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A Cannabis Chronology

This chronology is a co-production between CHIC and UKCIA. Most of the timeline was compiled by Rob Christopher of CHIC, and UKCIA added more using Neil Montgomery's timeline for Pot Night and other sources.

[References](#)

Updated by [derek](#)

Cannabis sativa appears to have originated in Central Asia and was probably first cultivated for its fibre. It has been grown in China for at least 4500 years. It is thought to have reached Europe by 1500 BC.

- 2700 BC** First written record of cannabis use, in the pharmacopoeia of Shen Nung, one of the fathers of Chinese medicine.
 - 550 BC** The Persian prophet Zoroaster gives hemp first place in the sacred text, the Zend-Avesta, which lists over 10,000 medicinal plants.
 - 450 BC** The Greek historian Herodotus describes the Scythians of central Asia throwing hemp onto heated stones under canvas: 'as it burns, it smokes like incense and the smell of it makes them drunk'.
 - 100 BC** Chinese make paper from cannabis and mulberry.
 - AD 45** St Mark establishes the Ethiopian Coptic Church. The Copts claim that marijuana as a sacrament has a lineage descending from the Jewish sect, the Essenes, who are considered to be responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls.
 - 70** Roman Emperor Nero's surgeon, Dioscorides praises Cannabis for making "the stoutest cords" and for it's medical properties.
 - 400** Cannabis cultivated for the first time in England at Old Buckeham Mare.
 - 500** First botanical drawing of Cannabis appears in 'Constantinopolitanus'.
 - 600** Germans, Franks, Vikings, etc. make paper from Cannabis.
 - 800** Mohammed allows Cannabis, but forbids alcohol use.
 - 1000** The English word 'Hempe' first listed in a dictionary. Moslems produce hashish for medical and social use.
 - 1150** Moslems use Cannabis to start Europe's first paper mill. Most paper is made from Cannabis for next 850 years.
 - 1484** Pope Innocent VIII singles out cannabis as an unholy sacrament of the Satanic mass.
 - 1494** Hemp paper making starts in England.
 - 1545** Spanish bring Cannabis cultivation to Chile.
 - 1554** Spanish bring Cannabis cultivation to Peru.
- Queen Elizabeth I decrees that land owners with 60 acres or more must grow Cannabis else face

- 1563** a £5 fine.
- 1564** King Philip of Spain follows lead of Queen Elizabeth and orders Cannabis to be grown throughout his Empire from modern-day Argentina to Oregon.
- 1606** British take Cannabis to Canada to be cultivated mainly for maritime uses.
- 1611** British start cultivating Cannabis in Virginia.
- 1619** Virginia colony makes Cannabis Cultivation Mandatory, followed by most other colonies. Europe pays Hemp bounties.
- 1631** Cannabis used for bartering throughout American Colonies.
- 1632** Pilgrims bring Cannabis to New England.
- 1753** Cannabis Sativa classified by Linneaus.
- 1776** Declaration of Independence drafted on Cannabis paper.
- 1783** Cannabis Indica classified by Lamarck.
- 1791** President Washington sets duties on Cannabis to encourage domestic industry. Jefferson calls Cannabis "a necessity" and urges farmers to grow Cannabis instead of tobacco.
- 1807** Napoleon signs the Treaty of Tilset with Czar Alexander of Russia which cuts off all legal Russian trade with Britain. Britain blackmails and press gangs American sailors into illegally trading in Russian Hemp.
- 1808** Napoleon wants to place French Troops at Russian ports to ensure the Treaty of Tilset is complied with. The Czar refuses and turns a blind eye to Britain's illegal trade in Cannabis.
- 1812** 19th June America declares war on Britain. 24th June Napoleon invades Russia aiming to put an end to Britain's main supply of Cannabis. By the end of the year the Russian winter and army had destroyed most of Napoleon's invading force.
- 1835** The Club de Hashichines, whose bohemian membership included the poet Baudelaire, is founded.
- 1839** Homeopathy journal American Provers' Union publishes first of many reports on the effects of Cannabis.
- 1841** Dr. W.B. O'Shaughnessy of Scotland works in India then introduces Cannabis to Western medicine. In the following 50 years hundreds of medical papers are written on the medical benefits of Cannabis.
- 1845** Psychologist and 'inventor' of modern psychopharmacology and psychotimetic drug treatment, Jacques-Joseph Moreau de Tours documents physical and mental benefits of Cannabis.
- 1857** 'The Hasheesh Eater' by Fitz Hugh Ludlow is published. Smith Brothers of Edinburgh start to market a highly active extract of Cannabis Indica used as a basis for innumerable tinctures.
- 1860** First Governmental commission study of Cannabis and health conducted by Ohio State Medical society.
- 1870** Cannabis is listed in the US Pharmacopoeia as a medicine for various ailments.
- 1876** Hashish served at American Centennial Exposition.
- Queen Victoria's personal physician, Sir Russell Reynolds, prescribes Cannabis for menstrual

