
Off With Their Heads

Category: History

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General Bookthoughts:

This book is a must read for those of us out there who are looking for an easy to read history of Britain. It can be read in a weekend and is worth keeping very handy when you need a refresh. I could not recommend this book enough – I wish there were more like it. Perhaps the next purchase needs to be 30 Days Has September, a book in a very similar vein.

I must point out that I have used Wikipedia to supplement some of the narrative for my own purposes.

I have created a table of the monarchs in the Appendix.

Specific Bookthoughts:

- Stonehenge was built in three phases. It is in Wiltshire and was initially built in 3100 BC and improved upon in 2300 BC and 2000 BC. This makes it prehistoric because it pre-dates when history was written down.
- The Celts arrived in Britain from Eastern Europe in 650 BC. They believed that if they cut off the heads of the locals, they would inherit their courage, strength and intelligence.
- The Romans initially invaded Britain in 55 BC under Julius Caesar, but they failed. In A.D. 43, under Claudius, they were successful. They named the new territory Britannia. Besides the notorious taxes that the Romans levied, they also introduced Roman law, toilets, vegetables, roads, architecture. Of course, everybody who was not a Roman was considered a barbarian!
- In A.D. 50 they built a town called Londinium (London) which was sadly destroyed by fire in A.D. 60. As if this was not bad enough, London was then invaded by Queen Boudicca (a Celt) and her army, who slaughtered the inhabitants.
- London recovered and soon became the headquarters of Roman Britain in A.D. 120. They built a wall around London in A.D. 200 to stave off other barbarian invasions.
- Christians were persecuted by the Romans until A.D. 313.
- The only territory of Britain that was not conquered by the Romans was Scotland. In fact, the Scottish often invaded Roman territories. In response Hadrian's Wall was built across the whole of the North of England measuring 118 km and taking six years to build. It was completed around 130 A.D.
- The Romans came under increased attack in Britain and in Europe and finally left Britain in 409 to help defend a crumbling Rome.
- Britain, after the Romans, left was not a very pleasant place. Tribes were always invading and looting towns and often murdering people. Tribes from Europe such as the Jutes, Angles and Saxons invaded Britain. By 600 A.D. the Anglo-Saxons dominated England.
- The Vikings invaded in 793 (using ships) and were brutal. Eventually the Anglo-Saxons had to agree to splitting England. They ruled the west whilst the Vikings ruled the east. The Vikings started to settle in the areas in the AS west, which caused unrest which led to a fight for control of England which the Vikings won. They controlled England in 1013. They crowned a king Canute the great in 1016. He was an inclusive king who allowed Anglo-Saxons to retain the laws.
- An Anglo Saxon man (Edward the Confessor) became king after Canute, but died in 1066 without leaving an heir. The result was a fight between the Vikings (Harald) and the English (Harold) for the throne. The battle of Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire was the result and Harold (English) won and was crowned (he was also the last Anglo Saxon King). However, William from Normandy also felt he had a claim to the crown. His great aunt was Edward's mother (making him a second cousin I think). Also, during Edwards reign, he spent much of his time in exile in Normandy during Viking invasions. William argued that during his time in Exile, Edward promised him the crown. So, William fought for it. This new battle near Hastings was won by the Normans (Harold's forces were weakened by the Battle of Stamford Bridge) and William the Conqueror was crowned King of England in 1066. William I.
- William had to stave off many rebellions. He built a tower to defend against the rebellious people of London. This later became The Tower of London.

- William, to raise much needed money (for defense mostly), decided to introduce a new tax based on the wealth of civilians. He created the Domesday Book which recorded each person's land and belongings – which remains intact today.
- Following on from William, was William II, Henry I and Stephen/Matilda (William I's kingdom was divided among his children, which created a lot of infighting over the crown). However the next great ruler was Henry II (son of Matilda) crowned in 1154 (Matilda and Stephen agreed Matilda's son would be crowned as a peace keeping condition for Stephen to retain power). Henry restored order to the land and created a large empire that included significant parts of France. His father was a senior nobleman in France, Geoffrey Plantagenet of Anjou, which caused Henry to inherit much land there (and helped unite France for England). Henry was the first Plantagenet king.
- Henry II's famous son was Richard I also known as the Lionheart. He had this nickname because he was big and strong and well known for his warrior abilities. He was intent on fighting in the Crusades (selling many of his possessions to fulfil this dream) against the Muslims and in particular, to take back Jerusalem for the Christians. However, he failed at this (taking back Jerusalem) in spite of his exceptional military prowess. We are reminded that Jerusalem was seized by Saladin for the Muslims in 1187 (from the Christian Crusaders).
- Richard was captured by the Austrians who demanded a ransom of £100,000. Whilst this was paid, it was said that his younger brother John who succeeded him as king tried to avoid paying this ransom. John seems the antithesis of Richard being a poor fighter and a schemer (nicknamed softsword and was the rival to Robin Hood in the fables). He lost support of the Catholic Church as well as vast parts of France during his reign. He also increased the taxes to support his unsuccessful wars. The result was an uprising by the local barons who started a civil war. The barons had formed a great Council which was the precursor to modern Parliament (known as the first English parliament). However John predictably resisted sharing power and was thrown into prison. In 1215, this council drafted the Magna Carta which was designed to limit the powers of the Kings. It was also the beginnings of a constitution, guaranteeing free and fair trials to all and protecting people against unfair taxes. King John signed it.
- When King John died, the throne went to his nine-year-old son Henry III who reigned for 56 years. This was in 1216. Henry was captured by the barons (de Montfort) along with his son Edward and was imprisoned – for going against Magna Carta. In 1265, Edward escaped fought to avenge the imprisonment of his father and overthrew the parliament and was made king (Battle of Evesham in that year).
- Three Edwards followed King Henry III as king. Edward I (Henry's eldest son) was nicknamed Long Shanks because he was so tall. Although he initially resisted Magna Carta, he soon realised that he needed a parliament to keep the peace and to raise the money to defend and extend his kingdom. He created an even more inclusive council, which became known as the model parliament. Edward invaded Scotland and seized power. However the Scottish, under William Wallace (who was hung, drawn and quartered by the English) and then Robert the Bruce fought back and reclaimed the crown. There were numerous fights to and fro between Edward and Robert. Even after Edward I, his son Edward II continued the battle. At the famous Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 Robert was crowned King of Scotland and in 1328 Scotland was officially independent of England.
- Since the Norman, William the Conqueror, invaded England, there were ongoing tensions between the French and English. The Hundred years War from 1337 to 1453 was such an example. It was started because of a disputed claim to the throne – the direct Capetian bloodline

