

An **A to Z** of
BRITISH LIFE



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ADRIAN ROOM

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Introduction

An A to Z of British Life gives up-to-date information on all aspects of British life and institutions. It explains everything that other nationalities find interesting, amusing, puzzling or even frustrating about Britain and the British. Important public events, major government posts and well-known organizations of all kinds are described. Also included are events, institutions and people that show a typically British set of values or an important facet of British life. Entries on regional foods shed light on the culinary variety within Britain, while descriptions of sports, crafts and societies show what the British do in their spare time.

Extensive cross-references and a thematically arranged index make the dictionary easy to use. Finally, information that can most usefully be summarized in list or map form is included towards the back of the book and cross-referred to from the main text.

Adrian Room
Petersfield, Hampshire

Key to phonetic symbols

Vowels and diphthongs

1	i:	as in	see /si:/	11	ɜ:	as in	fur /fɜ:(r)/
2	ɪ	as in	sit /sɪt/	12	ə	as in	ago /ə'gəʊ/
3	e	as in	ten /ten/	13	eɪ	as in	page /peɪdʒ/
4	æ	as in	hat /hæt/	14	aʊ	as in	home /həʊm/
5	ɑ:	as in	arm /ɑ:m/	15	aɪ	as in	five /faɪv/
6	ɒ	as in	got /gɒt/	16	aʊ	as in	now /naʊ/
7	ɔ:	as in	saw /sɔ:/	17	ɔɪ	as in	join /dʒɔɪn/
8	ʊ	as in	put /pʊt/	18	ɪə	as in	near /nɪə(r)/
9	u:	as in	too /tu:/	19	eə	as in	hair /heə(r)/
10	ʌ	as in	cup /kʌp/	20	ʊə	as in	pure /pjʊə(r)/

Consonants

1	p	as in	pen /pen/	13	s	as in	so /səʊ/
2	b	as in	bad /bæd/	14	z	as in	zoo /zu:/
3	t	as in	tea /ti:/	15	ʃ	as in	she /ʃi:/
4	d	as in	did /dɪd/	16	ʒ	as in	vision /'vɪʒn/
5	k	as in	cat /kæt/	17	h	as in	how /haʊ/
6	g	as in	got /gɒt/	18	m	as in	man /mæn/
7	tʃ	as in	chin /tʃɪn/	19	n	as in	no /nəʊ/
8	dʒ	as in	June /dʒu:n/	20	ŋ	as in	sing /sɪŋ/
9	f	as in	fall /fɔ:l/	21	l	as in	leg /leg/
10	v	as in	voice /vɔɪs/	22	r	as in	red /red/
11	θ	as in	thin /θɪn/	23	j	as in	yes /jes/
12	ð	as in	then /ðen/	24	w	as in	wet /wet/

Pronunciation

For each entry a recommended pronunciation is given. The model followed is RP, a non-regional accent of British English. In this accent *r* is sounded only before vowels. Final *r* in the spelling is silent unless the word is followed by one beginning with a vowel. This 'linking *r*' is shown in brackets as in *welfare officer* /ɒfɪsə(r)/: the *r* is to be sounded only when the next word begins with a vowel. When a linking *r* is possible within a headphrase, it is shown as at the end of *welfare*. Thus /'welfeər ɒfɪsə(r)/. The high mark /' shows the main stress in the phrase, and the low mark / / shows the secondary stress. Sometimes the stress changes when a word is added to a headphrase. In such cases the pronunciation for the expanded phrase is shown in full in brackets. For example, *trilby* (*hat*) /'trɪlbɪ (,trɪlbɪ 'hæt)/. When the addition of a word does not affect the position of the main stress, the additional word alone is shown in brackets. For example, *bring-and-buy* (*sale*) /,brɪŋ ən 'baɪ (seɪl)/. The style of pronunciation shown is a careful one. For instance, *first class* is given as /,fɜːst 'klɑːs/, although in fluent colloquial speech the /t/ is very likely to be omitted. A /t/ is also shown in *hot cross bun* where native speakers of English are likely to say /,hɒk krɒs 'bʌn/. Users of the dictionary who want systematic information on such features are referred to *An English Pronunciation Companion* by A C Gimson and S M Ramsaran (OUP 1982).

