**THE BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM: HISTORY**

**CHARACTERISTICS:**

* No written constitution
* Not logical, efficient, fully democratic
* Changes are gradual and based on consensus

**WHY?** Because the UK hasn’t been invaded for almost 1,000 years

MAIN EVENTS:

1215: Magna Charta – It limited the power of the king

1341: Bicameralism was created – A model for many other states

19th century: the suffrage was extended

1918: women voted for the first time

1970: people from 18 to 21 could vote

**THE MONARCH: Symbol of national unity**

**THE CHOICE OF THE MONARCH**

* IN THE PAST: first son
* NOW: first child

**ROLES THE MONARCH:**

* Head of State
* Head of the Commonwealth
* Head of the Church of England

**POWERS OF THE MONARCH:**

* Executive power (mainly symbolic)
* Opens, closes and dissolves Parliament

**THE THREE POWERS OF THE STATE IN THE UK**

**LEGISLATIVE POWER: makes new laws and changes existing ones**

* House of Commons
* 659 representatives (MPs), one for each district
* Elected every 5 years
* More powerful
* House of Lords
* Not elected
* Less powerful

**EXECUTIVE POWER: executes the laws**

* Queen (only symbolic power)
* Government, formed by
* Prime Minister (the leader of the party that won the elections, nominated by the monarch)
* Ministers

**JUDICIAL POWER: ensures that everyone obeys the laws**

* **3 separate legal systems (England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland)**
* **The Supreme Court of the UK (created in 2009) to unify the system**

**THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM (FPTP – First Past the Post)**

Majority system: The winner takes all (in each district there is only one party that wins and one candidate that is elected for the House of Commons)

ADVANTAGES

* Extremist parties can’t be elected
* The results are calculated quickly

DISADVANTAGES

* It doesn’t reflect the number of votes
* Smaller parties are damaged
* Tactical voting is encouraged