

PRIME MINISTERS PORTRAITS GUIDE





Textile design with diamond and flower pattern, green body colour with gold decoration,
A.W.N. Pugin, ca. 1847. One of a series of designs (on 5 sheets) for textiles at the Houses of Parliament.

©Victoria and Albert Museum, London

INTRODUCTION



Charles Michael Philips was admitted to the Inn in 1975 and called in 1978. Over several generations his family had collected a collection of Prime Minister portraits, starting with Sir Robert Walpole. In 1975 Philips approached the Treasurer, Sir George Baker about donating his collection to the Inn.

After several letters to both Master Treasurer and the Under Treasurer, Captain Morison, the Executive and Finance Committees decided to accept Mr Philips' generous offer. It was decided that the portraits should hang in the Library and they arrived late in 1976.

The portraits languished in the Library loft for at least the next 20 years before it was decided to conserve and hang them. When they were eventually displayed, there were a number of portraits missing including the Earl of Shelburne, Lord Grenville, George Canning, and several twentieth century PMs.

Ever since, it has been the Librarian's (previously Keeper of the Library) task to request a signed portrait of each new Prime Minister who takes office. It was not until 2012 that a member of the Library and Archive Committee, Lord Hacking, highlighted the missing portraits. The Library and Archive Committee and the then Keeper of the Library, Vanessa Hayward, set about to complete the collection. One glaring omission was the Duke of Wellington, which was generously donated by Master David Wurtzel.

THE PRIME MINISTERS



1. Sir Robert Walpole
© The Trustees of the British Museum

1. Sir Robert Walpole, 1730 - 1742

Born 26 August 1676, Houghton Hall, Norfolk, died 18 March 1745, Arlington Street, London
Political Party - Whig

Significant Legislative Acts

- Parliamentary Privilege Act 1737 - an act granting the Members of Parliament the right of Privilege.
- Distress for Rent Act 1737 - an act for securing the payment of rents by tenants and preventing frauds.
- Gaming Act 1738 - an act for preventing excessive and deceitful gaming.

2. Spencer Compton, 1st Earl of Wilmington, 1742 - 1743

Born 1673/4, Compton Wynyates, Warwickshire, died 2 July 1743, St. James's Square, London
Political Party - Whig

- Spencer Compton, Earl of Wilmington's tenure as First Lord of the Treasury was short, he died in office in 1743.

3. Henry Pelham, 1743 – 1754

Born 1696 at Laughton, Sussex, died 17 March 1754, Arlington Street, London

Political Party – Whig

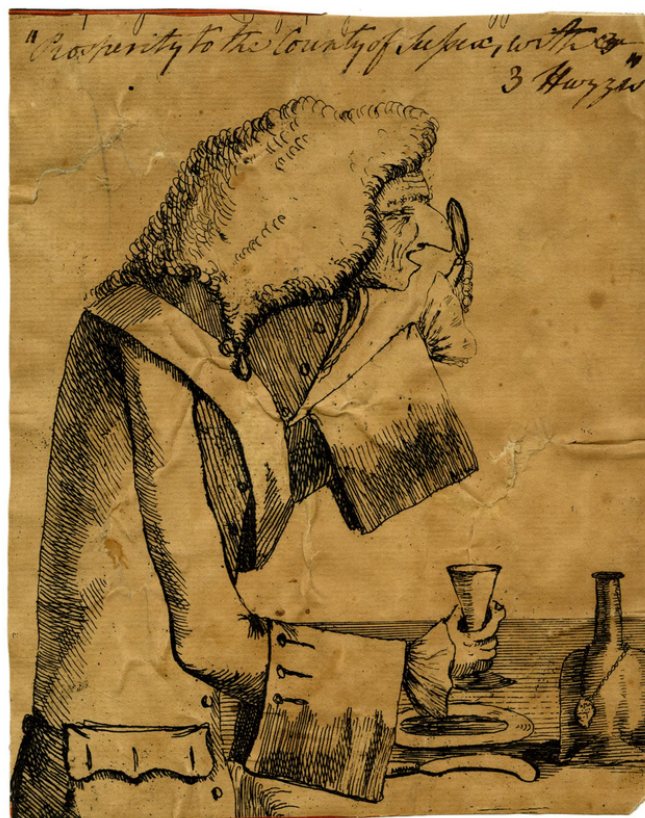
Significant Legislative Acts

- The Consolidation Act 1749 – reorganised the Royal Navy.
 - Reorganised the British Calendar in 1751 when 1st January became New Year's Day.
 - The Jew Act 1753 – allowed Jews to become naturalised by application to Parliament.
 - The Marriage Act 1753 – enumerated the minimum age of consent for marriage.
-

4. Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle, 1754 – 1756 and 1757 – 1762

Born 21 July 1693, London, died 17 November 1768, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London

Political Party – Whig



2. Representation of: Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle

© The Trustees of the British Museum

5. William Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire, 1756 – 1757

Born 1719/20 London, died 2 October 1764 at Spa in the Austrian Netherlands (now Belgium)

Political Party – Whig

Significant Legislative Acts

– The Militia Act 1757 – establishing Militia regiments in all counties for home defence.

6. John Stuart, Earl of Bute, 1762 – 1763

Born 25 May 1713, Parliament Square, Edinburgh, died 10 March 1792, Isle of Bute

Political Party – Tory

Significant Legislative Acts

– Cider Tax 1763 – a tax of 4 shillings per hogshead to raise revenue to pay for the Seven Years War.



3. Satire on Lord Bute's alleged continuing dominance over certain politicians even four years after his resignation from office

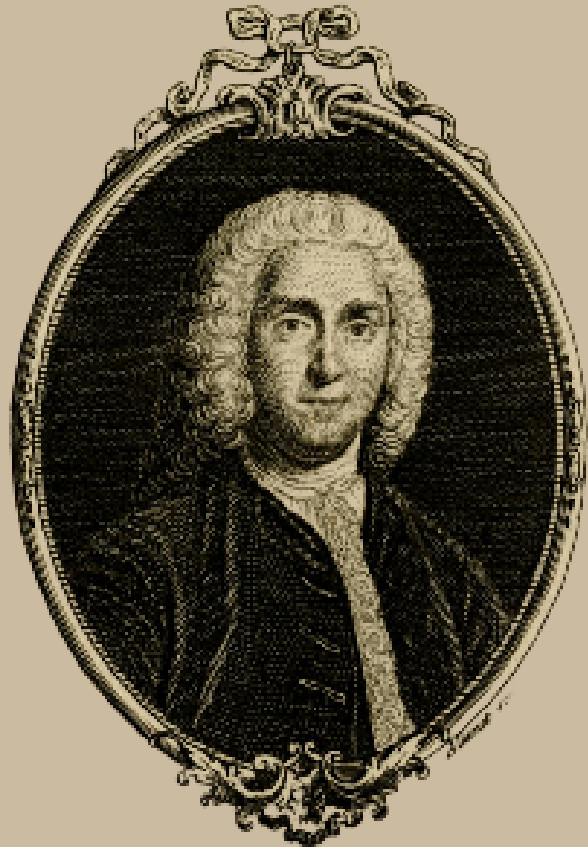
© The Trustees of the British Museum

7. George Grenville, 1763 – 1765

Born 17 October 1712,
Buckinghamshire, died 13
November 1770, London
Political Party – Whig

Significant Legislative Acts

- Navy Act 1758 – speeding up of wages to seamen so they could send money home to their families.
- Stamp Act 1765 – all legal documents, contracts, licences, newspapers, pamphlets etc. carried a tax.
- Parliamentary Elections Act 1770
- changed the tradition of petitions to Parliament being dealt with a committee rather than the House.



4. George Grenville
© The Trustees of the British Museum

8. Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquess of Rockingham, 1765 – 1766 and 1782 – 1782

Born 13 May 1730, Wentworth near Rotherham, died 1 July 1782, Wimbledon
Political Party – Whig

Significant Legislative Acts

- Declaratory Act 1766 – for securing the dependency of George III's dominions in America on Parliament.
- Repeal of the controversial Stamp Act 1766, in the face of protest from the Colonies.
- The Catholic Relief Act 1778 enabled Catholics to own land, inherit property and join the army.
- The Parliament Act 1782 – disqualified all officers of Customs and Excise and the Post Office from voting in Parliamentary elections.

