

### **England's Agricultural Revolution**

There was an agricultural revolution in England in the 18th century. It began with **Jethro Tull**. In the 17th century seed was sown by hand. The sower simply scattered seed on the ground. However in 1701 Tull invented the **seed drill**. This machine dropped seeds at a controllable rate in the straight lines. A harrow at the back of the machine covered the seeds to prevent birds eating them. Tull also invented a **horse drawn hoe** which killed weeds between rows of seeds.

Furthermore new forms of **crop rotation** were introduced. Under the old system land was divided into 3 fields and each year one was left fallow. This was, obviously, wasteful, as one third of the land was not used each year. In the 17th century the Dutch began to use new forms of crop rotation with **clover** and root crops such as **turnips** instead of letting the land grow fallow. (Root crops restored fertility to the soil). In the 18th century these new methods became common in England. A man named Charles "Turnip" Townshend did much to popularize growing turnips.

Turnips had another advantage. They provided winter feed for cattle. Previously most cattle were slaughtered at the beginning of winter because there was not enough food to keep them through the season. Now fresh milk and butter became available all year round.

### **The American War of Independence**

The white population of the American colonies was diverse, consisting of Europeans escaping religious and political persecution, as well as criminals transported from Britain, and many European farmers wishing to benefit from the wide-open fertile land. However, trade the lifeblood of the American economy was dominated by British ships, British regulations and British taxes. By the 1750s many Americans began to denounce British tyranny. Fighting began in 1775, an alliance of European powers, jealous of British colonial wealth, combined with a determined American force, skillfully guided by General

Washington, gave the Americans victory and independence. Before the end of the century Britain was experiencing a revolution which was visibly changing her and the world's life, this was the Industrial Revolution.

## **The Industrial Revolution**

It is the process of change from an agrarian, handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacture. This process began in Britain in the 18th century and from there spread to other parts of the world.

The invention of the steam engine caused the industrial revolution in Britain. In 1698 **Thomas Savery** made the first steam engine, and from 1712 **Thomas Newcomen** made steam engines to pump water from coalmines. Then, in 1769, **James Watt** patented a more efficient steam engine and in the 1780s it was adapted to power machinery.

The first industry to become mechanized was the textile industry. In 1785 **Edmund Cartwright** invented a loom that could be powered by a steam engine. As a result of these new inventions cotton production boomed.

Economic growth was helped by vast improvements in transport. In fact, none of these changes would have been of any use had the goods produced not been able to be transported around the country quickly, safely and cheaply. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century a network of canals was built. One of the first canals was built by James Brindley, it opened in 1761 from Worsley to Manchester. This was an enormous success, thereby launching the “golden age of canal building.”

## **WW I, the Irish Question and WW II**

As the balance of powers in Europe was collapsing at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Britain abandoned the policy of “splendid isolation” and joined the *Allied powers* (i.e. Britain, France and Russia). British soldiers fought in **World War I** (1914- 18) on the side of the Allies.

In addition to the war difficulties and damage Britain had to deal with the **Irish question** or the granting of home rule to Ireland. The Irish question had been put off before World War I which resulted in street riots in Dublin in 1916 in the so-called ***Easter Rebellion***. In 1922 Britain recognized the independence of the ***Irish Free State***; however, Ulster (Northern Ireland) remained part of the UK, as the Protestant majority of its inhabitants demanded in a referendum.

In the interwar period, Britain pursued the policy of appeasement together with other western states. As a result, Britain was not prepared for **World War II** (1939-45). In 1940, Britain was left alone to fight Germany and its allies, but it managed to defeat the German attempt to bomb it to submission in the *Battle of Britain* and to continue fighting until the victory in 1945.

### **The Affluent Fifties and The Swinging Sixties**

As the country headed into the 1950s, rebuilding continued and a number of immigrants from the remaining British Empire, mostly the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent, were invited to help the rebuilding effort. The postwar period also witnessed a dramatic rise in the average standard of living. Between 1951 and 1963, wages rose by 72% while prices rose by 45%, enabling people to afford more consumer goods than ever before. As a result of these changes, large numbers of the working classes were able to participate in the consumer market for the first time. By the end of the 1950s, Britain had become one of the world's most affluent countries, and by the early Sixties, most Britons enjoyed a level of prosperity that had previously been known only to a small minority of the population.

In the early 1960's, almost 40% of the population was under 25. The increasing affluence of Britain's youth provided them with greater personal choice and freedom, creating **the Youth Culture** which rejected the established values and traditions, focusing itself instead on music, drugs, and fashion. But youth culture not only challenged tradition, but also authority, organising strikes on key issues of the time such as nuclear disarmament, environmental issues, women's rights and anti-Vietnam War protests. Therefore, an irrevocable change in the youth culture of British society occurred in this period.

### **Devolution in Wales and Scotland**

Devolution is a form of subsidiarity passing power back to a subordinate elected body, on a geographical basis. In September 1997 two referenda were organised in Wales and Scotland. Both Scotland and Wales decided in favour of devolution.

The devolution legislation provides a constitution for Scotland and Wales within the framework of a Scottish Parliament and Welsh assembly. The two bodies began to operate in 1999 by organising their first elections.

## **War on Terrorism 2001 and 2003**

Britain's foreign policy principles began to change when it initiated cooperation with President George Bush following the **09/11 bombings**. In that respect, Britain allied swiftly with the United States to punish the **Taliban government** for refusing to hand over the **Al Qaeda Organisation leader Osama Bin Laden**. The latter was wanted in the United States for directing the plane attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon. Britain sent its forces to Afghanistan in **October 2001** and became the second largest contributor to the war effort. By July 2010, the conflict cost Britain 300 royal troops and billions of pounds, but there was no end to the war in sight.

Britain's last war was in **Iraq** beginning in **March 2003**. That year, the United States decided to invade Iraq in total disregard for the United Nations disapproval. Here too, Britain followed in the footsteps of the United States almost blindly. In going to war, Britain relied on the disputed justification that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction in breach of the United States sanctions that prohibited the Saddam government from acquiring such sophisticated technology. Soon, it was proved that Saddam Hussein did not possess these weapons, but the war went on unscrupulously. British forces were not withdrawn from Iraq until 2010.

## **7/7 bombing of London**

Terrorist attacks on civilians moved to Britain in the summer of 2005. On 7 July 2005, four British-born citizens of Pakistani origin plotted a series of bombings at the London underground station. The blast killed 52 persons, in addition to the four bombers. As the plotters were British of Pakistani origins, the country faced the danger of racial tensions and prospect for greater national insecurity. It was clear that Britain put its security at high risk by participating in the **US-led war on terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq**, and identifying so closely with American foreign policy aims.