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What the 1971 Act lists

Scotland already had an early May Monday written into a 1971 Act of Parliament. England and Wales, in that same schedule, did not.

Schedule 1 of the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 still lists the bank holidays it names. For England and Wales the list is Easter Monday; the last Monday in May; the last Monday in August; 26 December, if it is not a Sunday; and 27 December in a year in which 25 or 26 December is a Sunday. There is no 1 May, and no first Monday in May.

The Scotland list in the same schedule includes “The first Monday in May.” The early May holiday that England and Wales now keep arrived later. The National Trust dates that change to 1978, and to Michael Foot, then Labour Employment Secretary.

A 2025 proclamation later appointed Monday 4 May 2026 as a bank holiday in England, Wales and Northern Ireland under that same Act. Official dates for each year are the ones on the GOV.UK bank-holidays page, which labels the holiday “Early May bank holiday.”

Two official lists, one May

The Act’s wording for Scotland is “the first Monday in May.” GOV.UK labels the holiday “Early May bank holiday,” and in 2020 even listed it on a Friday. Those are official in their own places, and they are not the same sentence.

A short quiz

1. Does the England and Wales list in Schedule 1 include the first Monday in May?
2. What wording does Schedule 1 use for Scotland?
3. When does the National Trust say England’s early May holiday began?

Answers. 1. No. 2. “The first Monday in May.” 3. In 1978, under Michael Foot.

Wording from the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971, Schedule 1 (latest revised text on legislation.gov.uk), the National Trust, and GOV.UK, checked 17 November 2026.
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