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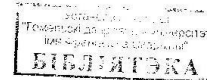
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РЕПОЗИТОРИЙ ГТУ ИМ. Ф. СКОРИНЫ

Введение

Начало 21 века отмечено бурным развитием культурологических связей и огромным интересом к изучению социокультурного языкового контекста. Все в большей мере стали преобладать взгляды на язык как на средство общения. Расширяются рамки в обучении общению на иностранном языке за счет включения элементов социокультурной коммуникации. Становится аксиомой высказывание о том, что "любой язык несет отпечаток культуры и менталитета, и это, в первую очередь, отражается на речевом этикете".

Хорошие навыки межкультурной коммуникации в значительной мере зависят от наличия у студентов не только устойчивых языковых навыков, но и достаточных социокультурных фоновых знаний и адекватного представления о культуре и мире тех людей, где данный язык функционирует, и в частности Великобритании. Формирование социокультурной компетенции, под которой понимается комплекс знаний о ценностях, верованиях, поведенческих образцах, обычаях, традициях, языке, достижениях культуры, собственных определенных обществу и характеризующих его, происходит в процессах социокультурного воспитания (процесса приобщения личности к культуре и народным традициям страны изучаемого языка) и обучения. На формирование комплекса знаний о культуре, традициях, государственном устройстве, социальной жизни Великобритании и умение использовать страноведческие знания в профессиональной деятельности и направлен курс лекций «Страноведение Великобритании».

Курс лекций состоит из двух частей. Во второй части содержатся сведения о национальных чертах характера британцев, характерных чертах их жизни и быта, национальной системе здравоохранения и социального обеспечения, средствах массовой информации.

Курс лекций «Страноведение Великобритании» представляет собой систематическое изложение широкого круга вопросов, входящих в систему социокультурных знаний о современной Великобритании и адресован студентам специальности 1- 02 03 06 01 «Английский язык».

1 Social Behaviour and Attitudes

1.1 National and Regional Identities

1.2 Social Class

1.3 British Identity: Multiculturalism, Conservatism, Individualism, the Love of Nature, the Love of Animals, Formality and Informality, Public Spiritedness and Amateurism

1.4 The Culture of Sport

1.1 National and Regional Identities

National ('ethnic') loyalties can be strong among the people in Britain whose ancestors were not English. For some people living in England who call themselves Scottish, Welsh or Irish, this loyalty is little more than a matter of emotional attachment. But for others, it goes a bit further and they may even join one of the sporting and social clubs for 'exiles' from these nations. These clubs promote national folk music, organize parties on special national days and foster a consciousness of doing things differently from the English. For people living in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the way that ethnic identity commonly expresses itself varies. People in Scotland have constant reminders of their distinctiveness. First, several important aspects of public life are organized separately, and differently, from the rest of Britain – notably, education, law and religion. Second, the Scottish way of speaking English is very distinctive. A modern form of the dialect known as Scots is spoken in everyday life by most of the working classes in the lowlands. It has many features which are different from other forms of English and cannot usually be understood by people who are not Scottish. Third, there are many symbols of Scottishness which are well-known throughout Britain.

However, the feeling of being Scottish is not that simple. This is partly because of the historical cultural split between highland and lowland Scotland. A genuinely Scottish Gaelic sense of cultural identity is, in modern times, felt only by a few tens of thousands of

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people in some of the western isles of Scotland and the adjoining mainland. These people speak Scottish Gaelic (which they call 'Gallie') as a first language.

1.1.1 What does it Mean to be Scottish?

On 25 January every year, many Scottish people attend 'Burns' suppers'. At these parties they read from the work of the eighteenth century poet Robert Burns (regarded as Scotland's national poet), wear kilts, sing traditional songs, dance traditional dances (called 'reels') and eat haggis (made from sheep's heart, lungs and liver).

Here are two opposing views of this way of celebrating Scottishness.

The people of Wales do not have as many reminders of their Welshness in everyday life. The organization of public life is identical to that in England. Nor are there as many well-known symbols of Welshness. In addition, a large minority of the people in Wales probably do not consider themselves to be especially Welsh at all. In the nineteenth century large numbers of Scottish, Irish and English people went to find work there, and today many English people still make their homes in Wales or have holiday houses there. As a result, a feeling of loyalty to Wales is often similar in nature to the fairly weak loyalties to particular geographical areas found throughout England (see below) – it is regional rather than nationalistic.

However, there is one single highly-important symbol of Welsh identity – the Welsh language. Everybody in Wales can speak English, but it is not everybody's first language. For about 20% of the population (that's more than half a million people), the mother-tongue is Welsh. For these people Welsh identity obviously means more than just living in the region known as Wales. Moreover, in comparison to the other small minority languages of Europe, Welsh shows signs of continued vitality. Thanks to successive campaigns, the language receives a lot of public support. All children in Wales learn it at school, there are many local newspapers in Welsh, there is a Welsh television channel and nearly all public notices and signs are written in both Welsh and English.

The question of identity in Northern Ireland is a much more

complex issue and is dealt with at the end of this chapter.

As for English identity, most people who describe themselves as English usually make no distinction in their minds between 'English' and 'British'. There is plenty of evidence of this. For example, at international football or rugby matches, when the players stand to attention to hear their national anthems, the Scottish, Irish and Welsh have their own songs, while the English one is just 'God Save the Queen' – the same as the British national anthem.

1.1.2 Geographical Identity

A sense of identity based on place of birth is, like family identity, not very common or strong in most parts of Britain – and perhaps for the same reason. People are just too mobile and very few live in the same place all their lives. There is quite a lot of local pride, and people find many opportunities to express it. This pride, however, arises because people are happy to live in what they consider to be a nice place and often when they are fighting to preserve it. It does not usually mean that the people of a locality feel strongly that they *belong* to that place.

A sense of identity with a large geographical area is a bit stronger. Nearly everybody has a spoken accent that identifies them as coming from a particular large city or region. In some cases there is quite a strong sense of identification. Liverpudlians (from Liverpool), Mancunians (from Manchester), Geordies (from the Newcastle area) and Cockneys (from London) are often proud to be known by these names. In other cases, identity is associated with a county. These are the most ancient divisions of England. Although their boundaries and names do not always conform to the modern arrangement of local government, they still claim the allegiance of some people. Yorkshire, in the north of England, is a notable example. Another is Cornwall, in the south-west corner of England. Even today, some Cornish people still talk about 'going to England' when they cross the country border – a testament to its ethnic Celtic history.

Many English people see themselves as either 'northerners' or 'southerners'. The fact that the south is on the whole richer than the north, and the domination of the media by the affairs of London and

the south-east, leads to resentment in the north. This reinforces the pride in their northern roots felt by many northerners, who, stereotypically, see themselves as tougher, more honest and warmer-hearted than the soft, hypocritical and unfriendly southerners. To people in the south, the stereotypical northerner (who is usually male) is rather ignorant and uncultured and interested only in sport and beer-drinking.

1.2 Social Class

Historians say that the class system has survived in Britain because of its flexibility. It has always been possible to buy or marry or even work your way up, so that your children (and their children) belong to a higher social class than you do. As a result, the class system has never been swept away by a revolution and an awareness of class forms a major part of most people's sense of identity.

People in modern Britain are very conscious of class differences. They regard it as difficult to become friends with somebody from a different class. This feeling has little to do with conscious loyalty, and nothing to do with a positive belief in the class system itself. Most people say they do not approve of class divisions. Nor does it have very much to do with political or religious affiliations. It results from the fact that the different classes have different sets of attitudes and daily habits. Typically, they tend to eat different food at different times of day, they like to talk about different topics using different styles and accents of English, they enjoy different pastimes and sports, they have different values about what things in life are most important and different ideas about the correct way to behave. Stereotypically, they go to different kinds of school.

An interesting feature of the class structure in Britain is that it is not just, or even mainly, relative wealth or the appearance of it which determines someone's class. Of course, wealth is part of it – if you become wealthy, you can provide the conditions to enable your children to belong to a higher class than you do. But it is not always possible to guess reliably the class to which a person belongs by looking at his or her clothes, car or bank balance. The most obvious

and immediate sign comes when a person opens his or her mouth, giving the listener clues to the speaker's attitudes and interests, both of which are indicative of class.

But even more indicative that *what* the speaker says is the way that he or she says it. The English grammar and vocabulary which is used in public speaking, radio and television news broadcasts, books and newspapers (and also – unless the lessons are run by Americans – as a model for learners of English as a foreign language) is known as 'standard British English'. Most working-class people, however, use lost of words and grammatical forms in their everyday speech which are regarded as 'non-standard'.

Nevertheless, nearly everybody in the country is capable of using standard English (or something very close to it) when they judge that the situation demands it. They are taught to do so at school. Therefore, the clearest indication of a person's class is often his or her accent. Most people cannot change this convincingly to suit the situation. The most prestigious accent in Britain is known as 'Received Pronunciation' (RP). It is the combination of standard English spoken with an RP accent that is usually meant when people talk about 'BBC English' or 'Oxford English' (referring to the university, not the town) or 'the Queen's English'.

RP is not associated with any particular part of the country. The vast majority of people, however, speak with an accent which is geographically limited. In England and Wales, anyone who speaks with a strong regional accent is automatically assumed to be working class. Conversely, anyone with an RP accent is assumed to be upper or upper-middle class. (In Scotland and Northern Ireland, the situation is slightly different; in these places, some forms of regional accent are almost as prestigious as RP).

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, the way that people wish to identify themselves seems to have changed. In Britain, as anywhere else where there are recognized social classes, a certain amount of 'social climbing' goes on; that is, people try to appear as if they belong to as high a class as possible. These days, however, nobody wants to be thought of as snobbish. The word 'posh' illustrated this tendency. It is used by people from all classes to mean 'of a class higher than the one I (the speaker) belong to' and

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it is normally used with negative connotations. To accuse someone of being posh is to accuse them of being pretentious.

Working-class people in particular are traditionally proud of their class membership and would not usually wish to be thought of as belonging to any other class. Interestingly, a survey conducted in the early 1990s showed that the proportion of people who describe themselves as working class is actually greater than the proportion whom sociologists would classify as such! This is one manifestation of a phenomenon known as 'inverted snobbery', whereby middle-class people try to adopt working-class values and habits. They do this in the belief that the working classes are in some way 'better' (for example, more honest) than the middle classes.

In this egalitarian climate, the unofficial segregation of the classes in Britain has become less rigid than it was. A person whose accent shows that he or she is working class is no longer prohibited from most high-status jobs for that reason alone. Nobody takes elocution lessons any more in order to sound more upper class. It is now acceptable for radio and television presenters to speak with 'an accent' (i.e. not to use strict RP). It is also notable that, at the time of writing, none of the last five British Prime Ministers went to an elitist school for upper-class children, while almost every previous Prime Minister in history did.

In general, the different classes mix more readily and easily with each other than they used to. There has been a great increase in the number of people from working-class origins who are homeowners and who do traditionally middle-class jobs. The lower and middle classes have drawn closer to each other in their attitudes.

1.3 British Identity: Multiculturalism, Conservatism, Individualism, the Love of Nature, the Love of Animals, Formality and Informality, Public Spiritedness and Amateurism

Generally speaking, British people invest about the same amount of their identity in their gender as people in other parts of northern

Europe do. On the one hand, society no longer overtly endorses differences in the public and social roles of men and women, and it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of sex. On the other hand, people still (often unconsciously) expect a fairly large number of differences in everyday behaviour and domestic roles.

In terms of everyday habits and mannerisms, British society probably expect a sharper difference between the sexes than most other European societies do. For example, it is still far more acceptable for a man to look untidy and scruffy than it is for a woman; and it is still far more acceptable for a woman to display emotions and be demonstrably friendly than it is for a man to do so.

As far as roles are concerned, most people assume that a family's financial situation is not just the responsibility of the man. On the other hand, they would still normally complement the woman, not the man, on a beautifully decorated or well-kept house. Everyday care of the children is still seen as mainly the women's responsibility. Although almost as many women have jobs as men, nearly half of the jobs done by women are part-time. In fact, the majority of mothers with children under the age of twelve either have no job or work only during school hours. Men certainly take a more active domestic role than they did forty years ago. Some things, however, never seem to change. A comparison of child-rearing habits of the 1950s and the 1980s showed that the proportion of men who never changed a baby's nappy had remained the same (40%)!

In general, the sharpest distinction between the expected roles and behaviour of the two sexes is found in the lower and upper classes. The distinction is far less clear among the middle classes, but it is still there.

At the public level there are contradictions. Britain was one of the first European countries to have a woman Prime Minister and a woman chairperson of debate in its Parliament. However, in the early nineties, only about 5% of MPs were women, only 20% of lawyers in Britain were women, less than 10% of accountants were women and there was one female consultant brain surgeon in the whole country.

At the 1997 election the proportion of women MPs increased sharply (to 18%) and nearly every institution in the country has opened its doors to women now. One of the last to do so was the

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Anglican Church, which, after much debate, decided in favour of the origination of women priests in 1993. However, there are a few institutions which, at the time of writing, still don't accept female members – for example, the Oxford and Cambridge Club in London, an associations for graduates of these two universities.

1.3.1 Attitudes

The British, like the people of every country, tend to be attributed with certain characteristics which are supposedly typical. However, it is best to be cautious about accepting such characterizations too easily, and in the case of Britain there are three particular reasons to be cautious. The first three sections of this chapter deal with them in turn and comment on several stereotyped images of the British.

