

## Political life \* Monarchy \* Government.

**The style of democracy.** The British are said to have a high respect for the law. First, Britain is one of the very few European countries whose citizens do not have identity cards. Before the 1970s, when tourism to foreign countries became popular (and so the holding of passports became more common), most people in the country went through life without ever owning a document whose main purpose was to identify them. British people are not obliged to carry identification with them. You do not even have to have your driving licence with you in your car. If the police ask to see it, you have 24 hours to take it to them! Second, and on the other hand, Britain (unlike some other countries in western Europe) does not have a Freedom of Information Act. There is no law which obliges a government authority or agency to show you what information it has collected about you. In fact, it goes further than that. There is a law (called the Official Secrets Act) which obliges many government employees not to tell anyone about the details of their work. These two aspects are characteristic of the relationship in Britain between the individual and the state. To a large degree, the traditional assumption is that both should leave each other alone as much as possible. The duties of the individual towards the state are confined - to not breaking the law and paying taxes. There is no national service (military or otherwise); people are not obliged to vote at elections if they can't be bothered; people do not have to register their change of address with any government authority when they move house. Similarly, the government in Britain has a comparatively free hand. It would be correct to call the country 'a democracy' in the generally accepted sense of this word. But in Britain this democracy involves less participation by ordinary citizens in governing and lawmaking than it does in many other countries. There is no concept of these things being done 'by the people'. If the government wants to make an important change in the way that the country is run - to change, for example, the electoral system or the powers of the Prime Minister - it does not have to ask the people. It does not even have to have a special vote in Parliament with an especially high proportion of MPs in favour. It just needs to get Parliament to agree in the same way as for any new law. In Britain there has only been one countrywide referendum in British history (in 1975, on whether the country should stay in the European Community).

**The constitution.** Britain is a constitutional monarchy. That means it is a country governed by a king or queen who accepts the advice of a parliament. It is also a parliamentary democracy.

Britain is almost alone among modern states in that it does not have 'a constitution' at all. Of course, there are rules, regulations, principles and procedures for the running of the country — all the things that political scientists and legal experts study and which are known collectively as 'the constitution'. But there is no single written document which can be appealed to as the highest law of the land and the final arbiter in any matter of dispute. Nobody can refer to 'article 6' or 'the first amendment' or anything like that, because nothing like that exists. Instead, the principles and procedures by which the country is governed and from which people's rights are derived come from a number of different sources. They have been built up, bit by bit, over the centuries. Some of them are written down in laws agreed by Parliament, some of them have been spoken and then written down (judgements made in a court) and some of them have never been written down at all. For example, there is no written law in Britain that says anything about who can be the Prime Minister or what the powers of the Prime Minister are, even though he or she is probably the most powerful person in the country. Similarly, there is no single written document which asserts people's rights. Some rights which are commonly accepted in modern democracies (for example, the rights not to be discriminated against on the basis of sex or race) have been formally recognized by Parliament through legislation; but others (for example, the rights not to be discriminated against on the basis of religion or political views) have not. Nevertheless, it is understood that these latter rights are also part of the constitution.

**The style of politics.** Despite recent changes such as the televising of Parliament, political life in Britain is still influenced by the traditional British respect for privacy and love of secrecy. It is also comparatively informal. In both Parliament and government there is a tendency for important decisions to be taken, not at official public meetings, or even at prearranged private meetings, but at lunch, or over drinks, or in chance encounters in the corridors of power. It used to be said that the House of Commons was 'the most exclusive club in London'. And indeed, there are many features of Parliament which cause its members (MPs) to feel special and to feel a special sense of belonging with each other, even among those who have radically opposed political philosophies. First, constitutional theory says that Parliament has absolute control over its own affairs and is, in fact, the highest power in the land. Second, there are the ancient traditions of procedure. Many of these serve to remind MPs of a time when the main division in politics was not between this party and that party but rather between Parliament itself and the monarch. These features, together with the long years of political stability, have led to a genuine habit of co-operation among politicians of different parties. Another example is television advertising. By agreement, political parties are not allowed to buy time on television. Instead, each party is given a strict amount of time, with the two biggest parties getting exactly equal amounts. A very notable example is the system of 'pairing' of MPs.

► **The pairing system.** *The pairing system is an excellent example of the habit of co-operation among political parties in Britain. Under this system, an MP of one party is 'paired' with an MP of another party. When there is going to be a vote in the House of Commons, and the two MPs know that they would vote on opposite sides, neither of them bother to turn up for the vote. In this way, the difference in numbers between one side and the other is maintained, while the MPs are free to get on with other work. The system works very well. There is hardly ever any 'cheating'.*

### British political parties

#### CONSERVATIVE

History: developed from the group of MPs known as the Tories in the early nineteenth century (see chapter 2) and still often known informally by that name (especially in newspapers, because it takes up less space!).

Traditional outlook: right of centre; stands for hierarchical authority and minimal government interference in the economy; likes to reduce income tax; gives high priority to national defence and internal law and order.

Since 1979: aggressive reform of education, welfare, housing and many public services designed to increase consumer-choice and/or to introduce 'market economics' into their operation.

Organization: leader has relatively great degree of freedom to direct policy.  
Leader (May 2002): Iain Duncan Smith.  
Voters: the richer sections of society, plus a large minority of the working classes.  
Money: mostly donations from business people.

### **Labour**

History: formed at the beginning of the twentieth century from an alliance of trade unionists and intellectuals. First government in 1923.

Traditional outlook: left of centre; stands for equality, for the weaker people in society and for more government involvement in the economy; more concerned to provide full social services than to keep income tax low.

Since 1979: opposition to Conservative reforms, although has accepted many of these by now; recently, emphasis on community ethics and looser links with trade unions (see chapter 1 g).

Organization: in theory, policies have to be approved by annual conference; in practice, leader has more power than this implies.

Leader (May 2002): Tony Blair.

Voters: working class, plus a small middle-class intelligentsia.

Money: more than half from trade unions.

### **Liberal Democrats**

History: formed in the late 1980s from a union of the Liberals (who developed from the Whigs of the early nineteenth century) and the Social Democrats (a breakaway group of Labour politicians).

Policies: regarded as in the centre or slightly left of centre; has always been strongly in favour of the EU; places more emphasis on the environment than other parties; believes in giving greater powers to local government and in reform of the electoral system (see chapter 10).

