

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
---------------------------	----------

Part I: The British Are Coming!.....	9
---	----------

Chapter 1: So Much History, So Little Time	11
--	----

Chapter 2: Sticks and Stone Age Stuff	23
---	----

Chapter 3: Woad Rage and Chariots: The Iron Age in Britain	35
--	----

Part II: Everyone Else Is Coming! The Invaders	49
---	-----------

Chapter 4: Ruled Britannia	51
----------------------------------	----

Chapter 5: Saxon Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll	67
---	----

Chapter 6: Have Axe, Will Travel: The Vikings	83
---	----

Chapter 7: 1066 and All That Followed	99
---	----

Part III: Who's in Charge Around Here?

The Middle Ages	115
------------------------------	------------

Chapter 8: England Gets an Empire	117
---	-----

Chapter 9: A Right Royal Time – the Medieval Realms of Britain	133
--	-----

Chapter 10: Plague, Pox, Poll Tax, and Ploughing – and Then You Die	151
---	-----

Part IV: Rights or Royals? The Tudors and Stuarts.....	165
---	------------

Chapter 11: Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears the Crown	167
---	-----

Chapter 12: A Burning Issue: The Reformation	185
--	-----

Chapter 13: Crown or Commons?	203
-------------------------------------	-----

Chapter 14: Old Problems, New Ideas	221
---	-----

Part V: On the Up: The Eighteenth and

Nineteenth Centuries	233
-----------------------------------	------------

Chapter 15: Let's Make a Country	235
--	-----

Chapter 16: Survival of the Richest: The Industrial Revolution	255
--	-----

Chapter 17: Children of the Revolutions	269
---	-----

Chapter 18: Putting on My Top Hat – The Victorians	287
--	-----

Chapter 19: The Sun Never Sets – But It Don't Shine Either	303
--	-----

Part VI: Don't Look Down: The Twentieth Century.....	319
---	------------

Chapter 20: The Great War: The End of Innocence – and Everything Else?	321
--	-----

Chapter 21: Radio Times	333
-------------------------------	-----

Chapter 22: TV Times	349
----------------------------	-----

<i>Part VII: The Part of Tens</i>	365
Chapter 23: Ten Top Turning Points	367
Chapter 24: Ten Major Documents	371
Chapter 25: Ten Things the British Have Given the World (Whether the World Wanted Them or Not)	375
Chapter 26: Ten Great British Places to Visit	379
Chapter 27: Ten Britons Who Should Be Better Known	383
<i>Index</i>	389

Table of Contents

***Introduction* 1**

About This Book	1
Conventions Used in This Book	2
Foolish Assumptions	3
How This Book Is Organised	3
Part I: The British Are Coming!	3
Part II: Everyone Else Is Coming! The Invaders	4
Part III: Who's in Charge Around Here? The Middle Ages	4
Part IV: Rights or Royals? The Tudors and Stuarts	4
Part V: On the Up: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries	5
Part VI: Don't Look Down: The Twentieth Century	5
Part VII: The Part of Tens	6
Icons Used in This Book	6
Where to Go from Here	7

***Part 1: The British Are Coming!* 9**

Chapter 1: So Much History, So Little Time 11

A Historical Tin of Beans – But Not Quite 57 Varieties	12
An island nation	13
How the UK Was Born	15
England: Head Honcho	15
The conquest of Scotland	16
The conquest of Wales	17
The conquest of Ireland	17
You're Not From Round 'Ere – But Then Again, Neither Am I	18
Any such thing as a native Briton?	18
Immigrants	19
Whose History Is It Anyway?	20
Kings and queens	20
What about the workers?	21
A global story	22

Chapter 2: Sticks and Stone Age Stuff 23

What a Load of Rubbish! What Archaeologists Find	24
Going through the trash	24
Examining the tools	24
Looking at tribal societies of today	25
Uncovering Prehistoric Man	25
It's life, Jim, but not as we know it	25
Why the ruckus?	25

The Stone Age	26
Hey, hey – we're the monkeys! The Neanderthals	27
Meet your ancestors	28
Plough the Fields, Don't Scatter – the Neolithic Revolution	30
Rolling stones: A national institution	31
Giving It Some Heavy Metal: The Bronze Age	32
And the bronze goes to	32
Beakermania	33

