

British Calendar Act of 1751

British Calendar Act of 1751

In the year 1752 the British Parliament and King George II corrected several problems with the then current Julian calendar. The correction was first adopted by Pope Gregory XIII in October of 1582. However, adoption of the Gregorian Calendar outside of Catholic countries was delayed as Martin Luther (the original) had nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of his church on October 31, 1517. This started the Protestant Reformation, which was still ringing strong enough in 1582 to make most Protestant countries resist "bowing" to any Papal decree. Only after the problems had been growing for about 200 additional years did Great Britain adopt the Gregorian Calendar. The law was passed in 1751 and implemented in 1752. Great Britain was actually an early-bird in the list of Protestant countries. Some countries delayed adopting the Gregorian Calendar till the 1900s. The Calendar Act addressed two major issues:

- The Julian calendar was eleven days ahead of the earth's actual position due to its lack of Leap Years. This correction added the 100/400 year exceptions we use today along with dropping eleven days out of September of 1752 to bring the calendar back into agreement with the earth's position. See the following calendar.
- The Act also change the beginning of the year from March 15, as used by the government for legal purposes, to the popular date of January 1, which was used by the populace and many other nations.

The Calendar Act also addresses many legal and religious issues associated with making the change.

British Calendar Act of 1751 For The Year 1752

The Statutes at Large

From the Twentieth Year of the Reign of KING GEORGE the SECOND
To the Thirtieth Year of the Reign of KING GEORGE the SECOND
V O L U M E the S E V E N T H

L O N D O N : Printed for MARK BASKET, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, and by the Assigns of ROBERT BASKET; And by HENRY WOODFALL and William STRAHAN, Law Printers to the King's Most Excellent Majesty.

MDCCLXIV.

Note: The original text is written as six long paragraphs, one for each section marked off by Roman numerals. It was broken into shorter paragraphs in this version. Also, the original text uses the tall s (the old form that looks similar to an f, but with cross bar on the left is missing) wherever the s is not the last letter in the word Editorial annotations are written within [brackets], and a summary of the sections is outdented to the left margin. .

C A P. XXIII. A.D. 1751. Anno vicesimo quarto GEORGII II.

An Act for Regulating the Commencement of the Year; and for Correcting the Calendar now in Use.

'Amended by 25 Geo. 2. c. 30.'

WHEREAS the legal Supputation of the Year of our Lord in that Part of Great Britain called England, according to which the Year beginneth on the 25th Day of March, hath been found by Experience to be attended with divers Inconveniencies, not only as it differs from the Usage of neighbouring Nations, but also from the legal Method of Computation in that Part of Great Britain called Scotlond [sic], and from the common Usage throughout the whole Kingdom, and thereby frequent Mistakes are occasioned in the Dates of Deeds, and other Writings, and Disputes arise therefrom: `And whereas the Calendar now in Use throughout all his Majesty's British Dominions, commonly called The Julian Calendar, hath been discovered to be erroneous, by means whereof the Vernal or Spring Equinox, which at the Time of the General Council of Nice [i.e. Nicaea] in the Year of our Lord 325, happened on or about the 21st Day of March, now happens on the 9th or 10th Day of the same Month; and the said Error is still increasing, and if not remedied, would, in Process of Time, occasion the several Equinoxes and Solstices to fall at very different Times in the Civil Year from what they formerly did, which might tend to mislead Persons ignorant of the said Alteration: `And whereas a Method of correcting the Calendar in such manner, as that the Equinoxes and Solstices may for the future fall nearly on the same nominal Days, on which the same happened at the Time of the said General Council, hath been received and established, and is now generally practiced by almost all other Nations of Europe: `And whereas it will be of general Convenience to Merchants, and other Persons corresponding with other Nations and Countries, and tend to prevent Mistakes and Disputes in or concerning the Dates of Letters, and Accounts, if the like Correction be received and established in his Majesty's Dominions: ' May it therefore please your Majesty, that it may be enacted, and be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same,

The old Supputation of the Year not to be made use of after Dec. 1751. Year to commence, for the future, on 1 Jan.

That in and throughout all his Majesty's Dominions and Countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, belonging or subject to the Crown of Great Britain, the said Supputation, according to which the Year of our Lord beginneth on the 25th Day of March, shall not be made use of from and after the last Day of December 1751; and that the first Day of January next following the said last Day of December shall be reckoned, taken, deemed and accounted to be the first Day of the Year of our Lord 1752; and the first Day of January, which shall happen next after the said first Day of January 1752, shall be reckoned, taken, deemed and accounted to be the first Day of the Year of our Lord 1753; and so on, from Time to Time, the first Day of January in every Year, which shall happen in Time to come, shall be reckoned, taken, deemed and accounted to be the first Day of the Year; and that each new Year shall accordingly commence, and begin to be reckoned, from the first Day of every such Month of January next preceding the 25th

Day of March, on which such Year would, according to the present Supputation, have begun or commenced:

The Days to be numbered as now until 2 Sept. 1752; and the Day following to be accounted 14 Sept. omitting 11 Days.

