Summary British History Essay, Research Paper

ESWH

Chapter 1 The foundation Stones

The Island

Britain is an Island and its history has been closely connected to the sea. The seas saved Britain from danger. Strong national sense have been developed by the sea.

Britain?s prehistory

Britain has not always been an island. The ice age wasn?t one cold period. Our first evidence of human life is a few stone tools, dating from 250.000 BC.

Britain was hardly habitable until another milder period around 50.000 BC. During this period, a new type of human seemed to have arrived. They look similar to normal people, but they were smaller and had a life span of only thirty years.

Around 10.000 BC Britain was peopled by groups of hunters, gatherers and fishers.

Around 5.000 BC, Britain has become an island.

There were several invaders:

?The first people to invade were people from either spain or north-africa. They were small and dark and knew how to make pottery.

?After 2400 BC new groups of people arrived in Britain, they were round-headed and strongly built. They became leaders of British society.

?Around 700 BC They Celts arrived in Britain, They came from central Europe and they were technically advanced. They could make weapons from Iron. These are the ancestors of many of the people in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Cornwall. Last Celtic arrivals were the belgian Tribes.

?The Romans arrived in 55 BC. They brought the skills of reading and writing to Britain. The Romans could not conquer Scotland.

?The Anglo-Saxons Invaded in the fifth century AD.

?The Vikings in 865 AD

Roman Life

The Romans had a good influence on British life, The people learned how to speak Latin/ Greek and learned how to write. The Romans came to Britain because they could use the British food for their army with the Gauls.

Most obvious characteristic were the towns, They were the bases of Roman civilisation.

There were three different kind of towns in Roman Britain.

?Coloniae: Towns settled by Roman settlers

?Municipia: Large cities in which all inhabitants were given Roman citizenship.

?Civitas: Included the old Celtic tribal Capitals

London was twice the size of Paris and the most important trading centre of Northern Europe, because Britain produced so much corn for export.

The biggest change during the Roman occupation was the growth of large farms called ?villas?. Roman life seemed civilised, but it was also hard if you were poor. The life expectancy was only 20 years.

Chapter 2 The Saxon Invasion

The Invaders

The invaders came from powerful Germanic tribes.

?The SaxonsSettled in the rest of England.

?The Angles Settled in the East

?The JutesSettled in mainly Kent and along the south coast

They gave the England of modern times her name. It was the part they had settled in Britain.

The Anglo-Saxon left little of Celtic culture in England. There are only two cities: London and Leeds and some rivers: Thames.

Government and society

The Saxons created institutions which made the English state strong for the next 5oo years.

One of them was the King?s council, the Witan. It issued laws and orders. Nowadays the king still has a privy council, based on the Witan.

The Saxons divided the land into counties (Shire is the Saxon word for county). They also changed the agriculture in Britain. They introduced a new plough which was far more better than the Celtic one.

The farmers had to work together, because they had to share land and instruments with each other. This made a new form of settlements. To make this work they had several laws and regulations.

?Each district had a ?manor?, The villagers paid their taxes here and men met here to join the ?fyrd?, The Anglo-Saxon army.

?The Aldermen were the local officials, but they changed to warlords. The name was changed to Earl. A Danish name. They are both still used in the army.

Christianity

In the Celtic areas, Christianity began to spread, because it was forbidden in the Anglo-Saxon part.

Not Augustine, but the Celtic church brought Christianity to the normal people. Bishops went from village to village to tell about their religion. They were also accepted in Anglo-Saxon villages, in spite of the difference.

Saxon kings helped the church become big, but the church also increased the power of kings. They gave their king support and made it harder for Royal power to be questioned. It was different from now, an eldest son did not become king automatically.

The power of the church was also increased by the monasteries. They trained the men who could read and write.

The Vikings

The Vikings invaded in 865 AD. They accepted Christianity quickly and did not disturb the local population. King Alfred won a battle against the Vikings in 878, and eight years later he captured London. He was smart enough to make a treaty with the Vikings.

Alfred was recognised as a king.

Who should be king?

The Saxon king, Ethelred decided to pay the Vikings to stay away. He asked money from his people (taxes) It was the beginning of the tax system.

Edward ( the confessor), who was the son of Ethelred, was more interested in the church, than in being king.

Edward died in 1066 without an heir. The question who should be king is important in British History.

Harold was chosen to be king, He had no Royal blood. His right to the throne was challenged by the Duke of Normandy. Harold was faced by two dangers:

?The French in the North

?The Danish in the South

He defeated the Danish, but got killed in the battle of Hastings by the French . Duke William became king.

Chapter 3 The Celtic kingdoms.

Wales

The Celts were driven in to wales, they called themselves cymry ?fellow countrymen?. Life in Wales was dangerous and bloody. Almost all kings got killed by a cymry.

In 1039 Gruffydd ap Llewelyn was the first Welsh king to rule all over Wales.

