

United Kingdom



KEY FACTS

Population:	62,783,000 (2012)
GDP p.c. growth:	1.7% p.a. 1990–2012
UN HDI 2012:	world ranking 26
Official language:	English
Time:	GMT plus 0–1hr
Currency:	pound sterling (£)

Geography

Area:	243,305 sq km
Coastline:	12,400 km
Capital:	London

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) consists of a group of islands off the western coast of Europe. The largest, Great Britain, comprises three countries: England, Scotland and Wales. Ireland, to the west, consists of the UK's province of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. There are several offshore islands and island groups, the largest lying off Scotland.



The UK is a union of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Crown dependencies (the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) are largely self-governing with the UK responsible for their defence and international relations and are not part of the United Kingdom.

Time: GMT. The clock is advanced by one hour from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October.

Area: 243,305 sq km – England 130,395; Scotland 78,313; Wales 20,754; Northern Ireland 13,843.

Topography: The UK is just under 1,000 km long and just under 500 km across at the widest point. The country is low-lying in the east of England, with mountains in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Pennine chain forms a ridge down northern England. The Cambrian Mountains stretch across Wales, with Snowdon in the north-west rising to 1,085 metres. Northern Ireland has the Sperrin, Antrim and Mourne Mountains. Scotland has almost 300 peaks over 913 metres and Ben Nevis in the Grampian range rises to 1,343 metres. The Scottish Orkney and Shetland islands in the north and Hebrides in the north-west are mountainous and fiorded island chains. The UK is well-watered, with navigable rivers including the Thames, Severn, Trent, Mersey and Tyne. There are many lakes, especially in the north-west (the Lake District) and in Scotland and Northern Ireland (known respectively as lochs or loughs).

Climate: The climate is mild, cool-temperate and oceanic. Rainfall is generally heaviest between September and January. Air currents across the Atlantic are warmed by the Gulf Stream and make the rainfall unpredictable but also give the country a warmer climate than usual for its latitude. The northerly latitude gives long days in summer and long nights in winter.

Environment: The most significant environmental issues are: continuing reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with

Did you know?

Queen Elizabeth II is Head of the Commonwealth and head of state of 16 Commonwealth countries.

The UK hosts in London the HQ of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Foundation, Association of Commonwealth Universities, Commonwealth Business Council, Commonwealth Games Federation, Commonwealth Local Government Forum and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Scholarships and fellowships are awarded by the United Kingdom to citizens of other Commonwealth countries under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan.

Three Britons have won the overall Commonwealth Writers' Prize and four the Best First Book award.

Kyoto Protocol commitments; air pollution mainly by motor vehicles; and the need to recycle a progressively larger proportion of solid waste.

Vegetation: The original natural vegetation consisted largely of forest, but 76 per cent of the land area is now cultivated farmland or pasture. There is moorland in Yorkshire (northern England), the south-west and Scotland. Forest areas have doubled since 1919 and represent 12 per cent of the land area, having increased at 0.5 per cent p.a. 1990–2010. Fourteen national parks in England, Wales and Scotland, regional parks and various designated areas help to protect the environment. Arable land comprises 25 per cent of the total land area.

Wildlife: About 30,000 animal species are found in the UK. Indigenous wildlife originally included bears and wolves, but human settlement has long rendered these extinct. Surviving larger mammals include deer, otters, badgers and foxes; marshland areas support waders and other birds, and there are many migrants. Conservation schemes protect numerous species and important habitats. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 extended the list of protected species, and three conservation agencies (English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales and Scottish Natural Heritage) have schemes to recover and reintroduce threatened species. Five mammal species and four bird species are thought to be endangered (2012).

Main towns: London (capital, England, pop. 7.74m in 2010), Birmingham (England, 942,800), Glasgow (Scotland, 578,800), Liverpool (England, 452,800), Edinburgh (Scotland, 451,900), Leeds (England, 441,000), Sheffield (England, 415,200), Manchester (England, 396,300), Bristol (England, 373,000), Cardiff (Wales, 316,800), Leicester (England, 296,600), Bradford (England, 279,000), Coventry (England, 267,800), Kingston upon Hull (England, 265,600), Belfast (Northern Ireland, 258,700), Plymouth (England, 253,200), Stoke-on-Trent (England, 249,100), Derby (England, 247,500), Wolverhampton (England, 246,100), Nottingham (England, 240,400), Southampton (England, 236,900), Portsmouth (England, 203,600), Swansea (Wales, 173,900), Norwich (England, 171,200), Newcastle-upon-Tyne (England, 168,100), Aberdeen (Scotland, 165,600), Oxford (England, 146,700) and Cambridge (England, 117,000).

Transport: There are 419,630 km of roads, 100 per cent paved; motorways account for some 3,500 km. At least 70 per cent of households own one or more cars, 27 per cent owning two or more.

The world's first passenger steam railway (the Stockton and Darlington Railway) began operation in Britain in 1825. The system was nationalised in 1948 and privatisation was completed in 1997, though Railtrack, the company that managed the railway infrastructure, reverted to public ownership in 2001, as Network Rail. There are 31,471 km of railway.

The Channel Tunnel was opened to traffic in 1994. It operates a fast undersea train shuttle between Folkestone in England and Calais in France, carrying cars, freight and passengers, linking London with Paris and Brussels. There are underground railway systems in London ('the tube') and Glasgow. Liverpool has a metro-like system. Several light rail systems were built during the 1990s, including the Docklands Light Railway, Tyne and Wear Metro, Manchester Metrolink, South Yorkshire Supertram, the Midland Metro and the Croydon Tramlink.

There are about 100 commercially significant ports and several hundred small harbours. The main ports are London, Dover, Tees and Hartlepool, Grimsby and Immingham, Southampton, Liverpool and Felixstowe. Forth, Sullom Voe (Shetland) and Milford Haven mostly handle oil.

London's international airports are Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and City Airport. Other major international airports are Manchester, Birmingham and Glasgow. There are more than 150 civil aerodromes.

Society

KEY FACTS 2012

Population per sq km: 258

Life expectancy: 80 years

Net primary enrolment: 100% (2011)

Population: 62,783,000 (2012); England 83.6 per cent, Scotland 8.6 per cent, Wales 4.9 per cent, Northern Ireland 2.9 per cent (2001 census); 80 per cent of people live in urban areas and 26 per cent in urban agglomerations of more than one million people; growth 0.4 per cent p.a. 1990–2012; birth rate 12 per 1,000 people (16 in 1970); life expectancy 80 years (72 in 1970 and around 50 in 1901).

According to the 2001 census, the ethnic origins of the population are 92.1 per cent European; 4.0 per cent Asian (1.8 per cent Indian, 1.3 per cent Pakistani, 0.5 per cent Bangladeshi); two per cent Caribbean or African; and 0.4 per cent Chinese.

Language: English (official language); Welsh (an official language in Wales) is spoken by about 21 per cent of people in Wales (2001 census) and is the first language in much of rural north and west Wales; Scottish Gaelic is spoken in Scotland by some 70,000 people, many of whom live in the Hebrides. Many ethnic minorities speak the languages of their countries of origin.

Religion: The majority of adherents to a religion are Christians (71.8 per cent in the 2001 census, of a wide variety of denominations); independent churches and new religious movements increased in the late 20th century. There are substantial communities of Muslims (2.8 per cent), Hindus (1.0 per cent), Sikhs (0.6 per cent), Jews (0.5 per cent) and Buddhists (0.3 per cent). About one-quarter of the population does not profess any religion (22.9 per cent in the 2001 census).

Health: Public spending on health was eight per cent of GDP in 2011. The National Health Service (NHS) provides free health care. It has a workforce of around one million people and is paid for mainly through general taxation. Cancer, heart disease and stroke are the major causes of death, while accidents are the commonest cause of death under 30. Up to the end of 2006, 73,000 people were estimated to be living with HIV. Cigarette smoking is the largest preventable cause of illness and death. About 27 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women drink alcohol to an extent that may put their health at risk. There are 34 medical schools in the United Kingdom (2014). Infant mortality was four per 1,000 live births in 2012 (23 in 1960).

Education: Public spending on education was six per cent of GDP in 2010. There are 12 years of compulsory education starting at the age of five. Primary school comprises six years and secondary seven, with cycles of three and four years. The school year starts in September.

History

Stone circles like Avebury and Stonehenge are evidence of prehistoric cultures, especially notable in the milder south of England where ancient sites abound. Julius Caesar led token Roman expeditions into Britain in 55 and 54 BCE. Roman colonisation began 80 years later, lasting from CE 43 to about 409. Scotland resisted occupation for most of the period.

After the departure of the Romans, Angles, Saxons and Jutes from northern Europe settled, the Angles giving their name to England. Several large kingdoms emerged: Northumbria in the north, Mercia in the midlands and Wessex in the south. Vikings from Scandinavia made incursions from the eighth century and settled widely in the north and east. Ireland was dominated by the Vikings during the tenth century. In 1066 England was invaded and conquered by the Norman duke William of Normandy (France).

In 1169 Henry II of England authorised an invasion of Ireland, following which a large part of the country came under the control of Anglo-Norman magnates. Wales came under English rule during the 13th century, during the reign of Edward I; but the continuing strength of Welsh national feeling was shown by a rising at the beginning of the 15th century.

Christianity spread in the sixth to seventh centuries. Much of Britain shifted from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism in the 16th century. England retained an Episcopalian church (governed by bishops), while Scotland embraced a Presbyterian system.

In 1603, King James VI of Scotland succeeded to the English throne, so uniting the two Crowns. However, England and Scotland remained separate political entities during that century, apart from an enforced period of unification under Oliver Cromwell in the 1650s. In 1707 both countries agreed on a single parliament for Great Britain.

Several campaigns were waged against Irish insurgents during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603). The northern province of Ulster resisted English rule particularly strongly; following defeat of the rebels, Ulster was settled by immigrants from Scotland and England. Further risings were crushed by Oliver Cromwell. An uneasy peace prevailed throughout most of the 18th century. In 1782 the Irish Parliament was given legislative independence and in 1801 Ireland was joined to Great Britain by an Act of Union.

England has ousted its monarch on more than one occasion. During England's civil wars (1642–51), triggered by clashes between king and parliament, Charles I was executed and a republic briefly instated under Oliver and later Richard Cromwell (1649–60). In 1688 a bloodless 'revolution' took place, and James II was replaced by William and Mary.

Britain transformed itself from an agrarian to an industrial society from the 1760s to 1830s, the world's first industrial revolution. The country also developed a powerful navy and merchant fleet. It was the first nation to have a political anti-slavery movement,

which led the government to ban the slave trade in 1807 and slavery in 1833–34.

In the 19th century, wealthy and industrialised, Britain became the major world power with an empire that included colonies on every continent. However, the 20th century reversed much of this. Two world wars, failure to keep pace with industrial advance, a severe brain drain and the independence of Commonwealth countries reduced Britain's position on the world stage. But it remains a leading liberal democracy, with art and literature, intellectual freedoms and parliamentary traditions of lasting influence.

Through the 1960s and 70s, the government switched between the Labour and Conservative parties. The general election of 1979, following the 'winter of discontent' of continual strikes and industrial unrest, gave a large majority for the then relatively unknown Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher and began a long period of Conservative government.

Thatcher implemented a radical programme of economic liberalisation, privatisation, trade union reform and reduction of public expenditure. She won the two succeeding elections until she resigned in 1990 following a Tory leadership contest. She was replaced by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, John Major, who won the April 1992 elections, with a smaller but still substantial majority.

During this period, leadership of the opposition changed hands. Neil Kinnock, Labour Party leader since October 1983 who had driven through modernisation of the party, resigned after losing the 1992 elections, and was succeeded by John Smith, whose unexpected death in 1994 led to another leadership election, won by Tony Blair, who sought to modernise the party. Under the banner of 'New Labour', his reform of the party resulted in the jettisoning of traditional socialist policies.

Led by Blair, Labour won the May 1997 elections with the largest majority in its history – 418 seats, against 165 Conservatives, 46 Liberal Democrats and 30 others (mainly representing nationalist interests in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). Blair became Prime Minister. John Major resigned as Conservative leader and was replaced by the former Welsh Secretary, William Hague.

In the general election in June 2001 – 11 months before the full five-year term – in a record low turnout, the Labour Party won a decisive victory with 413 seats and 41 per cent of the votes; the Conservatives took 166 seats (32 per cent) and the Liberal Democrats 52 (18 per cent). Hague resigned as Conservative leader and was replaced by the former shadow defence secretary, Iain Duncan Smith. Then, in November 2003, following a no-confidence vote of Conservative MPs, he, in turn, was succeeded by shadow chancellor of the exchequer, Michael Howard.

Immediately after the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, the UK lent its total support to the US



Government in building a broad coalition to fight international terrorism, then in military operations in Afghanistan from October 2001 and Iraq, from invasion in March 2003 to withdrawal of the last British troops in May 2011.

Constitutional development

England has had a single crown since the tenth century and a parliament since the 13th century. The constitution evolved through the struggle for power between them. Early parliaments – the term is first recorded in 1236 – were called to meet the king's expenses of government. Those who were summoned by name in due course formed the House of Lords; others who represented communities became the House of Commons. Individual freedoms, such as protection against unlawful imprisonment, were protected by the Habeas Corpus Act of 1679. By the early 18th century real power was passing from the monarch to parliament, and parliament developed a two-party system. From 1832, the vote, initially held by the land-owning classes only, was gradually extended until universal male suffrage was achieved in 1918. In 1928 the vote was extended to women and in 1969 the minimum voting age was reduced from 21 to 18.

The modern Conservative Party evolved out of the 18th-century Tory party and the Liberal Democrats out of the Whig party. The Labour Party, representing working people, emerged at the end of the 19th century.

Referendums over the introduction of a certain level of self-government were held in September 1997. The Scottish referendum produced a strong majority for a separate parliament (74 per cent) with limited tax-raising powers (63 per cent majority) on a turnout of over 60 per cent. In Wales, the result was a narrow majority of 50.3 per cent, on a turnout of 50 per cent, for a Welsh Assembly.

The first elections to the new Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly were held on 6 May 1999. Labour emerged as the largest party in both legislatures, although without an overall majority in either. The elections were the first to be held in Great Britain under a system of proportional representation. In the 2007 elections the Scottish National Party (SNP) became the largest party in the Scottish Parliament. Then in 2011 it gained a majority and formed an SNP government, promising a referendum on Scottish independence from the United Kingdom during its term of office.

Northern Ireland

The deep divisions in Northern Irish society, dating from the time of the Irish independence struggle at the beginning of the 20th century, were exposed in an upsurge of violent conflict in the 1970s, which lasted into the 1990s. Most Protestants, who constitute the majority (50.6 per cent in the 1991 census), are Unionists who want to remain British; many Roman Catholics (38.4 per cent) are Nationalists or Republicans, who favour unity

with the Irish Republic. Thirty years of unrest led to some 3,500 killings and 36,000 injuries.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 recognised, for the first time, Ireland's right to have a consultative role on Northern Ireland. When in August 1994 the Irish Republican Army (IRA) announced a ceasefire, its political wing, Sinn Fein, joined the multiparty talks. A continuing issue in all subsequent talks was that of IRA disarmament. Mediator US Senator George Mitchell broke the initial deadlock by recommending in January 1996 that disarmament should proceed by stages in parallel with the talks. However, in February the IRA resumed hostilities, and when talks formally began in June 1996, Sinn Fein was not included until the ceasefire was resumed and talks with all major parties were under way in October 1997. This resulted in the Good Friday Agreement of 10 April 1998, which constituted an elected assembly, a power-sharing executive of all major parties with devolved powers and cross-border institutions.