Chapter 3: Woad Rage and Chariots: The Iron Age in Britain 35

The Iron Age: What It Was and How We Know What We Know	35
Written accounts from others	36
Look what I found down the bog: Bodies	38
Figuring Out Who These People Were	38
Looking for patterns	38
Celts in Britain? Maybe, maybe not	39
Life in Iron Age Britain	41
Warring tribes	41
Trading places	41
A touch of class	43
Bring me my chariot, and Fire!	44
Hit the woad, Jack	44
This Is NOT a Hoax: The Belgians Are Coming!	45
More Blood, Vicar? Religion in the Iron Age	46
Ye gods!	46
Head cases	47
Sacrificing humans	47

Part II: Everyone Else Is Coming! The Invaders 49

Chapter 4: Ruled Britannia 51

A Far-Away Land of Which We Know Virtually Nothing	51
The Gallic Wars	52
Welcome to England!	53
They're Back – with Elephants!	54
Caratacus fights the Romans	54
One angry lady – Boudica	55
Roman in the Gloamin' – Agricola	57
“And What Have the Romans Ever Given Us in Return?”	57
Sorry, no aqueducts	58
Another brick in the wall	58
Urban sprawl	59
Get your kicks on Route LXVI	59
All that foreign food	61
The Roman way of life	61
Saints alive! Christianity arrives!	61

Time to Decline and Fall . . . and Go	62
Trouble up North	63
Roman Emperors, made in Britain	63
Gothic revival	64
Exit Romans, stage left	64
Chapter 5: Saxon Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll	67
They're Coming from All Angles!	68
Welcome to our shores!	68
The Overlord of All Britain: Vitalinus the Vortigern	68
Disunited Kingdoms	70
Celtic kingdoms	70
Saxon kingdoms	73
We're on a Mission from God	74
Keeping the faith to themselves: The British Christians	75
Sharing the faith: The Celtic Church	75
Enter the Roman Church	77
Winds of Change	80
The Rise of Mercia	80
I don't want to worry you, but I saw three ships come sailing in: The Vikings	81
Chapter 6: Have Axe, Will Travel: The Vikings	83
The Fury of the Norsemen	84
A-pillaging we will go	84
Setting up base on the Isle of Man	85
Some Seriously Good Kings	86
Scotland the brave: Kenneth MacAlpin	87
We'll poke your eye out in the hillsides: The Welsh	87
The English Kings: Egbert, Alfred, and Athelstan	88
The Vikings Are Gone – Now What?	91
They're back – and this time it's personal	91
Showdown in Ireland	93
Scotland wasn't much better	93
Cnut: Laying down the Danelaw	95
The Messy Successions Following Cnut	95
Kings for (just over) a day	96
Edward the Confessor	96
The men who would be King	97
Chapter 7: 1066 and All That Followed	99
The King Is Dead, Long Live, er	99
King Harold – One in a Million, One in the Eye	100
Trouble on the not-too-distant horizon	100
The fightin' fyrd	101
England 1, Norway nil	101
Come on William, if you're hard enough!	102
Norman mods and Saxon rockers: Battle at Hastings	103

William Duke of Normandy, King of England	104
Coronation chaos	104
Under new management	105
Mine, all mine! – The feudal system	106
Scotland turns English	108
And Wales follows suit	109
But Ireland has a breather	110
The Church gets cross	110
William Dies and Things Go Down Hill	111
Who wants to be a William heir?	111
William Rufus as King	111
Henry Beauclerc (a.k.a. Henry I) as King	112
Anarchy in the UK	112

Part III: Who's in Charge Around Here?