- 1890** cramps. He claims in the first issue of The Lancet, that Cannabis "When pure and administered carefully, is one of the of the most valuable medicines we possess"
- 1895** The Indian Hemp Drug Commission concludes that cannabis has some medical uses, no addictive properties and a number of positive emotional and social benefits. First known use of the word 'marijuana' for smoking, by Pancho Villa's supporters in Sonora Mexico. The song "La Curaracha" tells the story of one of Villa's men looking for his stash of "marijuana por fumar"
- 1910** African-American 'reefer' use reported in jazz clubs of New Orleans, said to be influencing white people. Mexican's reported to be smoking Cannabis in Texas. Newspaper tycoon Randolph Hearst has 800,000 acres of prime Mexican Timberland seized from him by Villa and his men. Could this be the reason why his newspapers subsequently ran many stories portraying Negroes and Mexicans as frenzied beasts under the influence of 'Marijuana'.
- 1911** Hindus reported to be using 'Gunjah' in San Francisco. South Africa starts to outlaw Cannabis.
- 1912** The possibility of putting controls on the use of Cannabis is raised at the first International Opium Conference.
- 1915** California outlaws Cannabis.
- 1916** Recognising that timber supplies are finite, USDA Bulletin 404 calls for new program of expansion of Cannabis to replace uses of timber by industry.
- 1919** Texas outlaws Cannabis.
- 1923** The South African delegate to the League of Nations claims mine workers are not as productive after using 'dagga' (Cannabis) and calls for international controls. Britain insists on further research before any controls are imposed.
- 1924** At the second International Opiates Conference the Egyptian delegate claims that serious problems are associated with Hashish use and calls for immediate international controls. A Sub-Committee is formed and listens to the Egyptian and Turkish delegations while Britain abstains. The conference declares Cannabis a Narcotic and recommends strict international control.
- 1925** The 'Panama Canal Zone Report' conducted due to the level of Cannabis use by soldiers in the area concludes that there is no evidence that Cannabis use is habit-forming or deleterious. The report recommends that no action be taken to prevent the use or sale of Cannabis.
- 1928** September 28th. The Dangerous Drugs Act 1925 becomes law and Cannabis is made illegal in Britain.
- 1930** Louis Armstrong is arrested in Los Angeles for possession of cannabis.
- 1931** The Federal Bureau of Narcotics is formed with Anslinger appointed as its head.
- 1937** Following action by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics and a campaign by newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, a prohibitive tax is put on hemp in the USA, effectively destroying the industry. Anslinger testifies to congress that 'Marijuana' is the most violence causing drug known to Man. The objections by the American Medical Association (The AMA only realised that 'Marijuana' was in fact Cannabis 2 days before the start of hearing) and the National Oil Seed Institute are rejected.
- 1938** The February edition of US magazine Popular Mechanics (written before the Marijuana Transfer Tax was passed) declares 'Hemp - the New Billion Dollar Crop.'
- 1941** Cannabis dropped from the American Pharmacopoeia. Popular Mechanics Magazine reveal details of Henry Ford's plastic car made using Cannabis and fuelled from Cannabis. Henry Ford continued to illegally grow Cannabis for some years after the Federal ban, hoping to become independent of the petroleum industry.
- 1943** Both the US and German governments urge their patriotic farmers to grow hemp for the war effort. The US shows farmers a short film - 'Hemp for Victory' which the government later

pretends never existed. The editor of 'Military Journal' states that although some military personnel smoke Cannabis he does not view this as a problem.

