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Welcome to the Houses of Parliament

The Houses of Parliament are among the most iconic buildings in the world; they are a World Heritage Site. Their grand neo-gothic vista dominating the River Thames at Westminster is the focus of the United Kingdom's parliamentary democracy, resonant with historic associations. John Bright (Quaker politician and reformer) famously declared in the 1860s that 'England is the Mother of

Parliaments'. The Westminster model of democracy has been widely exported and imitated around the globe, especially in parts of the former British Empire.

The Houses of Parliament have always been at the centre of national events. Here Sir Thomas More and King Charles I stood on trial prior to their executions, and here also Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators launched their audacious Gunpowder Plot to destroy the king and



his advisors at one stroke. It was here that the nation's great orators have clashed in the House of Commons, a witness to the intense parliamentary rivalries of William Pitt against Charles James Fox, and Benjamin Disraeli against William Gladstone, among many others. The buildings have been brought to ruins by devastating fire in the 1830s and the bombs of the Luftwaffe in the 1940s, only to rise from the ashes. And here crowds of protesters have gathered at the gates to demand the admission

of their representatives to the parliamentary fold: Roman Catholics, Chartists, secularists and suffragettes. Monarchs lie in state here, and in these buildings one Prime Minister was shot through the heart.

Here, Britain's national identity is forged and its democracy continues to mature. This is the story of the Houses of Parliament.



Above: The Houses of Parliament, from the South Bank, Lambeth