

# SOCIAL & INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF BRITAIN

BY

A. A. W. RAMSAY, M.A., F.H.D.

Author of 'Idealism and Foreign Policy, 1860-1878'

WITH A FOREWORD

BY

Professor J. F. REES, M.A.

Professor of Commerce in the University of Birmingham

LONDON: 38 SOHO SQUARE, W.1  
W. & R. CHAMBERS, LIMITED  
EDINBURGH: 339 HIGH STREET

Printed in Great Britain.  
W. & R. CHAMBERS, LTD., LONDON and EDINBURGH.

## FOREWORD.

WHY does History figure among the subjects we learn at school? We know that we must study English in order to be able to read intelligently and to write as well as possible. Arithmetic has its practical uses in everyday life. But what is the use of History? Suppose you were transported to an inhabited planet you would be quite helpless until you had learnt how the society you found there had come into existence, and you would make all kinds of mistakes until you had found out a great deal about its past—that is to say, of its History. In the same way you would feel strange in a new country until you had acquainted yourself with its customs, and customs are explained by History. What we do not always realise is that to understand our own country we must study its past. For the past is not over and done with; it has given us our religion, our law, our institutions, our literature. How can we appreciate this rich heritage unless we know something of how it was built up and preserved for us in the past? History, then, is essential to the intelligent and responsible citizen.

But you will say that you do not want to know everything that happened in the past. You are willing to learn about the things which will explain what you see around you. Perhaps you will complain that you cannot understand the causes of the wars of which you read, and that the doings of statesmen puzzle you. The great French naturalist, Henri Fabre, sympathised with the objection which is contained in this complaint. 'History,' he said, 'celebrates the battlefields whereon we meet our death, but scorns to speak of the ploughed fields whereby we thrive; it knows the names of the king's favourites'

[if he had been an Englishman he might have said it knows the names of the six wives of Henry VIII.], 'but it cannot tell us the origin of wheat. That is the way of human folly.'

We are not quite so foolish now. Historians are coming more to recognise the great importance of knowing something about the life of the people in the past. Wars, Dr Ramsay tells us, have not been going on all the time; if they had been, civilisation would not have survived. But all the time men have been cultivating the fields, building the towns, and carrying on trade at home and abroad. If you look around you, you will see History written in the shape of the fields, in the position of the villages, and in the buildings of the towns and countryside. For History is not something written in books alone. You can see for yourselves in your own locality evidences of what men have done in the past. That is the best place to begin attempting to learn what History really is.

In this volume you will find that Dr Ramsay will help you at every turn. She will tell you what the country used to be like, and how it gradually changed until it is what you now see. When you have read her book with care, using maps and pictures, and reading some at least of the ballads and other literature she recommends at the end of her chapters, I think you will have a new understanding of the world in which you find yourself. History will always have an interest for you, and you will have no patience with those who question its use.

J. F. REES.

BIRMINGHAM,  
*June 1926.*

## CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	9
I. THE EARLY INHABITANTS OF BRITAIN. . . . .	10
II. BRITAIN AT THE FIRST COMING OF THE ROMANS . . . . .	18
III. BRITAIN AS A ROMAN PROVINCE . . . . .	24
IV. THE ENGLISH SETTLEMENT . . . . .	33
V. SOCIAL LIFE IN THE OLD ENGLISH PERIOD. . . . .	41
VI. THE COMING OF THE NORTHMEN AND THE GROWTH OF TOWNS . . . . .	49
VII. THE NORMAN CONQUEST AND ITS EFFECTS. . . . .	55
VIII. FEUDALISM AND THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY. . . . .	63
IX. TOWN LIFE AND THE GILD SYSTEM . . . . .	70
X. SCOTLAND. . . . .	77
XI. MONEY AND TAXATION . . . . .	88
XII. THE BREAK-UP OF THE MANORIAL SYSTEM. . . . .	95
XIII. FOREIGN TRADE . . . . .	102
XIV. THE NEW DISCOVERIES . . . . .	110
XV. ENCLOSURES AND THE POOR LAW. . . . .	118
XVI. MERCHANT COMPANIES AND THE FIRST COLONISTS . . . . .	126
XVII. TAXATION AND BANKING . . . . .	134
XVIII. SCOTLAND IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES . . . . .	142
XIX. THE SOUTH SEA BUBBLE AND THE MINISTRY OF WALPOLE . . . . .	150
XX. IRELAND . . . . .	158
XXI. THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION . . . . .	164
XXII. THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: THE GREAT INVEN- TIONS. . . . .	171
XXIII. THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION: AGRICULTURE . . . . .	183
XXIV. MACHINERY AND THE WORKMAN . . . . .	191
XXV. LAISSER-FAIRE . . . . .	198
XXVI. THE HUMANITARIANS . . . . .	206
XXVII. THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE REFORM MOVEMENT . . . . .	215
XXVIII. THE OLD POOR LAW AND THE NEW . . . . .	222