9. William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham, 1766 – 1768

Born 15 November 1708, Westminster, died 1 May 1778, Hayes, Middlesex

Political Party – Whig

– Pitt's great popularity with the people led to him, being known as the 'Great Commoner'. He is credited with the birth of the British Empire.

10. Augustus Henry Fitzroy, 3rd Earl of Grafton, 1768 – 1770

Born 28 September 1735, died 14 March 1811, Euston Hall Suffolk

Political Party – Whig

– Fitzroy often attracted scandal due to his indiscreet personal life. His career was saved when his wife's own indiscretions allowed him to divorce her.

11. Lord Frederick North, 1770 – 1782

Born 13 April 1732, London, died 5 August 1792, London

Political Party – Tory

Significant Legislative Acts

– Tea Act 1773 – sparked the Boston Tea Party and led to the American Revolution in 1776



5. Caricature of Lord North
© The Trustees of the British Museum

12. William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne, 1782 – 1783

Born 2 May 1737, Dublin, died 7 May 1805, London

Political Party – Whig

– Petty was in power at the time of the treaty of Paris which ended the American War of Independence.



6. Representation of William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne
© The Trustees of the British Museum

13. William Bentinck, 3rd Duke of Portland, 1783 – 1783 and 1807 – 1809

Born 14 April 1738, died 30 October 1809, Bulstrode, Buckinghamshire

Political Party – Whig

Significant Legislative Acts

– Treaty of Paris 1783 – formal end to the American War of Independence.

14. William Pitt, 1783 – 1801 and 1804 – 1806

Born 28 May 1759, Hayes Place, Kent, died 23 January 1806 Putney Heath, London

Political Party – Tory

Significant Legislative Acts

– India Act 1784 – control over all British territories in the East Indies and over the affairs of the company.

– Act of Union 1800 – Great Britain and Ireland joined to create the United Kingdom.

15. Henry Addington, 1st Viscount Sidmouth, 1801 – 1804

Born 30 May 1757, Holborn, London, died 15 February 1844, London
Political Party – Tory

Significant Legislative Acts

– Treaty of Amiens 1802 – temporarily ended hostilities between the UK and France.

16. William Wyndham Grenville, 1st Baron Grenville, 1806 – 1807

Born 25 October 1759, Buckinghamshire, died 17 January 1834,
Buckinghamshire
Political Party – Whig

Significant Legislative Acts

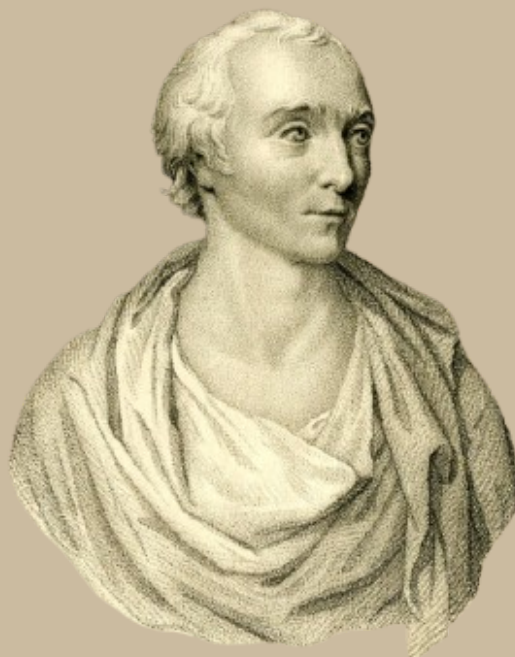
– Slave Trade Act 1807 – abolished the slave trade in the British Empire.

