



WAS IST BRITISCH



**Stormy
weather ahead**
What does “being
British” really mean?

An A-Z of British life
Essential Britain by
the letter

At home in the UK
A week with a real
English family



In einer multikulturellen Gesellschaft, in der politische und soziale Ungewissheit herrscht, wie würde man als Brite die eigene Wesensart definieren? LORRAINE MALLINDER macht sich auf die Suche nach einer Antwort.

ADVANCED AUDIO

Twenty years ago almost to the day, Britain was in a state of shock. Princess Diana had just died in a car crash. Television reports were filled with tearful **outpourings** of **grief** for the woman known as the “People’s Princess”.

The event was a turning point in the collective consciousness of Britain. Critics complained about the emotional behaviour, but many saw it as the beginning of a healthier society — a society that was not afraid to show its feelings. It was the end of the traditional “stiff upper lip”.

Twenty years on, emotion is everywhere in public life. Indeed, some might say that it was Prime Minister Theresa May’s rather emotionless campaigning that lost her the Tories’ majority in the recent election. “Strong and stable” on autopilot did not **hit the spot**.

Recently, though, the country has had a lot to digest. Shock events have occurred in quick **succession** — from Brexit and multiple terrorist attacks to the Grenfell Tower fire in London. Grenfell seemed to tell a wider truth, that of an **uncaring** government leaving its poor to **rot**. The country has reacted with anger and sadness.

In the background, Britain is also dealing with its **colonial legacy**, a multiheaded monster that raises endless questions about the relationship between history, foreign policy and the growing terrorist threat. Add immigration to this mix, and you have a highly toxic debate that has **split** the country down the middle — as if Britain were not already divided enough.

These days, our four-nation **alliance** — the United Kingdom — seems to be held together by little more than geography and perhaps a love of reality TV shows.

There are serious constitutional issues to discuss, maybe some day after Brexit.

From the outside, it may seem as if Britain were **heading for a nervous breakdown**. Our most **precious** institutions, namely the **NHS** and the BBC, are permanently being squeezed. And as the cost of living rises, people struggle with zero-hour contracts and **benefits cuts**. It’s no surprise that mental-health problems, such as depression and panic attacks, are increasing.

It’s easy to talk of decline, but Britain still has the talent to surprise. The latest election, in which the British people brought Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn back from the dead, is a good example. Then, following the recent terrorist attacks in London, the Twittersphere rose **defiantly** to tell *The New York Times* that Britain was not “reeling”. And when the government did not react after the Grenfell fire, civilians helped by bringing food and clothing to survivors.

All this happened in the month of June alone. Our **national narrative** seems to be on **fast forward**, so that it is difficult to make sense of events. Several different revolts seem to be taking place at once: against inequality, against the establishment, against liberalism, against Europe.

Perhaps all this is the outcome of living in a connected world in which everybody’s voice can be heard. But it may also be part of the national character: much as the British are known for keeping calm and carrying on, they also have an anarchic **streak**.

Either way, this is a very different Britain from the one that said farewell to Princess Diana. It’s a Britain that no longer seems so sure of where it is, quite apart from where it is going. But one thing is clear: as it moves into an uncertain future, the nation is questioning itself every step of the way. Ideas and **inventiveness** are not in **short supply**.

alliance [ə'laɪəns]

• Verbindung, Bündnis

benefits cut

[ˈbenɪfɪts kʌt]

• Kürzung der Zuschüsse

colonial legacy

[kə'ləʊniəl 'legəsi]

• Kolonialerbe

defiantly [di'faɪəntli]

• trotzig, herausfordernd

fast forward: be on ~

[ˌfɑːst 'fɔːwəd]

• sich im schnellen

Vorlauf befinden

grief [griːf]

• Trauer

head for sth. [ˈhed fə]

• auf etw. zusteuern

hit the spot

[ˌhɪt ðə 'spɒt] *ifml.*

• das Richtige sein

inventiveness

[ɪn'ventɪvɪnəs]

• Ideenreichtum,

Erfindungskraft

national narrative

[ˌnæʃənəl 'nærətɪv]

• nationale Geschichte,

Entwicklung

nervous breakdown

[ˌnɜːvəs 'breɪkdaʊn]

• Nervenzusammen-

bruch

NHS (National Health Service)