Leader (May 2002): Charles Kennedy.

Voters: from all classes, but more from the middle class.

Money: private donations (much poorer than the big two).

**Nationalist parties.** Both Plaid Cymru (party of Wales' in the Welsh language) and the SNP (Scottish National Party) fight for devolution of governmental powers. Many of their members, especially in the SNP, are willing to consider total independence from the UK. Both parties have usually had a few MPs at Westminster in the last fifty years, but well under half of the total numbers of MPs from their respective countries.

**Parties in Northern Ireland.** Parties here normally represent either the Protestant or the Catholic communities (see chapter 4)! There is one large comparatively moderate party on each side (the Protestant Ulster Unionists and the Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party) and one or more other parties of more extreme views on each side (for example, the Protestant Democratic Unionists and the Catholic Sinn Féin). There is one party which asks for support from both communities - the Alliance party. It had not, by 2002, won any seats.

**Other parties.** There are numerous very small parties, such as the Green Party, which is supported by environmentalists. There is a small party which was formerly the Communist party, and a number of other left-wing parties, and also an extreme right-wing party which is fairly openly racist (by most definitions of that word). It was previously called the National Front but since the 1980s has been called the British National Party (BNP). At the time of writing, none of these parties had won a single seat in Parliament in the second half of the twentieth century. In 1993, however, the BNP briefly won a seat on a local council.

**The party system.** Britain is normally described as having a 'two-party system'. This is because, since 1945, one of the two big parties has, by itself, controlled the government, and members of these two parties have occupied more than 90% of all of the seats in the House of Commons. Moreover, this is not a peculiarly modern phenomenon. Basically the same situation existed throughout the 19th century, except that the Liberals, rather than Labour, were one of the two big parties. The Labour party was formed at the start of the 20th century and within about 30 years had replaced the Liberals in this role.

One reason for the existence of this situation is the electoral system. The other is the nature of the origin of British political parties. Britain is unlike most other countries in that its parties were first formed inside Parliament, and were only later extended to the public at large. During the 18th century Members of Parliament tended to divide themselves into two camps, those who usually supported the government of the time and those who usually did not. During the 19th century it gradually became the habit that the party which did not control the government presented itself as an alternative government. This idea of an alternative government has received legal recognition. The leader of the second biggest party in the House of Commons (or, more exactly, of the biggest party which is not in government) receives the title 'Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition' and even gets a salary to prove the importance of this role. He or she chooses a 'shadow cabinet', thereby presenting the image of a team ready to fill the shoes of the government at a moment's notice.

Although the Labour party was formed outside Parliament, and, as its name implies, did exist to promote the interests of a particular group (the working class), it soon fitted into the established framework. It is very difficult for smaller parties to challenge the dominance of the bigger ones. If any of them seem to have some good ideas, these ideas tend to be adopted by one of the 3 biggest parties, who all try to appeal to as large a section of the population as possible.

### **THE MONARCHY.**

**The appearance.** The position of the monarch in Britain is a perfect illustration of the contradictory nature of the constitution. From the evidence of written law only, the Queen has almost absolute power, and it all seems very undemocratic. The American constitution talks about 'government of the people for the people by the people'. There is no law in Britain which says anything like that.

Every autumn, at the state opening of Parliament, Elizabeth II, who became Queen in 1952, makes a speech. In it, she says what 'my government' intends to do in the coming year. And indeed, it is her government, not the people's. As far as the law is

concerned, she can choose anybody she likes to run the government for her. There are no restrictions on whom she picks as her Prime Minister. It does not have to be somebody who has been elected. The same is true for her choices of people to fill some hundred or so other ministerial positions. She can also dismiss them. Officially speaking, they are all 'servants of the Crown' (not servants of anything like 'the country' or 'the people'). She also appears to have great power over Parliament. It is she who summons a Parliament, and she who dissolves it before a general election. Nothing that Parliament has decided can become law until she has agreed to it.

Similarly, it is the Queen, and not any other figure of authority, who embodies the law in the courts. In the USA, when the police take someone to court to accuse them of a crime, the court records show that 'the people' have accused that person. In other countries it might be 'the state' that makes the accusation. But in Britain it is 'the Crown'. This is because of the legal authority of the monarch. And when an accused person is found guilty of a crime, he or she might be sent to one of 'Her Majesty's' prisons.

Other countries have 'citizens'. But in Britain people are legally described as 'subjects' - subjects of Her Majesty the Queen. Moreover, there is a principle of English law that the monarch can do nothing that is legally wrong. In other words, Queen Elizabeth is above the law.

#### ► *The house of Windsor*

*Windsor is the family name of the royal family. The press sometimes refers to its members as 'the Windsors'. Queen Elizabeth is only the fourth monarch with this name. This is not because a 'new' royal family took over the throne of Britain four reigns ago. It is because George V, Elizabeth's grandfather, changed the family name. It was Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, but during the First World War it was thought better for the king not to have a German - sounding name.*

**The reality.** In practice, of course, the reality is very different. In fact, the Queen cannot choose anyone she likes to be Prime Minister. She has to choose someone who has the support of the majority of MPs in the House of Commons (the elected chamber of the two Houses of Parliament). This is because the law says that 'her' government can only collect taxes with the agreement of the Commons, so if she did not choose such a person, the government would stop functioning. In practice the person she chooses is the leader of the strongest party in the House of Commons. Similarly, it is really the Prime Minister who decides who the other government ministers are going to be (although officially the Prime Minister simply 'advises' the monarch who to choose).

It is the same story with Parliament. Again, the Prime Minister will talk about 'requesting' a dissolution of Parliament when he or she wants to hold an election, but it would normally be impossible for the monarch to refuse this 'request'. Similarly, while, in theory, the Queen could refuse the royal assent to a bill passed by Parliament - and so stop it becoming law - no monarch has actually done so since the year 1708. Indeed, the royal assent is so automatic that the Queen doesn't even bother to give it in person. Somebody else signs the documents for her.

In reality the Queen has almost no power at all. When she opens Parliament each year the speech she makes has been written for her. She makes no secret of this fact. She very obviously reads out the script that has been prepared for her, word for word. If she strongly disagrees with one of the policies of the government, she might ask the government ministers to change the wording in the speech a little beforehand, but that is all. She cannot actually stop the government going ahead with any of its policies.

