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A Guide  
For Guys  
Like You

# A GUNNER'S GUIDE TO GREAT BRITAIN

## Introduction

During the course of this War, you may find yourself in England, or as you have heard your folks call it sometimes, the "Old Country". During your stay there, you will be a guest of Great Britain, and the purpose of this guide, is to try and acquaint you with the British people, their country, and their ways.

Although we are a part of the British Empire, speaking the same language, believing in representative government, in freedom of worship, and in freedom of speech, some things are a little different over there from what we have been accustomed to here in Canada.

For instance: The people of the British Isles are often more reserved in conduct than we. So if they sit in trains or busses without striking up conversation with you, it doesn't mean that they are being haughty or unfriendly. Probably they are paying more attention to you than you think. But they don't speak to you because they don't want to appear intrusive or rude.

Another difference. They have phrases of their own that may sound funny to you. You can make just as many boners in their eyes. It isn't a good idea for instance, to say "bloody" in mixed company in Britain—it is one of their worst swear words. To say: "I look like a bum" is offensive to their ears, for to the British this means that you look like your own backside. It isn't important—just a tip if you are trying

**To help you see it through**

**We guys who've seen**

**Are sincere and keen**

**To help you, it's up to you!**

to shine in polite society. Near the end of this guide you will find more of these differences of speech.

British money is in pounds, shillings and pence. The British are used to this system and they like it, and all your arguments that our decimal system is better won't convince them. They won't be pleased to hear you call it "funny money", either. They sweat hard to get it (wages are much lower in Britain than in Canada) and they won't think you smart or funny for mocking at it.

**DON'T BE A SHOW OFF.** The British dislike bragging or showing off. Canadian wages and Canadian soldier's pay are among the highest in the world. When pay day comes, it would be sound practice to learn to spend your money according to British standards. They consider you highly paid. They won't think any better of you for throwing money around; they are more likely to feel that you haven't learned the common-sense virtues of thrift. The British "Tommy" is apt to be specially touchy about the difference between his wages and yours. Keep this in mind. Use common sense and don't rub him the wrong way.

You will find many things in Great Britain physically different from similar things in Canada. But there are also important similarities—our common speech, our common law, and our ideals of religious freedom all come from Britain. Remember that in Canada you like people to conduct themselves as we do, and to respect the same things. Try to do the same for the British and respect the things they treasure.

**THE BRITISH ARE TOUGH.** Don't be misled by their tendency to be soft-spoken and polite. If they need to be, they can be plenty tough. The English language didn't spread across the oceans and over the

mountains and jungles and swamps of the world because these people were panty-waists.

Sixty thousand British civilians—men, women and children—have died under bombs, and yet the morale of Great Britain is unbreakable and high. A nation doesn't come through that, if it doesn't have plain, common guts. You won't be able to tell Great Britain much about "taking it". They are not particularly interested in taking it any more. They are far more interested in getting together in solid friendship with us, so that we can all start dishing it out to Hitler.

## The Country

**AGE INSTEAD OF SIZE.** On furlough you will probably go to the cities, where you will meet the Briton's pride in age and tradition. You will find that the people of Great Britain care little about size, not having the "biggest" of many things as we do. For instance, London has no skyscrapers. Not because English architects couldn't design one, but because London is built on swampy ground, not on a rock like Ottawa and skyscrapers need something solid to rest their foundations on. In London they will point out to you buildings like Westminster Abbey, where England's kings and greatest men are buried, and St. Paul's Cathedral with its famous dome, and the Towers of London, which was built almost a thousand years ago. All of these buildings have played an important part in England's history.

The largest English cities are all located in the lowlands near the various seacoasts. In the southeast, on the Thames (pronounced "Tems") is London which is at the heart of our far-flung British Empire. The population of greater London is twelve million people, this is equal to the total population of Canada. The

great "midland" manufacturing cities of Birmingham, Sheffield, and Coventry are located in the central part of England. Nearby on the west coast are the textile and shipping centres of Manchester and Liverpool. Further north, in Scotland, is the world's leading ship-building centre of Glasgow. On the east side of Scotland is the historic Scottish capital, Edinburgh, scene of the tales of Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson which many of you read in school. In southwest England at the broad mouth of the Severn is the great port of Bristol.