Susan Ramsaran
University College, London

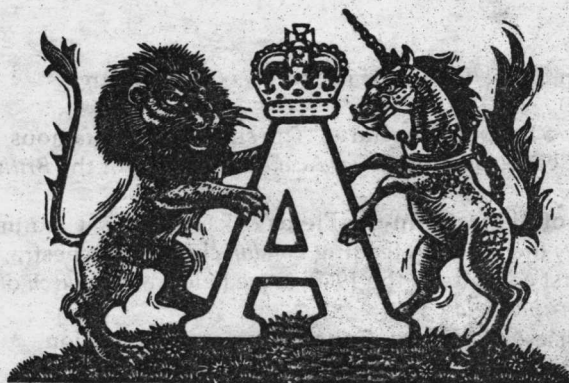
*The Lion and the Unicorn
were fighting for the Crown;
The Lion beat the Unicorn
all round about the town.*

*Some gave them white bread,
and some gave them brown;
Some gave them plum-cake,
and sent them out of town.*

Traditional English nursery rhyme

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A N Other /,ei en 'lðə(r)/ (language) A way of giving the name of a member of a sports team when his or her name is not yet known or when the member has not yet been selected. It is also used as a specimen name in other circumstances, such as on a form, to show how it should be completed. [from 'another']

A to Z /,ei tə 'zed/ (daily life) A general title for a street directory of a town or city, especially one of London.

AA /,ei 'ei/ see *Alcoholics Anonymous* (charities)

AA /,ei 'ei/, the (*Automobile Association, the*) (transport) One of the two leading British clubs for motorists, which offers its members practical advice and assistance, legal aid and a range of specialized services. Compare RAC.

Abdication /,æbdɪ'keɪʃn/, the (history) The formal giving up of the throne in 1936 by King Edward VIII, so that he could marry an American divorcee, Mrs Wallis Simpson.

Aberdeen Angus /,æbədi:n 'æŋgəs/ (animal world) A breed of black, hornless, beef cattle, originally reared in the Scottish counties of Aberdeen and Angus.

Aberdonian /,æbə'dəʊniən/ (geography) Someone born or living in Aberdeen or the former county of Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

academic year /,ækədəmɪk 'jɪə(r)/ (education) The year beginning in October in universities and establishments of further education or higher education, and September in schools (see *school year*), and ending in late June or early July. The year, which is usually divided into three terms¹, ends with important examinations, such as the GCSE and A-level in schools or a first degree in a university.

academy /ə'kædəmɪ/ (education) The name of certain schools and colleges³, in particular some private secondary schools and

a number of *public schools*' in Scotland (eg, *Edinburgh Academy*).

Academy /ə'kædəmɪ/, **the** (arts) The short title of a famous academy, especially the *Royal Academy (of Arts)* or the *British Academy*.

Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields /ə'kædəmɪ əv snt ,mɑ:tɪn ɪn ðə 'fi:ldz/, **the** (arts) A leading *London* chamber orchestra, whose first concerts in the 1960s were held in the church of *St Martin-in-the-Fields*.

ACAS /'eɪkəs/ (**Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, the**) (work) An organization set up by the government in 1975 to provide mediation and arbitration as a means of avoiding or ending strikes or other industrial disputes. The Service also advises on industrial relations and encourages *collective bargaining*.

Access (card) /'ækses (kɑ:d)/ (finance) A major type of credit card issued by a group of banks including *Lloyds, Midland, National Westminster, the Clydesdale Bank* and the *Royal Bank of Scotland*. Compare *VISA (card)*.

accumulator /ə'kju:mjuleɪtə(r)/ (sport and leisure) A progressive bet in horse-racing, especially on four or more races, in which the bet and winnings on the first race are placed on the second, those of the second on the third, and so on, so that the *punter* finally either wins everything or loses everything. Compare *double*³.

