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**C**ampaign for an **E**nglish **P**arliament  
*The Voice of England*

# **Think of England**

## **Number 85 : November 2018**



**Championing England  
& Challenging Prejudice**

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Number 85 November 2018

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## Campaign for an English Parliament Aims, Principles and Policies.

We campaign for an English Parliament, meaning a parliament for the people of England, for whom England is their chosen or inherited home and who are legally entitled to vote.

We campaign for an English Parliament with powers at least as great as those of Scotland's, i.e. a Parliament and Executive (Government) that can make Acts (primary legislation) on the same domestic issues (e.g. health, welfare & education) that are devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

The CEP works with academics, business groups, trades unions, think tanks and the media to create the conditions whereby UK MPs see that there is no alternative to the re-establishment of the English Parliament.

The CEP is a pressure group. It is not a political party. It does not contest elections.

The CEP is not and will not be affiliated to or formally linked with any political party

**Editorial:** The Stephen Haseler memorial lecture tells us only that Brendan Donnelly dislikes us and that Brexit is all our fault for being selfish. He refers to so-called English exceptionalism. Doesn't every nation think it is



unique? Indeed it is that uniqueness that makes them interesting. He also makes an extraordinary claim that the electoral roll for a national vote namely the EU referendum should have, uniquely, been extended to expatriots, foreign nationals and sub-adults. We never heard that the devolution referendums should have been extended to the rest of the UK!

The budget awarded the rest of the UK increased funding. You may wonder why England was not included? That is because we get what is politically expedient to the UK government and remains after all other priorities have been addressed. I have included the UK government's great plan for a greener country. What wonderful aspirations but how do you square that with an ever increasing population demanding housing, water, power and roads? Note that the UK Government only has power over England in these matters and that includes the Agriculture Bill currently going through the UK Parliament. Very little of that Bill will apply to the rest of the UK when it is passed into law. Inquiry witnesses referred to the inadvisability of future English regulations creating trade barriers with Scotland. Well the SNP did that shamelessly when their caucus voted against the UK government's proposal to extend Sunday trading hours in England to match those already in place in Scotland.

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**Campaigning for England:** The Campaign for an English Parliament is a Company limited by guarantee for which Company members are responsible. Company members and the National Council (Board of Directors) are required by law to hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) to carry out formal Company decisions. In addition following completion of that business the meeting is thrown open to members of the Campaign.

The AGM for 2018 will take place on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> November at 1.00 pm in the Fellow, Kings Cross, 24, York Way, London, N1 9AA, 0207 8334395



### MEMORIAL LECTURE FOR STEPHEN HASELER

4th OCTOBER 2018

#### Will Brexit Destroy the United Kingdom?

Delivered by **Brendan Donnelly**, Director, The Federal Trust for Education & Research

Unsurprisingly, I have very mixed feelings about giving this lecture today. I am flattered and honoured to have been invited to speak as a memorial lecturer for Stephen. His contribution to the work and discussion of the Global Policy Institute and of the Federal Trust was immense and will never be forgotten. Many of the topics at the centre of current political discussion, the role of the super-rich in modern capitalism, the concealed fragility of long-standing British institutions, English exceptionalism, were broached in Stephen's writings long before they became fashionable..... Stephen was less surprised than many by the outcome of the EU referendum in June 2016. He rightly saw it as the consequence of the cracks and tensions within British political society which he had been discussing for many years..... The way in which the decision to hold a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU was taken faithfully mirrored a number of Stephen's abiding concerns about the functioning of the United Kingdom. It was a decision with the most far-reaching potential effects of every kind for the country taken with little care for its wider consequences, and almost exclusively in the Conservative party interest to meet a specifically English problem..... No account was taken in the decision to hold the referendum of the interests of other parts of the United Kingdom apart from England. (*Actually no it was designed to be in the interests of the Tory party, which he fumes against elsewhere. Ed.*)..... So confident was David Cameron of winning the 2016 referendum that he allowed the franchise to be tilted significantly towards the Leave side by excluding from the vote 17- and 18-year olds, EU citizens of long residence in the UK and British citizens of long residence elsewhere in the EU, all of which voters could well have voted in their majority to remain in the EU. Mr. Cameron also allowed the Eurosceptic wing of his party to pre-empt official campaigning by the Conservative Party, proclaiming the party neutral in a referendum called by its leader (*Does he mean 16 & 17 year olds, as 18 year olds can vote in national elections. Moreover EU nationals are, quite rightly, by law only allowed to vote in local elections. Neutral? What about the millions spent on 'project fear'?Ed.*).....if any kind of Brexit takes place, and even perhaps if Brexit does not take place, the constitutional stability of the United Kingdom will be and indeed already has been gravely undermined. This was an issue to which Stephen Haseler was always particularly sensitive. He often spoke of the United Kingdom as an "English superstate," the constitutional immobilism of which contained within it the seeds of its own destruction.....I should personally not be surprised if in ten years' time Northern Ireland has ceased to be part of the United Kingdom..... Similar considerations apply to Scotland. A "no deal" Brexit would be a major shot in the arm for the Scottish National Party, and an Irish backstop for "hard Brexit" would inevitably create demands for similar treatment of Scotland. There is already a willing audience in Scotland for claims that the London government is looking to retain for itself all powers returned to the United Kingdom from the EU after Brexit. These complaints will inevitably grow in political prominence and resonance over the years of the "transition" period..... A "hard Brexit" instead of a referendum would confirm forever the status of the Conservative Party as the flagship of English nationalism.

