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# Election timetables

This Research Paper sets out the model timetables for Parliamentary general elections and by-elections. A model local election timetable is also included as are the timetables for the local and European Parliamentary elections on 4 June 2009. Illustrative general election timetables are given, including one for the last possible date for the next general election on 3 June 2010. The Paper updates and replaces Research Paper 07/31 *Parliamentary Election Timetables*.

Please note that illustrative general election timetables for other dates in 2010 are available in Standard Note SN/PC/4454, [General Election timetables](#).

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## Summary of main points

This Paper sets out the model electoral timetables for general and by-elections as laid down in the *Parliamentary Elections Rules* appended to the *Representation of the People Act 1983* as subsequently amended.

The date of a parliamentary general election is governed by the date on which the timetable starts, with the proclamation summoning the new Parliament/dissolving the old Parliament and issue of writ occurring on Day 0 and polling day on Day 17. For the purposes of the timetable, weekends and public holidays are disregarded. The by-election timetable varies between 15 and 19 days from the issuing of the writ. The timing of the writ for by-elections is by tradition in the hands of the Chief Whip of the party to which the previous Member belonged. Although elections are traditionally held on a Thursday, this is not a statutory requirement.

The last possible date for the next general election is a complex calculation, because of the uncertainties of the operation of the *Septennial Act 1715*, as amended, which is still in force. This sets five years as the maximum duration of a Parliament, but Parliament has not been allowed to expire in modern times, since the writs have always been issued before the five years has run out. The writs for the next Parliament are issued under the royal prerogative, with the only statutory requirement being that a new Parliament should meet within three years of the last. The paper includes a timetable for the last possible date of the next general election (3 June 2010); the date and timetable are the same whether Parliament is allowed to expire or whether the writ is issued before expiry.

Parliament may be prorogued or both Houses adjourned before dissolution. The former is a prerogative act, with both procedures being used in recent times. There are certain differences in the effect on the operation of parliamentary business. During adjournments, committees can, in theory at least, meet and continue their business (and if the House has previously provided for it, written questions and statements can be processed and published). During a prorogation all business is suspended and all bills and other matters which are before the House will fall. Select committee reports which have been agreed before prorogation could be published, but for reports which are at all controversial committees are unlikely to authorise this. The date of the election is normally announced some days before dissolution, allowing a few days to finish parliamentary business.

The electoral timetable for local and European elections is 25 days, and several key deadlines differ from the parliamentary timetable. This paper sets out the timetables for the local elections and European Parliamentary elections on 4 June 2009.



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# I General elections

## A. Background

Statutory electoral timetables for both general and by-elections are laid down in the *Parliamentary Elections Rules* appended to the *Representation of the People Act 1983*. The timetables were last amended by the *Electoral Administration Act 2006*.<sup>1</sup>

The Electoral Commission published proposals in July 2003 to lengthen the general election timetable to bring it into line with the 25 day local election timetable, but these have not been implemented.<sup>2</sup> The Commission's reasoning was based on the increasing practice of combining local and general elections, as in 2001:

2.9 One of the key timetable-related issues to emerge out of our report on the 2001 general election was that of the shorter length of the Parliamentary general election timetable. In our consultation paper, we identified two main difficulties caused by the timetable's brevity:

- A heavy workload for electoral administrators, particularly in light of the changes introduced by the Representation of the People Act 2000, which introduced postal voting on demand and allowed a postal or proxy vote application to be accepted up to six – rather than 11 – working days before the poll.
- A very short timescale for electors to organise a postal vote for a particular election – at present voters have two weeks from the issuing of writs to send in applications.

[...]

2.11 As already indicated, we accept that there may, in principle, be good reasons why different elections might require different approaches in a number of respects, including the time needed between commencement of the process and polling day. However, we are not convinced that the current inconsistencies in election timetables are based on anything other than historical accident, and the prevailing political pressures at the time different legislation was passed.