had ended. The French family (Valois) and the English Family (Plantagenet) both laid claim. At the Battle of Crecy in 1346, English longbows were far more effective than the French crossbows and the English won under Edward III. Another good victory was at the Battle of Agincourt. The French vastly outnumbered the English, but the French refused to fight because their opponents were not knights. They wanted the glory of killing knights rather than English longbowmen (who ironically therefore defeated them!). Under Henry V the English won this battle in 1415. However, it seems that Joan of Arc was a pivotal figure in changing the fortunes for the French. She led the French in war at a very young age, claiming she had visions from God (for her efforts, she was burnt at the stake when she was 19 in 1431). Over time the French gradually won back their land until the English were defeated. Sadly, during this time in 1348 the Black death arrived in Britain. It seemed to have been carried by bacteria in rats that were transferred by fleas to humans. Estimates are that a third of the population of England died.

- Edward III had many children, but because Edward lived a long time, many of his children predeceased him. His eldest son, Edward the Dark Prince, predeceased him but had a son before he died. This was Richard II who was crowned King after Edward III's death (Edward's grandson). However, the other sons of Edward III (the dark prince's brothers), were the beginnings of the Houses of York and Lancaster respectively. Of his five sons, two were Dukes of York (Edmund) and Lancaster (John) respectively. Richard left no heirs, probably because he married a French princess who was 7 and he was 30!
- Richard, probably because he had no heirs, became increasingly insecure as time marched on. There was no obvious heir and so he probably expected rivals to overthrow him to secure the crown for their respective families. Such a rival was his cousin, Henry, son of the Duke of Lancaster (John). Richard forced the issue by disinheriting (from Henry's father's will/land) and exiling Henry. Henry decided to respond and overthrew Richard who died in the tower (Henry received a lot of support from the English to overthrow Richard, because of Richard's tyrannical behaviour especially during the Peasants revolt/Poll tax levying). He became Henry IV in 1399 and, importantly, was the son of a Lancastrian thereby establishing the House of Lancaster.
- The War/s of the Roses was a civil war in 1455 and lasted 30 years. It was between two rival families, the house of Lancaster and the house of York. Lancaster, started by Henry IV, was carried forward successfully by Henry V, his son. The trouble started when Henry V died and his son, Henry VI, was placed on the throne at nine months. He grew up mentally unstable. His inability to rule ultimately resulted in Richard, Duke of York, fighting for the crown. Lancaster had as its symbol a red rose and York had a white rose. York (Richard) was pitted against Lancaster (Henry VI, king). Initially Richard beat the Lancastrians (battle of St Albans 1455), but was never crowned, however years later at the Battle of Wakefield in Yorkshire in 1460, Richard was killed and the Lancastrians prevailed. Richard's son, Edward IV, then defeated the Lancastrians at the Battle of Towton in 1461 (this was the largest battle fought in Britain – about 80,000 soldiers). Henry VI was then thrown in the tower and Edward IV was crowned King (the first Yorkist King and, interestingly, the tallest ever king at an estimated 6ft4). For a brief period Henry was rescued from the tower and placed back on the throne but Edward recaptured Henry who was murdered in the tower. The result was a switching of the throne from Henry VI (Lancaster) to Edward IV (York) in 1461, then back to Henry in 1470 and the back to Edward in 1471. York then prevailed for a few generations (Edward V and Richard III).
- Edward V succeeded his father to the throne (see next point) who was then succeeded by Richard III. (The fighting finally stopped in 1485 when a Lancastrian, Henry Tudor was crowned Henry VII).

