



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Works of Art in the Member's Dining Room



Member's Dining Room

At one time intended as a conference room and known as the 'Painted Chamber' after a room in the medieval Palace, Members' Dining Room was created in 1871 following demands for more dining facilities. In about 1930 the south wall was removed thus adding the serving room of two bays to the Dining Room. At the same time, the northern section of the room including the north entrance door was partitioned for use as the Chess Room; the ceiling was lowered here, thereby hiding one over-door carving of the Royal arms. Panelling was reinstated in the dining room, but the fireplace was left in the Chess Room.

The ceiling in the northern section is particularly elaborate and contains carved shields of the three kingdoms and pink and green foliage decoration. The ceiling in the southern section is grained. A small lobby in the centre which once led into the room from the corridor was converted into a serving area; this is now a wine store. The screen was set back into the arch before 1900, and later removed altogether; part of it survives in 1,

Parliament Street on the first floor. A new set of cupboards was provided in its place in about 2005.

The walls were to have held fresco paintings, but these were never carried out and hardboard panels were substituted and covered in wallpaper. Two over-doors were provided during the original construction of the room c. 1850 and display carvings of the royal coat of arms, richly painted.

'Kendall of Warwick' - Thomas H. Kendall (1837-1919) - provided in 1874 the 22 wooden relief sculptures of fish, fowl and fruit. Kendall, who set up his business in 1859 specialized in designing and executing carved wooden furniture and won awards at the International Exhibition at Kensington in 1862. His carvings of flowers, birds, animals and foliage were considered amongst the best of their period.

The Scott-Cuthbertson wallpaper is not based on historical precedent; papers from this firm may have been designed by E.W. Pugin.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan 1751-1816

Oil painting, by Joshua Reynolds
WOA 5415

John Wilkes 1727-97 M.P

Oil painting, by Robert Edge Pine 1768
WOA 2935

John Bright 1811-1889

Oil painting, Robert Nicholas Fowler
WOA 2932

The House of Commons in Session

Oil painting, Peter Tillemans 1709-1714
WOA 2737

The House of Commons Sir Robert Walpole's Administration 1722-42

Oil painting, unknown artist c.1800
WOA 3067

Arthur Onslow 1691-1768 Speaker

Oil painting, Joseph Highmore 1735
WOA 2739

William Wilberforce M.P

Oil painting, by George Richmond 1833
WOA 6071

Annie Besant

Oil painting, by Edmund Hodgson Smart
WOA L847 (Loaned by a private collection)

Charles James Fox 1749-1806

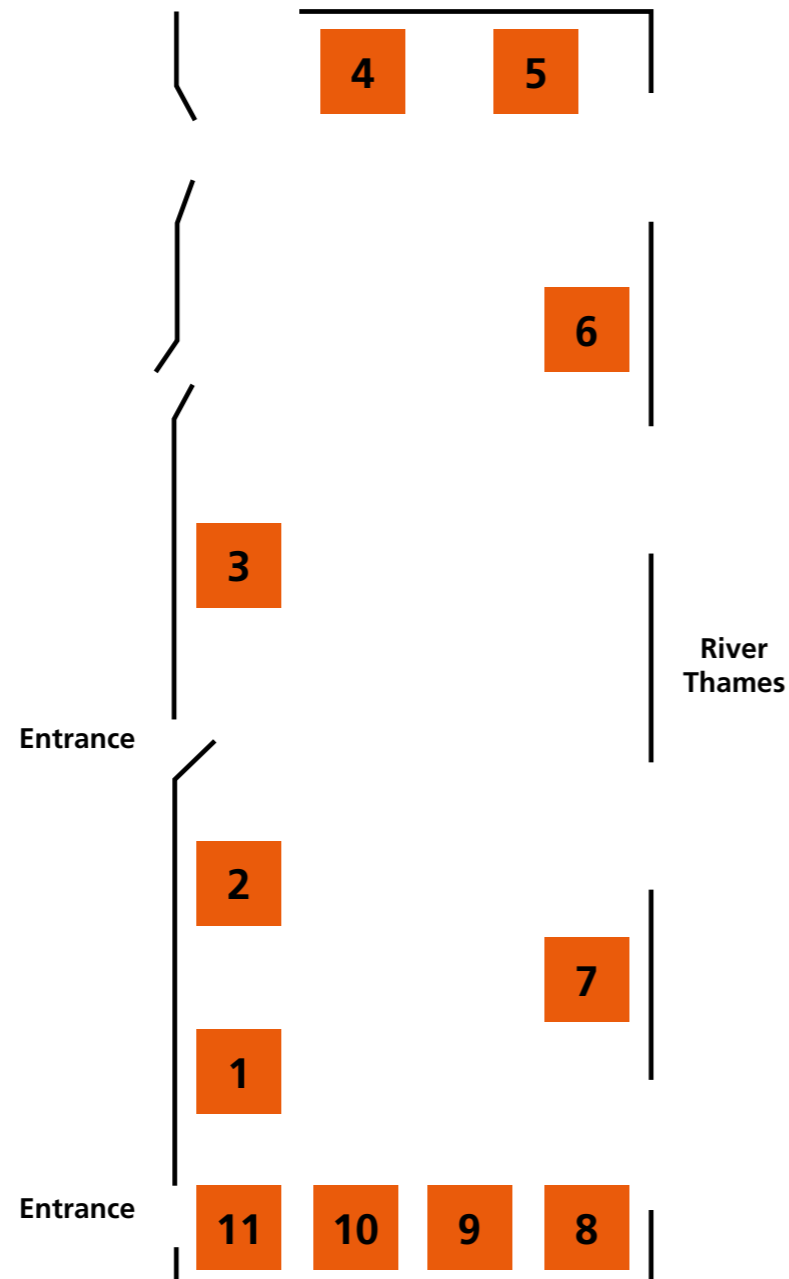
Oil painting, attributed to John Hoppner
WOA 3065

