



Britain. The Country and its People

What is the official name of the UK?

The official name of the country is the "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland".



Where is the UK situated?

The UK is situated on the British Isles - a large group of islands lying off the north-western coast of Europe.



What islands do the British Isles consist of?

The British Isles is made up of:

- Great Britain
- Northern Ireland
- about 5000 small islands



What countries make up the United Kingdom?



Which countries are in Great Britain?



Great Britain

England is the largest country in Great Britain and the UK. It is sometimes, wrongly, used in reference to the whole United Kingdom, the entire island of Great Britain, or indeed the British Isles. This is not only incorrect but can cause offence to people from other parts of the UK.



Up until the seventeenth century there had been four 'countries' in the British Isles:

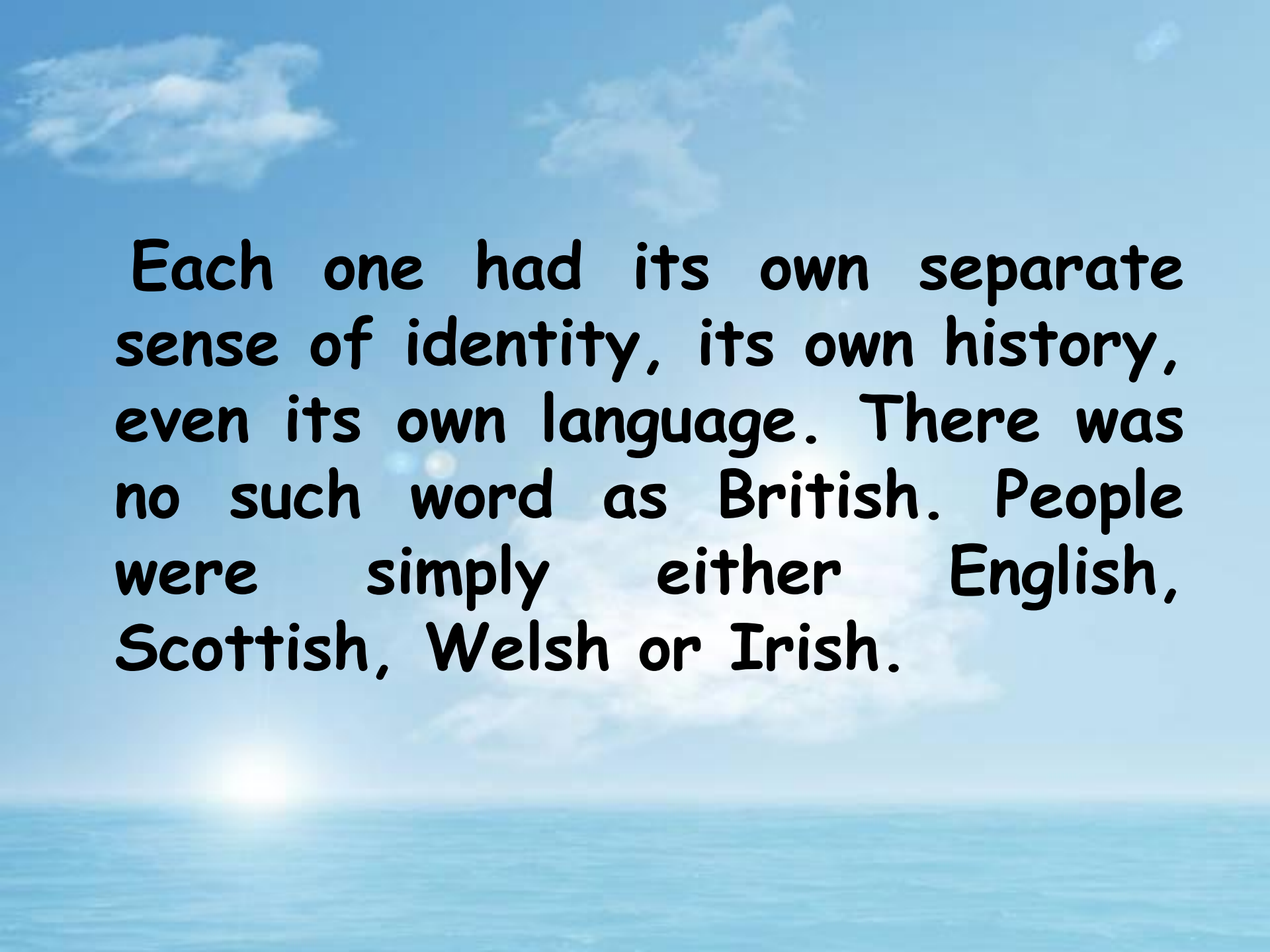


England

Scotland

Wales

Ireland



Each one had its own separate sense of identity, its own history, even its own language. There was no such word as British. People were simply either English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish.

How and why was the UK formed?



The United Kingdom was formed in 1801 when the Irish parliament was joined with the parliament for England, Wales and Scotland in London, and the whole of the British Isles became a single state. However, in 1922 the south of Ireland became the Irish Free State and, in 1949, a completely independent republic.



How is the national flag called?

The present Union Flag, popularly known as the Union Jack, represents the political union of three kingdoms

- England
- Scotland
- Ireland (Ulster)



The Union Jack is made up of the individual flags of three of the Kingdom's countries.

As Wales was not a Kingdom but a Principality it could not be included on the flag.



The Welsh Dragon

The Union Jack is made of 3 flags. Do you know what these are?



England
is represented
by the flag of
St George



Scotland
is represented
by the flag of
St Andrew



Ireland
is represented
by the flag of
St Patrick



The Union Jack

What is the symbol of the UK?



Britannia

What are the national identities of the people living in Great Britain?

Although everyone in the UK has a British citizenship, they have different nationalities.

British citizens, do not regard themselves as British and prefer to state their national identity as English, Scottish or Welsh.

This is because different groups of people tend to develop their own customs and way of life.



What is the official language of the UK?

English is the official language of the UK and the first language of the vast majority of the population. The English language is a West Germanic language, originating from England. People in Wales speak a completely different language. About 25% of the people there still speak in their native Celtic tongue called Welsh. In some regions of Scotland, Gaelic is used as a first language (particularly in the Highlands and the Western Isles). Although Wales and Scotland have their own languages, English is spoken in both countries more.

A fictional character who is supposed to personify Englishness is John Bull.



Floral emblems of the UK

Each country within the United Kingdom has a national emblem, as well as its own flag.



What is the national flower of England?

The Tudor rose is the national floral emblem of England. It symbolizes the end of the Wars of the Roses.



What is the Scottish national flower?

The national flower of Scotland is the thistle.

Thistle is a prickly-leaved purple flower which was first used in the 15th century as a symbol of defence. The thistle has been a Scottish symbol for more than 500 years.



What is the Welsh national flower?

The national flower of Wales is the daffodil, which is traditionally worn on St. David's Day.



What is the national flower of Northern Ireland?

The national flower of Northern Ireland is the shamrock, a three-leaved plant similar to clover. It is a symbol of trinity