The Middle Ages..... 115

Chapter 8: England Gets an Empire117

Meet the Family	117
Good lords! (Sacré bleu!)	118
England was nice, but France was home	119
Henry II and the Angevin Empire	119
A trek to Toulouse	120
The Big Match: England vs. Wales	120
Bad news for Ireland	122
All (fairly) quiet on the Scottish Front	123
Henry the lawgiver	124
Murder in the Cathedral	124
Henry's cunning plan . . . doesn't work	125
Recipe for instant martyr	125
Royal Families and How to Survive Them	126
Richard I – the Lion King	128
A-crusading we will go	128
A King's ransom	129
King John	129
Score: 1-nil to the Pope	130
Er, I seem to have lost my Empire	130
Magna Carta	131

Chapter 9: A Right Royal Time – the Medieval Realms of Britain133

Basic Background Info	134
England – the French connection	134
Who was ruling what?	134

Simon Says "Make a Parliament, Henry!"	135
I'm the King of the Castles: Edward I	136
War for Wales	136
Hammering Scots	137
You Say You Want a (Palace) Revolution: Edward II	139
A woman scorned	140
Careful! Some day your prince may come	141
Conquering France: The Hundred Years War and Edward III	141
Some battles	142
Conquering France again	143
Calamity Joan	144
Lancaster vs. York: The Wars of the Roses – a User's Guide	145
House of Lancaster: Henrys IV, V, and VI	147
House of York: Edwards IV and V and Richard III	148
Guns 'n' Roses	148

Chapter 10: Plague, Pox, Poll Tax, and Ploughing – and Then You Die151

Benefits of the Cloth	151
What people believed in	152
The church service	153
Monastic orders	154
Medieval schools	155
Tending the sick: Medical care in the Middle Ages	156
The advanced thinkers	157
A rebel: John Wyclif and the Lollards	157
The Black Death	159
Death by plague	159
Dire diagnoses	159
The Prince and the Paupers: The Peasants Revolt	160
Laws to keep wages low	161
A poll tax	161
Showdown at Smithfield	162

Part IV: Rights or Royals? The Tudors and Stuarts 165

Chapter 11: Uneasy Lies the Head that Wears the Crown167

Princes and Pretenders	167
Tricky Dicky, a.k.a. Richard III	169
Enter Henry Tudor – and a succession of pretenders	170
And Then Along Came Henry (the VIII, that is)	171
Bad Ideas of the Sixteenth Century – No 1: Marrying Henry VIII	171
Edward VI, Queen Mary, . . . and Jane Grey?	174

The Stewarts in a Stew	175
James IV attacks the English – and loses	176
A new King and another power struggle	176
Bad ideas of the sixteenth century – No 2: Marrying Mary, Queen of Scots	177
The First Elizabeth	179
The Virgin Queen vs. the not-so-virgin Mary	179
English sea dogs vs. the Spanish Armada	181
The seeds of an Empire	182
Protestants in Ulster	183
Don't let the sun go down on me	183
Chapter 12: A Burning Issue: The Reformation	185
Religion in the Middle Ages	185
The role of the Catholic Church	187
Enter the Reformers	189
Back in England with Henry VIII	191
Breaking with Rome	192
Closing the monasteries	192
The Pilgrimage of Grace	193
The Church of England: More Protestant or More Catholic?	193
God's on Our Side! – The Protestants and Edward VI	195
Bread, wine – and trouble	195
We're on God's side! – The Catholics and Queen Mary	196
A good beginning, then a few bad decisions	196
Come on Mary, light my fire	197
Elizabeth Settles It . . . or Does She?	197
The Catholics strike back and strike out	198
And the Protestants aren't happy either	199
Scotland Chooses Its Path	199
Protestant uprising	199
Mary's return to Scotland	200
James VI steps in and muddies the waters even more	200
Chapter 13: Crown or Commons?	203
The Stewarts Come South	203
Know your Puritans	204
Boom Shake the Room – the Gunpowder Plot	205
James I fought the law and . . . who won?	206
Charles I	207
Buckingham's palace?	207
Lack of Commons sense	208
Ireland, under Strafford's thumb	209
Getting tough with Puritans – again	210
Parliament: It's back and shows who's boss	210

