

## Lecture 02: The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

### 1.The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:

The map below demonstrates that:


- The UK is a set of islands situated in the British Isle.
- It is located on the north-west coast of Europe.
- It surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, North Sea, Celtic Sea, the Republic of Ireland and the English Channel.
- It comprises four main nations: 'England', 'Wales', 'Scotland' and 'Northern Ireland'.



- The four countries have their own capital cities: London, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast, respectively.
- **Britain** = England+ Wales
- **Great Britain** = England + Wales + Scotland
- **The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)** = England+ Wales+ Scotland+ Northern Ireland.

### 2.Some historical names and signs of national identity of the UK:

Name / sign	Signification
-------------	---------------

<p><b>Albion</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It is one of the ancient names of Great Britain.</li> <li>➤ It is originated from a Celtic word.</li> <li>➤ It is widely used by writers and poets.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Britannia</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It a female incarnation of Britain.</li> <li>➤ With the helmet and the trident, it represents the symbol power over the sea.</li> <li>➤ Also, Britannia was the name of the Roman province that encompasses England and Wales.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Briton</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The name attributed to all citizens of the UK</li> </ul>
<p><b>Caledonia, Cambria and Hibernia</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Are the Roman names to refer to Scotland, Wales and Ireland.</li> <li>➤ These names are still used but mainly in specific contexts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hyberno-English ( type of English)</li> <li>• The Cambrian period ( Geological time)</li> <li>• Glasgow Caledonian University ( names of institutions and organisations)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Erin, Emerald Isle</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Poetic name for Ireland, the land that is characterised by the verdure of its countryside.</li> </ul>

### John Bull



- Is a fictional character that symbolises 'Britishness' or 'Englishness'.
- It is the British version of the American Uncle Sam.
- He represents the typical example of the British gentleman during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### The Kilt and bagpipe



- Are well-known symbols of 'Scottishness'
- The kilt is the skirt worn by the man during special occasions and events.
- Its origin is Gaelic (Celtic culture).
- The bagpipe is a musical instrument.
- Almost all the Scottish played it during their special occasions.















### Harp



- Is a token of both Wales and Ireland

### 3. Symbols of the four nations

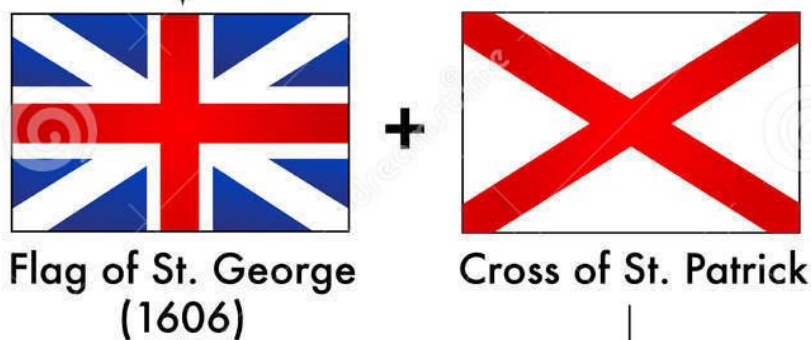
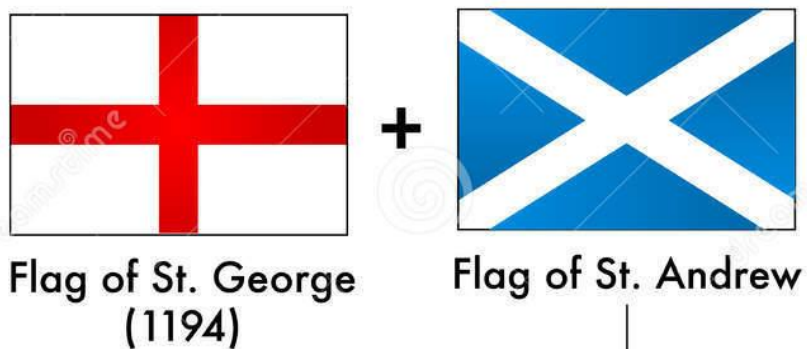
The following figure represents the main tokens and national symbols of each of the four nations that form the UK

	England	Wales	Scotland	Ireland
Flag	St George's Cross	Dragon of Cadwallader	St Andrew's Cross	St Patrick's Cross
				
			Lion rampant	Republic of Ireland
				
Plant	Rose	Leek/Daffodil	Thistle	Shamrock
				
Colour				
Patron saint	St George	St David	St Andrew	St Patrick
Saint's day	23 April	1 March	30 November	17 March



#### 4.The Union flag, the Union Jack:

This picture summarises and portrays the main steps and transformations that result in the current UK flag.



**The Union Flag (Union Jack)  
(1801)**



Although it is quite wrong to use the name 'England' while referring to the UK, many people still commit this mistake. This could imply that the English culture is the most dominant culture in the UK. The following aspects are indexes:

- The political system of the four nations is English.
- The language used by the four countries is English.
- The Bank of England is the one that controls the supply of money.
- The name of the current monarch is Elizabeth II, despite the fact that Scotland and Northern Ireland had never been ruled by Elizabeth I.
- Daily life is organised with respect to the English customs.
- Names of organisations and publications use England as the norm and the remaining parts as special cases.

These aspects are not the inherent consequences of the agreement between the four nations. Rather, they are the automatic results of the economic and the military dominance and power of England. Consequently, the English culture is the prevailing culture in the UK.

---

### **Suggested homework 2:**

- Mention some preconceptions you had about the UK.
- In what ways does this lecture help you to substitute them?

### **Further reading**

Britain for learners of English by James O'Driscoll.