*(Exceptionalism is the perception or belief that a species, country, society, institution, movement, individual, or time period is "exceptional" (i.e., unusual or extraordinary). The term carries the implication that the referent is superior in some way, whether specified or not. Although the idea appears to have developed with respect to an era, today the term is particularly applied in national or regional contexts (from Wikipedia)*

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English Affairs and English Politics are issues that should be decided only by an English Parliament

## Current English Affairs: Budget

**Times 30/10/18: DEVOLVED FUNDING:** An additional £950million has been pledged for the Scottish government, £550 million for the Welsh government and £320 million for a Northern Ireland Executive in the period to 2020-21.

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## English politics: A green (English) future?, Brexit Agriculture Bill

The Government published its 25-year plan to improve the environment 'A Green Future' on 11 January 2018.

**Background to the plan:** The idea of a 25-year environment plan arose from a proposal in a Natural Committee Capital (an independent advisory committee to the Government) report in March 2014 that the Government should provide a 25 year framework to maintain and improve natural capital. The Government then endorsed this recommendation. A commitment for a 25-year environment plan was later made part of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (Defra) former single departmental plan (2015-2020), published February 2016. The Natural Capital Committee published advice and recommendations on what the Government should consider in developing the plan on 28 September 2017.

**Aims of the Plan:** The Prime Minister identified the protection and enhancement of the natural environment as a "central priority" for the Government as part of delivering its manifesto pledge to "be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it". Aspects of the Plan relate to England only, whereas others relate to the UK as a whole. The executive summary commits the Government to championing sustainable development and further elaborates the broad aims of the Plan: "...to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first. The Plan looks forward to delivering a Green Brexit – seizing this once-in-a lifetime chance to reform our agriculture and fisheries management, how we restore nature, and how we care for our land, our rivers and our seas."

**Government Goals:** Clean air; Clean and plentiful water; Thriving plants and wildlife; A reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards such as drought and flooding; Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently; Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment. In addition: managing pressures on the environment by: Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Minimising waste; Managing exposure to chemicals; Enhancing biosecurity.

**Brexit:** The plan is framed in the context of Brexit and the Government's previous commitments to continue EU environmental rights on a UK legal basis and its intention to uphold its obligations under international environmental treaties. The Plan clarifies that it is not pre-empting discussions with the devolved nations regarding the shape of common frameworks after Brexit, but confirms the Government will continue to work with the devolved Administrations on these aspects.

It reiterates the Government's intention to consult on a new, independent statutory body that would hold Government to account for upholding environmental standards in **England**; and to consult on the scope and content of a new policy statement to ensure environmental principles underpin policy making.

**Key policy areas:** Using a "natural capital" approach to protecting and enhancing the environment, by recognising its tangible and non-tangible economic benefits.

The establishment of a **green business council** to advise government on "environmental entrepreneurialism". A natural environment impact fund is being mooted to support this which would use natural capital valuations; Introducing a principle of "**environmental net gain**" into planning decisions where wider natural capital benefits will be assessed as part of the planning process; Achieving zero avoidable **plastic waste** by the end of 2042 through a number of initiatives;

A commitment to reducing the risk of harm to people, the environment and the economy from natural hazards including **flooding, drought and coastal erosion**.

The aims for a post-Brexit **sustainable fisheries policy**, based on a natural capital approach;

A new commitment to publishing an **overarching chemicals strategy** to set out the UK's approach as it leaves the EU;



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Initial proposals for a new **environmental land management system** (based on paying public money for public 'goods' such as environmental enhancement), which will be set out in a Command Paper later this spring - a pre-cursor to the Agriculture Bill which will set out post-Brexit support arrangements for farmers;

A target of ensuring the **sustainable management of soil** by 2030 and establishing sufficient data to understand the current state of soil health;

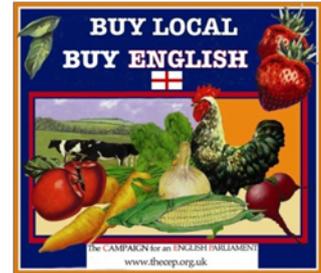
An aim to **increase woodland in England** in line with the aspiration of achieving 12% cover by 2060: this would involve planting 180,000 hectares by the end of 2042; and

A goal to **mitigate and adapt to climate change** by doing "what is necessary to adapt to the its effects". The Government proposes to update the Plan at least every 5 years, and to report annually on progress to Parliament. A set of indicators will be developed to monitor progress.

