Time-scales used in the United Kingdom from 1880 onwards

The time-scale used for general purposes in the United Kingdom is Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), except during those periods of Summer Time when the clocks are advanced by one or two hours. Prior to 1916 October 1, the standard time for the whole of Ireland was Dublin mean time (GMT−25 minutes), however, during the period 1916 May 21 to 1916 October 1 Irish clocks were advanced by one hour on Dublin mean time. Thereafter, time in Ireland was synchronised with that of Great Britain.

Before 1981, the change from GMT to GMT+1 h and the reversion occurred at 2 am GMT on the dates given overleaf; the change from GMT to GMT+1 h and the reversion in 1981-1992, and all changes from GMT+1 h to GMT+2 h and the subsequent reversions occur at 1 am GMT on the dates given. All changes occur on Sundays, except for the reversion to GMT in 1917-1921 inclusive, and the change to GMT+2 h in 1945, which occurred on Mondays.

Care must be taken with dates before 1925 since the astronomical day began at noon on the civil day of the same date. The dates in the table overleaf refer to the civil calendar.

GMT+1 h was kept continuously from 1968 February 18 to 1971 October 31. In 1968 Summer Time ended at 2 am GMT on October 27 and was immediately followed by British Standard Time, also equal to GMT+1 h, which was the time system in use between 1968 October 27 and 1971 October 31.

In 1972-1980 the following rule, from Section 1 of the Summer Time Act 1972, applied: Summer Time (GMT+1 h) is the period from the day following the third Saturday in March or, if that day is Easter Day (which will not occur in this century) the day following the second Saturday in March to the day following the fourth Saturday in October. The change occurs at 2 am GMT.

In 1981-1994 the following rule applies: Summer Time (GMT+1 h) is the period from the last Sunday in March to the day following the fourth Saturday in October. The change occurs at 1 am GMT.

For 1995-1997 the dates are given on the reverse of this sheet.

For the years 1998 - 2001 the dates are given by the EU 8th Directive on Summer Time, which operate from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October, and the changes occur at 1 am GMT, and the changes occur at 1 am GMT.

For the years 2002 - 2007, and beyond, the EU 9th Directive on Summer Time rules apply. These rules are the same as those of the 8th Directive.


Such occasions are marked in the BBC broadcasts by the emission of seven, instead of six, time pips; the beginning of the last (lengthened) pip marks the commencement of the first second of the next minute, as usual.

GAW/GRB/GAG/JPH/CHY/BDY/SAB/PSP

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At the time this sheet was produced, HMNAO believes the information to be accurate.