**The role of the monarch.** What, then, is the monarch's role? Many opinions are offered by political and legal experts. Three roles are often mentioned. **First**, the monarch is the personal embodiment of the government of the country. **Second**, it is argued that the monarch could act as a final check on a government that was becoming dictatorial. **Third**, the monarch has a very practical role to play. By being a figurehead and representing the country, Queen Elizabeth II can perform the ceremonial duties which heads of state often have to spend their time on.

## THE GOVERNMENT

### *Ministers and departments*

*Most heads of government departments have the title 'Secretary of State' (as in, for example, 'Secretary of State for the Environment'). The minister in charge of Britain's relations with the outside world is known to everybody as the 'Foreign Secretary'. The one in charge of law and order inside the country is the 'Home Secretary'. Their departments are called the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office respectively (the words 'exterior' and 'interior' are not used). The words 'secretary' and 'office' reflect the history of government in Britain, in which government departments were at one time part of the domestic arrangements of the monarch. Another important person is the 'Chancellor of the Exchequer', who is the head of the Treasury (in other words, a sort of Minister of Finance).*

Who governs Britain? When the media talk about 'the government' they usually mean one of two things. The term 'the government' can be used to refer to all of the politicians who have been appointed by the monarch (on the advice of the Prime Minister) to help run government departments (there are several politicians in each department) or to take on various other special responsibilities, such as managing the activities of Parliament. There are normally about a hundred members of the government' in this sense. Although there are various ranks, each with their own titles, members of the government are usually known as 'ministers'. All ministers come from the ranks of Parliament, most of them from the House of Commons. Unlike in the USA and in some other countries in Europe, it is rare for a person from outside Parliament to become a minister.

The other meaning of the term 'the government' is more limited. It refers only to the most powerful of these politicians, namely the Prime Minister and the other members of the cabinet. There are usually about twenty people in the cabinet (though there are no rules about this). Most of them are the heads of the government departments.

Partly as a result of the electoral system, Britain, unlike much of western Europe, normally has 'single-party government'. In other words, all members of the government belong to the same political party. Traditionally, British politicians have regarded coalition government (with several parties involved) as a bad idea. Since the formation of modern political parties in the 19th century, Britain has had a total of only 21 years of coalition governments (1915—1922 and 1931 —1945). Even when, for brief periods in the 1970s, no single party had a majority of seats in the House of Commons, no coalition was

formed. There was a 'minority government' instead. The habit of single-party government has helped to establish the tradition known as collective responsibility. That is, every member of the government, however junior, shares the responsibility for every policy made by the government. This is true even if, as is often the case, he or she did not play any part in making it. Of course, individual government members may hold different opinions, but they are expected to keep these private. By convention, no member of the government can criticize government policy in public. Any member who does so must resign.

**The cabinet.** The cabinet meets **once a week** and takes decisions about new policies, the implementation of existing policies and the running of the various government departments. Because all government members must be seen to agree, exactly who says what at these meetings is a closely guarded secret. Reports are made of the meetings and circulated to government departments. They summarize the topics discussed and the decisions taken, but they never refer to individuals or what they said. To help run the complicated machinery of a modern government, there is an organization called the cabinet office. It runs a busy communication network, keeping ministers in touch with each other and drawing up the agendas for cabinet meetings. It also does the same things for the many cabinet committees. These committees are appointed by the cabinet to look into various matters in more detail than the individual members of the cabinet have the time (or knowledge) for. Unlike members of 'the government' itself, the people on these committees are not necessarily politicians.

#### *The cabinet*

*The history of the cabinet is a good example of the tendency to secrecy in British politics. It started in the eighteenth century as an informal grouping of important ministers and officials of the royal household. It had no formal recognition. Officially speaking, the government was run by the Privy Council, a body of a hundred or more people (including those belonging to 'the cabinet'), directly responsible to the monarch (but not to each other). Over the years, the cabinet gradually took over effective power. The Privy Council is now a merely ceremonial organization with no power. Among others, it includes all the present ministers and the most important past ministers.*

*In the last hundred years, the cabinet has itself become more and more 'official' and publicly recognized. It has also grown in size, and so is now often too rigid and formal a body to take the real decisions. In the last fifty years, there have been unofficial 'inner cabinets' (comprising the Prime Minister and a few other important ministers). It is thought that it is here, and in cabinet committees, that much of the real decision-making takes place.*

**No. 10 Downing Street.** Here is an example of the traditional fiction that Prime Ministers are not especially important people. Their official residence does not have a special name. Nor, from the outside, does it look special. It is not even a detached house! Inside, though, it is much larger than it looks. The cabinet meets here and the cabinet office works here. The PM lives 'above the shop' on the top floor.

*The Chancellor of the Exchequer lives next door, at No. 11, and the Government Chief Whip (see chapter 10) at No. 12, so that the whole street is a lot more important than it appears. Still, there is something very domestic about this arrangement. After the government loses an election all three ministers have to throw out their rubbish and wait for the furniture vans to turn up, just like anybody else moving house. The PM also has an official country residence to the west of London, called 'Chequers'.*

**Prime Ministers since 1940** (Blue = Conservative Red = Labour)

**Winston Churchill (1940-45) Clement Attlee (1945-51) Winston Churchill (1951-55) Anthony Eden (1955-57) Harold Macmillan (1957-63) Alec Douglas-Home (1963-64) Harold Wilson (1964-70) Edward Heath (1970-74) Harold Wilson (1974-76) James Callaghan (1976-79) Margaret Thatcher (1979-91) John Major (1991-97) Tony Blair (1997—2007), James Brown (2007–2010), David Cameron (2010 - 2016), Theresa May (2016-)**

**Central and local government.** Some countries, such as the USA and Canada, are federal. They are made up of a number of states, each of which has its own government with its own powers to make laws and collect taxes. In these countries the central governments have powers only because the states have given them powers. In Britain it is the other way around. Local government authorities (generally known as 'councils') only have powers because the central government has given them powers. Indeed, they only exist because the central government allows them to exist. Several times in the last hundred years British governments have reorganized local government, abolishing some local councils and bringing new ones into existence.

The system of local government is very similar to the system of national government. There are elected representatives, called **councillors** (the equivalent of MPs). They meet in a council chamber in the Town Hall or County Hall (the equivalent of Parliament), where they make policy which is implemented by local government officers (the equivalent of civil servants).