REMEMBER THERE'S A WAR ON. Britain may look a little shop-worn and grimy to you. The British people are anxious to have you know that you are not seeing their country at its best. There's been a war on since 1939. The houses haven't been painted because factories are not making paint—they're making planes. The famous English gardens and parks are either unkept because there are no men to take care of them, or they are being used to grow needed vegetables. British taxicabs look antique because Britain makes tanks for herself and Russia, and hasn't time to make new cars. British trains are cold because power is needed for industry, not for heating. There are no luxury dining cars on trains because total war effort has no place for such frills. The trains are unwashed and grimy because men and women are needed for more important work than car-washing. The British people are anxious for you to know that in normal times Britain looks much prettier, cleaner, neater.

### The People—Their Customs and Manners

The best way to get on in Great Britain is very much the same as the best way to get on in Canada.

The same sort of courtesy and decency and friendliness that go over big in Canada will go over big in Britain. The British have seen a good many Canadians and they like Canadians. They will like your frankness as long as it is friendly. They will expect you to be generous. They are not given to back-slapping and they are shy about showing their affections. But once they get to like you they make the best friends in the world.

In "getting along" the first important thing to remember is that the British are like us in many ways—but not in all ways. You will quickly discover differences that seem confusing and even wrong. Like driving on the left side of the road, and having money based on an "impossible" accounting system, and drinking warm beer. But once you get used to things like that, you will realise that they belong to England just as baseball and jazz and coca-cola belong to us.

THE BRITISH LIKE SPORTS. The British of all classes are enthusiastic about sports, both as amateurs and a spectators of professional sports. They love to shoot, they love to play games, they ride horses and bet on horse races, they fish. But be careful where you hunt or fish. Fishing and hunting rights are often private property.)

The great "spectator" sports are football in the autumn and winter and cricket in the spring and summer. See a "match" in either of these sports whenever you get a chance. You will get a kick out of it.

Cricket will strike you as slow compared with baseball, but it isn't easy to play well. You will probably get more fun out of "village cricket" which corresponds to sandlot baseball. The big professional matches are often nothing but a private contest be-

tween the bowler (who corresponds to our pitcher) and the batsman (batter) and you have to know the fine points of the game to understand what is going on.

Football in Britain takes two forms. They play soccer, which is known here, and they also play "rugger", which is a rougher game, but is played without the padded suits and headguards we use. Rugger requires fifteen on a side, uses a ball slightly bigger than our football, and allows lateral but not forward passing. The English do not handle the ball as cleanly as we do, but they are far more expert with their feet. As in all English games, no substitutes are allowed. If a man is injured, his side continues with fourteen players and so on.

You will find that English crowds at football or cricket matches are more orderly and more polite to the players than we are. If a fielder misses a catch at cricket, the crowd will probably take a sympathetic attitude. They will shout "good try" even if it looks to you like a bad fumble. Here the crowd would probably shout "take him out". This contrast should be remembered. It means that you must be careful in the excitement of an English game not to shout out remarks which everyone here would understand, but which the British might think insulting.

In general more people play games in Britain than in this country, even if they are not good at it. You can always find people who play no better than you and are glad to play with you. They are good sportsmen and are quick to recognize good sportsmanship wherever they meet it.

**INDOOR AMUSEMENTS.** The British have theaters and movies (which they call "cinemas") as we do. But the great place place of recreation is the "pub".

A pub or public house, is what we call a bar or tavern. The usual drink is beer, which is not an imitation of German beer, but ale. (But they usually call it beer or "bitter".) Not much whiskey is now being drunk. Wartime taxes have shot the price of a bottle up to about \$5.00. The British are beer-drinkers—and can hold it. The beer is now below peacetime strength, but can still make a man's tongue wag at both ends.

You will be welcome in the British pubs as long as you remember one thing. The pub is "the poor man's club," the neighborhood or village gathering place, where the men have come to see their friends, not strangers. If you want to join a darts game, let them ask you first (as they probably will). And if you are beaten it is the custom to stand aside and let someone else play.