- There was some controversy over the crowning of Richard III in 1483. When Edward IV died the heir to the throne was his 12-year-old son, Edward V. Richard III, his uncle, was placed in temporary charge of the country. Richard held Edward and his younger brother in the Tower of London. A month later both princes disappeared and some believe that this was Richard's doing (so that he could be crowned).
- Richard was attacked by Henry Tudor who had been living in France in a famous Battle called the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. Richard was killed and Henry Tudor became Henry VII of England in that year. He married Elizabeth of York, smartly uniting the rival houses. This was the beginning of the reign of the Tudor kings and queens (he was first Tudor monarch). Henry's mother was a direct descendant of Edward III and his son, the Duke of Lancaster (John), the founding father of the house of Lancaster. His mother was only 13 when he was born!
- Henry VIII was crowned in 1509, although his older brother Arthur would have been King had it not been for his untimely death. Initially Henry was athletic and strong, possibly even good-looking. Henry married six times. In order Catherine of Aragon, Ann Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard and Catherine Parr. They were divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived. The annulment of Henry's first marriage (he was not given a son) was not granted by the Catholic Church, which angered Henry. In order to overcome this obstacle, Henry declared himself the head of the newly formed non-catholic Church of England (he used the passage in Leviticus which prohibits marrying your brother's wife – Catherine was first married to his brother, Arthur, before Arthur died). Henry then looted the Catholic monasteries throughout England, taking their riches for himself. Henry's first wife yielded a daughter, Mary who later became a catholic Queen. Anne Boleyn only had one child, a daughter, who became the protestant Queen Elizabeth I (which seems the reason Henry lost interest – she was not delivering a son! She was executed for Treason – in those days being unfaithful to the king was considered treason). Finally Henry had a son, delivered by Jane Seymour. He was Edward VI. These are the only three children that Henry had.
- When Henry VIII died in 1547, Edward VI was only nine years old. He sadly died when he was 15. In order to prevent a Catholic taking the throne (Mary Tudor, his elder sister, was a Catholic), the custodians of the throne gave of the throne to Lady Jane Grey (the nine days queen) who was 17 and a Protestant (descended from Henry VII, Henry Tudor). However Mary marched on London and claimed the throne for herself and had Lady Jane Grey, her cousin, beheaded. Mary I (known affectionately as bloody Mary was crowned in 1553 and was the first “fully fledged” Queen of England. She also imprisoned her other cousin, Mary Queen of Scots. Later, her sister (Elizabeth I, a protestant) executed Mary Queen of Scots, seemingly reluctantly. Being a Catholic, Mary persecuted Protestants (many were burnt alive at the stake, giving her the name bloody Mary) and she freed the catholic priests who had been locked up. She also married a Catholic, King Philip the second of Spain. They bore no heirs which meant that the catholic theme would not be carried forward.
- Following her sister's death in 1558, Elizabeth I was crowned Queen of England. Elizabeth never married and had no children (seems the Tudor's weren't too fertile!). She was the last Tudor to reign and died in 1603. The Spanish had claimed America in 1492, under the Explorer Christopher Columbus (and later Cortez defeated Aztecs in 1521 and Pizarro the Incas in 1532). Many ships sailed from the Americas back towards Spain laden with treasure. Elizabeth commissioned Francis Drake to loot these ships and bring back the loot for her. King Philip of Spain was unimpressed.

Remember he had been married to Queen Mary. He launched attacks on England with a famous Spanish Armada. But the English pre-empted these attacks and beat the Spanish heavily.