Most British people have far more direct dealings with local government than they do with national government. Local councils traditionally manage nearly all public services. Taken together, they employ three times as many people as the national government does. In addition, there is no system in Britain whereby a national government official has responsibility for a particular geographical area. (There is no one like a 'prefect' or 'governor'). In practice, therefore, local councils have traditionally been fairly free from constant central interference in their day to day work.

#### **Counties, boroughs, parishes**

*Counties are the oldest divisions of the country in England and Wales. Most of them existed before the Norman conquest. They are still used today for local government purposes, although a few have been 'invented' more recently (e.g. Humberside) and others have no function in government but are still used for other purposes. One of these is Middlesex, which covers the western part of Greater London (letters are still addressed 'Middx.') and which is the name of a top-class cricket team. Many counties have 'shire' in their name (e.g. Hertfordshire, Hampshire, Leicestershire). 'Shires' is what the counties were originally called.*

*Boroughs were originally towns that had grown large and important enough to be given their own government, free of control by the county. These days, the name is used for local government purposes only in London, but many towns still proudly describe themselves as Royal Boroughs.*

*Parishes were originally villages centred on a local church. They became a unit of local government in the nineteenth century. Today they are the smallest unit of local government in England.*

*The name 'parish' is still used in the organization of the main Christian churches in England.*

Local councils are allowed to collect one kind of tax. This is a tax based on property. (All other kinds are collected by central government.) It used to be called '**rates**' and was paid only by those who owned property. Its amount varied according to the size and location of the property. In the early 1990s it was replaced by the 'community charge' (known as the '**poll tax**'). This charge was the same for everybody who lived in the area covered by a council. It was very unpopular and was quickly replaced by the '**council tax**', which is based on the estimated value of a property and the number of people living in it. Local councils are unable to raise enough money in this way for them to provide the services which central government has told them to provide. In addition, recent governments have imposed upper limits on the amount of council tax that councils can charge and now collect the taxes on business properties themselves (and then share the money out between local councils). As a result, well over half of a local council's income is now given to it by central government.

*The Greater London Council. The story of the Greater London Council (GLC) is an example of the struggle for power between central and local government. In the early 1980s Britain had a right-wing Conservative government. At a time when this government was unpopular, the left-wing Labour party in London won the local election and gained control of the GLC. The Labour-controlled GLC then introduced many measures which the national government did not like (for example, it reduced fares on London's buses and increased local taxes to pay for this). The government decided to abolish the GLC. Using its majority in the House of Commons, it was able to do this. The powers of the GLC were either given to the thirty-two boroughs of London, or to special committees. It was not until the year 2000 that a single governmental authority for the whole of London came into existence again and the city got its first ever directly- elected mayor.*

## ELECTIONS

The maximum life of the House of Commons has been restricted to five years since the Parliament Act 1911. The franchise (right to vote) became universal for men in the nineteenth century. Women's suffrage came in two stages (1918 and 1928).

For parliamentary elections the United Kingdom is divided into 650 constituencies of roughly equal population. The average constituency contains about 60,000 registered voters. Any British citizen from the age of 18 registered as an elector for the constituency elects a single member to the House of Commons.

Voting is on the same day (usually on Thursday) in all constituencies, and the voting stations are open from 7 in the morning till 9 at night. Each voter has only one vote, if he knows that he will be unable to vote, because he is ill or has moved away or must be away on business, he may apply in advance to be allowed to send his vote by post.

Voting is not compulsory. But in the autumn of each year every householder is obliged by law to enter on the register of electors the name of every resident who is entitled to vote. Much work is done to ensure that the register is complete and accurate. It's only possible to vote at the polling station appropriate to one's address.

As in Britain the political scene is dominated by the Conservatives and the Labour Party, in every constituency each of these parties has a local organization whose first task is to choose the candidate and which then helps him to conduct his local campaign. Any British subject can be nominated as a candidate, there is no need to live in the area, though peers, clergymen, lunatics and felons in prison are disqualified from sitting in the House of Commons. There are usually more than two candidates for each seat. The candidate who wins the most votes is elected. This practice is known as the majority electoral system.

## The system of law

**The police and the public.** There was a time when a supposedly typical British policeman could be found in every tourist brochure for Britain. His strange-looking helmet and the fact that he did not carry a gun made him a unique symbol for tourists - the image of the friendly British 'bobby'.

New Scotland Yard is the famous building which is the headquarters of its Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

**The system of justice.** The system of justice in England and Wales, in both civil and criminal cases, is (as it is in North America) an adversarial system. In criminal cases there is no such thing as an examining magistrate who tries to discover the real truth about what happened. In formal terms it is not the business of any court to find out 'the truth'. Its job is simply to decide 'yes' or 'no' to a particular proposition (in criminal cases, that a certain person is guilty of a certain crime) after it has heard arguments and evidence from both sides (in criminal cases these sides are known as the defence and the prosecution).

There are basically **2 kinds of court**. More than 90% of all cases are dealt with in magistrates' courts. Every town has one of these. In them, a panel of magistrates (usually three) passes judgement. In cases where they have decided somebody is guilty of a crime, they can also impose a punishment. This can be imprisonment for up to a year, or it can be a fine, although if it is a person's 'first offence' and the crime is not serious, they often impose no punishment at all.

Magistrates' courts are another example of the importance of amateurism in British public life. Magistrates, who are also known as Justices of the Peace (JPs), are not trained lawyers. They are just ordinary people of good reputation who have been appointed to the job by a local committee. They do not get a salary or a fee for their work (though they get paid expenses). Inevitably, they tend to come from the wealthier sections of society and, in times past, their prejudices were very obvious. They were especially harsh, for instance, on people found guilty of poaching (hunting animals on private land), even though these people sometimes had to poach in order to put food on their families' tables. In modern times, however, some care is taken to make sure that JPs (Justices of the Peace) are recruited from as broad a section of society as possible.



Even serious criminal cases are first heard in a magistrate's court. However, in these cases, the JPs only need to decide that there is a prima facie case against the accused (in other words, that it is possible that he or she may be guilty). They then refer the case to a higher court. In most cases this will be a crown court, where a professional lawyer acts as the judge and the decision regarding guilt or innocence is taken by a jury. Juries consist of **12** people selected at random from the list of voters. They do not get paid for their services and are obliged to perform this duty. In order for a verdict to be reached, there must be agreement among at least ten of them. If this does not happen, the judge has to declare a mistrial and the case must start all over again with a different jury. A convicted person may appeal to the Court of Criminal Appeal (generally known just as the Appeal Court) in London either to have the conviction quashed (i.e. the jury's previous verdict is overruled and they are pronounced 'not guilty') or to have the sentence (i.e. punishment) reduced. The highest court of all in Britain is the **House of Lords**.

