

# Scotland, England and the making of Great Britain



In the wake of the Scottish independence referendum, our visual overview explores two key episodes that brought Scotland and England together

In September 2014, voters north of the border passed their verdict on the union between England and Scotland. The referendum on Scottish independence

has thrown the spotlight on the episodes that originally brought the two nations together: the 'Union of the Crowns' under James VI of Scotland in 1603, and the Act of Union merging the parliaments in 1707. Does a shared British experience amount to a shared and lasting British identity?

## Timeline 1 The House of Stuart and the 'Union of the Crowns'

**1603** Death of Queen Elizabeth I. The Stuart dynasty takes the throne, and James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England

**1604** James I appeals for a merger between the parliaments of England and Scotland to create a 'Perfect Union'

**1608** James's union project defeated in the Westminster Parliament

**1653** Oliver Cromwell creates a single parliament in Westminster, incorporating Scottish and Irish MPs

**1660** Restoration of Charles II. Separate Scottish and Irish parliaments brought back

**1669-70** Proposal for union by ministers under Charles II. Fails when English and Scottish commissioners are unable to agree terms

## Timeline 3 Legacy of union

**1714** George, elector of Hanover, proclaimed George I of Great Britain. However, there are also Stuart ('Jacobite') claimants to the throne

**1715** Jacobite rebellion: pledge by Prince James Edward Stuart to restore the Scottish Parliament. Rebels defeated at battle of Sheriffmuir

**1725** Riots against English taxation in Elgin, Stirling, Glasgow, Paisley and Dundee

**1745-46** Jacobite rebellion begins in the Scottish Highlands. Rebels enter England, but are forced to retreat and then crushed at battle of Culloden

**1756-63** Seven Years' War between England and France — Scottish soldiers instrumental in the capture of Quebec for the British empire

**1759** Foundation of the Carron Company iron works, Falkirk. Beginning of the Industrial Revolution in Scotland

Britain's rise as a global industrial power widened the economic and political opportunities for Scots, and helped the Union to succeed

James VI of Scotland became King James I of England in 1603. He established a single currency and a shared flag — the original Union Jack — and campaigned for a full parliamentary union. James believed that a common language and a common Protestant religion meant that England and Scotland were being willed by God to come together.

### Timeline 2 The Act of Union

#### A union of convenience

The Union of 1707 was shaped by political and economic self-interest. England needed Scottish assistance in fighting a major war against Louis XIV of France, and the English ministers needed the Scottish elites to agree to pass the throne to George, elector of Hanover, after Queen Anne had failed to produce a living heir. The Scots were offered access to the trade of the English colonies overseas — a lifeline for a nation nearly impoverished after the failure of its own colonial project at Darien in Central America.

The union of the parliaments came with many concessions. Scotland kept its independent church, and its separate systems of law and education. Eventually, in 1999, the terms of union were loosened further, with the devolution of powers in Scotland to a re-established Edinburgh Parliament. But the Act of 1707 aroused violent resentment in sections of Scottish opinion, stirred by allegations that it had been forced through parliament by English bribery and intimidation.

**1698-1701** Scotland is impoverished by the failure of its colony at Darien in Central America after English and Spanish opposition: 25% of all the money in Scotland is lost with the scheme

**1701** Act of Settlement. English Parliament agrees that the crown will pass to the German royal house of Hanover in the absence of any British Protestant heir to the throne

**1702** Outbreak of war between England and France

**1706** English commissioners sent into Scotland to draw up terms for a union

**16 January 1707** Passing of the Act of Union

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