[ˌen eɪtʃ 'es] UK

• staatlicher Gesundheitsdienst

outpouring [ˈaʊtˌpɔːrɪŋ]

• Erguss, Welle

precious [ˈpreʃəs]

• kostbar, wertvoll,

geschätzt

reel [riːl]

• schwanken, taumeln,

verunsichert sein

rot: leave sb. to ~

[rɒt] *ifml.*

• jmdn. verrotten lassen

short supply: be in ~

[ˌʃɔːt sə'plaɪ]

• Mangelware sein

split: ~ sth. down the

middle [splɪt]

• etw. zerteilen

streak [striːk]

• Ader, Charakterzug

succession [sək'seʃən]

• Folge

uncaring [ˌʌn'keərɪŋ]

• gefühllos, gleichgültig

On Britishness

LORRAINE MALLINDER *spricht mit Menschen, die es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht haben, verschiedene Lebensbereiche in Großbritannien zu verstehen.*



On the state of the nation: John Curtice — cult psephologist

A professor of politics at the University of Strathclyde, John Curtice was the surprise star of June's general election, after predicting on national television that Theresa May would lose her majority. The shock results matched almost exactly his exit poll. Here, he tells us where Britain is right now:

Overall, we're a liberal society. On sexuality, we're beginning to deal with issues like transgender rights. Even religious sections of society seem to be liberal on sexuality.

This said, big segments of society have struggled to accommodate the high levels of immigration over the past few years. There's a social division here between younger, university-educated professionals and older, less-educated people in lower-status jobs. For less-qualified people, freedom of movement is something that happens to them rather than an opportunity.

As a country, we shouldn't exaggerate the extent to which we are unusual. But we are distinctive in the sense that we are a multinational state, a place that has to manage and negotiate overlapping identities. This has been more of an issue in the past 20 years. We're not unique in that respect, though. Spain has the same issues.

We're halfway between the US and Europe. We're not as *laissez-faire* as the Americans are. Although we value public services, we tend not to be in favour of high levels of government intervention.

Another way the UK stands out is that it does not feel European. In Eurobarometer surveys, two thirds of respondents consistently say they feel more British than European. That's why we constantly ask questions about why Brussels is telling us what to do.

It's partly geography — we're not part of the Continent — but it also has to do with our past as one of the biggest empires in the world. We therefore have an

affinity with other parts of the globe that we don't necessarily have with other European countries.



On diversity: Bidisha — journalist, writer and broadcaster

Bidisha burst on to Britain's literary scene in the mid 1990s with her first novel, *Seahorses*, written when she was just 16. Today, she specializes in international affairs, human rights and social justice. Here, she explains why she thinks Britain is going backwards on diversity.

At a very personal level, I'm in my 30s, established in my career and public life — and worried and despairing. I have seen the great dream of multiculturalism and

accommodate sth.

[ə'kɒmədeɪt]
• etw. Platz bieten, etw. aufnehmen

despair

[dɪ'speɪə]
• verzweifeln, verzagen

diversity

[daɪ'vɜːsəti]
• Vielfalt, Multikulturalität

exit poll

['eksɪt pəʊl]
• Wählerbefragung; hier: Wahlprognose

overlapping

[,əʊvə'læpɪŋ]
• sich überlagernd

psephologist

[sɪ'fɒlədʒɪst]
• Wahlforscher(in)

respondent

[rɪ'spɒndənt]
• befragte Person

The United Kingdom: a multicultural place, but not the only one in Europe



Fotos: E. Bock/af; privat; Bulls/Scope Press; M. Marsland/Getty Images; pop-jop/Stock.com

the trend of “cool Britannia” come and go. I am aggrieved because of issues of sex and race, which have either stalled or actively gone backwards in most areas of life in the UK.

The white men’s clubs which ran everything still run everything and, despite there being several very eminent women of colour in my fields, we are still very much a minority, and we are never in each other’s company. Each of us is often the only woman and only person of colour on the panel.

Life is much colder and harder than it was — much more racist, much more suspicious and more ignorant. The general tenor of debate, both private and public, casual and professional, has become much coarser. It has become permissible to say just anything, no matter how narrow-minded, inflammatory, ignorant or insulting.

However, I associated the Britain I grew up in, particularly the British London I grew up in, with other things — often very positive things: tolerance, variety, diversity of language, colour, culture, heritage; a singularly subtle and dry humour; a joyful eccentricity, even a celebration of the quirky and the bizarre.