Act (of Parliament) /ækt (əv 'pɑ:ləmənt)/ (law) A law that has been passed by the *House of Commons* and *House of Lords* and given the *royal assent*.

act of God /ækt əv 'gɒd/ (law) A legal term used for damage caused by a sudden natural force such as a flood, hail storm or landslide, and not by man.

Act of Supremacy /ækt əv su:'preməsi/, **the** (history) The Act of 1534 that declared the sovereign to be the secular head of the *Church of England*.

Act of Union /ækt əv 'ju:nɪən/, **the** (history) The Act of 1707 that declared the union of *England* and *Wales* and *Scotland* as a single kingdom under the name of *Great Britain*.

Adam (style) /'ædəm (ædəm 'stail)/ (style) An elegant, neo-classical style of architecture and furniture created by the two Scots brothers Robert and James Adam in the 18th century.

Admiral's Cup /ædmərəlz 'kʌp/, **the** (sport and leisure) The main prize for the biennial international yachting contest of four races (the *Fastnet*, the *Britannia Cup* and two others). It

is presented by the admiral who is the head of the Royal Ocean Racing Club, which established the prize in 1957.

Admiralty /'ædmərəlti/, **the** (1 defence 2 government) 1 The former name (to 1964) of the *Royal Navy department* of the Ministry of Defence. 2 The government building in *Whitehall, London*, where the Admiralty was and where now the headquarters of the *Civil Service* is.

Admiralty Arch /'ædmərəlti 'ɑ:tʃ/ (London) A triumphal arch at the east end of *The Mall, London*, built as a memorial to *Queen Victoria* and named after the *Admiralty*², next to which it stands.

adult education /'ædʌlt edʒu'keɪʃn/ (education) Any education or educational course taken by someone who has left school, whether with the aim of gaining a basic academic qualification, such as a GCSE grade, or simply for personal satisfaction and pleasure. Adult educational courses, which are fee-paying, are usually held in a school building or *community centre* at a time when people are free to attend, such as in the evening or at a *weekend*. The courses themselves, which are normally weekly and start in the autumn, range from the purely academic, such as mathematics or foreign languages, to the recreational, such as 'keep fit', calligraphy and gardening. Some courses are specially designed for *OAPs*. In other instances, adults are allowed to join normal *sixth form* classes at a *secondary school*, especially if they are studying for an *A-level* examination.

Advent /'ædvənt/ (religion) For Christians, the time of preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth at *Christmas*, lasting from the *Sunday* nearest 30 November (called *Advent Sunday*) to *Christmas*. [from the *advent* or coming of Christ]

Advertising Standards Authority /'ædvətaɪzɪŋ 'stændədʒ ɔ:θərəti/, **the** (ASA, **the**) (daily life) The independent (non-governmental) body that monitors professional standards of advertising in the interests of the public and of industry, in particular by means of the *British Code of Advertising Practice*. This Code aims to ensure that all advertisements are truthful, within the law, and morally decent (their slogan is 'legal, decent, honest and truthful'). Members of the public have the right to complain to the ASA about any specific advertisement, and the Authority may subsequently ask for the offending advertisement to be reworded or withdrawn altogether.

AEU /'eɪ i: 'ju:/, **the** (Amalgamated Engineering Union, **the**)

(work) A large trade union with members in the engineering industry, and regarded as usually having a left-wing leadership sympathetic to the aims of the *Labour Party*. It currently has about 815,000 members.

Age Concern /'eɪdʒ kən'sɜːn/ (charities) A charity organization that cares for the elderly. It was founded in 1940, and has nearly 1,000 local groups round the country working with volunteers to provide a range of services. These include day centres, lunch *clubs*, visits to the elderly in their homes, etc. A separate Age Concern organization cares for the elderly in *London*.

age of consent /'eɪdʒ əv kən'sent/, **the** (law) The minimum age, at present 16, at which a young person may legally have sexual intercourse.

age of discretion /'eɪdʒ əv dɪ'skreʃn/, **the** (law) The minimum age, at present 14, at which a young person is judged legally competent to manage his or her own affairs.