- William Shakespeare lived during the Tudor era. He married Anne Hathaway and had three children with her. He is buried in the holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon.
- The Stuarts succeeded the Tudors to the throne. King James I of England (crowned 1603) previously known as King James VI of Scotland, was the son of Mary Queen of Scots (cousin of Queens Mary and Elizabeth. James was also directly descended from Henry VII, a Tudor). He was crowned King of England in 1603 (he was warmly received). He was famous for the translation of the Bible, the King James version, the first to use the term Great Britain and for creating the Union Jack. But, he was a boastful and egotistical leader refusing to share power with parliamentarians. There was also a famous plot to blow him up in 1605, the gunpowder plot (Guy Fawkes backed by Catholics). Some extreme Protestants known as puritans voiced their disapproval by leaving England and sailing to America on the famous Mayflower in 1620. There were about 100 of them (called pilgrims/puritans who sailed from Plymouth in England to Plymouth in America).
- Charles I succeeded his father, James I, to the throne. Like his father he excluded Parliament and even imprisoned some of them. When he refused to have a constitutional monarchy (he believed he was appointed by God), the upshot was civil war, fought between the parliamentarians (called round heads) and the royalists (called Cavaliers). The parliamentarians under an MP called Oliver Cromwell created an army of professional soldiers (called the new model Army) who defeated the royalists. The final defeat was inflicted at the Battle of Naseby in 1645 and, yet, he remained defiant of parliament. This resulted in a second civil war and he was captured and imprisoned for treason and executed in 1649 at Whitehall.
- With Charles I dead, England was declared a Republic known as the Commonwealth of England. Cromwell had the throne from 1653-58 and was succeeded by his son Richard Cromwell (1658-59), albeit briefly (ironically, it appears they ruled in a virtual dictatorship). In the years between Charles' death and Cromwell's reign (1649-1653), there was lots of infighting over how parliament should be structured and so it seems there was no appointed ruler during this time. Oliver Cromwell was only sworn in, in 1653.
- Richard Cromwell was appointed when his father died of illness. But the army was not happy with his appointment because he had no significant military experience. The army, being civilians, requested parliament to be dissolved but the request fell on deaf ears. They then overthrew Richard who resigned. Charles II, who was in exile in France (after Oliver Cromwell defeated Charles II at the battle of Worcester in 1651), was invited to return and was crowned the king. His wife had four miscarriages and he left no heir.
- Another plague struck London in 1665, the bubonic plague. As with the Black death of 1348, it was spread by fleas living on rats. Sadly, in a terrible double blow, a huge fire engulfed London a year later (in 1666), started in a small bakery in pudding Lane. The one good thing is that it killed most of the rats in London and that Christopher Wren, an architect, redesigned some of London (before funding ran out) including the building of St Paul's Cathedral.
- Charles II's brother, James II inherited the throne in 1685 but was not a popular king because he was Catholic (the last Catholic King of England – he converted to Catholicism which is why he and his children were different religions). When he fathered a son, the Protestants invited his daughter Mary II and her husband William III (her first cousin) to come and overthrow James, which they did and became king and Queen of England in 1689 (known as the Glorious

Revolution). King James fled to France and threw the great Seal into the River Thames. In 1689 parliament voted to bar Catholics from the throne as part of the Bill of Rights. The dethroned King was clearly upset that his own daughter had overthrown him, but it seems to have been driven by William, her husband.

- William outlived his wife, Mary II and was King in 1689 (they had no children – there were rumours he was gay). Noting his right to the throne was only via marriage to Mary, this was not a typical occurrence. But it seems to have been allowed because he was Protestant and other claimants to the throne were Catholics (and the Bill of Rights precluded Catholics).
- Mary's sister, Anne, was next to the throne, but left no heirs in spite of being pregnant 19 times and having a few surviving children (that died young). She was crowned in 1702 and presided over the Acts of Union in 1707, when Scotland and England were united under one sovereign state, known as the Kingdom of Great Britain. Anne was the first monarch of the joint state and, because she had no surviving children, was the last monarch in the house of Stuart. She was also the last English monarch (thereafter was GB). Because there was no clear bloodline relative to succeed Anne (and many close were Catholic), parliament had to pass an Act of Settlement, appointing a new Protestant blood line to the throne. The Hanover family (Sophia) was considered the best – she was granddaughter of James I.
- Anne died in 1714 and George I was crowned (George was from Lower Saxony, now part of Germany) being the start of the Georgian era from 1714 to 1830 where 4 Georges reigned. There were over 50 Catholics that had a closer blood line than George – but thanks to the Act of Settlement and the Bill of Rights, they had no look in. During George I's reign, Britain transitioned towards a cabinet government and appointed their first prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole. Towards the end of George's reign, most power was in the hands of the PM.
- George II, his son, was crowned in 1727 and was the last monarch born outside Britain. He famously fended off the Jacobites at the Battle of Culloden Moor where Bonnie Prince Charlie was defeated. BPC was the last Stuarts claimant to the throne and he was attempting to restore the Stuarts to the crown by invading England.
- George III reigned for 60 years from 1760. He presided over the uniting of Ireland and Britain into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801. He also reigned during the Boston tea party in 1773. Although he sent the British Army over to fight the locals in the US, the British were defeated at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781. Two years later the USA was formed. He also presided over the Napoleonic wars, until Napoleon was defeated in 1815.
- George IV presided from 1820 to 1830 although he was in charge in 1811 during his father's life because his father became mentally ill. He was fashion conscious, remodelling Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace and building the National Gallery in London and Kings College.
- The Georgian era also coincided with the industrial revolution. With the Scottish engineer, James Watt's steam engine, goods were made quickly and cheaply and transported rather easily. What followed were Luddite protests in 1811. Factory workers started destroying machines because they were being done out of work by them. The factory workers were rounded up and sent off to Australia which was the establishment of Britain's first prison colony (in 1770 James Cook had mapped the east coast of Australia and declared a few areas British colonies (like NSW)).
- The French Revolution also began during the Georgian era (the storming of the prison, the Bastille, took place in 1789). Napoleon settled the chaos by seizing power and nominating himself Emperor of France. He wanted to expand the French empire across Europe and met resistance from the British on a few occasions. On 21 October 1805, the Battle of Trafalgar began off the

west coast of Spain Horatio Nelson was aboard HMS victory. He had lost his arm and right eye in battle but was still a young man at only 20 years old. Tactically he attacked the French ships at right angles which proved very successful.