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**In June The Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee launched its report, The future for food, farming and the environment.**

The inquiry focused on the impacts of leaving the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and whether the Government's White Paper proposals will deliver on its ambitions to both increase farm competitiveness and enhance the environment. The Committee is calling on the Government to ring-fence funding for farming post-Brexit, provide much greater details on its new support mechanisms for farmers, and ensure environmental and welfare standards are maintained on products entering Britain.



**Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):** The report highlights the need for the Government to produce a thorough sectoral assessment of these impacts to identify support for small and medium-sized farms and should commit to ring fencing the funds released to fund the rural economy and environment. Withdrawing Direct Payments will have a varied impact between sectors, and particularly damaging effects will be felt by grazing livestock, cereal and mixed farms.

**Farm competitiveness:** Agricultural productivity is in decline and the UK is falling behind its competitors, the White Paper fails to address the barriers to productivity and so will not support the Government's ambitions for farming in **England**. It should produce a farm productivity plan by May 2019 that investigates new tax breaks, advice centres, capital grant support and the successor to the agri-tech fund, amongst other areas of exploration.

**Environmental Public Goods:** There is broad support for including animal health and welfare within Defra's public money for public goods policy, but the paper has failed to consider wider food policy with public impact such as reducing diet-related diseases. It should support healthy food in payment models to farming, and bring forward changes to Government buying standards and ensure use of healthy, affordable and British food in Government procurement.

**Trade and labelling:** Defra's involvement in agri-food negotiations is positive, and the Committee is calling on the Government to ensure that trade agreements always prevent agri-food products that do not meet our environmental, animal welfare and food standards from entering the country. This will be supported by the Committee's recommendation to improve country of origin food labelling.

**Background:** Once the UK leaves the EU, the Government plans to incentivise methods of farming that create new habitats for wildlife, increase biodiversity, reduce flood risk, better mitigate climate change and improve air quality by reducing agricultural emissions. It intends to do this by leaving the European Common Agricultural Policy and implementing a new system based on paying public money for public goods. The Government published its agriculture consultation 'Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit' on 27 February 2018. This paper consulted on a new domestic settlement for agriculture in **England** which will help deliver the Government's ambitions to "provide better support for farmers and land managers who maintain, restore, or create precious habitats for wildlife". The results of this consultation will inform the upcoming Agriculture Bill, due later in 2018.

Agricultural policy is a devolved issue, as are other areas of legislation relating to farming. The consultation focuses on the approach to be adopted in **England** but notes that the UK Government and devolved administrations are working together to determine common frameworks in areas that are currently governed by EU law.

**Devolution:** Agriculture and environmental protection are competences devolved to the governments of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Although agricultural policies are agreed at the EU level, there is

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some discretion to vary Direct Payments to farmers and introduce separate rural development programmes. The consultation set out the future for agriculture in **England** and does not reference potential changes in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

However witnesses cautioned that there must be an element of regulatory alignment to retain the functioning of the UK single market. George Dunn from the Tenant Farmers Association told us:

What we would not want is to see **England** take a different approach on a regulatory matter that made Scotland decide not to trade food across that border [...] We need to be mindful that we live in a single market within the UK, and ensure that we protect that marketplace from a trading perspective, but also allow sufficient devolution for the policy framework. [...] We run the theoretical risk of having that type of arrangement where there are trade barriers between parts of the UK.

After exit from the EU, each constituent part of the UK will be able to determine its new agricultural policy to address its specific needs. There may be areas where a common approach is helpful, such as in determining standards for plant and animal health and welfare. Regulatory alignment in these areas will support the functioning of the UK single market. Where these UK wide agreements are made, they must be agreed, following consultation, and with the support of the Governments of the constituent parts of the UK.

When it comes to designing new agricultural models in each country, such as payment for public goods, organisations suggested there could be more flexibility. Tim Breitmeyer, discussing Wales, said: “they [the Welsh Government] should have sufficient control over their own policy, particularly when it comes to the whole public goods model and the environmental side of it. I can understand that, because there are differing priorities there”.

We put to the Minister that Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish farmers may end up in receipt of greater financial support which could undermine farmers in **England**. He suggested that this would not occur due to state aid rules and an agreed UK framework:

In addition, to promote clarity in **English** agriculture, we recommend that Defra confirms as soon as possible: The timing and length of the “agricultural transition” period that gives farm businesses a reasonable time to plan and adapt; the status of cross-compliance and “greening” conditionality during the transition period; and that all existing environmental schemes will be supported to their completion.

### **Appendix: Government Response**

The Government welcomes the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee’s report, ‘The future for food, farming and the environment’.

The Agriculture Bill (‘the Bill’) was introduced on 12 September.

The aim of the consultation document was not to outline detailed policy on the areas set out above and those raised in the Committee’s report, but to set a clear direction for future farm support in **England**—our proposal to spend public money on the things which have public value—without being overly prescriptive about how this would be achieved.