Edmund Burke 1729-1797

Oil painting, by James Northcote
WOA 3066

Portrait of Mrs. Herbert Asquith

Oil painting by Philip Alexius de Laszlo 1909
WOA 7214



1. Richard Brinsley Sheridan 1751-1816

Oil painting, by Joshua Reynolds WOA 5415

Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) was born in Dublin and became the well-known playwright of *The School for Scandal* and *The Rivals*. He entered Parliament in 1780 after spending £1000 on eligibility for a seat. Sheridan was an ally of Charles James Fox, whom he particularly admired for opposing the American war. By 1783, Sheridan was Secretary to the Treasury and was an entertaining parliamentary performer. He was described by Edmund Burke as having "the most astonishing effort of eloquence, argument and wit united". When the Whigs came to power in 1806, Sheridan became Treasurer of the Navy and a member of the Privy Council. He died in 1816 and is buried in Westminster Abbey. The artist, Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) painted a range of well-known sitters during the 18th century.



2. John Wilkes 1727-97 M.P

Oil painting, by Robert Edge Pine 1768 WOA 2935

John Wilkes (1727-97) became MP for Aylesbury in 1757 but was reputedly not a fluent public speaker. His political talent lay in his writing skills but after being accused of publishing texts that supported Parliamentary reform, was expelled from the House of Commons in 1764. As a result, Wilkes became a popular defender of freedom against tyranny of ministers and, by association, the Monarchy. Wilkes was also a campaigner for the establishment of the National Gallery, and as treasurer to the Foundling Hospital he would have known major artists associated with it such as Hogarth, Highmore and Hayman. Wilkes returned to the House of Commons in 1774. The artist, Robert Edge Pine (1730-1788) was an admirer of Wilkes and, like him, a supporter of American republicanism.

3. John Bright 1811-1889

Oil painting, Robert Nicholas Fowler WOA 2932

John Bright (1811-1889) was born in Rochdale, Lancashire and became MP for Manchester in 1843. Bright lost his seat in 1857 when his popularity declined following his opposition of the Crimean War. However, a few months later he was elected as MP for Birmingham, a seat he held for over thirty years. Bright was a Quaker and for the majority of his career had no connection with a particular political party. He was a key figure in the Anti-Corn Law campaign, which sought for the price of corn to be lowered in order for British manufacturers to sell more goods nationally and globally. Bright was also strongly opposed to the oppression of the poor and the slave trade. The original portrait by John Everett Millais (1829-1896) was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1880 and is now at Bodnant, Denbighshire.

4. The House of Commons in Session

Oil painting, Peter Tillemans 1709-1714 WOA 2737

This painting shows a view of the interior of the House of Commons when it was situated in the medieval chapel of St Stephen's. The Commons had sat here since 1547. This painting shows the galleries designed by Sir Christopher Wren and arms of Queen Anne can be seen above the Speaker's chair. The Commons ceased to sit here when the majority of the old palace was destroyed by fire on 16 October 1834. The 'adversarial' layout of the modern Chamber that you see today was inspired by the layout here, when members sat in the narrow chapel pews facing one another. The Speaker depicted is believed to be Richard Onslow (1654-1717). The artist, Peter Tillemans (c. 1684-1734) was a Belgian painter and draughtsman but spent much of his life in Westminster.



5. The House of Commons Sir Robert Walpole's Administration 1722-42

Oil painting, unknown artist c.1800 WOA 3067

This painting depicts Sir Robert Walpole in about 1730 in the House of Commons with Speaker Onslow in the Chair. Walpole was a Whig politician in the early 18th century and was the first holder of the office of Prime Minister. In the first ten years of his Parliamentary career, Walpole became member of the Admiralty Board, Secretary of the War and Treasurer of the Navy. The Tories came to power in 1710 and briefly imprisoned Walpole for corruption. However, when George I came to the throne in 1714, he distrusted the Tories and the Whigs rose to power again. In 1715 Walpole became First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. The original painting is attributed to Sir James Thornhill, but there is a manuscript written by Speaker Onslow stating that some figures were in fact painted by William Hogarth.