The duty of the judge during a trial is to act as the referee while the prosecution and defence put their cases and question witnesses, and to decide what evidence is admissible and what is not (what can or can't be taken into account by the jury). It is also, of course, the judge's job to impose a punishment (known as 'pronouncing sentence') on those found guilty of crimes.

There is no death penalty in Britain, except for treason. It was abolished for all other offences in 1969. Although public opinion polls often show a majority in favour of its return, a majority of MPs has always been against it. For murderers, there is an obligatory life sentence. However, 'life' does not normally mean life.

**The legal profession.** There are two distinct kinds of lawyer in Britain. One of these is a solicitor. They handle most legal matters for their clients, including the drawing up of documents (such as wills, divorce papers and contracts), communicating with other parties, and presenting their clients' cases in magistrates' courts. However, only since 1994 have solicitors been allowed to present cases in higher courts. If the trial is to be heard in one of these, the solicitor normally hires the services of the other kind of lawyer - a barrister. The only function of barristers is to present cases in court.

Neither kind of lawyer needs a university qualification. The vast majority of barristers and most solicitors do in fact go to university, but they do not necessarily study law there. This arrangement is typically British.

It is exclusively from the ranks of barristers that judges are appointed. Once they have been appointed, it is almost impossible for them to be dismissed. The only way that this can be done is by a resolution of both Houses of Parliament, and this is something that has never happened. Moreover, their retiring age is later than in most other occupations. They also get very high salaries.

**Ministry of justice?** Actually there is no such thing in Britain. The things that such a ministry takes care of in other countries are shared between a number of authorities, in particular the Home Office, which administers prisons and supervises the police, and the office of the Lord Chancellor, which oversees the appointment of judges, magistrates and other legal officers.

**The law in Scotland.** Scotland has its own legal system, separate from the rest of the United Kingdom. Although it also uses an adversarial system of legal procedure, the basis of its law is closer to Roman and Dutch law. The names of several officials in Scotland are also different from those in England and Wales. A very noticeable feature is that there are three, not just two, possible verdicts. As well as 'guilty' and 'not guilty', a jury may reach a verdict of 'not proven', which means that the accused person cannot be punished but is not completely cleared of guilt either.

### **The system of education.**

The basic features of the British educational system are the same as they are anywhere else in Europe: full-time education is compulsory up to the middle teenage years; the academic year begins at the end of summer; compulsory education is free of charge, but parents may spend money on educating their children privately if they want to. There are **3 recognized stages**, with children moving from the first stage (primary) to the second stage (secondary) at around the age of 11 or 12. The third (tertiary) stage is 'further' education at university or college. However, there is quite a lot which distinguishes education in Britain from the way it works in other countries.

### **Public means private!**

Terminology to do with the school system in Britain can be confusing. Schools funded by the government, either directly or via local education authorities, are called 'state schools' and education provided in this way is known as 'state education'. This distinguishes it from 'private education', which comprises 'independent schools'. Some independent schools (a varying number, because the term is not exact) are known as 'public schools'.

The possibility of confusion is especially great because in the USA schools organized by the government are called 'public schools' and the education provided by the government is called the 'public school system'. In Britain today, about 8% of children are educated outside the state system.

### **The public school system**

Stereotypical public schools:

are for boys only from the age of thirteen onwards, most of whom attended a private 'prep' (= preparatory) school beforehand;

take fee-paying pupils (and some scholarship pupils who have won a place in a competitive entrance exam and whose parents do not pay);

are boarding schools (the boys live there during term-time);

are divided into 'houses', each 'house' being looked after by a 'housemaster';

make some of the senior boys 'prefects', which means that they have authority over the other boys and have their own servants (called 'fags'), who are appointed from amongst the youngest boys;

place great emphasis on team sports;

enforce their rules with the use of physical punishment;

have a reputation for a relatively great amount of homosexual activity;

are not at all luxurious or comfortable.

However, this traditional image no longer fits the facts. These days, there is not a single public school in the country in which all of the above features apply. There have been a fairly large number of girls' public schools for the last hundred years, and more recently a few schools have started to admit both boys and girls. Many schools admit day pupils as well as boarders, and some are day-schools only; prefects no longer have so much power or have been abolished altogether; fagging has disappeared; there is less emphasis on team sport and more on academic achievement; life for the pupils is more physically comfortable than it used to be. Among the most famous public schools are **Eton, Harrow, Rugby and Winchester**.

**Central government** does not prescribe a detailed programme of learning or determine what books and materials should be used. It says, in broad terms, what schoolchildren should learn, but it only offers occasional advice about how they should learn it. Nor does it dictate the exact hours of the school day, the exact dates of holidays or the exact age at which a child must start in full-time education. It does not manage an institution's finances either, it just decides how much money to give it. It does not itself set or supervise the marking of the exams which older teenagers do. In general, as many details as possible are left up to the individual institution or the **Local Education Authority (LEA)**, a branch of local government).

These days, most eleven-year-olds all go on to the same local school. These schools are known as **comprehensive schools**. The decision to make this change was in the hands of LEAs, so it did not happen at the same time all over the country. In fact, there are still one or two places where the old system is still in force.

Starting in the late 1980s, two major changes were introduced by the government. The first of these was the setting up of a national curriculum. For the first time in British education there is now a set of learning objectives for each year of compulsory school and all state schools are obliged to work towards these objectives. The national curriculum is being introduced gradually and will not be operating fully in all parts of Britain until the end of the 1990s. The other major change is that schools can now decide to 'opt out' of the control of the LEA and put themselves directly under the control of the appropriate government department. These 'grant-maintained' schools get their money directly from central government. This does not mean, however, that there is more central control. Provided they fulfil basic requirements, grant-maintained schools do not have to ask anybody else about how to spend their money.

One final point about the persistence of decentralization: there are really three, not one, national curricula. There is one for England and Wales, another for Scotland and another for Northern Ireland. The organization of subjects and the details of the learning objectives vary slightly from one to the other. There is even a difference between England and Wales. Only in the latter is the Welsh language part of the curriculum.