During the consultation period, the Government engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that we elaborate an agriculture policy which benefits British farmers, the environment, animal welfare, consumers, taxpayers and the wider rural community. In addition officials from Defra, Natural **England**, the Rural Payments Agency, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency facilitated 17 regional stakeholder events in **England** across a six-week period, each co-hosted by Defra with a stakeholder organisation. Over 1,250 people attended these events, including a mix of farmers, land owners, agronomists, environmental specialists and other interested stakeholders.

**Devolution:** Leaving the European Union gives us the opportunity to determine the most appropriate level of government for powers that return from the EU, ensuring that decision making sits closer to the people of the UK than ever before. It is our intention that each administration has the freedom to design policies that support their farming sectors and enhance their environment.

Intrinsic to our approach will be as much flexibility as possible for each devolved administration to design policies to meet their own circumstances as long as they are not detrimental to other parts of the UK.

The Agriculture Bill sets out primary legislation mostly for **England**. Following close engagement with the Devolved Administrations, the Bill will legislate for the Welsh Government and Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland until they pass primary legislation in their own Administrations.



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**11 October 2018: House of Commons Public Bill Committee to consider The Agriculture Bill.** Call for those with relevant expertise and experience or a special interest in the Agriculture Bill, currently passing through Parliament?

**Aims of the Bill:** Bill provides for a range of enabling powers to ensure “stability” for farmers as the UK exits from the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy and compliance with the World Trade Organisation Agreement on Agriculture. It also introduces new measures to change the way in which farmers and land managers are supported in the longer term. It is the first substantial Brexit Bill in a domestic policy area which covers both devolved and reserved matters.

The Bill is an ‘enabling’ Bill containing 25 delegated powers with five of these allowing Ministers to modify primary legislation (Henry VIIIth powers). A Delegated Powers Memorandum and a Defra Policy Statement provide more detail on the powers being sought.

The UK Government has said that the Bill is “a deliberate departure” from the CAP approach. These delegated powers are designed to allow government policy to “evolve” in response to “changing environmental priorities and changing social and economic circumstances”, reduce the bureaucracy of farm support and regulation and to enable the government to respond to the outcomes of EU withdrawal negotiations. This includes a ‘no deal’ scenario.

The main body of the Bill applies to **England**. However, Schedule 3(Wales) and Schedule 4 (Northern Ireland) extend similar powers to Welsh Ministers and the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) so that they can start preparing replacement schemes.

These powers were extended at the request of the Welsh Government and DAERA. However, the Scottish Government has not currently taken up the offer of powers in the Bill as it is in disagreement with the UK Government about its overall approach to repatriating EU powers in devolved areas of competence. There are no specific Scottish provisions in the Bill. Scotland is however covered by the UK provisions relating to the World Trade Organisation

**Phasing out of Direct Payments:** Clause 5 determines that, for farmers in **England** and Wales (Schedule 3) this phase-out is over a 7-year agricultural transition period from 2021 and that no direct payments will be made after 2027.

**Marketing Standards:** Part 5 provides powers to tailor and modernise existing marketing standards regarding the quality of agricultural products and product information to customers in **England**.

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### **Lords Select Committee Powers and Regulatory Reform Thirty Fourth Report 17 October**

**2018 :** The Agriculture Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on 12 September 2018 and had its Second Reading on Wednesday 10 October. The Bill is a skeleton bill, the operation of which is essentially a matter for subordinate legislation.

Normally we report on a bill in sufficient time to allow Members of the House of Lords to consider it before the bill’s committee stage in this House. Given the significance of this Bill as part of the suite of Brexit-related bills, we have reported in time for Members of the House of Commons to consider it at committee stage in their House. In due course, we propose to report on the Agriculture Bill in the form in which it comes to this House.



The Bill contains only 36 clauses and yet confers 26 powers on Ministers to make law. The comparatively large number of delegated powers in an otherwise small-to- medium-sized bill is ominous. The Government say that the Agriculture Bill is a “deliberate departure from the approach under the CAP of setting out detailed legislative rules”. The Bill will “provide the legal framework required to transition out of the EU, replace the CAP and deliver a range of reforms”. It will enable government to “move away from the rigid bureaucratic constraints of the current CAP legislation”.

**The Bill’s overall approach to delegated powers:** The Bill contains only 36 clauses and yet confers 26 powers on Ministers to make law. The comparatively large number of delegated powers in an otherwise small-to- medium-sized bill is ominous. The Government say that the Agriculture Bill is a “deliberate departure from the approach under the CAP of setting out detailed legislative rules”. The Bill will “provide the legal framework required to transition out of the EU, replace the CAP and deliver a range of reforms”. It will enable government to “move away from the rigid bureaucratic constraints of the current CAP legislation”.