The British make much of Sunday. All the shops are closed, most of the restaurants are closed, and in the small towns there is not much to do. You had better follow the example of the British and try to spend Sunday afternoon in the country.

British churches, particularly the little village churches, are often very beautiful inside and out. Most of them are always open and if you feel like it, do not hesitate to walk in. But do not walk around if a service is going on.

You will naturally be interested in getting to know your opposite number, the British soldier, the "Tommy" you have heard and read about. You can understand that two actions on your part will slow up the friendship—swiping his girl, and not appreciating what his army has been up against. Yes, and rubbing it in that you are better paid than he is.

**KEEP OUT OF ARGUMENTS.** You can rub a Britisher the wrong way by telling him "we have come

over to win the war." Neither do the British need to be told that they lost the first couple of rounds in the present war. Use your head before you sound off, and remember how long the British alone held Hitler off without any help from anyone.

In the pubs you will hear a lot of Britons openly criticizing their government and the conduct of the war. That isn't an occasion for you to put in your two-cents worth. It's their business, not yours. You sometimes criticise members of your own family—but just let an outsider start doing the same, and you know how you feel!

The Briton is just as outspoken and independent as we are. But don't get him wrong. He is also the most law-abiding citizen in the world, because the British system of justice is just about the best there is.

Once again, look, listen, and learn before you start telling the British how much better we do things. British railways have dinky freight cars (which they call "goods wagons") not because they don't know any better. Small cars allow quicker handling of freight at the thousands and thousands of small stations.

British automobiles are little and low-powered. That's because all the gasoline has to be imported over thousands of miles of ocean.

British taxicabs have comic-looking front wheel structures. Watch them turn around in a 12-foot street and you'll understand why.

The British don't know how to make a good cup of coffee. You don't know how to make a good cup of tea. It's an even swap.

The British are leisurely—but not really slow. Their crack trains held world speed records. A British ship

held the trans-Atlantic record. A British car and a British driver set world's speed records in America.

On the whole, the British people—whether English, Scottish or Welsh—are open and honest. If you are on furlough and puzzled about directions, money or customs, most people will be anxious to help you as long as you speak first and without bluster. The best authority on all problems is the nearest "bobby" (policeman) in his steel helmet. British police are proud of being able to answer almost any question under the sun. They're not in a hurry and they'll take plenty of time to talk to you.

The British will welcome you as good friends. But remember that crossing the ocean doesn't automatically make you a hero. There are housewives in aprons and youngsters in knee pants in Britain who have lived through more high explosives in air raids than many soldiers saw in first class barracks in the last war.

## Britain at War

At home in Canada you were in a country at war. Since your ship left port, however, you have been in a war zone. You will find that all Britain is a war zone and has been since September, 1939. All this has meant great changes in the British way of life.

Every light in England is blacked out every night and all night. Many a highway signpost has come down and barrage balloons have gone up. Grazing land is now ploughed for wheat and flower beds turned into vegetable gardens. Britain's peacetime army of a couple of hundred thousand has been expanded to over two million men. Everything from the biggest factory to the smallest village workshop is turning out something for the war. Hundreds of thousands of women

have gone to work in factories for the war. Hundreds of thousands of women have gone to work in factories or joined the many military auxiliary forces. Old-time social distinctions are being forgotten as the sons of factory workers rise to be officers in the forces and the daughters of noblemen get jobs in munition factories.

But more important than this is the effect of the war itself. The British have been bombed, night after night and month after month. Thousands of them have lost their houses, their possessions, their families. Gasoline, clothes, and railroad travel are hard to come by and incomes are cut by taxes to an extent we Canadians have not even approached. One of the things the English always had enough of in the past was soap. Now it is so scarce that girls working in the factories often cannot get the grease off their hands or out of their hair. And food is more strictly rationed than anything else.

**THE BRITISH CAME THROUGH.** For many months the people of Britain has been doing without things which Canadians take for granted. But you will find that shortages, discomforts, blackouts, and bombings have not made the British depressed. They have a new cheerfulness and a new determination born out of hard times and tough luck. After going through what they have been through it's only human nature that they should be more than ever determined to win.