Ireland

Ireland was never invaded by the Anglo-Saxons or the Romans. They had their own Celtic culture. Kings were chosen by election. Christianity came to England about AD 430, which is the beginning of Irelands history.

Scotland

Scotland was populated by different groups;

?The Picts; The main group/ lived in the north and northeast/ spoke Celtic

?The non-Pictish/ mainly Scots who moved to the highlands from Ireland in the Fourth century.

?The Britons/ lived in the lowlands.

The early middle ages

Chapter 4 conquest and feudal rule

The Norman conquest

William was crowned king, his conquest had only just begun. Only the Saxon Lords who accepted William completely from the beginning kept their land, the others lost everything.

William gave the land to his Norman nobles.

Feudalism

William was smart in giving away land. He gave his nobles and armies land in different parts of Britain, so they couldn?t gather men easily to start a rebellion.

At the same time he kept enough land himself to make sure was stronger. He kept the Saxon system of sherrifs.

Feudalism came from the French word feu. It means that all the land belongs to the King, but there are several Lords who look after it. In return for goods.

William decided to make an overview of his land and the value of it. This was no very popular, because everyone felt they could not escape this.

Kingship: a family business

When William died he left the Duchy of Normandy to his Elder son, Robert. He gave England to his second son, William. When William died, their younger brother Henry acted quickly and took over the throne. Robert was very angry and decided to invade England, but it took him over a year to gather an army.

The Norman nobles had to choose between Henry and Robert. They chose Henry, because he was already in London, with a crown on his head.

In 1106 Henry invaded Normandy and defeated Robert. England and normandy were now under the same ruler.

Henry?s son died and he had no other sons so he left everything to his daughter Matilda. He married her to a French noble. When henry died, His nephew Stephen did the same thing as him and raced to England to take the Throne. Matilda invaded four years later, with the result of a civil war. Matilda finally accepted Stephen as a king, but when he died he would have to leave the throne to her son.

Stephen died only one year later, and England was ruled by a king accepted by everyone, Henry II.

He married Eleanor of Aquitaine and he also ruled anjou. His empire stretched from the pyrenees to the Borders of Scotland.

Henry quarrelled with his wife and his two sons took the side of their mother. Henry died in 1189, defeated by his sons. Richard followed his father. He has always been one of Englands most popular kings.

Richard the lionhearted was captured by the duke of Austria on his return from the holy land. The Duke demanded money and it took England two years to pay. Richard was killed in France in 1199 and the French king took over Richard?s part of France.

Richard had no son, so his brother John followed him. John wasn?t popular because he was greedy.

He made a lot of money by raising taxes and payments.

In 1204 John had become less popular by failing to protect his nobles? land against France.

In 1209 John quarrelled with the pope. The pope asked the king of France to invade England and closed every church in England. Finally in 1214 John gave in.

In 1215 John hoped to recapture Normandy, but his nobles lost their trust in him and did not want to fight.

Magna Carta and the decline of feudalism

John was forced to sign a new agreement called magna carta. This promised protection for all freemen. It was not for the entire population, because the nobles only thought for themselves.

Magna Carta was recognized by every king after John and was used until the sixteenth century.

Chapter 5 The power of the kings of England

Church and state

John?s reign marked the end of the struggle between Church and state. This struggle was for both power and money. The Church wanted the kings of Europe to accept its authority over both spiritual and earthly affairs and argued that even kings were answerable to God. Kings on the other hand, chose bishops as men who could be loyal to them.

The beginnings of parliament

John died in 1216. His son Henry III was only nine years old and tied to magna carta, He was ruled by nobles for the first sixteen years.

Henry was able to rule at twenty-five. He spent lots of money and the nobles were upset. Under the leadership of one of the French nobles parliament was founded in 1258. It forced Henry to get rid of his foreign advisers.

Henry died in 1272 and his son Edward took over the throne.

Edward I brought the first real parliament together.. He also created the house of commons ( representative institution), which could provide the money he needed.

The house of commons was a mixture of inhabitants of Britain. All common people.

Dealing with the Celts

Edward I was less interested in bringing back France than uniting Britain under his control. In 1284 Edward united west Wales with England.

Ireland was conquered by Norman Lords in 1169. They had little problem defeating the Irish kings and tribes.

HenryII went to Ireland himself to ensure his lords would not become to independent.

He made Dublin the capitol of his new colony. The English crown only ruled Dublin and a small surrounding area called ?the pale?.

In Scotland things were very different. They were stronger than the welsh and they had their own king who ruled most of Scotland. This king was to powerful and most English kings did not try to defeat him, but Edward I was different.

In 1290 there was a crises. There were thirteen heirs to the throne. Robert Bruce and John de Balliol were both Norman-Scottish knights. They invited Edward to avoid civil war. Edward was willing to help if they would accept him as their overlord.

He put John de Balliol on the throne, but it was no succes, the Scottish nobles rebelled against him.

