**The United Kingdom of Great Britain**

THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland since 1922 includes England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and a lot of smaller islands. British Isles are a group of islands lying off the north-west of Europe. England, Wales and Scotland are in Great Britain. Northern Ireland is situated in the north-eastern part of Ireland. The larger part of Ireland is the Irish Republic. "Britania" is the ancient name of Britain.

The United Kingdom is washed by the North Sea in the east, the English Channel and the Strait of Dover in the south, the Atlantic Ocean in the north. In the west the United Kingdom is separated from the Irish Republic by the Irish Sea and the North Channel. The total area of the country is 94,249 square miles, and its population is 57 million people. The UK is an island state: it is composed of 5,500 islands, large and small. The two main islands are Great Britain (in which are England, Wales and Scotland )to the east and Ireland (in which are Northern Ireland and the independent Irish Republic) to the west. English is the official language of the United Kingdom. The inhabitants of the country are the English, the Welsh, the Scots and the Irish; these four nationalities have their own language and culture.

The capital of the whole country is London (7 mln); the capital of Wales is Cardiff (284 th); the capital of Scotland is Edinburgh (470 th); the capital of Northern Ireland is Belfast (440 th). There are 46 universities in Britain. The oldest and best known are located in Oxford, Cambridge, London, Edinburgh.

The climate of the United Kingdom is classified as temperate, cool. All parts of the British Isles get a lot of rains in all seasons. It is not very cold in winter and never very hot in summer. The average temperature in winter is +5C° and in summer is +20°C.

The chief rivers of the country are: the Severn (the longest), the Thames, the Trent, the Clyde and the Mersey. The seas around the country provide good fishing grounds. There are 6 beautiful lakes in England, this part is called "Lake District". Windermere is the largest among them. Scotland also has a lot of lakes which are called "lochs" there. The largest lake in the whole country is situated in Northern Island, it is Loch Neagh. One of the most attractive lake in Wales is Vyrnwy. These admirable places attract tourists from different countries.

The surface of England and Northern Ireland is flat, but Scotland and Wales are mountainous. The Pemurie Range in northern England and the Cambrian Mountains in Wales are rather low. Lowland Britain is a rich plain with chalk and limestone hills. The highest mountain top in the country is Ben Nevis in Highlands of Scotland , it is 1343 metres. The second highest mountain is in Wales, it is Snowdon, it is 1085 meters high. Many parts of the country have beautiful green meadows and hills.

The fauna of the British Isles is similar to that of Europe. The number of such large animals as bear, reindeer is very small. Here one finds foxes, hares, red deer, badgers, wild cats in most rural areas. Otters and seals may be seen on various parts of the coast. There are about 430 kinds of birds on the territory of the British Isles. Characteristic of the birds are sea gull, duck, goose, red grouse, dove, black cock, mountain eagle and others. The most numerous are blackbird, sparrow and starling. Robin redbreast is the national bird of the country.

There are three kinds of snakes of which only one is venomous. Sea and river fish are-trout, salmon, pike, grayling and so on. Fish farming production is centered mainly on salmon and trout.

As for the flora of the British Isles it is relatively poor comparing with that of many other countries. The most common trees are oak, beech, pine, birch, alder; maple, elm. Heather and moss dominate in the damp soils.

The United Kingdom has few mineral resources, of which the most important y are coal and oil. The largest coal fields are in England and Wales. The Welsh coal is considered to be the best in the world.

The oil fields are situated in the North Sea, along the coast of Scotland and England. Other minerals are natural gas, iron ore, lead, zinc, slate, lime stone, chalk, copper.

Metallurgy, chiefly iron and steel, is vital to other key industries such as shipbuilding, ship-repairing, automobile and aircraft industries, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering. Electronics, printing, pharmaceutics are the largest of all manufacturing sectors.

Production of textiles is spread throughout the country and British wool is well-known in the world. At the same time the textile machinery industry is an important sector of British industry. The United Kingdom now is one of the largest exporter of manufactured goods. Though the United Kingdom is a highly developed industrial country, agriculture remains the major sector of economy. The chief agricultural products of Britain are wheat, barley, oats, potatoes, sugar-beet, milk, beef, mutton and lamb. Britain has a long tradition of sheep production. Sheep can be seen in many parts of England and Scotland. Now the country can boast of more than 40 breeds . British poultry industry is growing quickly, and pig production is to be found in most parts of Britain.

The horticultural industry produces a lot of fruit, vegetables and flowers. Scotland is known for its large raspberry plantations in the world. Strawberry is widely grown.. in England. Black currants is grown in all parts of the country. The raising of flowers is very popular now. In England you can see fields of tulips stretched for miles. Mushrooms are also grown in specially constructed sheds in many parts of the country.

The United Kingdom is a parliamentary monarchy. The country has no Constitution, but a set of laws.

The head of the country is the Queen. The official residence of Queen Elizabeth the II is Buckingham Palace. The Royal Standard flying over the Buckingham Palace is the sign that the Queen is in the residence ; the absence of the Royal Standard means that the Queen is absent. Every year 6 million pounds is spent for keeping on monarchy. Everything in the country officially is done in the name of the Queen. The Queen's image appears on stamps, notes and coins.

British Parliament sits in the Palace of Westminster in the center of London. There are two towers in the Palace of Westminster: the Victoria Tower and The Clock Tower (called Big Ben). The British Flag (called the Union Jack) flying from the Victoria Tower shows that Parliament is in session. The light in the Clock Tower also indicates that Parliament is in session.

The Queen's power is limited by Parliament, which consists of the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The Queen enters the Palace of Westminster only on the day of the opening of Parliament at the beginning of a session. She makes her speech from the Throne in the House of Lords.

The members of the House of Commons, are elected by the population for a period of five years. There are 651 members of the House of Commons, most of them are professional politicians, lawyer\*;. The members of the House of Commons belong to different political parties. The Speaker is the chairman of all the debates in the House of Commons. His duty is to keep order. He sits on a beautiful chair, a gift from Australia and Canada to Mother Country. The Speaker is elected by the Members of the House of Commons. He never votes with other members. The government of the country is formed by the party which has the majority of members elected to Parliament. The Queen appoints its leader the Prime Minister. As the head of the Government the Prime Minister appoints about 100 ministers, of whom about 20 are in the Cabinet. The British Government is in the Whitehall.