Civil War: Battle Hymns and a Republic	212
War stories	212
Can we join in? Enter the Irish and the Scots	213
The only good Stuart is a dead Stuart	214
Oliver!	215
Levellers levelled and Scots scotched	215
England becomes a republic	216
Ireland: The Curse of Cromwell	217
Restoration Tragi-Comedy	217
Charles II comes to England	218
Some relief for Catholics and Puritans alike	218
So, Who Won – The Crown or Parliament?	218
Chapter 14: Old Problems, New Ideas	221
The Renaissance: Retro Chic	221
Sweet music and palaces in air	222
Shakespeare: The good, the bard and the ugly	223
It's No Fun Being Poor	225
The Poor Laws	225
Crime or class war?	226
New Ideas	226
Let's talk about religion	226
A little bit of politics	228
The appliance of science	229
<i>Part V: On the Up: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries</i>	233
Chapter 15: Let's Make a Country	235
No Popery! No Wooden Shoes!	235
1688: Glorious (?) Revolution (?)	236
Going Dutch	237
The Bill of Rights	238
Ireland: King Billy of the Boyne	238
Bad Heir Day	240
Marlborough country	240
Making Great Britain: Making Britain Great?	241
England and Scotland: One King, two Kingdoms	242
Glencoe – death at MacDonalds	243
Act Two of Union: Scotland	244
Rebellions: The '15 and the '45	244
Ireland: Penal times	246
Act Three of Union: Ireland	247

George, George, George and, er, George	248
The one and only, the original, George I	249
Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the water – George II	249
The badness of George III	249
To complete your set of Georges	250
Whigs and Tories	250
Whig oligarchy	250
Fighting the French: A National Sport	251
Chapter 16: Survival of the Richest: The Industrial Revolution ...	255
Food or Famine?	255
Problem: Fertiliser; Answer: Turnip	256
Baa baa black sheep, that's a lot of wool	257
Reaching (en)closure	257
Getting Things Moving: Road Work	258
Trouble Over: Bridged Water	259
Revolutionising the Cloth Trade	259
The spinning jenny has landed	259
Things speed up even more	261
It's (Not So) Fine Work, If You Can Get It: Life in the Factories	261
Trouble at t'mill	261
It were grim in them days	262
All Steamed Up	263
Do the Locomotion	264
Any Old Iron?	264
Tea, Sympathy, and the Slave Trade	265
Britons never shall be slaves – and nor will anyone else	266
Why Britain?	267
Chapter 17: Children of the Revolutions	269
Revolutions: Turning Full Circle or Half?	269
A British Civil War in America	270
How the trouble began	271
Things get nasty: From Boston to Concord	272
Declaring independence	273
The fight's on	273
Calling it quits: The world turned upside down	275
The French Revolution	275
The nutshell version	276
Sounds good to us . . . we think	277
This means war! Britain and France at it again	277
Impeached for free speech: Restricting freedoms	278
Cruising for a bruising – Nelson	279
Bonaparte's Spanish Ulcer: The Peninsular War	280
The Battle of Waterloo: Wellington boots out Napoleon	281

A British Revolution?	281
Sowing discontent: The Corn Law	282
What the protestors wanted	283
The Great Reform Act	285
Was <i>THAT</i> the British Revolution?	285

Chapter 18: Putting on My Top Hat – The Victorians287

Queen Victoria	288
Prime Ministers and MPs of the Age	289
Sir Robert Peel – tragedy of a statesman	289
The Irish Famine	289
Peel forgets to check behind him	290
Lord Palmerston – Send a gunboat!	291
Bill and Ben: The Gladstone and Disraeli show	292
Troubles at Home and Abroad	293
The People's Charter	293
The Crimean War – not Britain's finest hour	295
How Victorian Were the Victorians?	297
Did the upper classes really have the upper hand?	297
Were the Victorians really so cruel to children?	297
Were they really scared of sex?	298
Were Victorians really so religious?	298
Did the Victorians oppress women?	299
Things Can Only Get Better	300
Crystal Palace's Great Exhibition	300
Two giants: Brunel and Darwin	300

Chapter 19: The Sun Never Sets – But It Don't Shine Either303

New World Order	304
Colonies in the New World	305
Hey, sugar sugar	305
India Taken Away	306
Black Hole in Calcutta	307
The Battle of Warren Hastings	307
Great game, great game!	308
This is Mutiny, Mr Hindu!	309
Cook's Tour: Australia and New Zealand	309
Opium? Just Say Yes: China	310
Wider Still and Wider: Scrambling for Africa	311
Zulu!	312
The wild Boers	313
One for you and two for me – cutting up Africa	313
Welcome to the Middle of Nowhere	315
The Colonies Grow Up – As Long As They're White	316
Lion Tamers	316
What about the Irish?	317
The Anglo-Boer War: A hell of a lesson and a hell of a shock	318