Aintree /'eɪntri:/ (sport and leisure) A horse-racing course near *Liverpool*, where the *Grand National* is run annually.

Air Miles /,eə 'maɪlz/ (transport) A promotional scheme operated by *British Airways*, whereby the purchase of goods or services from certain shops and companies gives the purchaser the right to travel free for a stated number of miles on a BA air route. For example, the purchase of a man's suit costing £100 or more from the chain store *Debenhams* gives 250 Air Miles, or over half the cost of the return flight from *London* to *Paris* (rated at 450 Air Miles). The Air Miles distance is an approximation (to a multiple of 50) of the true distance by air from *London*, so that a return flight to *Rome* counts as 1,800 Air Miles, to *New York* 6,800, and to *Hong Kong* 11,500.

Airedale (terrier) /'eədeɪl (,eədeɪl 'terɪə(r))/ (animal world) A large, rough-haired, tan-coloured breed of dog with black back and sides. [originally bred in the valley of the river *Aire*, *Yorkshire*]

Albert Hall /,ælbət 'hɔːl/, **the** (*London*) A large hall in *London*, with seating for 8,000, where the annual *Promenade Concerts* are held, as well as a number of other concerts, parades, meetings and ceremonial and sporting events. [in full, the *Royal Albert Hall*, built in 1867–71 and named in honour of Prince Albert, the husband of *Queen Victoria*]

Albert Memorial /,ælbət mə'mɔːrɪəl/, **the** (*London*) A large monument opposite the *Albert Hall*, *London*, and containing a

seated bronze figure of Prince Albert, to whom it was built as a national memorial in 1863–76.

Alcoholics Anonymous /ælkə'hɒlɪks ə'nonɪməs/ (AA) (charities) A voluntary organization founded in 1947 for people who need help in fighting alcoholism. It currently has over 35,000 members, and operates through more than 2,000 branches.

Aldeburgh Festival /ɔ:ldbrə 'festəvl/, the (arts) An annual music festival at Aldeburgh, Suffolk, where it was started in 1948 by the composer Benjamin Britten (1913–76), who lived in Aldeburgh.

alderman /ɔ:ldəmən/ (government) The title of a senior governor of the *City (of London)* and, before 1974, that of a senior member of a local council, elected by other *councillors*. Aldermen were not members of the *Greater London Council* from the time of the 1977 elections, and they have not been members of London *borough*² councils since 1978.

Aldermaston /ɔ:ldəmə:stən/ (defence) A village in Berkshire where the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment is, and one of the main places selected by *CND* for anti-nuclear demonstrations, especially the marches to and from *London* in 1958–63.

Alderney (cow) /ɔ:ldəni (ɔ:ldəni 'kau)/ (animal world) A breed of light brown dairy cow, originally from Alderney, *Channel Islands*.

A-level /'eɪ ,levl/ (Advanced level) (education) A higher-level examination, usually taken at the age of 17 or 18, two years after the *GCSE* examination. It is the standard for entrance to university and other *higher education*, and to many forms of professional training.

Alexandra Palace /æɪgza:ndrə 'pælis/ (London) A large building on a hill in *Alexandra Park*, north *London*, used mainly for exhibitions and concerts. It formerly housed the main television studios of the *BBC*. The Palace was badly damaged by fire in 1980 but has now been rebuilt. The outside has been restored to its original Victorian style (see *Victoriana*), while the inside is used for conferences and concerts. The reopening took place in 1988.

Alexandra Park /æɪgza:ndrə 'pɑ:k/ (sport and leisure) A park in north *London* containing *Alexandra Palace* and a well-known race-course. The park is currently being improved and part of it will be used for rare plants and for wild birds and animals.