And that from and after the said first Day of January 1752, the several Days of each Month shall go on, and be reckoned and numbered in the same Order; and the Feast of Easter, and other moveable Feasts thereon depending, shall be ascertained according to the same Method, as they now are, until the 2nd Day of September in the said Year 1752 inclusive; and that the natural Day next immediately following the said 2nd Day of September, shall be called, reckoned and accounted to be the 14th Day of September, omitting for that Time only the 11 intermediate nominal Days of the common Calendar; and that the several natural Days, which shall follow and succeed next after the said 14th Day of September, shall be respectively called, reckoned and numbered forwards in numerical Order from the said 14th Day of September, according to the Order and Succession of Days now used in the present Calendar; and that all Acts, Deeds, Writings, Notes and other Instruments of what Nature or Kind soever, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil, Publick or Private, which shall be made, executed or signed, upon or after the said first Day of January 1752, shall bear Date according to the said new Method of Supputation,

Hilary and Michaelmas Terms, and all Courts, to be held on the same nominal Days.

- the two fixed Terms of St. Hilary and St. Michael, in that Part of Great Britain called England,
 - and the Courts of Great Sessions in the Counties Palatine, and in Wales,
 - and also the Courts of General Quarter-Sessions and General Sessions of the Peace,
 - and all other Courts of what Nature or Kind soever, whether Civil, Criminal, or Ecclesiastical,
 - and all Meetings and Assemblies of any Bodies Politick or Corporate, either for the Election of any Officers or Members thereof, or for any such Officers entering upon the Execution of their respective Offices, or for any other Purpose whatsoever,
- which by any Law, Statute, Charter, Custom or Usage within this Kingdom, or within any other the Dominions or Countries subject or belonging to the Crown of Great Britain, are to be holden or kept on any fixed or certain Day of any Month, or on any Day depending upon

Courts held with Fairs or Marts excepted.

the Beginning, or any certain Day of any Month (except for such Courts as are usually holden or kept with any Fairs or Marts) shall, from Time to Time, from and after the said 2nd Day of September, be holden and kept upon or according to the same respective nominal Days and Times, whereon or according to which the same are now to be holden, but which shall be computed according to the said new Method of numbering and reckoning the Days of the Calendar as aforesaid; that is to say, 11 Days sooner than the respective Days whereon the same are now holden and kept; any Law, Statute, Charter, Custom or Usage, to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding.

Hundredth Years, except every fourth hundred, to be common Years of 365 Days.

II. And for the continuing and preserving the Calendar or Method of Reckoning, and computing the Days of the Year in the same regular Course, as near as may be, in all Times coming; Be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That the several Years of our Lord, 1800, 1900, 2100, 2200, 2300, or any other hundredth Years of our Lord, which shall happen in Time to come, except only every fourth hundredth [sic] Year of our Lord, whereof the Year of our Lord 2000 shall be the first, shall not be esteemed or taken to be Bissextile or Leap Years, but shall be taken to be common Years, consisting of 365 Days, and no more;

Years Bissextile of 366 Days.

and that the Years of our Lord 2000, 2400, 2800, and every other fourth hundred Year of our Lord, from the said Year of our Lord 2000 inclusive, and also all other Years of our Lord, which by the present Supputation are esteemed to be Bissextile or Leap Years, shall for the future, and in all Times to come, be esteemed and taken to be Bissextile or Leap Years, consisting of 366 Days, in the same Sort and Manner as is now used with respect to every fourth Year of our Lord. `III. And whereas according to the Rule prefixed to the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England, Easter-day is always the first Sunday [sic] after the first Full Moon which happens next after the one and twentieth Day of March, and if the Full Moon happens upon a Sunday, Easter-day is the Sunday after; which Rule was made in Conformity to the Decree of the said General Council of Nice, for the Celebration of the said Feast of Easter: `And whereas the Method of computing the Full Moons now used in the Church of England, and according to which the Table to find Easter for ever, prefixed to the said Book of Common Prayer, is formed, is by Process of Time become considerably erroneous: `And whereas a Calendar, and also certain Tables and Rules for the fixing the true Time of the Celebration of the said Feast of Easter, and the finding the Times of the Full Moons on which the same dependeth, so as the same shall agree as nearly as may be with the Decree of the said General Council, and also with the Practice of foreign Countries, have been prepared, and are hereunto annexed; '

Easter and the other moveable Feasts, to be observed according to the new Calendar, Tables and Rules.