6. Arthur Onslow 1691-1768 Speaker

Oil painting, Joseph Highmore 1735 WOA 2739

Arthur Onslow (1691-1768) was Speaker of the House of Commons for over 30 years, holding the record for length of service. His Speakership lasted for the entire duration of the reign of King George II. After his retirement, Onslow was elected as a Trustee of the British Museum. It has been suggested that the characterisation of Onslow in the portrait indicates an intimacy between the artist and sitter. The face has been executed with the confidence expected of so competent an artist, but other elements – particularly Onslow's right hand – are uncharacteristically clumsy. The artist, Joseph Highmore (1692-1780) trained as a lawyer before being apprenticed to the studio of Sir Godfrey Kneller. Along with Francis Hayman and Gainsborough he was at the forefront of the English Rococo movement.

7. William Wilberforce M.P

Oil painting, by George Richmond 1833 WOA 6071

William Wilberforce (1759-1833) was born in Hull and studied at Cambridge University, where he met future Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger. Wilberforce became MP for Hull in 1780 and his strong Christian faith prompted his interest in social reform. He is perhaps best remembered for his involvement with the abolition of the slave trade. For 18 years Wilberforce introduced anti-slavery motions to parliament and in 1807 the slave trade was finally abolished. Wilberforce died in 1833, shortly after another act was passed giving freedom to all slaves in the British Empire. He was buried in Westminster Abbey near his life-long friend, Pitt. This portrait owes its genesis to an uncompleted portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence, for an earlier and related watercolour portrait in the National Portrait Gallery.



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8. Annie Besant

Oil painting, by Edmund Hodgson Smart WOA L847
(Loaned by a private collection)

Annie Besant (1847-1933) was a journalist, British social reformer, supporter of Indian nationalism and campaigner for women's rights. She grew up in London and married a clergyman Frank Besant in 1867 but her increasingly anti-religious views led to their separation in 1873. Besant was a close associate of Charles Bradlaugh and together they ran the National Secular Society. Besant succeeded Charles Bradlaugh as editor of the weekly National Reformer, which supported trade unions, women's suffrage, national education and, controversially, birth control. In 1888 Besant's journalism drew attention to the working conditions of female workers at the Bryant & May match factory in East London and was a contributory factor to the female workers strike, which Besant went on to support with other members of the Fabian Society. Besant became interested in Theosophy, a new religious movement based on the Hindu ideas of Karma and reincarnation. She helped to spread these beliefs around the world, including in India where she settled after becoming involved in the Indian nationalist movement.



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9. Charles James Fox 1749-1806

Oil painting, attributed to John Hoppner WOA 3065

Charles James Fox (1749-1806) was a direct descendent of Charles II, hence his distinctly Stuart first names. After attending Eton and Oxford University, Fox was elected to Parliament in 1768 at just 19 years of age. This technically made him ineligible to stand but his father had bought the representation of Midhurst in Sussex. Fox became a well-known statesman and Britain's first Foreign Secretary. He is often remembered for his strong opposition to the American War of Independence and the slave trade. Fox led a rather scandalous private life and he fathered several illegitimate children. He gave his last speech to Parliament in June 1806 and following his death later that year, was buried in the north transept of Westminster Abbey (known as Statesmen's Aisle).

10. Edmund Burke 1729-1797

Oil painting, by James Northcote WOA 3066

Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was born in Ireland and educated at Trinity College, Dublin. The son of a solicitor, Burke moved to London to study law but instead chose to pursue a political and literary career. In 1765, Burke became an MP and played a large role in debates concerning limits to the power of the King. At the outbreak of the French Revolution, Burke published his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. This hostile publication sparked a huge response, including Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*. Burke emphasised the dangers of mob rule and its detriment to French society - appealing instead for British virtues of tradition and continuity. Burke is often associated with being one of the founders of the British conservative tradition.

11. Portrait of Mrs. Herbert Asquith

Oil painting, by Philip Alexius de Laszlo 1909
WOA 7214

Margot Asquith, Countess of Oxford and Asquith (1864-1945) was born in Peeblesshire, Scotland, the sixth daughter of a wealthy industrialist and Liberal MP, Charles Tennant. Asquith became a popular figure in late Victorian and Edwardian society - well known for her fashion, wit and outspoken attitude. This made her a somewhat controversial second wife for Parliamentarian and future Prime Minister, Herbert Henry Asquith. Despite Asquith's reputation as a socialite, she mixed in political circles and by the end of 1903 it was hoped that her husband would become a prominent member of the new Liberal government. Asquith was a founding member of a group of influential politicians and intellectuals known as The Souls. However she was not actively involved in the politics of the day, perhaps most notably the Women's Suffrage Movement.



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The Parliamentary Art Collection is the national collection of art relating to the history of Parliament. The Collection contains images of important Parliamentary events past and present, images of people who have played an important role in making Parliament what it is today, and images which record the development over the centuries of the Palace of Westminster and the other buildings of the Parliamentary Estate. The earliest pieces date from the medieval age, with major holdings dating back to the 18th century, together with significant contemporary holdings.