1.3.2 Stereotypes and Change

Societies change over time while their reputations lag behind. Many things which are often regarded as typically British derive from books, songs or plays which were written a long time ago and which are no longer representative of modern life. One example of this is the popular belief that Britain is a 'land of tradition'. This is what most tourist brochures claim. The claim is based on what can be seen in public life and on centuries of political continuity. And at this level – the level of public life – it is undoubtedly true. The annual ceremony of the state opening of Parliament, for instance, carefully follows customs which are centuries old. So does the military ceremony of 'trooping the colour'. Likewise, changing of the guard outside Buckingham Palace never changes.

However, in their private everyday lives, the British as individuals are probably less inclined to follow tradition than are the people of most other countries. There are very few ancient customs that are followed by the majority of families on special occasions. The country has fewer local parades or processions with genuine folk roots than most other countries have. The English language has fewer sayings or proverbs that are in common everyday use than

many other languages do. The British are too individualistic for these things. In addition, it should be noted that they are the most enthusiastic video-watching people in the world – the very opposite of a traditional pastime!

There are many examples of supposedly typical British habits which are simply not typical any more. For example, the stereotyped image of the London 'city gent' includes the wearing of a bowler hat. In fact, this type of hat has not been commonly worn for a long time. Food and drink provide other examples. The traditional 'British' (or 'English') breakfast is a large 'fry-up' preceded by cereal with milk and followed by toast, butter and marmalade, all washed down with lost of tea. In fact, only 10% of the people in Britain actually have this sort of breakfast. Two-thirds have cut out the fry-up and just have the cereal, tea and toast. The rest have even less. What the vast majority of British people have in the mornings is therefore much closer to what they call a 'continental' (i.e. European) breakfast than it is to a 'British' one. The image of the British as a nation of tea-drinkers is another stereotype which is somewhat out of date. It is true that it is still prepared in a distinctive way (strong and with milk), but more coffee than tea is now bought in the country's shops. As for the tradition of afternoon tea with biscuits, scones, sandwiches or cake, this is a minority activity, largely confined to retired people and the leisured upper-middle class (although preserved in tea shops in tourist resorts).

Even when a British habit conforms to the stereotype, the wrong conclusions can sometimes be drawn from it. The supposed British love of queuing is an example. Yes, British people do form queues whenever they are waiting for something, but this does not mean that they enjoy it. In 1992, a survey found that the average wait to pay in a British supermarket was three minutes and twenty-three seconds, and that the average wait to be served in a bank was two minutes and thirty-three seconds. You might think that these times sound very reasonable. But *The Sunday Times* newspaper did not think so. It referred to these figures as a 'problem'. Some banks now promise to serve their customers 'within two minutes'. It would therefore wrong to conclude that their habit of queuing shows that the British are a patient people. Apparently, the British hate having to wait and have less patience than people in many other countries.

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1.3.3 English Versus British

Because English culture dominates the cultures of the other three nations of the British Isles, everyday habits, attitudes and values among the peoples of the four nations are very similar. However, they are not identical, and what is often regarded as typically British may in fact be only typically English. This is especially true with regard to one notable characteristic – anti-intellectualism.

Among many people in Britain, there exists a suspicion of intelligence, education and 'high culture'. Teachers and academic staff, although respected, do not have as high a status as they do in most other countries. Nobody normally proclaims their academic qualifications or title to the world at large. No professor would at large. No professor would expect, or want, to be addressed as 'Professor' on any but the most formal occasion. There are large sections of both the upper and working class in Britain who, traditionally at least, have not encouraged their children to go to university. This lack of enthusiasm for education is certainly decreasing. Nevertheless, it is still unusual for parents to arrange extra private tuition for their children, even among those who can easily afford it.

Anti-intellectual attitudes are held consciously only by a small proportion of the population, but an indication of how deep they run in society is that they are reflected in the English language. To refer to a person as somebody who 'gets all their ideas from books' is to speak of them negatively. The word 'clever' often has negative connotations. It suggests someone who uses trickery, a person who cannot quite be trusted (as in the expression 'too clever by half').

Evidence of this attitude can be found in all four nations of the British Isles. However, it is probably better seen as a specifically English characteristic not a British one. The Scottish have always placed a high value on education for all classes. The Irish of all classes place a high value on being quick, ready and able with words. The Welsh are famous for exporting teachers to other parts of Britain and beyond.

1.3.4 Multiculturalism

The third reason for caution about generalizations relates to the large-scale immigration to Britain from places outside the British Isles in the twentieth century. In its cities at least, Britain is a multicultural society. There are areas of London, for example, in which a distinctively Indian way of life predominates, with Indian shops, Indian clothes, Indian languages. Because in the local schools up to 90% of the pupils may be Indian, a distinctively Indian style of learning tends to take place.

These 'new British' people have brought widely differing sets of attitudes with them. For example, while some seem to care no more about education for their children than people in traditional English culture, others seem to care about it a great deal more.

However, the divergence from indigenous British attitudes in new British communities is constantly narrowing. These communities sometimes have their own newspapers but none have their own TV stations as they do in the United States. There, the numbers in such communities are large and the physical space between them and other communities is greater, so that it is possible for people to live their whole lives in such communities without ever really learning English. This hardly ever happens in Britain.

It is therefore still possible to talk about British characteristics in general (as the rest of this chapter does). In fact, the new British have made their own contribution to British life and attitudes. They have probably helped to make people more informal; they have changed the nature of the 'corner shop'; the most popular, well-attended festival in the whole of Britain is the annual Notting Hill Carnival in London at the end of August, which is of Caribbean inspiration and origin.

1.3.5 Conservatism

The British have few living folk traditions and are too individualistic to have the same everyday habits as each other. However, this does not mean that they like change. They don't. They may not behave in traditional ways, but they like symbols of

tradition and stability. For example, there are some very untraditional attitudes and habits with regard to the family in modern Britain. Nevertheless, politicians often cite their enthusiasm for 'traditional family values' (both parents married and living together, parents as the main source of authority for children etc) as a way of winning support.

In general, the British value continuity over modernity for its own sake. They do not consider it especially smart to live in a new house and, in fact, there is prestige in living in an obviously old one. They have a general sentimental attachment to older, supposedly safer, times. Their Christmas cards usually depict scenes from past centuries; they like their pubs to look old; they were reluctant to change their system of currency.

Moreover, a look at children's reading habits suggested that this attitude is not going to change. Publishers try hard to make their books for children up-to-date. But perhaps they needn't try so hard. In 1992 the two most popular children's writers were noticeably unmodern (they were both, in fact, dead). The most popular of all was Road Dahl, whose fantasy stories are set in a rather old-fashioned world. The second most popular writer was Enid Blyton, whose stories take place in a comfortable white middle-class world before the 1960s. They contain no references to other races or classes and mention nothing more modern than a radio. In other words, they are mostly irrelevant to modern life.

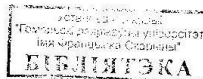
1.3.6 Being Different

The British can be particularly and stubbornly conservative about anything which is perceived as a token of Britishness. In these matters, their conservatism can combine with their individualism: they are rather proud of being different. It is, for example, very difficult to imagine that they will ever agree to change from driving on the left-hand side of the road to driving on the right. It doesn't matter that nobody can think of any intrinsic advantage in driving on the left. Why should they change just to be like everyone else? Indeed, as far as they are concerned, not being like everyone else is a good reason not to change.

Developments at European Union (EU) level which might cause a change in some everyday aspect of British life are usually greeted with suspicion and hostility. The case of double-decker buses is an example. Whenever an EU committee makes a recommendation about standardizing the size and shape of these, it provokes warnings from British bus builders about 'the end of the double-decker bus as we know it'. The British public is always ready to listen to such predictions of doom.

Systems of measurement are another example. The British government has been trying for years and years to promote the metric system and to get British people to use the same scales that are used nearly everywhere else in the world. But it has had only limited success. British manufactures are obliged to give the weight of their tins and packets in kilos and grams. But everybody in Britain still shops in pounds and ounces. The weather forecasters of the television use the Celsius scale of temperature. But nearly everybody still thinks in Fahrenheit. British people continue to measure distances, amounts of liquid and themselves using scales of measurement that are not used anywhere else in Europe. Even the use of the 24-hour clock is comparatively restricted.

British governments sometimes seem to promote this pride in being different. In 1993 the managers of a pub in Slough (west of London) started selling glasses of beer which they called 'swifts' (25 cl) and 'larges' (50 cl), smaller amounts than the traditional British equivalents of half a pint and a pint. You might think that the authorities would have been pleased at this voluntary effort to adopt European habits. But they were not. British law demands that draught beer be sold in pints and half-pints only. The pub was fined £3,100 by a court and was ordered to stop selling the 'continental' measures. British governments continue to put their clock back at the end of summer on a different date from every other country in Europe; they have so far resisted pressure from business people to adopt Central European Time, remaining stubbornly one hour behind; they continue to start their financial year not, as other countries do, at the beginning of the calendar year but at the beginning of April!



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1.3.7 The Love of Nature

Most of the British live in towns and cities. But they have an idealized vision of the countryside. To the British, the countryside has almost none of the negative associations which it has in some countries, such as poor facilities, lack of educational opportunities, unemployment and poverty. To them, the countryside means peace and quiet, beauty, good health and no crime. Most of them would live in a country village if they thought that they could find a way of earning a living there. Ideally, this village would consist of thatched cottages built around an area of grass known as a 'village green'. Nearby, there would be a pond with ducks on it. Nowadays such a village is not actually very common, but it is a stereotypical picture that is well-known to the British.

Some history connected with the building of the Channel tunnel provides an instructive example of the British attitude. While the 'chunnel' was being built, there were also plans to build new high-speed rail links on either side of it. But what route would these new railway lines take? On the French side of the channel, communities battled with each other to get the new line built through their towns. It would be good for local business. But on the English side, the opposite occurred. Nobody wanted the rail link near them! Communities battled with each other to get the new line built somewhere here else. Never mind about business, they wanted to preserve their and quite.

Perhaps this love of the countryside is another aspect of British conservatism. The countryside represents stability. Those who live in towns and cities take an active interest in country matters and the British regard it as both a right and a privilege to be able to go 'into the country' whenever they want to. Large areas of the country are official 'national parks' where almost no building is allowed. There is an organization to which thousands of enthusiastic country walkers belong, the Ramblers' Association. It is in constant with landowners to keep open the public 'rights of way' across their lands. Maps can be bought which mark, in great detail, the routes of all the public footpaths in the country. Walkers often stay at youth hostels. The Youth Hostels Associations is a charity whose aim is 'to help all,

especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside'. Their hostels are cheap and rather self-consciously bare and simple. There are more than 300 of them around the country, most of them in the middle of nowhere!

Even if they cannot get into the countryside, many British people still spend a lot of their time with 'nature'. They grow plants. Gardening is one of the most popular hobbies in the country. Even those unlucky people who do not have a garden can participate. Each local authority owns several areas of land which it rents very cheaply to these people in small parcels. On these 'allotments', people grow mainly vegetables.

1.3.8 The Love of Animals

Rosendale Pet Cemetery in Lancashire is just one example of an animal graveyard in Britain. It was started by a local farmer who ran over his dog with a tractor. He was so upset that he put up a headstone in memory of his dog. Now, Rosendale has thousands of graves and plots for caskets of ashes, with facilities for every kind of animal, from a budgie to a lioness. Many people are prepared to pay quite large sums of money to give their pets a decent burial (a trait they share with many Americans). As this example shows, the British tend to have a sentimental attitude to animals. Nearly half of the households in Britain keep at least one domestic pet. Most of them do not bother with such grand arrangements when their pets die, but there are millions of informal graves in people's back gardens. Moreover, the status of pets is taken seriously. It is, for example, illegal to run over a dog in your car and then keep on driving. You have to stop and inform the owner.

But the love of animals goes beyond sentimental attachment to domestic pets. Wildlife programmes are by far the most popular kind of television documentary. Millions of families have 'bird-tables' in their gardens. These are raised platforms on which birds can feed, safe from local cats, during the winter months. There is even a special hospital (St Tiggywinkles) which treats injured wild animals.

Perhaps this overall concern for animals is part of the British love of nature. Students indicating that some wild species of bird or

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mammal is decreasing in numbers become prominent articles in the national press. Thousands of people are enthusiastic bird-watchers. This peculiarly British pastime often involves spending hours lying in wet and cold undergrowth, trying to get a glimpse of some rare species.

1.3.9 Formality and Informality

The tourist view of Britain involves lots of formal ceremonies. Some people have drawn the conclusion from this that the British are rather formal in their general behaviour. This is not true. There is a difference between observing formalities and being formal in everyday life. Attitudes towards clothes are a good indication of this difference. It all depends on whether a person is playing a public role or a private role. When people are 'on duty', they have to obey some quite rigid rules. A male bank employee, for example, is expected to wear a suit with a tie, even if he cannot afford a very smart one. So are politicians. There was once a mild scandal during the 1980s because the Leader of the Opposition wore clothes on a public occasion which were considered too informal.