All England Club /ɔ:l 'ɪŋɡlənd klʌb/, **the** (sport and leisure) A tennis club in Wimbledon, London, on whose courts the annual open lawn tennis championships are held. [full title: All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club]

Alliance Party (of Northern Ireland) /ə'laɪəns, pɑ:tɪ (ə'laɪəns pɑ:tɪ əv nɔ:ðən 'aɪələnd)/, **the** (politics) The Party was formed in 1970 as a reaction to the *Troubles*. It aims to break down divisions between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland and to unite both sections of the community by working for moderate policies.

allotment /ə'lɒtmənt/ (daily life) A small piece of land, often on the outskirts of a town, that is rented by a private individual (often from a *local authority*) who grows vegetables there. Usually several allotments are grouped together. They were started during the First World War.



allotment

Ally Pally /æli 'pæli/ (London) A nickname for *Alexandra Palace*.

almshouse /'ɑ:mzhaʊs/ (charities) A house provided by the church or a charitable organization for poor or elderly people. [from 'alms', donations made to the poor or elderly]

Alsatian /æl'seɪʃn/ (animal world) A large, wolf-like dog kept as a pet or for use as a guide dog or guard dog, or for police work. It is more correctly known as a German shepherd dog.

Amateur Athletics Association /æmətər æθ'letiks əsəʊsɪ'eɪʃn/, **the (AAA, the/three As, the)** (sport and leisure) The national governing body of men's amateur athletics in England,

founded in 1880. The corresponding organization for women is the Women's AAA, founded in 1922. ['amateur' as opposed to 'professional']

Amis, Kingsley /'eɪmɪs, 'kɪŋzli/ (people) Kingsley Amis (born 1922) is an established novelist who writes in an imaginative but original manner about the inner feelings and hidden worries of ordinary people. Some people compare him to Anthony Burgess, but his style is more straightforward, and his language generally easier to understand. His best-known novel is perhaps his first, 'Lucky Jim' (1954), whose hero, a lower middle class lecturer, was regarded as a typical anti-Establishment 'angry young man'. In 1986 Amis won the Booker prize with 'The Old Devils', a perceptive study of growing old, centring on a group of old friends in South Wales.

Amnesty International /æmˈnɛsti ɪntə'næʃnəl/ (charities) A human rights movement funded by members' fees and gifts of money. It was founded in Britain in 1961. It works to release people who have been imprisoned, in any country, for their beliefs, colour, language, ethnic origin or religion, provided that they have not used or advocated violence. Such prisoners are called 'prisoners of conscience'. The movement, which also campaigns against torture and capital punishment, has over 100,000 members today in more than 70 countries.

ancient monument /eɪnʃənt 'mɒnjumənt/ (history) A monument or other building officially listed as being of historic, architectural or archaeological interest and so protected by Act (of Parliament) from being damaged or destroyed.

Andy Capp /ændi 'kæp/ (media) A character in a strip cartoon by the artist Reg Smythe in the *Daily Mirror*. He represents, in humorously exaggerated form, a typical working class man, and has what are supposed to be the two main characteristics of the working man, that is, idleness and flippancy. These are usually shown in his treatment of his wife, Florrie, and his reaction to daily life. [from a pun on 'handicap', and with a reference to the flat cap¹ which many working men wear, and which Andy Capp himself wears]

Anfield Road /ænfɪ:ld 'rəʊd/ (sport and leisure) The home football ground in Liverpool of Liverpool Football Club [named after district there]

Anglesey /'æŋglsɪ/ (geography) A Welsh island in the Irish Sea, close to mainland Britain and joined to it by a rail bridge.

and a road bridge. It is a popular tourist centre and the town of Holyhead on Anglesey is one of the main departure points for sea crossings to *Ireland*.

Anglia TV /ˌæŋɡliə ti: 'vi:/ (media) One of the 15 television companies of the IBA, transmitting programmes to *East Anglia*.