Be it therefore further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That the said Feast of Easter, or any of the moveable Feasts thereon depending, shall, from and after the said 2nd Day of September, be no longer kept or observed in that Part of Great Britain called England, or in any other the Dominions or Countries subject or belonging to the Crown of Great Britain, according to the said Method of Supputation now used, or the said Table prefixed to the Book of Common Prayer; and that the said Table, and also the Column of Golden Numbers, as they are now prefixed to the respective Days of the Month in the said Calendar, shall be left out in all future editions of the said Book of Common Prayer; and that the said new Calendar, Tables and Rules, hereunto annexed, shall be prefixed to all such future Editions of the said Book, in the Room and stead thereof;

Feasts and Fasts, &c. to be according to the new Calendar.

and that from and after the said 2nd Day of September, all and every the fixed Feast-days, Holy-days and Fast-days, which are now kept and observed by the Church of England, and also the several solemn Days of Thanksgiving, and of Fasting and Humiliation, which by virtue of any Act of Parliament now in being are, from Time to Time, to be kept and observed, shall be kept and observed on the respective Days marked for the Celebration of the same in the said new Calendar; that is to say, On the same respective nominal Days on which the same are now kept and observed; but which according to the Alteration by this Act intended to be made as aforesaid, will happen 11 Days sooner than the same now do; and that the said Feast of Easter, and all other moveable Feasts thereon depending, shall, from Time to Time, be observed and celebrated according to the said new Calendar, Tables and Rules hereunto annexed, in that Part of Great Britain called England, and in all the Dominions and Countries aforesaid, wherein the Liturgy of the Church of England now is, or hereafter shall be used; and that

- the two movable Terms of Easter and Trinity,
 - and all Courts of what Nature or Kind soever,
 - and all Meetings and Assemblies of any Bodies Politick or Corporate,
 - and all Markets, Fairs and Marts, and Courts thereunto belonging,
- which by any Law, Statute, Charter, Custom or Usage are appointed, used or accustomed to be holden and kept at any moveable Time or Times depending upon the Time of Easter, or any other such moveable Feast as aforesaid, shall, from Time to Time, from and after the said 2nd Day of September, be holden and kept on such Days and Times whereon the same shall respectively happen or fall, according to the happening or falling of the said Feast of Easter, or such other moveable Feasts as aforesaid, to be computed according to the said new Calendar, Tables and Rules.

Courts of Session and Exchequer in Scotland, and Markets, Fairs and Marts to be held upon the same Natural days.

IV. And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That

- the several Meetings of the Court of Session,
- and Terms fixed for the Court of Exchequer in Scotland,
- the April Meeting of the Governor, Bailiffs and Commonalty of the Company of Conservators of the great Level of the Fens,
- and the holding and keeping of all Markets, Fairs and Marts, whether for the Sale of Goods or Cattle, or for the hiring of Servants, or for any other Purpose, which are either fixed to certain nominal Days of the Month, or depending upon the Beginning, or any certain Day of any Month,
- and all Courts incident or belonging to, or usually holden and kept with any such Fairs or Marts, fixed to certain Times as aforesaid,

shall not, from and after the said 2nd Day of September, be continued upon, or according to the nominal Days of the Month, or the Time of the Beginning of any Month, to be computed according to the said new Calendar, but that from and after the said 2nd Day of September, the said Courts of Session and Exchequer, the said April Meeting, and all such Markets, Fairs and Marts as aforesaid, and all Courts incident or belonging thereto, shall be holden and kept upon, or according to the same natural Days, upon or according to which the same would have been so kept or holden, in case this Act had not been made; that is to say, 11 Days later than the same would have happened, according to the

nominal Days of the said new Supputation of Time, by which the Commencement of each Month, and the nominal days thereof, are anticipated or brought forward, by the Space of 11 Days; any Thing in this Act contained to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding. `V. And whereas, according to divers Customs, Prescriptions and Usages, in certain Places within this Kingdom, certain Lands and Grounds are, on particular nominal Days and Times in the Year, to be opened for Common of Pasture, and other Purposes; and at other Times, the Owners and Occupiers of such Lands and Grounds have a Right to inclose or shut up the same, for their own private Use; and there is, in many other Instances, a temporary and distinct Property and Right vested in different Persons, in and to many such Lands and Grounds, according to certain nominal Days and Times in the Year: `And whereas the anticipating or bringing forward the said nominal Days and Times, by the Space of 11 Days, according to the said new Method of Supputation, might be attended with many Inconveniencies; ' Be it therefore further declared, provided and enacted by the Authority aforesaid,

The Times for opening and inclosing of Commons, not altered.