On the other hand, when people are not playing a public role – when they are being themselves – there seem to be no rules at all. The British are probably more tolerant of 'strange' clothing than people in most other countries. You may find, for example, the same bank employee, on his lunch break in hot weather, walking through the streets with his tie round his waist and his collar unbuttoned. He is no longer 'at work' and for his employers to criticize him for his appearance would be seen as a gross breach of privacy. Perhaps because of the clothing formalities that many people have to follow during the week, the British, unlike the people of many other countries, like to 'dress down' on Sundays. They can't wait to take off their respectable working clothes and slip into something really scruffy. Lots of men who wear suits during the week can then be seen in old sweaters and jeans, sometimes with holes in them. And male politicians are keen to get themselves photographed not wearing a tie when 'officially' on holiday, to show that they are really ordinary people.

This difference between formalities and formality is the key to what people from other countries sometimes experience as a coldness among the British. The key is this: being friendly in Britain often involves showing that you are not bothering with the formalities. This means not addressing someone by his or her title (Mr, Mrs, Professor etc), not dressing smartly when entertaining guests, not shaking hands when meeting and not saying 'please' when making a request. When they avoid doing these things with you, the British are not being unfriendly or disrespectful, they are implying that you are in the category 'friend', and so all the rules can be ignored. To address someone by his or her title or to say 'please' is to observe formalities and therefore to put a distance between the people involved. The same is true of shaking hands. Although this sometimes has the reputation of being a very British thing to do, it is actually rather rare. Most people would do it only when being introduced to a stranger or when meeting an acquaintance (but not a friend) after a long time. Similarly, most British people do not feel welcomed if, on being invited to somebody's house, they find the hosts in smart clothes and a grand table set for them. They do not feel flattered by this, they feel intimidated. It makes them feel they can't relax.

It is probably true that the British, especially the English, are more reserved than the people of many other countries. They find it comparatively difficult to indicate friendship by open display of affection. For example, it is not the convention to kiss when meeting a friend. Instead, friendship is symbolized by behaving as casually as possible. If you are in a British person's house, and you are told to 'help yourself' to something, your host is not being rude or suggesting that you are of no importance – he or she is showing that you are completely accepted and just like 'one of the family'.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the general amount of informality has been increasing. Buffet-type meals, at which people do not sit down at a table to eat, are a common form of hospitality. At the same time, the traditional reserve has also been breaking down. More groups in society now kiss when meeting each other (women and women, and men and women, but still never men and men!).

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1.3.10 Public Spiritedness and Amateurism

In public life Britain has traditionally followed what might be called 'the cult of the talented amateur', in which being too professionally dedicated is looked at with suspicion. 'Only doing your job' has never been accepted as a justification for actions. There is a common assumption that society is best served by everybody 'chipping in' – that is, by lots of people giving a little bit of their free time to help in a variety of ways. This can be seen in the structure of the Civil service. In the circumstances under which Members of Parliament do their work, in the use of unpaid non-lawyers to run much of the legal system, in some aspects of the education system, and in the fact that, until recently, many of the most popular sports in the country were officially amateur even at top level.

This characteristic, however, is on the decline. In all the areas mentioned above, 'professionalism' has changed from having a positive one. Nevertheless, some new areas of amateur participation in public life have developed in the last decade, such as neighbourhood watch schemes. Moreover, tens of thousands of 'amateurs' are still actively involved in charity work. As well as giving direct help to those in need, they raise money by organizing jumble sales, fetes and flag days (on which they stand in the street collecting money). This voluntary activity is a basic part of British life. It has often been so effective that whole countrywide networks have been set up without any government help at all. It is no accident that many of the world's largest and most well-known charities (for example, Oxfam, Amnesty International and the Save the Children Fund) began in Britain. Note also that, each year, the country's blood transfusion service collects over two million donations of blood from unpaid volunteers.

1.4 The Culture of Sport

Think of your favourite sport. Whatever it is, there is a good chance that it was first played in Britain, and an even better chance

that its modern rules were first codified in Britain. The public schools of the Victorian era believed that organized competitive games had many psychological benefits. These games appealed to, and developed, the British sense of 'fair play'. This concept went far beyond abiding by the written rules of a game. It also meant observing its unwritten rules, which governed behaviour before, during and after the game. You had to be a 'good loser'. To be a cheat was shameful, but to lose was just 'part of the game'. Team games were best, because they developed 'team spirit'.

Modern sport in Britain is very different. 'Winning isn't everything' and it's only a game' are still well-known sayings which reflect the amateur approach of the past. But to modern professionals, sport is clearly not just a game. These days, top players in any sport talk about having a 'professional attitude' and doing their 'job' well, even if, officially, their sport is still an amateur one. Nevertheless, the public-school enthusiasm for sport and the importance placed on simply taking part has had a lasting influence on the nature and role of sport in Britain today.

1.4.1 A National Passion

Sport probably plays a more important part in people's lives in Britain than it does in most other countries. For a very large number, and this is especially true for men, it is their main form of entertainment. Millions take part in some kind of sport at least once a week. Many millions more are regular spectators and follow one or more sports. There are hours of televised sport each week. Every newspaper, national or local, quality or popular, devotes several pages entirely to sport.

The British are only rarely the best in the world at particular sports in modern times. However, they are one of the best in the world in a much larger number of different sports than any other country (British individualism at work again). This chapter looks at the most publicized sports with the largest followings. But it should be noted that hundreds of other sports are played in Britain, each with its own small but enthusiastic following. Some of these may not be seen as a sport at all by many people. For most people with large

gardens, for example, croquet is just an agreeable social pastime for a sunny afternoon. But to a few, it is a deadly serious competition. The same is true of other games such as indoor bowling, darts or snooker. Even board games, the kind you buy in a toy shop, have their national champions. Think of any pastime, however trivial, which involves some element of competition and, somewhere in Britain, there is probably a 'national association' for it which organizes contests.

The British are so fond of competition that they even introduce it into gardening. Many people indulge in an informal rivalry with their neighbours as to who can grow the better flowers or vegetables. But the rivalry is sometimes formalized. Through the country, there are competitions in which gardeners enter their cabbages, leeks, onions, carrots or whatever in the hope that they will be judged 'the best'. There is a similar situation with animals. There are hundreds of dog and cat shows throughout the country at which owners hope that their pet will win a prize.

1.4.2 Gentlemen and Players

The middle-class origins of much British sport means that it began as an amateur pastime – a leisure-time activity which nobody was paid for taking part in. Even in football, which has been played on a professional basis since 1885, one of the first teams to win the FA (Football Association) Cup was a team of amateur players (the Corinthians). In many other sports there has been resistance to professionalism. People thought it would spoil the sporting spirit. Not until 1968 were tennis professionals allowed to compete at Wimbledon. In cricket there was, until 1962, a rigid distinction between 'gentlemen' (amateurs) and 'players' (professionals), even when the two played together in the team. These days, all 'first class' cricketers are professionals.

1.4.3 The Social Importance of Sport

The importance of participation in sport has legal recognition in Britain. Every local authority has a duty to provide and maintain

playing fields and other facilities, which are usually very cheap to use and sometimes even free. Spectator sport is also a matter of official public concern. For example, there is a law which prevents the television rights to the most famous annual sporting occasions, such as the Cup Final and the Derby, being sold exclusively to satellite channels, which most people cannot receive. In these cases it seems to be the event, rather than the sport itself, which is important. Every year the Boat Race and the Grand National are watched on television by millions of people who have no great interest in rowing or horse-racing. Over time, some events have developed a mystique which gives them a higher status than the standard at which they are played deserves. In modern times, for example, the standard of rugby at the annual Varsity Match has been rather low – and yet it is always shown live on television.

Sometimes the traditions which accompany an event can be as important as the actual sporting contest. Wimbledon, for instance, is not just a tennis tournament. It means summer fashions, strawberries and cream, garden parties and long, warm English summer evenings. This reputation created a problem for the event's organizers in 1993, when it was felt that security for players had to be tightened. Because Wimbledon is essentially a middle-class event, British tennis fans would never allow themselves to be treated like football fans. Wimbledon with security fences, policemen on horses and other measures to keep fans off the court? It just wouldn't be Wimbledon!

The long history of such events has meant that many of them, and their venues, have become world-famous. Therefore, it is not only the British who tune in to watch. The Grand National, for example, attracts a television audience of 300 million. This worldwide enthusiasm has little to do with the standard of British sport. The cup finals of other countries often have better quality and more entertaining football on view – but more Europeans watch the English Cup Final than any other. The standards of British tennis is poor, and Wimbledon is only one of the world's major tournaments. But if you ask any top tennis player, you find that Wimbledon is the one they really want to win. Every footballer in the world dreams of playing at Wembley, every cricketer in the world of playing at

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Lord's, Wimbledon, Wembley and Lord's are the 'spiritual homes' of their respective sports. Sport is a British export!

1.4.4 Cricket

Judging by the numbers of people who play it and watch it, cricket is definitely not the national sport of Britain. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, interest in it is largely confined to the middle classes. Only in England and a small part of Wales is it played at top level. And even in England, where its enthusiasts come from all classes, the majority of the population do not understand its rules. Moreover, it is rare for the English national team to be the best in the world.

When people refer to cricket as the English national game, they are not thinking so much of its level of popularity or of the standards of English players but more of the very English associations that it carries with it. Cricket is much more than just a sport; it symbolizes a way of life – a slow and peaceful rural way of life. Cricket is associated with long sunny summer afternoons, the smell of new-mown grass and the sound of leather (the ball) connecting with willow (the wood from which cricket bats are made). Cricket is special because it combines competition with the British dream of rural life. Cricket is what the village green is for! As if to emphasize the rural connection, 'first class' cricket teams in England, unlike teams in other sports, do not bear the names of towns but of countries (Essex and Yorkshire, for example).

Cricket, therefore, the national English game in a symbolic sense. However, to some people cricket is more than just a symbol. The comparatively low attendance at top class matches does not give a true picture of level of interest in the country. One game of cricket takes a terribly long time, which a lot of people simply don't have to spare. In fact there are millions of people in the country who don't just enjoy cricket but are passionate about it! These people spend up to thirty days each summer tuned to the live radio commentary of 'Test' (= international) Matches. When they get the chance, they watch a bit of the live television coverage. Some people even do both at the same time (they turn the sound down on the television

and listen to the radio). To these people, the commentators become well-loved figures. When, in 1994, one famous commentator died, the Prime Minister lamented that 'summers will never be the same again'. And if cricket fans are too busy to listen to the radio commentary, they can always phone a special number to be given the latest score!

1.4.5 Football

The full official name of 'soccer' (as it is called in the USA and sometimes in Britain) is 'association football'. This distinguishes it from other kinds such as rugby football (almost always called simply 'rugby'), Gaelic football, Australian football and American football. However, most people in Britain call it simply 'football'. This is indicative of its dominant role. Everywhere in the country except south Wales, it is easily the most popular spectator sport, the most-played sport in the country's state schools and one of the most popular participatory sports for adults. In terms of numbers, football, not cricket, is the national sport, just as it is everywhere else in Europe.

British football has traditionally drawn its main following from the working class. In general, the intelligentsia ignored it. But in the last two decades of the twentieth century, it has started to attract wider interest. The appearance of fanzines is an indication of this. Fanzines are magazines written in an informal but often highly intelligent and witty style, published by the fans of some of the clubs. One or two books of literary merit have been written which focus not only on players, teams and tactics but also on the wider social aspects of the game. Light-hearted football programmes have appeared on television which similarly give attention to 'off-the-field' matters. There has also been much academic interest. At the 1990 World Cup there was a joke among English fans that it was impossible to find a hotel room because they had all been taken by sociologists!

Many team sports in Britain, but especially football, tend to be men-only, 'tribal' affairs. In the USA, the whole family goes to watch the baseball. Similarly, the whole family goes along to cheer the

Irish national football team. But in Britain, only a handful of children or women go to football matches. Perhaps this is why active support for local teams has had a tendency to become violent. During the 1970s and 1980s football hooliganism was a major problem in England. In the 1990s, however, it seemed to be on the decline. English fans visiting Europe are now no worse in their behaviour than the fans of many other countries.

Attendances at British club matches have been falling for several decades. Many stadiums are very old, uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous. Accidents at professional football matches have led to the decision to turn all the country's football grounds into 'all-seater' stadiums. Fans can no longer stand, jump, shout and sway on the cheap 'terraces' behind the goals (there have been emotional farewells at many grounds to this traditional 'way of life'). It is assumed that being seated makes fans more well-behaved. It remains to be seen whether this development will turn football matches into events for the whole family.

1.4.6 Rugby

There are two versions of this fast and aggressive ball game: rugby union and rugby league. They are so similar that somebody who is good at one of them can quickly learn to become good at the other. The real difference between them is a matter of social history. Rugby union is the older of the two. In the nineteenth century it was enthusiastically taken up by most of Britain's public schools. Rugby league split off from rugby union at the end of the century. Although it has now spread to many of the same places in the world where rugby union is played, its traditional home is among the working class of the north of England, where it was a way for miners and factory workers to make a little bit of extra money from their sporting talents. Unlike rugby union, it has always been a professional sport.

Because of these social origins, rugby league in Britain is seen as a working class sport, while rugby union is mainly for the middle classes. Except in south Wales. There, rugby union is a sport for all classes, and more popular than football. In Wales, the phrase 'international day' means only one thing – that the national rugby

team are playing. Since 1970, some of the best Welsh players have been persuaded to 'change codes'. They are 'bought' by one of the big rugby league clubs, where they can make a lot of money. Whenever this happens it is seen as a national disaster among the Welsh.

