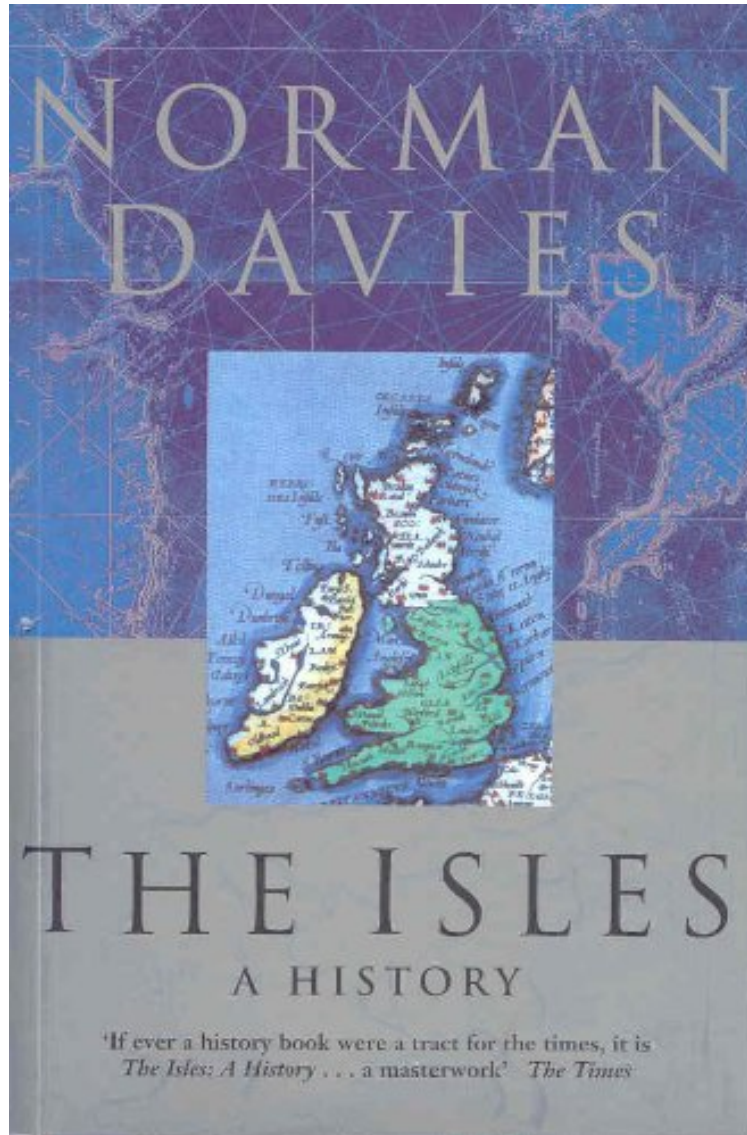


[Mobile ebook] The Isles: A History (English Edition)

The Isles: A History (English Edition)

Von Norman Davies

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Von Norman Davies : The Isles: A History (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Isles: A History (English Edition):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen2 von 2 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A flawed masterpieceVon dara.connolly@mail.esb.ieMr Davies' book is an excellent introduction to the history of the British Isles. The author is at pains to use terms like "British" and "English" only in their proper contexts, and is so careful to avoid anachronism that he refers to historical figures and places only by the names current at the time. King

William I, for example, is "Guillaume" in the book. The separate and inter-dependent histories of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales are treated in depth. Unfortunately, the book is marred by several egregious errors of fact; notably the assertion on page 905 (hardback) that the Irish civil war was won by Eamon de Valera's anti-treaty forces. The edition I read also suffered from a lack of proofreading that showed up on almost every page. The concluding chapter on the "Post-Imperial Isles" consists of a series of essays documenting various strands of modern society. These essays are very strongly informed by events of the late 1990s and are somewhat out of keeping with the overall scope of the work. All in all however, for the tolerant reader this book is a most enjoyable route to a solid knowledge of British history.