**We are dismayed at the Government’s approach to delegated powers in the Agriculture Bill.**

(a) The Agriculture Bill represents a major transfer of powers from the EU to Ministers of the Crown, bypassing Parliament and the devolved legislatures in Wales and Northern Ireland.

(b) Parliament will not be able to debate the merits of the new agriculture regime because the Bill does not contain even an outline of the substantive law that will replace the CAP after the United Kingdom leaves the EU. Most debate will centre on delegated powers because most of the Bill is about delegated powers. At this stage it cannot even be said that the devil is in the detail, because the Bill contains so little.

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(d)The central purpose of the Agriculture Bill is to provide a framework that confers on Ministers extensive powers to make law in more than two dozen classes of statutory instrument. Extensive powers are conferred on Ministers with correspondingly few duties. The words "The Secretary of State may" occur 36 times in the Bill. The words "The Secretary of State must" occur three times.

(e)Significantly, powers are exercisable indefinitely and without sunset clauses. They include unlimited monetary penalties, the ability to create criminal offences punishable by up to two years' imprisonment, and the conferral of enforcement functions on third parties. We are not convinced by the need for such extensive powers to be conferred on Ministers indefinitely.

In the Explanatory Notes to the Agriculture Bill, the Government give an overview of the Bill in twelve points. All twelve points involve Ministers having the power to make law, including:

Powers to set unlimited monetary penalties and to create criminal offences punishable by up to two years' imprisonment

Powers to modify retained CAP regulations

Powers to intervene in exceptional market conditions

Powers to regulate marketing standards for agricultural products

Powers to control contractual dealings between producers and first purchasers

It is true that the extensive powers in this Bill largely replace directly applicable EU regulations. But the practical effect of the Bill is that very considerable repatriated powers are momentarily returning to Parliament on exit day only to be immediately granted to Ministers of the Crown

### COMMONS:

#### 24 October 2018: Farming and rural business sector questioned on Agriculture Bill

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee hears from the farming and rural business sector.

Likely topics for discussion include the impact of the Bill on farmers, including the agricultural transition period, phasing out of direct payments and fair dealing obligations to improve fairness in the supply chain.

Potential impacts of the Agriculture Bill examined

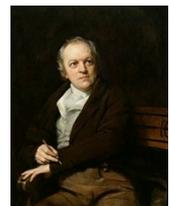
Secretary of State questioned on Agriculture Bill

#### 29 October 2018

The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee continues its inquiry into the Scrutiny of the Agriculture Bill. In this session likely topics for discussion include the Government's ambitions for agriculture, the new system of "public money for public goods" and proposals to improve fairness in the supply chain.

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**England's heroes/heroines: William Blake** (28 November 1757 – 12 August 1827) was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognised during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the history of the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. What he called his prophetic works were said by 20th-century critic Northrop Frye to form "what is in proportion to its merits the least read body of poetry in the English language". His visual artistry led 21st-century critic Jonathan Jones to proclaim him "far and away the greatest artist Britain has ever produced". In 2002, Blake was placed at number 38 in the BBC's poll of the 100 Greatest Britons. Although he lived in London his entire life, except for three years spent in Felpham, he produced a diverse and symbolically rich oeuvre, which embraced the imagination as "the body of God" or "human existence itself".



Although Blake was considered mad by contemporaries for his idiosyncratic views, he is held in high regard by later critics for his expressiveness and creativity, and for the philosophical and mystical undercurrents within his work. His paintings and poetry have been characterised as part of the Romantic movement and as "Pre-Romantic". A committed Christian who was hostile to the Church of England (indeed, to almost all forms of organised religion), Blake was influenced by the ideals and ambitions of the French and American Revolutions. Though later he rejected many of these political beliefs, he maintained an amiable relationship with the political activist Thomas Paine; he was also influenced by thinkers such as Emanuel Swedenborg. Despite these known influences, the singularity of Blake's work makes him difficult to classify. The 19th-century scholar William Rossetti characterised him as a "glorious luminary", and "a man not forestalled by predecessors, nor to be classed with contemporaries, nor to be replaced by known or readily surmisable successors"

William Blake was born at 28 Broad Street (now Broadwick St.) in Soho, London. He was the third of seven children, two of whom died in infancy. His father, James, was a hosier. Blake attended school only long enough to learn reading and writing, leaving at the age of ten, and was otherwise educated at home

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by his mother Catherine. Even though the Blakes were English Dissenters, William was baptised on 11 December at St James's Church, Piccadilly, London. The Bible was an early and profound influence on Blake, and remained a source of inspiration throughout his life.

When William was ten years old, his parents knew enough of his headstrong temperament that he was not sent to school but instead enrolled in drawing classes at Pars's drawing school in the Strand. He read avidly on subjects of his own choosing. During this period, Blake made explorations into poetry; his early work displays knowledge of Ben Jonson, Edmund Spenser, and the Psalms.