Rugby union has had some success in recent years in selling itself to a wider audience. As a result, just as football has become less exclusively working class in character, rugby union has become less exclusively middle class. In 1995 it finally abandoned amateurism. In fact, the amateur status of top rugby union players had already become meaningless. They didn't get paid a salary or fee for playing, but they received large 'expenses' as well as various publicity contracts and paid speaking engagements.

1.4.7 Animal in Sport

Traditionally, the favourite sports of the British upper class are hunting, shooting and fishing. The most widespread form of hunting is foxhunting – indeed, that is what the world 'hunting' usually means in Britain. This is a popular pastime among some members of the higher social classes and a few people from lower social classes, who often see their participation as a mark of newly won status.

Killing birds with guns is known as 'shooting' in Britain. It is a minority pastime confined largely to the higher social classes; there are more than three times as many licensed guns for this purpose in France as there are in Britain. The birds which people try to shoot (such as a grouse) may only be shot during certain specified times of the year. The upper classes often organize 'shooting parties' during the 'season'.

The only kind of hunting which is associated with the working class hare-coursing, in which greyhound dogs chase hares. However, because the vast majority of people in Britain are urban dwellers, this too is a minority activity.

The one kind of 'hunting' which is popular among all social classes is fishing. In fact, this is the most popular participatory sport of all in Britain. Between four and five million people go fishing regularly. When fishing is done competitively, it is called 'angling'.

Apart from being hunted, another way in which animals are used

in sport is when they race. Horse-racing is a long-established and popular sport in Britain, both 'flat racing' and 'national hunt' racing (where there are jumps for the horses), sometimes known as 'steeple-chase'. The former because known as 'the sport of king' in the seventeenth century, and modern British royalty has close connections with sport involving horses. Some members of the royal family own racehorses and attend certain annual race meetings (Ascot, for example); some are also active participants in the sport of polo and show-jumping (both of which involve riding a horse).

The chief attraction of horse-racing for most people is the opportunity it provides for gambling. Greyhound racing, although declining, is still popular for the same reason. In this sport, the dogs chase a mechanical hare round a racetrack. It is easier to organize than horse-racing and 'the dogs' has the reputation of being the 'poor man's racing'.

1.4.8 Foxhunting

Foxhunting works like this. A group of people on horses, dressed in eighteenth century riding clothes, ride around with a pack of dogs. When the dogs pick up the scent of a fox, somebody blows a horn and the dogs, horses and riders all chase the fox. Often the fox gets away, but if not, the dogs get to it before the hunters and tear it to pieces. As you might guess in a country of animal-lovers, where most people have little experience of the harsher realities of nature, foxhunting is strongly opposed by some people. The League Against Cruel Sports wants it made illegal and the campaign has been steadily intensifying. There are sometimes violent encounters between foxhunters and protestors (whom the hunters call 'saboteurs').

1.4.9 Other Sports

Almost every sport which exists is played in Britain. As well as the sports already mentioned, hockey (mostly on a field but also on ice) is quite popular, and both basketball (for men) and netball (for women) are growing in popularity. So too is the ancient game of rounders.

The British have a preference for team games. Individual sports such as athletics, cycling, gymnastics and swimming have comparatively small followings. Large numbers of people become interested in them only when British competitors do well in international events. The more popular individual sports are those in which socializing is an important aspect (such as tennis, golf, sailing and snooker). It is notable in this context that, apart from international competitions, the only athletics event which generates a lot of enthusiasm is the annual London Marathon. Most of the tens of thousands of participants in this race are 'fun runners' who are merely trying to complete it, sometimes in outrageous costumes, and so collect money for charity.

There seem to be two main exceptions to this tendency to prefer team games. One is boxing, where some of the attraction lies in the opportunity for gambling. But while boxing is declining in popularity, the other exception, motor sports, is becoming more popular.

Questions

1 Strong local nationalism are felt and expressed in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Do these movements result from similar or different causes? Are they expressed in similar or different ways?

2 Are class divisions in Britain real or imagined? Do classes differentiate themselves in accent, clothes, money, habits or attitudes?

3 What are the ways in which British individualism is expressed?

4 Anti-intellectual attitudes exist in Britain. Why?

5 In what respects do the British display conservative attitudes?

6 What are the ways in which the love of nature is most commonly displayed?

7 How common is it for the British to engage in voluntary activities?

8 The British are perhaps less fashion-conscious than other Europeans. Why?

9 What are British attitudes to sport?

2 Religion in Britain

- 2.1 Freedom of Conscience
- 2.2 The Church of England
- 2.3 Other Conventional Christian Churches
- 2.4 Other Religions, Churches and Religious Movements

2.1 Freedom of Conscience

The vast majority of people in Britain do not regularly attend religious services. Many do so only a few times in their lives. Most people's everyday language is no longer, as it was in previous centuries, enriched by their knowledge of the Bible and the English Book of Common Prayer. It is significant that the most familiar and well-loved English translation of the Bible, known as the King James Bible, was written in the early seventeenth century and that no later translation has achieved similar status.

It therefore seems that most people in Britain cannot strictly be described as religious. However, this does not mean that they have no religious or spiritual beliefs or inclinations. Surveys have suggested that nearly three-quarters of the population in God and between a third and a half believe in concepts such as life after death, heaven and hell (and that half or more of the population believe in astrology, parapsychology, ghosts and clairvoyance). In addition, a majority approve of the fact that religious instruction at state schools is compulsory. Furthermore, almost nobody objects to the fact that the Queen is 'by the grace of God', or the fact that she, like all previous British monarchs, was crowned by a religious figure (the Archbishop of Canterbury) in a church (Westminster Abbey) and that the British national anthem (God Save Our Queen) invokes God's help in protecting her.

The general picture, as with so many aspects of British life, is of a general tolerance and passive approval of the status quo. The majority attitude towards organized religion is rather similar to that towards the monarchy. Just as there is no serious republican

movement in the country, so there is no widespread anti-clericalism. And just as there is no royalist movement either, so most people are not active participants in organized religion, but they seem to be glad it is there!

2.1.1 Religion and Politics

Freedom of religious belief and worship (and also the freedom to be a non-believer) is taken for granted in modern Britain. With the notable exception of Northern Ireland, a person's religion has almost no political significance. There are no important 'Christian' or anti-clerical political parties. Except perhaps for Muslims, there is no recognizable political pressure group in the country which is based on a particular religious ideology. To describe oneself as 'catholic' or 'church of England' or 'Methodist' or any other recognized label is to indicate one's personal beliefs but not the way one votes.

The religious conflicts of the past and their close relationship with politics have left only a few traces in modern times, and the most important of these are institutional rather than political: the fact that the monarch cannot, by law, be a Catholic; the fact that the twenty-six senior bishop in one particular church (the Church of England) are member of the House of Lords (where they are known as the 'Lords Spiritual'); the fact that the government has the right of veto on the choice of these bishops; the fact that the ultimate authority for this same church is the British Parliament. These facts point to a curious anomaly. Despite the atmosphere of tolerance and the separation of religion and politics, it is in Britain that we find the last two cases in Europe of 'established' churches, that is churches which are, by law, the official religion of a country. These cases are the Church of Scotland (see 'other Christian denominations' below) and the Church of England. The monarch is the official head of both, and the religious leader of the latter, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is appointed by the government.

However, the privileged position of the Church of England (also known as the Anglican Church) is not, in modern times, a political issue. Nobody feels that they are discriminated against if they do not belong to it. In any case, the Anglican Church, rather like the BBC,

has shown itself to be effectively independent of government and there is general approval of this independence. In fact, there is a modern politics-and-religion debate, but now it is the other way around. That is, while it is accepted that politics should stay out of religion, it is point of debate as to whether religion should stay out of politics.

The Anglican Church used to be half-jokingly described as 'the Conservative party at prayer'. This reputation was partly the result of history and partly the result of the fact that most of its clergy and regular followers were from the higher ranks of society. However, during the 1980s and early 1990s it was common for the Church to publicly condemn the widening gap between rich and poor in British society. Its leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, repeatedly spoke out against this trend, implying that the Conservative government was largely to blame for it – despite comments from government ministers that politics should be left to the politicians. The Archbishop also angered some Conservative Anglicans when, at the end of the Falklands/Malvinas War in 1982, he did not give thanks to God for a British victory. Instead, he prayed for the victims of the war on both sides.

In 1994 the Catholic Church in Britain published a report which criticized the Conservative government. Since the general outlook of Britain's other conventional Christian denominations has always been anti-Conservative, it appears that all the country's major Christian churches are now politically broadly left of centre.

2.2 The Church of England

Although the Anglican Church apparently has much the largest following in England, and large minorities of adherents in the other nations of Britain, appearances can be deceptive. It has been estimated that less than 5% of those who, if asked, might describe themselves as Anglicans regularly attend services. Many others are christened, married and buried in Anglican ceremonies but otherwise hardly ever go to church. Regular attendance for many Anglicans is traditionally as much a social as a religious activity, and

predominantly one for the upper and middle classes.

The doctrine of the Church of England was set out in the sixteenth century, in a document called the Thirty-Nine Articles. However, the main motivation for the birth of Anglicanism was more patriotic and political than doctrinal. As a result, it has always been what is called a 'broad church', willing to accommodate a wide variety of beliefs and practices. For example, the nature of its religious services varies quite widely from church to church, depending partly on the inclinations of the local priest and partly on local tradition.

Three main strands of belief can be identified. One strand is evangelical, or 'low church'. This places great emphasis on the contents of the Bible and is the most consciously opposed to Catholicism. It therefore adheres closely to those elements of the Thirty-Nine Articles that reject Papal doctrines and is suspicious of the hierarchical structure of the Church. It prefers plain services with a minimum of ceremony. In contrast, the beliefs of the 'Anglo-Catholic', or 'high church', strand are virtually identical to those of Catholicism – except that it does not accept the Pope as the ultimate authority. High church services are more colourful and include organ music and elaborate priestly clothing. Both these strands are traditional in their outlook. But there is also a liberal wing, which is willing to question some of the traditional Christian beliefs, is more inclined to view the Bible as merely a historical document, is more tolerant towards homosexuality and was the first to support moves to ordain women priests.

2.2.1 Women Priests

On Wednesday 11 November 1992, at five in the evening, Dr George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, rose to announce a momentous decision. By just two votes more than the required two-thirds majority, the General Synod of the Anglican Church (its governing body) had voted to allow the ordination of women priests. The debate in the Synod had lasted more than six hours, and had been going on for years before that, both inside and outside the church, all over the country.

About eighteen months afterwards, the first women priests were

ordained. Those who support this development believe that will help to give the Church of England a greater relevance to the modern world and finally bring it up to date. (Unlike the Catholic Church, it has always allowed its clergy to be married). Some who were opposed to the change have not accepted the Synod's decision, and there are a few local cases of attempts to set up a rebel church. Some members of the Anglican Church have decided to 'go over to Rome' – that is, to join the Catholic Church, which does not have women priests.

But to many, perhaps most, of its members, it is the 'Englishness' of the Anglican Church which is just as important as its religious doctrine. This is what gives it meaning and holds its various strands together. Without it, many Anglo-Catholics would be Catholic, many low churchers and liberals would form their own sects or join existing nonconformist groups, and a very large number would simply cease to have anything to do with organized religion at all. Perhaps this is why an opinion poll in the 1980s showed that most people, displaying apparently uncharacteristic intolerance, approve of the law that does not permit a Catholic monarch.

At present, this national distinctiveness is emphasized by the Anglican Church's position as the official religion. It has been argued that the tie between Church and State should be broken; that is, that the Church should be disestablished so that, after losing its extreme members to other churches, it could spend less time on internal disagreement and more on the moral and spiritual guidance of its remaining members. Those who are against this move fear that it would cause the obvious Englishness of the Church to disappear and thus for the number of its adherents to drop sharply.

2.3 Other Conventional Christian Churches

After the establishment of Protestantism in Britain, Catholicism was for a time an illegal religion and then a barely tolerated religion. Not until 1850 was a British Catholic hierarchy reestablished. Only in this century has it been as open about its activities as any other religion. Although Catholics can now be found in all ranks of society and in all occupations, the comparatively recent integration of

Catholicism means that they are still under-represented at the top levels. For example, although Catholics comprise more than 10% of the population, they comprise only around 5% of MPs.

A large proportion of Catholics in modern Britain are those whose family roots are in Italy, Ireland or elsewhere in Europe. The Irish connection is evident in the large proportion of priests in England who come from Ireland (they are sometimes said to be Ireland's biggest export!).

Partly because of its comparatively marginal status, the Catholic Church, in the interests of self-preservation, has maintained a greater cohesiveness and uniformity than the Anglican Church. In modern times it is possible to detect opposing beliefs within it (there are conservative and radical/liberal wings), but there is, for example, more centralized control over practices of worship. Not having had a recognized, official role to play in society, the Catholic Church in Britain takes doctrine and practice (for example, weekly attendance at mass) a bit more seriously than it is taken in countries where Catholicism is the majority religion – and a lot more seriously than the Anglican Church in general does.