In return for a share of political powers for the Roman Catholic minority and for an involvement in Northern affairs for the Irish, Ireland was to relinquish the goal – enshrined in its constitution – of a united Ireland unless and until it is proved by vote to be the wish of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. The Agreement was approved by the peoples of Ireland and Northern Ireland in May 1998 and the 108 members of the new assembly were elected in June 1998. However, formation of the cabinet was delayed by the IRA refusing to disarm; it was finally formed in December 1999 when the Ulster Unionists accepted a new deadline for the IRA to disarm in January 2000 after the government was formed.

A series of allegations of IRA paramilitary activity – culminating in the arrest of people accused of intelligence gathering inside the Northern Ireland Office – led in October 2002 to the resignation of Unionist ministers, and the suspension of the assembly and resumption of direct rule by the UK Government. Power-sharing under the Good Friday Agreement was resumed in May 2007, with Ian Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) as First Minister and Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein as Deputy First Minister, the Ulster Unionists having been overtaken by DUP in both UK elections of May 2005 and Northern Ireland elections of March 2007.

European relations

The UK joined the EU (then the European Economic Community) in January 1973. Some aspects of EU membership have been a source of contention within the country's economic, political and social spheres. Critical issues include possible adoption of the euro currency; the embracing of a policy enabling free movement of workers to the UK from EU member states, particularly those in the eastern parts of Europe; and the ratifying of EU treaties that bring about further economic and political integration – for instance, the Treaty of Lisbon of 2007.

After the age of 16, when it is no longer compulsory, most young people stay in education, either at school or at further education colleges, and may then go on to higher education institutions. According to the higher education admissions service, UCAS, there are more than 300 institutions providing higher education courses, including universities, colleges of higher education and further education colleges. The female–male ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 1.40:1 (2010). There is virtually no illiteracy among people aged 15–24.

The UK hosted the First Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Oxford in 1959 and the 15th Conference in Edinburgh in 2003. Commonwealth Education Ministers meet every three years to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest.

Media: There are many daily and Sunday newspapers, of which some ten dailies and ten Sunday papers are national. 'Quality' newspapers include *The Daily Telegraph* (established 1855), *Financial Times* (1888), *The Guardian* (1821), *The Independent* (1986), *The Scotsman* (1817 as a weekly, daily from 1855) and *The Times* (1785). Leading weeklies include *The Economist*, *The Observer* and *The Sunday Times*.

The BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) – which began daily radio broadcasting in 1922 – provides national, regional and community public radio and TV services, and the international World Service radio and World News TV channel. The BBC is funded by an annual licence fee payable by all households with a TV set. The first commercial TV channel, ITV, was launched in 1955 and commercial radio in the 1970s (although ship-based 'pirate' radio stations sprung up in the 1960s until they were outlawed).

The many other TV and radio broadcasters, including the state-owned TV channel, Channel 4 (launched in 1982), are funded by income from sales of advertising or by subscription, or by civil society organisations. All broadcasting is digital and the majority of stations and channels have only ever been digital. Analogue broadcasts were switched off region by region during 2007–12. Terrestrial and satellite broadcasting reaches most households. In most urban areas cable transmission is also available; and many radio and TV programmes can be replayed via the internet.

Some 99 per cent of households have TV sets (2007). There are 802 personal computers per 1,000 people (2006).

Communications: Country code 44; internet domain '.uk'. Coin- and card-operated phone booths are located throughout the country, and multimedia phone booths in larger cities. Mobile phone coverage is generally good. There are internet cafés in most urban areas, and growing numbers of coffee shops, bars and libraries offer wireless connections. Post offices are located in all towns and many villages.

There are 529 main telephone lines, 1,353 mobile phone subscriptions and 870 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

Public holidays: New Year's Day, May Day (first Monday in May), Spring Bank Holiday (last Monday in May), Summer Bank Holiday (last Monday in August, first Monday in August in Scotland only), Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Additionally in Scotland: Hogmanay (2 January); and in Northern Ireland: St Patrick's Day (17 March), and Battle of the Boyne Day (12 July). The Queen's Official Birthday (in June) is not a public holiday.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday and Easter Monday.

Economy

KEY FACTS 2012

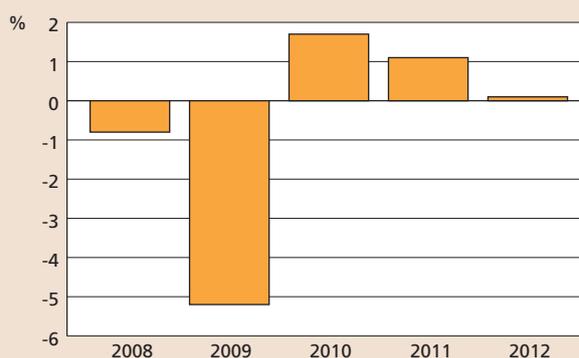
GNI:	US\$2,444.9bn
GNI p.c.:	US\$38,670
GDP growth:	-0.6% p.a. 2008–12
Inflation:	3.3% p.a. 2008–12

The UK is among the largest economies in the world (ranking sixth in 2012, in terms of GDP, after the USA, China, Japan, Germany and France). For three decades after World War II, it was in decline relative to other industrialised democracies, especially in the 1970s when there was very high inflation, ending in the recession of the early 1980s.

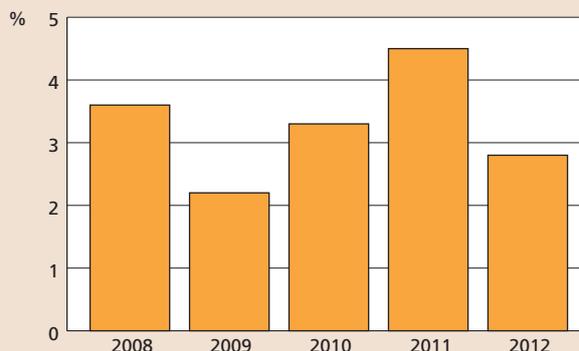
However, during the 1980s the Conservative government managed to arrest this decline and GDP growth averaged 3.0 per cent in that decade, one of the highest OECD rates, despite the slowdown at the end of the decade when the country was in recession again. During the 1990s growth averaged 2.5 per cent p.a. and exports remained strong.

Interest rate policy was surrendered by the Treasury to the Bank of England in 1997 soon after Labour came to power.

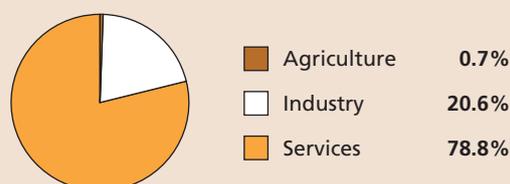
Real Growth in GDP



Inflation



GDP by Sector (2012)



Growth continued into the 2000s, despite the global slowdown in 2001–02, the very serious outbreak of foot and mouth disease in February 2001, and the impact of the terrorist attacks in the USA in September 2001 on air travel and tourism industries. GDP grew by 2.7 per cent p.a. over 2003–07, while inflation remained at no more than three per cent p.a.

From the second half of 2007 the country was increasingly affected by the global credit crunch, the resulting turmoil in financial markets throughout the world, high and volatile energy prices, and from 2008 the global economic downturn.

The then government and Bank of England moved during 2007–09 to prevent recession becoming depression. They initiated measures to stimulate the economy and to rescue financial institutions that were failing following the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage sector in the USA and consequent cessation of inter-bank lending.

The economy stalled during 2008, plunging into recession in the autumn, recording a contraction of 0.8 per cent for that year and a further 5.2 per cent in 2009. In 2010 the new government launched its five-year programme of public spending cuts aimed at eliminating the budget deficit; GDP growth was 1.7 per cent in 2010, 1.1 per cent in 2011, 0.3 per cent in 2012 and 1.9 per cent in 2013. Unemployment rose rapidly from 5.5 per cent in 2008 to 8.4 per cent in 2011, but then fell to 7.1 per cent by November 2013.

Constitution

Status: Monarchy under Queen Elizabeth II

Legislature: UK Parliament

The UK does not have a written constitution. Acts of Union integrated England with Wales (1536–42), with Scotland (1707) and with Ireland (1801). In 1921 southern Ireland became the Irish Free State (later Republic of Ireland). The constitution is made up of common law, statute law and conventions, and may be changed by a simple act of parliament without any special procedure or majority.

The UK is a constitutional monarchy (with Queen Elizabeth II as head of state) and a parliamentary democracy (with parliament as the legislative organ). Parliament is bicameral, with an upper chamber, the House of Lords (comprising 88 hereditary peers, 667 life peers and 24 bishops in January 2014), and a lower chamber, the House of Commons (with 650 elected members). The Prime Minister and cabinet lead the executive. Parliamentary elections are held at least every five years, with universal adult suffrage.

A major constitutional process to change the membership of the House of Lords was begun in 1998. Of some 700 hereditary peers, only 92 were allowed to keep their seats after November 1999, whereon a second stage of reform was due to lead to the final removal of all hereditary peers and a wide-ranging debate about possible new methods to select members of the upper chamber.

Local government is conducted through local authorities, with specified powers in education, social services, etc. Councils are directly elected by voters in the relevant area.

The governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are responsible for local government in their own regions. In England local government is devolved to two levels of authority: county/metropolitan area and district. In certain instances

government is delivered by councils at both levels with responsibilities divided between the two, and in others, by the county/metropolitan area or district but not by both.

Politics

Last elections: 6 May 2010

Next elections: 7 May 2015

Head of state: Queen Elizabeth II

Head of government: Prime Minister David Cameron

Ruling party: coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats

Women MPs: 22%

In the hard-fought May 2005 general election, the ruling Labour Party, led by Tony Blair, won fewer seats (355) than in 2001, and received a reduced share of the votes (35.2 per cent); while both the Conservatives (with 198 seats and 32.4 per cent) and the Liberal Democrats (with 62 seats and 22.0 per cent) made gains. At 61.8 per cent, voter turnout was only two per cent higher than in 2001 and this was mainly due to an increase in postal voting. In December 2005 shadow Education Minister David Cameron became Conservative Party leader. In June 2007 Prime Minister Blair was succeeded as Labour Party leader and Prime Minister by Gordon Brown, who was the only candidate.

In the May 2010 election, the Conservative Party won 306 of the 649 seats contested (voting in one constituency was postponed following the death of a candidate) and 36.1 per cent of votes, but failed to secure a parliamentary majority; the Labour Party took 258 seats (29.0 per cent) and the Liberal Democrats 57 (23.0 per cent). The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats formed a coalition with Cameron as Prime Minister and Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg as Deputy Prime Minister; it was the country's first full coalition government for 65 years.

International relations

United Kingdom is a member of the Council of Europe, European Union, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Traveller information

Immigration and customs: Passports must be valid for at least three months from the date of departure. Visas are required by most Commonwealth nationals. Prohibited imports include meat and milk, and meat and milk products, except those from EU and certain other European countries.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the left. Visitors can drive with a foreign driving licence. Seatbelts are compulsory and drink-driving carries severe penalties.

There is a comprehensive transport network throughout the country comprising air, rail, bus and ferry services. Licensed taxis are widely available in all urban areas and are metered. Many towns also have unlicensed taxis, or minicabs, but they are not allowed to pick up customers in the street and must be booked by phone.

Travel health: There are no prevalent diseases where appropriate precautionary measures are recommended.

There were 29,282,000 tourist arrivals in 2012.

Further information

UK Government: www.direct.gov.uk
 Electoral Commission: www.electoralcommission.org.uk
 UK Parliament: www.parliament.uk
 Office for National Statistics: www.statistics.gov.uk
 Bank of England: www.bankofengland.co.uk
 VisitBritain: www.visitbritain.com
 Association of Commonwealth Universities: www.acu.ac.uk
 Commonwealth Business Council: www.cbglobal.org
 Commonwealth Foundation: www.commonwealthfoundation.com
 Commonwealth Games Federation: www.thecgf.com
 Commonwealth Local Government Forum: www.clgf.org.uk
 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association: www.cpahq.org
 Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan: www.csfp-online.org
 Commonwealth Secretariat: www.thecommonwealth.org
 Commonwealth of Nations: www.commonwealthofnations.org/country/United_Kingdom

Media

Financial Times: www.ft.com
The Daily Telegraph: www.telegraph.co.uk
The Guardian: www.guardian.co.uk
The Independent: www.independent.co.uk
The Scotsman: thescotsman.scotsman.com
The Times: www.timesonline.co.uk
The Economist: www.economist.com
The Observer: observer.theguardian.com
The Sunday Times: www.thesundaytimes.co.uk
 BBC: www.bbc.co.uk
 BBC World Service: www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice
 Channel 4: www.channel4.com
 ITV: www.itv.com
 Press Association: www.pressassociation.com

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United Kingdom

United Kingdom: Overseas Territories



The UK's overseas territories are: Anguilla, Bermuda, British Antarctic Territory, British Indian Ocean Territory, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, Pitcairn (including Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands), St Helena and St Helena Dependencies (Ascension and Tristan da Cunha), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands.

The UK's overseas territories retain their connection with the UK by virtue of the wishes of their inhabitants and there is no intention either to delay independence for those territories that desire it or force it on those that do not. All the inhabited territories have assumed a very substantial measure of responsibility for the conduct of their own affairs.

Anguilla

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

Anguilla is the most northerly of the Leeward Islands in the Eastern Caribbean. It includes the island of Sombrero to the north-west, on which there is a lighthouse, and several islets and cays (such as Scrub Island, Dog Island, Prickly Pear Cays and Sandy Island).

Time: GMT minus 4hr

Area: Anguilla island 96 sq km; Sombrero 5 sq km.

Topography: Anguilla island is long and relatively narrow (5 km maximum), and mainly flat. The highest point, Crocus Hill, is 64 metres above sea level. There are about 30 white coral sand beaches. There are no rivers, but some salt ponds.

Climate: The tropical marine climate is generally pleasant and healthy; the hot season is July to October. Rainfall is erratic, averaging about 790 mm p.a., September to January being the wettest months. During June to November, the hurricane season, squalls and thunderstorms occur, and hurricanes are always a possibility.

Environment: The most significant environmental issue is that supplies of drinking water are insufficient to meet the growing demand, largely because of the poor distribution system.

Vegetation: A thin layer of soil covers the rock, with pockets of fertile soil in places. Much of the island is covered in scrub. Forest covers 60 per cent of the land area.

Main settlements: The Valley (capital, pop. 1,860 in 2010), North Side (2,270), The Quarter (1,580), Stoney Ground (1,470), George Hill (1,070), Island Harbour (1,070) and the Farrington.

Transport/Communications: A network of tarred, gravel and earth roads serve all parts of the island.

The main seaports are Sandy Ground at Road Bay on the north coast (cargo) and Blowing Point on the south coast for passenger services to Marigot in St Martin (25 minutes).

