

# POINTS OF INTEREST IN GREAT BRITAIN

## STONEHENGE

is perhaps the most important and most interesting prehistoric monument in Britain. It is situated two miles from Amesbury on Salisbury plain. It was built about 1700 B.C. It consists of two incomplete circles of stones the purpose of which is not quite clear. It is believed that Stonehenge was a temple for sun worship and probably also a place of observation of the sun for the purpose of agriculture.

## OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

are the oldest English universities. Oxford was founded in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and Cambridge in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. All the other universities are much more modern. London University, for instance, was founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Oxford and Cambridge differ from all the other universities in Great Britain or on the Continent. They are, in fact, a collection of independent colleges.

“The University” is just a term used for the administrative body (*orgán*) which organizes lectures and examinations, gives degrees, etc. Each college (*kolej*) has its own character. The colleges are where the students live and they all have dinner together in big dining halls.

As far as the University of Oxford is concerned, it has 35 colleges today and 200 to 400 students live and work in each college. The Oxford University Library is one of the biggest libraries in the world. It is said to have about 4 million books in 4 buildings.

## STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

is known, as the birthplace of one of the greatest dramatists of the world – William Shakespeare. It is situated right in the heart of England. Every year millions of people come to see the city as well as Shrottery, a nearby village, with the famous Ann Hathaway's cottage. Ann was Shakespeare's wife, whom he married at 18, when she was 26 years old.

Tourists coming to Stratford want to see especially Henley Street, with the house where Shakespeare was born, the Grammar School where he is thought to have been educated, the remains of New Place, which was the best house in the town when Shakespeare bought it in 1597. Here he spent the last 6 years of his life. They also want to see The Church of the Holy Trinity - where Shakespeare was buried when he died in 1616.

Tourists also come to see the Shakespeare Memorial Buildings which consist of a theatre, a picture gallery and a museum. The city is also known for The Shakespeare Festival which lasts from April to October each year.

## GREENWICH

is a suburb of London and is situated on the Thames. Lots of people come to Greenwich to see the former observatory. The old building is well known all over the world because the meridian passing through it. This meridian was adopted as the universal meridian.

It is used for calculating the time in most parts of the world.

## **CASTLES WINDSOR, HAMPTON COURT**

Windsor is situated on the river Thames - not very far from London. It is a very old castle, founded under William the Conqueror. It is as old as the Tower of London. The castle has been a royal residence for nine hundred years.

Today it is the largest inhabited castle in the world. A large part of the castle is now open to the public. Visitors can see beautiful old furniture and many paintings by famous artists - including Hollar's engravings (*rytyny*).

St. George's Chapel is the burial place of many sovereigns and famous people.

## **HAMPTON, COURT**

is also situated on the Thames, not far from London. It is the most beautiful of all the royal palaces. In ancient times most English kings and queens lived at Hampton Court. When travelling to London, they went down the river in boats. There are always a lot of visitors at Hampton Court. A part of the palace, its courts and beautiful gardens are now open to the public. The palace also includes magnificent State rooms, which may be seen too, when the Queen is not present.

## **SOUTHWEST ENGLAND**

A lot could be said about Southwest England. It is in fact the least densely populated part of England. There are no large towns, and most of the old market villages have been little disturbed by modern life. Dartmoor is the largest area of unspoilt countryside left in southern England. Most of it lies in Dartmoor National park. There are hills, valleys, wild, little-visited moors and swamps there. Every visitor to England would like to see the moors, which are so often described in typical English detective stories. But there is also Plymouth there, which is the largest city in the West Country. It is a naval port with a fine harbour. Several times it played an important part (*role*) during the English history. The Elizabethan sailors set out from this port on their great voyages above all Sir Francis Drake, who circumnavigated the globe. The Pilgrim Fathers, too, sailed from Plymouth to America in the Mayflower in 1620 and founded Plymouth Colony on the coast of Massachusetts. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century James Cook departed from Plymouth on his three-year voyage round the world.

## **DOVER**

one of the most important passenger ports in the south of Britain. It is situated near the Strait of Dover, which is the narrowest part of The English Channel. The Strait separates the Continent from Great Britain. The English Channel at its narrowest spot between Dover and Calais in France is a stretch of water 35 km wide and only about 40m deep. It is very stormy. The crossing of the Channel is very often accompanied by seasickness. Most of the south coast consists of high cliffs. The chalk cliffs of Dover are the first place of Great Britain to be seen by foreign tourists coming to Great Britain by the Channel ferry (by boat). The cliffs are topped by Dover castle, which is a former Norman fortress built there to guard the entrance from the Continent. Dover is also well-known for the annual attempts to swim the Channel. It is not easy because of strong currents, which make it impossible to swim in a straight line so that the distance that must be swum is much greater than 35 km. Since the first successful attempt to swim the channel in 1875 there have been many successful swims including several successful nonstop two-way swims.

## **HASTINGS**

an ancient city associated with the Norman invasion and the Battle of Hastings on 14 October 1066 – the last successful attempt to invade Britain. The battle ended in the victory of William the Conqueror over the English King Harold who was killed in the battle. On the site of the battle, Battle Abbey was founded by William the Conqueror and an altar was erected on the exact spot where the English King Harold had been killed.

## **CANTERBURY**

an ancient city, 93 kilometers south-east of London, with the population of about 36,000. With more than 2,000 years of history and the site of Canterbury Cathedral (a marvellous piece of architecture of Late Gothic Style) has become the centre of Christianity in England. The Cathedral was the scene of the murder of St. Thomas Becket X in 1170 under the reign of Henry II. The murder itself marked the culmination of a long conflict between the Church and the State, in which Thomas Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury and the royal minister tried to defend the independence of the Church of the State. He was murdered by barons acting probably on Henry's orders. Three years later Becket was proclaimed a saint and pilgrimages were held to his tomb. They were popular especially in the Middle Ages and one of them is described in Geoffrey Chaucer's famous Canterbury Tales.

## **SCOTLAND**

### **LOCH NESS**

an attractive place for tourists. It is about forty kilometers long and over one kilometer wide and has an average depth of 120 m. It is fed by eight rivers and innumerable streams. Its water is dark as a consequence of the peaty (*rašelinový*) soil in the neighbourhood. Loch Ness never freezes and its temperature never rises above 6°C. Divers working with powerful lamps have been unable to see for more than three meters around them. The lake is especially famous and attractive for the legends about an unknown beast living in the lake.

A lot of sightings have been made, several of the eye-witnesses were trained observers but there is no evidence that the monster really exists. And the mystery continues...