The Prime Minister of the country is responsible for the policy conducted by Parliament. As for the House of Lords many people consider this system undemocratic because the number of Lords is 1000-1200 but they are not elected by the population. The House of Lords consists of princes, marquises, viscounts, barons, peers, Bishops of the Church. The chairman of the House of Lords is the Lord Chancellor, he sits on the wool sack, a large bag of wool, covered with a red cloth. This shows that wool made England rich. The House of Lords has no real power but acts rather as advisory council for the House of Commons.

The session in Parliament begins at the end of October and lasts for about 160 days.There are three main political parties in the United Kingdom: the Labour, the Conservative and the Liberal parties.

One of the oldest flags in the world is the British one. Its crosses stand for the patron saints of England (St. George's flag which has a red cross with extended horizontals on a white field), Scotland (St. Andrew's flag which has a white cross on a blue field), and Ireland (St. Patrick's flag which has a red cross on a white field).The arms of the crosses do not meet at the center. Some historians say that the British flag got the name of Union Jack from James 1 under whom Scotland and England were united in the 17th century.

The national anthem of the country is " God Save the Queen".

Questions

1 .What is the official name of Great Britain?

2. Where is it situated?

3. What parts does it consist of?

4. What territory does the United Kingdom occupy?

5. Why is the climate of the British Isles milder than that one of the Continent?,

6. The United Kingdom is a highly developed industrial country isn't it? Prove bit.

7.Are there any famous educational establishments in Great Britain?

8.What can you say about the political system of the country

9.What city is the capital of Great Britain?

10. Who is the Prime Minister of Great Britain?

WHO ARE -THE BRITISH?

Are they one people? How did they evolve? How many are there? What are their rights? What jobs do they do? How do they live? What-do they believe? What do they enjoy?

The answers to these questions provide a broad profile of ordinary citizens living in Britain today - their traditions, aspirations, talents, differences and habits. The following text traces the historical assimilation of the people of Britain, and identifies the political, economic, social and cultural influences and pursuits that determine and typify the British way of life.

GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Britain lies off the north-west coast of mainland Europe. Its full name is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Great Britain comprising England, Scotland and Wales. Although Britain is a unitary state, the constituent countries have separate national identities, variations in culture and tradition, and different physical characteristics.

With an area of some 242,000 sq km (93,000 sq miles), Britain is just under 1,000 km (about 600 miles) from the south coast to the extreme north of Scotland and just under 500 km (300 miles) across in the widest part.

England is predominantly a lowland country, with upland regions in the north (such as the Pennine Chain, the Cumbrian mountains and the Yorkshire moorlands) and the downs in central southern England, which are low chalk hill ranges. Whales is a country of hills and mountains, the highest being Snowdon at 1,085 m (3,560 ft). Britain's highest mountain, Ben Nevis (1,343 m, 4,406 ft), is in the central highlands of Scotland, which contains large areas of wild, unspoilt landscape. Northern Ireland is at its nearest point only 21 km (13 miles) from Scotland. It has a 488-km (303-mile) border in the south and west with the Irish Republic. At its centre lies Lough Neagh, Britain's largest freshwater lake (396 sq km, 153 sq miles).

Britain has frequent weather changes through the seasonal cycle of winter, spring, summer and autumn, although temperatures rarely exceed 32°C or fall below -10°C. Rainfall is fairly well distributed throughout the year.

People in the four lands of Britain derive from a host of ancestral sources, notably: the prehistoric cultures which produced such impressive monuments as the stone circles of Avebury and Stonehenge; the ancient Celtic peoples who inhabited western and central Europe; the Romans who occupied Britain for over 300 years from the invasion in AD 43; the Angles, Saxons and Jutes - Germanic peoples who began raiding and settling in Britain from the third century; Scots from Ireland, who began to settle in what became known as Scotland in the sixth century (merging with the indigenous Picts to form one kingdom under Kenneth Macalpin in the ninth century); the Vikings from Scandinavia, who pillaged and settled areas of Britain and Ireland from the end of the eighth century; and the Normans from France, who invaded England in 1066.

The last thousand years have witnessed the assimilation of all these strands -and many new ones besides, following on from global exploration, the expansion of trade and international rivalry, and the growth of the Empire.

At the same time political, social, economic and religious trends, pressures and crises have all evolved to create the beliefs, lifestyle and expectations that are prevalent among the people today.

PAST EVENTS - MODERN LEGACIES ROMAN RULE

Roman rule was very influential in Britain's evolution, not least in the founding of towns and cities so many of which are familiar to the people today. For example, London and Lincoln largely preserve their Roman names - Londinium and Lindum Colonia respectively - while others, such as Chester, Gloucester and Colchester, betray their origins by the '-Chester' or '-cester1 ending. This name, derived from the Latin castra, was given to the Roman sites by the Anglo-Saxons.

SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity - which had been introduced to Britain under the Romans - was reintroduced to pagan England in the sixth and seventh centuries. The Catholic Church sent St Augustine to preach and establish bishoprics in 597. Since that time, Christianity has remained the predominant faith among people in Britain.

REIGN OF ALFRED THE GREAT

From the fifth century onwards a number of small kingdoms emerged in England. These gradually evolved into fewer, larger groupings - particularly Northumbria in the north, Mercia in the midlands and Wessex in the south. During the ninth century Vikings from Scandinavia overran all these kingdoms except Wessrx, where Alfred the Great, who reigned from M71 to 899, successfully resisted the invaders, hi the tenth century the Wessex dynasty came to rule the whole of England. The present Royal Family is partly descended from the royal line of Wessex.

NORMAN CONQUEST OF ENGLAND

The last successful foreign invasion of England took place in 1066, when Duke William of Normandy defeated the English at the Battle of Hastings. The

Norman Conquest led to closer links with the mainland of Europe. Normans and others from France came to settle, and French became the language of the nobility and the law courts for the next three centuries,

MAGNA CARTA AND THE BEGINNINGS OF PARLIAMENT

hi 1215 King John signed Magna Carta (Great Charier) in the face of demands by barons. It secured feudal rights and established areas over which the King had no jurisdiction, and has been interpreted throughout English history as guaranteeing certain political and civil liberties. The rest of the 13th century saw the development of Parliament as a gathering of feudal barons and representatives of counties and towns summoned by the King. By the end of the century, it had adopted its basic makeup of Lords and Commons, and it had established the right to approve taxation. It also soon acquired the right to approve new laws.

THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

Between 1534 and 1540 King Henry VIII of the Tudor dynasty broke with the Papacy in Rome, heralding the English Reformation and the establishment of the Church of England. Despite the suppression of the monasteries, the Church remained largely unaffected until the reign of his son Edward VI (1547-53), when Protestantism became the official religion of England.

Popular hostility to the Papacy remained widespread for centuries, hi Ireland, differences between the religious traditions remain very marked to this day.

UNION OF ENGLAND AND WALES

The subjugation of Wales by the English had been completed in the late 13th century by Edward I, who gave his infant son, later Edward II, the title of Prince of Wales - still carried today by the monarch's eldest son. Between 1536 and 1542 Acts of Union integrated England and Wales administratively and legally and gave Wales representation in Parliament.

CIVIL WAR AND THE EXECUTION OF CHARLES I

Hostility between Parliament and the Crown led to the outbreak of civil war in 1642. The eventual victory of the Parliamentary army heralded the execution of Charles I in 1649, the temporary abolition of the monarchy (until 1660), and the rule of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector.

THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION AND BILL OF RIGHTS

In 1685 James II, a Roman Catholic, became king (succeeding his brother, Charles II). However, as he lost popularity for his autocratic rule and pro-Catholic policies, his Protestant Dutch son-in-law, William of Orange, was invited by leading politicians to intervene. The result was the bloodless or 'Glorious Revolution\* in which James found himself practically without support and was overthrown. The crown was offered jointly to William and his wife Mary. The following year the Bill of Rights was passed, establishing the political supremacy of Parliament.

UNION OF ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

Scotland remained a separate kingdom throughout the Middle Ages, often at war with England. Realising the benefits of closer political and economic union, England and Scotland agreed in 1707 on a single Parliament for Great Britain. Scotland retained its own system of law and church settlement. The Union became strained in the first half of the 18th century, when two Jacobite uprisings attempted to restore the Catholic Stuart dynasty to the throne.

THE GROWTH OF THE EMPIRE

The 17th and 18th centuries saw considerable overseas expansion by Britain. The foundation of the colonies in North America was followed by other major acquisitions, in competition with the French and other European powers. Despite the North American colonies winning the War of Independence between 1775 and 1783, Britain continued to extend its rule through the 19th century over a large part of the world - a process from which the modern Commonwealth eventually emerged.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The Industrial Revolution, which was a key development in shaping the face of modern Britain, took place between about 1760 and 1830. Britain was the first country in the world to industrialise, pioneering many technologies and large-scale production processes. In pursuit of work in the new mills and factories, people concentrated in the industrial centres which developed in particular areas of the country. The cities which rose to prominence as manufacturing and commercial centres, such as Birmingham, Manchester and Sheffield, remain among the principal centres of population today. Transport was revolutionised in this period, with the construction of a wide network of canals in the late 18th century, many of which are still in use today. These were followed in the early 19th century by the advent of the railways, the world's first passenger railway opening between Stockton and Darlington in 1825. Although slums developed in many of the emerging industrial towns, some of the more philanthropic mill and factory owners sought to provide better facilities for their employees. One of these model settlements for industrial workers was Saltaire near Bradford, built by Titus Salt in the late 19th century. As well as the mill and the workers' houses, Salt also built civic facilities such as the church and a school.

THE CENSUS

In 1801 the first census of population in England and Wales was held. There has been a census in Britain every ten years since that date, except in 1941 when war intervened. Census information is used by central and local government to help make financial allocations and plan services.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Freedom of conscience in religious matters was achieved gradually from the 17th century onwards. Laws discriminating against minority religious groups were administered less harshly and then finally repealed. Catholic emancipation in 1829 relieved Catholics in Britain of the legal and civil restrictions accumulated since the time of the English Reformation. Religious freedom for all people in Britain has since become an accepted right.

THE REFORM ACTS

Today people in Britain take for granted the right to vote in national and local elections (see p. 15). However, at one time the vote was confined to a very narrow group of men. The widening of the franchise started with the Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867, continued in 1884, 1918 and 1928, and was completed in 1969 when the minimum voting age was reduced to 18. The Ballot Act of 1872 gave voters the means to keep their vote secret - an arrangement that has stood the test of time so well that even the official specification for the design of the ballot box is virtually identical to that of the late 19th century.

PARTITION OF IRELAND

The formal connection between Great Britain and Ireland dates from the Norman invasion of Ireland in the 12th century. In the late 1550s and early 1600s English and Scottish Protestants migrated to the northern province of Ulster, their religion setting them apart from the other, indigenous Roman Catholic inhabitants of Ireland. In 1801 Ireland was unified with Great Britain, but Irish Nationalists continued to campaign in the 19th and early 20th centuries for some measure of independence. At the same time, the Protestant Unionist majority in the north resisted any moves towards Irish home rale. In 1921 the Anglo-Irish Treaty established the Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion, but Northern Ireland exercised its right to opt out and remain part of the United Kingdom.

Between 1922 and 1972 Northern Ireland was governed by a Parliament responsible for a range of local affairs but, following the upsurge in intercommunal violence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it has been ruled directly by Westminster since 1972. Successive British Governments have tried to find the basis for returning greater power to Northern Ireland's locally elected representatives, but agreement has proved elusive.

In December 1993 the British and Irish Governments made a declaration stating that any settlement would be based on the principles of democracy and consent, and could only be reached by agreement between parties with a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods. This was 'followed by both the nationalist and loyalist paramilitaries announcing ceasefires in August and October 1994. The British Government has since continued to work to create the right conditions for all-party talks, with the aim of achieving an overall settlement. This has included the publication of the Frameworks for the Future document in February 1995.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE

The 1940s saw educational and social welfare developments, the broad principles of which are maintained today, hi 1944 a new Education Act for England and Wales allowed for a great expansion of education provided by the State (see p. 31). A new Ministry of Education was empowered to develop a national education policy. Also, the school system was divided into two levels, primary and secondary, making secondary education to the age of 15 compulsory.

Hi 1942 the government-sponsored TrJeveridge report' proposed a comprehensive scheme of social insurance covering the whole community, forming the basis of much of the present social security system. Legislation in 1946 provided for the establishment of Britain's National Health Service (NHS), the most comprehensive medical care scheme of its time. The NHS has since provided a full range of mainly free medical services, available to all British residents regardless of their income.