1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. More than meets the eye Von Fr Kurt Messick

The British Isles are a unique geographical location in the world, having been provided by nature with advantages and problems unique in the world, and peopled by various groups who have worked together and against one another for domination of the Isles. Only for the briefest periods in history did the Isles truly represent a unified group, and even these times were more of an appearance of unity rather than actual unification.

Norman Davies, author of the critically acclaimed 'Europe: A History', has put together an interesting history of the British Isles, trying to portray them as a group that, while lacking unity, should be at least addressed as a unified group, always influencing and co-dependent upon each other. Davies is rather modest in his self-description of the book: 'This book necessarily presents a very personal view of history. Indeed, by some academic standards, it may well be judged thoroughly unsound. As I wrote in relation to a previous work, it presents the past 'seen through one pair of eyes, filtered by one brain, and recorded by one pen'. It has been assembled by an author who, though being a British citizen and a professional historian, has no special expertise in the British historical field.' Davies self-criticism is really far too strongly expressed here, for he does an admirably thorough job at documentation, reporting, and theorising. Taking a cue from other historians who worry about the increasing lack of historical knowledge of the general public coupled with the increasing specialisation which causes people to lose proper perspective, Davies has put together a comprehensive history of the British Isles which strives to escape at least some of the problems of previous histories.

For instance, it has only been within the last generation that 'English History' has come to be seen as an inaccurate term for discussion of the affairs of all the Isles, or even for the history of the largest island, Great Britain. To this day, anomalies exist that confuse the status of the islands (all cars in the United Kingdom, for instance, carry the plate coding GB, even those cars in Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom that is not part of Great Britain, etc.). Davies takes great care to distinguish English from Scot from Pict from Irish from British, which has a meaning close to the commonly-used term for only the most ancient and the most modern British events. This does, I must confess, occasionally get in the way of the narrative history. While explaining his reasoning up front in the introduction or preface makes sense, the constant referring to this state of affairs interrupts the flow of the narrative a bit more than it perhaps should.

Davies takes a long-term approach, starting with prehistorical evidence for inhabitation of the areas which are now the British Isles (which used to be connected to the mainland), getting into real substance with the arrival of the Celts in the British Isles (the longest-tenured remaining people in the Isles, pushed to the periphery but still influential in many ways), which for a period of six to seven centuries may have been the longest period of unity and stability the Isles have ever, or will ever, know. However, even these groups were not unified in a political sense, and tribal warfare was common on all the main islands among competing groups.

Davies proceeds to explore the history of the British Isles under the Romans, during the Germanic invasion/migrations, during the Norse/Viking invasions/raids, during the Norman conquest, and then to the period of English hegemony. The period of English hegemony consists of three primary periods: the 'Three Kingdoms' period (England, Ireland, and Scotland); the Union period (which variously includes Ireland in union with a unified England and Scotland), and the post-Imperial time, which has seen an increasing move toward devolution, beginning with Irish independence and continuing toward separate parliaments for the 'nations'. In all but name, therefore, the policy of devolution had been accepted by the Thatcher government in the cultural and educational sphere many years before it was adopted in the constitutional sphere by 'New Labour'. The cumulative effects were bound to be far-reaching. The Scots and the Welsh, and to some extent the Northern Irish, were given a strong injection not only of self-esteem but also of separation.

Davies tackles difficult questions and problems that are not typical of standard histories, especially where speculation into the possible future of the British Isles is concerned. As the United Kingdom has never been a nation-state in the same sense as continental nations, what does this mean for the future of the Union? Will the British Isles once again become a collection of peoples, owing more allegiance to the broader, historically-newly forming European Union than toward each other politically, while still maintaining trade and social ties that are incredibly strong? Only time will tell.

A biased history, to be sure, but a very unique insight, and well worth reading for a broader perspective on the history of the peoples of the British Isles than most 'British history' or 'English history' books will give.

