

# A UK Democracy Timeline



## Character Cards

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1215 — King John and the Magna Carta</b></p> <p>I'm King John, and my barons forced me to seal the Magna Carta at Runnymede. They were basically saying even I'm not above the law, so I agreed to 63 rules about how the kingdom should be run. They also set up a council of 25 barons to keep an eye on me. I wasn't exactly thrilled about it, but it turned out to be a big moment for law, rights, and fairness in England.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1265 – Simon de Montfort creates Parliament</b></p> <p>I'm Simon de Montfort, and I rebelled against King Henry III because many of us thought he was ruling badly. I called a parliament that wasn't just nobles and bishops — I also brought in ordinary people from towns and shires. I didn't win in the end (Evesham wasn't my finest day), but the idea of a broader Parliament stuck and helped shape democracy in England.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1414 - Henry V recognises Parliament</b></p> <p>I'm Henry V, and I made it clear Parliament mattered. Big decisions like taxes and laws worked better when Parliament was involved, so I used it more regularly. It built trust between the Crown and Parliament and showed that ruling properly meant working together, not just giving orders from the top.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1536 — Henry VIII joins England and Wales</b></p> <p>I am King Henry VIII, and through the Laws in Wales Acts 1535–1542 I brought England and Wales under one legal system and gave Wales representation in Parliament. Parliament also became more central to government life during this period. These changes helped create a more unified state across England and Wales.</p>

**1605 — Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot**

I'm Guy Fawkes, and I was part of a group angry about how Catholics were treated under James I. So we planned to blow up Parliament during the State Opening. It didn't work — we were caught before anything happened. Now people remember it every 5th of November with bonfires and fireworks.

**1649 — Charles I loses the argument**

I'm Charles I, and things escalated during the English Civil War after conflict with Parliament. I was put on trial at Westminster Hall and executed in 1649. After that, Parliament abolished the monarchy and the House of Lords, and England became a Commonwealth — a rare moment with no king.

**1653 — Oliver Cromwell takes charge**

I'm Oliver Cromwell, and I lost patience with Parliament and dissolved it. I became Lord Protector under the Protectorate of England, running the country without a king — but not really with elections either. When I died, I hadn't set up a proper system for succession, so my son Richard Cromwell took over. He was quickly forced out, and things fell into chaos.

**1660 — The monarchy returns**

I'm Charles II of England, and after years of political chaos following the Commonwealth and Protectorate, I was invited back to take the throne. People wanted stability after Oliver Cromwell's death, so the monarchy was restored in the Restoration. Parliament returned too, and this time it stuck — but with more limits on royal power.

**1688 – The Glorious Revolution and the Bill of Rights**

I'm James II of England, and I was pushed out during the Glorious Revolution after tensions over religion and how I ruled. Some said I abdicated, others said I abandoned the throne — either way, Parliament declared it vacant. William III and Mary II were offered the crown. The Bill of Rights 1689 then made it clear monarchs must rule with Parliament, not above it.

### **1707 – The Act of union**

I'm Queen Anne of Great Britain, and in 1707 I oversaw the Acts of Union. This joined England and Scotland into one country called Great Britain with a single Parliament at Westminster. It wasn't always smooth, but it created a stronger political and economic union.

### **1721 - The first Prime Minister**

I'm Robert Walpole, and I became the leading minister working with the king to run the government — even though the title “Prime Minister” wasn't officially used yet. I stayed in power for around 21 years, making me the longest-serving head of government in British history. I also became closely linked with 10 Downing Street.

At the time, voting was still very limited — only wealthy property owners could take part — but government was slowly becoming more structured and representative.

### **1832–1837 — The Reform Acts begin to change voting**

I'm the story of Britain slowly widening who gets a say. The Reform Act 1832 and later reforms reduced unfair constituencies and expanded voting rights. By the second wave, many male householders could vote regardless of wealth.

### **1918 - Votes for women and wider democracy**

I'm the result of long campaigning for change. The Representation of the People Act 1918 gave many women the vote for the first time and extended voting to women over 30 who owned property and all men over 21.

The first woman elected was Constance Markievicz, although she didn't take her seat in Parliament.

### **1919 — First steps for women in Parliament**

In 1919, Nancy Astor became the first woman to actually take her seat in the House of Commons. It was a major step — women were now part of Parliament itself, not just voters.