Wallblake Airport, the international airport, is situated in The Valley.

The international dialling code is 1 264. There are 425 main telephone lines, 1,847 mobile phone subscriptions and 592 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

Society

Population: 14,000 (2012); 100 per cent of people live in urban areas; population density 139 per sq km; life expectancy 81 years.

Language: English

Religion: Mainly Christians (Anglicans 29 per cent, Methodists 24 per cent, Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists and Roman Catholics); Hindu, Jewish and Muslim minorities (2001 census).

Health: Princess Alexandra Hospital is at Sandy Ground. Infant mortality is about three per 1,000 live births (2012).

Education: There are 13 years of compulsory education starting at age five. Net enrolment ratios are 92 per cent for primary (2006) and 81 per cent for secondary (2005). The pupil–teacher ratio for primary is 16:1 and for secondary 10:1 (2007). The school year starts in September.

Tertiary education is provided at the regional University of the West Indies, which has campuses in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Media: *The Anguillian* (weekly) and *The Light* (weekly). Radio Anguilla provides a public radio service.

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Labour Day (early May), Anguilla Day (last Friday in May), Queen's Official Birthday (Monday in June), August Monday (start of carnival week, the first week in August), August Thursday and Constitution Day (Thursday and Friday of the same week in early August), Separation Day (a Monday before Christmas), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday, Easter Monday and Whit Monday.

Economy

Currency: Eastern Caribbean dollar

GDP: US\$290m (2012)

Tourist arrivals: 65,000 (2012)

In the 1990s, the traditional industries of lobster fishing, farming, livestock rearing, salt production and boat building were

overshadowed by high-class tourism, related construction and a developing offshore finance sector.

Thus, following the US economic slowdown of 2000, when there was a sharp fall in tourists coming to Anguilla, the economy hardly grew at all in 2000–02. There was a recovery in 2003, and a surge of growth from 2004, which was sustained until 2008, when the world economic downturn caused another substantial fall in income from tourism. The economy contracted by some 24 per cent in 2009 and five per cent in 2010, and only began to grow again in 2011–12.

History

The island, formerly called by the Carib name *Malliouhana*, gained the Spanish name Anguilla because of its 'eel-like' shape. It was inhabited by Arawaks for several centuries before being colonised in 1650 by English settlers coming from St Kitts, after which it was administered by the English as part of the Leeward Islands colony. It has remained a British territory ever since.

In 1631 the Dutch built a fort on Anguilla, but they had to abandon it after a few years. In 1688 the island was invaded by a party of Irish, who settled and left their surnames to some of the modern inhabitants. There was an attempted French landing in 1745 near Crocus Bay (north coast). In 1796 French troops landed at Rendezvous Bay (south coast) and fought their way eastwards to Sandy Hill, where they were beaten back.

In 1825, against the wishes of the islanders, Anguilla became incorporated with St Kitts and Nevis. Politics on the island since then has been dominated by this issue. In 1872 an unsuccessful petition was sent to the British Colonial Office, asking for separate status and direct rule from Britain. In 1958 the islanders formally petitioned the Governor, again unsuccessfully, requesting a dissolution of the political and administrative association with St Kitts. In 1958–62 Anguilla was, along with St Kitts and Nevis, a unit of the short-lived Federation of the West Indies.

Following the dissolution of the Federation in 1962, Anguilla became part of the Associated State of St Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla. In May 1967, Anguillians refused to recognise any longer the authority of the new state and evicted police from St Kitts. A referendum in June 1967 endorsed the decision to separate from St Kitts. A senior UK official resided on the island for a year from January 1968, monitoring the situation and discussing possible solutions with the Anguilla Council.

In March 1969, after the UK parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, William Whitlock, had been ejected, UK security forces occupied Anguilla, and the UK Government appointed a commissioner. Following negotiations, agreement was reached, and the UK Parliament's Anguilla Act (July 1971) provided for a formal separation of Anguilla when St Kitts and Nevis became independent. In December 1980, Anguilla was formally separated and reverted to the status of a UK dependent territory (subsequently UK Overseas Territory).

In the general election of March 1999, the Anguilla United Party (AUP) and the Anguilla Democratic Party (ADP) each won two seats and the opposition Anguilla National Alliance (ANA) three seats. However, the AUP/ADP government's majority was overturned in May 1999, when Finance Minister and ADP leader Victor Banks resigned. Then in January 2000, Chief Minister Hubert Hughes called another election for March 2000 – four years early. In the election the opposition United Front coalition (ANA plus Victor

Banks) gained four seats, while the governing AUP took two, and ANA leader Osbourne Fleming became Chief Minister.

Constitution

The present constitution dates from April 1982, with an amendment in 1990. Under it, Anguilla is a self-governing dependency of the UK with a ministerial system of government. There is a Governor appointed by the British monarch, an executive council and a unicameral House of Assembly.

The Governor is responsible for external affairs, offshore finance, defence, internal security (including the police force), the public service and administration of the courts. The executive council is presided over by the Governor; it consists of the Chief Minister, three other elected ministers, Deputy Governor and Attorney-General.

The House of Assembly consists of seven elected members (directly elected for a five-year term), two *ex officio* members and two members whom the Governor nominates, following consultation with the Chief Minister.

In January 2006 the government appointed a Constitutional and Electoral Reform Commission to take forward the constitutional reform process.

Politics

Last elections: February 2010

Next elections: 2015

Head of state: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by the Governor

Chief Minister: Hubert Hughes

Ruling party: Anguilla United Movement

In the February 2005 general election, the Anguilla United Front – AUF; now a separate party comprising the former Anguilla National Alliance (ANA) and Anguilla Democratic Party – gained four seats, Anguilla Strategic Alliance took two seats and Anguilla United Movement (AUM) one. AUF leader Osbourne Fleming continued as Chief Minister.

In the election of February 2010 the AUM (with four seats and only 32.7 per cent of votes) narrowly defeated the ruling AUF (two seats and 39.4 per cent). The Anguilla Progressive Party received 14.7 per cent of votes and took one seat. AUM leader Hubert Hughes became Chief Minister and Finance Minister.

Bermuda

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

Bermuda lies in the North Atlantic, east of the USA, and roughly at the latitude of South Carolina. The islands and islets of The Bermudas lie along the southern rim of the summit of a submarine volcanic mountain.

Time: GMT minus 4hr. The clock is advanced by one hour from the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October.

Area: 53.3 sq km

Topography: Around 138 limestone islands and islets lie in the shape of a fishhook. The ten main islands form a close chain about 35 km long, interconnected by bridges and causeways. The main

island is about 23 km by 1.6 km. Coastlines have small bays, with beaches of fine pale sand, often of pink sand, surrounded by vivid blue-green waters. There are no rivers or lakes. The highest point of the main island is 79 metres above sea level.

Climate: Generally humid with average maximum (August) and minimum (February) temperatures of 32°C and 9°C. Average annual rainfall is 1,475 mm. Hurricanes can occur in the summer; the country had severe hurricanes in August and September 1995.

Vegetation: Inland there is an abundance of subtropical plants including various palm trees, prickly pear and lantana shrubs; there are also many introduced flowering trees and bushes. Vegetables (cabbage, carrots, potatoes, beans), fruit (tomatoes, bananas, citrus) and flowers (especially lilies) on cultivated land. Forest covers 20 per cent of the land area.

Wildlife: Lizards and green turtles; about ten species of bird; abundance of ants and mosquitoes. A Bermuda Act of 1620 'against the killing of sea turtles' is thought to be the world's earliest piece of conservation legislation. Further legislation followed in the 17th to 19th centuries to protect flora and fauna including cedar trees, bait fish and birds.

Main towns: Hamilton (capital), Tucker's Town and Flatts Village on Great Bermuda; St George on St George's Island; Freeport on Ireland Island.

Transport/Communications: There are 225 km of public highways and 222 km of private roads. Bermuda's first four-lane highway opened at Crow Lane in 1992.

There are three ports (Hamilton, St George and Freeport); Hamilton handles the main passenger and cargo traffic.

Bermuda International Airport (formerly called Kindley Field) is 15 km from Hamilton. When the US air base was closed in 1995, the Bermuda Government took over management of the airport.

The international dialling code is 1 441. There are 1,058 main telephone lines, 1,395 mobile phone subscriptions and 913 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

Society

Population: 64,800 (2012); 100 per cent of people live in urban areas; population density 1,216 per sq km; life expectancy 81 years.

About 55 per cent of Bermudians are of African descent; most others are of European or mixed descent (2000 census).

Language: English. There is a small Portuguese-speaking community.

Religion: Predominantly Christians (Anglicans 23 per cent, Roman Catholics 15 per cent, Methodists 11 per cent, and many other denominations; 2000 census).

Health: Facilities include King Edward VII Hospital (a general hospital), St Brendan's (for mental illnesses) and Agape House (for the terminally ill). Other services include child health clinics, school health services and clinics, a clinic for sexually transmitted diseases, family planning services, dental services for children, a physical abuse centre and a hostel for alcoholics. Infant mortality is about two per 1,000 live births (2012).

Education: There are 12 years of compulsory education starting at age five. The net enrolment rate at primary school level is 85 per

cent (2011). The pupil–teacher ratio for primary is 8:1 and for secondary 6:1 (2006). The school year starts in September.

Bermuda College provides post-secondary vocational courses and an associate degree programme. Adult literacy is more than 95 per cent.

Media: *The Royal Gazette* (daily) and *Bermuda Sun* (bi-weekly). All TV and radio broadcasters are privately owned.

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Bermuda Day (24 May), National Heroes' Day (a Monday in June), Emancipation Day and Somers Day (consecutive Thursday and Friday in July/August), Labour Day (first Monday in September), Remembrance Day (11 November), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday.

Economy

Currency: Bermuda dollar (Bda\$), at par with US\$

GDP: US\$6.8bn (2012)

Tourist arrivals: 232,000 (2012)

Bermuda's economy rested principally on tourism and earnings from the US and UK military bases. Closure of these bases coincided with a slowdown in tourism due to recession in the USA and the early 1990s were difficult years for the economy.

Since then, tourism, financial services and e-commerce have been successfully developed, and the country enjoys one of the world's highest per capita incomes. The Bermuda Land Development Company was established to plan, finance, market and develop the 324 hectares of land vacated by the US military.

In 2000 the economy slowed to a halt, as the impact of the US slowdown was felt on tourism. It then picked up in 2002 and was buoyant until 2008, when the collapse of international financial markets and the world economic downturn hit both financial services and tourism. GDP growth stalled, plunging from 3.0 per cent in 2008 to a contraction of 5.0 per cent in 2009, and continuing in recession in 2010–12.

History

The Bermudas were visited about 1503 by a Spanish sailor, Juan de Bermudez, and had the name *La Bermuda* by 1510. Ferdinand d'Orviedo (also Spanish) sighted them in 1515. They remained uninhabited until 1609, when the *Sea Venture*, on its way to Virginia with British settlers, and commanded by Sir George Somers, was wrecked on one of the reefs. News spread of the beauty and fertility of the islands, and in 1612 King James I extended the charter of the Virginia Company to include them. The first emigrants went out in that year; others followed, and enslaved Africans were brought in with them. The islands, known as Somers Islands, were bought about 1615 by some entrepreneurs from the City of London. In 1684 the company's charter was annulled, and government passed to the Crown.

By the 19th century, the country had a valuable vegetable export industry, and, around the middle of the century, tourists began arriving (then, as now, mostly from North America).

During World War II, a US military base was established at Kindley Field; in 1948, under a treaty between the USA and the UK, its airport was opened to civilian aircraft. The base was closed down, and its personnel repatriated, in 1995.

The Parliamentary Franchise Act 1963 enfranchised everyone over the age of 25, and gave property owners the privilege of two votes. The Progressive Labour Party (PLP), Bermuda's first political party, was formed shortly before the 1963 elections, but the majority of seats went to independent candidates.

In the following year, most of the independent members formed the United Bermuda Party (UBP) with policies favouring strong professional and business development. A new constitution providing for self-government came into force in 1968, following a general election which was won by the UBP. The UBP was returned to power in seven subsequent elections.

A referendum on independence was held in August 1995, just after the country had suffered damage from Hurricane Felix. Voter turnout was low (59 per cent of the 38,000 registered voters). The vote was decisive – 24 per cent for independence and 73 per cent against.

Premier Sir John Swan, who had campaigned for independence, and had said he would resign if the vote went against him, stood down within days of the referendum and was succeeded as leader of the UBP and Premier by Dr David Saul, previously Finance Minister. In March 1997 Saul resigned from office and was replaced by Bermuda's first woman Premier, Pamela Gordon.

In November 1998 the PLP, under the leadership of Jennifer Smith, achieved its first general election victory, winning 26 of the 40 seats and receiving 54 per cent of the votes. The UBP, which had been in power for 30 years, won 14 seats; three cabinet ministers lost their seats. The National Liberal Party fought four seats and gained none, and together with the four independent candidates, took less than two per cent of the votes.

Constitution

Bermuda is a UK overseas territory with a substantial measure of self-government. Its bicameral legislature is responsible for most internal affairs. There is an upper house of 11 members appointed by the Governor (three at his/her discretion, five on the Premier's advice, three on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition) and (following a constitutional change enacted in 2003) a 36-member House of Assembly, elected in 36 constituencies by universal adult suffrage for a five-year term.

The Governor is responsible for external affairs, defence and internal security. Appointed by and representing the UK monarch, the Governor in turn appoints the majority leader in the House of Assembly as Premier. The Premier appoints the cabinet, which must include at least six other members of the legislature.

Politics

Last elections: 17 December 2012

Next elections: 2017/2018

Head of state: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by the Governor

Head of government: Premier Michael Dunkley

Ruling party: One Bermuda Alliance

In July 2003, the Progressive Labour Party (PLP), led by Jennifer Smith, defeated the United Bermuda Party (UBP) in a general election, winning 22 of the 36 seats, and was returned to power. The election was followed by a period of in-fighting within the PLP culminating on 28 July with Smith tendering her resignation as Premier and party leader. William Alexander Scott became the new PLP leader and was sworn in as the new Premier on 29 July.

In a leadership election at the PLP conference in October 2006, Dr Ewart Brown defeated Scott and was sworn in as Premier a few days later. Brown was returned as Premier in the December 2007 elections when the ruling PLP once again took 22 seats. UBP – led by Wayne Fubert – took the remaining 14.

In October 2010 Brown resigned as Premier and leader of the PLP, and Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Paula Cox was elected by the party to succeed him. In her new cabinet she retained the finance portfolio.

The December 2012 election was won by the opposition One Bermuda Alliance (with 19 seats and 51.7 per cent of votes cast) and party leader Craig Cannonier was sworn in as Premier. The PLP, which had been in power since November 1998, secured the remaining 17 seats (46.1 per cent); the incumbent Premier, Paula Cox, lost her seat and subsequently resigned as leader of the party.

Premier Cannonier resigned on 19 May 2014 and Deputy Premier Michael Dunkley was sworn in to succeed him the following day.

British Antarctic Territory

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

The British Antarctic Territory consists of that segment of the Antarctic continent lying south of latitude 60°S and between longitudes 20° and 80°W, comprising the Antarctic Peninsula with all adjacent islands, the South Orkney and South Shetland Islands and the Weddell Sea, as well as the landmass extending to the South Pole.