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXIX. TAXATION AND TRADE. . . . .	229
XXX. MONEY DURING THE FRENCH WARS . . . . .	236
XXXI. THE EMPIRE OVERSEAS . . . . .	243
XXXII. BANKING . . . . .	255
XXXIII. NEW INVENTIONS . . . . .	261
XXXIV. LANDLORD, TENANT, AND LABOURER . . . . .	268
XXXV. COMMERCIAL TREATIES AND FOREIGN COMPETITION	275
XXXVI. FREE TRADE AND IMPERIAL PREFERENCE . . . . .	283
XXXVII. THE LATER HISTORY OF THE TRADE UNIONS . . . . .	288
XXXVIII. THE STATE AND ITS SUBJECTS . . . . .	294
XXXIX. THE ECONOMIC CAUSES OF THE GREAT WAR . . . . .	300
XL. MONEY AND THE GREAT WAR . . . . .	306
XLI. CONCLUSION . . . . .	315

---

### AUTHOR'S NOTE.

I HAVE to thank Professor J. F. Rees, of the University of Birmingham, for kindly consenting to revise the proofs and to write a Foreword; and also to express my obligation, throughout, to his inspiring teaching of Economic History when I had the privilege of attending his lectures in Edinburgh. I must also thank Mr William Woodburn, of Messrs W. & R. Chambers, Ltd., for invaluable advice and assistance.

A. A. W. RAMSAY.

# Dates and Facts to Remember.

## PERIOD I. THE BEGINNINGS OF BRITISH HISTORY

30,000 (?) B.C. to 43 A.D.

Dates to Remember.	Facts to Remember.
About 3500 B.C. Breaking of the last land bridge with the Continent.	Nomadic and Pastoral Peoples. Beginnings of settled life. Agriculture, and the arts.
About 500 B.C. Beginnings of the Keltic Invasion.	Tribal system.
55 B.C. First Roman landing.	

## PERIOD II. ROMAN CIVILISATION.—43 A.D. to 410 A.D.

Dates to Remember.	Facts to Remember.
200-300. Introduction of Christianity.	Roman occupation. Villas and Vici.
410-449. Interval between the Roman and Anglo-Saxon Times.	Building of roads, bridges, and towns. Growth of trade.

## PERIOD III. THE ANGLO-SAXONS.—449 to 1066.

Dates to Remember.	Facts to Remember.
449-520. Anglo-Saxon Wars of conquest.	Destruction of civilisation, and return to barbarism.
597-703. Introduction of Christianity.	New Language—English. Mixture of different races.
787-878. First Invasion of Northmen.	Village communities. Free and unfree men.
1002-1017. Second Invasion of Northmen.	Towns and trade encouraged by the Northmen. Levy of Danegeld.

**PERIOD IV.—EARLY MIDDLE AGES.—1066 to 1300.**

<b>Dates to Remember.</b>	<b>Facts to Remember.</b>
1135-1154. Bad times under Stephen.	French language and learning come to England.
1154-1189. Reforms of Henry II.	Villeinage and Feudalism.
1290. Edward I. drives out the Jews.	Merchant Gilds and Craft Gilds. Growing importance of money. Growing power of the king.