Bidisha’s latest book is *Asylum and Exile: The Hidden Voices of London*.

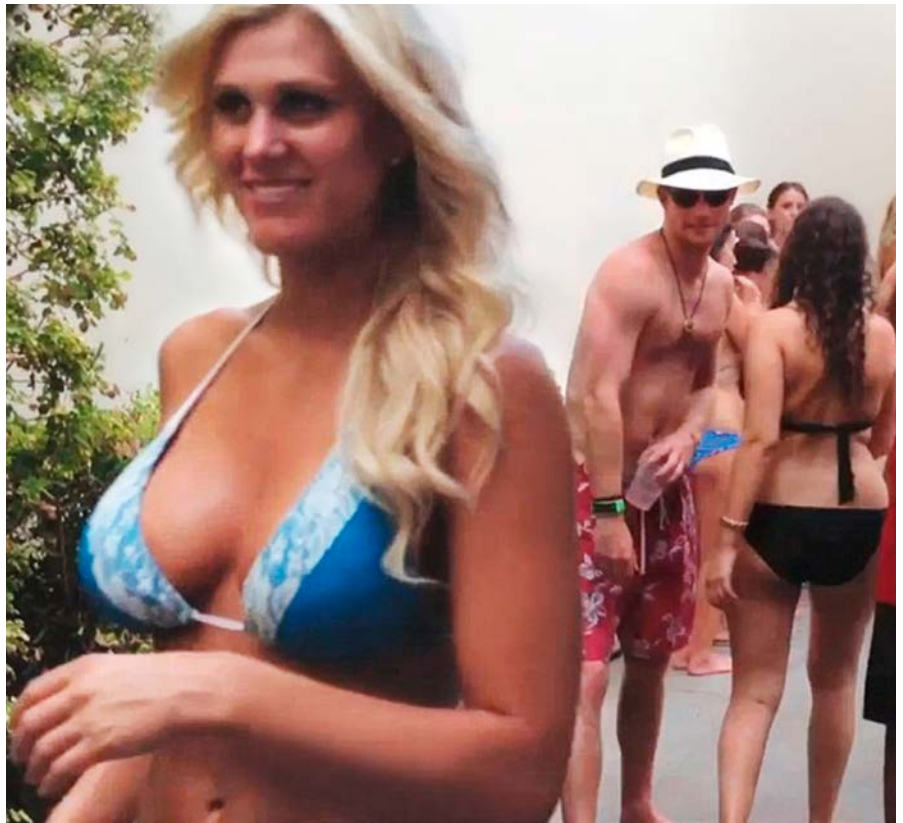


**On mental health:
Alastair Campbell —
journalist and campaigner on mental health**

Best known for his work as Tony Blair’s spin doctor, Alastair Campbell now campaigns on mental-health issues with the charity Time to Change. As Britain faces an unprecedented mental-health crisis, he comments on how attitudes are changing.

I was a journalist when I had a breakdown. When I jumped ship and went to work for Tony Blair, I was considered newsworthy as opposed to someone covering the news. It was an instant decision not to be ashamed of it.

These days, you’ve got a lot of public figures speaking up. Prince William got involved because of his own issues with his mother’s death, but also after seeing suicide cases in his work as an air



End of a wild lifestyle? Prince Harry has spoken about how the misery of losing his mother affected his behaviour

ambulance pilot. Quite a few Members of Parliament have spoken out as well. Time to Change has worked with the soaps, which have had some interesting plot lines on mental health. There’s definitely been a shift in attitudes towards mental health in Britain. My worry is that it hasn’t been accompanied by a shift in the attitudes of policymakers. There’s a sense of normal illness being physical. I think they see mental health as separate. That’s what we have to break down.

In poor parts of the country, where the needs are greatest, the services are not available. You get them only if you pay for them. There have been cuts in services for adolescents. That’s where we should be cutting the least. A country that doesn’t invest in its young people’s mental health is not invested in the future.

We’re still far away from where we need to be, but I think we’re working our way towards a tipping point.