THE END OF EMPIRE

At the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 the British Empire had expanded to almost one-fifth of the world land mass and one-quarter of the world population. However, from that time it decentralised. Self-governing dominions, such as Canada and Australia, were described in 1926 as autonomous members of the oBritish Commonwealth of Nations'. Most other colonies, beginning with India and Pakistan, were granted independence by Britain after 1945, and most of them joined the Commonwealth.

Immigration from former territories in the Caribbean and the South Asian sub-continent was substantial in the 1950s and 1960s, forming the basis of the ethnic minority population in Britain today.

BRITAIN IN EUROPE

At the end of the Second World War in 1945 the economies of most European countries were in ruins. In addition, the then Soviet Union's Communist influence was expanding. In the face of these challenges, the countries of

Western Europe sought to co-operate in their reconstruction and to organise themselves in such a way that wars between them would not recur.

Out of the consequent negotiations emerged what is now termed the European Union - an association of sovereign nations, initially comprising six member states in the 1950s but expanding progressively over the years to the current membership of 15. Britain joined in 1973 and its links with its European Union partners have since become ever more closely integrated, influencing the lives of all its citizens.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Britain has a population of about 58 million people, the 17th largest in the world. The great majority, 48.7 million, live in England; Scotland has just over 5 million people, Wales 2.9 million and Northern Ireland about 1.6 million. The population density is well above the

European Union average. England is the most densely populated, with 373 people per sq km, and Scotland the least, with 67 people per sq km. The great majority of people are concentrated in towns and cities, although there has been a trend, especially in the capital London for people to move away from congested urban centres into the suburbs.

In 1994 there were 751,000 live births in Britain, compared with 626,000 deaths. The birth rate is relatively low at 12.9 live births per 1,000 population. This is in part due to a trend towards later marriage and towards postponing births.

The average age of women having children has risen to over 28 years in England and Wales. There is also a greater preference for smaller families than in the past, which has led to a significant decline in the proportion of families with four or more children. In addition, more widespread and effective contraception has made it easier to plan families.

Life expectancy for men in Britain is about 73 years and for women 78 years (compared with 49 years for men and 52 years for women at the start of the century). The general death rate in 1994 was 10.7 per 1,000 of the population. There has been a decline in mortality at most ages, particularly among children, reflecting better nutrition, rising living standards, medical advances and improved health measures, wider education and the smaller size of families.

Deaths caused by circulatory diseases (including heart attacks and strokes) now account for nearly half of all deaths, and mortality from heart disease in England and Wales remains high compared with that of other developed countries. The next largest cause of death is cancer, which is responsible for nearly one-quarter of deaths. The Government has developed a national health strategy for addressing the major causes of premature death and preventable illness among people in Britain.

Britain has one of the highest marriage and divorce rates in the European Union, hi 1993 there were 341,600 marriages in Britain, of which 38.4 per cent were remarriages of one or both parties. Of the population aged 16 or over in England and Wales in 1992, 57 per cent were married, 27 per cent were single, 9 per cent were widowed and 7 per cent were divorced. The average age for first marriages in England and Wales is now about 28.2 for men and 26.2 for women.

Hi 1993 in England and Wales there were about 14 divorces for every 1,000 married couples. The average age of spouses at the time of divorce is now about 39.3 for men and just over 37.6 for women. Divorce rates are lower in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Hi common with many other Western European countries, there has been an increase in cohabitation (unmarried couples living together) in Britain. About 18 per cent of non-married men and women aged 16-59 in Great Britain were cohabiting in 1992. There is some evidence of a growing number of stable non-married relationships. Roughly half of all births outside marriage (which accounted for 32 per cent of live births in Britain in 1994) are registered by both parents giving a single address as their place of residence.

ELDERLY PEOPLE

One of the most significant changes in the a structure of Britain's population over the last 30 years has been the increasing proportion of people over retirement age (65 for men and 60 for women) - some 11 million today, and their numbers continue to grow. This has important implications for social services provision into the next century.

Most elderly people in Britain live healthy and independent lives. Nearly all want to be part of the community, living in their own homes. Many view their later years as an opportunity to do the things they never previously had the time for, or to take on new interests or challenges. For instance, adult educational and recreational courses run by local authorities throughout Britain are well attended by older people, and some sports, such as bowls, attract many elderly participants.

Yet a lot of older people - perhaps living alone, in poor health or disabled in some way - have important needs, hi addition to the large amount of willing help from relatives, neighbours and friends, practical support for Britain's elderly people is provided by the social services authorities, voluntary organisations and, to a lesser extent, the private sector.

Services for elderly people are designed help them live at home whenever possible. I fact, only about 5 per cent of people aged over 65 in Britain live in institutional accommodation. These services may include advice and help from visiting social workers, assistance with domestic chores and the provision of meals in the home. Day centres and lunch clubs are very popular among older people as they provide, in addition to a hot meal and facilities such as a laundry, an important focal point for social contact They may also offer leisure and educational activities, many of which are run by older people themselves.

Local authorities and voluntary organisations operate special transport services to enable less mobile elderly people to get to day centres or to visit the shoos, the doctor, family or friends. There are concessionary fares for resident pensioners on most bus services, and special discounts are available on coach and rail travel.

Special housing needs for the elderly are met by local authorities, housing associations, voluntary bodies and the private sector. Sheltered housing schemes may consist of groups of flats or small houses where older people can live independently but still have the support of a resident warden. For those people who are too infirm to continue to live independently there are residential homes providing full board, or nursing homes offering 24-hour personal care.

YOUNG PEOPLE

The home is the central focus of most young people's lives in Britain, particularly for those who are still attending school (see p.31). The majority rely upon their home environment as a place of security and upon their parents as the main providers of food, money and other necessary amenities for life - as well as general advice. Young people spend a large proportion of their leisure time in the home with other members of their family or with friends.

After the home, school is the main social environment where children not only receive their formal education but also develop their identities within peer groups. All schoolchildren in Britain are encouraged to take up activities which complement their academic and vocational education and help to identify their individual talents, such as sports, drama, music and creative pursuits. Many of these form part of school curricula.

The personal development and informal social education of young people aged 11-25 is also promoted by the Youth Service in Britain. The Service is a partnership between statutory authorities and a large number of voluntary organisations. A recent survey estimated that nearly 6 million young people in this age group are either current or past participants in the Service.