- A Member of Parliament named William Wilberforce made a famous speech against slavery and the House of Commons voted to abolish it in 1807, although it did take a while longer to stop.
- Napoleon's army was significantly depleted after their exploits in Russia. However, that did not stop him from marching on Belgium and meeting the Duke of Wellington in that famous battle, the Battle of Waterloo. The casualties were similar on either side. Napoleon lost the battle and was banished to St Helena Island in the South Atlantic where he died.
- William IV followed his brother, George IV to the crown in 1830. William left no legitimate descendants, although he had many illegitimate ones (David Cameron of the Tories is related to one).
- The Victorian era (1837-1901) followed the Georgian era, with the brief exception of William IV in the middle. She was William's niece. She was 18 when she became Queen and reigned for 63 years. Whilst most of the power was with parliament, she presided over significant expansion of the British Empire, becoming the foremost political power of the era. She married Prince Albert, her German cousin and they had nine children. Sadly he died from typhoid and Queen Victoria wore black for the rest of her life, in mourning. She only came out in public many years later following a persuasive conversation with the Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli. She built the Royal Albert Hall in honour of her dead husband.
- During the Victorian era there were many technological, cultural and traditional breakthroughs. Sewers were introduced to London, advances made on steam technology, police were introduced, Dickens wrote his books, Darwin wrote on the origin of species, antiseptics were introduced, school was made compulsory for all not just the wealthy etc.
- The Irish potato famine in the mid-1800s resulted in Irish farmers not being able to pay the British landlords. Many of them were thrown off the land. The result was many died which turned the Irish against England. This was the beginning of talks for Ireland's independence.
- The Crimean War (1853-1856) was a series of battles designed to stop the Russian extending their territory in the Crimea. The British were notoriously poorly equipped for some reason. The charging light Brigade is a good example, where the British simply charged and were shot down by the Russians. But there was a shining light, a woman named Florence Nightingale who took many nurses to the Crimea and helped tend the wounded.
- India was also under mutiny by the locals (triggered, it seems, by the use of animal fats on cartridges used by the Indians in the East India Company Army which went against both Hindu and Muslim tradition) and so Queen Victoria took over the entire sub continent. Up until this time the British trading company, the Honourable East India Company, had been governing India since the 1600s.
- 10% of Africa was controlled by European countries at the start of the 1870s. By the turn of the century some 30 years later they ruled over 90%.
- During her reign, the British Empire expanded significantly (especially with Napoleon out the way, there were no main rivals). There was ongoing war with Russia over territory (such as the Crimean which Britain lost), but in the end a treaty was signed (Anglo-Russian Entente) giving Britain control over certain regions. They colonised much of Africa (Cape to Cairo..). They also had India, much Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

- Queen Victoria died in 1901 and throne passed on to her son Edward VII (1901 to 1910). This was a brief Edwardian era (because his mother lived for ages!). Quite strangely, with Victoria being female, the Victorian era was one remembered for its sexist men and attitudes. Wives up until 1882 were their husband's possessions and they were required to look after the home. The suffragettes rose up in protest. Finally, some women were able to vote by 1918 and all were given the vote in 1928. Interestingly, most of Victoria's relatives were Germans. Edward (her son) was likeable and known for his peace keeping (he had good relations with France), yet he did not get on well with his German nephew. He anticipated WW1 (perhaps because of this), but was not alive to see it (lucky him).
- With the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, the First World War began. The killer was a Bosnian Serb and Austro-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Russia and France quickly came to support Serbia. Germany, the sly buggers, took the opportunity to invade Belgium and France. This brought Britain into the War to help France. And the rest was history. The Germans faced the French and the British forces, both in trench lines. These were hundreds of kilometres long known as the Western front. USA, as always later joiners to war, only joined the Allies in 1917. This pushed the Germans into an all out attack on the Western front (battle of the Somme in 1916 where allies pushed back the Germans). Germany was finally forced to surrender.
- George V presided over WW1 and was Edward VII's son. He was monarch from 1910-1936 and was the first from the house of Windsor (he changed the family surname to Windsor because of his families ties with Germany – he wanted to disown the Germans because of WW1). His reign saw the rise of communism, fascism and socialism.
- Edward VIII followed his father, George V and only reigned for 1 year (1936). He fell in love with an American divorcee (twice divorced socialite, Wallis Simpson) which created all sorts of problems when he decided to marry her. The Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, opposed the marriage and would have resigned had the wedding happened. This would have caused a general election, which would have been a political nightmare for the already unpopular king. Instead, the king abdicated the throne and still married her. He passed the crown to his brother, George VI.
- George VI presided over WWII (1936-52). His actual name was Albert, but he used the name George to try to win back favour for the monarchy by continuing his father's name.
- Before the war there was talk of Ireland gaining independence from Britain. The Protestant north were happy to be ruled by England, but the Catholic south wanted independence. During the First World War, the Catholics from the South took the opportunity to attempt a mutiny in 1916. They took over Dublin's Post Office, known as the Easter rising. The British quickly neutralised them and had the people executed. This made the Irish more determined to become independent. Sinn Fein, using their military force called the IRA, tried to force out the British. The British sent in some ex-soldiers, nicknamed the Black and Tans to face the revolt. After much fighting, Ireland was finally established in 1937(Northern Ireland remaining part of the United Kingdom).
- Spanish flu broke out in 1918 which killed more than 25 million people globally (deadliest natural disaster in history). Wiki states the deaths at 50-100m.
- In 1931, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada were given their right to independence. India and Pakistan had to wait until 1947, thanks in great part Mohandas Gandhi for organising non-violent protests against the British.

