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# Time-line of Muslims in Britain

Saturday, 10 November 2007

757-796

Offa of Mercia (powerful Anglo-Saxon King) minted coins with Arabic declaration of faith demonstrating diplomatic relations with the Muslim empire. Many Muslims landed at this time in the British Isles as explorers and traders.

900

Ballycotton Cross found on Southern coast of Ireland bears Arabic inscription 'Bismillah' (in the name of God). This is one of many artefacts of the period which demonstrates Islam's early interaction with Britain.

1125

It is generally believed that the first Englishman known for certain to have been a scholar of Arabic was Henry II's tutor, Adelard of Bath who travelled in Syria and Muslim Spain and translated a number of Arabic texts into Latin.

1185

Despite hostilities during the Crusades, the Muslim leader Saladin fascinated the Knights Templars; particularly his moral character. Many were known to have a fondness for Muslim habits and customs. One such knight, Robert of St. Albans, embraced Islam and later had the honour of marrying the great-granddaughter of Saladin.

1500's

The first English convert to Islam recorded is John Nelson, a 16th century sailor. During the reign of Elizabeth I, there were considerably more Englishmen living in North Africa than living in all the North American colonies. In Algiers alone, there were 5000 English converts and many sailors brought back tales of their compatriots who had 'turned Turk';.

1606

The British consul of Egypt (Benjamin Bishop) became a Muslim. By the end of the 17th century, trade with Turkey accounted for one quarter of all England's overseas commercial activity.

1636

A Chair of Arabic at the University of Oxford was established and it was known that Charles I collected Arabic and Persian manuscripts. Christian scholars of the era wrote favourably of Islam including Dr Henry Stubbs.

1641

Document refers to "a sect of Mahomatens" being "discovered here in London".

1600's

British East India Company was formed to cash in on the eastern route spice trade. British control of India resulted in a gradual migration of many classes of Indians to Britain.

1860

Existence of the first mosque in Britain at 2 Glyn Rhondda Street, Cardiff, recorded in the Register of Religious Sites (now maintained by the Office of National Statistics).

1877

Queen Victoria became Empress of India and several Indian servants and spouses joined the royal household. Her favourite member of staff was Abdul Karim who gave the Queen lessons in Hindustani and received the title 'Companion of the Indian Empire';.

1886

Founding of the Anjuman-I-Islam in London, later renamed the Pan-Islamic Society.

1887

William Henry Quilliam (Shaikh Abdullah Quilliam) embraced Islam and led a small community in Liverpool. In 1889 the community rented a house, 8 Brougham Terrace, to serve as a prayer hall. He would personally call the adhan - the call to prayer - from one of its upper windows. The community was soon able to purchase the rented property and also 9-12 Brougham Terrace, which became the Liverpool Muslim Institute. Following a visit to Turkey Abdullah Quilliam was given the title 'Sheikh-ul-Islam of the British Isles' by the Sultan. He founded a weekly journal, The Crescent, which was published from 1893 to 1908. Quilliam is buried at Brookwood Cemetery, near Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking.

1889

Establishment of the Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking, with an adjoining student hostel, under the patronage of the Indian

Muslim princess, the Begum of Bhopal. It was the base for the journal 'Muslim India and the Islamic Review', re-named as 'the Islamic Review' in 1921. An early editor was the charismatic Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, a barrister originally from Lahore.

1910

Syed Ameer Ali convened a public meeting at the Ritz Hotel for the establishment of the London Mosque Fund for "a mosque in London worthy of the tradition of Islam and worthy of the capital of the British Empire". He was the first Indian to be appointed Privy Councilor and to be given membership of the Judicial Committee, the then Supreme Court of the Raj. On retirement in 1904 he settled in Britain with his English wife; his sons Waris and Tariq subsequently served as trustees on a number of the first mosque projects in London.

1913

First issue of the journal 'Muslim India & The Islamic Review', later renamed the 'Islamic Review', Woking. The journal was published for sixty years.

1914

Friday prayers were held under the auspices of the London Mosque Fund, first in Lindsay Hall, Notting Hill Gate, and later at 39 Upper Bedford Place. The venue then shifted to 111 Campden Hill Road, where prayers were conducted till October 1928.

1916

British Muslim Lord Headley (Al-Haj El-Farooq) wrote to Secretary of State Austen Chamberlain for allocation of state funds for the purchase and construction of a mosque in London "in memory of Muslim soldiers who died fighting for the Empire".