Area: 1,709,400 sq km

Topography: The Antarctic Peninsula and the islands are mountainous (Mt Jackson 3,184 metres). The mountains, the tail of the Andes chain, are connected to South America by a submarine ridge (the Scotia arc), which includes the active volcanoes of the South Sandwich Islands. The South Orkneys and South Georgia are also peaks of this chain. Of the 0.4 per cent of the Antarctic continent which is ice-free, most is on the Antarctic Peninsula. No geological survey has been undertaken to establish whether commercially exploitable mineral resources exist in Antarctica. The Madrid Protocol (1991) bans all mineral resource activities on the continent. Scientists confirm that 180 million years ago, Antarctica was the centre of a southern supercontinent, 'Gondwana', which broke up to form Antarctica, South America, Africa, India and Australia. So it is possible that minerals found in the other continents also exist in Antarctica. There may also be hydrocarbons (oil and gas) on the Antarctic continental shelf.

Climate: The centre of the landmass is cold with average annual temperatures of –50°C to –60°C. It is also theoretically a desert with annual snowfall equivalent to 70 mm of rainfall. Nearer the coast, it is less cold (–10°C to –20°C) and receives more snow and some rain. Winds are moderate but there are locally strong katabatic winds where cold air flowing from the interior is channelled by the local topography.

Vegetation: Sparse and primitive, with only lichens and mosses able to survive in the interior. Near the coast, where land is snow-free in summer, there are a few stands of flowering plants such as Antarctic hairgrass and Antarctic pearlwort. Antarctica has not

always been a frozen continent. Seventy million years ago, some parts had a temperate climate, were forested and populated by the last dinosaurs. Scientists have found fossilised trees, ferns and other vegetation as well as the remains of ancient extinct animals.

Wildlife: The Antarctic Peninsula and islands are the most favoured breeding grounds for birds on the continent: seven species of penguin are resident in the area; petrels, cormorants, sheathbills, prions, skuas and terns breed there. Six species of seals live on and under the pack ice; they breed during the spring (September–November). The Weddell seal is the most southerly mammal, living under the sea ice on the coast all year round.

Settlements: Two British Antarctic Survey (BAS) research stations are manned the year round: Rothera on Adelaide Island, and Halley V on moving ice off the Caird Coast. There is a summer-only station at Signy in the South Orkney Islands.

Transport/Communications: Ships belonging to the British Antarctic Survey service the stations, and there is direct air support between the Falkland Islands and Rothera. The main stations are linked by satellite to the Survey headquarters in Cambridge, UK. Support is given to the British Antarctic Survey by the presence of the ice patrol vessel HMS *Endurance*, which is in Antarctic waters throughout the austral summer.

Society

Population: British Antarctic personnel number about 50 in winter, rising to more than 400 in summer. In addition to the British Antarctic Survey, the wintering bases of other Antarctic treaty parties are present in the British Antarctic Territory, with an estimated population varying from 450 in winter to 2,500 in summer. Cruiseships also bring tens of thousands of visitors each year to the British Antarctic Territory. The tourists stay three to five days on board ships in the area.

Economy

There is no economic activity. Scientific research and environmental monitoring are carried out. The Antarctic ozone hole was discovered by BAS scientists. Tourism is growing. The United Kingdom Antarctic Heritage Trust has a team at Port Lockroy each season. This historic site attracts tens of thousands of visitors a year.

History

The South Shetland Islands were discovered and taken possession of by Captain W Smith in 1819, the South Orkney Islands by Captain G Powell in 1821. The Antarctic Peninsula was discovered in 1820 by Edward Bransfield and taken possession of for Britain in 1832 by John Biscoe. Thereafter, explorers penetrated the Weddell Sea and, finally, the great landmass of the continent. Ernest Shackleton's ship, *Endurance*, was trapped in pack ice in the Weddell Sea for a year during 1915–16. Britain registered the first claim to Antarctic Territory by Letters Patent in 1908, a claim that had to be adjusted in 1917 as it included part of Argentina and Chilean Patagonia. Britain's claim to the land between longitudes 20° and 80°W is contested by Argentina's claim to the region between 25° and 74°W, and Chile's claim to the region between 53° and 90°W.

In the 1950s, five-sixths of the Antarctic continent was claimed by seven countries. However, none of the claims were recognised by non-claimant states and the Antarctic Treaty (1959) was negotiated to put in place a mechanism to defuse disputes over sovereignty. It

followed the unprecedented scientific co-operation in Antarctica demonstrated by 12 countries during the International Geophysical Year, 1957–58.

The Treaty came into force in 1961. Covering the area south of 60°S, its objectives are: to keep Antarctica demilitarised, nuclear-free and to ensure that it is used for peaceful purposes only; to promote international scientific co-operation in Antarctica; and to set aside disputes over territorial sovereignty.

An Environmental Protocol was added to the Antarctic Treaty in 1991, putting into abeyance indefinitely the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in Antarctica. This prohibition may be reviewed after 50 years, or before if there is a consensus of treaty parties to do so.

There were 12 original signatories to the Treaty, including Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the UK. The Treaty has been acceded to by 50 states (the 50th, Pakistan, became a member in March 2012), and 28 of these have Consultative Party status. The Consultative Parties are those that demonstrate their interest in Antarctica by conducting substantial research activity there. The Consultative Parties meet annually.

Administration

Until 1989, the British Antarctic Territory was administered by a high commissioner, resident in the Falkland Islands. In 1989, the administration was moved to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London. The office of commissioner is held by the head of Overseas Territories Department and the Administrator is the head of the Polar Regions Section.

Since 1967, the Department of Education and Science in the UK (later the Office of Science and Technology) has been financially responsible for the British Antarctic Survey through the Natural Environment Research Council. Station commanders are appointed magistrates and the courts of the territory are presided over by a senior magistrate or a judge of the Supreme Court. A Court of Appeal was set up in 1965 for hearing appeals from the territory.

British Indian Ocean Territory

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

The British Indian Ocean Territory consists of a group of islands, the Chagos Archipelago, forming the southern extension of the Maldives Ridge off south-west India. It lies 1,770 km east of Seychelles and 1,930 km north-east of Mauritius.

Area: The territory covers approx. 54,400 sq km of ocean.

Topography/wildlife: The largest island, Diego Garcia, has an area of 44 sq km and is V-shaped, its two arms enclosing a large deep lagoon. The islands are home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, including several now-endangered species of crabs and turtles.

Society

Population: No permanent settled population. The only inhabitants are UK and US military personnel and civilian contract employees, all living on Diego Garcia. In September 2003, these numbered approximately 3,000 persons. The former population has been resettled (see *History* below).

Economy

There is no economic activity in the territory, which is used for defence purposes, but there is a licensed fishery in the 370-km fisheries conservation and management zone.

History

The Chagos islands were first discovered by Portuguese mariners in the early 16th century. The French assumed sovereignty more than two centuries later and began to exploit the hitherto uninhabited islands for copra in the 1780s. The islands became British when ceded by France to Britain, together with Mauritius and Seychelles, in 1814. Following the French practice, they continued to be administered from Mauritius. Prior to Mauritius achieving independence and with the agreement of the Mauritius Council of Ministers, the islands were detached in 1965 to form part of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), together with some other small island groups that were detached from (but later reverted to) Seychelles.

The British Government entered into an agreement with the USA in 1966 whereby the Territory was to remain available for the defence needs of the two countries for an initial period of 50 years. Following this the copra plantations were run down and closed. In the late 1960s/early 1970s arrangements were made for the islanders to be relocated to Mauritius and Seychelles. The vast majority of them (some 1,200) were relocated to Mauritius. At that time, the UK made UK£650,000 available to the Mauritius Government for the express purpose of assisting resettlement.

In the mid-1970s a member of the Chagossian community in Mauritius started legal proceedings against the British Government in the English courts, claiming among other things that he had been wrongfully removed from the islands. Under an agreement reached in 1982 the legal proceedings were withdrawn and the UK made an *ex gratia* payment of UK£4 million for the benefit of the Chagossian community in Mauritius.

In 1998 another member of the Chagossian community instituted judicial review proceedings challenging the validity of BIOT's Immigration Ordinance 1971, which prohibited the entry of any person into any part of the Territory unless he obtained a permit to do so. The judgment in November 2000 held that the 1971 ordinance was indeed invalid and it was replaced by a new ordinance that allows the Chagossians to return and reside in any part of the Territory except (for defence reasons) Diego Garcia.

No Chagossians have returned to the islands to live since the new ordinance was enacted. The islands other than Diego Garcia are uninhabited and have no facilities on them to support a settled population. There are a few disintegrated remains of buildings from the copra plantation days, but these are unusable. There is no clean water supply, no power and no transport.

In February 2002, the Chagos Refugees Group, a Mauritius-based group of Chagos islanders, applied to the UK courts for further compensation and assisted resettlement on all of the islands including Diego Garcia. The court case started in October 2002 and, in October 2003, the courts found in favour of the UK Government but allowed the islanders to appeal on some of the issues.

In June 2004, the UK Government passed an order in council banning the islanders from the Chagos Islands and the islanders then applied for a judicial review of the order in council. In May

2006 the UK High Court overturned this order in council giving the islanders the right to return. In May 2007 the Court of Appeal upheld the High Court's decision ruling that the methods used in banning the islanders from returning to the islands were unlawful. In November 2007, the UK House of Lords gave the UK Government permission to challenge the Court of Appeal's ruling with the proviso that the government cover the cost of the appeal, whatever the outcome. In October 2008 the UK Law Lords upheld the UK Government's appeal, denying the islanders the right to return to the Islands. On 20 December 2012, seven years after the islanders filed the case, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that their claims had been definitively settled in the UK courts and were inadmissible.

Administration

The Chagos Archipelago is Crown property administered from London by a commissioner assisted by the officer in charge of the Royal Navy complement on Diego Garcia. The islands are also subject to a claim by Mauritius.

British Virgin Islands

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

British Virgin Islands lies roughly midway between Puerto Rico and the northernmost of the Leeward Islands group in the Caribbean. It is an archipelago of more than 40 islands, 16 of which are inhabited. They are situated 96.5 km east of Puerto Rico, with the US Virgin Islands between. To the east and south lie Anguilla, St Kitts and the other islands of the Lesser Antilles. Tortola is the largest island of the group.

Time: GMT minus 4hr

Area: 153 sq km. The largest of the islands are: Tortola (54 sq km), Anegada (39 sq km), Virgin Gorda (21 sq km) and Jost Van Dyke (9 sq km).

Topography: With the exception of Anegada (a flat reef-surrounded island of coral limestone at the northern tip of the group) the islands, which form a projection of the archipelago of Puerto Rico and the American Virgin Islands, are hilly.

Climate: Subtropical with annual rainfall averaging 1,250 mm. Trade winds keep the air fresh.

Environment: The most significant environmental issue is the inadequacy of natural freshwater resources. Except for a few seasonal streams and springs on Tortola, most of the islands' water supply comes from wells and rainwater catchment.

Vegetation: The natural vegetation is mostly light bush and grass; there is some cultivated land, on which fruit and vegetables are grown. Forest covers 25 per cent of the land area.

Wildlife: The islands are home to some rare birds (including the pearl-eyed thrasher) as well as flamingos and pelicans. There are two sea bird sanctuaries.

Main settlements: Road Town (capital, pop. 9,300 in 2010) and East End–Long Look on Tortola; The Valley on Virgin Gorda.

Transport/Communications: There are some 200 km of roads, including a dual carriageway near Road Town.

Ferry services link main islands, including the United States Virgin Islands.

Beef Island Airport, although small, receives aircraft from Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands and the USA. It lies 14.5 km from Road Town on Tortola, and Beef Island and Tortola are linked by road bridge. There are airports on Virgin Gorda and Anegada. Within the country, light aircraft fly between the islands.

The international dialling code is 1 284. There are 437 main telephone lines and 1,734 mobile phone subscriptions per 1,000 people (2012).

Society

Population: 28,100 (2012); 40 per cent of people live in urban areas; population density 184 per sq km; life expectancy 78 years.

Some 82 per cent of the people are of African descent; the balance is of European, Indian or mixed descent. About 30 per cent are immigrants from St Kitts and Nevis or St Vincent and the Grenadines; 13 per cent come from North America and Europe, and there is a growing section from the Dominican Republic.

Language: English

Religion: Predominantly Christians, including Methodists, Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Church of God.

Health: There are hospitals on Tortola and clinics on other islands. Infant mortality is about 14 per 1,000 live births (2012).

Education: There are 12 years of compulsory education starting at age five. Net enrolment rate for primary is 81 per cent (2011). The pupil–teacher ratio for primary is 14:1 and for secondary 9:1 (2007). The school year starts in September.

Scholarships are available for students to go to the regional University of the West Indies, and to universities in the USA, Canada and the UK. The H Lavity Stoutt Community College opened in the late 1990s. There is virtually no adult illiteracy. Road Town has a public library, and there are library stations on the outer islands.

Media: *The BVI Beacon* is weekly and *BVI News* provides online news (bvinews.com).

Public holidays: New Year's Day, H Lavity Stoutt's Birthday (7 March), Commonwealth Day (second Monday in March), Queen's Official Birthday (one of the first three Saturdays in June, in line with the UK), Territory Day (1 July), Festival (Monday–Wednesday including the first Monday in August), St Ursula's Day (21 October), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday, Easter Monday and Whit Monday.

Economy

Currency: US dollar

GDP: US\$909m (2012)

Tourist arrivals: 351,000 (2012)

Tourism and offshore financial services are the main economic activities, supplemented by agriculture and fishing. By mid-2009 some 405,870 international companies had been registered, generating substantial income for the government.

The economy grew steadily in the 2000s, mainly at more than three per cent p.a. Then in 2008–09, when the global financial

crisis and world economic downturn hit both financial services and tourism, GDP growth stalled, the economy contracting by seven per cent in 2008 and a further 13 per cent in 2009, and then recovering only very weakly in 2010–12.

History

The Virgin Islands (*Las Virgenes*, or 'The Maidens') were discovered in 1493 by Christopher Columbus, who named them in honour of St Ursula and her company of 11,000 maidens. St Ursula's Day, 21 October, is a national holiday. As Europeans began moving into the Caribbean, the islands were often a shelter and meeting places for groups of pirates, who built a fort on Tortola, on which some of them settled down. The island was annexed by the Governor of the Leeward Islands in 1672, and such inhabitants as he found were moved to St Christopher (St Kitts). Between 1680 and 1717, European planters, with African slaves, moved into the islands; by 1717, there were 317 Europeans on Virgin Gorda and 159 on Tortola (plus an unrecorded population of slaves). In 1773 the planters were granted their own 12-member House of Assembly and a legislative council.

The islands became part of the colony of the Leeward Islands in 1872. In 1956 the Leewards were de-federated, and the British Virgin Islands became a separate colony administered by the Governor of the Leeward Islands. The Administrator of the islands became directly responsible to the Colonial Office in 1960; in 1971, the Administrator's title was raised to Governor.

At elections in February 1995, the Virgin Islands Party (VIP) won six of the 13 legislative council seats and formed a coalition with two independent members. Ralph O'Neal became Chief Minister.

