

1925: Margaret Roberts is born in Grantham in Lincolnshire.

1959: Mrs. Thatcher becomes the Member of Parliament for Finchley.

1975: Mrs. Thatcher defeats Mr. Heath to become the leader of the Conservative Party.

MARGARET THATCHER

Margaret Thatcher became the United Kingdom's first woman Prime Minister when she was elected in 1979. She was considered very strong-minded and many people did not agree with her policies.



THE "IRON LADY"

Margaret Roberts was born in 1925 in Lincolnshire. Her father had a grocer's shop. She married Denis Thatcher in 1951 and became a Conservative Member of Parliament in 1959. In 1975, she challenged the former Prime Minister, Edward Heath (1916–2005), who had just lost a general election, and became leader of the Conservative Party.

A Russian journalist once called her the "Iron Lady". She took this as a compliment, and the term was often used to describe her.



AWESOME FACT

Mrs. Thatcher won three general elections and was Prime Minister for eleven and a half years.

The Winter of Discontent

In the winter of 1978–1979, there were many strikes. Rubbish piled up in the streets when the binmen went on strike. People called it "The Winter of Discontent", a phrase from Shakespeare. The Labour government, led by Jim Callaghan, became very unpopular. There was a general election, and Mrs. Thatcher was elected as Prime Minister.

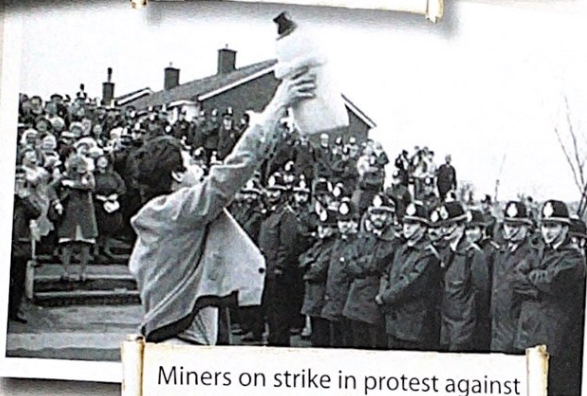
1979: Mrs. Thatcher wins the general election, becoming the first woman ever to do so.

1990: Mrs. Thatcher resigns and leaves Downing Street in tears after many years in power.

2013: Mrs. Thatcher dies and there is a funeral service at St. Paul's Cathedral.



Mrs. Thatcher working with her Cabinet.



Miners on strike in protest against the closure of the coal mines.

MRS. THATCHER'S RESIGNATION

Mrs. Thatcher was a very dominant figure and some even called her bossy. She had many arguments with her own ministers. She was opposed to the idea of a single currency within the European Union. In 1989–1990, she introduced a new tax called the Community Charge (or "Poll Tax") to change the way local government was paid for. Instead of paying rates based on how much your house was worth, everybody would pay the same. This was very expensive for many people and led to rioting in the streets.

In November 1990, Michael Heseltine (b.1933) challenged her for the leadership. Although she won more votes than him, she knew she no longer had enough support to carry on. She resigned as Prime Minister. There was a further vote for a new leader, and John Major (b.1943) became Prime Minister.

Mrs. Thatcher was given the title Baroness. Towards the end of her life she had several strokes and was rarely seen in public.

TRADE UNION REFORM AND THE MINERS' STRIKE

Mrs. Thatcher passed new laws that made it more difficult for unions to call strikes. In 1984, some of the coal mines were closed down and many miners lost their jobs. Arthur Skargill, the leader of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), called a strike. The government maintained that this was illegal.

The strike went on for a year. Eventually, the miners gave in and went back to work. More mines were closed and entire communities, where mining had been very important, were changed forever.



COOL FACT

Baroness Thatcher's Funeral

Baroness Thatcher died in 2013 and a big funeral service for her was held in St. Paul's Cathedral in London.