1917

Marmaduke Pickthall, the son of an Anglican clergyman and distinguished poet and novelist, declared his Islam in dramatic fashion after delivering a talk on 'Islam and Progress' on 29th November 1917 to the Muslim Literary Society in Notting Hill, West London. Throughout the Great War (1914-1918), and even prior to declaring his faith as a Muslim, he wrote extensively in support of the Ottomans. When a vicious propaganda campaign was launched in 1915 over the massacres of Armenians, Pickthall rose to the challenge and argued that all the blame could not be placed on the Turkish government. At a time when many Indian Muslims in London had been co-opted by the Foreign Office to provide propaganda services in support of Britain's war against Turkey, Pickthall's stand was a most courageous one and of great integrity. When British Muslims were asked to decide whether they were loyal to the Allies (Britain and France) or the Central Powers (Germany and Turkey), Pickthall said he was ready to be a combatant for his country so long as he did not have to fight the Turks. He was conscripted in the last months of the war and became corporal in charge of an influenza isolation hospital. The Foreign Office would have dearly liked to have used his talents as a linguist, but instead decided to regard him as a security risk.

1928

Formation of the London Nizamiah Mosque Trust Fund by Lord Headley (Al-Haj El-Farooq) ; these funds were subsequently transferred to the London Central Mosque Fund (present day Islamic Cultural Centre in Regents Park).

1930

A branch of the Western Islamic Association was formed in South Shields by Khalid Sheldrake. In 1936 there was also a sufi zawiya lodge in South Shields at 45 Cuthbert Street. By 1938 the Muslim community was 700 strong.

1933

Muslim Society of Great Britain, under the presidency of Ismail de Yorke, organised Islamic events at the Portman Rooms, Baker Street.

1937

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, best known in the English-speaking Muslim world for his monumental translation and commentary of the Holy Qur'an, finally settles in Britain after years as an itinerant educationalist. British Muslims initiate their first political campaign by expressing opposition to the Peel Commission's proposals for the partitioning of Palestine. Yusuf Ali, drawing on his first-hand knowledge of the mandates drawn up by the League of Nations, lectured widely on the injustice in Palestine, at venues in Brighton, Cambridge and London. Yusuf Ali was the only non-ambassadorial trustee of the London Central Mosque Fund, thus representing the British Muslim community.

1940

Churchill, at a war cabinet meeting on 24th October, authorised allocation of funds for the acquisition of a site for the London mosque.

1941

East London Mosque and Islamic Cultural Centre opened by the Egyptian Ambassador, Dr Hassan Nahjat Pasha. The

Mosque was subsequently managed by the Jamiat Muslimeen.

1944

King George VI visited the Islamic Cultural Centre - Regents Lodge in Regents Park - for its official opening.

1950-1970

The British government encouraged immigration from the New Commonwealth. After the Second World War there were severe labour shortages, hence the significant influx of Muslim immigrants to help with the massive task of reconstruction.

1962

Groups of students from six cities met in Birmingham to form the Federation of the Students Islamic Societies in the UK & Eire (FOSIS). The UK Islamic Mission was also formed this year.

1969

The Muslim Educational Trust came into being, addressing the needs of Muslim school children, and publishing the landmark 'First Primer of Islam' in April 1969.

1970

Martin Lings (Abu Bakr Sirajuddin) appointed Keeper of Oriental Manuscripts at the British Museum. The Union of Muslim Organisations (UMO) was formed with Dr Syed Aziz Pasha as General Secretary. Bashir Maan elected the first Muslim councillor in Glasgow

1971

'Impact International', the authoritative Muslim news magazine, launched in London in May

1973

Establishment of the Islamic Council of Europe, with headquarters in London and diplomat Salem Azzam appointed Secretary General. The Islamic Foundation, Leicester (subsequently relocated in 1990 to Markfield) was also formed this year with Professor Khurshid Ahmed as its first Director General.

1974

Opening of the Dar-al-Uloom, Holmcombe Hall, Bury; publication of the 'Draft Prospectus of the Muslim Institute for Research and Planning', by Dr Kalim Siddiqui

1976

World of Islam festival in London

1977

Islamic Centre established; Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens) reverted to Islam.

Current day

Muslim Britain is young: 800,000 people are aged under 25, the vast majority straddling two cultures. "Art, music, film and other forms of culture are as much part of the daily lives of Muslims as are politics, religion and science," The Muslim community contributes more than £31bn to the economy, and much else besides to our lives. Islam is Britain's second most popular religion. Over 600,000 of Britain's 1.5 million Muslims are active in their faith. Most British Muslims belong to the Sunni tradition of Islam. There are over 600 mosques in the UK and around 60 Muslim schools.