This comparative dedication can be seen in two aspects of Catholic life. First, religious instruction is taken more seriously in Catholic schools than it is in Anglican ones, and Catholic schools in Britain usually have a head who is either a monk, a friar or a nun. Second, there is the matter of a attendance at church. Many people who hardly even step inside a church still feel entitled to describe themselves as 'Anglican'. In contrast, British people who were brought up as Catholics but who no longer attend mass regularly or receive the sacraments do not normally describe themselves as 'Catholic'. They qualify this label with 'brought up as' or 'lapsed'. Despite being very much a minority religion in most places in the country, as many British Catholics regularly go to church as do Anglicans.

2.3.1 Episcopalianism

The Anglican Church is the official state religion in England only. There are, however, churches in other countries (such as Scotland, Ireland, the USA and Australia) which have the same origin and are

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almost identical to it in their general beliefs and practices. Members of these churches sometimes describe themselves as 'Anglican'. However, the term officially used in Scotland and the USA is 'Episcopalian' (which means that they have bishops), and this is the term which is often used to denote all of these churches, including the Church of England, as a group.

Every ten years the bishops of all the Episcopalian churches in the world gather together in London for the Lambeth Conference, which is chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Despite the name 'Canterbury', the official residence of the head of the Church of England is Lambeth Palace in London.

2.3.2 Keeping the Sabbath

In the last two centuries, the influence of the Calvinism tradition has been left in laws relating to Sundays. These laws have recently been relaxed, but shop opening hours, gambling and professional sport on Sundays are still all restricted in small ways. In some places in rural Wales, where nonconformism is traditionally strong, Sundays are still 'dry'; that is, the pubs stay closed.

2.3.3 Other Conventional Christian Churches

In many ways, Anglicanism represents a compromise between Protestantism and Catholicism. Its stated doctrine, which rejects the authority of the Pope and other important aspects of Catholic doctrine, is Protestant. But its style, as shown by its hierarchical structure and its forms of worship, is rather Catholic.

When Protestantism first took root in Britain, there were many people who rejected not only Catholic doctrine but also 'Romish' style. These people did not join the newly-established Anglican Church. They regarded both the authority given to its clergy and its continuation of orthodox ritual as obstacles to true worship. Instead, they placed great importance on finding the truth for oneself in the words of the Bible and on living an austere life of hard work and self-sacrifice. They disapproved of the pursuit of pleasure and therefore frowned on public entertainments such as the theatre, on drinking, on

gambling and on any celebration of the sexual aspect of life.

This is the origin of the Puritan/Calvinism tradition in Britain. The first church within this tradition was the Presbyterian Church. In Scotland, this form of Protestantism was so strong that it became the nation's established church. The Church of Scotland has a separate organization from the Anglican Church. It has no bishops. Its head, or 'Moderator', is elected by its general assembly. It is the biggest religion in Scotland, where it is often known simply as 'the kirk' (the Scots word for 'church'). There are also many Presbyterians in England and a large numbers in Northern Ireland.

In England, those Protestants who did not accept the authority of the Anglican Church were known as 'dissenters' and later, as tolerance grew, as 'nonconformists'. These days, when refusal to conform to the established church is irrelevant, they simply called 'members of the free churches'. A great many different free-church groups have come into being over the centuries. In the details of their organization, styles of worship and doctrinal emphasis, the various nonconformist groups differ considerably. However, they all share, in varying degrees, certain characteristics: they regard simplicity and individual prayers as more important than elaborate ritual and public ceremony; there is comparatively little difference between their clergy (if they have any at all) and their lay members; they praise self-denial, although to a lesser extent than the original Puritans. For example, many are teetotal (their members do not drink alcohol).

After Presbyterians, the largest traditional nonconformist group in Britain is the Methodist Society. Methodists follow the teachings of John Wesley, an eighteenth century preacher who started his career as an Anglican clergyman. He had little doctrinal disagreement with the established church. However, he and his followers considered that it did not care enough about the needs of ordinary people and that its hierarchy was not serious enough about the Christian message. The Salvation Army grew out of the Wesleyan movement.

Two other nonconformist groups with a long history are the Baptist and the Quakers. The former are comparatively strict both in their interpretation of the Bible and in their dislike of worldly pleasure. The latter, also known as the Society of Friends, are a very

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small group whose notable characteristics are their complete lack of clergy and their pacifism. They refuse to fight in any war, though they will do ambulance and hospital work.

2.4 Other Religions, Churches and Religious Movements

Since it is a multicultural country where the pressure to conform is comparatively weak, Britain is home to followers of almost every religion and sect imaginable. Some of these are offshoots, or local combinations, of those already mentioned. For example, the only Church of distinctly Welsh origin calls itself both 'Calvinistic Methodist' and 'Presbyterian Church of Wales'.

The number of followers of all the traditional Christian churches have been slowly but steadily declining in the second half of the twentieth century. Other Christian sects and churches have been growing. Because of their energetic enthusiasm and their desire to attract new followers, they are sometimes characterized by the term 'evangelical'. Most of them are similar to traditional nonconformist groups in that they avoid rigid ritual and place great emphasis on scripture. In the case of some groups, their interpretations of the Bible are often literal: the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists (all of which originated in the USA) are examples. These groups, and others, also provide a strict code of behaviour for their followers.

The fastest-growing type of evangelical Christianity, however, places less emphasis on dogma, sin, or giving people a code of behaviour. Instead, the emphasis is on the spiritual and miraculous, on revelation. Gathering often involve joyful singing. There is a belief in spiritual healing of the sick. The oldest existing church of this type in Britain is called Pentecostal, and this term is sometimes used to denote all such groups. Pentecostalism has had a small working-class following for many years. Its recent growth is among the middle class. Many groups began with meeting in people's living rooms, where formality is at a minimum. Another term sometimes used of these groups is 'charismatic', reflecting both their enthusiasm and their emphasis on the miraculous. The growth of these groups

might indicate that many British people feel a gap in their lives which neither the material benefits of modern life nor the conventional churches can fill.

Some people are turning even further afield, beyond the bounds of the Christian tradition. The term 'New Age' is used to cover a very wide range of beliefs which can involve elements of Christianity, eastern religions and ancient pagan beliefs all mixed in together. Interests and beliefs of this kind are not new in Britain. Theosophy, Druidism, Buddhism, Christian Scientism (which believes in the control of the body through the mind) and many other beliefs have all had their followers in this country for a hundred years or more. Until the 1960s such people came exclusively from a small set of the upper middle class. Since then, however, New Age beliefs have filtered downwards to other sections of the social scale. Despite their great variety and lack of exclusiveness, two features seem to be common to all New Age beliefs: first, an emphasis on personal development (often seen as spiritual development); second, respect for the natural environment.

The remaining religious groups with significant numbers of followers in Britain are all associated with racial minorities. The most well-established of these are the Jews. Anti-Semitism exist in Britain, but for a long time it has been weaker than it is in most other parts of Europe. The security and confidence of Judaism in Britain can be seen both in the healthy proportion of Jews in Parliament and in the fact that within it there is, quite openly, the same struggle between orthodox/conservative and liberal/radical viewpoints as there is in the Anglican and Catholic churches.

The numbers of followers of the Christian Orthodox, Sikh, Hindu and Muslim religions are all growing, mainly because of high birth rates among families belonging to them. The last of these is by far the largest. Its continued growth is also for another reason. Relative poverty, racial discrimination and occasional conflict with the authorities have cause people brought up as Muslims to be politicized – more so than any other religious group in the country. As a result, young Muslims are less likely to drift away from their religion than the young of other faiths. One example of conflict is the Salman Rushdie affair. Another is the question of Muslim



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schools. There have been both Catholic and Jewish state schools for some time now. The country's Muslims are demanding the same opportunity.

Finally, it is necessary to mention what are called 'cults'. The beliefs of these groups vary so widely that it is impossible to generalize about them. What they seem to have in common is the style of their belief, involving absolute commitment to and unquestioning obedience of the leader around whom they are centred (it is often only in this sense that they can be called religions). Cult have a bad reputation for using mind-control techniques. Their extremist tendencies are often offensive to most people and, with a few exceptions, each individual cult is tiny. However, it has been estimated that there are between 500 and 700 of them in the country and that, taken together, they have nearly half a million followers.

Questions

1 In what ways does the Church of England is typical of the English character?

2 What are the essential differences between the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, the two "established Churches" of Britain?

3 What are the characteristic features of "New Age" beliefs?

4 In what ways, and to what extent, can different churches and religions in Britain be associated with particular geographical areas and particular social classes?

3 The Media

3.1 The Press. The Characteristics of the National Press

3.2 Radio and Television

3.1 The Press. The Characteristics of the National Press

British people watch a lot of television. They are also reported to be the world's most dedicated home-video users. But this does not mean that they have given up reading. They are the world's third biggest newspaper buyers; only the Japanese and the Swedes buy more.

3.1.1 The Importance of the National Press

Newspaper publication is dominated by the national press, which is an indication of the comparatively weakness of regional identity in Britain. Nearly 80% of all household buy a copy of one of the main national papers every day. There are more than eighty local regional daily papers; but the total circulation of all of them together is much less than the combined circulation of the national 'dailies'. The only non-national papers with significant circulations are published in the evenings, when they do not compete with the national papers, which always appear in the mornings.

Most local papers do not appear on Sundays, so on that day the dominance of the national press is absolute. The 'Sundays papers' are so-called because that is the only day on which they appear. Some of them are sisters of a daily (published by the company) but employing separate editors and journalist.

The morning newspaper is a British household institution; such an important one that, until the laws were relaxed in the early 1990s, newsagents were the only shops that were allowed to open on Sundays. People could not be expected to do without their newspapers for even one day, especially a day when there was more free time to read them. The Sunday paper sell slightly more copies



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than the national dailies and are thicker. Some of them have six or more sections making up a total of well over 200 pages.

Another indication of the importance of 'the papers' is the morning 'paper round'. Most newsagents organize these, and more than half of the country's readers get their morning paper delivered to their door by a teenager who gets up at around half-past five every day in order to earn a bit of extra pocket money.

3.1.2 The National Papers and Scotland

There is an exception to the dominance of the national press throughout Britain. This is in Scotland, where one paper, the Sunday Post, sells well over a million copies. Another weekly, Scotland on Sunday, also has a large circulation. There are three other notable 'Scotland only' papers, but two of these, the Glasgow Herald and the Scotsman, are quality papers with small circulations and the other, the Daily Record, is actually the sister paper of the (London) Daily Mirror. The other national British papers are all sold in Scotland, although sometimes in special Scottish editions.

3.1.3 The Two Types of National Newspaper

Each of the national papers can be characterized as belonging to one of two distinct categories. The 'quality papers', or 'broadsheets', cater for the better educated readers. The 'popular papers', or 'tabloids', sell to a much larger readership. They contain far less print than the broadsheets and far more pictures. They use larger headlines and write in a simpler style of English. While the broadsheets devote much space to politics and other 'serious' news, the tabloids concentrate on 'human interest' stories, which often means sex and scandal!

However, the broadsheets do not completely ignore sex and scandal or any other aspect of public life. Both types of paper devote equal amounts of attention to sport. The difference between them is in the treatment of the topics they cover, and in which topics are given the most prominence.

The reason that the quality newspapers are called broadsheets

and the popular ones tabloids is because they are different shapes. The broadsheets are twice as large as the tabloids. It is a mystery why, in Britain, reading intelligent papers should need highly-developed skills of paper-folding! But it certainly seems to be the rule. In 1989 a new paper was published, the Sunday Correspondent, advertising itself as the country's first 'quality tabloid'. It closed after one year.

3.1.4 The Characteristics

The way politics is presented in the national newspapers reflects the fact that British political parties are essentially parliamentary organizations. Although different papers have differing political outlooks, none of the large newspapers is an organ of a political party. Many are often obviously in favour of the policies of this or that party (and even more obviously against the policies of another party), but none of them would ever use 'we' or 'us' to refer to a certain party.

What counts for the newspaper publishers is business. All of them are in the business first and foremost to make money. Their primary concern is to sell as many copies as possible and to attract as much advertising as possible. They normally put selling copies ahead of political integrity. The abrupt turnabout in the stance of the Scottish edition of the Sun in early 1991 is a good example. It had previously, along with the Conservative party which it normally supports, vigorously opposed any idea of Scottish independence or home rule; but when it saw the opinion polls in early 1991 (and bearing in mind its comparatively low sales in Scotland), it decided to change its mind completely.

The British press is controlled by a rather small number of extremely large multinational companies. This fact helps to explain two notable features. One of these is its freedom from interference from government influence, which is virtually absolute. The press is so powerful in this respect that it is sometimes referred to as 'the fourth estate' (the other three being the Commons, the Lords and the monarch). This freedom is ensured there is a general feeling in the country that 'freedom of speech' is a basic constitutional right. A



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striking example of the importance of freedom of speech occurred during the Second World War. During this time, the country had a coalition government of Conservative and Labour politicians, so that there was really no opposition in Parliament at all. At one time, the cabinet wanted to use a special wartime regulation to temporarily ban the Daily Mirror, which had been consistently critical of the government. The Labour party, which until then had been completely loyal to the government, immediately demanded a debate on the matter, and the other national papers, although they disagree with the opinions of the Mirror, all leapt to its defence and opposed the ban. The government was forced to back down and the Mirror continued to appear throughout the war.

3.1.5 Papers and Politics

None of the big national newspapers 'belongs' to a political party. However, each paper has an idea of what kind of reader it is appealing to and a fairly predictable political outlook. Each can therefore be seen, rather simplistically, as occupying a certain position on the right-left spectrum.