The introduction of the national curriculum is also intended to have an influence on the subject-matter of teaching. At the lower primary level, this means a greater emphasis on what are known as '**the three Rs**' (*Reading, Writing and Arithmetic*). At higher levels, it means a greater emphasis on science and technology. A consequence of the traditional British approach to education had been the habit of giving a relatively large amount of attention to the arts and humanities (which develop the well-rounded human being), and relatively little to science and technology (which develop the ability to do specific jobs). The prevailing belief at the time of writing is that Britain needs more scientists and technicians.

**School life.** There is no countrywide system of nursery (i.e. pre-primary) schools. In some areas primary schools have nursery schools attached to them, but in others there is no provision of this kind. Many children do not begin full-time attendance at school until they are about five and start primary school. Almost all schools are either primary or secondary only, the latter being generally larger.

Nearly all schools work a five-day week, with no half-day, and are closed on Saturdays. The day starts at or just before nine o'clock and finishes between three and four, or a bit later for older children. The lunch break usually lasts about an hour-and-a-quarter. Nearly two-thirds of pupils have lunch provided by the school. Parents pay for this, except for the 15% who are rated poor enough for it to be free. Other children either go home for lunch or take sandwiches.

**Public exams.** The organization of the exams which schoolchildren take from the age of about 15 onwards exemplifies both the lack of uniformity in British education and also the traditional 'hands-off' approach of British governments. First, these exams are not set by the government, but rather by independent examining boards. There are several of these. Everywhere except Scotland (which has its own single board), each school or LEA decides which board's exams its pupils take. Some schools even enter their pupils for the exams of more than one board.

Second, the boards publish a separate syllabus for each subject. There is no unified school-leaving exam or school-leaving certificate. Some boards offer a vast range of subjects. In practice, nearly all pupils do exams in English language, maths and a science subject, and most also do an exam in technology and one in a foreign language, usually French. Many students take exams in three or more additional subjects.

Third, the exams have nothing to do with school years as such. They are divorced from the school system. There is nothing to stop a sixty-five year-old doing a few of them for fun. In practice, of course, the vast majority of people who do these exams are school pupils, but formally it is individual people who enter for these exams, not pupils in a particular year of school.

**Education beyond sixteen.** At the age of sixteen people are free to leave school if they want to. With Britain's newfound enthusiasm for continuing education (and because there are not enough unskilled jobs to go round), far fewer sixteen-year-olds go straight out and look for a job than used to. About a third of them still take this option, however. Most do not find employment immediately and many take part in training schemes which involve on-the-job training combined with part-time college courses.

There has been a great increase in educational opportunities for people at this age or older in the last quarter of the twentieth century. About half of those who stay in full-time education will have to leave their school, either because it does not have a sixth form or because it does not teach the desired subjects, and go to a Sixth-form College, or College of Further Education. An increasing number do vocational training courses for particular jobs and careers. Recent governments have been keen to increase the availability of this type of course and its prestige (which used to be comparatively low). In England and Wales, for those who stay in education and study conventional academic subjects, there is more specialization than there is in

most other countries. Typically, a pupil spends a whole two years studying just three subjects, usually related ones, in preparation for taking A-level exams, though this is something else which might change in the near future.

### **Exams and qualifications:**

**GCSE** = General Certificate of Secondary Education. The exams taken by most fifteen- to sixteen- year-olds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Marks are given for each subject separately. The syllabuses and methods of examination of the various examining boards differ. However, there is a uniform system of marks, all being graded from A to G. Grades A, B and C are regarded as 'good' grades.

**SCE** = Scottish Certificate of Education. The Scottish equivalent of GCSE. These exams are set by the Scottish Examinations Board. Grades are awarded in numbers (1 = the best).

**A Levels** = Advanced Levels. Higher-level academic exams set by the same examining boards that set GCSE exams. They are taken mostly by people around the age of eighteen who wish to go on to higher education.

**SCE 'Highers'** = The Scottish equivalent of A-levels.

**GNVQ** = General National Vocational Qualification. Courses and exams in job-related subjects. They are divided into five levels, the lowest level being equivalent to GCSEs/SCEs and the third level to A-levels/'Highers'. Most commonly, GNVQ courses are studied at Colleges of Further Education, but more and more schools are also offering them.

**Degree:** A qualification from a university. (Other qualifications obtained after secondary education are usually called 'certificate' or 'diploma'). Students studying for a first degree are called undergraduates. When they have been awarded a degree, they are known as graduates. Most people get honours degrees, awarded in different classes. These are: Class I (known as 'a first') Class II,I ('a 2, 1' or 'an upper second') Class II,II ('a 2,2' or 'a lower second') Class III ('a third') A student who is below one of these gets a pass degree (i.e. not an honours degree).

**Bachelor's Degree:** The general name for a first degree, most commonly a BA (= Bachelor of Arts) or BSc (= Bachelor of Science).

**Master's Degree:** The general name for a second (postgraduate) degree, most commonly an MA or MSc. At Scottish universities, however, these titles are used for first degrees.

**Doctorate:** The highest academic qualification. This usually (but not everywhere) carries the title PhD (= Doctor of Philosophy). The time taken to complete a doctorate varies, but it is generally expected to involve three years of more-or-less full-time study.

However, the expansion of higher education is putting a strain on these characteristics. More students means more expense for the state. The government's response has been to abolish the student grant which, at one time, covered most of a student's expenses during the thirty-week teaching year. On top of that, most students have to pay fees. As a result, many more students cannot afford to live away from home. In 1975 it was estimated that 80% of all university students were non-local. This percentage is becoming lower and lower. In addition, more than a third of students now have part-time jobs, which means that they cannot spend so much time on their studies. A further result of increased numbers of students without a corresponding increase in budgets is that the student/staff ratio has been getting higher. All of these developments threaten to reduce the traditionally high quality of British university education. They also threaten to reduce its availability to students from low-income families.

### **Types of university**

There are no important official or legal distinctions between the various types of university in the country. But it is possible to discern a few broad categories.

**Oxbridge.** This name denotes the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, both founded in the medieval period. They are federations of semi- independent colleges, each college having its own staff, known as 'Fellows'. Most colleges have their own dining hall, library and chapel and contain enough accommodation for at least half of their students. The Fellows teach the college students, either one-to-one or in very small groups (known as 'tutorials' in Oxford and 'supervisions' in Cambridge). Oxbridge has the lowest student/staff ratio in Britain. Lectures and laboratory work are organized at university level. As well as the college libraries, there are the two university libraries, both of which are legally entitled to a free copy of every book published in Britain. Before 1970 all Oxbridge colleges were single-sex (mostly for men). Now, the majority admit both sexes.