Alastair Campbell is the author of *Winners And How They Succeed*. The book features a chapter on historical figures such as Winston Churchill and Charles Darwin, both of whom suffered from mental health problems.

adolescent [ˌædəˈlesənt]

• Jugendliche(r)

aggrieved [əˈɡriːvd]

• bedrückt

coarse [kɔːs]

• grob, derb, rüde

heritage [ˈherɪtɪdʒ]

• (Kultur-)Erbe

inflammatory

[ɪnˈflæmətəri]

• aufhetzerisch

jump ship [ˌdʒʌmp ˈʃɪp]

• das Schiff wechseln

narrow-minded

[ˌnærəʊ ˈmaɪndɪd]

• engstirnig, beschränkt

plot line [ˈplɒt laɪn]

• Handlungsstrang

quirky [ˈkwɜːki]

• verschroben, schrullig

singularly [ˈsɪŋɡjʊləli]

• einzigartig, außerordentlich

spin doctor

[ˈspɪn ˌdɒktə]

• Image- und PR-Berater(in), Schönredner(in)

stall [stɔːl]

• zum Stillstand kommen

subtle [ˈsʌtəl]

• feinsinnig

tipping point

[ˈtɪpɪŋ pɔɪnt]

• Umkehr-, Wendepunkt

unprecedented

[ʌnˈpresɪdəntɪd]

• beispiellos, noch nie dagewesen

Do you feel British?

Wir befragten Passanten in Edinburgh, das sich eher unions- und europafreundlich zeigt, ob sie sich als Briten empfinden.

hijack ['haɪdʒæk]

→ entführen

Union Jack

[ˌjuːniən 'dʒæk]

→ die britische Flagge

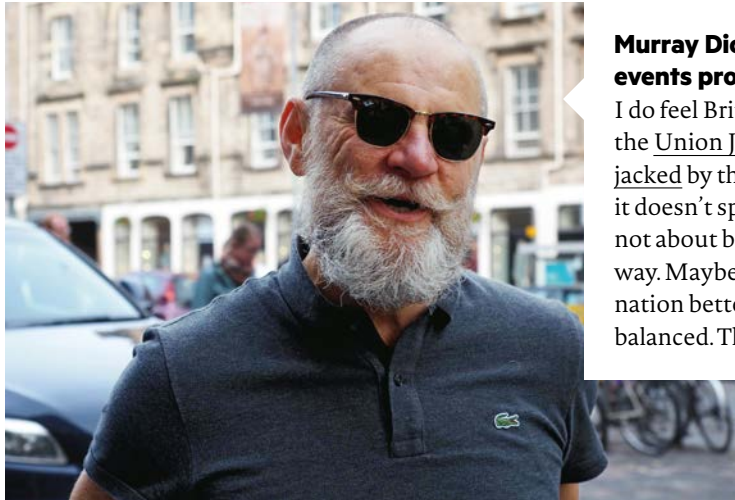
vibe [vaɪb] *ifml.*

→ Stimmung, Atmosphäre

Maya Priestley, 19, waitress

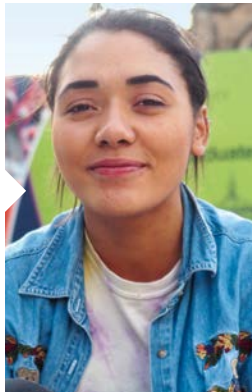
I am British, but I find it quite a restrictive term. I think of it as a collective of four nations. I suppose that culture does bring us together, though — things like the soaps and the music. Britain is very creative.

It has an underground vibe. When my mum talks to me about the bands she listened to when she was young, I realize how much music is the foundation of our culture.



Murray Dickson, 60, events promoter

I do feel British. But it's not about the Union Jack. That's been hi-jacked by the Little Englanders, so it doesn't speak for the nation. It's not about being superior in any way. Maybe the BBC represents the nation better. It's proper, fair and balanced. These are British values.



Jamie Binning, 25, sports technology designer

I'm definitely British, but I struggle with what that means. It's geography really. We're a group of individual nations that have come together, all different, but all British. There's obviously a stereotypical image that exists. During the Brexit debate, lots of propaganda was used to separate the British from the Europeans, but we remain European.



Julia Duncan, 83, retired

Scotland, Britain, Europe — it's all the same to me. I don't believe in nations. I think we should all be together as one world. Why should we think Britain is so special? We need to stop putting these boundaries up against each other.