The Electoral Commission proposals formed part of a package of reform to electoral administration set out in the Commission's report, *Voting for Change: an electoral law modernisation programme*, published in June 2003. The *Electoral Administration Act 2006* subsequently included many of these recommendations in its provisions, including the abolition of Maundy Thursday as a *dies non* (not counted for the purposes of the timetable).<sup>3</sup> However the Government did not favour an increase in the length of the Parliamentary timetable in its response to *Voting for Change* in December 2004.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Electoral Administration Act 2006 (Commencement No 2, Transitional and Savings Provisions) Order, 2006*. SI 2006/3412

<sup>2</sup> *Electoral Timetables in the United Kingdom* Electoral Commission July 2003, available at [http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/files/dms/Timetables\\_10051-7977\\_\\_E\\_\\_N\\_\\_S\\_\\_W\\_\\_.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/files/dms/Timetables_10051-7977__E__N__S__W__.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> For further details of the *Electoral Administration Bill 2005-06* see Library Research Paper 05/65 at <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2005/rp05-065.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Cm 6426 Recs 54-56

## B. Model general election timetable

Proclamation summoning new Parliament, dissolution of old Parliament and issue of writ	Day 0
Receipt of writ	Day 1
Last day for publication of notice of election (4pm)	Day 3
Last day for delivery of nomination papers/withdrawals of candidature/appointment of election agents (4pm)	Day 6
Statement of persons nominated published at close of time for making objections to nomination papers (5pm on Day 6) or as soon afterwards as any objections are disposed of	
Last day for requests for a new postal vote or to change or cancel an existing postal vote or proxy appointment (5pm)	
Last day to apply to register to vote	
Last day for new applications to vote by proxy (except for medical emergencies)(5pm)	Day 11
Last day for appointment of polling and counting agents	Day 15
Polling Day (7 am – 10 pm)	Day 17
Last day to apply for a replacement for spoilt or lost postal ballot papers (5pm)	

For the purposes of the timetable, Saturday, Sunday, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Good Friday, other bank holidays and any day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning are disregarded. Maundy Thursday is no longer disregarded following the *Electoral Administration Act 2006*.<sup>5</sup>

A royal proclamation is a formal notice issued to the people by the Sovereign. The role of proclamations in modern times has diminished, but the most important are those which announce the accession of a new Sovereign, and those which dissolve parliament and trigger the campaign for a general election. The form of a proclamation is contained in statutory regulations; the draft is submitted for approval and signature to the Queen in Council. At the same time an order is approved, directing the Lord Chancellor to cause

<sup>5</sup> S 20 of the *Electoral Administration Act 2006*. Brought into force by the *Electoral Administration Act 2006 (Commencement No 2, Transitional and Savings Provisions) Order, 2006*. SI 2006/3412



the 'Great Seal of the Realm' to be affixed to the proclamation. The proclamation takes effect the moment it is sealed and the same regulations detail how the proclamation should be publicised.

### **C. Day of election**

There is no statutory requirement for parliamentary elections to be held on Thursdays; they can be held on any weekday. However, using Thursdays has become an election convention. Since 1935 every general election has been held on a Thursday. The month for the election varies but 1918 was the last time that an election was held in December, and there have been no polling days in January since 1910. For a full list of months in which elections have been held see *British Electoral Facts 1832 –1999*, Tables 5.02 and 5.03.<sup>6</sup>

### **D. Days of public thanksgiving or mourning**

The *Representation of the People Act 1983* states that days of public thanksgiving or mourning are to be disregarded for the purpose of the election timetable but no definitions of such days are provided by the Act or elsewhere.

The parliamentary election timetable could be affected by a period of mourning following the death of a member of the Royal Family. Days of mourning are not statutorily defined but would seem to encompass the general days of mourning observed by the public on the death of the sovereign, as opposed to the court mourning observed by the Royal Family and others. General mourning is observed by the general public, and is usually restricted to the death of the Sovereign. It lasts only a few days, until the funeral. It is assumed that this would be "public mourning" for the purposes of the *Representation of the People Act 1983*. There was no period of general mourning on the death of King George VI in 1952, but it is possible that a period of general mourning would be announced on the death of the present Sovereign.

In practice it could perhaps be assumed that any day of mourning or thanksgiving relevant to the election timetable would be set for a day or days (such as Saturdays or Sundays) which, if otherwise appropriate in the context of the event giving rise to them, would not substantively interfere with the election timetable.