You are going to Britain from a country where your home is still safe, food is still plentiful, and lights are still burning. So it is doubly important for you to remember that the British soldiers and civilians have been living under a tremendous strain. It is always impolite to criticise your hosts. It is militarily stupid to insult your allies. So stop and think before

you sound off about luke-warm beer, or cold boiled potatoes, or the way English cigarettes taste.

If British civilians look dowdy and badly dressed it is not because they do not like good clothes or know how to wear them. All clothing is rationed and the British know that they help war production by wearing an old suit or dress until it cannot be patched any longer. Old clothes are "good form".

One thing to be careful about—if you are invited into a British home and the host exhorts you to "eat up—there's plenty on the table," go easy. It may be the familys' rations for a whole week spread out to show their hospitality.

**WASTE MEANS LIVES.** Most British food is imported even in peacetimes, and for the last two years the British have been taught not to waste the things that their ships bring in from abroad. British seamen die getting those convoys through. The British have been taught this so thoroughly that they now know that gasoline and food represent the lives of merchant sailors. And when you burn gasoline needlessly, it will seem to them as if you are wasting the blood of those seamen—when you destroy or waste food you have wasted the life of another sailor.

**BRITISH WOMEN AT WAR.** A British woman officer or non-commissioned officer can—and often does—give orders to a man private. The men obey smartly and know it is no shame. For British women have proven themselves in this war. They have stuck to their posts near burning ammunition dumps, delivered messages afoot after their motor-cycles have been blasted from under them. They have pulled aviators from burning planes. They have died at the gun posts

and as they fell another girl has stepped directly into the position and "carried on". There is not a single record in this war of any British woman in uniformed service quitting her post or failing in her duty under fire.

Now you understand why British soldiers respect the women in uniform. They have won the right to the utmost respect. When you see a girl in khaki or air-force blue with a bit of ribbon on her tunic—remember she didn't get it for knitting more socks than anyone else in the community.

**SOME HINTS ON BRITISH WORDS.** British slang is something you will have to pick up for yourself. But even apart from slang, there are many words which have different meanings from the way we use them and many common objects have different names. For instance, instead of railroads, automobiles, and radios, the British will talk about railways, motorcars, and wireless sets. A railroad tie is a sleeper. A freight car is a goods wagon. A man who works on the road-bed is a navvy. A streetcar is a tram. Automobile lingo is just as different. A light truck is a lorry. The top of a car is a hood. What we call the hood (of the engine) is a bonnet. The fenders are wings. A wrench is a spanner. Gas is petrol—if there is any.

Your first furlough may find you in some small difficulties because of language difference. You will have to ask for sock suspenders to get garters and for braces instead of suspenders—if you need any. If you are standing in line to buy (book) a railroad ticket or a seat at the movies (cinema) you will be queuing ((pronounced "cueing") up before the booking office. If you want a beer quickly, you had better ask for the nearest pub. You will get your drugs at a chemist's

and your tobacco at a tobacconist, hardware at an ironmonger's. If you are asked to visit somebody's apartment, he or she will call it a flat.