### **1928 — Full equal voting rights for women**

I'm the result of a long fight for equality. The Representation of the People Act 1928 finally gave all women over 21 the right to vote on the same terms as men.

That meant, for the first time, men and women had equal voting rights — no property rules, no age gap, just full equality at the ballot box. It was a huge step forward for democracy in the UK.

### **1948 — One person, one vote**

I'm the change that finally made voting fairer across the board. The Representation of the People Act 1948 ended the old system where some people could vote more than once in different places (like university seats or multiple constituencies).

From this point on, it was simple: one person, one vote. A proper modern democracy at last.

### **1951 - The start of European cooperation**

I'm the European Coal and Steel Community, created after World War II when European countries wanted to make sure another devastating war didn't happen. The idea was simple: if countries shared control of coal and steel (key resources for weapons and industry), it would be much harder for them to go to war with each other.

It was one of the first real steps towards European integration and led to the development of the EU institutions we know today. It showed that cooperation between countries could replace conflict — and that peace could be built through shared power and trade.

### **1957 — The European Economic Community (EEC)**

I'm the Treaty of Rome 1957, which created the European Economic Community. The idea was to bring European countries closer together by sharing trade and strengthening economies, so war between them would become far less likely. It was another big step towards what later became the European Union.

<b>1964 — The Welsh Office is created</b>
I'm the Welsh Office, created by the UK government to give Wales its own dedicated voice inside Westminster. It didn't mean full self-government yet, but it was an early step towards devolution.
<b>1969 — Voting age lowered to 18</b>
I'm the change that finally recognised younger adults. The voting age was lowered from 21 to 18, meaning many more young people could take part in elections for the first time. It was a big shift towards a more inclusive democracy.
<b>1973 — UK joins the EEC</b>
I'm the moment the UK joined the European Communities enlargement 1973. The UK entered the Common Market to strengthen trade and economic cooperation with Europe, becoming part of a growing European economic partnership.
<b>1979 — Welsh devolution referendum (first attempt)</b>
I'm the first attempt at Welsh devolution. In the 1979 Welsh devolution referendum, the majority voted against creating a Welsh Assembly, so no major change happened at that point.
<b>1997 — Wales votes for devolution</b>
I'm the second referendum, and this time Wales voted in favour of devolution (50.3%/49.7) in the 1997 Welsh devolution referendum. This led to the creation of a new Welsh Assembly and marked a major shift away from all laws being made only in Westminster.
<b>1999 — Devolution begins</b>
I'm the start of real devolution. The UK Parliament remained important, but now Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland all gained their own institutions with powers over certain areas like education and health. It meant law-making was shared for the first time in modern UK history.

**2006 — The Senedd opens**

I'm the opening of the Senedd, the permanent home of Welsh democracy. "Senedd" simply means parliament in Welsh, and it became the centre of Welsh political life.

**2011 — More law-making powers for Wales**

I'm the result of the 2011 Welsh devolution referendum. From this point, Wales could make laws in more areas without needing permission from Westminster, strengthening its role as a governing body.

**2014 — Votes at 16 in Scotland referendum**

I'm the change that allowed 16 and 17 year olds to vote in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum. It was the first time younger voters were included in such a major decision in the UK.

**2015 — New rights and responsibilities in Wales and Scotland**

I'm a year of change. Scotland passed laws allowing 16 and 17 year olds to vote in certain elections, and Wales introduced the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This law meant public bodies had to think long-term — about things like poverty, health, and climate change — when making decisions.

**2016 — Brexit referendum**

I'm the 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, where the UK voted to leave the European Union. It was a major political turning point in modern British history.

### 2020 — More voting rights changes

In the year more people gained the vote in Wales and Scotland, 16 year olds and qualifying foreign nationals are able to vote in Welsh and Scottish parliament elections and local elections in Wales and Scotland.

The Welsh Assembly's name is changed to Senedd Cymru

UK left the EU

### 2021 — Local voting rights expand in Wales

In the extension of voting rights in Wales, allowing 16 and 17 year olds and qualifying foreign nationals to vote in local elections. It continued the trend of making democracy more inclusive at a devolved level.

Reference Source: [The Democracy Box \(UK Timeline\)](#)