**Industry in the U.K.**

Principal factors in the industrial prominence of Britain were its Industrial revolution of 18-th century and early leadership in the wool trade, favourable climate, mineral wealth, development of shipping and naval control of the seas and colonial markets. Britain had much greater freedom from political and religious wars existed in continental Europe.

With the invention of mechanically powered machinery, the textile industry grew rapidly and has remained one of the most important industries of Great Britain. Two inventions—steam-powered mining machinery (1765) by James Watt and railroad locomotives (1815) by George Stephenson—were of major importance in the development of British coal and iron-ore resources and in the expansion of iron and steel manufacturing.

Great Britain has remained one of the most highly industrialized countries of the world. In the early 1990s manufacturing and mining industries employed about 18 percent of the workforce and accounted for approximately 24 percent of the GDP. In the same period the approximate yearly production figures were 16.2 million metric tons of crude steel, 1.3 million passenger cars, 172 000 gross registered tons of merchant vessels, 122 200 metric tons of woolen yarn, and 142 million m of woven cotton fabrics. Scotland and Northern Ireland were noted for their production of whiskeys and linen, and England had a large brewing industry. In terms of value, the leading branches of the manufacturing sector were food products, transportation equipment, non-electrical machinery, chemical products, and metals and metal products. The leading manufacturing regions are Greater London and the metropolitan counties of Greater Manchester, West Midlands (Birmingham), and Merseyside (Liverpool). Other important industrial centers were Glasgow, southern Wales, and Belfast.

# Energy

Annual electrical output in the early 1990s exceeded 317 billion kilowatt-hours, of which about 75 percent was generated in conventional thermal facilities using fossil fuels. Britain was a pioneer in the development of nuclear plants for the production of electricity. The world’s first commercial-scale nuclear power station at Calder Hall in Cumberland became functional in 1956. By the early 1990s nuclear power supplied about 16 percent of Great Britain’s electricity production.