In May 1999 O'Neal and the VIP were returned to office, with seven seats and 38 per cent of the votes. The National Democratic Party took five seats and Concerned Citizens Movement one.

Constitution

The British Virgin Islands is a UK overseas territory. The 2007 constitution provides for a greater degree of internal self-government than previously and for fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual.

The legislature, the House of Assembly, comprises 13 elected and two appointed members. The UK monarch is represented by a Governor responsible for external affairs, defence, internal security and the public service, and the administration of the courts. On all other matters, the executive has authority. The executive consists of the Governor and the cabinet comprising the Premier, the Attorney-General and four other ministers appointed by the Governor from the House of Assembly on the advice of the Premier.

The High Court and Court of Appeal of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court have jurisdiction over the Islands.

Politics

Last elections: November 2011

Next elections: 2015

Head of state: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by the Governor

Head of government: Premier Dr Orlando Smith

Ruling party: National Democratic Party

In the June 2003 elections the National Democratic Party (NDP) defeated the Virgin Islands Party (VIP), winning the majority of the seats and Dr Orlando Smith became Chief Minister.

The VIP won the August 2007 elections, securing ten of the 13 elective seats, and Ralph O'Neal began his third term as head of government and his first as Premier, a post created in the new constitution of June 2007.

The NDP defeated the VIP in the November 2011 elections taking nine seats to the VIP's four. NDP leader Dr Orlando Smith was sworn in as Premier.

Cayman Islands

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

The Cayman Islands group lies between Cuba and Jamaica in the Caribbean. The territory is a group of three islands: Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

Time: GMT minus 5hr

Area: 262 sq km

Topography: The Caymans are low-lying coral islands, nearly all less than 20 metres above sea level; the highest point is the eastern side of Cayman Brac, 43 metres above sea level. Grand Cayman, which is about 34 km in length, has a big bay (the North Sound) on the north-west side; the bay is a good harbour for small boats. The west coast has the Seven Mile Beach, famous for its fine powdery sand. There are no rivers. Drinking water is obtained by desalination.

Climate: Tropical, tempered by cooling north-east trade winds from November to March; warm from May to October, with prevailing winds east-south-east. The hurricane season is from June to November. Hurricanes Allen (August 1980) and Paloma (November 2008) caused extensive damage on Cayman Brac, and Hurricanes Gilbert (September 1988) and Ivan (September 2004) very extensive damage and flooding on Grand Cayman.

Environment: The most significant environmental issue is the lack of natural freshwater resources.

Vegetation: Forest covers 53 per cent of the land area.

Main towns: George Town (capital, pop. 29,100 in 2010), West Bay (12,700) and Bodden Town (7,700) on Grand Cayman. Cayman Brac has four small settlements: Stake Bay, West End, Creek and Spot Bay. Little Cayman has a permanent population of some 150.

Transport/Communications: Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac together have 785 km of paved roads. A new road bypassing part of the busy West Bay Road on Grand Cayman was opened in 1998. Little Cayman also has some paved roads.

George Town is a port of registry for shipping, with a total of 1,400 vessels registered in 2000, and the port is an important calling centre for cargo carriers. Caymanian-owned ships, and ships with Caymanian registration, operate services with Florida and Jamaica.

The international airports are Owen Roberts Airport on Grand Cayman and Gerrard Smith Airport on Cayman Brac. Little Cayman has a private airstrip suitable for light aircraft.

The international dialling code is 1 345. There are 650 main telephone lines, 1,717 mobile phone subscriptions and 741 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

Society

Population: 57,000 (2012); 100 per cent of people live in urban areas; population density 218 per sq km; the majority of people live on Grand Cayman; life expectancy 81 years. The population increased by 52 per cent between 1989 and 1999.

Cayman Islanders are partly of European, partly of African, mostly of mixed descent.

Language: English; there is a small Spanish-speaking community.

Religion: Mainly Christians, including followers of Church of God, and Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists and Pentecostals.

Health: The government provides hospitals on Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac, and district clinics, an eye clinic and a dental clinic on Grand Cayman and a clinic on Little Cayman. A new hospital was opened in 1999 in George Town. A private hospital opened in 2000. Mosquitoes are controlled, to a great extent, by the Mosquito Research and Control Unit. Tropical diseases are uncommon. There is strong emphasis on anti-drug programmes, the islands being vulnerable because of their position on drug-smuggling routes. Infant mortality is about six per 1,000 live births (2012).

Education: There are 12 years of compulsory education starting at age five. There are some fee-paying church schools. Net enrolment ratios are 93 per cent for primary and 79 per cent for secondary (2007). The pupil-teacher ratio for primary is 11:1 (2007). The school year starts in September.

About 15 per cent of school leavers go on to university. Tertiary education is provided in the Cayman Islands at the Community College (tertiary and adult), the Law School and the International College of the Cayman Islands. Adult literacy is more than 90 per cent.

Media: *Caymanian Compass*, *Cayman Net News* and *Cayman News Service* (online) are published daily. Radio Cayman provides a public radio service.

Public holidays: New Year's Day, National Heroes' Day (Monday in late January), Discovery Day (third Monday in May), Queen's Official Birthday (Monday in June), Constitution Day (first Monday in July), Remembrance Day (11 November), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and Easter Monday.

Economy

Currency: Cayman Islands dollar (CI\$), fixed at CI\$0.82:US\$1

GDP: US\$3.0bn (2012)

Tourist arrivals: 322,000 (2012)

In per capita terms, Cayman Islands is among the wealthiest economies in the world. The country has no direct taxation and a high percentage of home ownership. The economy is based on high-class tourism and offshore financial services, with a tiny proportion of the population engaged in agriculture and fishing.

In the absence of direct taxation, the sources of government revenue are import duty (on most goods), stamp duty on

documents, and company and licence fees. The country provides a registry for international companies, banks and trust companies, insurance companies, investment funds, and ships and yachts. By May 2008 some 80,000 companies had been registered in Cayman Islands. A stock exchange was opened in 1997.

The economy grew slowly in the early 2000s, strengthening in 2005–07, due mainly to the increase in construction activity following Hurricane Ivan in September 2004, before stalling in 2008–10, when it was hit by a sharp contraction in both tourism and financial services. GDP declined by some eight per cent in 2009 and four per cent in 2010, before recovering in 2011–12.

History

The islands were sighted by Christopher Columbus in 1503 on his last voyage to the West Indies. However, they appear on maps prior to that year, more or less correctly placed. The name 'Cayman', by which the group has been known since about 1530, is a Spanish corruption of the Carib word for 'crocodile'. The early history of European penetration is a record of environmental despoliation. The islands were once home to large numbers of crocodiles, which were exterminated in the sailors' search for fresh meat. The Spaniards first called the group *Las Tortugas* because the surrounding waters were full of turtles. These, too, were hunted to extermination by about 1800. From the early 16th century until the mid-17th century, English, Spanish and French ships called at the islands to hunt, but there was no settlement.

In 1670, the Treaty of Madrid recognised Britain's claim to the islands as part of the territory of Jamaica. Grand Cayman was subsequently colonised from Jamaica, the early population including many African slaves. Cayman Brac and Little Cayman were settled in the 1830s. Until the end of the days of sail, the islands were often called at by passing ships, and there was a thriving industry in building small schooners. When that prosperous period ended, they had little contact with the outside world; many people emigrated, settling in Nicaragua, the Bay Islands and Florida. From the 1940s, when air-travel was becoming common, they became accessible again.

In 1832 representative government was established with the formation of an elected legislative assembly, although the three islands had separate administrations until 1877. When Jamaica opted for independence in 1962, the Cayman Islands preferred to remain under the UK Crown, with their own Administrator. In November 1971 the Administrator's title was changed to that of Governor.

In May 2002 the territory became an associate member of CARICOM.

Constitution

Under the November 2009 constitution, which provides for a greater degree of internal self-government than that of 1972, Cayman Islands is a UK overseas territory with representative government and the British monarch as head of state, represented by a Governor. There are provisions for the rights and freedoms of the individual.

From the election due in 2014, the first to be held under the 2009 constitution, the Legislative Assembly will have a Speaker and 20 members (18 directly elected every four years plus the Deputy Governor and the Attorney-General).

The executive comprises the Governor and the cabinet. The Governor is responsible for external affairs, defence, internal security (including the police) and the overall organisation of the public service. The cabinet is responsible for all other matters. Together with the Governor it includes the Premier, Deputy Premier and at least five other ministers, who are all elected members of the Legislative Assembly; the Deputy Governor and Attorney-General are *ex officio* members. The Premier is eligible to serve for a maximum of two consecutive parliamentary terms.

Politics

Last elections: May 2009

Next elections: 2014

Head of state: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by the Governor

Head of government: Premier Juliana O'Connor-Connolly

Ruling party: United Democratic Party

Until 2001, Cayman Islands had no political parties, and elections were fought by individuals in informal groupings. However, in November 2001 Minister of Tourism McKeeva Bush announced the formation of the United Democratic Party (UDP) and within a few days he became leader of government business, following an assembly vote of no confidence in Kurt Tibbetts (by nine votes to five).

The general election due in November 2004 was postponed until May 2005 after Hurricane Ivan devastated the islands in September 2004. The election was won by the People's Progressive Movement (PPM), with nine seats, and party leader Kurt Tibbetts then became leader of government business. The UDP took five seats and an independent one.

In the May 2009 elections, the UDP, led by McKeeva Bush, took nine seats, the PPM five, and independents one, and Bush was confirmed as leader of government business. Turnout was 73 per cent.

Under the constitution that came into force in November 2009, Bush became the country's first Premier.

Following an assembly vote of no confidence in Premier McKeeva Bush (by 11 votes to three), on 19 December 2012 Governor Duncan Taylor replaced him with Juliana O'Connor-Connolly.

Falkland Islands

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

A group of islands consisting of East and West Falkland, and approximately 700 smaller islands, which lie about 480 km north-east of the southern tip of South America.

Time: GMT minus 4hr. The clock is advanced by one hour from the first Sunday in September to the first Sunday in April.

Area: 12,173 sq km

Topography: The islands are deeply indented with many anchorages. The landscape is treeless moorland, with deep peat deposits, and hills ranging across the northern parts of both islands, rising to the highest points: Mt Osborne (705 metres) in East Falkland, and Mt Adam (700 metres) in West Falkland.

Climate: Temperate, cooled by the Antarctic current, lashed by gales in every month of the year, and with a moderate 625 mm of rainfall per annum. There is little variation in temperature, which ranges 3–9°C.

Wildlife: There are no native mammals remaining. Around 65 species of bird breed on the islands, including the Falkland pipit and the striated caracara. Several million penguins breed there and sea mammals are abundant.

Main settlement: Stanley (pop. 2,230 in 2010), on East Falkland, is the only appreciable settlement.

Transport/Communications: There are some 50 km of surfaced roads around Stanley and the airport, and 390 km of unsurfaced gravel tracks. Most road travel outside Stanley is by Land Rover or motorcycle.

A commercial ship runs between the Falklands and the UK five times a year and the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) operates a service about 11 times a year.

There are airports at Mt Pleasant and Stanley. Flights from the UK are provided by the MOD, refuelling at Ascension Island. There are scheduled weekly flights to and from mainland Chile. The government runs internal air services by light aircraft to some of the smaller islands.

The international dialling code is 500. There are 653 main telephone lines, 1,139 mobile phone subscriptions and 405 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

Society

Population: 3,000 (2012); with the very low population density of one person per four sq km; the majority of the population is of UK descent.

Language: English

Religion: Mainly Christians (67 per cent in 2006 census); most of the rest do not profess any religion.

Health: Care is provided by the Falkland Islands Government. There are usually four doctors, two dentists and 20 qualified nurses present on the islands. The King Edward VII Memorial Hospital was completed in 1987. The hospital is run jointly by the Falkland Islands Government and the UK Ministry of Defence with some of the medical staff provided by the MOD.

Education: Education is free and compulsory from age five to 16 – seven years of primary and five years of secondary. There is one school in Stanley, comprising a junior school (for age five to 11 years) and a community school (11–16). Pupils unable to attend school in Stanley, where there is a hostel for up to 65 boarders, can be taught by peripatetic teachers and by radio/telephone.

Suitable students are funded to continue their studies at sixth-form level in the UK – for example, at Loughborough College or Peter Symonds College, or at other institutions at parental request. Some students go on to university.

Media: *Penguin News* is published weekly. The *Falkland Islands News Network* is published online (www.falklandnews.com) and incorporates *Financial News and Information* and *Teaberry Express*. Falkland Islands Radio Service provides public radio.

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Queen's Birthday (21 April), Liberation Day (14 June), Spring Holiday (Monday in October),

Battle Day (8 December), Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Most government offices are closed for the Christmas period; the Stanley Races are held for two days after Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday.

Economy

Currency: Falkland Islands pound, at par with pound sterling

In general terms, the Islands are self-supporting except for defence. The main economic activities are fishing (predominantly for squid and by licensed foreign trawlers) and sheep farming. Revenue is also generated by the sale of stamps and coins as collectors' items.

Tourism has grown rapidly and there are some 50,000 visitors a year, mainly from cruiseships in the austral summer months. Economic diversification is under way into industries such as meat production and agriculture.

Oil

In 2011 significant deposits of oil were found in the waters surrounding the Islands, with the prospect that Falklands could within a few years become a major oil production centre.

History

The first sighting of the Islands has been ascribed to various navigators, but the first known landing was by Captain John Strong in 1690, who named the Islands after the then Treasurer of the Navy, Viscount Falkland. The first occupation was by the French in 1764 under Antoine-Louis de Bougainville, who established a small colony on East Falkland. This was sold to Spain, who governed most of South America at that time, in 1767. In 1765, the British had taken possession of West Falkland and, in the next year, established a colony on Saunders Island to the north of West Falkland. The Spanish compelled the British settlers to leave in 1770, bringing the two nations to the brink of war, but were persuaded to hand back the colony in 1771. Both British and Spanish had left the Islands by the early 19th century.

In 1820, the Buenos Aires government, which had declared its independence of Spain in 1816, sent a ship to the Islands to claim sovereignty, and a colony was once more established on East Falkland under Luis Vernet as Governor. In 1831, a US warship destroyed this settlement in reprisal for the arrest of three American sealing vessels. In 1832 the Argentinians again attempted to settle a garrison but were evicted when the HMS *Clio* arrived.

The British resumed occupation of the Islands, which has been continuous since. The Islands were given a Governor in 1843. Grants-in-aid for the settlement were approved and continued until 1885, when the Islands became self-supporting.

Argentina did not abandon its claim to the Islands, and pursued this in UN talks from 1966 onwards, despite the islanders' overwhelming preference for retaining their association with the UK. During these years, links continued between the Falklands and Argentina, with air and sea communication, and facilities for education and medical care for the Falklanders. In April 1982, Argentine military forces invaded the Islands and overwhelmed the small UK garrison. A UK task force was dispatched and forced the Argentinians to surrender on 14 June 1982, after the loss of some 1,000 UK and Argentine lives.