On 4 August 1772, Blake was apprenticed to engraver James Basire of Great Queen Street, at the sum of £52.10s, for a term of seven years. At the end of the term, aged 21, he became a professional engraver. Blake's first biographer, Alexander Gilchrist, records that in June 1780 Blake was walking towards Basire's shop in Great Queen Street when he was swept up by a rampaging mob that stormed Newgate Prison. The mob attacked the prison gates with shovels and pickaxes, set the building ablaze, and released the prisoners inside. Blake was reportedly in the front rank of the mob during the attack. The riots, in response to a parliamentary bill revoking sanctions against Roman Catholicism, became known as the Gordon Riots and provoked a flurry of legislation from the government of George III and the creation of the first police force.

Blake married Catherine Boucher— who was five years his junior — on 18 August 1782 in St Mary's Church, Battersea. Illiterate, Catherine signed her wedding contract with an X.

Blake's first collection of poems, *Poetical Sketches*, was printed around 1783. After his father's death, Blake and former fellow apprentice James Parker opened a print shop in 1784 and began working with radical publisher Joseph Johnson. Johnson's house was a meeting-place for some leading English intellectual dissidents of the time: theologian and scientist Joseph Priestley, philosopher Richard Price, artist John Henry Fuseli, early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and English revolutionary Thomas Paine. Along with William Wordsworth and William Godwin, Blake had great hopes for the French and American revolutions and wore a Phrygian cap in solidarity with the French revolutionaries, but despaired with the rise of Robespierre and the Reign of Terror in France.

In 1800, Blake moved to a cottage at Felpham, in Sussex (now West Sussex), to take up a job illustrating the works of William Hayley, a minor poet. It was in this cottage that Blake began *Milton* (the title page is dated 1804, but Blake continued to work on it until 1808). The preface to this work includes a poem beginning "And did those feet in ancient time", which became the words for the anthem "Jerusalem".

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**England's history:** The Mayflower arrived at Cape Cod, America on 19 November 1620

The Mayflower was a 180-ton English wine ship that famously transported the first English Puritans, known today as the Pilgrim Fathers, from Plymouth, England, to the New World in 1620. There were 102 passengers, and the crew is estimated to have been about 30, but the exact number is unknown. The ship has become a cultural icon in the history of the United States. The Pilgrims signed the Mayflower Compact prior to leaving the ship and establishing Plymouth Colony, a document which established a rudimentary form of democracy with each member contributing to the welfare of the community. There was a second ship named Mayflower, which made the London to Plymouth, Massachusetts, voyage several times.



Mayflower in Plymouth Harbor by William Halsall (1882)

The original Mayflower was a square rig with a beakhead bow and high, castle-like structures fore and aft that served to protect the ship's crew and the main deck from the elements—designs that were typical with English merchant ships of the early 17th century. Her stern carried a 30-foot high, square aft-castle which made the ship extremely difficult to sail against the wind and unable to sail well against the North Atlantic's prevailing westerlies, especially in the autumn and winter of 1620; the voyage from England to America took more than two months as a result. The Mayflower's return trip to London in April–May 1621 took less than half that time, with the same strong winds now blowing in the direction of the voyage. The Mayflower set sail in early September, when western gales began to make the North Atlantic a dangerous place for sailing. Her provisions were already quite low when departing Southampton and they became lower still by delays of more than a month. The passengers had been on board the ship for this entire time and they were worn out and in no condition for a very taxing, lengthy Atlantic journey cooped up in the cramped spaces of a small ship. But the Mayflower sailed from Plymouth on September 6, 1620 with what the historian Bradford called "a prosperous wind"

Aboard the Mayflower were many stores that supplied the pilgrims with the essentials needed for their

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journey and future lives. It is assumed that they carried tools and weapons, including cannon, shot, and gunpowder, as well as some live animals, including dogs, sheep, goats, and poultry. Horses and cattle came later. The ship also carried two boats: a long boat and a "shallop", a 21-foot boat powered by oars or sails. She also carried 12 artillery pieces, as the Pilgrims feared that they might need to defend themselves against enemy European forces, as well as the Indians.

The passage was a miserable one, with huge waves constantly crashing against the ship's topside deck, fracturing a key structural support timber. The passengers had already suffered agonizing delays, shortages of food, and other shortages, and they were called upon to provide assistance to the ship's carpenter in repairing the fractured main support beam. It was repaired with the use of a device called a jackscrew, which had been loaded on board to help in the construction of settler homes. It was used to secure the beam to keep it from cracking farther, thus maintaining the seaworthiness of the vessel.

On November 9, 1620, they sighted present-day Cape Cod. They spent several days trying to sail south to their planned destination of the Colony of Virginia, where they had obtained permission to settle from the Company of Merchant Adventurers. However, strong winter seas forced them to return to the harbour at Cape Cod, well north of the intended area, where they anchored on November 11. The settlers wrote and signed the Mayflower Compact after the ship dropped anchor, in what is now Provincetown Harbour, in order to establish legal order and to quell increasing strife within the ranks.