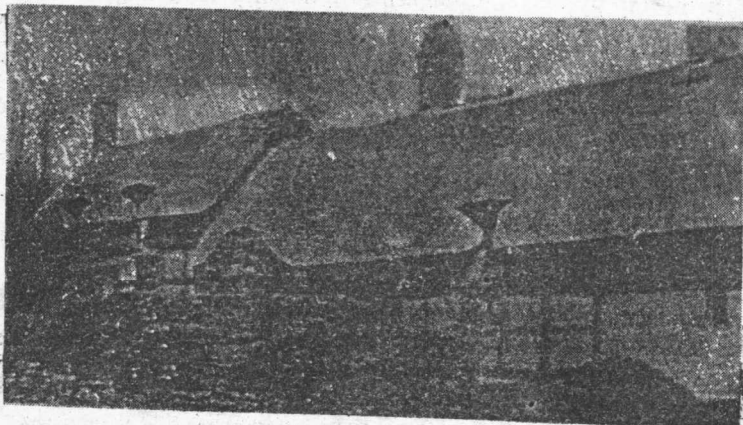
Anglican /'æŋɡlɪkən/ (religion) A member of the *Church of England*.

Anglo-Catholic /ˌæŋɡləʊ 'kæθəlik/ (religion) An *Anglican* who accepts much of the teaching of the *Roman Catholic Church*, without wishing to join it. He usually regards *church* ritual as important, and believes in the authority of the clergy. See *High Church*.

Anglo-Irish Agreement /ˌæŋɡləʊ ˌaɪərɪʃ ə'ɡri:mənt/, **the** (law) The agreement concluded in 1985 between the *United Kingdom* and the Republic of *Ireland* with the aim of securing peace and stability in *Northern Ireland*. See *Northern Ireland*, *Northern Ireland Assembly*.

Anglo-Saxon /ˌæŋɡləʊ 'sæksn/ (language) 1 The language of the Anglo-Saxons, the Germanic people who were dominant in *Britain* from the 5th century to the *Norman Conquest* in 1066. The language is also known as Old English. 2 Another term for 'plain' English, especially containing *four-letter words* and other normally taboo words and phrases.

Anne Hathaway's Cottage /æn ˌhæθəweɪz 'kɒtɪdʒ/ (history) The old house near *Stratford-upon-Avon* in which *Shakespeare's* wife, Anne Hathaway (1557-1623), was born. Today the house is a museum and a popular tourist attraction.



Anne Hathaway's Cottage

Anne, Princess /'æn, ,prɪnsɪs/ (royal family) Princess Anne (born 1950) is the only daughter of *Queen Elizabeth* and was given the title of *Princess Royal* in 1987. She has acquired a reputation for being arrogant, but in recent years has become quite popular with the general public. Princess Anne is widely known for her interest in horses and horse-racing, which she shares with her mother. She is now president of the *Save the Children Fund* and carries out many public engagements.

annual /'ænjʊəl/ (media) A book or magazine published once a year, usually just before *Christmas* (for the following year). The term often applies to a children's book that has the title of a comic, for example 'The *Dandy Annual* 1988'. Such a book contains longer versions of many of the comic's regular features.

another place /ə,nʌðə 'pleɪs/ (government) A parliamentary phrase used in the *House of Commons* to refer to the *House of Lords* and in the *House of Lords* to refer to the *House of Commons*.

Antonine Wall /,æntənain 'wɔ:l/, the (history) A Roman wall in southern *Scotland* running from the river *Forth* in the east to the river *Clyde* in the west. It was built in the reign of the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius (86-161 AD). Compare *Hadrian's Wall*.

Any Questions? /,eni 'kwɛstʃənz/ (media) A popular radio programme broadcast weekly since 1948 in which questions of topical interest are put by members of an audience to members of a specially selected panel, who answer them spontaneously. The programme is made from a different location in *Britain* each week. The panel members usually include noted public figures such as *MPs*, writers and broadcasters.

A1 /,eɪ 'wʌn/ (transport) 1 The classification of a ship in *Lloyd's Register* when it is in first class condition. 2 The *A-road* that runs from *London* to *Edinburgh*.

APEX /'eɪpeks/ (Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff, the) (work) A trade union to which belong a number of *civil servants* and government office workers, with a current membership of about 80,000.

Apprentice Boys' Parade /ə,prentɪs, bɔɪz pə'reɪd/, the (tradition) An annual parade of *Orangemen* in *Derry* (*Londonderry*) and other towns in *Northern Ireland*, on 12 August. The parade marks the defeat of the Catholics by the