

CHRONOLOGY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Compiled by Martin Lipka

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55 B.C.

The Romans invade Britain (Julius Caesar). For several hundred years the Celts will come under Roman rule, and Britain will be a Roman province.

“0”

There is no such thing as the year zero! The year 1 B.C. (“before [the birth of] Christ”) is followed by the year 1 A.D. (“anno domini”, i.e. after the birth of Christ).

449 A.D.

Hengist and Horsa, Germanic chieftains, are called to Britain, where they establish the Anglo-Saxon rule.

c. 600

Pope Gregory sends out missionaries to win England for the Christian religion.

899

Death of King Alfred, who had defended Britain against the Vikings.

1066

After the Battle of Hastings the Normans, led by William the Conqueror, become the new masters in England. The

“Domesday Book” gives us a detailed picture of the subdued country.

1215

King John (a.k.a. John Lackland) is forced to sign the Magna Charta: The barons and the large cities gain a share of the king’s power.

1282

Edward I. completes the conquest of Wales but fails to conquer Scotland. During his reign Parliament becomes an important institution in the state.

1381

The Peasants’ Revolt, led by Wat Tyler.

1429

In the course of the Hundred Years’ War, Joan of Arc frees Orleans - English hopes to win the French throne come to nothing.

1534

Henry VIII. (Tudor): The Anglican Church is separated from Rome.

1588

The Spanish Armada is defeated (Sir Francis Drake). Under Queen Elizabeth I England becomes one of the most powerful countries in Europe - and on the seven seas.

1603

James I (Stuart) combines the English and the Scottish crown. At the same time Shakespeare writes his great dramas.

1649

Charles I is executed: Parliament has overthrown the Stuart monarchy.

1651

Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the victorious Puritans, launches the Navigation Act, which is the starting signal for the development of England's sea trade. But after Cromwell's death the Stuart kings return.

1679

The Habeas Corpus Act protects the freedom of the individual person.

1689

After the Glorious Revolution, King William of Orange and Queen Mary share the political power with Parliament.

1713

After stopping the aggressive foreign policy of Louis XIV, the balance of power in Europe is established (France, Austria, Prussia, Russia, with England as the umpire).

1763

England is on the winning side in the Seven Years' War. France is no longer a rival in North America and India.

1771

Richard Arkwright, who has improved Hargreaves's "Spinning Jenny" so that it can be propelled by water power, founds the first cotton mill (Cromford): The first step towards the textile industry.

1776

The thirteen American colonies declare their independence. But before long a new empire is won - above all in India.

1788

James Watt's steam engine is fully developed. It will be the ideal energy source of the Industrial Revolution.

1806

Napoleon tries in vain to defeat Britain by an economic war: In the end Britain is stronger than ever.

1815

Wellington leads the Allies in the final victory over Napoleon at Waterloo.

1825

Stephenson constructs the first real railway. Now the industrial age has a modern transport system.

1851

London: First World Fair in the Crystal Palace - the British show their industrial leadership in the world.

1877

Two years after Disraeli purchased the Suez Canal, Queen Victoria becomes Empress of India: the heyday of English imperialism. - At home, the majority of the male population is still excluded from parliamentary elections, despite several Reform Bills..

1914

The First World War sees Britain at the side of France against the German aggression.

1919

After the First World War, the right to vote is extended to all adults, and the British Empire is larger than ever; but there are also signs of trouble (e.g. in India, where Gandhi demands self-government).

1922

Ireland becomes an (almost) independent republic – but Northern Ireland (“Ulster”) remains a part of the United Kingdom.

1931

The Westminster Statute dismisses the “white” dominions into independence (Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand) but keeps them within the Commonwealth.

1938

At Munich Chamberlain betrays the Czech nation. But Britain realizes that the Appeasement policy only plays into the hands of the dictators.

1940

“The Blitz” over London - but the British nation, under Churchill’s leadership, does not give up.

1945

At the end of the Second World War, Britain is one of the victorious Allied Powers, but the world power status has been lost: The United Kingdom itself has suffered seriously from the strain of the bomb war and the armament costs; and the worldwide British Empire faces the first signs of dissolution when India demands full independence.

The first post-war election sweeps Labour into power, thus starting a period of social reform.

1952

When Queen Elizabeth II comes to the throne, Churchill and the Conservatives are back in office.

1956

The Conservative decline begins with the Suez Crisis (a last relapse into imperialism), and with the failure to join the continental countries in the foundation of the European Common Market one year later.

1960

In the late 50s and early 60s one African colony after the other is dismissed into independence. But the hopes for a revitalisation of the British Commonwealth of Nations do not come true.

1964

After 13 years of Conservative rule, Labour takes over under the leadership of Harold Wilson, and under the strong influence of the Trade Unions.

1969

The British Army is brought into Northern Ireland, but the conflict in Ulster becomes worse than ever.

1973

The Conservative government of Ted Heath eventually brings about Britain's entry into the EC (European Community).

1976

Two women from Northern Ireland are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their attempts to stop the civil war between the Protestant majority and the Catholic minority (with the British Army as a third party to make things even more complicated). But the killing goes on.

1979

After two more Labour governments, Margaret Thatcher, the "Iron Lady", leads the Conservatives into a new era of uninterrupted rule.

1981

Prince Charles marries Lady Diana - a heart-warming event in an otherwise disillusioned country.

1982

The military victory in the Falklands War with Argentina boosts Britain's pride and Mrs Thatcher's prestige, despite an unemployment rate of 3 million at home.

1985

The coal miners' strike breaks down after a full year of strike action. Union leader Arthur Scargill has challenged the "Iron Lady" - and lost. Britain's North continues to suffer from the permanent economic crisis, the South flourishes more than ever.

1992

Mrs Thatcher's successor, John Major, wins a fourth term for the Conservatives, but the British economy plunges into a recession, as the poor performance of the pound shows. Even the Royal Family seems no longer what it was.

1997

Tony Blair, who has led “New Labour” to a landslide victory, becomes Prime Minister.

Diana, Princess of Wales, dies in an accident. Although her marriage to Prince Charles has been divorced, she is mourned as if she had been the Queen.

2003

Britain follows the U.S.A. into the Iraq War despite overwhelming public opposition.

2009

Last year’s spectacular crash of the international finance markets develops into a worldwide economic crises. Britain, under Gordon Brown, and the pound sterling are severely hit.