On Monday, November 27, an exploring expedition was launched under the direction of Capt. Christopher Jones to search for a suitable settlement site. There were 34 persons in the open shallop: 24 passengers and 10 sailors. They were forced to spend the night ashore due to the bad weather which they encountered, ill-clad in below-freezing temperatures with wet shoes and stockings that became frozen. Bradford wrote, "Some of our people that are dead took the original of their death here" on that expedition. The settlers explored the snow-covered area and discovered an empty native village, now known as Corn Hill in Truro. The curious settlers dug up some artificially made mounds, some of which stored corn, while others were burial sites. However, the only contemporary account of events, William Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation*, records only that the pilgrims took "some" of the corn, to show to others back at the boat, leaving the rest. They later took what they needed from another store of grain, but paid the natives back in six months, and there was no resulting conflict.

During the winter, the passengers remained on board the Mayflower, suffering an outbreak of a contagious disease described as a mixture of scurvy, pneumonia, and tuberculosis. When it ended, only 53 passengers remained—just over half; half of the crew died, as well. In the spring, they built huts ashore, and the passengers disembarked from the Mayflower on March 21, 1621.

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### English culture: Conkers

The first mention of the game is in Robert Southey's memoirs published in 1821. He describes a similar game, but played with snail shells or hazelnuts. It was only from the 1850s that using horse chestnuts was regularly referred to in certain regions. The game grew in popularity in the 19th century, and spread beyond England.

The first recorded game of Conkers using horse chestnuts was on the Isle of Wight in 1848.

There is uncertainty of the origins of the name. The name may come from the dialect word *conker*, meaning "knock out" (perhaps related to French *conque* meaning a conch, as the game was originally played using snail shells and small bits of string.) The name may also be influenced by the verb *conquer*, as earlier games involving shells and hazelnuts has also been called *conquerors*. Another possibility is that it is onomatopoeia, representing the sound made by a horse chestnut as it hits another hard object, such as a skull (another children's "game", also called conkers, consists of simply throwing the seeds at one another over a fence or wall). Conkers are also known regionally as *obblyonkers*, *cheggies* or *cheesers*. Although a "cheeser" is a conker with one or more flat sides, this comes about due to it sharing its pod with other conkers (twins or triplets). Also *Cheggers* was used in Lancaster, England in the 1920s. In D. H. Lawrence's book *Sons and Lovers*, the game is referred to as *cobblers* by William Morel.

**The game:** A hole is drilled in a large, hard conker using a nail, gimlet, small screwdriver, or electric drill. A piece of string (often a shoelace is used), about 20 cm (8 inches) long, is threaded through it. A large knot at one or both ends of the string secures the conker. The game is played between two people, each with a conker. They take turns hitting each other's conker using their own. One player lets the conker dangle on the full length of the string while the other player swings their conker and hits.

**Scoring:** The conker eventually breaking the other's conker gains a point. This may be either the attacking



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conker or (more often) the defending one.

A new conker is a *none-er* meaning that it has conquered none yet.

If a *none-er* breaks another *none-er* then it becomes a *one-er*, if it was a *one-er* then it becomes a *two-er* etc. In some regions the winning conker assimilates the previous score of the losing conker, as well as gaining the score from that particular game. For example, if a *two-er* plays a *three-er*, the surviving conker will become a *six-er* (the sum of the two previous scores plus one for the current game). In other regions the winning conker simply gains one point, irrespective of the points-value of the loser.

Variant rules: If the strings become entangled, the first player to shout "strings" or "stringies" has an extra turn. If one player drops their conker, the other can shout "stamps" or "stampies" entitling them to try and break the conker on the ground by stamping on it. Shouting "no stamps" before the other player can shout "stamps" prevents any stamping.

Hardening conkers: The hardest conkers usually win. Hardening conkers is often done by keeping them for a year (aged conkers are called *laggies* in many areas or *seasoners* in Ireland and Liverpool), baking them briefly, soaking or boiling in vinegar, or painting with clear nail varnish. Such hardening is, however, usually regarded as cheating. At the British Junior Conkers Championships on the Isle of Wight in October 2005, contestants were banned from bringing their own conkers due to fears that they might harden them. The Campaign for Real Conkers claimed this was an example of over-regulation which was causing a drop in interest in the game. In both the World Conker Championship and the North American Championship, contestants are also restricted to using the conkers provided by the Organisers.

One factor affecting the strength of a conker is the shape of the hole. A clean cylindrical hole is stronger, as it has no notches or chips that can begin a crack or split.

**Championships:** In 1965 the World Conker Championships were set up in Ashton (near Oundle) Northamptonshire, England, and still take place on the second Sunday of October every year.

