

HOUSE OF LORDS

## History of the House of Lords



The House of Lords is an essential part of the UK Parliament. It checks and challenges the work of government and considers all legislation. Its long and eventful history has shaped the role, work and composition of today's House.

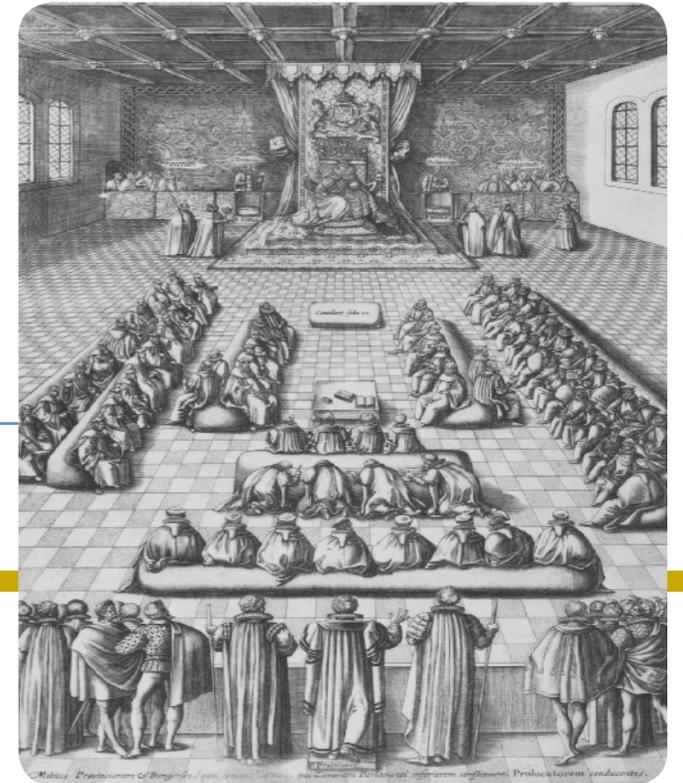
## Contents

Origins of Parliament	1
From Civil War to Articles of Union	2
19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> century	3
21 <sup>st</sup> century and reform	5

# Origins of Parliament

## 1584

Queen Elizabeth I seated on the throne in the House of Lords, with the Commons attending



### 11<sup>th</sup> century

Parliament originates in the Anglo-Saxon King's council or Witan – a political body attended by religious leaders, magnates and the King's ministers.

### 13<sup>th</sup> century

The Parliament of 1265 called by Simon de Montfort includes representatives from counties, cities and boroughs for the first time.

### 14<sup>th</sup> century

Two distinct Houses of Parliament emerge. Representatives from the towns and counties begin to meet separately as the House of Commons. Archbishops, bishops and certain abbots and priors (Lords Spiritual) and noblemen (Lords Temporal) form the House of Lords.

### 15<sup>th</sup> century

Lords Temporal attend the House of Lords on an almost entirely hereditary basis. 'Peers', as they became known, are accountable to each other and divide into five ranks: duke, marquess, earl, viscount and baron.

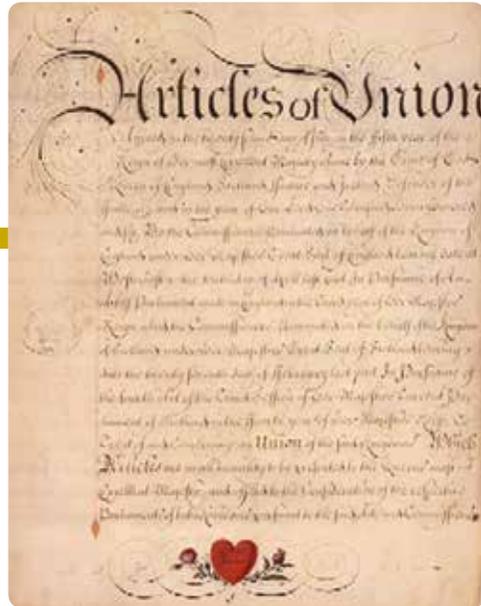
### 16<sup>th</sup> century

After the 1539 suppression of the monasteries, only bishops attend the House and the Lords Temporal form a majority for the first time.

# From Civil War to Articles of Union

## 1707

The Articles of Union with Scotland



### 18<sup>th</sup> century

The Acts of Union with Scotland (1707) and Ireland (1800) create a single Parliament, first for Great Britain and then for the United Kingdom. The acts entitle Scottish and Irish Peers to elect representatives to sit in the Lords.

### 17<sup>th</sup> century

In 1642, during the Civil War, bishops are excluded from the House of Lords but are returned by the Clergy Act 1661. In 1649, after the Civil War, the monarchy and the House of Lords are abolished. After the restoration of Charles II in 1660 the House is reinstated.

The Commons pre-eminence in financial matters is further asserted by the passing of resolutions in 1671 and 1678. The Declaration of Rights establishes Parliament's authority over the King and is later embodied in the 1689 Bill of Rights.