- 1944** New York Mayor LaGuardia's Marijuana commission reports that Cannabis causes no violence at all and cites other positive results. Anslinger responds by denouncing LaGuardia and threatens doctors with prison sentences if they dare carry out independent research on Cannabis.
- 1945** Newsweek reports that over 100,000 Americans use Cannabis.
- 1948** Anslinger now declares that using Cannabis causes the user to become peaceful and pacifistic. He also claims that the Communists would use Cannabis to weaken the American's will to fight.
- 1951** UN bulletin of Narcotic Drugs estimates 200 million Cannabis users worldwide.
- 1952** First UK Cannabis bust at the Number 11 Club, Soho.
- 1961** Anslinger heads US delegation at UN Drugs Convention. New international restrictions are placed on Cannabis aiming to eliminate its use within 25 years.
- 1962** Anslinger is sacked by President Kennedy. Kennedy may well have smoked cannabis in the White House.
- 1964** The first head shop is opened by the Thelin brothers in the United States.
- 1966** The folk singer Donovan becomes the first celebrity hippy to fall foul of the law.
- 1967** In July over 3,000 people hold a mass 'smoke-in' in Hyde Park in London. The same month, The Times carries a pro-legalisation advertisement which declares that "the laws against Marijuana are immoral in principle and unworkable in Practice. The signatories include David Dimbleby, Bernard Levin, and the Beatles.
- 1967** The most famous bust of all, on the home of Rolling Stone, Keith Richards, uncovered marijuana. Richards and Mick Jagger were sentenced to prison for respectively three months and one year. The sentences prompted an outcry that culminated in Lord Rees Mogg's famous Times editorial 'Who brakes a butterfly on a wheel?' The convictions were quashed on appeal.
- 1967** In New York, on Valentines Day, Abbie Hoffman and the Yippies mail out 3000 joints to addresses chosen at random from the phonebook. They offer these people the chance to discover what all the fuss is about, but remind them that they are now criminals for possessing cannabis. The mail out was secretly funded by Jimi Hendrix, and attracts huge publicity.
- 1968** A Home Office select committee, chaired by Baroness Wootton, looks at the 'cannabis question'. Its report concluded that cannabis was no more harmful than tobacco or alcohol, and recommended that the penalties for all marijuana offences be reduced. Campaign against Cannabis use by US Troops in Vietnam - Soldiers switch to heroin.
- 1969** Incoming Labour minister Jim Callaghan rejects the Wootton recommendations and introduces a new Misuse of Drugs Act, which prescribes a maximum five years' imprisonment for possession. The Act remains in force to this day.
- 1970** Canadian Le Dain report claims that the debate on the non-medical use of Cannabis "has all too often been based on hearsay, myth and ill-informed opinion about the effects of the drug." Marijuana Transfer Tax' declared unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court.
- 1971** Misuse of Drugs Act lists Cannabis as a Class B drug and bans its medical use despite the recommendation of the Wootton Report that "Preparations of Cannabis and it's derivatives should continue to be available on prescription for purposes of medical treatment and research". President Nixon declares drugs "America's public enemy No. 1".
- 1972** The White House passes a \$1 billion anti-drug bill and Nixon again declares drugs America's public enemy No. 1". The US Government Shafer report voices concern at the level of spending used to stop illicit drug use. From 1969-73 the level of spending rose over 1000 percent.

- 1973** President Nixon declares "We have turned the corner on drug addiction in America'. Oregon becomes the first state to take steps towards legalisation.
- 1975** Hundreds of Doctors call on US Government to instigate further research on Cannabis. Supreme Court of Alaska declares that 'right of privacy' protects Cannabis possession in the home. Limit for public possession is set at one ounce.
- 1976** Ford Administration bans government funding of medical research on Cannabis. Pharmaceutical companies allowed to carry out research on synthetic, manmade Cannabis analogues. Holland adopts policy of tolerance to Cannabis users. Robert Randal becomes first American to receive Cannabis from Federal supplies under a Investigational New Drug (IND) program. Ford's chief advisor on drugs, Robert Dupont declares that Cannabis is less harmful than alcohol or tobacco and urges for its decriminalisation. Disturbances erupt at the end of the Notting Hill carnival. BBC News reports: 'Scores of young black men roamed the streets late into the night, openly smoking marijuana joints and listening to the non-stop pounding of reggae music'.
- 1978** New Mexico becomes first US state to make Cannabis available for medical use.
- 1980** Paul McCartney spends ten days in prison in Japan for possession of cannabis.
- 1983** UK convictions for cannabis possession exceed 20,000, having risen from just under 15,000 in 1980. US government instructs American Universities and researchers to destroy all 1966-76 Cannabis research work.
- 1988** In Washington, DEA Judge Francis Young concludes at the end of a lengthy legal process that "Marijuana in its natural form is one of the safest therapeutically active substances known to man". He recommends that medical use of marijuana should be allowed, for certain life- or sense-threatening illnesses. The DEA administrator rejects the ruling. US Senate adds \$2.6 Billion to federal anti-drug efforts.
- 1989** Outgoing president Reagan declares victory in War on Drugs as being a major achievement of his administration. Secretary of State James Baker reports that the global war on narcotics production "is clearly not being won."
- 1990** The discovery of THC receptors in the human brain is reported in Nature.
- 1991** 42,209 people are convicted of cannabis offences in the UK. 19,583 escape with cautions.
- 1993** Hempcore become the first British company to obtain a license to grow Cannabis as the Home Office lift restrictions on industrial hemp cultivation.
- 1994** Home Secretary Michael Howard increases maximum fines for possession from £500 to £2,500. Germany becomes the first European country apart from Holland to decriminalise possession of 'small quantities of cannabis for occasional use'. The Liberal-Democrat conference votes for a Royal Commission, yet the tabloid press report that they support legalisation! Key rings with leaves taken from Hempcore's first Harvest are illegally sold in such publications as 'Viz'. The Home Office are aware of the situation but do not prosecute Hempcore who could have been facing 15 years and an unlimited fine. Association of Cannabis Therapeutics talks to Department Of Health about possibility of Legalising Cannabis for Medical use.
- 1995** Channel 4 dedicate 8 hours of programming to Cannabis on Pot Night. The BBC respond with blatant anti-cannabis propaganda on Panorama. 10 millionth cannabis arrest in the US in July. Labour shadow minister Clare Short says the subject of decriminalisation should be discussed. She is immediately denounced by other leading Labour Politicians.
- 1995** UKCIA website is launched
- 1997** The newspaper The Independent on Sunday launched a "Decriminalise cannabis" campaign. They, like us, believed that a change would come with the newly elected Labour government, they were wrong, but they did organise a big demonstration in London in March of 1998, before dropping the campaign. These large demonstrations became an annual event thereafter, although no longer organised by the newspaper.