After the election of the Menem government in Argentina in 1989, there was a rapprochement between the UK and Argentina. In 1990, diplomatic relations, broken off in 1982, were restored with Argentina, with both sides in effect agreeing to disagree on sovereignty over the Islands. In July 1999, the UK and Argentina agreed on some confidence-building measures between the territory and Argentina, including co-operation in areas such as fisheries.

In a referendum in March 2013 the people of the Falkland Islands voted in favour of remaining a UK overseas territory. Of the 1,517 votes cast – a turnout of more than 90 per cent – all but three were in favour.

Constitution

Falkland Islands is a UK overseas territory by choice. Supreme authority is vested in the British monarch and exercised by a Governor on the monarch's behalf, with the advice and assistance of the executive and legislative councils. The constitution includes the islanders' right to self-determination and provides for fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual.

The Governor presides over an executive council of five, three elected and two *ex officio* members. The legislative council has eight elected members and the two *ex officio* members of the executive council.

After eight years of consultation and debate, a new constitution was adopted in November 2008, replacing that of October 1985 (with amendments in 1997 and 1998). It enhances democracy; provides for greater transparency and accountability; and clarifies the rights of individuals in line with the international agreements the UK is party to.

Gibraltar

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

Gibraltar, at the mouth of the Mediterranean sea, is connected to Spain by a 1.6 km-long sandy isthmus. To the west, across the Bay of Gibraltar, is the Spanish port of Algeciras; across the Strait of Gibraltar, 21 km to the south, is Morocco.

Time: GMT plus 1hr. The clock is advanced by one hour from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October.

Area: 6.5 sq km

Topography: Gibraltar is a narrow peninsula 4.8 km long and 1.2 km wide, aligned north/south, and rising to 426 metres on a limestone and shale ridge, known as 'the Rock' (hence Gibraltar's nickname). There is no natural fresh water, and drinking water is produced by desalination and stored in a reservoir on the Rock.

Climate: The climate is Mediterranean, with winter rainfall brought by westerly winds, and dry summers. Snow and frost are extremely rare. In summer the prevailing winds are easterly. Average annual rainfall (1997–2002) is 699 mm.

Environment: The most significant environmental issue is the limited natural freshwater resources; rainwater is collected in large concrete or natural rock water catchments.

Vegetation: Gibraltar has more than 500 species of small flowering plants, including the unique candytuft. Olive and pine trees grow on the higher ground.

Wildlife: Various small mammals are found on the Rock, as well as the Barbary ape (the only wild monkey in Europe) and the only Barbary partridges in Europe.

Transport/Communications: There are 29 km of roads, and a system of tunnels within the Rock; some 20,000 motor vehicles are registered.

Despite not being a natural haven, the harbour is extensive, and has been used for centuries as a refitting and revictualling centre for the navies of many nations. The port is able to take large ships and provides a base for transshipment, as well as being a UK naval base.

Gibraltar Airport is 1 km north of the town centre on the North Front (the neck of the territory leading to Spain).

The international dialling code is 350. There are 789 main telephone lines, 1,187 mobile phone subscriptions and 650 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

Society

Population: 30,000 (2012); 100 per cent of people live in urban areas; population density 4,615 per sq km; life expectancy 79 years.

Gibraltarians comprise 81 per cent of the population (2001 census), other British nationals 12 per cent and Moroccans three per cent.

Language: English is the official language, and most people speak Spanish and English.

Religion: Predominantly Christians (Roman Catholics 78 per cent, Anglicans seven per cent, others three per cent), Muslims four per cent, Jewish and Hindu minorities (2001 census).

Health: Infant mortality is about six per 1,000 live births (2012).

Social welfare: Benefit is provided for maternity, unemployment, illness, disability and death, and is funded through contributions.

Education: There are ten years of compulsory education starting at age five. The school year starts in September.

Media: *The Gibraltar Chronicle* (established 1801) and *Panorama* are published daily; *The New People* weekly; and *The Gibraltar Magazine* and *Insight* monthly.

Radio Gibraltar and GBC Television provide public services operated by the Gibraltar Broadcasting Corporation.

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Commonwealth Day (second Monday in March), May Day (Monday in early May), Spring Bank Holiday (last Monday in May), Queen's Official Birthday (Monday in June), Summer Bank Holiday (Monday late in August), National Day (10 September), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday and Easter Monday.

Economy

Currency: Gibraltar pound, at par with pound sterling

GDP: US\$1.8bn (2012)

Gibraltar lacks natural resources and has to import fuels and foodstuffs. Hitherto dependent on a diminishing UK Ministry of Defence presence, financial services and tourism became increasingly important as Gibraltar sought to diversify its economy.

There is considerable trade in re-export to Spain, including manufactured goods, fuels, beverages and tobacco and resale of fuel to shipping. From the 1990s structural reforms have brought about substantial growth in the private sector.

History

Gibraltar has a long and turbulent history owing to its unique position at a major crossroads of European commerce. It has been a stronghold of the Moors, but Spain held the Rock for 242 years of continuous occupation, during its period of greatest power and expansion in Europe and the Americas. However, when the Spanish King Charles II died in 1701, a disputed succession led to war, with Britain, Holland, Austria and the Holy Roman Empire joining forces to promote their candidate, the Archduke Charles of Austria. An English and Dutch fleet arrived in the Bay of Gibraltar in July 1704, and evicted the Spanish garrison on 4 August of that year. The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) ended the war and ceded Gibraltar to Britain.

Since then, British forces have withstood numerous sieges. The 'Great Siege' (1779–83), when the Governor, General George Augustus Eliot, withstood a combined Spanish and French attack, was followed by the Treaty of Versailles, which confirmed Britain's title to Gibraltar. In 1805, after the Battle of Trafalgar, HMS *Victory* was towed into Gibraltar carrying the body of Admiral Nelson. It became of even more strategic importance to Britain with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, providing the main route to colonies in East Africa and Asia.

The Rock was of considerable significance in the two world wars of the 20th century as a centre for refitting ships, an air base and a key point in anti-submarine operations.

Successive Spanish governments have accepted the validity of the Treaty of Utrecht but argued that British sovereignty over the Rock is an anachronism. Spanish policy has been to recover sovereignty by peaceful means. During the 1960s, Franco's government imposed restrictions on communications between Spain and the Rock. But in a referendum in 1967, Gibraltarians voted 12,138 to 44 to stay British. A new constitution in 1969 emphasised Gibraltar's UK allegiance, while giving greater internal self-government. Spain responded by closing the border and severing telephone and transport links. Gibraltar joined the European Community in 1973 under the terms of the Act of Accession.

After the death of Franco in 1975 and the restoration of democracy in Spain, attitudes gradually softened and the border was reopened in 1985, in advance of Spain's entry into the European Community in January 1986.

Joe Bossano, leader of the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party (GSLP) was Chief Minister from 1988 until the elections of May 1996. As Chief Minister he campaigned for Gibraltarian self-determination and opposed the Brussels Process (agreement between the British and Spanish Governments to start negotiations aimed at overcoming all the differences between them on Gibraltar). Bossano did not participate in meetings under the process, but did develop closer relations with the authorities of the Spanish Campo region adjacent to Gibraltar.

The 1996 elections were won by the Gibraltar Social Democrats (GSD), whose leader, Peter Caruana, became Chief Minister. The February 2000 elections were again won by the GSD, with eight of 15 elective seats in the parliament, and Caruana continued as

Chief Minister. The GSD government favoured dialogue with Spain but was also committed to defending the Gibraltarians' right of self-determination and vigorously opposed any concessions on sovereignty without Gibraltar's consent.

The Brussels Process was restarted in the summer of 2001 with the aim of achieving a lasting resolution to the Gibraltar dispute. By July 2002, after several months of negotiations, the UK and Spain had reached broad agreement on many of the principles that could underpin a lasting settlement, but a number of issues remained unresolved. On 7 November 2002, the Gibraltar Government held a referendum to ask the people of Gibraltar whether they accepted the principle of joint sovereignty with Spain and 98.5 per cent voted 'no'.

Constitution

The current constitution was promulgated in 2006 with the intention to provide for a modern relationship between Gibraltar and the UK – not one based on colonialism. It builds on the 1969 Gibraltar Constitution which formalised the devolution to local ministers of responsibility for a range of defined domestic matters.

The Governor represents the British monarch who is head of state and retains direct responsibility for all matters not specifically allocated to local ministers: principally external affairs, defence and internal security.

The parliament comprises a Speaker, at least 17 elected members and (since the 2007 elections) four *ex officio* members (the principal auditor, the ombudsman, the clerk to the parliament and any other officer prescribed by law). Elections to the parliament take place every four years. All British subjects over the age of 18 who fulfil residence requirements are entitled to vote. The territory comprises a single constituency and there is a block voting system under which each elector may vote for up to ten candidates.

The constitution provides for a police authority and commissions charged with appointing judicial and other public officials.

Politics

Last elections: December 2011

Next elections: 2015

Head of state: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by the Governor

Head of government: Chief Minister Fabian Picardo

Ruling party: coalition of Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party and Liberal Party

Peter Caruana and the Gibraltar Social Democrats (GSD) were returned with eight seats and 52 per cent of votes in elections in November 2003, and the alliance led by Joe Bossano received 40 per cent – the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party (GSLP) five seats and the Liberal Party two seats.

In the elections of October 2007, the GSD won with a reduced vote (49 per cent) but an increased majority (taking ten seats), and Caruana was returned as Chief Minister. The GSLP–Liberal alliance received 45 per cent of votes and took seven seats.

The December 2011 elections were won by the alliance of the GSLP (seven seats) and Liberal Party (three seats); the remaining seven seats were taken by the GSD. GSLP leader Fabian Picardo became Chief Minister.

Montserrat

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

Montserrat is one of the Leeward Islands in the Eastern Caribbean, lying 43 km south-west of Antigua and 64 km north-west of Guadeloupe.

Time: GMT minus 4hr

Area: 102 sq km

Topography: Entirely volcanic and very mountainous, with a rugged coastline. There are three mountain ranges: Silver Hills in the north; Centre Hills and the Soufrière Hills Volcano in the south. There are hot springs, ravines, black-sand beaches, and a white-sand beach at Rendezvous Bay in the north. The two waterfalls were destroyed by the volcano.

Climate: Tropical, usually tempered by sea breezes. Rainfall averages 1,475 mm p.a.; most rain falls in the second half of the year. June to November is the hurricane season.

Environment: Environmental issues are mainly related to the presence of the active volcano on the island, but another significant issue is land erosion on slopes that have been cleared for cultivation.

Vegetation: Tropical; prior to the resumption of volcanic activity, mountain areas close to the volcano were thickly forested, with fruit and vegetables grown in the cultivated areas. But successive eruptions and pyroclastic flows reduced these areas to a scarred lunar-type landscape and it will be many years before they can be cultivated again. Forest covers 20 per cent of the land area.

Main settlements: Plymouth, once a thriving capital, is now a ghost town, buried beneath more than one metre of volcanic ash; Brades (*de facto* capital, pop. 1,310 in 2010), St Peter's (790), St John's and Salem.

Transport/Communications: Many roads were damaged, destroyed or made inaccessible by volcanic activity. A new roads infrastructure has been built in the north of the island.

Plymouth, the only seaport with a harbour capable of handling cargo vessels, closed in June 1997. A new port facility has been constructed at Little Bay in the north and there is a ferry service to Antigua.

The nearest international airport is in Antigua, from where planes flew to W H Bramble Airport on the east side of the island. The airport was closed in June 1997 and helicopter services operate from Gerald's Heliport to Antigua (20 minutes' flying time). A new airport was opened in 2005.

The international dialling code is 1 664. There are 515 main telephone lines, 832 mobile phone subscriptions and 307 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

Society

Population: 5,000 (2012); 14 per cent of people live in urban areas; population density 49 per sq km; population was 10,639 at the 1991 census; life expectancy 74 years.

Most of the people are of African descent, with some of European (mainly Irish) and some of mixed descent and, prior to the renewed volcanic activity, a number of retired North Americans.

Language: English is the official language.

Religion: Mainly Christians (Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists).

Health: The Glendon Hospital has been relocated to the north of the island. Though very unpleasant, there is no evidence to suggest that ash falls have created any serious health problems other than those stemming from respiratory problems. Infant mortality is about 14 per 1,000 live births (2012).

Education: There are ten years of compulsory education starting at age five. Net enrolment ratios are 92 per cent for primary and 96 per cent for secondary (2007). The pupil–teacher ratio for primary is 16:1 and for secondary 12:1 (2007). The school year starts in September.

Tertiary education is provided at the regional University of the West Indies, which has campuses in Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. Adult literacy is more than 90 per cent.

Media: *The Montserrat Reporter* is published weekly. Radio Montserrat and ZTV provide public radio and TV services.

Public holidays: New Year's Day, St Patrick's Day (17 March), Labour Day (first Monday in May), Queen's Official Birthday (Monday in June), August Monday (first Monday in August), Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Festival Day (31 December). St Patrick's Day is followed by a week of celebrations, and there are celebrations throughout 15 December–1 January.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday, Easter Monday and Whit Monday.

Economy

Currency: Eastern Caribbean dollar

GDP: US\$64m (2012)

Tourist arrivals: 5,000 (2012)

In the 1980s, the main economic activities were agriculture and tourism (especially luxury villa holidays) with some light engineering. Hurricane Hugo destroyed 90 per cent of infrastructure in September 1989, severely damaging the tourism and agriculture sectors.

Since then the main economic activity has been reconstruction, which suffered a major setback when volcanic activity began in 1995. GDP fell from EC\$163 million in 1995 to EC\$91 million in 2000. Montserrat's economy and infrastructure have been rebuilt in the 2000s, including a new airport (opened in 2005) and ferry port.

Aid

The damage to the economy, first by Hurricane Hugo and then by the volcanic activity, has made Montserrat heavily dependent on aid. Its main aid partners are the UK and Canada.

History

Montserrat was sighted by Christopher Columbus during his second voyage in November 1493. He named it Santa Maria de Montserrate after the Abbey of Montserrate near Barcelona. In 1632, the island became a British colony although the first settlers were largely Irish. More Irish settlers followed, driven out of Virginia in an anti-Catholic purge.

Enslaved Africans were brought to the island to work tobacco, indigo, cotton and sugar plantations. In 1678 the population

consisted of 992 slaves and 2,682 mainly Irish-descended planters. By 1805 there were 9,500 slaves and about 1,000 settlers of European descent. Montserrat was captured by the French on three occasions for short periods but was finally restored to Britain in 1783.

The abolition of slavery in 1834 and falling sugar prices during the 19th century had an adverse effect on the island's economy. Moreover, the island has suffered frequent damage from hurricanes and earthquakes.

In 1869, the philanthropist Joseph Sturge of Birmingham formed the Montserrat Company. This company bought up the estates that were not economically viable, planted limes, started production of the island's famous lime juice, set up a school and sold smallholdings to the inhabitants, with the result that much of modern Montserrat is owned by smallholders.

From 1671 Montserrat and the other Leeward Islands were administered by a captain-general and commander-in-chief. In 1871 the Leeward Islands became a federal colony with a Governor. The federation was abolished in July 1956, and Montserrat became a colony in its own right. In 1958 it joined the Federation of the West Indies; in 1962, when the Federation broke up, it gained separate administration; and in 1971 the Administrator was promoted to Governor.

