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# The BRITANNIA Collection

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Picture credits:

Attributed to Nicholas Hilliard *Queen Elizabeth I*  
Loan from the National Portrait Gallery

Holman Hunt *Our English Coasts, 1852*  
(*Strayed Sheep*)

Richard Wilson *The Cock Tavern, Cheam, Surrey*  
Charles Ginner *Piccadilly Circus*

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# The BRITANNIA Collection

'One Michael Owen... There's only one Michael Owen...'  
Ok, ok... We know how proud the British are to be British and all that, but don't get too excited. This is not that kind of collection. Why? Because you already know all about fish and chips, cricket and The Beatles. Let's find out why we are here and what lies at the heart of British civilization.

Britannia was originally the Latin name that the Roman Empire gave to the island of Great Britain, and the figure of Britannia has become a national personification of Britain. You can see her at the top of the Millbank entrance to Tate Britain.



room  
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Go to room 2 and take a look at *Queen Elizabeth I* painted by Nicholas Hilliard. The jewel above her hand is a phoenix. This mythical, unique bird alludes to the unmarried Queen's virginity. Elizabeth holds a rose, once associated with the Virgin Mary, but also an emblem of the Tudor dynasty.

The coastal scenery of Britain is an emblem of national identity. The fact that Britain is an island presents it as a source of national strength and independence, but the sheep teetering on the edge of the cliff in this painting represent the threat of invasion from foreign visitors. "Stand strong, little army of sheep!"

room  
14



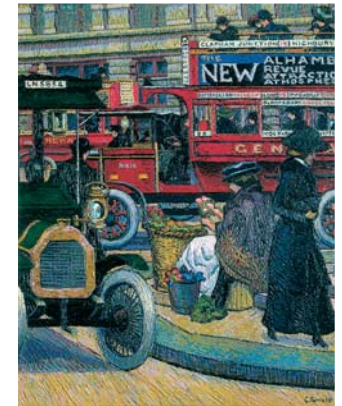
Let's stop for a quick pint at Richard Wilson's *The Cock Tavern, Cheam, Surrey*. That's how pubs looked in 1745 – not so different from today.

room  
7



Finally, this Collection brings us to more modern times. Look at *Piccadilly Circus* in the year 1912. Here Charles Ginner captures the brashness and bustle of the modern city. Look at the flower seller imprisoned by cars and buses – the early days of the 'rush hour'.

room  
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And last of all, why not experience the *real* heart of British civilization? A cup of tea from the Café downstairs.