Part VI: Don't Look Down: The Twentieth Century319**Chapter 20: The Great War: The End of Innocence – and Everything Else?321**

Indian Summer	321
Go easy on the ice	322
Not so quiet on the home front	322
Alliance Building	324
Loitering with entente	324
Going great guns – The naval race	325
Bullets in Bosnia	326
General von Schlieffen's cunning plan and Britain's ultimatum	326
The Great War	327
Your Country Needs YOU!	328
Death in the trenches	328
Death in the Dardanelles	329
Death at sea	330
Death on the Somme	331
Death in the mud	331
The war ends	332

Chapter 21: Radio Times333

Big Troubles	333
Ireland – the Troubles	334
India – Massacre at Amritsar	335
Problems back home	336
The Years That Roared	338
Party time!	338
Party's over: The slump	338
How Goes the Empire?	340
Palestine – the double promised land	340
Gandhi	341
The Road to Munich	342
The Munich Conference	343
And then Hitler attacked Poland	343
World War Two	343
Early battles and Churchill's finest hour	344
Battle over Britain	344
If it ain't flamin' desert, it's flippin' jungle	347
Boats and bombers	347
D-Day – Fighting on the beaches	348
The war with Germany ends	348
The war with Japan continues	348

Chapter 22: TV Times349

We Are the Masters Now	349
The Beveridge Report: Fighting giants	350
Going into Labour	350
Power for the people	351
You may have won the war, but you can't have any sweets	352
Discovery and recovery	353
End of Empire	353
Sunset in the east . . . and the Middle East	354
Wind of change in Africa	354
Falklands fight; Hong Kong handover	355
Commonwealth games	355
Losing an Empire, Finding a Role	356
A world power or just in de-Nile?	356
Into Europe?	357
What ARE those politicians up to?	358
Disunited Kingdom?	362
Black and British – and brown, and yellow	362
Belfast blows up	362
Scotland and Wales – sort-of Nations Once Again	364

Part VII: The Part of Tens.....365**Chapter 23: Ten Top Turning Points367**

End of the Ice Age, c.7,500 BC	367
The Romans Invade Britain, 43 AD	367
The Synod of Whitby, 664	368
The Norman Invasion of England, 1066	368
The English Invade Ireland, 1170	368
The Battle of Bannockburn, 1314	369
Henry VIII Breaks with Rome, 1532	369
Charles I Tries to Arrest Five MPs, 1642	369
The Great Reform Act, 1832	370
The Fall of Singapore, 1942	370

Chapter 24: Ten Major Documents371

Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People (731)	371
The Book of Kells (800)	371
Magna Carta (1215)	372
The Declaration of Arbroath (1320)	372
The Authorised "King James" Version of the Bible (1611)	372
The Petition of Right (1628)	373
Habeas Corpus (1679)	373

Lord Mansfield's Judgement (1772)	373
The People's Charter (1838)	374
Darwin's Origin of Species (1859)	374

Chapter 25: Ten Things the British Have Given the World (Whether the World Wanted Them or Not) 375

Parliamentary Government	375
The English Common Law	376
Organised Sport	376
The Novel	376
DNA	377
The BBC	377
The Beatles	377
Tea with Milk	378
Penicillin	378
Gilbert and Sullivan	378

Chapter 26: Ten Great British Places to Visit 379

Skara Brae	379
Iona	379
Hadrian's Wall	380
Durham	380
Stirling Castle	380
Beaumaris	381
Armagh	381
Chatsworth House	381
Ironbridge	382
Coventry Cathedral	382

Chapter 27: Ten Britons Who Should Be Better Known 383

King Oswald of Northumbria	383
Robert Grosseteste	384
Nicholas Owen	384
John Lilburne	384
Olaudah Equiano	385
John Snow	385
Sophia Jex-Blake	386
Emily Hobhouse	386
Dr Cecil Paine	387
Chad Varah	387

Index 389