Katie Greene, 16, student

I'm not against the idea of being British, but I don't feel it's a part of my identity. I always introduce myself as being Scottish and Irish, never British. When I think of the term, I think of the history and the imperialism. I see it as a political union rather than a social and cultural union. I don't feel that it captures a sense of identity. The biggest thing about being British is perhaps the passport.



Snapshots from modern Britain

Welche Institutionen sind noch typisch britisch, und in welchem Zustand befinden sie sich?

The class system

It's as British as tea and cake. In 2017, the class system is still alive and well. Sure, Prince Harry may say "ain't" in a bid to sound like Everyman; and hard work and talent could get you far. But class distinctions are still a national obsession. Four years ago, the BBC's Great British Class Survey pinpointed seven different groups, ranging from the "precariat" (15 per cent) to the "elite" (six per cent). The distinctions were made in financial, cultural and social terms. Want to find out where you stand in the British class system? Take the test here: bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22000973

Income inequality

As Simply Red once sang, "Money's too tight to mention." According to a recent report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, nearly a third of Britons — some 19 million people — don't have enough to live on. This number includes six million children. As the cost of living goes up, pay has flatlined. When she came to power last year, pledging to take action, Theresa May identified the struggling as "jams"

— "just about managing". But according to the think tank Resolution Foundation, changes to the tax and benefits system over the next few years will make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Losing faith

According to the British Social Attitudes Survey, 48 per cent of the British population describe themselves as "nones"; in other words, having no religion. Among young people, the number is even higher, at 62 per cent. The figures appear to have levelled out in recent years, but experts say the figures could drop dramatically with the passing of the older generation. The 2011 UK Census identified the main religion as Christianity, followed by Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism and Buddhism.

Cultural capital

You've heard of them before: James Bond, Harry Potter, Kate Moss, erm, Johnnie Walker. Britain wields some serious soft power in the world, through its personalities, music and films. But its creative industries could take a hit from Brexit. Films like *The King's Speech* and *Amy* received money for distribution from Europe. For bands, the logistics of touring — their main way of making money — look set to become a major headache.

benefits system

[ˈbenɪfɪts ˈsɪstəm]
• Sozialleistungssystem

census

[ˈsɛnsəs]
• Volkszählung

class distinction

[ˌklɑːs dɪˈstɪŋkʃən]
• Klassenunterschied

flatline

[ˈflætlaɪn] *ifml.*
• stagnieren

in a bid

[ɪn ə ˈbɪd]
• in dem Versuch, mit der Absicht

level out

[ˌlevəl ˈaʊt]
• abfallen, abflachen

obsession

[əbˈseʃən]
• Besessenheit, fixe Idee

pinpoint

[ˈpɪnpɔɪnt]
• genau festlegen

pledge

[pledʒ]
• versprechen

soft power

[ˈsɒft ˈpaʊə]
• sanfte Macht

take a hit

[ˌteɪk ə ˈhɪt]
• getroffen werden

think tank

[ˈθɪŋk ˌtæŋk]
• Expertenkommission, Ideenschmiede

wield

[wiːld]
• ausüben

Britain in quotes

Zitate berühmter Briten über ihre Kultur.



“In Britain, a cup of tea is the answer to every problem.”

David Walliams, comedian



“What an idiotic Yorkshireman thinks is British is not what some cultured southerner thinks. There is no one type of Britishness.”

Brian Sewell, art critic



“It’s celebrated in British culture to be eccentric.”

Paloma Faith, singer-songwriter

“Life in Britain had seemed like one long antechamber to a room that had too many barriers to entry.”

Christopher Hitchens, writer

antechamber
[ˈæntɪ,tʃeɪmbə]
• Vorraum

“The British do not expect happiness. I had the impression, all the time that I lived there, that they do not want to be happy; they want to be right.”

Quentin Crisp, writer

“Britain: the land of embarrassment and breakfast.”

Julian Barnes, writer



“The best of British is the best of many cultures, societies and identities. And while the colour of my skin and my religion are different, I share these principles, making me a fiercely proud Londoner and Englishman. And thoroughly British.”

Sadiq Khan, mayor of London

fiercely [fɪəslɪ]
- hier: äußerst

thoroughly [ˈθɔːrəli]
- durch und durch

“Watching TV is the most popular leisure activity in Britain. I find that very depressing.”

Jeremy Paxman, broadcaster

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