From the time the People's Liberation Movement (PLM) took power from the Progressive Democratic Party in 1978, independence became a dominant issue of Montserrat politics. The PLM, under the leadership of John Osborne, retained its majority through the elections of 1983 and 1987.

However, the plans to push ahead to independence were frustrated by a series of misfortunes. In 1989, Hurricane Hugo devastated the island and made Montserrat dependent on aid for reconstruction. In 1990, there were irregularities in the offshore banking sector, which led to an investigation by police officers from the UK's Scotland Yard, followed by prosecutions and deregistration of many foreign banks. The government then thoroughly overhauled the sector and imposed more stringent controls.

In the 1991 elections the newly formed National Progressive Party, led by Reuben Meade, gained the majority. The Soufrière Hills Volcano reactivated in July 1995 after a lengthy period of dormancy. With the volcano increasing in vigour, the capital Plymouth and most of the population from the south of the island were evacuated to the safety of the north in April 1996. In due course an exclusion zone comprising roughly the southern two-thirds of the island was established.

The general election of November 1996 led to no overall majority for any party. The Movement for National Reconstruction (MNR) led by Bertrand Osborne formed a coalition government supported by former Chief Minister Meade and an independent. In August 1997 Bertrand Osborne resigned when three of his ministers withdrew their support. David Brandt, a lawyer and independent, formed a government.

The volcano erupted again with greater vigour on 25 June 1997. Pyroclastic flows swept down the north face of the volcano resulting in the deaths of 19 people. The deaths occurred in areas which had been declared out of bounds due to the threat of volcanic activity. The main part of the deserted capital, Plymouth, was destroyed in August 1997. There were, both in early August

and late September, series of vigorous explosions, and then the largest pyroclastic flow to date occurred on Boxing Day 1997, destroying villages within the exclusion zone.

In April 1996 Montserratians resident on the island on 1 April 1996 had been offered resettlement in the UK provided they were able to travel at their own expense and 1,500 people took up this offer. By August 1997, with the situation worsening, the UK Government offered to pay airfares for those who wished to resettle in the UK or other parts of the Caribbean. By 1998 some 3,500 Montserratians had evacuated to the UK, 3,000 to neighbouring countries and 3,500 remained on the island.

In July 1998 scientists judged that the volcano had entered a period of repose, though in areas surrounding the volcano danger would remain for some years, but in November 1999 it became active again and there were further eruptions in March and June 2000 and July 2001. The largest eruption since 1997 occurred in July 2003. There were no human casualties, but agriculture was devastated and the entire island was covered in ash.

Constitution

In 1989, the constitution, formerly comprising various bills and acts, was consolidated into one document and came into force on 13 February 1990.

The constitution that came into force on 27 September 2011 introduced a greater degree of self government; stronger human rights provisions; and stronger measures to promote good governance.

Montserrat is an internally self-governing UK overseas territory. Government is executed through the Governor appointed by the British monarch, the cabinet and the Legislative Assembly.

The Governor appoints as Premier the Legislative Assembly member who has the support of a majority of the elected members. The cabinet is presided over by the Governor and includes the Premier and three other ministers, appointed by the Governor in accordance with the advice of the Premier; and, *ex officio*, the financial secretary and Attorney-General.

The Legislative Assembly has nine directly elected members and two *ex officio* members, the financial secretary and Attorney-General. Elections are held at least every five years.

Politics

Last elections: 11 September 2014

Next elections: 2019

Head of state: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by the Governor

Head of government: Premier Donaldson Romeo

Ruling party: People's Democratic Movement

In April 2001, the New People's Liberation Movement (NPLM) under the leadership of John Osborne won an early general election with seven seats; the remaining two seats were taken by the National Progressive Party led by Reuben Meade.

In the May 2006 general election the Movement for Change and Prosperity (MCP) took four seats, the governing NPLM three, Montserrat Democratic Party (MDP) one and independents one. Dr Lowell Lewis of the MDP received the support of the majority of the new legislative council and became Chief Minister.

The general election of September 2009 was won by the MCP, which took six seats; independents gained the other three, leaving the MDP without representation in parliament. MCP leader Reuben Meade was sworn in as Chief Minister. After the new constitution came into force, in October 2011 he was sworn in as Premier.

John Osborne, who served as Chief Minister for 18 years (1978–91 and 2001–06), died on 2 January 2011.

The general election of 11 September 2014 was won by the People's Democratic Movement led by Donaldson Romeo, securing seven of the nine directly elected seats and 50 per cent of the votes. The remaining two seats were won by the MCP led by Reuben Meade (35 per cent). Donaldson Romeo was sworn in as Premier on 12 September 2014.

Pitcairn Islands

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

Pitcairn Island lies in the central South Pacific, approximately half-way between Panama and New Zealand. Henderson lies at 169 km, Oeno at 121 km and Ducie at 471 km distance from Pitcairn.

Pitcairn is in the Western Hemisphere and on the American side of the International Date Line; so it and Cook Islands are almost one day behind their other Commonwealth Pacific neighbours.

Time: GMT minus 8hr

Area: 35.5 sq km; Pitcairn: 4.35 sq km; Henderson: 30.0 sq km.

Topography: Pitcairn, the only inhabited island in this territory, is a volcanic crater rising to 300 metres. It has precipitous coastal cliffs, with only one, moderately accessible, landing-place, Bounty Bay, near the main settlement of Adamstown. The soil on the islands is fertile.

Climate: Pitcairn has a subtropical climate, with mean monthly temperatures ranging from 19–24°C and an average annual rainfall of 2,000 mm.

Wildlife: In 1989 Henderson Island was included on the UNESCO World Heritage List as a bird sanctuary. Four species of birds are unique to the island: Henderson fruit dove, Henderson rail, Henderson warbler and Henderson lorikeet.

Transport/Communications: The islanders use quad bikes as their main form of transport. There are also tractors and a bulldozer on Pitcairn, and two aluminium longboats. A supply ship makes scheduled calls approximately twice a year. Container ships, yachts and other vessels call on an ad hoc basis if they are passing; in 2000 there were 54 visits; in 2001, 58 visits; and in 2002, 56 visits. There is a basic telephone system on Pitcairn. Overseas telephone and fax communications are maintained via satellite only.

Society

Population: 54 (2012). Overpopulation on Pitcairn has been a problem in the past, leading to evacuations in 1831 and 1856, but the Pitcairners have always returned. The population reached a peak of 233 in 1937, and declined for many years, reaching 55 in 1993 and 40 in January 1998. It has remained above that level since then.

Language: The official languages are English and (since 1997) Pitkern, a mixture of English and Tahitian, with English predominating.

Religion: The islanders have been Seventh Day Adventists since 1887 and do not therefore celebrate Easter.

Health: Medical care is provided by a trained nurse.

Education: Primary education is available on the island and secondary-level students participate in correspondence courses. There is one all-age school and education is compulsory from age five to 15 years. Scholarships are available for secondary and higher education in New Zealand.

Media: The monthly newsletter, *The Pitcairn Miscellany*, is edited by the resident school teacher. It is available in print and online.

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Bounty Day (28 April), Queen's Official Birthday (one of the first three Saturdays in June, in line with the UK), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Economy

Currency: New Zealand dollar

The annual budget for Pitcairn is around NZ\$1 million. Despite prudent financial management, Pitcairn's annual expenditure consistently exceeds revenue. The main government revenue derives from the sale of postage stamps and of internet domain addresses. The islanders fish, and produce vegetables and fruit (including sweet potatoes, sugar cane, taro, oranges, bananas and coffee), for their own consumption and for sale to the occasional passing ships. In the latter 1990s they developed beekeeping and honey production.

There is also a mail-order trade in carving and basketware; and island produce and curios are sold to passing cruiseships. Miro trees, which grow on the Henderson atoll, provide wood for handicrafts. A range of minerals, including manganese, iron, copper, gold, silver and zinc, has been discovered within the exclusive economic zone, which extends 370 km offshore and comprises 880,000 sq km.

History

Although there are archaeological remains indicating habitation by Polynesian people 600 years ago, Pitcairn's modern population arises from its occupation in 1790 by Fletcher Christian and eight of the mutineers from HMS *Bounty*, 12 Tahitian women and six men. It became a British settlement in 1887, being placed under the jurisdiction of the British high commissioner for the Western Pacific in 1898, and the Governor of Fiji in 1952. The UK high commissioner in New Zealand has been the Governor since 1970.

Administration

The island council has ten members – four councillors and the chairman of the internal committee are elected annually between 1 and 15 December, one is nominated by the council and two, including the island secretary, are appointed by the Governor. It is presided over by the island mayor (elected every three years in December). A commissioner manages the day-to-day operations of the island and liaises with the Governor's Office in Wellington (New Zealand), the island council and the Governor's representative on Pitcairn. A judicial system comprising a magistrate's court, supreme court and appeal court has been established. There is no taxation, nor any banking facilities.

St Helena and St Helena Dependencies

St Helena lies in the South Atlantic Ocean, with Ascension 1,131 km to the north-west, and Tristan da Cunha 2,100 km to the south.

St Helena

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

St Helena lies 1,931 km from the coast of Angola, Africa.

Time: GMT

Area: 122 sq km

Topography: St Helena is volcanic and mountainous, with perpendicular cliffs of 490–700 metres on the eastern, northern and western sides of the island, and mountains to 820 metres to the south. The only inland waters are small streams, few of them perennial, fed by springs in the central hills.

Climate: The climate is subtropical and mild, with annual rainfall varying from 200 mm at sea level to 760 mm in the centre, with continuous trade winds.

Vegetation: Indigenous vegetation includes cabbage trees, cedars, bamboo and banana plants. There are approximately 45 plants unique to St Helena. Arable land and pastures comprise some 15 per cent of the land area and woods and forests some seven per cent.

Main settlements: Half Tree Hollow, Longwood, St Paul's and Jamestown.

Transport/Communications: There are 118 km of paved roads and about 20 km of earth roads, with 2,066 licensed vehicles at the end of 2000.

The only port is Jamestown. The RMS *St Helena* provides a passenger and freight service between St Helena and the UK, and more frequent services between St Helena, Ascension and Cape Town.

The international dialling code is 290. There are 612 main telephone lines and 68 internet users per 1,000 people (2012).

Society

Population: 4,000 (2009); population density 33 per sq km; life expectancy 79 years. The inhabitants are of diverse origins, and principally African, European and Chinese.

Language: English is the official language.

Religion: Mainly Christians (Anglicans at least 80 per cent); St Helena forms a diocese of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa.

Health: Jamestown has a small hospital with several medical officers and a dentist.

Education: Education is free and compulsory for ten years from age five to 15. There are four years of primary and four years of secondary education; four first schools, three middle schools and one upper school. The school year starts in September.

Media: *St Helena Herald* and *The St Helena Independent* are weekly newspapers; and Radio St Helena is a radio station.

Economy

Currency: St Helena pound, at par with pound sterling

Fishing and agriculture are the main economic activities. Poultry, pigs, sheep, goats and cattle are produced for domestic consumption. A tourist office was established in 1998 with a view to developing tourism aimed at visitors sailing on the RMS *St Helena*.

Aid

Imports generally greatly exceed exports and the islanders rely on UK aid to make up the balance.

History

St Helena was discovered by the Portuguese navigator Joao da Nova in 1502 and named by him after the saint of that day. The Dutch later annexed it, but it was finally taken over by the British East India Company in 1661, the charter being issued by King Charles II in 1673. It was brought under Crown government in April 1834. Napoleon was exiled on St Helena (in Longwood House, now a museum) from 1815 until his death in 1821. Jamestown was a busy port until 1870, when steam ships and the opening of the Suez Canal changed sea routes. It was of strategic importance during World War II.

Constitution

The present constitution came into force in 1989. It provides for a Governor (of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha), representing the British monarch who is head of state, and a legislative council (for St Helena), consisting of a Speaker, three *ex officio* members and 12 elected members.

Administration

Five committees of the legislative council are responsible for general oversight of the activities of the five biggest spending government departments, and have in addition a range of statutory and administrative functions. The Governor is also assisted by an executive council of the three *ex officio* members and the five chairpersons of the council committees. A process of constitutional modernisation began in 2003, with the aim of introducing a larger degree of self-government.

Ascension Island

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

Time: GMT

Area: 88 sq km

Topography: Ascension Island is the peak of a 3,500 metres volcanic mountain range mostly submerged and rising 875 metres above sea level. There are on the island 44 dormant, but not extinct, volcanoes. There are no surface streams.

Climate: Tropical with strongly moderating and stabilising oceanic influence. Mean temperatures show very little seasonal variation (27–31°C) and rainfall is light (165 mm at sea level and much higher on Green Mountain).

Vegetation: Though previously barren, with increasing precipitation, the island is becoming greener, with lush tropical

vegetation on Green Mountain, where there is a farm, and increasingly in other parts of the island. An invasive thorn tree of Mexican origin has spread over half the island, transforming the bare volcanic scenery. Biological and mechanical measures have been adopted to limit further spread.

Wildlife: The island's 32 crescent-shaped beaches provide a critical breeding area for the endangered green turtles which visit each year from December to May. It is the most important seabird breeding site in the tropical Atlantic. Many thousands of sooty terns breed on the island while others including the endemic Ascension frigate bird, the red and yellow-billed tropic birds and the rare red-footed booby breed on Boatswain Bird Island and offshore rocks. The waters surrounding the island are rich in marine life, including tuna, sharks, marlin and sailfish.

Main settlement: Georgetown

Transport/Communications: There are 40 km of roads. The RMS *St Helena* provides a regular service between the UK, Ascension, St Helena and Cape Town. A UK Ministry of Defence charter cargo ship calls monthly and a US supply ship calls six times a year. There are regular flights of the UK and US air forces. From October 2003, non-scheduled civilian charter flights were permitted to use the military Wideawake Airfield.

The international dialling code is 247.

Society

Population: 950 (2009); 1,123 (1998 census), 719 St Helenians, 192 Americans and the rest from the UK; population density 11 per sq km. There are no permanent residents; the population comprises employees and their families on contract to one of the organisations operating on the island or to the local government. Ascension is part of the Anglican diocese of St Helena and the Roman Catholic Apostolate of the South Atlantic and Antarctica.

Education: free and compulsory from age five to 16 years. There is one primary and one secondary school.

Media: *The Islander* is the weekly newspaper. The Administrator's website, providing information on the territory, is at www.ascension-island.gov.ac.

Economy

Sales of postage stamps and raising of transit charges only provide limited revenue. A fiscal regime was introduced in April 2002, providing additional revenue through a combination of income tax, customs duties and a property tax.

The British Broadcasting Corporation established its Atlantic Relay Station in 1966 (for broadcasts to South America and West Africa). Since April 2001, the Ascension Island Government has provided and funded public services such as education, health care and infrastructure management. It also runs the savings bank, the post office and police force.

Ascension experienced rapid development in 1982 during the Falklands conflict between the UK and Argentina, and has continued to be utilised as a supply link to the South Atlantic. Agreement on use of Wideawake Airfield by civilian charter flights opened up opportunities for new economic activities.

