

Текст для чтения

The United States of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

How did English history start?

About three thousand years Before Christ (BC) [bi'fo: kraist] people came from the north of Spain (the Iberian Peninsula) to many parts of Europe including the British Isles.

So, those people who lived on the territory of Great Britain in the earliest times were of the Iberian origin. The Iberians used stone weapons and tools.



One of the mysterious monuments of prehistoric Britain is Stonehenge. It was constructed before 2000 BC and is a trace of the ancestors of the British people. Stonehenge is a circle of huge stone slabs. It is situated in the southern part of England.

Why exactly it was built is unknown, but it may have religious and political significance. No one can tell for sure how these large stones were moved or from what places they were brought. Stonehenge is still a mystery to scholars and to all the descendants.

National symbols of the UK (plants)

England



The Tudor rose (the Rose of England) was adopted as a national emblem of England around the time of the Wars of the Roses (1455-1485) as a symbol of peace. It is a syncretic symbol in that it merged the white rose of the royal house of York and the red rose of the royal house of Lancaster. As such, it is seen on the dress uniforms of the Yeomen Warders at the Tower of London, and of the Yeomen of the Guard. It featured on the British Twenty Pence coin.

Scotland



The thistle has been the national emblem since it was adopted by King James III, in the 15th century. In the language of flowers, the thistle (like the burr) is an ancient Celtic symbol of nobility of character as well as of birth, for the wounding or provocation of a thistle yields punishment. For this reason the thistle is the symbol of the Order of the Thistle, a high chivalric order of Scotland.

Wales



The daffodil and the leek are symbols of Wales. The origins of the leek can be traced to the 16th century, while the daffodil became popular in the 19th century, encouraged by David Lloyd-George. There are many explanations of how the 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 friend from foe. As Shakespeare records in Henry V, the Welsh archers wore leeks at the battle of Agincourt in 1415. And the daffodil is traditionally worn on St David's Day each 1 March.

Northern Ireland



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.



London - The Capital of Great Britain

London is situated upon both banks of the River Thames, it is the largest city in Britain and one of the largest in the world. Its population is about 7 million people.

London consists of three parts: the City of London, the West End and the East End.

The City extends over an area of about 2.6 square kilometres in the heart of London. About half a million people work in the City but only less than 6000 live here. It is the financial centre of the UK with many banks, offices and Stock Exchange. But the City is also a market for goods of almost every kind, from all parts of the world.

The West End is the centre of London. Here are the historical palaces as well as the famous parks. Hyde Park with its Speaker's Corner is also here. Among other parks are Kensington Gardens, St. James's Park. In the West End is Buckingham Palace. Which is the Queen's residence, and the Palace of Westminster which is the seat of Parliament.

The best-known streets here are Whitehall with important Government offices. Downing Street, the London residence of Prime Minister and the place where the Cabinet meets. Fleet Street where most newspapers have their offices, Harley Street where the highest paid doctors live, and some others.

Trafalgar Square is named so in commemoration of Nelson's great victory. In the middle stands the famous Nelson Column with the statue of Nelson 170 feet high so as to allow him a view of the sea. The column stands in the geographical centre of the city. It is one of the best open air platforms for public meetings and demonstrations.

One of the "musts" for the sightseer are the Houses of Parliament, facing the Thames, on one side, and Parliament Square and Westminster Abbey, on the other. The House of Commons sits to the side of the Clock Tower (Big Ben), the House of Lords - to the Victoria Tower side.

Westminster Abbey is the crowning and burial place of British monarchs. It has its world famed Poet's Corner with memorials to Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, the Bronte's sisters. Tennyson. Longfellow, Wordsworth, Burns, Dickens, Thackeray, Hardy, Kipling and other leading writers. Only a few however, are actually buried there.

The name "West End" came to be associated with wealth, luxury, and goods of high quality. It is the area of the largest department stores, cinemas and hotels. There are about 40 theatres, several concert halls, many museums including the British Museum, and the best art galleries.

It is in the West End where the University of London is centred with Bloomsbury as London's student quarter.

The Port of London is to the east of the City. This is the East End of London, unattractive in appearance, but very important to the country's commerce.

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