As you can see, the right seems to be heavily over-represented in the national press. This is not because such a large majority of British people hold right-wing views. It is partly because the press tends to be owned by Conservative party supporters. In any case, a large number of readers are not very interested in the political coverage of a paper. They buy it for the sport, or the human interest stories, or for some other reason.

3.1.6 The Characteristics of the National Press: Sex and Scandal

The other feature of the national press which is partially the result of the commercial interests of its owners is its shallowness. Few other European countries have a popular press which is so 'low'. Some of the tabloids have almost given up even the pretence of dealing with serious matters. Apart from sport, their pages are full of little except stories about the private lives of famous people. Sometimes their 'stories' are not articles at all, they are just excuses

to show pictures of almost naked women. During the 1980s, page three of the Sun became infamous in this respect and the women who posed for its photographs became known as 'page three girls'.

The desire to attract more readers at all costs has meant that, in the late twentieth century, even the broadsheets in Britain can look rather 'popular' when compared to equivalent 'quality' papers in some other countries. They are still serious newspapers containing high-quality articles whose presentation of factual information is usually reliable. But even they now give a lot of coverage to news with a 'human interest' angle when they have the opportunity.

This emphasis on revealing the details of people's private lives has led to discussion about the possible need to restrict the freedom of the press. This is because, in behaving this way, the press has found itself in conflict with another British principle which is as strongly felt as that of freedom of speech – the right to privacy. Many journalists now appear to spend their time trying to discover the most sensational secrets of well-known personalities, or even of ordinary people who, by chance, find themselves connected with some newsworthy situation. There is a widespread feeling that, in doing so, they behave too intrusively.

Complaints regarding invasions of privacy are dealt with by the Press Complaints Commission (PCC). This organization is made up of newspaper editors and journalists. In other words, the press is supposed to regulate itself. It follows a Code of Practice which sets limits on the extent to which newspapers should published details of people's private lives. Many people are not happy with this arrangement and various governments have tried to formulate laws on the matter. However, against the right to privacy the press has successfully been able to oppose the concept of the public's 'right to know'.

Of course, Britain is not the only country where the press is controlled by large companies, with the same single aim of making profits. So why is the British press more frivolous? The answer may lie in the function of the British press for its readers. British adults never read comics. These publications, which consist entirely of picture stories, are read only by children. It would be embarrassing for an adult to be seen reading one. Adults who want to read



something very simple, with plenty of pictures to help them, have almost nowhere to go but the national press. Most people don't use newspapers for 'serious' news. For this, they turn to another source-- broadcasting.

Sex and scandal sell newspapers. In September 1992, when there were plenty of such stories around involving famous people and royalty, sales of tabloids went up by 122,000. But in October, when stories of this kind had dried up, they fell by more than 200,000. Even the quality Observer got in on the act. On 11 October 1992, its magazine section featured nine pages of photos of the pop-star Madonna taken from Sex (her best-selling book). That week, its sales were 74,000 greater than usual. The next Sunday, without Madonna, they were exactly 74,000 less than they had been the week before.

3.1.7 The Rest of the Press

If you go into any well-stocked newsagent's in Britain, you will not only find newspapers. You will also see rows and rows of magazines catering for almost every imaginable taste and specializing in almost every imaginable pastime. Among these publications there are a few weeklies dealing with news and current affairs. Partly because the national press is so predictable (and often so trivial), some of these periodicals manage to achieve a circulation of more than a hundred thousand.

The Economist is of the same type as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Der Spiegel* and *L'Express*. Its analyses, however, are generally more thorough. It is fairly obviously right-wing in its views, but the writing is of very high-quality and that is why it has the reputation of being one of the best weeklies in the world.

The New Statesman and *Society* is the left-wing equivalent of *The Economist* and is equally serious and well-written.

Private Eye is a satirical magazine which makes fun of all parties and politicians, and also makes fun of the mainstream press. It specializes in political scandal and, as a result, is forever defending itself in legal actions. It is so outrageous that some chains of newsagents sometimes refuse to sell it. Although its humour is

often very 'schoolboyish', it is also well-written and it is said that no politician can resist reading it.

The country's bestselling magazine is the *Radio Times*, which, as well as listing all the television and radio programmes for the coming week, contains some fifty pages of articles. (None the typically British appeal to continuity in the name 'Radio Times'. The magazine was first published before television existed and has never bothered to update its title).

3.2 Radio and Television

Just as the British Parliament has the reputation for being 'the mother of parliaments', so the BBC might be said to be 'the mother of information services'. Its reputation for impartiality and objectivity in news reporting is, at least when compared to news broadcasting in many other countries, largely justified. Whenever it is accused of bias by one side of the political spectrum, it can always point out that the other side has complained of the same thing at some other time, so the complaints are evenly balanced. In fact, the BBC has often shown itself to be rather proud of the fact that it gets complaints from both sides of the political divide, because this testified not only to its impartiality but also to its independence.

Interestingly, though, this independence is as much the result of habit and common agreement as it is the result of its legal status. It is true that it depends neither on advertising nor (directly) on the government for its income. It gets this from the licence fee which everybody who uses a television set has to pay. However, the government decides how much this fee is going to be, appoints the BBC's board of governors and its director general, has the right to veto any BBC programme before it has been transmitted and even has the right to take away the BBC's licence to broadcast. In theory, therefore, it would be easy for a government to influence what the BBC does.

Nevertheless, partly by historical accident, the BBC began, right from the start, to establish its effective independence and its reputation for impartiality. This first occurred through the medium



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of radio broadcast to people in Britain. Then, in 1932 the BBC World Service was set up, with a licence to broadcast first to the empire and then to other parts of the world. During the Second World War it became identified with the principles of democracy and free speech. In this way the BBC's fame became international. Today, the World Service still broadcasts around the globe, in English and in several other languages. In 1986 the Prime Minister of India, Mrs Indira Gandhi, was assassinated. When her son Rajiv first heard reports that she had been attacked, he immediately turned to the BBC World Service to get details that he could rely on. The BBC also runs five national radio stations inside Britain and several local ones.

3.2.1 BBC Radio

Radio 1 began broadcasting in 1967. Devoted almost entirely to pop music, its birth was a signal that popular youth culture could no longer be ignored by the country's established institutions. In spite of recent competition from independent radio stations, it still has over ten million listeners.

Radio 2 broadcasts mainly light music and chat shows.

Radio 3 is devoted to classical music.

Radio 4 broadcasts a variety of programmes, from plays and comedy shows to consumer advice programmes and in-depth news coverage. It has a small but dedicated following.

Radio 5 is largely given over to sports coverage and news.

Two particular radio programmes should be mentioned. Soap operas are normally associated with television, but *The Archers* is actually the longest-running soap in the world. It describes itself as 'an everyday story of country folk'. Its audience, which is mainly middle-class with a large proportion of elderly people, cannot compare in size with the television soaps, but it has become so famous that everybody in Britain knows about it and tourist attractions have been designed to capitalize on its fame.

Another radio 'institution' is the live commentary of cricket Test Matches in the summer.

3.2.2 Television: Organization

In terms of the size of its audience, television has long since taken over from radio as the most significant form of broadcasting in Britain. Its independence from government interference is largely a matter of tacit agreement. There have been occasions when the government has successfully persuaded the BBC not to show something. But there have also been many occasions when the BBC has refused to bow to government pressure. Most recent cases have involved Northern Ireland. For a brief period starting in the late 1980s, the government broke with the convention of non-interference and banned the transmission of interviews with members of outlawed organizations such as the IRA on television. The BBC's response was to make a mockery of this law by showing such interviews on the screen with an actor's voice (with just the right accent) dubbed over the moving mouth of the interviewee!

There is no advertising on the BBC. But Independent Television (ITV), which started in 1954, gets its money from the advertisements it screens. It consists of a number of privately owned companies, each of which is responsible for programming in different parts of the country on the single channel given to it. In practice, these companies cannot afford to make all their own programmes, and so they generally share those they make. As a result, it is common for exactly the same programme to be showing on the ITV channel throughout the country.

When commercial television began, it was feared that advertisers would have too much control over programming and that the new channel would exhibit all the worst features of tabloid journalism. The Labour party, in opposition at the time of its introduction, was absolutely against it. So were a number of Conservative and Liberal politicians. Over the years, however, these fears have proved to be unfounded. Commercial television in Britain has not developed the habit of showing programmes sponsored by manufacturers. There has recently been some relaxation of this policy, but advertisers have never had the influence over programming that they have had in the USA.

Most importantly for the structure of commercial television, ITV

news programmes are not made by individual television companies. Independent Television News (ITN) is owned jointly by all of them. For this and other reasons, it has always been protected from commercial influence. There is no significant difference between the style and content of the news on ITV and that on the BBC.

The same fears about the quality of television programmes that were expressed when ITV started are now heard with regard to satellite and cable television. This time the fears may be more justified, as the companies that run satellite and cable television channels are in a similar commercial and legal position on those which own the big newspapers (and in some cases are actually the same companies). However, only about a third of households receive satellite and/or cable, and so far these channels have not significantly reduced the viewing figures for the main national channels.

3.2.3 Television: Style

Although the advent of ITV did not affect television coverage of news and current affairs, it did cause a change in the style and content of other programmes shown on television. The amount of money that a television company can charge an advertiser depends on the expected number of viewers at the time when the advertisement is to be shown. Therefore, there was pressure on ITV from the start to make its output popular. In its early years ITV captured nearly three-quarters of the BBC's audience. The BBC then responded by making its own programmes equally accessible to a mass audience. Ever since then, there has been little significant difference in what is shown on the BBC and commercial television. Both BBC1 and ITV (and also the more recent Channel 5) show a wide variety of programmes. They are in constant competition with each other to attract the largest audience (this is known as the ratings war). But they do not each try to show a more popular type of programme than the other. They try instead to do the same type of programme 'better'.

Of particular importance in the ratings war is the performance of the channels' various soap operas. The two most popular and long-

running of these, which are shown at least twice a week, are not glamorous American productions showing rich and powerful people (although series such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty* are sometimes shown). They are ITV's *Coronation Street*, which is set in a working-class area near Manchester, and BBC1's *EastEnders*, which is set in a working-class area of London. They, and other British-made soap and popular comedies, certainly do not paint an idealized picture of life. Nor are they very sensational or dramatic. They depict (relatively) ordinary lives in relatively ordinary circumstances. So why are they popular? The answer seems to be that their viewers can see themselves and other people they know in the characters and, even more so, in the things that happen to these characters.

The British prefer this kind of pseudo-realism in their soaps. In the early 1990s, the BBC spent a lot of money filming a new soap called *Eldorado*, set in a small Spanish village which was home to a large number of expatriate British people. Although the BBC used its most successful soap producers and directors, it was a complete failure. Viewers found the complicated storylines and the Spanish accents too difficult to follow, and could not identify with the situations in which the characters found themselves. It was all just too glamorous for them. It was abandoned after only a year.

It became obvious in the early 1960s that the popularity of soap operas and light entertainment shows meant that there was less room for programmes which lived up to the original educational aims of television. Since 1982 Britain has had two channels (BBC2 and Channel 4) which act as the main promoters of learning and 'culture'. Both have been successful in presenting programmes on serious and weighty topics which are nevertheless attractive to quite large audiences. BBC2 is famous for its highly acclaimed dramatizations of great works of literature and for certain documentary series that have become world-famous 'classics' (the art history series *Civilisation* and the natural history series *Life On Earth* are examples). Another thing that these channels do well, particularly Channel 4, is to show a wide variety of programmes catering to minority interests – including, even, subtitled foreign soap operas!

As long ago as 1953, it was estimated that twenty million viewers watched the BBC's coverage of the coronation of Queen



Elizabeth II. By 1970, 94% of British households had a television set (known colloquially as a 'goggle box'), mostly rented rather than bought. Now, 99% of households own or rent a television and the most popular programmes are watched by as many people as claim to read the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* combined.

Television broadcasting in Britain has expanded to fill every part of every day of the week. One of the four channels (ITV) never takes a break (it broadcasts for twenty-four hours) and the others broadcast from around six in the morning until after midnight. A survey reported in early 1994 that 40% of British people watched more than three hours of television every day; and 16% watched seven hours or more! Television news is watched every day by more than half of the population. As a result, its presenters are among the best-known names and faces in the whole country – one of them once boasted that he was more famous than royalty.

3.2.4 The Ratings: a Typical Week

The ratings are dominated by the soaps (*Coronation Street*, *EastEnders*, *Neighbours* and *Emmerdale*) and soap-style dramas (*Casualty*, which is set in a hospital, and *The Bill*, which is about the police). Light-entertainment talk shows also feature prominently (e.g. *This Your Life*, *Barrymore* and *Noel's House Party*) and quiz shows are sometimes very popular (e.g. *Countdown*). It is unusual that only one comedy programme appears below (*Red Dwarf*). Certain cinema films can also get high ratings (marked ** below). Science fiction remains a popular genre: *Quantum Leap* and *Red Dwarf* are both long-running series. Sports programmes appear in the top ten when they feature a particular sporting occasion. This happens frequently. There is one example in the list below (*The Big Fight Live*).

The list includes just one representative of 'high culture': the dramatization of the novel *Middlemarch*, by the nineteenth century author George Eliot. There are two documentaries, a travel series (*Great Railway Journeys*) and a science series (*Horizon*).