History

Ascension was discovered by the Portuguese in 1501 and named on a subsequent visit on Ascension Day 1503. When Napoleon was

exiled on St Helena in 1815, such was the respect he engendered that the British also placed garrisons on Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. After Napoleon died in 1821, the island was used as a base for ships engaged in the suppression of the slave trade on the West African coast and remained under the supervision of the British Admiralty until it was made a dependency of St Helena in 1922 and was then managed by the Eastern Telegraph Company (renamed Cable & Wireless in 1934), until the appointment of an Administrator in 1964. The USA first established a war-time air base there in 1942, which it then reoccupied in 1957 and later, for a period, used in connection with the tracking of the Apollo Space programme. In 1982 it was an important staging post for the UK in the Falklands conflict.

Administration

The Governor of St Helena is concurrently Governor of Ascension. There is a resident Administrator, who administers the island on behalf of the Governor and is also the chief magistrate (and is assisted by six justices of the peace), the coroner, registrar of births, marriages and deaths, immigration officer, harbour master and receiver of wrecks. Elections were held in November 2002 for the island's first advisory island council.

Tristan da Cunha

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

Tristan da Cunha lies 2,400 km west of Cape Town. The island group also includes Inaccessible Island, the three Nightingale Islands (all uninhabited) and Gough Island, which has a weather station.

Time: GMT

Area: 98 sq km

Topography: Tristan da Cunha is a small, almost circular, volcanic island, rising to 2,060 metres.

Climate: The climate is warm-temperate, with 1,675 mm average annual rainfall in Edinburgh.

Wildlife: The group of islands provides breeding grounds for albatrosses, rock-hopper penguins and seals, and a number of unique species, including the flightless land rail. Gough Island is a world heritage site.

Main settlement: Edinburgh of the Seven Seas is the only permanent settlement.

Transport/Communications: Crawfish trawlers from Cape Town call about six times a year, and supplies are brought once a year both by RMS *St Helena* (from the UK) and *Agulhas* (from Cape Town). Several cruiseships also call each year. There is no airfield.

The international dialling code is 247. As of 2007, virtually all island homes had working telephones. There are permanent internet services.

Society

Population: 250 (2009), mainly of UK origin.

Religion: An Anglican chaplain is provided from South Africa and a Roman Catholic priest from the UK.

Health: The UK provides an optician and dentist (calling once each year), and a resident doctor.

Education: free and compulsory from age five to 15 years, provided at one all-age school.

Media: *The Tristan Times* is published weekly.

Economy

Tristan da Cunha supports itself through a substantial fishing industry based around the Tristan rock lobster, including a fish-freezing plant. Some income is also earned from the sale of stamps to philatelists, and handicrafts. Apart from capital projects, it has been financially independent from the UK since 1980.

History

The islands were discovered in 1506 by a Portuguese admiral, Tristão de Cunha. The first occupation of the island was the British garrison placed there in 1816, some of whom elected to stay on after its withdrawal; by 1886 it had a population of 97. Missionaries provided services as priests, teachers, honorary commissioners and magistrates in the first half of the 20th century, but otherwise the islanders were virtually isolated until a meteorological and wireless station was built there during World War II. In 1948, a crawfish industry began, providing employment.

In 1961, a volcano erupted near the settlement of Edinburgh and the entire island had to be evacuated; a few have since settled in the UK but most islanders chose to return in 1963.

Administration

The Governor of St Helena is concurrently Governor of Tristan da Cunha. Locally, there is an Administrator (also the magistrate), and an island council with three *ex officio* and eight elected members, one of whom must be a woman.

South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

The island of South Georgia lies approximately 1,390 km east-south-east of the Falkland Islands. It is some 170 km long and varies in width from 2 km to 40 km.

The South Sandwich Islands are a further 640 km to the south-east of South Georgia. The islands are volcanic, ice-bound in winter and difficult of approach. They are uninhabited and, like South Georgia, rich in wildlife.

Topography: South Georgia is extremely mountainous, and over half the island is permanently covered by snow or ice. The north-east, leeward side of the island offers a number of safe anchorages.

Vegetation and wildlife: The Territory is of great importance for sub-Antarctic flora and fauna. South Georgia is the breeding ground for some 95 per cent of the world's Antarctic fur seal population as well as globally significant populations of elephant seals, albatrosses, petrels and penguins. Reindeer were introduced in about 1911 by Norwegian whaling companies. Only the coastal fringes of South Georgia support vegetation, mainly in the form of tussock grass. The Government of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands recognises the islands' significance for global conservation and is committed to providing a sustainable policy framework, which conserves, manages and protects the islands'

rich natural environment while at the same time allowing for human activities and for the generation of revenue which allows this to be achieved. This framework was set out in the 2000 *South Georgia Environmental Management Plan*. The South Sandwich Islands represent a maritime ecosystem scarcely modified by human activities.

Society

Population: There is no permanent human population on South Georgia. However, there is a team of scientists from the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) based at the research station at the administrative centre of King Edward Point, replacing the small military detachment which had been there since British forces recaptured the island in 1982. This research station (built in 2001) provides valuable scientific advice to the South Georgia Government on the sustainable management of the commercial fishery around South Georgia which represents the main source of income for the government. BAS also maintains an all-year research station on Bird Island off the north-west point of South Georgia. Other officials based at King Edward Point include a marine officer/harbour master and the curators of the South Georgia Museum.

Economy

Some 90 per cent of government revenue is derived from the sale of fishing licences, with sales of stamps and commemorative coins, customs and harbour dues, and landing and transshipment fees contributing the rest.

History

In 1775 Captain James Cook made the first landing on South Georgia and claimed it in the name of King George III. In 1904, the first whaling station was established at Grytviken, and in 1909 Britain appointed a resident magistrate. The whaling industry collapsed in the mid-1960s and the whaling stations were abandoned. In 1982, the island was briefly occupied by Argentine forces. Until 1985, both South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands were dependencies of the Falkland Islands, but from that date were constituted as a separate colony of the UK.

Concern over unregulated fishing led in 1993 to the establishment of a maritime zone of 370 km around the islands and to the introduction in August 1993 of a regime for the conservation and management of the fisheries in the zone.

Administration

The Governor of the Falkland Islands is concurrently Commissioner for South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, and is responsible for the conduct of government business, including legislation. The commissioner is assisted by the first secretary at Government House in Stanley, who is concurrently assistant commissioner and director of fisheries, and by an operations manager. The Attorney-General and financial secretary from the Falkland Islands fulfil parallel roles in South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

South Georgia has a rich heritage stemming from its past prominence as a staging post for Antarctic discovery and a centre for sealing and whaling. Consequently it is attracting an increasing number of tourists and other visitors interested in research. The government welcomes such visits to the territory but all visitors, irrespective of their nationality and mode of transport, must apply in advance to the commissioner for permission to do so.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Status: UK overseas territory

Geography

Turks and Caicos Islands form the southern tip of the Bahamas chain in the north of the Caribbean region. Their nearest neighbour to the south is the Dominican Republic. They comprise two groups of about 40 islands. The Turks Islands take their name from the red flowers of a type of indigenous cactus which, to 17th-century Spanish sailors, resembled the headgear of Turkish men. Two of the eight Turks Islands are inhabited: Grand Turk and Salt Cay. Principal islands of the Caicos group (Spanish *cayos*: cays) are: South Caicos, East Caicos, Middle (or Grand) Caicos, North Caicos, Providenciales and West Caicos.

Time: GMT minus 5hr. The clock is advanced by one hour from the first Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October.

Area: 500 sq km

Topography: The islands are all flat sandy cays, nowhere higher than 75 metres. The Turks Islands passage, a deep channel 35 km across, separates the two island groups.

Climate: Constant south-east trade winds freshen the air in the otherwise tropical climate. Rainfall is variable: about 525 mm on Grand Turk and generally higher in the Caicos Islands. Hurricanes are a danger.

Vegetation: Forest covers 36 per cent of the land area.

Main settlements: Cockburn Town (capital) on Grand Turk; and Cockburn Harbour, straddling South and East Caicos. The most populous islands are Providenciales, Grand Turk, North Caicos, South Caicos and East Caicos.

Transport/Communications: There are surfaced and unsurfaced roads on all inhabited islands.

The main seaports are Grand Turk, Salt Cay, Providenciales and Cockburn Harbour. Regular cargo and postal services operate to/from Miami.

The country has three international airports, on Grand Turk, Providenciales and South Caicos. There are landing strips on Salt Cay, Pine Cay, Parrot Cay, Middle Caicos and North Caicos.

The international dialling code is 1 649. There are 114 main telephone lines per 1,000 people (2012).

Society

Population: 32,000 (2012); 92 per cent of people live in urban areas; population density 64 per sq km; population was 12,350 at the 1990 census. The population has grown rapidly due to immigration from other Caribbean countries, especially Haiti, including a substantial number of illegal immigrants, making it difficult to estimate the population; life expectancy 79 years.

Some 60 per cent of the population are Turks and Caicos Islands nationals, around 20 per cent from Haiti, seven per cent from The Bahamas and four per cent from the USA. Most of the people are of African descent.

Language: The official and national language is English; Haitian immigrants speak a French-based Creole.

Religion: Mainly Christians (Baptists 40 per cent in 1990, Anglicans 18 per cent, Methodists 16 per cent, Church of God 12 per cent).

Health: The general hospital is on Grand Turk; it has a maternity ward and a geriatric block, an operating theatre and a laboratory with X-ray facilities. There are clinics, staffed by nurses and visited fortnightly by medical officers, on Salt Cay, South Caicos, Middle Caicos and North Caicos; there is a full-time medical officer on Providenciales and a health complex offering 24-hour secondary health care. Dental services are provided at a dental clinic and visits by dental professionals to the clinics. Further medical back-up is available in The Bahamas, Jamaica and the USA. Infant mortality is about 11 per 1,000 live births (2012).

Education: There are 13 years of compulsory education starting at age four. Net enrolment ratios are 78 per cent for primary and 70 per cent for secondary (2005). The pupil–teacher ratio for primary is 15:1 and for secondary 9:1 (2005). The school year starts in September.

At tertiary level, the Community College on Grand Turk offers vocational and professional education, and the new Windsor University at Cockburn Town on Grand Turk provides medical training. There are three public libraries.

Media: The newspapers are *Turks and Caicos Free Press* (weekly), *Turks and Caicos Sun* and *Turks and Caicos Weekly News*. Radio Turks and Caicos on Grand Turk provides a public service to all islands.

Public holidays: New Year's Day, Commonwealth Day (second Monday in March), National Heroes' Day (last Monday in May), Queen's Official Birthday (Monday in June), Emancipation Day (first Monday in August), National Youth Day (last Friday in September), Columbus Day (Monday in October), International Human Rights Day (24 October), Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Religious and other festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Good Friday and Easter Monday.

Economy

Currency: US dollar

GDP: US\$730m (2012)

Tourist arrivals: 354,000 (2011)

Tourism and financial services have become the main economic activities in Turks and Caicos Islands. Reflecting the openness of the economy, its close links with the USA and use of the US dollar as domestic currency, domestic prices tend to follow US prices. The main export is seafood products, including lobster and conch.

The economy was sluggish in 2001–02, owing to the slowdown in the USA, but expanded strongly in 2003–07. But after the global financial crisis and world economic downturn hit both tourism and financial services, GDP growth went sharply into reverse in 2009 (–20 per cent), before recovering in 2010–12.

History

The islands, then uninhabited, were discovered by Juan Ponce de Leon in 1512, but there was no settlement. After about 1678 Bermudians came and went; they raked sea salt between March and November. Driven away by the Spaniards in 1710, they returned soon afterwards, despite harassment. After the American

War of Independence (1775–81) loyalist planters from the southern part of what is now the United States settled on the islands, bringing African-descended slaves with them.

After the abolition of slavery (1834), many of the planters left, but their former slaves remained, and the islands were administered from The Bahamas until 1848, when the inhabitants petitioned for, and were granted, separate colonial status, with an elected Legislative Board and an Administrative President. In 1873, following another petition from the inhabitants, the islands were annexed to Jamaica, but kept their own legislative board and had their own commissioner.

In the period of the Cold War, Turks and Caicos was used for deployment of various Western armaments. The USA retained an air base on South Caicos from 1944 to 1947, and in 1952 a guided missile base was set up on Grand Turk.

In 1959 moves towards representative government were put into effect. The Governor of Jamaica also became Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands. An assembly and executive council were established. In 1962, when Jamaica chose to become independent, the country became a Crown colony without a Governor, but with an Administrator. In November 1965 the Governor of The Bahamas also became the Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands. In 1973, when The Bahamas became independent, the islands got their own Governor, responsible for defence, internal security and foreign affairs, and their own legal jurisdiction. Under the constitution of August 1976, provision was made for a Chief Minister and up to three ministers empowered to govern the country in accordance with decisions of the executive council.

The general election in January 1995 was won by the People's Democratic Movement (PDM), with eight seats in the legislative council; the Progressive National Party (PNP) took four and one seat was won by an independent. PDM leader Derek Taylor became Chief Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Planning.

In March 1999 the PDM again won with nine of the 13 elective seats and 52 per cent of the votes; the PNP took four seats.

Constitution

The constitution of August 2006 provides for a Governor (representing the British monarch, who is head of state); a cabinet of two *ex officio* members (the financial secretary and the Attorney-General), the Premier and other ministers; and (replacing the legislative council) a unicameral House of Assembly of 21 members, 15 of whom are directly elected for a four-year term, four nominated from the cabinet, one *ex officio* (the Attorney-General) and the Speaker.

In August 2009 the UK Government suspended ministerial government and the House of Assembly and imposed direct rule for a period of up to two years, when elections would be held. In September 2010 the UK Government announced the indefinite postponement of elections until certain requirements were met; these included conclusion of the investigation into allegations of corruption against some former members of the PNP government, and constitutional and public administration reforms, imposing stricter financial controls; a smaller public service; and tax reform. A new constitution embodying these reforms was adopted in October 2011.

Politics

Last elections: 9 November 2012

Next elections: 2016

Head of state: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by the Governor

Head of government: Premier Rufus Ewing

Ruling party: Progressive National Party

In the April 2003 election, when the ruling People's Democratic Movement (PDM) was returned for a third consecutive term, the opposition Progressive National Party (PNP) filed election petitions against the results in two constituencies. The Chief Justice declared the results in both districts void and the PDM no longer had a majority in the legislative council. The Governor, acting in accordance with the constitution, issued writs for by-elections in the two constituencies to be held on 7 August. The PNP won both seats in the by-elections giving them a majority of 8:5 in the legislative council, and Michael Misick was sworn in as Chief Minister on 15 August 2003. Under the new constitution in August 2006 Misick's title was changed to Premier.

In the February 2007 general election, the ruling PNP received 60 per cent of the votes and was returned with 13 seats, the PDM taking the remaining two elective seats.

In February 2009, an investigation led by a British judge found a 'high probability of systemic corruption' in Misick's administration. The resignation of Misick and several of his ministers followed and Galmo Williams became Premier until August 2009 when the UK Government dissolved the cabinet and legislature and Governor Gordon Wetherell assumed executive powers.

Wetherell was succeeded as Governor by Damian Roderic Todd in September 2011. In the general election that was held in November 2012 the PNP won eight seats and the PDM seven, and PNP leader Rufus Ewing was sworn in as Premier.

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