

Содержание:

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Architecture

Many ancient standing stone monuments were erected during the prehistoric period; amongst the best known are Stonehenge, Devil's Arrows, Rudston Monolith and Castlerigg. With the introduction of Ancient Roman architecture there was a development of basilicas, baths, amphitheatres, triumphal arches, villas, Roman temples, Roman roads, Roman forts, stockades and aqueducts. It was the Romans who founded the first cities and towns such as London, Bath, York, Chester and St Albans. Perhaps the best-known example is Hadrian's Wall stretching right across northern England. Another well-preserved example is the Roman Baths at Bath, Somerset.

Early Medieval architecture's secular buildings were simple constructions mainly using timber with thatch for roofing. Ecclesiastical architecture ranged from a synthesis of Hiberno-Saxon monasticism, to Early Christian basilica and architecture characterised by pilaster-strips, blank arcading, baluster shafts and triangular headed openings. After the Norman conquest in 1066 various Castles in England were created so law lords could uphold their authority and in the north to protect from invasion. Some of the best-known medieval castles are the Tower of London, Warwick Castle, Durham Castle and Windsor Castle.

Throughout the Plantagenet era, an English Gothic architecture flourished, with prime examples including the medieval cathedrals such as Canterbury Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and York Minster. Expanding on the Norman base there was also castles, palaces, great houses, universities and parish churches. Medieval architecture was completed with the 16th-century Tudor style; the four-centred arch, now known as the Tudor arch, was a defining feature as were wattle and daub houses domestically. In the aftermath of the Renaissance a form of architecture echoing classical antiquity synthesised with Christianity appeared, the English Baroque style of architect Christopher Wren being particularly championed.

Georgian architecture followed in a more refined style, evoking a simple Palladian form; the Royal Crescent at Bath is one of the best examples of this. With the emergence of

romanticism during Victorian period, a Gothic Revival was launched. In addition to this, around the same time the Industrial Revolution paved the way for buildings such as The Crystal Palace. Since the 1930s various modernist forms have appeared whose reception is often controversial, though traditionalist resistance movements continue with support in influential places.

Folklore

English folklore developed over many centuries. Some of the characters and stories are present across England, but most belong to specific regions. Common folkloric beings include pixies, giants, elves, bogeymen, trolls, goblins and dwarves. While many legends and folk-customs are thought to be ancient, for instance the tales featuring Offa of Angel and Wayland the Smith, others date from after the Norman invasion; Robin Hood and his Merry Men of Sherwood and their battles with the Sheriff of Nottingham being, perhaps, the best known.

During the High Middle Ages tales originating from Brythonic traditions entered English folklore and developed into the Arthurian myth. These were derived from Anglo-Norman, Welsh and French sources, featuring King Arthur, Camelot, Excalibur, Merlin and the Knights of the Round Table such as Lancelot. These stories are most centrally brought together within Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*). Another early figure from British tradition, King Cole, may have been based on a real figure from Sub-Roman Britain. Many of the tales and pseudo-histories make up part of the wider Matter of Britain, a collection of shared British folklore.

Some folk figures are based on semi or actual historical people whose story has been passed down centuries; Lady Godiva for instance was said to have ridden naked on horseback through Coventry, Hereward the Wake was a heroic English figure resisting the Norman invasion, Herne the Hunter is an equestrian ghost associated with Windsor Forest and Great Park and Mother Shipton is the archetypal witch. On 5 November people make bonfires, set off fireworks and eat toffee apples in commemoration of the foiling of the Gunpowder Plot centred on Guy Fawkes. The chivalrous bandit, such as Dick Turpin, is a recurring character, while Blackbeard is the archetypal pirate. There are various national and regional folk activities, participated in to this day, such as Morris dancing, Maypole dancing, Rapper sword in the North East, Long Sword dance in Yorkshire, Mummers Plays, bottle-kicking in Leicestershire, and cheese-rolling at Cooper's Hill. There is no official national costume, but a few are well established such as the Pearly Kings and Queens

associated with cockneys, the Royal Guard, the Morris costume and Beefeaters.

Cuisine

Since the early modern period the food of England has historically been characterised by its simplicity of approach and a reliance on the high quality of natural produce. During the Middle Ages and through the Renaissance period, English cuisine enjoyed an excellent reputation, though a decline began during the Industrial Revolution with the move away from the land and increasing urbanisation of the populace. The cuisine of England has, however, recently undergone a revival, which has been recognised by food critics with some good ratings in Restaurant's best restaurant in the world charts. An early book of English recipes is the *Forme of Cury* from the royal court of Richard II.

Traditional examples of English food include the Sunday roast, featuring a roasted joint (usually beef, lamb, chicken or pork) served with assorted vegetables, Yorkshire pudding and gravy. Other prominent meals include fish and chips and the full English breakfast (generally consisting of bacon, sausages, grilled tomatoes, fried bread, black pudding, baked beans, mushrooms and eggs). Various meat pies are consumed, such as steak and kidney pie, steak and ale pie, cottage pie, pork pie (usually eaten cold) and the Cornish pasty.

Sausages are commonly eaten, either as bangers and mash or toad in the hole.

Lancashire hotpot is a well-known stew originating in the northwest. Some of the more popular cheeses are Cheddar, Red Leicester, Wensleydale, Double Gloucester and Blue Stilton. Many Anglo-Indian hybrid dishes, curries, have been created, such as chicken tikka masala and balti. Traditional English dessert dishes include apple pie or other fruit pies; spotted dick – all generally served with custard; and, more recently, sticky toffee pudding. Sweet pastries include scones (either plain or containing dried fruit) served with jam or cream, dried fruit loaves, Eccles cakes and mince pies as well as a wide range of sweet or spiced biscuits.

Common non-alcoholic drinks include tea, the popularity of which was increased by Catherine of Braganza, and coffee; frequently consumed alcoholic drinks include wine, ciders and English beers, such as bitter, mild, stout and brown ale.