.

## **2.6 The Norman Invasion**

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century the Normans, a mixed Scandinavian and French people, living in the North of France, began to attack the coasts of England from Normandy. The English king who died in 1066 had no children and William, the Duke of Normandy, being a relative of the died king, wanted to become the king of England. So he began preparation for a war to fight for the Crown.

The Normans' army was much larger than Anglo-Saxon forces and they were greatly superior in quality. The Anglo-Saxon army consisted mainly of free peasants who fought on foot. Not all of them had weapons, many had pitchforks and axes. The Normans were well armed.

The Normans crossed the Channel in big sailing-boats and landed in the south of England, fought with Anglo-Saxons and won the victory. The battle between the Normans and the Anglo-Saxons took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1066 at a little village Hastings. William, Duke of Normandy, became the king of England and was called William the Conqueror, who ruled England for 21 years.

## 2.7 The medieval period (1066 – 1485)

Unlike the Germanic invasions, the Norman invasion was small-scale. There was no such thing as a Norman village or a Norman area of settlement. Instead, the Norman soldiers became the owners of some patches of land – and of the people living on it. A strict feudal system was imposed. Great nobles, or barons, were responsible directly to the king; lesser lords, each owing a village, were directly responsible to a baron. Under them were the peasants, tied by a strict system of mutual duties and obligations to the local lord, and forbidden to travel without his permission. The peasants were the English-speaking Saxons. The lords and the barons were the French-speaking Normans. This was the beginning of the English class system.

The Normans introduced the strong system of government that's why the Anglo-Norman kingdom was the most powerful political force in the British Isles. The authority of the English monarch gradually extended to other parts of these islands in the next 210 years. By the end of the thirteenth century, a large part of eastern Ireland was controlled by Anglo-Norman lords in the name of the English king and the whole of Wales was under his direct rule (at which time the custom of naming the monarch's eldest son the 'Prince of Wales' began). Scotland managed to remain politically independent in the medieval period, but was obliged to fight occasional wars to do so.

The cultural story of this period is different. Two hundred and fifty years after the Norman Conquest a Germanic language (Middle English) but not the Norman (French) language became the dominant one in all classes of society in England. Furthermore, the Anglo-Saxon concept of common law, but not Roman law, formed the basis of the legal system.

Despite English rule, northern and central Wales was never settled in great numbers by Saxon or Norman. As a result the (Celtic) Welsh language and culture remained strong. The Anglo-Norman lords of eastern Ireland remained loyal to the English king but, despite laws to the contrary, mostly adopted the Gaelic language and customs.

By the end of this period there was a cultural split in Scotland between the lowlands, where the way of life and language was similar to that in England, and the highlands, where (Celtic) Gaelic culture and language prevailed.

Parliament appeared in this period in England. The word 'parliament' comes from the French word parler (to speak), and was first used in England in the thirteenth century to describe an assembly of nobles called together by the king. In 1295, the Model Parliament set the pattern for the future by including elected representatives from urban and rural areas.

## 2.8 Exercises

### Exercise 1 Can you answer these questions?

- 1) Who were the first to inhabit the British Isles?
- 2) Which part of the British Isles was named Britain and why?
- 3) When did the army of Julius Caesar first invade Britain?
- 4) What was the function of 'Hadrian's Wall' during the Roman conquest?
- 5) What kingdoms were formed by the Germanic tribes?
- 6) When did the Norman invasion to Britain begin?
- 7) When did the first Parliament appear?

