

The British Empire

Key people

Empire Builders

Queen Victoria

Queen of England (1838-1901) was queen of England at the height of the British Empire and was head of state for nearly a third of the globe. In 1876 she took the title of Empress of India.

Australia

James Cook

First Englishman to discover coast of Australia and charter the land. Established New South Wales as a British penal colony.

Arthur Phillips

Phillips was the first governor of New South Wales and oversaw the penal colony. He ensured that people were treated fairly. It was so successful that once criminals served their sentence, they stayed as Australian citizens.

Africa

Cecil Rhodes

English business man who made his fortune selling diamonds mined from south Africa. He became so wealthy he named the country after himself, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). He remains still a controversial figure.

India

Robert Clive

English businessman who seized large areas of Bengal for the East India Company. This later became part of British controlled India

Key terms

Aboriginal

Original inhabitants of Australia

Britannia

A female figure used to symbolise the British Empire

Colony

A country that is part of an empire.

East India Company

Trading company that gradually took control of India

Empire

A group of countries, people or land ruled by one single country referred to as the "mother" country.

Famine

A shortage of food.

Jewel in the crown

The largest and richest part of Britain's Empire

Imperialism

The act of building an empire.

Nationalism

Wanting your country to be the best or to be free from someone's empire

Penal colony

A territory used as a place for housing prisoners

The Raj

The period of British rule in India after 1857. From the Hindi word for reign.

Key events

Australia

- In 1768 James Cook charts the coast of Australia, claiming Botany Bay for the British Empire. English settlers cast a way a borigines.
- Australia was set up as a penal colony to house Britain convict population. Governor Arthur Phillips oversaw the colony, which was a success. This resulted in some wanting to remain in Australia as citizens.
- In 1851 Edward Hargreaves found gold in an Australian river. This sparked a mass movement of people to Australia: the population of Melbourne reached 123,000 by 1854.

Africa

- English traders had been involved with the slave trade since 16th century.
- By the mid-1800's European countries began competing for African land. A large empire meant international power and recognition.
- In 1854 *The Times* named this hunt for African territories the "Scramble for Africa".
- In 1885, the European powers came together at the Berlin Conference. Here, Africa was carved up and distributed to the different European countries. There was not a single representative from Africa present at these talks.
- Britain controlled 32% of Africa.

India

- India was regarded as the 'Jewel in the Crown of the British Empire'.
- Originally, the East India Company (a trading company set up under Elizabeth I) controlled large parts of India. Robert Clive seized Bengal for the company, raiding its treasury and increasing the wealth of the East India Co.
- In 1857 there was a mass uprising by Indian Soldiers, resulted in thousands of deaths (both Indian and British). When order was restored, the British government took over control of India, making it part of the British Empire. This signaled the start of the British Raj in India
- In 1876, Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, despite never visiting the country.