That nothing in this Act contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to accelerate or anticipate the Days or Times for the opening, inclosing or shutting up any such Lands or Grounds as aforesaid, or the Days or Times on which any such temporary or distinct Property or Right in or to any such Lands or Grounds as aforesaid is to commence; but that all such Lands and Grounds as aforesaid shall from and after the said 2nd Day of September be, from Time to Time, respectively opened, inclosed, or shut up, and such temporary and distinct Property and Right in and to such Lands and Grounds as aforesaid, shall commence and begin upon the same natural Days and Times on which the same should have been so respectively opened, inclosed or shut up, or would have commenced or begun, in case this Act had not been made; that is to say, 11 Days later than the same would have happened, according to the said new Account and Supputation of Time, so to begin on the said 14th Day of September as aforesaid.

Times of Payment of Rents, Annuities, &c.

VI. Provided also, and it is hereby further declared and enacted, That nothing in this present Act contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to accelerate or anticipate the Time of Payment of any Rent or Rents, Annuity or Annuities, or Sum or Sums of Money whatsoever, which shall become payable by Virtue or in Consequence of any Custom, Usage, Lease, Deed, Writing, Bond, Note, Contract or other Agreement whatsoever, now subsisting, or which shall be made, signed, sealed or entred into, at any Time before the said 14th Day of September, or which shall become payable by virtue of any Act or Acts of Parliament now in Force, or which shall be made before the Said 14th Day of September, or the Time of doing any Matter or Thing directed or required by any such Act or Acts of Parliament to be done in relation thereto; or to accelerate the Payment of, or increase the Interest of, any such Sum of Money which shall become payable as aforesaid;

Time of Delivery of Goods, Commencement or Expiration of Leases, &c.

or to accelerate the Time of the Delivery of any Goods, Chattles, Wares, Merchandize or other Things whatsoever; or the Time of the Commencement, Expiration or

Determination of any Lease or Demise of any Lands, Tenements or Hereditaments, or of any other Contract or Agreement whatsoever; or of the accepting, surrendering or delivering up the Possession of any such Lands, Tenements or Hereditaments; or the Commencement, Expiration or Determination of any Annuity or Rent; or of any Grant for any Term of Years, of what Nature or Kind soever, by Virtue or in Consequence of any such Deed, Writing, Contract or Agreement;

Time of attaining of the Age of 21 Years, &c. not altered.

or the Time of the attaining the Age of one and twenty Years, or any other Age requisite by any Law, Custom or Usage, Deed, Will or Writing whatsoever, for the Doing any Act, or for any other Purpose whatsoever, by any Person or Persons now born, or who shall be born before the said 14th Day of September; or the Time of the Expiration or Determination of any Apprenticeship or other Service, by virtue of any Indenture, or of any Articles under Seal, or by reason of any simple Contract or Hiring whatsoever; but that

- all and every such Rent and Rents, Annuity and Annuities, Sum and Sums of Money, and the Interest thereof, shall remain and continue to be due and payable;
- and the Delivery of such Goods and Chattles, Wares and Merchandize, shall be made;
- and the said Leases and Demises of all such Lands, Tenements and Hereditaments, and the said Contracts and Agreements, shall be deemed to commence, expire and determine;
- and the said Lands, Tenements and Hereditaments shall be accepted, surrendered and delivered up;
- and the said Rents and Annuities, and Grants for any Term of Years, shall commence, cease and determine,

at and upon the same respective natural Days and Times, as the same should and ought to have been payable or made, or would have happened, in case this Act had not been made; and that no further or other Sum shall be paid or payable for the Interest of any Sum of Money whatsoever, than such Interest shall amount unto, for the true Number of natural Days for which the principal Sum bearing such Interest shall continue due and unpaid; and that no Person or Persons whatsoever shall be deemed or taken to have attained the said Age of one and twenty Years, or any other such Age as aforesaid, or to have completed the Time of such Service as aforesaid, until the full Number of Years and Days shall be elapsed on which such Person or Persons respectively would have attained such Age, or would have completed the Time of such Service as aforesaid, in case this Act had not been made; any Thing herein before contained to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding.

See 26 Geo. 2. c. 34. s. 4.

Source: Adapted from Gilbert Heulton.

<http://www.exit109.com/~gheulton/y2k/br1752a.html>