Youth clubs and centres are the most common types of Youth Service provision, encouraging their members to participate in sport, cultural and creative activities, and community service. Some also provide information and counselling. Youth clubs may be branches of national or international bodies or they may be entirely local institutions.

There are many religious groups and churches with specialist youth organisations, as well as uniformed organisations such as the Guides and Scouts Associations and Boys' and Girls' Brigades.

Finance is provided by many foundations and trusts for activities which develop the latent talents of Britain's young people. The Prince's Trust and the Royal Jubilee Trust, for example, help individuals and organisations active in youth-oriented projects related to urban deprivation, unemployment, homelessness and young offending. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme challenges young people to achieve certain standards in community service, expeditions, social and practical skills and physical recreation.

WOMEN

There is a ratio of about 104 females to every 100 males in Britain. There are about 3 per cent more male than female births every year. Because of the higher mortality of men at all ages, there is a turning point, at about 50 years of age, beyond which the number of women exceeds the number of men. This imbalance increases with age so that there are many more women among the elderly.

The economic and domestic lives of women have been transformed in during the 20th century. These changes are partly due to the removal of discrimination in political and legal rights which has promoted sex equality. Another major feature has been the increase in the number of women, especially married women, at work. The growth of part-time and flexible working patterns, and training and retraining schemes, has allowed more women to take advantage of employment opportunities. Childcare provision, such as day nurseries and childminders, has also increased significantly, extending choice and opportunity for women beyond the scope of home and family.

Women now make up over two-fifths of the workforce in Britain, and about 800,000 run their own businesses. They are increasingly represented in the professions. The proportion of public appointments held by women has risen to 30 per cent, and the number of women Members of Parliament has increased to over 60.

Women take up around all further and higher education places, and the provision of 'access' courses has helped those returning to education.

ETHNIC MINORITIES

For centuries people from overseas have settled in Britain, either to escape political or religious persecution or in search of better economic opportunities. The Irish have long formed a large section of the population. Jewish refugees who came to Britain towards the end of the 19th century and in the 1930s were followed by other European refugees after 1945. Substantial immigration from the former colonies in the Caribbean and the South Asian sub-continent dates principally from the 1950s and 1960s. There are also sizeable groups from the United States and

Canada, as well as Australians, Chinese, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Italians and Spaniards.

Since 1962 Britain has necessarily imposed controls limiting the number of immigrants to levels the country can absorb, both economically and socially. Immigration Rules set out the requirements to be met by people (excluding British citizens) who seek entry to or leave to remain in Britain. Nationals of European Union member states are not subject to substantive immigration control, and may work in Britain without restriction.

In the 1991 census just over 3 million people (5.5 per cent) described themselves as belonging to an ethnic group other than the 'white' group. Nearly half of the ethnic minority population were born in Britain. A higher proportion is under 16 than for the white group, but a much lower proportion is over pensionable age.

Many members of the black and Asian communities are concentrated in the inner cities, with related problems of deprivation, However, much progress has been made over the last 20 years in tackling racial disadvantage in Britain through equal opportunities policies backed up by anti-discrimination legislation, and through the social, economic and educational initiatives of central and local government.

Many individuals from the ethnic minority communities have achieved distinction in their careers and in public life, and the proportion occupying professional and managerial positions is increasing. There are at present six ethnic minority Members of Parliament, and the number of ethnic minority councillors in local government is growing. There has also been an expansion of commercial enterprise, and numerous self-help projects in ethnic minority communities have been established. Black competitors have represented Britain in a range of sporting activities (such as athletics and football), and ethnic minority talents in the arts and in entertainment have increasingly been recognised.

The British people enjoy a long-established democratic way of life, sustained by free elections, freedom of speech and open and equal treatment before the law. These rights are balanced by responsibilities, since a democratic society can only function when the people participate actively in its institutions.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The basic principle of British democracy is that the people elect Members of Parliament (MPs) to the House of Commons to which the Government is accountable. The system provides effective channels for British citizens to influence their government as well as checks and balances to prevent any government from exceeding its powers. MPs have a duty to deal with problems and queries raised by their constituents, local organisations and pressure groups.

The most direct opportunity for the individual to influence the national political scene is during general elections (and by-elections) to the House of Commons, the centre of parliamentary power. Citizens aged IS and over, with a few exceptions, have the right to vote by secret ballot, 'although voting is not compulsory. Britain is divided into 651 constituencies, each represented by one MP. The average number of voters in a constituency ranges between 55,000 and 70,000.

Any British citizen, with few exceptions, can stand for election if aged 21 or over. Elections to the House of Commons have to be held at least once every five years. If an MP resigns or dies during the life of a Parliament a by-election is held.

In the 1992 general election 76.6 per cent of a total electorate of 43.3 million people exercised their right to vote. Support for the Conservatives is strongest in the southern half of England and East Anglia, while the Labour Party is more successful in Wales, Scotland and in urban industrialised areas. Support for the third largest party, the Liberal Democrats, is particularly strong in the south west of England. Unionist (Protestant) panics hold the majority of the parliamentary seats in Northern Ireland, and a handful of seats are held by two nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales. Support among British people for extremist political views is relatively small. British voters also elect 87 representatives to the European Parliament, which monitors the operation of the European Union. Direct elections take place in all Union member states every five years.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY

As well as taking part in parliamentary elections, people in Britain elect their representatives to local councils which provide services such as education, public housing, personal social services, police and fire brigades. Many candidates at local government elections stand as representatives of the main political parties, although there are some independent candidates, and some represent local interests. Candidates must live or work in the area of the local authority to which they seek election. Councillors serve part-time and are unpaid, except for certain expenses.

PRESSURE CROUPS

In addition to participation in parliamentary and local elections, people in Britain have other ways of expressing their views and trying to influence the way their lives are governed. Millions of people support pressure groups, which are informal organisations representing a vast array of interests and causes, and which are free to express their opinions and conduct campaigns without government interference. Pressure groups aim to influence those who are in authority in the way decisions are made-and carried out.

There is a huge range of pressure groups, covering areas such as politics, business, employment, consumer affairs, ethnic minorities, aid to developing countries, foreign relations, education, culture, defence, religion, sport, transport, health, social welfare, animal welfare and the environment. Some have over a million members; others only a few dozen. Some exert pressure on a number of different issues; others are only concerned with a single issue. Some have come to play a role in the way Britain is governed; others seek influence through radical protest.

THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

In Britain there is a long tradition of voluntary service to the community. There are hundreds of thousands of voluntary organisations, ranging from national bodies to small local groups. Their activities range from helping to relieve poverty throughout the world to running a local village hall. Self-help groups have been the fastest expanding area of the voluntary sector over the last 20 years.

Voluntary organisations may be staffed by professional workers, but many rely on the efforts of volunteers at some level. It has been estimated that up to half of all British adults take part in some form of organised voluntary activity during the course of a year. Many volunteers are involved in work which improves the quality of life in their local communities or, more widely, give their time to help organise events and groups in areas as diverse as social welfare, education, sport and the arts. A very large number are also involved in activities to protect or improve the environment (see p. 34).

Some people not only give up their leisure time for others but also put their own lives at risk. Around 10,000 volunteers are members of either the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the Mountain Rescue Committee of Great Britain or the British Cave Rescue Council.

THE LAW

Every citizen in Britain has the right to open and equal treatment before the law (although England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all have their own legal systems). Law in Britain is formulated and enforced on behalf of the people and there is a long tradition of the general public participating in that process. Alongside the police and professional judiciary, ordinary citizens may contribute to the fair and efficient administration of justice as magistrates, jurors and witnesses.

Members of the public who are not formally trained in law may become lay magistrates or Justices of the Peace.

Magistrates' torn Is (district courts in Scotland) air local courts, silling without a jury, which deal with summary offences - less serious offences and the vast majority of criminal cases. Unpaid lay magistrates are usually recommended for the job by committees of local people.

The more serious criminal cases are tried in the higher courts before a judge and a jury of 12 people (15 in Scotland). It is the jury's role in a trial to determine the guilt or innocence of a defendant. People between the ages of 18 and 70 (65 in Scotland) whose names appear on the electoral register, with certain exceptions, are liable for jury service and their names are chosen at random. Jury service typically lasts between five and ten working days and citizens are only excused for valid reasons. Some people may also be required to attend a court hearing as a witness either for the prosecution or the defence.

THE POLICE

The police are responsible for enforcing the law in Britain. The 52 forces are responsible to the local communities they serve. Forces are accountable to committees of elected local councillors, lay justices and nominees, who in turn have a duty to listen to the views of people in their area about policing objectives and plans.

There are about 150,000 full-time police officers in Britain, of whom around 12 per cent are women. They are backed up by special constables - volunteer officers who are attached to each force and perform auxiliary police duties, without pay, in their spare time.

THE ARMED FORCES.

The men and women who comprise Britain's regular armed forces are paid professionals who enlist voluntarily. There is no conscription, hi April 1995 their strength was over 233,000. The forces are under the command of the elected government and have no independent political role. As is the case with the police, members of the armed forces are subject to the law in the same way as any civilian.

Hi addition to their military role, the armed services help the civil authorities when required, for example in search and rescue missions at sea or during emergencies brought about by bad weather.

The regular forces are supplemented by trained reserve and auxiliary forces. Some of these become reservists following a period of regular service; others are volunteers who train in their spare time.

Britain has a higher proportion of the adult population in work - 70 per cent -than any other large European country. The labour market has changed considerably in recent years, with a growing proportion of people working in service industries (such as financial services, education, medical services, retailing, catering, transport and communication). Nearly three-quarters of employees now work in the service sector, compared with around one-fifth in manufacturing. Other major changes have been the rising proportion of women in the workforce and the increase in part-time employment.

PATTERNS OF EMPLOYMENT

In mid-1995 the workforce in employment in Britain totalled 25.7 million. Of these, 21.9 million (11 million men and over 10.8 million women) were classed as employees in employment, and about 3.3 million were self-employed. The remainder were either in the armed forces or on work-related government training programmes. Recent trends show a continuing fall in full-time employment, but part-time employment has increased over the last decade by 1.3 million to 6.1 million - about 2 per cent of those in employment. About 44 per cent of women in employment work part-time, compared with 8 per cent of men.

The number of employees engaged in service industries in Great Britain in mid-1995 was 15.4 million, about 2 million more than in 1985. There has been a gradual move away from manual to non-manual occupations, which now account for nearly three-fifths of jobs.

PEOPLE AT WORK

The varied skills of working people throughout Britain are reflected in a vast range of professional, vocational, technical and other pursuits.

TRANSPORT

There has been a considerable increase in passenger travel in recent years -29 per cent between 1984 and 1994. Travel by car and van rose by 38 per cent, and air travel was up by about two-thirds. In all, car and van travel accounts for 87 per cent of passenger mileage within Great Britain. Car ownership has also risen substantially, hi all, 68 per cent of households in Great Britain had the regular use of one or more cars in 1994; 23 per cent had the use of two or more cars.

Traffic management schemes are used in many urban areas to reduce congestion, create a better environment and improve road safety. Although Great Britain has one of the highest densities of road traffic in the world, it has a good record on safety, with the lowest road accident death rate in the European Union.

The rail passenger network in Britain comprises a fast inter-city network linking the main centres of Great Britain; local stopping services; and commuter services in and around the large conurbations, especially London and south-east England. Rail services have been further improved by the new Channel Tunnel, linking Britain's 16,500-km (10,252-mile) rail network to that of the European mainland.

London Underground operates services on 392 km (245 miles) of railway, of which about 170 km (106 miles) are underground. The system has 245 stations, and a further extension is under construction. About 764 million passenger journeys were made on London

Underground trains in 1994-95. The Docklands Light Railway, a 22-km (14-mile) route with 27 stations, connects the City of London with areas in east London. Urban light rail lines also operate in Glasgow, Tyne and Wear, Greater Manchester and Sheffield; similar mass transit schemes are planned in other big cities.

In 1994 there were 37 million international passenger trips by sea between Britain and the rest of the world. Almost all the passengers who arrived at or departed from British ports travelled to or from the continent of Europe or the Irish Republic. In the same year about 236,000 people embarked on pleasure cruises from British ports.

Air travel has risen substantially in recent years. In 1994 some 96 million passengers travelled by air (international terminal passengers) to or from Britain, a 10 per cent increase on 1993. British airlines carried 43,9 million passengers on scheduled services and 27.1 million on charter flights.