1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. some subjects are too big for one volume Von Ein Kunde

Davies book is massive, which is necessary for a topic as large as History of British Isles from the beginning. Much of his early history adds light to a poorly understood topic seems worthwhile. When we get to more modern times, in my view he seems to want to pile on history of various different institutions with only passing reference to people. For example there are discussions of British common law, the evolving importance and then waning of importance of the Royal Navy, the size of the British Armed forces

including the Army, the history of Imperial measures such as pounds and the mile (as opposed to the metric system). Yet he has only minimal mention of such figures in the evolution of the British Empire as Clive or Cecil Rhodes. When he does mention them, it is often grouped together with others as part of an abstract discussion of some general trend. There are brief discussions of some of the key explorers of this century, Scott of the Antarctic, Mallory , the team of Hillary and Norgay on Everest. Davies correctly summarizes the failure of Scott to learn how to use specialized equipment, such as dogsleds, as being the key to his failure while Amundsen succeeded. There is a great deal of discussion of the fact that the Royal Family are of German extraction, that the only thing about Diana that they did not criticize was her Englishness. I think many people would find a book more satisfying that spoke somewhat more about stories of individuals and less about the evolution of institutions as abstract concepts. Perhaps Davies is reacting to the fact that most history is told about individuals, so he wishes to correct this by describing abstractions and institutional developments. In one sense this may be correcting an imbalance. Yet it seems difficult to warm to this mode fo telling a story.

KurzbeschreibungThe bestselling and controversial new history of the 'British Isles', including Ireland from the author of *Europe: A History*. Emphasizing our long-standing European connections and positing a possible break-up of the United Kingdom, this is agenda-setting work is destined to become a classic. 'If ever a history book were a tract for the times, it is *The Isles: A History ... a masterwork.*' Roy Porter, *The Times* 'Davies is among the few living professional historians who write English with vitality, sparkle, economy and humour. The pages fly by, not only because the pace is well judged but also because the surprises keep coming.' Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Sunday Times* 'A book which really will change the way we think about our past . marvellously rich and stimulating' Noel Malcolm, *Evening Standard* 'A historiographical milestone.' Niall Ferguson, *Sunday Times* 'The full shocking force of this book can only be appreciated by reading it.' Andrew Marr, *Observer* 'It is too soon to tell if [Norman Davies] will become the Macaulay or Trevelyan of our day: that depends on the reading public. He has certainly made a good try. This is narrative history on the grand scale - compulsively readable, intellectually challenging and emotionally exhilarating.' David Marquand, *Literary .de* When did British history begin, and where will it all end? These controversial issues are tackled head-on in Norman Davies' polemical and persuasive survey of the four countries that in modern times have become known as the British Isles. Covering 10 millennia in just over a thousand pages, from "Cheddar Man" to New Labour, Davies shows how relatively recent was the formation of the English state--no earlier than Tudor times--and shows too how a sense of Britishness only emerged with the coming of empire in the 18th and 19th centuries. A historian of Poland and the author of an acclaimed history of Europe, Davies is especially sensitive to the complex mixing and merging of tribes and races, languages and traditions, conquerors and colonised which has gone on throughout British history and which in many ways makes "our island story" much more like that of the rest of Europe than we usually think. Many myths of the English are dispelled in this book and many historians are taken to task for their blinkered Anglo-centrism. But the book ends on an upbeat note, with Davies welcoming Britain's return to the heart of Europe at the dawn of the new millennium. --Miles Taylor.co.uk When did British history begin, and where will it all end? These controversial issues are tackled head-on in Norman Davies' polemical and persuasive survey of the four countries that in modern times have become known as the British Isles. Covering 10 millennia in just over a thousand pages, from "Cheddar Man" to New Labour, Davies shows how relatively recent was the formation of the English state--no earlier than Tudor times--and shows too how a sense of Britishness only emerged with the coming of empire in the 18th and 19th centuries. A historian of Poland and the author of an acclaimed history of Europe, Davies is especially sensitive to the complex mixing and merging of tribes and races, languages and traditions, conquerors and colonised which has gone on throughout British history and which in many ways makes "our island story" much more like that of the rest of Europe than we usually think. Many myths of the English are dispelled in this book and many historians are taken to task for their blinkered Anglo-centrism. But the book ends on an upbeat note, with Davies welcoming Britain's return to the heart of Europe at the dawn of the new millennium. --Miles Taylor