- During the First World War, out of necessity, women performed many roles and jobs previously done by men, which was a very important eye opener for society. It was a significant contributor to women getting the vote in 1928.
- Wall St crashed in 1929 sending the world into global economic meltdown. There was mass unemployment during the 1930s right across Europe. This seems to have created a melting pot of fascist ideologies such as those followed by Mussolini and Hitler. Hitler came into power in Germany in 1933. One of the first things he did was build Germany's military power base. Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister wanted to avoid a Second World War and entered into a peace treaty with Hitler. But Hitler kept breaking his promises and when he invaded Poland, Britain declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939. Churchill replaced Chamberlain as prime minister in May 1940 when he was already 66 years old. When France surrendered control to Germany, Churchill sent in many British troops to defend France. The Germans then turned their attentions toward Britain which became known as the Battle of Britain. It was a war fought in the air which the British won thanks to their secret weapon, radar. The Germans bombed many civilians including bombing London many times, particularly on 7 September 1940. King George the sixth refused to leave London and visited many victims of the bombings. This made him popular. Quite famously, the US and Britain decided to attack the German occupied France on 6 June 1944 in a place called Normandy and this became known as D-Day. The troops landed on the Normandy beaches and were met by gunfire but ended up wresting France back from the Germans and continued to march toward Berlin. From the other side the Russians were also advancing on Berlin because of what Hitler had done to the Russians. Whilst there was victory in Europe following Hitler's suicide and Germany's surrender on 8 May 1945, the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed before the Second World War was over.
- Queen Elizabeth II, daughter of George VI (actually called Albert), was crowned in 1952 and remains the current queen. Her only sibling is Princess Margaret. She fell in love with Prince Philip (prince of Greece and Denmark) when she was 13 and he is her second cousin, once removed. He had sisters who married German noblemen who had Nazi links. Philip's surname is Mountbatten, but the royal family name remains Windsor. Their children are Charles, Anne (married a Philips), Andrew and Edward. Each has been divorced except Edward who is married to Sophie Rhys-Jones.

Dates for formation Britain as we know it:

- Union of crowns in 1603, brought England, Scotland and Ireland under one monarchy (although they remained separate states). James I was king.
- 1707, Act of Union passed, Kingdom of Great Britain was formed by combining Scotland and England (which included Wales). Government became united (one state).
- 1800, Added Ireland to United Kingdom. But Irish partition in 1922/3, leaving south of Ireland to be self governed. Changed name to United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Interesting comments:

- Initially the Romans treated Christians harshly, often killing them. One in particular named Alban was killed for offering shelter to a priest that the Romans were looking for. He was later made a saint and the town St Albans is named after him.

- Hadrian's Wall is the largest stone structure ever built by the Roman Empire.
- A tribe called the Scots, who rebelled against the Romans, were actually from Ireland.
- Four days of the week are named after Anglo Saxon gods. These being Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
- The Anglo-Saxons pushed the Celts into an area now known as Wales. The Celts and the Anglo-Saxons often fought each other. The King of the Anglo-Saxons (Offa) built/dug a trench 270 km long to keep out the Celts, which is known as Offa's Dyke. Parts remain visible today.
- Bede was Britain's first historian who wrote a history of the English people which was completed in 731. He was the first to use the BC and AD terminology which is still used today.
- York is named after the Vikings who called it Jorvik. It was a Viking stronghold.
- Canute, the Viking king, was said to have proven that his powers were limited by commanding that the ocean tide stop, which obviously it didn't. His aim was to show that God was all-powerful and not he.
- The castles built by William the Conqueror are known as motte and bailey castles. They were built on mounds of earth known as mottes and the wooden towers were known as Baileys.
- The English later called the survey of belongings by William the Conqueror, the Domesday book. This is because it resembles the assessment that God makes on judgement Day. Judgement Day and Domesday are interchangeable terms.
- There was a plot created by Catholics who aimed to blow up King James I and Parliament on 5 November 1605. A man called Guy Fawkes managed to make his way into the centre of Parliament with the gunpowder to blow up Parliament. However he was caught and hanged. This was the start of Guy Fawkes Day.
- The Duke of Wellington from the Battle of Waterloo had some boots made for him that he required to be strong enough for battle and comfortable enough for dinner. Once when he was on a ship that was sinking, he refused to take his boots off. Waterproof boots are now called Wellington boots.
- It was said that Prince Albert started the tradition of decorating Christmas trees and sending Christmas cards during the Victorian era.
- Sir Robert Peel used the first police force when he was prime minister (1829). This is where the term Bobbies boys came from to describe policeman.
- Mohandas Gandhi (real name) was also known as Mahatma Gandhi because Mahatma means great soul.
- Oliver Cromwell was given a posthumous execution. This involved digging up his body and mutilating it. At the time it was believed that if you were not buried, you could not be resurrected. Cromwell's corpse was hanged, drawn and quartered. This involved being dragged on a wooden frame (drawn), hanged until almost dead (not applicable in this case!), then beheaded and cut into quarters.
- When George II was crowned, Handel was commissioned to create 4 new anthems for the coronation. One is still sung to this day for each coronation (Zadok the priest).
- The Battle of Culloden Moor was the last pitched battle. A pitched battle is one where both sides agree on a location and time for a battle. It allows either side to disengage before or during initial exchanges.
- A Jacobite is someone wanting to restore the Stuarts to the crown in Britain.