The Antiques Roadshow comes from a different location in the country every week. In it, local people bring along objects from their

houses and ask experts how much they are worth.

Apart from the films, there is only one American programme in the list below (*Quantum Leap*).

Questions

- 1 What are the essential characteristics of British newspapers? What are the two main types called, and who reads them?
- 2 To what extent are newspapers, radio and television funded by advertising?
- 3 Are there any limits to press freedom?
- 4 What is the essential dilemma faced by the press concerning the respect of privacy?
- 5 The dominant force in British Broadcasting is the BBS. What enabled it to achieve its position, and how does it maintain this? Which characteristics give the BBS its special position in Britain and in the rest of the world? Will British television maintain its world reputation for excellence?
- 6 What are British viewing habits?



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4 Welfare State

- 4.1 The National Health Service
- 4.2 Personal Social Services and Charities
- 4.3 The Social Security System

Britain can claim to have been the first large country in the world to have accepted that it is part of the job of government to help any citizen in need and to have set up what is generally known as a 'welfare state'.

Before the twentieth century, welfare was considered to be the responsibility of local communities. The 'care' provided was often very poor. An especially hated institution in the nineteenth century was the workhouse, where the old, the sick, the mentally handicapped and orphans were sent. People were often treated very harshly in workhouses, or given as virtual slaves to equally harsh employers.

During the first half of the twentieth century a number of welfare benefits were introduced. These were a small old-age pension scheme (1908), partial sickness and unemployment insurance (1912) and unemployment benefits conditional on regular contributions and proof of need (1934). The real impetus for the welfare state came in 1942 from a government commission, headed by William Beveridge, and its report on 'social insurance and allied services'. In 1948 the National Health Act turned the report's recommendations into law and the National Health Service was set up.

The mass rush for free treatment caused the government health bill to swell enormously. In response to this, the first payment within the NHS (a small fixed charge for medicines) was introduced in 1951. Other charges (such as that for dental treatment in 1952) followed.

The health and social welfare system is part of everyone's life in Britain. It provides help for anyone who is raising a family or who is elderly, sick, disabled, unemployed, widowed or disadvantaged.

Everyone at some point in their lives will receive help from its varied services, ranging from health checks for children, home help for disabled or elderly people or cash benefits to cover periods of unemployment.

The three pillars of the health and social welfare system are:

The National Health Service – the health of the community is the responsibility of the NHS, free to everyone who normally lives in Britain.

The Personal Social Services – provided by local authorities for elderly and disabled people, those with mental disorders and for families and their children.

Social Security – designed to secure a basic standard of living for people who are unemployed, help for families and help towards the cost of disablement.

4.1 The National Health Service

The NHS is a central element of the welfare state, present on virtually every high street in the form of local pharmacists and in every community and neighbourhood in the form of General Practitioners (GPs) and dental services.

On a typical day in England, nearly three quarters of a million people will visit their doctor and one and a half million prescription items will be dispensed by pharmacies. Ambulances will make 8,000 emergency journeys, 2,000 babies will be delivered, 90,000 people will visit a hospital outpatient clinic and more than half a million households will receive help in the home.

The NHS which provides all these services has a yearly budget of more than £41 billion. With one million staff, it is one of the largest employers in the world.

The principles on which it was founded at its creation in 1948 remain true today: that there should be a free, comprehensive health service for everyone according to need, regardless of their income.

4.1.1 What does the NHS Do?

The aims of the NHS are clear. They are to improve the health of the nation as a whole by:

- promoting health;
- preventing ill health;
- diagnosing and treating injury and disease;



– caring for those with long-term illness and disability.

To achieve these aims, the NHS provides a comprehensive range of care, nearly all of which is free:

– **primary care** through family doctors, dentists and other health care professionals;

– **secondary care** through hospitals and ambulance services;

– **tertiary care** through specialist hospitals treating particular types of illness or disease.

The NHS also collaborates with social services to provide **community care**.

4.1.2 Primary Care

The vast majority of people are seen by primary care services in the community. They remain the first point of contact most people have with the NHS: between them they cater for about 90 per cent of patient contact with the health service, at half the cost of hospital care. The Government's long-standing policy is to build up and extend these services to relieve the more costly secondary care services of hospital and specialist services.

Primary care is provided by family doctors, dentists, opticians and pharmacists, who work within the NHS as independent practitioners. Other professionals involved in primary care include district nurses, health visitors, midwives, speech therapists, physiotherapists, chiropodists, dieticians and counsellors.

GPs or family doctors are present in every community and they remain the backbone of the health service. They provide essential primary care and act as gatekeepers to other services, referring patients on when necessary. Every year there are some 250 million GP consultations and some six million people visit a pharmacy every day.

Visits to doctors or dentists may be for treatment or for preventative advice. Preventing ill-health is an important part of a GP's work, and most GPs run programmes to prevent heart disease and stroke, to manage chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes and to improve childhood immunisation rates.

About 80 per cent of GPs work in partnerships or group practices – often as members of **primary health care teams**.

Primary health care teams also include health visitors, district nurses and midwives who are salaried NHS staff, and sometimes social workers and other professionals employed by the health authorities. GPs often work in health centres which offer people a range of health services in one place.

Other key primary care professionals include:

– **midwives** who care for women throughout pregnancy, birth and for 28 days after the baby is born. Some are based in hospital and some go out into the community;

– **health visitors** who promote health for families and are responsible for preventative action. They aim to identify the health needs of the local population and work closely with other NHS colleagues;

– **district nurses** who care for people in their homes or elsewhere outside the hospital setting. Like health visitors, they offer advice in health promotion and education.

4.1.3 How Primary Care is Developing

The 1997 NHS Primary Care Act introduced greater flexibility in the delivery of primary health care services for patients. The new law allows GPs, dentists, NHS trusts and NHS staff to develop, with health authorities and health boards, new ways of delivering their primary care services.

From October 1998 pilot schemes began in areas with high levels of illness and where it is often difficult to recruit GPs. There are two types of scheme:

– one which will enable NHS trusts or GP practices to employ GPs on a salary (instead of a self-employed basis), with the aim of giving patients who live in areas of high health risk access to a flexible family doctor service;

– one to create primary health care 'one-stop shops' where GPs, community nurses and other professionals work as a single team in the community offering a range of services from eye tests to counselling.

The new **Primary Care Groups** – local partnerships between family doctors and community nurses – will be expected to play an increasing role in taking decisions about services for patients.



4.1.4 Secondary Care

While Primary Care Groups may be the first point of call, secondary care, managed by NHS Trusts, deal with any further treatment or care someone may need. This can range from health advice to some of the most sophisticated treatment in the world.

There are around 300 district general hospitals in England, found in many large towns and cities. They provide a range of services from the care of the elderly to maternity services, supported by services such as anaesthetics, pathology and radiology. Almost all district hospitals have accident and emergency departments for emergency admissions.

Patients either attend as day cases, in-patients for a longer stay or out-patients. There are also patients who attend wards for treatments such as dialysis. The advent of new treatments has meant the trend has been towards more patients treated as day care and fewer long-stay wards.

4.1.5 Tertiary Care

Some hospitals provide specialist services such as heart and liver transplants, treatments for rare cancers and craniofacial services. These specialist services cover patients over more than one district or region.

There are also specialist hospitals of international renown such as the Hospital for Sick Children at Great Ormond Street, Moorfields Eye Hospital and the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery. As well as offering highly specialised treatments, these hospitals are also centres for teaching and international research.

4.1.6 Hospital Building under the Private Finance Initiative

The Government wants to promote a partnership between the public and private sectors in many areas of industry and services. The Private Finance Initiative (PFI) was launched in 1992 for this purpose: in the health service it means encouraging private companies to help finance the design, construction and running of NHS buildings and support services.

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In May 1997, in order to boost the PFI, the new Government passed legislation which made the powers of NHS Trust clearer when signing PFI agreements. Further schemes costing £2,500 million have since been announced, amounting to the biggest hospital building programme in the history of the NHS.

4.1.7 Community Care

Social services have the lead responsibility for community care services to meet the needs of older people, people with disabilities, mentally ill people or other vulnerable members of society. The NHS, however, has an important role in providing some services and in collaborating closely with social services to plan and deliver community care.

Here the role of the NHS includes helping to assess people's needs for community care, liaising with social services over hospital discharges to make sure people get the continuing care they need, as well as delivering some services. The NHS makes an important contribution to community care services, for example, district nurses provide nearly 2.5 million episodes of care annually.

4.1.8 How is the NHS Funded?

The NHS is free at the point of delivery to anyone normally resident in Britain. All taxpayers and employees contribute to its cost.

About **82 per cent** of the cost of the health service is paid for by general taxes. The rest comes from:

- a proportion of National Insurance contributions (paid by working people and employers) – **12.2 per cent**;

- charges towards the costs of certain items, such as drugs prescribed by GPs, dental treatment and sight tests – **2.3 per cent**. (Children and adults who may have difficulties paying are exempted from these charges.);

- land sales and other schemes for generating income – less than **one per cent**.

In addition:

- health authorities are free to raise funds from voluntary sources;

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– some NHS hospitals take private patients who pay the full cost of their accommodation and treatment.

4.1.9 How is the Money Spent?

The NHS is one of the largest employers in the world, and staff costs account for two-thirds of all expenditure. About one tenth of the budget, some £4 billion, is spent each year on medicines.

In terms of spending on patients, more than two-fifths of total hospital and community health services expenditure, is on people aged 64 and over, while they make up just 16 per cent of the population.

The pie chart on the left shows spending in terms of different services:

– **Hospital and Community Health Services** provide hospital care and a wide range of community services;

– **Family Health Services (FHS)** provide general medical, dental, pharmaceutical and some ophthalmic services, and covering the cost of medicines prescribed by GPs;

– **Central Health and Miscellaneous Services** provide services which are most effectively administered centrally such as welfare food (such as free milk and vitamins for the children of families on Income Support) and support to the voluntary sector;

– The administrative costs of the health departments are included under **Departmental Administration**.

Spending on health is one of the Government's top priorities. Spending on the NHS has increased in real terms for many years; the total in 1996-1997 was £35 billion; in 1997-1998 this figure increased to nearly £42 billion, which amounts to £1,700 for every household in the country.

In July 1998 the Government announced it would provide an extra £20 billion over the next three years. That amounts to an increase of 4.7% a year above inflation between 1998-1999 and 2001-2002.

This investment in the NHS is planned to bring a host of improvements to services:

- improve hospitals and GP services;
- provide for the largest hospital building plan ever;
- reduce waiting lists;

– finance reform, based on partnership of all health bodies, with GPs and nurses playing a more important role;

- begin to reduce avoidable illness, disease and injury;
- reduce the rate of growth in emergency admissions.

4.1.10 How is the NHS Organised?

Central Government is directly in charge of the NHS, led by the Secretary of State for Health and a team of ministers at the **Department of Health**. The Department is responsible for planning a health strategy in England.

Within that department, management of the service is led by the **NHS Management Executive**. The NHS Management Executive is responsible for developing policies which ensure the quality of health services. The Executive has eight regional offices, which liaise with the health authorities in their region.

Services are administered by a range of **health authorities** and **health boards** throughout Britain. There are 100 health authorities in England and five in Wales, 15 health boards in Scotland and four health and social services boards in Northern Ireland. They are all responsible for identifying the health care needs of the people living in their area. They also arrange for services from doctors, dentists, pharmacists and opticians and administers their contracts.

Community health councils (local health councils in Scotland) represent the opinion of local people on the health services provided and on any planned changes.

Health authorities and boards cooperate closely with the **local authorities** in charge of social work, environmental health, education and other services.

4.1.11 Recent Reforms

The new Health Act 1999 encourages partnership within the NHS and between the health service and local authorities to improve health care, and has created two bodies to drive quality in the NHS. Its main aspects are:

- the creation of Primary Care Groups and Trusts, teams of GPs,



community nurses and social services staff, to take control of most of the NHS budget from April 1999. The new teams put local doctors and nurses in the driving seat in shaping local health care;

- new powers to break down barriers between health and social services and between the NHS and local authorities, to encourage partnership working and deliver health improvements;

- the introduction of new legal duties of quality of care and of partnership to drive up standards of care;

- two new national bodies, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence and the Commission for Health Improvement, to encourage best practice, spread good-value new treatments across the NHS and sort out problems - all to improve quality;

- Health Action Zones, formed in some of the most deprived areas of the country and covering some 13 million people, which will tackle health problems of local people;

- NHS Direct - a 24-hour telephone hotline staffed by nurses to help reduce pressure on hospitals and GPs by giving on-the-stop health advice.

4.1.12 NHS Staff

The NHS is Europe's largest employers with a workforce of nearly one million people. Nurses and midwives make up nearly half the entire workforce in England. Staff costs account for roughly 70 per cent of spending on hospitals and community health services.

The numbers of GPs in England has risen by nine per cent between 1987-1997, with all of the increase occurring amongst women. The numbers of ancillary and maintenance and works staff directly employed by the NHS has fallen since the introduction of competitive tendering which has led to many of these jobs being carried out by the private sector.

In September 1996 approximately 940,000 non-medical staff were employed in the NHS hospital and community health services:

- 67 per cent of these staff were directly involved in patients care and 33 per cent were management and support staff;
- there were 332,660 nurses, midwives and health visitors;
- there were 167,430 administration and estates staff;

- just under 80 per cent of the non-medical workforce were female and over five per cent were from ethnic minority groups.