**The old Scottish universities.** By 1600 Scotland boasted four universities. They were Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and St Andrews. The last of these resembles Oxbridge in many ways, while the other three are more like civic universities (see below) in that most of the students live at home or find their own rooms in town. At all of them the pattern of study is closer to the continental tradition than to the English one — there is less specialization than at Oxbridge.

**The early nineteenth-century English universities.** Durham University was founded in 1832. Its collegiate living arrangements are similar to Oxbridge, but academic matters are organized at university level. The University of London started in 1836 with just two colleges. Many more have joined since, scattered widely around the city, so that each college (most are non-residential) is almost a separate university. The central organization is responsible for little more than exams and the awarding of degrees.

**The older civic ('redbrick') universities.** During the nineteenth century various institutes of higher education, usually with a technical bias, sprang up in the new industrial towns and cities such as Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. Their buildings were of local material, often brick, in contrast to the stone of older universities (hence the name, 'redbrick'). They catered only for local people. At first, they prepared students for London University degrees, but later they were given the right to award their own degrees, and so became universities themselves. In the mid twentieth century they started to accept students from all over the country.

**The campus universities.** These are purpose-built institutions located in the countryside but close to towns. Examples are East Anglia, Lancaster, Sussex and Warwick. They have accommodation for most of their students on site and from their



beginning, mostly in the early 1960s, attracted students from all over the country. (Many were known as centres of student protest in the late 1960s and early 1970s.) They tend to emphasize relatively 'new' academic disciplines such as social sciences and to make greater use than other universities of teaching in small groups, often known as 'seminars'.

**The newer civic universities.** These were originally technical colleges set up by local authorities in the first half of the twentieth century. Their upgrading to university status took place in two waves. The first wave occurred in the mid 1960s, when ten of them (e.g. Aston in Birmingham, Salford near Manchester and Strathclyde in Glasgow) were promoted in this way. Then, in the early 1970s, another thirty became 'polytechnics', which meant that as well as continuing with their former courses, they were allowed to teach degree courses (the degrees being awarded by a national body). In the early 1990s most of these (and also some other colleges) became universities. Their most notable feature is flexibility with regard to studying arrangements, including 'sandwich' courses (i.e. studies interrupted by periods of time outside education). They are now all financed by central government.

## THE MEDIA

British people are reported to be the world's most dedicated home-video users. But this does not mean that they have given up reading. They are the world's third biggest newspaper buyers; only the Japanese and the Swedes buy more.

### The importance of the national press

Newspaper publication is dominated by the national press, which is an indication of the comparative weakness of regional identity in Britain (see chapter 4). Nearly 80% of all households buy a copy of one of the main national papers every day. There are more than eighty local and regional daily papers; but the total circulation of all of them together is much less than the combined circulation of the national 'dailies'. The only non-national papers with significant circulations are published in the evenings, when they do not compete with the national papers, which always appear in the mornings.

Most local papers do not appear on Sundays, so on that day the dominance of the national press is absolute. The 'Sunday papers' are so-called because that is the only day on which they appear. Some of them are sisters of a daily (published by the same company) but employing separate editors and journalists.

The morning newspaper is a British household institution; such an important one that, until the laws were relaxed in the early 1990s, newsagents were the only shops that were allowed to open on Sundays. People could not be expected to do without their newspapers for even one day, especially a day when there was more free time to read them. The Sunday papers sell slightly more copies than the national dailies and are thicker. Some of them have six or more sections making up a total of well over 200 pages. Another indication of the importance of the papers' is the morning 'paper round'. Most newsagents organize these, and more than half of the country's readers get their morning paper delivered to their door by a teenager who gets up at around half-past five every day in order to earn a bit of extra pocket money.

### The national papers and Scotland

There is an exception to the dominance of the national press throughout Britain. This is in Scotland, where one paper, the Sunday Post, sells well over a million copies. Another weekly, Scotland on Sunday, also has a large circulation. There are three other notable 'Scotland only' papers, but two of these, the Glasgow Herald and the Scotsman, are quality papers (see page 15-2) with small circulations and the other, the Daily Record, is actually the sister paper of the (London) Daily Mirror. The other national British papers are all sold in Scotland, although sometimes in special Scottish editions.

### The two types of national newspaper

Each of the national papers can be characterized as belonging to one of two distinct categories. The 'quality papers', or 'broadsheets', cater for the better educated readers. The 'popular papers', or 'tabloids', sell to a much larger readership. They contain far less print than the broadsheets and far more pictures. They use larger headlines and write in a simpler style of English. While the broadsheets devote much space to politics and other 'serious' news, the tabloids concentrate on 'human interest' stories, which often means sex and scandal!

However, the broadsheets do not completely ignore sex and scandal or any other aspect of public life. Both types of paper devote equal amounts of attention to sport. The difference between them is in the treatment of the topics they cover, and in which topics are given the most prominence.

The reason that the quality newspapers are called broadsheets and the popular ones tabloids is because they are different shapes. The broadsheets are twice as large as the tabloids. It is a mystery why, in Britain, reading intelligent papers should need highly-developed skills of paper-folding! But it certainly seems to be the rule. In 1989 a new paper was published, the Sunday Correspondent, advertising itself as the country's first 'quality tabloid'. It closed after one year.

## The history of Britain traced through the history of architecture

The Normans had an enormous influence on the development of both castles and churches in England. There had been large scale fortified settlements, known as burghs, and also fortified houses in Anglo-Saxon England, but the castle was a Norman importation, starting with the wooden Motte and Bailey castles. A motte is an enditched mound, usually artificial, which supported the strongpoint of the motte-and-bailey castle, overshadowing the bailey or enclosed courtyard below. It is predominantly rounded in plan, but square or rectangular mottes are known, especially in Scotland.

Numbers of castles during that period are uncertain, but it seems plausible that about 1,000 had been built by the reign of Henry I (1100-1135). They took many forms. Some were towers on mounds, surrounded by larger enclosures - often referred to as motte and bailey castles. Others were immense, most notably the huge palace-castles which William I built at Colchester and at London; the White Tower at London remains the typical child's image of a mediaeval fortification. These were the largest secular buildings in stone since the time of the Romans, over 6 centuries before. They were a celebration of William's triumph, but also a sign of his need to overawe the conquered.