17. Spencer Percival, 1809 – 1812

Born 1 November 1762, London, died 11 May 1812, in the lobby of the House of Commons
Political Party – Tory

Significant Legislative Acts

– Regency Bill 1810 – which, due to George III's continued ill health, appointed his son as Regent



7. Spencer Percival
© The Trustees of the British Museum

18. Robert Banks Jenkinson, Earl of Liverpool, 1812 – 1827

Born 7 June 1770, London, died 4 December 1828, Surrey

Political Party – Tory

Significant Legislative Acts

- Importation Act 1815 – prohibited the import of foreign wheat until the domestic price reached an accepted level.

19. George Canning, 1827 – 1827

Born 11 April 1770, London, died 8 August 1827, Chiswick House, Middlesex

Political Party – Tory

20. Frederick Robinson Viscount Goderich, 1827 – 1828

Born 1 November 1782, London, died 28 January 1859, Putney Heath, London

Political Party – Tory

- Goderich is the only Prime Minister never to face parliament while in office.

21. Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, 1828 – 1830 and 1834 [interim PM]

Born 1 May 1769, Dublin, died 14 September 1852, Walmer Castle, Kent

Political Party – Tory

- Wellington boots are named after him.

Significant Legislative Acts

- Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829 – removed many of the restrictions on Catholics and giving them almost full civil rights.



8. Portrait of the Duke of Wellington
© The Trustees of the British Museum



9. Silhouette caricature of Charles Grey
© The Trustees of the British Museum

22. Charles Grey, 2nd Earl Grey, 1830 – 1834

Born 13 March 1764, Falloden, Northumberland, died 17 July 1845, Howick, Northumberland
Political Party – Whig

Significant Legislative Acts

- Reform Act 1832 – reformation of the electoral system.
- Slavery Abolition Act 1833 – abolished slavery throughout the British Empire.

23. William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne, 1834 – 1834 and 1835 – 1841

Born 15 March 1779, London, died 24 November 1848, Brocket, Hertfordshire
Political Party – Whig

Significant Legislative Acts

- Dissenters' Marriage Bill 1836 – which legalised civil marriage outside of the church.

24. Sir Robert Peel, 2nd Baronet, 1834 – 1835 and 1841 – 1846

Born 15 February 1788, Bury, Lancashire, died 2 July 1850, London
Political Party – Conservative

Significant Legislative Acts

- Factory Act 1844 – improved factory working conditions for women and children.
- Importation Act 1846 – removed trade barriers on imported corn which drove down prices.
- Repealing the Corn Laws in 1846.

25. Lord John Russell, 1st Earl Russell, 1846 – 1852 and 1865 – 1866

Born 18 August 1792, Mayfair, London, died 28 May 1878, Richmond Park, London

Political Party – Whig

Significant Legislative Acts

– Factory Act 1847 – limited factory working hours.– Public Health Act 1848 – improved sanitary conditions in towns.



10. Portrait of Lord John Russell
© The Trustees of the British Museum

26. Edward Smith Stanley, 14th Earl of Derby, 1852 – 1852, 1858 – 1859 and 1866 – 1868

Born 29 March 1799, Knowsley Hall, Prescot, Lancashire, died 23 October 1869, Knowsley Hall

Political Party – Whig / Tory

Significant Legislative Acts

– India Bill 1858 – transferred control of the East India Company to the Crown

.– Jews Relief Act 1858 – allowed Jews to sit in Parliament.

27. George Hamilton Gordon, Earl of Aberdeen, 1852 – 1855

Born 28 January 1784, Edinburgh, died 14 December 1860, St James, London

Political Party – Conservative

Significant Legislative Acts

– Charter Act 1853 – opened up the covenanted Indian Civil Service.

28. Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston, 1855 – 1858 and 1859 – 1865

Born 29 October 1784, Westminster, London, died 18 October 1865, Broomfield Hall, Hertfordshire

Political Party – Liberal / Whig

Significant Legislative Acts

- Government of India Bill 1858 – transferring control of the East India Company to the Crown.
-

29. Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, 1868 – 1868 and 1874 – 1880

Born 21 December 1804, London, died 19 April 1881, London

Political Party – Conservative

- He was the first and only Jewish Prime Minister to date.