- 2000** After four long years of attempted repression of cannabis under the first Labour Administration of Tony Blair, the climate of opinion began to change. In September of 2000, at the Tory party conference, the then shadow Home Secretary, Anne Widdecombe to make her keynote speech which was to be in the tradition of firm support for the issue of law and order. She announced that the next Conservative government would have a "crack down" on cannabis and she even proposed on the spot fines for simple small scale possession. The media and the police tore the speech apart as unworkable and even undesirable. Several Tory MP's admitted past use, the crack down on cannabis was over.
- 2001** At the start of the new administration in June 2001 the police in Lambeth, South London announced that they would no longer give anyone found in possession of cannabis a criminal record and the issue of legalisation became a major issue in the campaign for the leadership of the Conservative party. We began to hope change was close
- 2001** October: The government sets up a Select Committee to look at drugs policy. When giving evidence the Home Secretary (David Blunkett) announces his intention to move cannabis from class B to class C, making possession a non-arrestable offence.
- 2004** January: The long awaited reclassification finally happened, but the law relating to Class C drugs was changed so as to make most of the changes meaningless. The government spends 1 million pounds on an advertising campaign to tell people nothing had changed and that Cannabis is still illegal.
- 2005** Reefer madness V2 launched by the mental health charities RETHINK and SANE, drawing attention to research which claimed to show a link between cannabis use and serious mental illness. The campaign was used as a platform to oppose the reclassification to class C and over the next four years a series of alarmist and totally inaccurate newspaper reports carried scare stories of a dangerous new version of cannabis - "skunk" - said to be 30 or more times stronger than cannabis used to be.
- The ACMD examines the issue and recommends no change to the classification of cannabis and the Home Secretary Charles Clarke agrees to keep it where it is, but orders a total review of the drugs classifications. Clarke is replaced shortly after and his review is scrapped.
- 2007** Tony Blair finally stands down to widespread relief, but is replaced by Gordon Brown who announces his intention to move cannabis to class B again. The issue is returned to the ACMD for their advice upon which the decision would normally have been based.
- 2008** ACMD reports that cannabis should remain class C. Research carried out for the Home Office but never made public is leaked by the Guardian and shows incidence of psychosis has actually dropped during the time cannabis use increased. Gordon Brown ignores the ACMD advice and announces cannabis will be returned to class B.
- UKCIA loses it's webhosting and moves to a new server. Newsblog starts.
- 2009** Cannabis is returned to class B of the misuse of drugs act in January.

References

Most of the timeline was compiled by Rob Christopher of CHIC using the following sources:
 Chris Conrad, *HEMP, Lifeline to the Future* (ISBN 0-963975-1-2)
 Ernest Abel, *Marijuana, The First 12,000 years* (Plenum Press, New York 1980)
 Jack Herer, *The Emperor Wears No Clothes* (ISBN # 1-878125-00-1)
 Peter Stratford, *Psychedelics Encyclopaedia* (ISBN 0-9114171-51-8)

Some more came from the web site that accompanied Channel 4's Pot Night.

UKCIA checked and corrected the above and added more using:

Terrence McKenna, *Food Of The Gods*
 Abbie Hoffman, *Soon To Be A Major Motion Picture*
 Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*



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