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### Promotion: Sweet Chestnuts

Just like oak and beech, the sweet chestnut is an iconic tree in English woodlands, particularly in the south, where they thrive on the lighter soils, and have been used for coppicing and producing poles and nuts. Without doubt the European or Spanish sweet chestnut, *C. sativa*, is our best-loved species of the genus. A grand dame of our woodlands, it is regarded as an honorary native. It was very popular in the 18th and 19th centuries so historic specimens can be found in parklands and on large estates. Large areas of woodland are still dedicated to commercial coppicing in Kent and Sussex. Though not considered a native tree, they have been part of our landscape for centuries and are said to have been planted in great number by the Romans. Serrated leaves, twisted bark and tasty nuts, so good for roasting, make them highly prized.



Chestnuts are shiny brown nuts whose thick casing has long, sharp, needle-like spikes (burs). There are usually two to four nuts per casing. Unlike other nuts, chestnuts have a high starch and water content but low protein and fat levels. English chestnuts have never been as popular as Continental ones, but they're a versatile and flavourful storecupboard ingredient. Chestnuts are available fresh, ground, dried, puréed or vacuum-packed.

Ground chestnut (chestnut flour) has a sweet strong flavour and a slightly pasty texture when cooked. Dried chestnuts lend a smoky flavour and robustness of character to soups or stews. There are two types of puréed chestnut: sweetened and unsweetened, which are used in sweet and savoury dishes respectively (the sweetened version is used in the classic Mont Blanc). Vacuum-packed chestnuts are of variable quality. The best are made from whole, unbroken nuts and work well in soups, stuffings, stews and sauces. Wild English sweet chestnuts are not fully ripe until they fall in large numbers in late October. Look for the glint of shiny dark brown nuts; paler nuts are unripe and will quickly shrivel.

Most of the chestnuts available in supermarkets during the chestnut season (late September to December) are from Europe rather than home-grown. If you buy your chestnuts fresh, choose plump smooth, shiny nuts. Avoid any wrinkled nuts and discard any bad ones, which will have an acrid smell and bitter taste. Chestnut flour, dried chestnuts, chestnut purée and vacuum-packed chestnuts are sold throughout the year, although they're more readily available in autumn and before Christmas. Dried chestnuts and chestnut flour are available from Italian delicatessens; chestnut flour is also available online. Both sweetened and unsweetened chestnut purées are sold in cans (read the label carefully to make sure you're buying the right one). The best quality vacuum-packed chestnuts are usually sold whole and unbroken, also in cans.

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They tend to be more expensive than the plastic vacuum-sealed packets of smaller nuts and nut pieces. (Most commercial chestnuts are grown on the continent but English grown chestnuts can be obtained from private growers who advertise on eBay.Ed.)

Hang wild chestnuts in a netted bag in a cool dry place for a couple of days after collecting them. During that time, some of the starch will be converted to sugar, giving a sweeter nut.

**Preparation:** To peel chestnuts, soak them in water for 30 minutes, then score each with a small knife down the plump side. Roast at 225C/425F/Gas 7 for about 25 minutes. Keep warm with a tea towel while you peel away the hard outer shell and the softer inner brown skin (warm nuts peel more easily than cold ones). For a faster method, slit the rounded shell of the nut, bring to the boil in plenty of cold water and cook for 20 minutes. Leave the nuts in the hot water so that they stay warm and soft as you peel.

Dried chestnuts must be soaked in water for at least eight hours before cooking. Chestnut flour tastes best mixed with other flours: allow about ten per cent chestnut flour in bread (it has no gluten so won't rise on its own). Mix to taste in cakes, batters and biscuits or add a small amount to pasta doughs.

**ENGLISH SHROPSHIRE FRESH ORGANIC WINDFALL CHESTNUTS IDEAL for Christmas/Halloween:** These are delicious sweet chestnuts picked daily straight from our sweet chestnut trees. This year has seen the best crop for over 20 years on our trees, they are large and extra tasty. They will be picked and posted the same day to ensure freshness.

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### Recipe: Chestnut and red wine pâté

By The Vegetarian Society

**Preparation time:** 1-2 hours

**Cooking time:** less than 10 mins

**Serves:** Serves 4



#### Ingredients:

|                                            |                                      |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 tbsp olive or groundnut oil              | 1 small onion, finely chopped        |
| 1 clove of garlic, crushed                 | pinch dried thyme                    |
| 150ml/1/4pt red wine                       | 150ml/1/4pt vegetable stock          |
| 100g/4oz chopped chestnuts (cooked weight) | 100g/4oz chestnut purée              |
| 75g/3oz wholemeal breadcrumbs              | 1 tbsp brandy                        |
| 10-15ml/2-3 tsp soy sauce                  | salt and freshly ground black pepper |

**Method:** Heat the oil in a saucepan, gently cook the onion and garlic with the dried thyme until soft. Add the red wine and vegetable stock and bring to the boil.

Remove from the heat and stir in the chopped chestnuts, chestnut purée, breadcrumbs, brandy and soy sauce. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Cook over a gentle heat until thickened. Spoon the pate into individual ramekins, smooth the surface and then chill in the refrigerator until required.

Serve garnished with fresh herbs, with crackers and crisp green salad leaves.

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(Sucking England dry)

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