



HOUSE OF LORDS

Briefing

# The History of the House of Lords

Key dates in the evolution of the House



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Both Houses assembled in Westminster Hall in 1320.



The Articles of Union 1707.



Queen Anne in the House of Lords as the first Scottish peers sit in the Chamber.



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

Origins of Parliament in the Witan; councils consulted by Saxon kings and attended by religious leaders, magnates and the king's own ministers.

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

Attendance includes representatives of counties, cities and boroughs.

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

Two distinct Houses of Parliament emerged in the 14<sup>th</sup> century after representatives from the towns and counties began to meet separately as the House of Commons. Archbishops, bishops and sometimes abbots and priors – the 'Lords Spiritual' – and noblemen – the 'Lords Temporal' – formed the House of Lords.

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

By the 15<sup>th</sup> century attendance by the Lords Temporal at the House of Lords was on an almost entirely hereditary basis. Also known as peers, the Lords Temporal saw themselves as accountable to each other and were divided into five ranks: Duke, Marquess, Earl, Viscount and Baron.

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

Until the suppression of the monasteries in 1539 the Lords Spiritual consisted of bishops, abbots and priors. After 1539, only bishops attended and the Lords Temporal formed the majority for the first time.

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

In 1642, during the Civil War, bishops were excluded from the House of Lords but returned by the **Clergy Act 1661**. In 1649, after the Civil War, the monarchy and the House of Lords were abolished. After the restoration of Charles II in 1660 the House was reinstated and later, in 1689, the Bill of Rights established Parliament's authority over the King. The Commons pre-eminence in financial matters was given an official basis in the passing of resolutions in 1671 and 1678 after attempts by the Lords to breach the convention. The Declaration of Rights established Parliament's authority over the King. It was later embodied in an Act, initiated by the Commons – known as the **1689 Bill of Rights**.

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

The **Acts of Union** with Scotland (1707) and Ireland (1800) created a single Parliament for Great Britain and then for the United Kingdom. The Acts entitled Scottish and Irish Peers to elect representatives from among their number to sit in the Lords.

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

The **Bishopric of Manchester Act 1847** (and later Acts) limited the number of bishops entitled to sit. Most of the Irish and all the Welsh bishops ceased to sit when their respective churches were disestablished in 1869 and 1920. Retired bishops cannot sit or vote in the House.

The **Appellate Jurisdiction Act 1876** created the judicial functions of the House of Lords and enabled the sovereign to create Lords of Appeal in Ordinary (Law Lords) to continue to sit and vote. They were, in effect, the first life peerages.

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

**1909** The Lords rejected the Liberal Government's budget. The Liberals then introduced a bill to end the power of the Lords to reject legislation approved by the Commons, which was passed under the threat of the creation of a large number of Liberal peers.

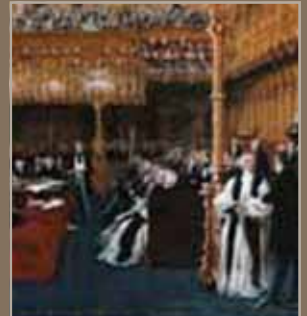
**1911** The **Parliament Act 1911** provided that:


- money bills approved by the Commons became law if not passed without amendment by the Lords within one month
- other public bills, except one to extend the life of a Parliament, became law without the consent of the Lords if passed by the Commons in three successive sessions providing two years elapsed between Second Reading and Final Passing in the Commons.

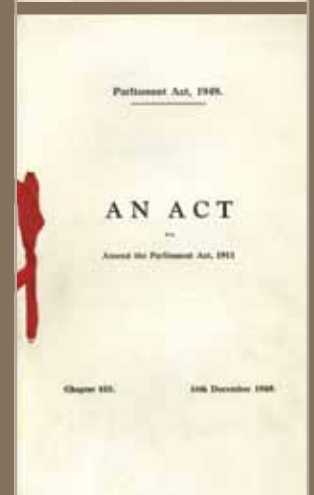
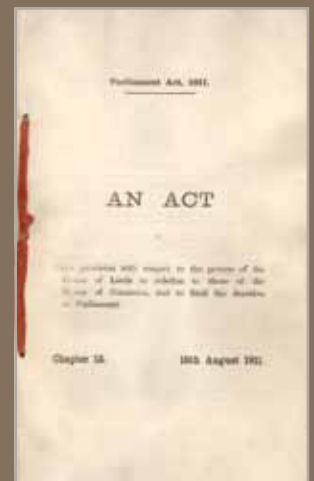
**1922** Elections for Irish representative peers ceased.


**1941** Commons Chamber destroyed by enemy action. The Lords give up their Chamber to the Commons and use the Queen's Robing Room when they sit.

**1949** The **Parliament Act 1949** reduced the delaying power of the 1911 Act in respect of public bills, other than money bills, to two sessions and one year respectively.



The Chamber in 1851, after the number of bishops entitled to sit had been limited. 



The Parliament Acts. 

**1958** The **Life Peerages Act 1958** permitted the creation of peerages for life, with no limit on numbers, to persons of either sex. Around the same time allowances for peers' out-of-pocket expenses and the system of 'leave of absence' for Members who did not wish or could not attend the House for a long period were introduced.

**1963** The **Peerage Act 1963** allowed hereditary **peeresses** to be Members of the House, hereditary peerages to be disclaimed for life and for **all** Scottish peers to sit.

**1968** The Labour Government introduced the **Parliament (No.2) Bill**, which would have created a two-tier House of created Members who could speak and vote and others who could speak but not vote. The bill was so held up in the House of Commons by both Labour and Conservative MPs that it had to be abandoned.

**1999** The **House of Lords Act 1999** removed the right of most hereditary peers to sit and vote in the House. An amendment to the bill, tabled by former Commons Speaker and, at the time, Convenor of the Crossbenchers Lord Weatherill, was accepted by the Government: it enabled 92 hereditary peers to remain until the House was fully reformed.

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

**2005** The **Constitutional Reform Act 2005** provided for the separation of the House's judicial function from Parliament and ended the Lord Chancellor's role as head of the judiciary, a member of the executive and as Speaker of the House of Lords.

**2006** The House held its first election for a Lord Speaker and Baroness Hayman was elected on 4 July 2006. The role was previously one of the Lord Chancellor's responsibilities.

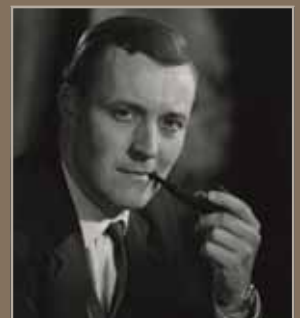
**2009** The House's judicial function ended and was transferred to the new UK Supreme Court. The current Law Lords became the first justices of the Supreme Court.

Debate and consideration of further Lords reform continues. For the latest information, visit the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page on the House of Lords homepage at [www.parliament.uk/lords](http://www.parliament.uk/lords).

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Baroness Wootton, the first female life peer.



Tony Benn, used the Peerages Act 1963 to disclaim his peerage to sit as an MP.



The House elects a Lord Speaker in July 2006.



Final judgments given by the Law Lords in July 2009.