Significant Legislative Acts

- Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875 – decriminalised the work of the trade unions and allowed peaceful picketing.
 - Public Health Act 1875 – further improvement of sanitation and living conditions in towns.
-

30. William Ewart Gladstone, 1868 – 1874, 1880 – 1885, 1886 – 1886 and 1892 – 1894

Born 29 December 1809, Liverpool, died 19 May 1898, Hawarden Castle,

Flintshire

Political Party – Liberal

- He served as Prime Minister for 4 separate periods – more than any other Prime Minister.

Significant Legislative Acts

- Representation of the People Act 1884 – increased the number of men eligible to vote (those paying an annual rent of £10 or owning land worth £10). Women were still ineligible to vote.

31. Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, 1885 - 1886, 1886 - 1892 and 1895 - 1902

Born 3 February 1830, Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, died 22 August 1903,

Hatfield House

Political Party - Conservative

Significant Legislative Acts

- Naval Defence Act 1889 - greatly enlarged the size of the Royal Navy to the combined size of the next two largest navies; those of France and Russia.
- Workmen's Compensation Act 1897 - made employers liable for accidents at work.



11. Satirical print: The Lordly Cecil entertains his Sovereign

© The Trustees of the British Museum

32. Archibald Primrose, 5th Earl of Rosebery, 1894 – 1895

Born 7 May 1847, London, died 21 May 1929, Epsom, Surrey

Political Party – Liberal

– Rosebery's declared ambitions were to marry an heiress, own a horse that won the Derby and be Prime Minister. He fulfilled all 3.

33. Arthur James Balfour, 1902 – 1905

Born 25 July 1848,

Whittingehame, London, died

19 March 1930, Woking, Surrey

Political Party – Conservative

Significant Legislative Acts

– Unemployed Workmen Act

1905 – enabled grants to be given to businesses or local authorities to employ more workers and decrease unemployment.

– Education Act 1902 –

abolished school boards and handed over their duties to local borough or county council, as Local Education Authorities.



12. Portrait of Arthur James Balfour, later 1st Earl of Balfour

© The Trustees of the British Museum

34. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, 1905 – 1908

Born 7 September 1836, Glasgow, died 22 April 1908, Downing Street, London

Political Party – Liberal

Significant Legislative Acts

– Probation Act 1907 – founded the Probation Service, which enabled courts to release offenders on probation.

35. Herbert Henry Asquith, 1908 – 1916

Born 12 September 1852, Morley, Yorkshire, died 15 February 1928, Sutton Courtenay, Oxfordshire
Political Party – Liberal

Significant Legislative Acts

- Old Age Pensions Act 1908 – provided for a non-contributory old age pension for eligible people over 70. To be eligible, people had to be earning less than £21.10s per year and pass a good character test.
 - National Insurance Act 1911 – created a system of insurance for working people against illness and unemployment. All wage earners between 16 and 70 had to contribute 4d per week, with employers paying 3d and the state 2d. This entitled workers to receive free medical care and dole payment for up to 15 weeks.
-

36. David Lloyd George, 1916 – 1922

Born 17 January 1863, Manchester, died 26 March 1945, Llanystumdwy, Caernarvonshire
Political Party – Liberal

Significant Legislative Acts

- Education Act 1918 – raised the school leaving age to 14.
- Representation of the People Act 1918 – allowed women over 30 to vote if householders or married to householders.
- Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920 – prohibited the employment of children and others in railways, transport, building, engineering, and mines.



13. David Lloyd George
© Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London

37. Andrew Bonar Law, 1922 – 1923

Born 16 September 1858, New Brunswick, Canada, died 30 October, 1923, London

Political Party – Conservative

38. Stanley Baldwin, 1923 – 1924, 1924 – 1929 and 1935 – 1937

Born 3 August 1867, Bewdley, Worcestershire, died 14 December 1947, Stourport, Worcestershire

Political Party – Conservative

Significant Legislative Acts

- Trade Disputes Act 1927 – this followed the General Strike of 1926 and introduced limits on the power of Trade Unions.
- Equal Franchise Act 1928 – gave the vote to all women over 21.
- Government of India Act 1935 – gave limited powers of self-government. It was heavily opposed by Winston Churchill.
- Public Order Act 1936 – passed to deal with marches by the Fascist movement and its opponents.