There were 28,937 GPs in England in October 1997. By 1996, nearly a third were female, compared with just over a fifth in 1986.

The voluntary sector plays an important role in supporting patients and health services. The Government gives grants to a large number of voluntary organisations working in health and personal social services in recognition of the valuable work they do.

The money - £59 million in 1996-1997 goes mainly to national organisations dealing with:

- children - people from ethnic minorities
- older people - people with HIV/AIDS
- carers - people suffering from drug or alcohol misuse.

In Scotland, Government grants for 1996-1997 amounted to £9 million. In Northern Ireland the Department of Health and Social Services spent £6.4 million in 1996-1997 to support voluntary work in the health service.

4.1.13 Private Medicine

About 11 per cent of the population in Britain is covered by private medical insurance and it is estimated that about three quarters of people receiving treatment in private hospitals or NHS pay beds are funded by health insurance schemes.

NHS patients are occasionally treated in the private sector (at public expense) in cases where doctors and managers consider it will be good value for money. The scale of private medicine compared to the NHS, however, is small.

Many overseas patients come to be treated in British private hospitals: Harley Street in London is world famous as a centre for medical consultants.

4.2 Personal Social Services and Charities

Social services provide £10 billion worth of care a year to vulnerable or disadvantage members of society. They cover the



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whole age range to provide for the poorly cared-for child to people who are approaching the end of their life. In between they care for people with mental health problems, physical disability or learning disabilities.

Personal social services are the responsibility of local social services authorities in England and Wales, social work departments in Scotland and health and social services boards in Northern Ireland.

The main services they provide are:

- residential care;
- day care;
- services for those confined to home;
- various forms of social work.

In 1997-1998, current expenditure in England on Personal Social Services was £10 billion, or about £200 per head:

- services for children and older people accounted for nearly three-quarters of spending;
- the single biggest item of expenditure was residential care for older people;
- all but two per cent of the remainder was for people with a mental illness, or physical or learning disabilities;
- spending on residential services accounted for just under half of the total.

In November 1998 the Government announced a new £3 billion programme to reform social services in a White Paper *Modernising Social Services*. The Paper proposes ways of making sure local councils, the NHS, voluntary bodies and commercial providers work together to deliver improvements, which include:

- promoting chances for people to live independent, fulfilling lives;
- improving the protection of vulnerable people;
- raising the standards of services.

The White Paper introduces plans for:

- a commission for care standards, an independent watchdog for each English region to regulate services whether they are provided in people's own homes, through organisations such as fostering agencies or in residential homes;

- new national standards of performance for local authorities and annual reports on what councils have achieved or not achieved;
- children's rights officers to inspect children's homes;
- the General Social Council, whose job will be to ensure the proper regulation and training of all the social care workforce.

Much of the care of older and disabled people is provided by the community – by families, self-help groups and voluntary agencies, leaving the statutory sector to provide the skilled care needed in particular services. There are about seven million such carers – one in eight adults in Britain.

The Government acknowledges the crucial role of carers. People who provide substantial, regular care have a right to have their own needs for help assessed. The Government also plans to create a national strategy for carers which will focus on recognising the importance of their role, consulting them and supporting their essential work.

There are nearly 200,000 voluntary organisations and charities concerned with health and social welfare. They range from national bodies such as Help the Aged to small, individual self-help groups. As demand for personal social services grows the contribution of the voluntary sector is also becoming increasingly important.

4.2.1 Meeting Increasing Demand

The demand for social services is increasing because of the growing numbers of older people and opportunities for older, disabled, mentally ill people and those with learning difficulties to live in the community, supported by health and social services.

4.2.1.1 Older People

Most older people continue to live in their own homes, with appropriate help. Only a small number – some five per cent – of people over 65 live in residential accommodation. In February 1999 the Royal Commission on Long-Term Care reported on the future of care for the elderly. The Government is consulting on its recommendation that the costs should be shared by the individual

and the State.

Services for older people, whether statutory or voluntary, are designed to help them live in their own home whenever possible. The services provide include help in the house, meals brought to the home, laundry services, sitters-in and night attendants. There are also day centres, luncheon clubs and recreational facilities which they may travel to.

Equipment, aids and adaptations to the home are available to help older people manage in their own homes. A special alarm system, for example, is provided by the local authority which allows older people to summon help in an emergency. Some local authorities or voluntary organisations run visiting services to check on the welfare of older people in the neighbourhood.

The trend in residential care for older people has been away from homes provided by the local authority towards greater numbers of places in private and voluntary-run homes. Local authorities do, however, have a duty to provide homes designed for older people. These are known as sheltered accommodation, and many have wardens on site.

Transport for older people is often free or subsidised – paid for in either care by the local authority.

4.2.1.2 Disabled People

There are some six million adults in Britain who have one or more disability. Some seven per cent of these (about 400,000 people) live in communal establishments. As part of the reforms of the early 1990s, there has been a trend towards supporting disabled people to live independently in their own homes, providing them with day and domiciliary services. Social services also provide respite care so that people who regularly care for disabled people can have a break.

Local social services are required to identify the number of disabled people in their area and to publicise services. Services include advice and help to rehabilitate disabled people or help them adjust to a recent disability. They also cover day centres or other places where social, occupational, educational and recreational facilities are provided.

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Specially-designed housing may be available for those able to look after themselves, or adaptations to the home can be made by social services, for example, ramps for wheelchairs or stair lifts.

4.2.1.3 People with Learning Disabilities

Social services are the lead statutory body for planning and arranging services for people with learning disabilities. The help they provide or arrange includes short-term care, support for families in their own homes, residential accommodation if a person needs it and activities outside the home.

People with learning disabilities are the largest group for day centre places funded by local authorities and the second largest group in residential care. If person has profound disabilities, the NHS will look after them in residential care. The NHS also provides specialist help if someone with learning disabilities needs it.

The Government aims to help people with learning disabilities lead full lives in their communities, and only be admitted to hospital on health grounds. In local settings, social services work with the NHS, families, education and training services and voluntary groups to plan and provide a range of services.

4.2.1.4 Help for Families and Children

Social services have a duty to look after the welfare of any child in need. They either provide directly or arrange for a range of help to families in crisis. This includes advice, counselling, help in the home or access to family centres. Sometimes services are provided by voluntary groups, for example refuges which provide a safe base for women and children who suffer domestic violence.

If a child is considered at risk of neglect or of physical, mental or emotional abuse, he or she is placed on a child protection register so the situation can be monitored. At the end of March 1996 some 32,000 children were on registers. A number of agencies and professions – co-ordinated by area child protection committees – are responsible for children at risk.

Children whose parents are unable or unwilling to look after

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them are placed in the care of the local authority who act as the legal guardian. The law requires that whenever possible children should remain with their families. However, if they are likely to suffer significant harm at home, children can either be placed in the care of foster parents or in a children's home with others. Children's homes are run by local authorities, voluntary or private organisations.

In September 1998 the Government launched the Quality Protects programme, a three-year strategy underpinned by £375 million, to improve children's services and deliver nationally agreed outcomes for children in care.

4.3 The Social Security System

The Department of Social Security is the biggest spending department of government and a major pillar of the welfare state. It provides more than £92 billion of benefits to secure a basic standard of living for people who are retired, unemployed or cannot work, to provide help for families and with the costs of disablement.

The social security system provides a minimum level of income below which no-one should fall if they are unable to work through their circumstances, unemployment, or disability. Social security provides cash benefits for children and families, unemployed people, disabled people and pensioners, including war pensioners.

The Government wants the welfare system wherever possible to help people towards independence, not to encourage dependence. The Government sums up its aims for social security like this: work for those who can; security for those who cannot. Later on this section describes the Government's plans for reform and the measures to help people into work.

All taxpayers, employers and employees contribute to the cost of social security. The programme has two sources of finance.

– the cost of contributory benefits and their administration is met from the **National Insurance Fund**, to which all employers and employees contribute. The Fund also has income from its investments;

– non-contributory benefits and their administration are financed

from **general taxation**.

General taxation provides more than half of social security income. National Insurance contributions from employers around a quarter and National Insurance contributions from employees about a fifth.

The total social security budget in 1997-1998 was more than **£ 92 billion**, which is almost a third of all government spending. The pie chart top left show how the budget was spent on people who received benefits for the year 1997-1998. The pie chart bottom left shows how the money was spent in terms of benefits for the same year.

4.3.1 Who Receives Benefits?

More than 20 million people receive some sort of benefit in Britain. The **elderly** and the **short-term sick** receive predominantly contributory benefits, **unemployment people** receive mainly income related benefits, **families** mainly other benefits while the **long-term sick and disabled** receive all three types of benefit.

Group	Benefits and who receives them
Elderly people	Retirement Pension
	Non-contributory Retirement Pension
	Christmas Bonus
	The principal income-related benefits
Long-term sick and disabled people	Winter Fuel Payment
	Incapacity Benefit (long-term rate)
	Attendance Allowance
	Disability Living Allowance
	Disability Working Allowance
	Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit
	Other Industrial Injuries Benefit
	Severe Disablement Allowance
	Invalid Care Allowance
	War Pensions
Independent Living Fund	
Motability	



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	Christmas Bonus
	Principal income-related benefits
Short-term sick people	Statutory Sick Pay
	Incapacity Benefit (short-term rate)
	Principal income-related benefits
Families	Child Benefit
	Family Credit
	Statutory Maternity Pay
	Maternity Allowance
	Maternity Grant
	Principal income-related benefits
Unemployed people	Unemployment Benefit
	Jobseeker's Allowance
	Principal income-related benefits
Widows and others	Widow's Benefits
	War Widow's Pensions
	Guardian Allowance and Child's Special Allowance
	Industrial Death Benefit
	Social Fund Funereal Payments
	Earnings Top-up Pilots
	Income support paid to people who do not fall within the other client groups

4.3.2 How is Social Security Organised?

The Department of Social Security (DSS) comprises a small central headquarters which support the Secretary of State for Social Security and a team of Ministers in developing policy, and five executive agencies. Most of the services in Great Britain are run by the separate agencies.

Executive agencies of the DSS:

- **the Benefits Agency** – pays most social security benefits;
- **the Child Support Agency** – collects child maintenance from absent parents;
- **the War Pensions Agency** – administers benefits and delivers services for war pensioners and their dependants;

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- **the Information Technology Agency** – develops, implements and supports the IT system which now plays a major role in social security.

In Northern Ireland the Social Security Agency administers contributions and benefits.

4.3.3 Types of Benefit

There are three broad categories of social security benefit:

Contributory benefits, where entitlement depends on a person's record of National Insurance contributions. The main contributory benefits are Retirement Pension, Widow's Benefits, Incapacity Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance. **These account for half of social security spending.**

Income-related benefit, for people whose income falls below a certain level, determined according to their family circumstances. These benefits take a person's capital well as their income into account. The income-related benefits are Income Support, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Disability Working Allowance, Family Credit and Earnings Top-up in certain pilot areas. **These account for a third of social security spending.**

Jobseeker's Allowance has both contributory and income-related components.

Other benefits depend on conditions such as disability or family needs. Benefits in this group include Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance and Child Benefit. **These other, non-contributory benefits account for about a sixth of social security spending.**

4.3.4 The Government's Aims

Since taking up office in May 1997 the Government has announced a number of wide-ranging reviews with the key objectives of tackling unemployment and social division which excludes people from playing a full part in their communities. The aims of the reviews are to:

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– modernise the structure of social security and the way benefits are delivered to encourage financial independence and promote social cohesion;

– make the welfare system active in supporting work, saving and honesty;

– tackle social and economic inequalities.

Welfare reform is central to the Government's plans for the future development of Britain. Reform will tackle three key problems with the existing welfare system:

– inequality and social exclusion are worsening, especially among children and pensioners, despite rising spending on social security;

– people face a series of barriers to paid work, including financial disincentives;

– fraud is taking money out of the system and away from genuine claimants.

Reform will be a long process, but the Government has already begun by publishing a Green Paper on Welfare Reform entitled *New Ambitions for Our Country – A New Contract for Welfare*. It sets out a number of key principles guiding welfare reform and includes a series of success measures to be achieved over the next 10 to 20 years. For example, by the end of the process of reform, the results that the Government expect to achieve include:

– a reduction in the proportion of working age people living in households where no-one works;

– a guarantee of decent income in retirement for all;

– a reduction in discrimination against people and an increase in the number of disabled people at work;

– a rise in the proportion of parents meeting their financial obligations to children after separation;

– a reduction in the amount of money lost in fraudulent payments.

Questions

1 The National Health Service: What is the strength of the GP system?

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2 What are the reasons for the steep rise in the cost of NHS?

3 What reforms did the Government introduce for hospitals, GPs and regional health authorities from 1990?

4 Compare the situation in Britain with that in Belarus from the point of view of availability of free medical treatment, provision of residential accommodation for the elderly, disabled and mentally ill.

5 Do you think that voluntary organizations in Britain which provide many forms of help allow the government to avoid its responsibilities?

6 Do you think that the British welfare state is successful in giving help to everybody who needs it? How many and what kinds of people "slip through the net" of care?

7 What are the main problems of the welfare state in modern Britain?

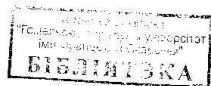
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