LIVING STANDARDS

Marked improvements in the standard of living for people in Britain have taken place during the 20th century. According to a United Nations report published in 1994, Britain ranked tenth out of 173 countries on a human development index that combines life expectancy, education levels and basic purchasing power.

Earnings from employment remain the main source of household income for most people, although other sources such as private pensions and annuities have become more important Disposable income - the amount of money people have available to spend after income tax, National Insurance and contributions to pension schemes have been deducted - is now at its highest-ever level. Since the 1970s there has been little change in the distribution of marketable wealth, nearly half of which is owned by the richest 10 per cent of people. A large proportion of personal wealth in Britain - 30 per cent in 1993 - is in residential property. The Government's privatisation programme has contributed to the growth of share ownership, hi 1993 about 10 million people - 22 per cent of the adult population of Great Britain -owned shares, compared with 7 per cent in 1979.

Average weekly household spending in Britain in 1994-95 was about ?284. Food and housing costs constituted 18 and 16 per cent of this. Transport and leisure pursuits accounted for about 15 and 16 per cent.

HOUSING

Largely depending on their means, people 111 Britain live in a diverse range of accommodation ranging from country mansions to single rooms or hostels in the inner cities. The majority, however, live in houses and (to a lesser extent) flats, either as owner-occupiers or as tenants paving rent. About 19 per cent of houses are detached, 31 per cent are semi-detached and 29 per cent are terraced. Purpose-built flats or maisonettes make up 15 per cent of the housing stock and converted flats or rooms account for 5 per cent.

Owner-occupation, which is central to government housing policy in Britain, increased substantially - from 49 per cent to 67 per cent - between 1971 and 1994. The number of owner-occupied homes amounted to 15.8 million at the end of 1993, compared with 4.1 million in 1950. Most people buy their homes with a mortgage loan, with the property as security. Building societies are the largest source of such loans, although banks and other financial institutions also take a significant share of the mortgage market. There arc some 5 million houses and in the public housing sector. Most of the public housing in Great Britain is provided by local housing authorities. Thirty-seven per cent of local authority tenants live in purpose-built flats or maisonettes, 33 per cent in terraced houses and 25 per cent in semi-detached houses. Most have the right to buy the homes they occupy if they wish.

Housing associations, which are non-profit-making, are now the main providers of additional low-cost housing for rent and for sale to those on low incomes and in the greatest housing need. The housing association sector is expanding rapidly; associations now own, manage and maintain over 950,000 homes and about 65,000 hostel and special needs bed-spaces in Great Britain, providing homes for well over a million people.

Almost 10 per cent of households are rented from private landlords.

LEISURE TRENDS

The most common leisure activities among people in Britain are home-based, or social, such as visiting relatives or friends.

Watching television is by far the most popular leisure pastime. Nearly every household has a television set, and average viewing time is over 25 hours a week. The majority of households also have a video recorder.

Other regular pastimes include listening to the radio and to recorded music. About 70 per cent of the population listen to local and national radio on an average day. Purchases of compact discs have risen very rapidly, and in 1992 for the first time exceeded the sales of audio cassettes. The proportion of households with a compact disc player increased from 15 per cent in 1989 to 39 per cent in 1993.

Many people in their spare time enjoy reading (over 50 per cent belong to a library), gardening, do-it-yourself home improvements, undertaking voluntary work, going out for a meal or drink (see Eating and Drinking Habits on p.27) or to the cinema. More daily newspapers, national and regional, are sold for every person in Britain than in most other developed countries. On an average day 60 percent of people over the age of 15 read a national morning paper; 70 per cent read a Sunday newspaper.

The British are renowned as animal lovers, and about half of all households have a pet, most commonly dogs and cats.

HOLIDAYS

In 1994, 60 per cent of the adult population took at least one holiday of four or more nights away from home. Nearly 58 million such holidays were taken by British residents, 31.5 million of them within Britain. The most popular destinations for summer holidays in Britain are the West Country, Scotland and Wales. August is the most popular month for taking holidays.

Of the major free seaside attractions, the most frequented were Blackpool Pleasure Beach in Lancashire (with an estimated 7.2 million visitors), the Palace Pier in Brighton and the Pleasure Beach at Great Yarmouth. In 1994 the most popular destinations for overseas holidays by British residents were France (12 per cent), mainland Spain (11 per cent) and the United States (8 per cent), hi all, British residents took 26.3 million holidays overseas in 1994, of which 57 per cent involved 'package1 arrangements (covering both transport and accommodation). About 77 per cent of all holidays abroad are taken in Europe.

The proportion of adults taking two or more holidays a year was 26 per cent in 1994.

EATING AND DRINKING HABITS

Although some traditional meals in Britain, like roast beef and Yorkshire pudding or fish and chips, remain popular, there has been a significant shift in eating habits among the population over the last decade or so. This is in part due to a greater emphasis on health and convenience considerations.

Consumption of several items, such as packet sugar, eggs, potatoes and fresh green vegetables, has declined substantially. An increase in the consumption of rice and pasta may be partly responsible for the decline in that of potatoes. Consumption of meat - with the exception of that of poultry which is now at a record level - has also fallen. Skimmed milk now constitutes more than half of the total household consumption of liquid milk. There has been a decline in the total consumption of cooking and spreading fats, with large falls in butter and lard usage being offset by rapid rises in the consumption of vegetable and salad oils and reduced fat spreads. A switch in fish consumption away from fresh white fish towards canned fish and shellfish has been evident. There has been a small increase in the intake of fibre.

Britain has a wide range of restaurants, offering cuisine from virtually every country. Chinese, Indian, Italian and Greek restaurants are among the most popular.

There has been little change in recent years in the amount of alcohol that people drink. Beer, including lager, is the most popular drink among male drinkers, whose overall alcohol consumption is significantly higher than that of women. The largest consumers of alcohol are in the 18 to 24 age range. Table wine has become more popular, although there has been little change in the consumption of stronger wines such as sherry and port.

INTEREST IN SPORT

There is widespread participation in sport among people in Britain. An estimated 29 million people over the age of 16 regularly take part in sports or exercise. The most popular are walking (including rambling and hiking), swimming, snooker /pool, keep fit / yoga and cycling. Women's participation has grown significantly over the last few us, even into traditionally male-dominated activities like football and rugby. Many sports, such as athletics, boxing and football, have also been successful in attracting considerable numbers of participants from the ethnic minorities.