14. George Nathaniel Curzon, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, Stanley Baldwin, 1st Earl Baldwin
© Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London

39. James Ramsay MacDonald, 1924 – 1924 and 1929 – 1935

Born 12 October 1866, Lossiemouth, Scotland, died 9 November 1937 on a ship in the Atlantic Ocean

Political Party – Labour

– James Ramsay MacDonald was the first Labour Prime Minister and came from a working class family.

Significant Legislative Acts

– Unemployment Act 1924 – set up Unemployment Assistance Boards.



15. Ramsay MacDonald and his cabinet of 1924
© Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London

40. Neville Chamberlain, 1937 – 1940 Born 18 March 1869, Birmingham, died 9 November 1940, Heckfield, Hampshire

Political Party – Conservative

Significant Legislative Acts

- Factories Act 1937 – limited hours worked by women and children.
- Holiday Pay Act 1938 – recommended a week's paid holiday which lead to development of holiday camps.
- Housing Act 1938 – encouraged slum clearance and rent control.

41. Sir Winston Churchill, 1940 – 1945 and 1951 – 1955

Born 30 November 1874, Bleinheim Palace, Oxfordshire, died 24 January 1965, London

Political Party – Conservative

– Churchill was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953 for his many published works.

Significant Legislative Acts

– Education Act 1944 – raised the school leaving age to 14 and introduced the 11+ examination.

42. Clement Attlee, 1945 – 1951

Born 3 January 1883, London, died 8 October 1967, London

Political Party – Labour

– Nationalised one fifth of the British economy.

Significant Legislative Acts

– National Health Service Act 1946 – followed the Beveridge Report, it came into force in 1948 and was the first service in the world to provide free healthcare available based on citizenship rather than the payment of fees or insurance premiums.

– National Insurance Act 1946 – decreed that employed people had to pay a weekly contribution in return for a range of benefits including unemployment and sickness benefits, retirement pension.

– Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946, Electricity Act 1947, Transport Act 1947 – nationalised the coal industry, electricity utilities, railways and long-distance haulage.

– Town and Country Planning Act 1947 – planning permission now required for land development; ownership alone no longer sufficient.

– Children Act 1948 – established a comprehensive childcare service, reforming services providing care to deprived and orphaned children.

– National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 – allowed the creation of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England and Wales, gave the public rights of way and access to open land.

43. Sir Anthony Eden 1st Earl of Avon, 1955 – 1957

Born 12 June 1897, Rushyford, County Durham, died 14 January 1977, Alvediston, Wiltshire

Political Party – Conservative

– His premiership was overshadowed by the Suez Crisis and he resigned after little more than 18 months in office.

44. Harold Macmillan, 1957 – 1963

Born 10 February 1894, London, died 29 December 1986, Chelwood Gate, Sussex

Political Party – Conservative

– He was heavily involved in negotiating the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, earning praise from Presidents Kennedy and Khrushchev for his patience and diplomacy.

45. Sir Alec Douglas-Home, 1963 – 1964

Born 2 July 1903, London, died 9 October 1995, Berwickshire

Political Party – Conservative

– He oversaw the abolition of resale price maintenance, which enabled the cut price stickers on goods we see today.

46. Harold Wilson, 1964 – 1970 and 1974 – 1976

Born 11 March 1916, Huddersfield, Yorkshire, died 24 May 1995, London

Political Party – Labour

– As Prime Minister Harold Wilson enacted social reforms in education, health, housing, gender equality, price controls, pensions, provisions for disabled people and child poverty.

Significant Legislative Acts

– Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965 – suspended the death penalty in England, Wales and Scotland.

– Sexual Offences Act 1967 – decriminalisation of certain homosexual offences.

47. Sir Edward Heath, 1970 – 1974

Born 9 July 1916, Broadstairs, Kent, died 17 July 2005, Salisbury, Wiltshire

Political Party – Conservative

– Heath served in the Second World War, reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Significant Legislative Acts

– Industrial Relations Act 1971 (repealed 1974) – controversial legislation designed to curb the power of the trades unions.