### Exercise 2 Test yourself: choose the most suitable answer.

- 1 What ancient tribes inhabited the British Isles B.C.?
  - a) the Celts;
  - b) the Saxons;
  - c) the Angles;
  - d) the Vikings.
- 2 Which part of the British Isles was named Britain?
  - a) Southern;
  - b) Northern;
  - c) Western;
  - d) Eastern.
- 3 Together with a high civilization the Romans brought... to the country.
  - a) Slavery;
  - b) Culture;
  - c) Destruction;
  - d) Christianity.
- 4 The Saxons formed several kingdoms in the... part of Britain?
  - a) north-eastern;
  - b) south-eastern;
  - c) south-western;
  - d) western.
- 5 What led the Anglo-Saxons kingdoms to unification?
  - a) idea about wealth;
  - b) task of defending the country;
  - c) cold weather;
  - d) good relations.
- 6 When did the Norman invasion to England begin?
  - a) 1066;
  - b) 829;
  - c) 1576;
  - d) 1606.
- 7 Who became the king of England after the Norman invasion?
  - a) William the Conqueror;
  - b) King Egbert;
  - c) Henry IV;
  - d) Henry VIII.
- 8 The Normans spoke ...and it was the language of the upper classes.

- a) English;
- b) German;
- c) French;
- d) Russian.

9 What is the most mysterious monument of the British past?

- a) Ben Nevis;
- b) Stonehenge;
- c) Hadrian Wall;
- d) Big Ben.

10 What was Robin Hood famous for?

- a) He was a very handsome man.
- b) He was the Norman's leader.
- c) He helped poor people.
- d) He was one of the British kings.

**Exercise 3** Complete the gaps in the text with the appropriate forms of the verbs given on the right.

### Roman Roads

Within four years of invading Britain in AD 47, the Romans had built over 1,000 miles of roads!

When they first \_\_\_\_\_, the Roman Army had to use **Arrive**  
the old grass and mud track ways which the Britons \_\_\_\_\_. **Use**  
These track ways were sometimes thousands of years old and  
often \_\_\_\_\_ up and down hills for reasons that nobody could **Go**  
remember. They \_\_\_\_\_ very difficult to travel along. **Be**

The Roman Army \_\_\_\_\_ better roads because it had to **Need**  
be able to move quickly to areas of trouble to keep the  
Britons under control. The Roman generals needed good

roads so that they \_\_\_\_\_ orders to the Roman soldiers **Can, send** who might be stationed in forts as far away as Hadrian's Wall. The roads were also important for moving supplies of food and weapons to the soldiers. In times of peace, good safe roads \_\_\_\_\_ more trade and more trade meant more taxes for **mean** the Emperor.

The army \_\_\_\_\_ the important task of planning and **give** building roads. These roads always \_\_\_\_\_ perfectly straight, **not run** they sometimes zigzagged up hills and often avoided obstacles. However, long stretches of Roman roads did run straight and this is what Roman roads \_\_\_\_\_ for. **remember**

**Exercise 4** Read the text and answer the questions:

1. List the reasons why the Roman Army built roads.
2. Which of these reasons do you think is the most important?
3. Explain in your own words what a Groma was and how it was used to build straight roads.
4. Why were Roman roads quick and safe to travel on?
5. Why was the surface of a Roman road curved?

### **So how did the Romans manage to build such straight roads?**

Roman engineers used an instrument called a Groma. This was a pair of boards fastened together into a cross shape. Lines with weights were hung from each corner so that they could get a straight line by lining up the weights with a pole a hundred meters or so away. In forest areas they built fires in a straight line and used the smoke as markers for the Groma.

Once the road had been planned the Roman soldiers dug two ditches on either side of the road to act as drains. The earth from these ditches was piled into the centre and rammed down. Stones were then gathered from the local area and laid down in different layers until they formed a hard surface that could take the weight of heavy carts. The surface of a Roman road was shaped into a camber so that rain water would run off into the ditches.

Roman roads were very quick and safe to travel large distances. The Roman soldiers were not the only people to use them. Merchants used them to carry goods all over the Roman Empire. The Romans built Britain's first proper roads. After the Romans left they were allowed to decay because people forgot how to rebuild and repair them. People continued to use the roads the Roman Army had built until 1745. Many modern roads are built along the original routes planned out by the Romans.

Did you know?

– Silbury Hill, in the English county of Wiltshire, is the largest man-made earthen mound in Europe. It was built about 4750 years ago.

– The stone circle at Avebury is the largest in the world. It was built between 5300 and 4600 years ago and covers 11 ha (28 acres). The outer circle is surrounded by a bank and ditch long of 1,5 km (1 mile).

