

British Hills Knowledge Base: Northern Ireland

In this video, we will be discussing Northern Ireland, with a brief overview of the country's history and a short quiz.



Northern Ireland in the UK

Northern Ireland is a country in the United Kingdom, a nation in north-western Europe. It is situated in the north-east of the island of Ireland. The capital city of Northern Ireland is Belfast, though the capital of the UK is London. Northern Ireland has a population of about 1.9 million people.

To the south of Northern Ireland is the nation of Ireland. For most of their history, both of these were a single country – Ireland. It was only in 1921 that Northern Ireland was formed, remaining a part of the United Kingdom whilst the rest of the nation became independent.

Historically, Ireland developed a Gaelic culture distinct from that of neighbouring England. Christianity arrived in Ireland in the 5th century, and after this Ireland was a centre of learning for both theology and Latin. However, English power was a constant threat to Irish independence, especially after the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century.

This clash between Protestant England and majority Catholic Ireland was the foundation of numerous wars. In 1541, Henry VIII of England declared himself King of Ireland, and over the next two centuries English control over Ireland increased, with regular attempts to weaken or eradicate the Catholic faith. English and Scottish Protestants were encouraged to move to Ireland, receiving rights and privileges the native Irish did not.

In 1801 Ireland was made part of the newly-formed United Kingdom. By this time, the Irish population was greatly divided, with powerful anger and hatred between different groups, usually along the lines of Catholic and Protestant.

When the Republic of Ireland became independent from the UK in 1921, Northern Ireland remained. Northern Ireland today has a complex relationship both with the rest of the UK, and Ireland. For instance, Northern Irish people can compete for both Ireland or Great Britain in international sporting events, or as a Northern Irish team.

The (unofficial) national flower of Northern Ireland is the shamrock. English is the major language of Northern Ireland, but Irish and Ulster Scots are also spoken by a significant minority of the population.