48. James Callaghan, 1976 – 1979

Born 27 March 1912, Portsmouth, Hampshire, died 26 March 2005, Ringmer, Sussex

Political Party – Labour

– He was the only Prime Minister to come to the premiership after holding the other 3 great offices of state: Chancellor of the Exchequer (1964 to 1967), Home Secretary (1967 to 1970) and Foreign Secretary (1974 to 1976).

Significant Legislative Acts

– Race Relations Act 1976: serious amendments to the 1968 act to make fresh provision with respect to discrimination on racial grounds and relations between people of different racial groups.

– Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976: regulated the keeping of dangerous wild animals



16. James Callaghan by Bryan Organ
© Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London

49. Margaret Thatcher, 1979 – 1990

Born 13 October 1925, Grantham, Lincolnshire, died 8 April 2013, Ritz Hotel, London

Political Party – Conservative

– Baroness Margaret Thatcher, the 'Iron Lady', was the first female British Prime Minister and the longest serving PM for over 150 years.

Significant Legislative Acts

– Housing Act 1980 – gave security of tenure and the right to buy homes to tenants of local authorities and other bodies.

50. John Major, 1990 – 1997

Born 29 March 1943, Carshalton, Surrey

Political Party – Conservative

– In 1994 his government's representatives participated in the negotiation of a ceasefire in Northern Ireland.

Significant Legislative Acts

– National Lottery Act 1993 – set up the National Lottery.

– Local Government Finance Act 1992 – brought in the Council Tax to replace the deeply unpopular Poll Tax.



17. John Major by John Wonnacott
© Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London

51. Tony Blair, 1997 – 2007

Born 6 May 1953, Edinburgh

Political Party – Labour

Significant Legislative Acts

- Civil Partnership Act 2004 – gave legal recognition of a relationship between two people of the same sex.
- Human Rights Act 1998 – gives fundamental rights and freedoms contained in the European Convention on Human Rights.
- Freedom of Information Act 2000 – gives members of the public the right to ask any public body for information about their activities.



18. Tony Blair by Alastair Adams
© Copyright National Portrait Gallery, London

52. Gordon Brown, 2007 – 2010

Born 20 February 1951, Glasgow

Political Party – Labour

- Britain's longest-serving modern Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was appointed Chancellor in May 1997, when Tony Blair became Prime Minister, through to June 2007 when he started as Prime Minister himself.

Significant Legislative Acts

- The Climate Change Act 2008 – set a target for the year 2050 for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 – conferred further powers to gather and share information for counter-terrorism purposes.

53. David Cameron, 2010 – 2016

Born 9 October 1966, London

Political Party – Conservative

– David Cameron was the youngest Prime Minister since Lord Liverpool in 1812.

Significant Legislative Acts

- European Union Referendum Act 2015 – legislated for a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union.
 - Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 – legalised marriage between people of the same sex.
-

54. Theresa May, 2016 – 2019

Born 1 October 1956, Eastbourne

Political Party – Conservative

Significant Legislative Acts

- EU Withdrawal Act 2018.



19. Theresa May
© UK Government

55. Boris Johnson, 2019 – 2022

Born 19 June 1964, New York

Political Party – Conservative

Significant Legislative Acts

- Elections Act 2022 – introduced a requirement for voter photo identification for in-person voting to Great Britain for the first time.
- The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 – enabled Police chiefs to put more conditions on static protests, such as those organised by Extinction Rebellion where roads and bridges are occupied.

56. Liz Truss, 2022 – 2022

Born 26 July 1975, Oxford

Political Party – Conservative

– In 2022 Liz Truss became the shortest-serving prime minister in the history of the United Kingdom. She resigned on her 50th day in office.

57. Rishi Sunak, 2022 – 2024

Born 12 May 1980, Southampton

Political Party – Conservative

58. The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP, 2024 –

Born 2 September 1962, London

Political Party – Labour



20. Keir Starmer
© UK Government



21. Whitehall and Big Ben by Elinor Proby Adams
© The Trustees of the British Museum



Sir Robert Walpole
© The Trustees of the British Museum