## MONEY

### TABLE OF BRITISH CURRENCY

#### COPPER COINS

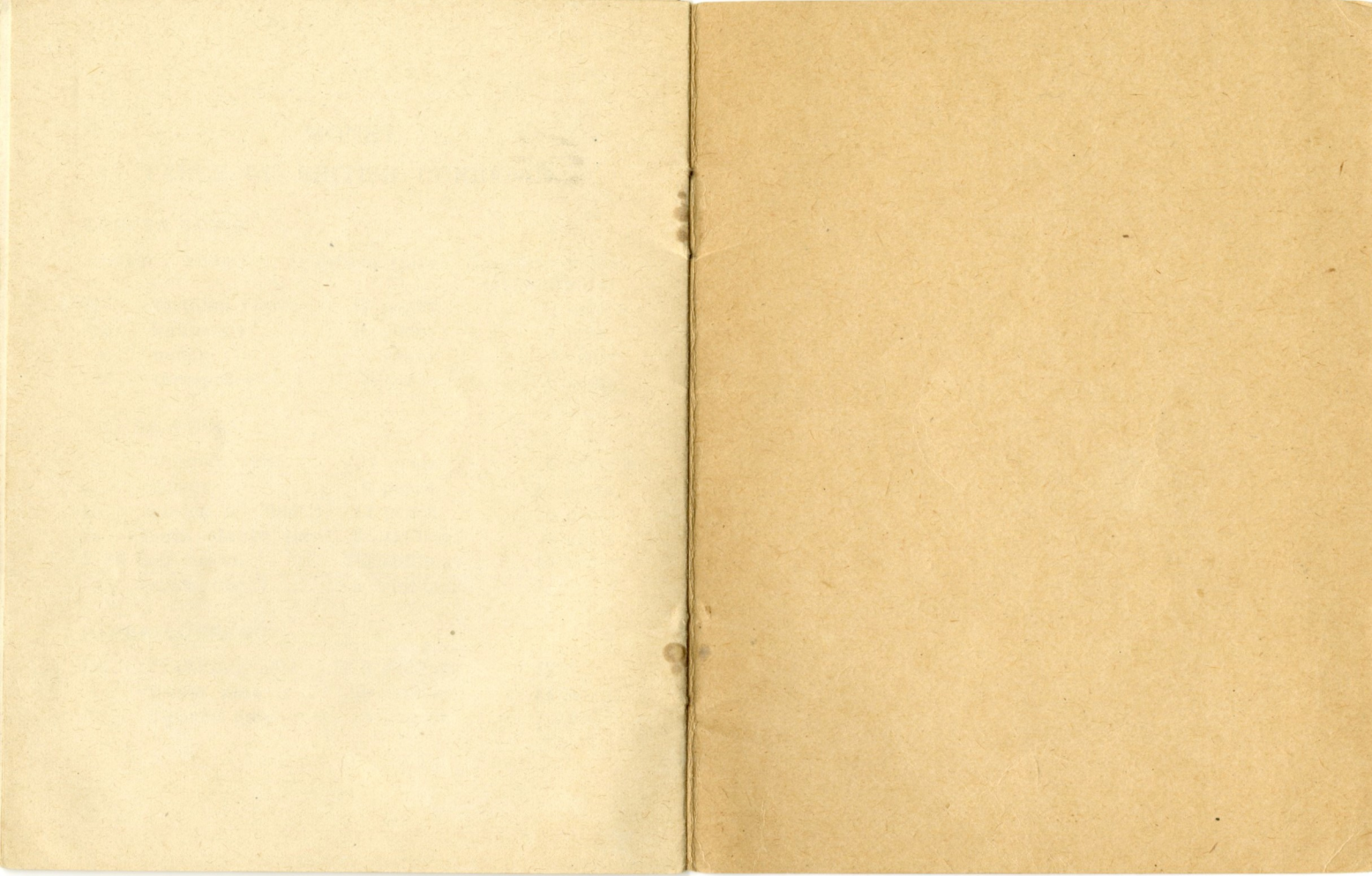
Symbol	Name	British value	Canadian value (approximate)
$\frac{1}{4}$ d	farthing (rare)	$\frac{1}{4}$ penny	$\frac{1}{2}$ cent
$\frac{1}{2}$ d	halfpenny	$\frac{1}{2}$ penny	1 cent
1d	penny	1 penny	2 cents
3d	threepence	3 pence	5 cents

#### SILVER COINS

3d	"thrup-'ny bit"	3 pence	5 cents
6d	sixpence	6 pence	10 cents
1s	shilling (or "bob")	12 pence	20 cents
2s	florin (fairly rare)	2 shillings	40 cents
2s 6d	half crown	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ shillings	50 cents
5s	crown (rare)	5 shillings	\$1.00

#### PAPER CURRENCY

10s	10-shilling note	10 s shillings	\$2.00
1	pound note	20 shillings	\$4.00
5	5-pound note	5 pounds	\$20.00



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