- Queen Victoria started an apparent line of descendants who had haemophilia. This made modern biologists wonder whether the father of the children was the Duke of Kent (male carriers always have the disease).
- The Queen (Elizabeth II) is the supreme governor of the Church of England.

MONARCHS	Crowned	House/Family	Claim	How	Details
William I	1066	Normandy	Edward made promise	Seized	Battle of Hastings. 3 monarchs same year. Edward Confessor, Harold, William. Domesday.
William II	1087	Normandy	Son of William I	Appointed	Called Rufus (red face).
Henry I	1100	Normandy	Son of William I	Seized	Made precursor to Magna Carta, charter of Liberties
Stephen	1135	Normandy	Grandson William I	Appointed	Last Norman King. Son of William's daughter. Wife also called Matilda. Defeated at Battle of Lincoln by cousin Matilda
Matilda	1141	Normandy	Daughter Henry I	Seized	11 Months only. Henry's will put her as successor. Husband Norman enemy, hence rejection of her claims.
Stephen	1141	Normandy	Grandson William I	Appointed	Treaty of Wallingford. Truce with Matilda. Agreed Matilda's son could become next king
Henry II	1154	Plantagenet	Son of Matilda	By Wall. treaty	Inherited French land via father, a French Count. United a lot of France and England.
Richard I	1189	Plantagenet	Son of Henry II	Appointed	Lionheart. Gave up all for Crusades. Wanted to take back Jerusalem from Saladin, but failed. Austrians captured him.
John	1199	Plantagenet	Brother of Richard I	Appointed	Weak, schemer, lost support of Cath Church + large parts of France. Caused uprising. Result Magna Carta 1215.
Henry III	1216	Plantagenet	Son of John	Appointed	Crowned at nine. Fought Magna Carta, was thrown under house arrest (by de Montfort). Escaped. Revenge at battle of Evesham.
Edward I	1272	Plantagenet	Son of Henry III	Appointed	Longshanks. Was imprisoned also by de Montfort. Resisted parliament, but realised its power. First model parliament. Fought W Wallace.
Edward II	1307	Plantagenet	Son of Edward I	Appointed	Fought Robert the Bruce, Banockburn, 1314.
Edward III	1327	Plantagenet	Son of Edward II	Appointed	Scotland independance 1328. Hundred year 1337-1453, Crecy 1346, Eng longbowmen defeated Fr crossbows. 1348 Blackdeath. Dark prince his son.
Richard II	1377	Plantagenet	Grandson Ed III	Appointed	Married french princess who was 7 (he was 30). No heirs. 1381 Peasants revolt (Wat Tyler)
Henry IV	1399	Lancaster	Grandson Ed III	Seized	Richard tyrant (peasants revolt, poll tax), insecure (no heirs). Henry popular. Established House of Lancaster.
Henry V	1413	Lancaster	Son of Henry IV	Appointed	1415 Agincourt, French lost, knights would not fight.
Henry VI	1422	Lancaster	Son of Henry V	Appointed	Crowned 9m old. Mentally unstable as adult. Resulted in 1455-1485 Wars of Roses. Lancaster red rose, York white. Richard DoY, killed Battle of Wakefield 1460.
Edward IV	1461	York	Relative Edward III	Seized	1461 Battle of Towton (largest battle fought in Britain, 80000 soldiers), beat Henry VI, Henry placed in tower
Henry VI	1470	Lancaster	Son of Henry V	Seized	Founded Eton and Kings College, Cambridge. Henry's mother, Margaret, rallied troops to overthrow Edward.
Edward IV	1471	York	Relative Edward III	Seized	Seemed to be more popular. Returned to London, got more and more support, overthrew Henry who died in tower
Edward V	1483	York	Son of Edward IV	Appointed	Only 2 months reign, 15 years old. One of two princes in tower, along with brother Richard.
Richard III	1483	York	Relative Edward III	Appointed	Claims 2 princes were illegitimate. Richard Crowned. Princes died, suspiciously in tower. Richard killed battle of Bosworth 1485.
Henry VII	1485	Tudor	Relative Edward III	Seized	Married princes sister, Elizabeth, united York and Lancaster. First Tudor. His mother was only 13 when she gave birth to him!
Henry VIII	1509	Tudor	Son of Henry VII	Appointed	Arthur, older brother, died, opened up throne. Henry married 6 times. Div, behead, died, div, behead, survive. Cath, Ann, Jane, Anne, Cath, Cath
Edward VI	1547	Tudor	Son of Henry VIII	Appointed	Son of Jane Seymour. Died when he was 15. Said Jane should replace him.
Lady Jane Grey	1553	Tudor	Relative Henry VIII	Appointed	Nine days queen. Protestant. Granddaughter of Henry VIII's sister. Killed by Mary.
Mary I	1553	Tudor	D'ter of Henry VIII	Seized	Daughter of 1st wife, Catherine of Aragon. Catholic, Bloody Mary. First full Queen. Marched on London, seized throne. Burnt protestants.
Philip II of Spain	1554	Tudor	Husband Mary I	Agreement	Under agreement, he was to enjoy same titles as wife, Queen Mary. Catholic. No heirs, no more catholics.