Queen Anne presides over the House of Lords as Scottish peers first sit in the chamber in 1707

The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

# 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century

## 1851

The chamber after the number of bishops entitled to sit had been limited to 26 – it had been rebuilt by Barry and Pugin following the Great Fire of 1834



WDA, 29/40 © Palace of Westminster Collection

### 19<sup>th</sup> century

The Bishopric of Manchester Act 1847 (and later acts) limits the number of bishops entitled to sit to 26. Retired bishops cannot sit or vote in the House. The Appellate Jurisdiction Act 1876 enables the appointment of professional judges as Lords of Appeal in Ordinary (Law Lords) to assist the Lord Chancellor in hearing appeals from the Court of Appeal. They are, in effect, the first 'life peers'.

### 20<sup>th</sup> century

**1909** The House of Lords rejects the Liberal government's budget. The government then introduces a bill to curb the power of the Lords to reject legislation approved by the Commons.

**1911** The Parliament Act 1911 limits the powers of the House of Lords by stating that bills dealing with raising or spending money can become law if not passed without amendment by the Lords within one month. The Lords can no longer veto other Commons bills permanently but instead can only delay them for up to two years.

- 1922** Elections for Irish representative peers end.
- 1941** The Commons chamber is destroyed during World War II. The Lords gives up its chamber to the Commons and uses the Robing Room when it sits.



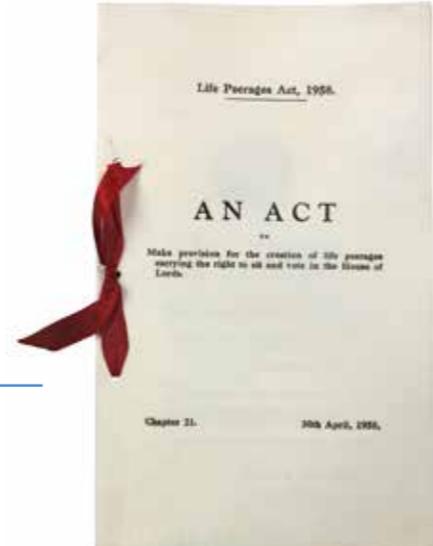
## 1941

The Robing Room acting as the Lords chamber during World War II

- 1949** The Parliament Act 1949 reduces the delaying power under the 1911 Act to one year.
- 1958** The Life Peerages Act 1958 permits the creation of peerages for life. Around the same time allowances for 'out-of-pocket' expenses and the system of 'leave of absence' for members are introduced.
- 1963** The Peerage Act 1963 allows hereditary peeresses to be members of the House, hereditary peerages to be disclaimed for life and all Scottish peers to sit.

## 1958

**Life Peerages Act 1958 creates life peerages and entitles women to sit as peers**



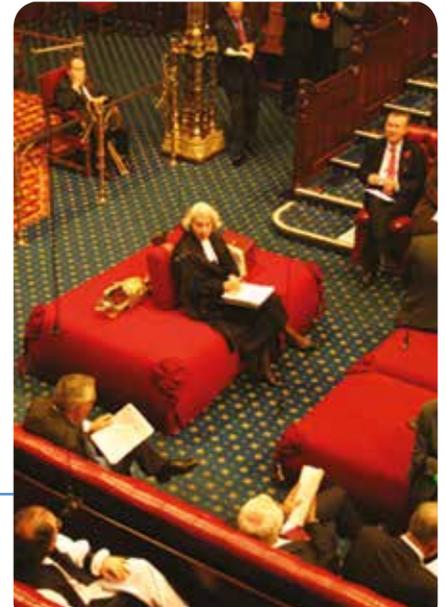
- 1968** The government abandons its Parliament (No.2) Bill which suggested a two-tier House composed of created members who could speak and vote and others who could speak but not vote.
- 1999** The House of Lords Act 1999 removes the right of hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House. During the passage of the legislation an amendment is accepted, enabling 90 hereditary peers, elected from among their own number, to remain until further reform is proposed.

# 21<sup>st</sup> century and reform

- 2005** The Constitutional Reform Act 2005 sets up the Supreme Court, separating the House's judicial function from Parliament. It ends the Lord Chancellor's combined role as head of the judiciary, a member of the executive and Speaker of the House of Lords.

## 2006

**The House elects its first Lord Speaker**



- 2006** The House holds its first election for a Lord Speaker and Baroness Hayman is elected.
- 2009** The House's judicial function is transferred to the new UK Supreme Court. Law Lords become the first justices of this final court of appeal.
- 2010** The coalition government publishes an agreement, stating that a group would be appointed to bring forward proposals for an elected House of Lords. The group, consisting of frontbench spokespeople from the three main political parties is to prepare a draft bill.

- 2011** The deputy prime minister publishes a draft bill on House of Lords reform setting out proposals for a House made up of 300 members, 80 per cent elected and 20 per cent appointed. The draft bill is referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses.
- 2012** The Joint Committee recommends an electoral mandate and in June the government introduces its Lords Reform Bill proposing a House made up of 450 members, 80 per cent elected and 20 per cent appointed but the bill is subsequently withdrawn through the Commons.
- 2014** The House of Lords Reform Act 2014 receives royal assent, allowing for resignation from the House of Lords, and the expulsion of members in certain circumstances.

**Debate continues about House of Lords reform and the House continues to draw on the professional experience of its membership in its examination of legislation and government actions and its investigative committee work.**

# Find out more

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