



## **Tony Blair** **Labour Leader 1994 - 2007**

Tony Blair was born in Edinburgh on 6<sup>th</sup> May 1953, attending the prestigious Fettes College in Edinburgh before heading off to Oxford - graduating in 1976 with a second class honors degree in Jurisprudence. It was while enrolled as a pupil barrister that he met his future wife, Cherie Booth.

Blair joined the Labour Party at the age of 22 and by the early 1980s was involved in Labour politics in London. He was persuaded to stand at the Beaconsfield By-Election (a safe Tory seat) in 1982 but made little impact - the labour vote fell by around 10 points from the previous General Election. However in 1983, at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, he was shortlisted for the Sedgefield constituency and won the nomination and entered Parliament after the 1983 General Election.

Once elected to Parliament he was rapidly promoted by a succession of Leaders receiving his first front-bench appointment in 1984 as an assistant shadow Treasury spokesman. By 1987 he was working with the shadow Trade and Industry team and became shadow Home Secretary under John Smith. The sudden death of Smith gave Blair an unexpected opportunity and he took it – beating the more established John Prescott and Margaret Beckett to become Leader of the Party.

His first speech to conference he announced his intention to scrap Clause 4 of the constitution, this being passed by a special conference a year later. At the 1996 conference he made his “education, education, education” speech. By this time the Party was well ahead in opinion polls and the party had been transformed and referred to as “new labour”.

"New Labour" won a landslide victory on 1st May 1997, gaining 145 seats and ending 18 years of Conservative Party rule. He would go on to win further elections in 2001 and 2005, becoming the most successful Labour Leader in our history.

During his first Parliament, as Prime minister, we saw a number of Key pieces of legislation being passed that would have had a lasting impact upon politics in the UK, such as:

- Minimum Wage
- Human Rights Act
- Freedom of Information Act
- Public Interest Disclosure Act
- Scottish parliament
- Welsh Assembly
- The schools Academy Programme

His period in office – over 10 years – saw a number of foreign policy actions. On the positive side was the “Good Friday Agreement”. But this to some degree has been lost by his active involvement in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Iraq (twice), and not forgetting Sierra Leone.

He agreed to stand down as Labour Leader following intense pressure from the media and other quarters after the 2005 election, formally announcing in September 2006 the timetable for his stepping down. He formally handed over the Leadership to Gordon Brown on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2007.

Since leaving office he has been active as a Middle East peace envoy, as well as launching his own foundation – the “Tony Blair Faith Foundation”.