William Wallace, a Scottish knight rebelled against Edward and was quite succesful, but Edward excecuted Wallace and it seemed he had won after all. Robert Bruce was the new leader of the movement. Edward died in 1307. He tried to hammer down the Scots, but hammered nationalism in the Scots instead.

Edward II, his son went back to England and Robert Bruce managed to become king of Scotland.

Chapter 6 Government and society

The growth of government

The form of government changed when England had also captured France and the usual way wasn?t very good anymore. They needed one central point and it is still there in Westminster. The king kept all records in Westminster. The officials in Westminster had to keep an eye on the economy of the country and the kings? needs. Government administration kept a copy of each letter they had sent and had grown enormously since William I.

Law and justice

Every lord had his own laws for their land, only for serious crimes there was a king?s court. Henry I introduced that all crimes should be punished equally. The king slowly took over the power of the nobles.

By the end of the twelfth century there were men educated for this purpose and they were experts on law and order. England had a different law system from the rest of Europe which still used the Roman laws. Britain introduced a jury to decide whether a man was guilty or innocent These early juries are different from now. The accused man could choose twelve neighbours or friends to convict he was innocent.

This changed and lawyers were introduced to guide the jury, which had no sense of law at all.

Religious beliefs

The Churches in villages were different from the Church the king had to deal with. Most priests were married and gave their position to their sons when they died.

This changed. Priests weren?t allowed to get married and convicts were founded for nuns and monks who were willing to keep this promise.

In the thirteenth century friars were brought up. They existed of preachers who went from village to village, they were interested in the normal soul and lived with the poor.

Ordinary people in country and town

Life in the countryside was hard. Men had to work all their lives until they were unable to work any longer.

The poor were divided from their masters by the feudal class system. See page 37.

The growth of towns as centres of wealth ( see page 38)

Language, literature and culture( see page 41)

Chapter 7 The late middle ages

War with Scotland and France

Scotland and France became allies, to protect themselves from England. France tried to make England less powerful, by influencing the trade with other countries.

England declared the war to France, because they could not afford to miss their trade with Flanders( belgium).

Edward III declared the war in 1337, claiming the right to the French Throne. The war did not end until 1453 and England lost all French property except for Calais.

At first there was peace after this war, but the fighting started again in the fifteenth century.

The age of chivalry

Code of chivalry = the way a perfect knight should behave.

Chivalry was a useful way of persuading young men to fight by creating the idea that war was a noble and glorious thing. They could benefit from it, but usually, war was nothing more than cruelty and death. The black prince was feared in France for its cruelty.

The century of plagues

The year 1348 brought the plague ( black death) It wasn?t the first natural disaster and it wasn?t the last. One third of Britain?s population died . There were more plagues after this which killed most the young and the healthy. After the Black death there were so few workers left, they could ask for a higher pay. This led to the end of serfdom.

Life became more agreable after this, even for peasants.

Lots of Flanders came to England after the industry collapsed there. They came to search for work encouraged by Edward III.

The poor in Revolt

When Edward III died his grandson Richard II became king. He was very young and advisors decided to ask taxes for every person above fifteen. After the third time ordinary people in the cities started rebellions and refused to pay. The man who made this up Wat Tyler got killed and Richard II met the peoples wishes and made peace. He did not enforce the tax, but he did not give them more rights.

Heresy and Orthodoxy

The Church wasn?t popular, because of its greed. Priests and Monks lived in wealth. They also became aware of their Englishness and the pope was a foreigner. They were convinced that their taxes helped the French, because the pope was living in France.

The Church also had to much power. Religious leaders were often chancellors of the king.

Another threat was the spread of religious writings and there was one man who decided everyone should be able to read the bible so he translated it into English.

Chapter 8 The crisis of Kings and nobles

The crisis of kingship

During the fourteenth century there was a continuous struggle between the king and his nobles.

1327- king Edward II got killed. His son Edward III was only eleven years old.

Richard II had made himself very unpopular by his choice of advisors. He imprisoned John of Gaunt third son of Edward III, he died in prison. Henry of Lancaster, took revenge and Richard was put down. Henry IV became king. He divided the country in two parts, Lancastrians and Yorkists.

Wales in Revolt

Owain Glyndwr was the first and only prince to be widely supported in Wales. He descended from two royal families and created the idea of a welsh nation. He wasn?t strong enough to defeat the English, beut he created a feeling of national identity.

The struggle in France

When Henry IV died he passed the throne to his son Henry V, The kingdom was peaceful and united. Henry V became one of England?s most beloved kings.

Henry V won back most of France and married the French king?s daughter Katherine of Valois. He was seen as the heir of France, but he died earlier than the king.

His nine month old son inherited the thrones of England and France.

England fought France to enlarge its kingdom, but they were defeated twice by the French and lost everything except Calais.

It’s not a complete summary of the book, but the first few chapters are there…

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illustrated history of britain