– The so-called British Imperial system of measurement (English units in the USA) has its roots in Roman units. The Romans also counted in feet, which they divided in 12 inches (uncia in Latin, from which the English word is derived). 5 feet made a pace, and 1000 paces (mille passus) became a mile in English. The Roman gallon was the congius (worth 0,92 U.S. gallons). The word pint comes from Latin picta ("painted"), via the Old French pinte, and corresponded to a painted mark on a vessel indicating this measure. Other units like the pound only evolved in the Middle Ages.

– Colchester in Essex is the oldest recorded town in Britain, as well as the first Roman town and Roman capital of Britain. Colchester Castle has the largest keep ever built in Europe, having a land area 50 % bigger than the Tower of London.

– The Fossdyke, connecting the River Trent at Torksey to Lincoln, is the oldest canal in Britain. It was built by the Romans around 12 °CE and is still navigable today.

## **3 History of Britain: from the Middle Ages to the Modern Times**

### **3.1 The late Middle Ages (13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century)**

The fourteenth century was disastrous for Britain as well as most of Europe, because of the effect of wars and plagues (Black Death). Probably one-third of British population died of plague. Whole villages disappeared, and some towns were almost completely deserted until the plague itself disappeared. Plagues killed sheep and other animals in the century. It resulted in years of famine and by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the population in Britain decreased from 4 mln. people to 2 mln. It only began to grow again in the second half of the fifteenth century.

Britain and France suffered from the damages of war. In the 1330s England began a long struggle against the French Crown. In France villages were raided or destroyed by passing armies. The war between England and France lasted for 100 years and is known as the Hundred Years War. England fought with Scots and wanted to control Ireland and Wales, both of which were trying to become independent.

During the fourteenth century, towards the end of the Middle Ages, there was a continuous struggle between the king and his nobles. The first crisis came in 1327 when Edward II was deposed and cruelly murdered. Towards the end of the fourteenth century Richard II was the second king to be killed by ambitious lords. He had made himself extremely unpopular by his choice of advisers. Richard II had no children. There were two possible successors. One was the earl of March, the sevenyear-old grandson of Edward III's second son. The other was Henry of Lancaster, son of John of Gaunt (the 3<sup>d</sup> son of Edward III). It was difficult to say which had the better claim to the throne. But Henry was stronger. He won the support of other powerful nobles and took the crown by force. Richard died mysteriously soon after. Henry IV spent the rest of his reign establishing his royal authority. But although he passed the crown to his son peacefully, from that time and half a century later the nobility was divided between those who supported his family, the 'Lancastrians', and those who supported the family of the earl of March, the 'Yorkists'.

During the fifteenth century the throne of England was claimed by representatives of two rival groups. The Lancastrians, whose symbol was a red rose, supported the descendants of the Duke of Lancaster, and the Yorkists, whose symbol was a white rose, supported the descendants of the Duke of York. The struggle for power led to the 'Wars of the Roses' between 1455 and 1485. They ended when Henry VII defeated and killed Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field and were followed by a period of stability and strong government.

With the spread of literacy, cultural life in Britain naturally developed also. In the cities, plays were performed at important religious festivals. They were called 'mystery plays' because of the mysterious nature of events in the Bible, and they were a popular form of culture.

The language itself was changing. French had been used less and less by the Norman rulers during the thirteenth century. After the Norman Conquest English (the old Anglo-Saxon language) continued to be spoken by ordinary people but was no longer written. But 'Middle English', the language of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was very different from Anglo-Saxon. This was partly because it had not been written for three hundred years, and partly because it had borrowed so much from Norman French. By the end of the Middle Ages, English as well as Latin was being used in legal writing, and also in elementary schools.



Education developed enormously during the fifteenth century, and many schools were founded by powerful men. Such universities as Oxford and Cambridge and public schools (Eton and Winchester School) were founded in the middle ages.

## **3.2 The sixteenth century**

The power of the English monarch increased in this period.

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