**PERIOD V. LATER MIDDLE AGES.—1300 to 1485.**

<b>Dates to Remember.</b>	<b>Facts to Remember.</b>
1348-1453. Hundred Years' War.	Gradual decay of Feudalism and Villeinage.
1348-49. Black Death.	Growth of foreign trade.
1381. Peasants' Revolt.	Development of the Woollen Industry.
1492. Discovery of America.	Power of the Craft Gilds. The first Merchant Adventurers.

**PERIOD VI. THE TUDORS.—1485 to 1603.**

<b>Dates to Remember.</b>	<b>Facts to Remember.</b>
1536-39. Suppressions of Monasteries.	Disappearance of Villeinage. Protestant Reformation.
1577-80. Drake sails round the world.	Foreign Trade, Discovery, Merchant Companies.
1588. Spanish Armada defeated.	The work of Burleigh and the new National State.
1600. East India Company founded.	Growth of Sea Power.
1061. The Poor Law.	Enclosures, and Poor Relief.



PERIOD VII. THE STEWARTS.—1603 to 1688.

Dates to Remember.	Facts to Remember.
1607. Colonisation of Virginia.	First Colonies.
1620. The Pilgrim Fathers colonise New England.	Growth of Sea Power.
1660. Navigation Act.	Mercantilism.
	King and Parliament quarrel over Taxation.
	Merchant Companies and Monopolies.
	War and Persecution in Scotland.

PERIOD VIII. PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT.—

1688 to 1760.

Dates to Remember.	Facts to Remember.
1694. Foundation of the Bank of England.	Free Trade with Scotland.
1707. Union of the Parliaments.	The First Great Financial Crisis.
1721. South Sea Bubble.	Walpole's Excise Bill.
	Agricultural Improvements.
	Beginning of Banking.

PERIOD IX. INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.—1760 to 1800.

Dates to Remember.	Facts to Remember.
1767. Spinning-jenny invented.	Great Inventions—machinery substituted for hand labour.
1783. Loss of American Colonies.	Improvements of Transport.
1789. French Revolution.	Great Development of the Cotton Trade.
1795. Speenhamland 'Act of Parliament.'	Enclosures—poor tenants lose their land. End of the Open-Field system.
1797. Suspension of Cash Payments.	Unemployment, Overwork, Low Wages.
1799-1800. Combination Laws passed.	Growth of Pauperism.
	Growth of British power at sea and in the colonies.

## PERIOD X. DISORDER AND REFORM.—1800 to 1846.

## Dates to Remember.

- 1802. First Factory Act.
- 1815. Peace, and Luddite Riots.
- 1818-1921. Resumption of Cash Payments.
- 1824. Trade Unions made legal.
- 1832. Reform Bill—landlords lose their power.
- 1833. Shaftesbury's great Factory Act.  
Abolition of Slavery.
- 1834. Poor Law Act.
- 1844. Bank Charter Act.
- 1845. Potato Famine in Ireland.
- 1846. Corn Law Repeal.

## Facts to Remember.

- Currency troubles owing to over-issue of paper-money.
- Great growth of trade and industry.
- Beginning of Free Trade.
- New Colonial Policy.
- By influence of Humanitarians many laws passed for protection of working classes, especially women and children.
- Scottish and Irish evictions.

## PERIOD XI. MODERN TIMES.—1846 to 1926.

## Dates to Remember.

- 1860. Complete Free Trade introduced.
- 1860-1890. Commercial Treaties.
- 1870-1885. Acts protecting Irish and Scottish crofters.
- 1875. New Trade Union law.
- 1903. Irish Land Purchase Act.
- 1906. Trade Unions given a privileged position. Workmen's Compensation Act.
- 1908. Old-Age Pensions begun.
- 1911. National Health Insurance Act and beginning of Unemployment Insurance.
- 1914. Suspension of Cash Payments.
- 1925. Earlier Old-Age Pensions; Pensions for Widows and Orphans.

## Facts to Remember.

- Many laws giving protection or privilege to the working classes.
- Great improvement in condition of these classes.
- Growth of power of Trade Unions.
- British Agriculture nearly ruined by foreign competition.
- Britain losing ground in trade and industry.
- Britain depending upon a foreign food supply.
- Growth of Socialism.
- Heavy losses during the Great War.