The integration in sport of people with disabilities is increasingly encouraged and organisations throughout Britain promote and develop such opportunities.

All schools (except those solely for infants) are expected to have a playing field or the use of one, and most secondary schools have a gymnasium. Some have other amenities such as swimming pools and sports halls.

LANGUAGE VARIATION

English is the main language spoken in Britain, although with many regional variations in terms of accent and phraseology. It is also one of the most widely used in the world; recent estimates suggest that over 310 million people speak it as their first language, with a similar number speaking it as a second language. Modern English derives primarily from one of the dialects of Anglo-Saxon, but has been very greatly influenced by other languages over time.

About 19 per cent of the population of Wales speak the Welsh language, which is of Celtic origin. They are concentrated in the rural north and west, where Welsh remains the first language of most of the population. Both the Government and voluntary groups have taken steps to revive the use of Welsh. Bilingual education in schools is encouraged and there has been an extended use of Welsh for official purposes and in broadcasting. In the context of dealing with public authorities and the administration of justice in Wales, Welsh and English are treated on an equal basis.

Gaelic, also a language of Celtic origin, is still spoken by some 70,000 people in Scotland; the greatest concentration of Gaelic speakers is in the islands of the Hebrides. People in the central lowlands of Scotland have for centuries spoken Scots, a dialect derived from the Northumbrian branch of Old English. This has its own recognised literary tradition and has seen a revival in poetry in the 20th century. Many words and phrases from the Scots tongue are retained in the everyday English which is spoken throughout Scotland.

Many other languages are spoken by the ethnic minority communities living in Britain.

All children in Britain up to the age of 16 must by law receive full-time education. Around 94 per cent of pupils get free education from public funds. The rest attend fee-paying independent schools. Boys and girls are taught together in most schools.

In England and Wales non-selective comprehensive education caters for children of all abilities. Nearly all pupils in Scotland attend non-selective schools. Secondary schools are largely selective in Northern Ireland, where a small number of integrated schools have been established at primary and secondary levels with the aim of providing education for Roman Catholic and Protestant children studying together.

Broadly based national curricula ensure that pupils study a balanced range of subjects. In Wales the Welsh language forms part of the national curriculum. Schools in England and Wales may also teach the main ethnic minority community languages at secondary level. Religious education is available in all schools, although parents have the right to withdraw their children from such classes.

Pupils aged 16 are normally assessed by the General Certificate of Secondary Education examination (or the Scottish Certificate of Education). Students who choose to continue their studies after 16 - about two-thirds - work for academic or vocational qualifications which are the main standard for entry to higher education or professional training.

Higher education is study above Advanced level or equivalent. The proportion of young people entering higher education in universities and colleges has risen from one in eight in 1979 to almost one in three today.

1999-95 there were over 1.5 million students in higher education courses, of whom 49 per cent were women. Overseas students at publicly funded higher education institutions numbered 158,000.

In 1994-95 more than 3.5 million people were enrolled on further and adult education courses, which are largely work-related and vocational. Many attend on a part-time basis or during the evenings.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

Everyone in Britain has the right to religious freedom without interference from the community or the State. Religious organisations and groups can own property, run schools and actively promote their beliefs. There is no religious bar to the holding of public office.

There are two established churches in Britain, that is, churches legally recognised as official churches of the State: in England the (Anglican) Church of

England, and in Scotland the (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland. Other Anglican churches are the Church in Wales, the Scottish Episcopal Church, and the Church of Ireland.

Attendances at Church of England services on a normal Sunday are around 1.1 million. Many people in Britain who rarely, if ever, attend services still regard themselves as belonging to the Church of England. The majority of the Church's clergy - men and women - are involved in parish ministry. The adult communicant membership of the Church of Scotland is about 715,600.

Free churches - a term used to describe some of the Protestant churches which are not established churches - include the Methodists, Baptists, and United Reformed Church. Of these, the Methodists have the largest following. Other Protestant churches in Britain include the Unitarians and Free Christians, as well as the Pentecostalists. About one British citizen in 10 claims to be a member of the Roman Catholic Church. Many Christian communities of foreign origin - for example, the Lutheran, Orthodox and Reformed Churches of various European countries -have also established their own centres of worship.

Although Britain is predominantly Christian, most of the world's religions an-represented, including Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, and Sikh communities. The Muslim population is the largest non-Christian grouping in the country.

A number of organisations, such as the Inter-Faith Network for the United Kingdom and the Council of Christians and Jews, exist to develop relations between different religions in Britain.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

People in Britain have widespread access to the arts, which cover drama, music, opera, dance, cinema and visual arts. Nearly 17 million people attended events in one or more of the major art forms in 1994.

About 650 professional arts festivals take place in towns and cities across Britain each year. The better known arts festivals, some of which are celebrations of national cultures, include the Edinburgh International Festival, which is the largest of its kind in the world; the Mayfest in Glasgow; the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales; the National Gaelic Mod in Scotland; and the Belfast Festival based at Queen's University in Northern Ireland. London is recognised as one of the world's leading cultural centres, and Britain has an impressive list of renowned professional performers.

Pop and rock music is by far the most popular form of musical expression in Britain. British groups continue to achieve international success and are often at the forefront of new developments in music.

As well as being spectators of the arts, many people are also keen participants. There are thousands of amateur dramatic societies, and performances by amateur musicians lake place in all kinds of venues throughout Britain. An estimated 6 million people take part in dance, making it one of Britain's leading participatory activities. Educational and recreational classes for interests such as drawing, painting and crafts are heavily subscribed.

There are about 1,800 cinema screens in Britain and attendances are currently running at 1.9 million a week. Cinema admissions in 1994 were estimated at 124 million - twice as many as in 1984.

About 80 million people a year attend more than 2,000 museums and galleries open to the public, which include the major national collections, and around 1,100 independent museums.

CONCERN FOR THE NATIONAL HERITAGE

Britain has a long tradition of conservation, and for many years has had policies and laws to protect both the natural environment and among people in Britain is reflected in the growing membership of these voluntary bodies. 101 example, the National Trust - a charity which owns and protects 230 historic houses open to the public, in addition to over 235,000 hectares of land in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Scotland has its own National Trust) - now has over 2 million members. Another organisation, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, is the largest voluntary wildlife conservation body in Europe.