Elizabeth I	1558	Tudor	Daughter Henry VIII	Appointed	Daughter of 2nd wife, Ann Boleyn. Protestant. Virgin. No marriage, no heirs. Francis Drake commissioned to loot, Philip upset. Spanish Armada beaten.
James I	1603	Stuart	G-G G'son Henry VII	Appointed	Union of crowns. Son of Mary Queen of Scots (cous. of Mary I, Eliz I). Egotist. Puritan rebels, sailed US. Guy Fawkes 1605 gunpowder plot (Catholics).
Charles I	1625	Stuart	Son of James 1	Appointed	Anti parliament like dad. Believed appointed by God. Civil war 1642. Executed 1649, Whitehall.
Oliv. Cromwell	1653	C'wealth	Revolt against King	Seized	Led roundheads, new model army. Defeat of royals battle of naseby 1645. Gap in monarchy 1649-1653. Arguments over parliament structures.
Rich. Cromwell	1658	C'wealth	Son of Oliver	Appointed	Army (civilians) unhappy with him, no battle experience. Overthrown. Charles II in excile - beaten by Cromwell 1651 battle of Worcester.
Charles II	1660	Stuart	Son of Charles I	Seized	Bubonic plague 1665. Fire of London 1666. Killed rats spreading. Christopher Wren.
James II	1685	Stuart	Brother of Charles I	Appointed	Converted to Catholicism. Last Cath. monarch. Had son (heir), so big rebellion. Some children protestant because he was originally Prot.
Mary II	1689	Stuart	Daughter Charles II	Seized	Daughter Mary and husband Will (also cousin) invited by parliament to overthrow dad. James threw Seal into Thames.
William III	1689	Stuart	Husband Mary II	Seized	Gay? Period known as Glorious Revolution. 1689 parliament voted, no Catholics on throne. William outlived Mary but allowed to stay on (no protestant heirs).
Anne	1702	Stuart	Sister Mary II	Appointed	Last monarch of England. Acts of Union 1707. Scotland/England unity. No heirs. Parliament passed Act of Settlement, new bloodline.
George I	1714	Hanover	Related to James I	Appointed	GB King. Saxony/Germany. 50 Catholics had closer bloodline (Bill of rights barred them). First prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole. Power in his hands.
George II	1727	Hanover	Son of George I	Appointed	Fended off Jacobites, Culloden Moor (Bonnie Prince Charlie - last Stuart claimant).
George III	1760	Hanover	Son of George II	Appointed	60 years. Boston tea party, 1773. United Ireland into GB, 1801. Battle of Yorktown, US defeated Brits, 1781. Napoleonic wars (defeated 1815). Ind rev.
George IV	1820	Hanover	Son of George III	Appointed	Was in charge from 1811, dad was sick. Luddite protests 1811, factory workers destroy machines.
William IV	1830	Hanover	Brother George IV	Appointed	No legitimate heirs. David Cameron related, illegitimately.
Victoria	1837	Hanover Saxe-Coburg and Gotha	Will's niece	Appointed	Haemophilia. Victorian era. 18yrs old, reigned 63 years. Empire expands. Married cousin, 9 children. Albert died, wore black (Disraeli), Vict & Alfred Hall. Dickens.
Edward VII	1901		Son of Victoria	Appointed	Suffragettes. Edward predicted war, was not happy with his German cousin, Willhelm.
George V	1910	Windsor	Son	Appointed	WW I. Dropped all references to Germany in WWI, including name. Change name to Windsor. Spanish Flu 1918, 50m dead. Wall st crash 1929.
Edward VIII	1936	Windsor	Son	Appointed	Wanted to marry Wallis Simpson, US socialite, 2 times divorced. Prime minister unhappy, potential resignation. Edward abdicated throne, married Wallis.
George VI	1936	Windsor	Brother	Appointed	WW II. Well liked, refused to leave London, visited wounded. Actual name Albert, but changed it to keep royal name.
Elizabeth II	1952	Windsor	Daughter	Appointed	Married Philip, German family. All children divorced, except Edward.