Churches too were built in great numbers, and in great variety: Durham cathedral, the Premonstratensian house.

Middle age. Norman architecture was built on a vast scale from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards in England, Wales and Ireland in the form of castles, such as the White Tower (**PIC. White Tower**) at the heart of the Tower of London, which was begun by Bishop Gundulf in 1078 on the orders of William the Conqueror. The structure was completed in 1097, providing a colonial stronghold and a powerful symbol of Norman domination.

Throughout Britain and Ireland, simplicity and functionality prevailed in building style. Castles, such as Alnwick Castle, Caernarfon Castle and Stirling Castle served military purpose; **Haddon Hall**

- **The Tudors - stately and curious workmanship**

Queen's House and Banqueting House both are in London. In addition there was progress towards more stable and sophisticated houses for those lower down the social scale. Stone, and later brick, began to replace timber as the standard building material for the homes of farmers, tradespeople and artisans. In spite of this building boom, the Renaissance was generally slow to arrive in England, largely because Elizabeth's troublesome relations with Catholic Europe made the free exchange of ideas difficult.

**Among the brightest examples of Tudor's Palaces and Houses are: Hampton Court Palace, Longleat House, Hardwick Hall, Elizabethan houses.**

### **Styles of the 17th century - a world turned upside down**

#### **Buildings of the 17th century**

**The Queens House**, Greenwich, was begun for Queen Anne between 1616 and 1619 and completed for Henrietta Maria between 1630 and 1635. Greenwich Hospital was built from 1696 onwards. The Queens House is by Inigo Jones and the Hospital is largely Christopher Wren's.

**St Paul's Cathedral**, London, (1675-1710) is not only one of the most perfect expressions of the English Baroque, but also one of the greatest buildings anywhere in England. It was designed by Wren to replace the old cathedral which had been devastated during the Fire of London in **1666**.

Although built in the 18th century, the ideology behind **Blenheim Palace** in Oxfordshire lies firmly in the 17th century. Conceived as a monumental homage to the Duke of Marlborough, whose victory over Louis XIV's army at Blenheim in Bavaria gives the palace its name, it was designed by John Vanbrugh and is the nearest thing Britain has to a Versailles.

### **Styles of the 18th century - rules cramp the genius**

#### **Buildings of the 18th century**

Loosely modelled on Palladio's Villa Capra, Lord Burlington's **Chiswick House** was one of the first shots fired in the war waged by the Georgians against the Baroque. In case anyone was slow to appreciate where Burlington's architectural allegiances lay, he had Michael Rysbrack design two statues to flank the entrance stair with Palladio on the left, and his earliest English disciple Inigo Jones on the right.

**Kedleston Hall**, Derbyshire (1758-77), is a high point of British neo-classicism. The Palladian layout had already been established when the up-and-coming Scottish architect Robert Adam was asked to take over the project in 1760 by the owner, Sir Nathaniel Curzon. The austere, delicate interiors, with their remarkably unified decoration, show Adam at the height of his powers. Kedleston, the Glory of Derbyshire, was one of the most consistently praised of all Georgian houses.

### **Victorian times - Merry England**

The huge glass-and-iron Crystal Palace designed by Joseph Paxton to house the Great Exhibition of 1851, shows another strand to 19th century architecture - one which embraced new industrial processes. But it wasn't long before even this confidence in progress came to be regarded with suspicion. Mass production resulted in buildings and furnishings that were too perfect, as the individual craftsman no longer had a major role in their creation. Railing against the dehumanising effects of industrialisation, reformers like John Ruskin and William Morris made a concerted effort to return to hand-crafted, pre-industrial manufacturing techniques. Morris's influence grew from the production of furniture and textiles, until by the 1880s a generation of principled young architects was following his call for good, honest construction.

#### **Victorian buildings**

**Houses of Parliament** (Charles Barry and A.W.N. Pugin, 1840-60) replaced the building destroyed by fire in 1834.

With its quiet, unassuming love for the vernacular of Kent and Sussex, and its rejection of Victorian pomposity, Philip Webb's **Red House** is the building which started the Arts and Crafts movement. It was originally designed for newly-weds William and Janey Morris.

**Castell Coch**, near Cardiff (1872-79), is a piece of inspired lunacy by William Burges, best known for his restoration of Cardiff Castle, an opium habit and the fact that he used to relax at home with a pet parrot perched on the shoulder of his hooded medieval robe. This reconstruction of a 13th century chieftain's stronghold - right down to the working portcullis - is scholarly, at least as far as the exterior is concerned. The interior is downright weird, combining High Victorian romanticism with Burges' own eclectic drawings from ancient British history, Moorish design and classical mythology.

Charles Rennie Mackintosh's **Glasgow School of Art** (1896-99, 1907-9) proves that there were a few dissenting voices raised against the Victorian trend to return to the past. Mackintosh was uncompromising in his rejection of historicism, and his buildings have more in common with the vertical geometry and sinuous curves of Art Nouveau work in France, Belgium and

Austria. But his decadent approach to design met with hostility in Britain and, a few years after the School of Art was completed in 1909, he gave up architecture.

### **Styles of the 20th century - conservatism and change**

#### **Buildings of the 20th century**

Cardiff's imposing **Civic Centre** is a vast complex including a City Hall and Law Courts by Lanchester & Richards, and the University College by W D Caröe. It was hailed as one of the most magnificent examples of civic planning in Britain but, in retrospect, its deeply conservative architecture also seems both arrogant and strangely out of touch with contemporary building in the rest of Europe.

**The De la Warr Pavilion, Sussex**, is a superb expression of all that is best about the Modern Movement. Commissioned by Lord De la Warr, mayor of Bexhill, and built between 1933 and 1936, it was an attempt to make Bexhill as attractive as exotic French and Italian resorts. It goes without saying that it failed, but the recent restoration of the Pavilion's clean, sweeping lines is a cause for national celebration.

**The Royal Festival Hall** is all that survives of the complex laid out on London's South Bank for the 1951 Festival of Britain. The festival buildings were important for the opportunity they afforded of presenting a showcase for good modern architecture and Martin's concert hall, while not exactly earth-shattering, is a timely reminder of what good festival architecture looks like.