The *Representation of the People Act 1985* provides for a 'freezing' of the electoral timetable for 14 calendar days following the demise of the Crown, if this occurs between the Proclamation summoning a new Parliament and polling day. The effect of section 20(2) of the 1985 Act would be to treat the date of the proclamation as if it had been made 14 calendar days after the actual date on which it was given. If this means that proceedings forming part of the electoral timetable will fall on a day which is disregarded under the Act, the proceedings will fall on the following day. If the death were to occur on or after polling day then the election takes its course.

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<sup>6</sup> *British Electoral Facts 1832-199*, edited by Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, 2000

The interaction between the 1983 Act provisions on public mourning and section 20 of the 1985 Act is far from clear. Although it may be regarded as unlikely that such general mourning would be announced in modern times, if it were to take place, it could last for a number of days, and each day of mourning would lengthen the electoral timetable of the 1983 Act by an additional day. If these days of mourning were proclaimed then either the timetable is frozen for a fortnight and the days of mourning are slotted into the intervening 14 days, or the timetable is lengthened by both the days of mourning and the 14 days. The 14 days come into play automatically on the announcement of the death whereas the days of mourning have to be proclaimed, and the assumption must be that the days of mourning would be slotted into the “frozen fortnight.” The days of mourning would lengthen the timetable further if proclaimed after the fortnight had ended, but before polling day.

## E. The last possible date for the next general election

Under the *Septennial Act 1715*, as amended by Section 7 of the *Parliament Act 1911*, five years is set as the maximum duration for a Parliament. In theory, once five years has passed a Parliament expires, but in practice the Prime Minister normally requests a dissolution from the Monarch before that date. The five years run from the first meeting of Parliament following the general election. The timetable for the next general election is then set in motion, unless dissolution has been requested earlier. The current Parliament was summoned to meet on Wednesday 11 May 2005, so would cease to exist at midnight on Monday 10 May 2010. The general principles behind the calculation of the latest date for a general election are considered below, using 2010 as an illustration.

There are two ways of examining the calculation of the last possible day for the forthcoming general election. One can assume (a) that a proclamation must be issued *before* Parliament expires under the *Septennial Act* (as amended) and calculate the latest possible date for the issue of proclamation and writs. Parliament has not been allowed to expire in modern times, and some authorities argue that a constitutional convention operates so that Parliament must be dissolved before the Act can take effect. Or (b) one can assume that, in the absence of any proclamation dissolving Parliament, that the Parliament automatically expires at midnight, and a proclamation is then required to summon a new Parliament. Statute law specifically provides for expiry through efflux of time. These two alternatives are considered in more detail:

- (a) *The Septennial Act 1715* (as amended) permits a Parliament to meet for five years.<sup>7</sup> The present Parliament was summoned to meet on 11 May 2005, so it would need to be dissolved before midnight on Monday 10 May 2010. A proclamation dissolving the old Parliament and summoning a new Parliament would, therefore, have to be issued at the latest on that Monday. This would make polling day **Thursday 3 June 2010** under the timetable set out in *Schedule 1* of the *Representation of the People Act 1983*.

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<sup>7</sup> The Septennial Act (as amended) states:...‘this present Parliament, and all Parliaments that shall at any time hereafter be called, assembled, or held, shall and may respectively have continuance for [five years,] and no longer, to be accounted from the day on which by writ of summons this present Parliament hath been, or any future Parliaments shall be, appointed to meet, unless this present or any such Parliament hereafter to be summoned shall be sooner dissolved by his Majesty, his heirs or successors.’

- (b) Alternatively, Parliament is allowed to expire at midnight of Monday 10 May 2010 when the *Septennial Act* (as amended) provisions take effect. Although there is no statutory requirement that a new proclamation be issued immediately, it is expected that a proclamation would be made and writs issued at the earliest practicable day, which would be Tuesday 11 May 2010. Polling day would, therefore, be Friday 4 June.<sup>8</sup> It could be argued that the convention of holding the election on a Thursday is now so established that the last realistic day would be **Thursday 3 June 2010**, with the proclamation issued on Monday 10 May 2010.<sup>9</sup>

By the *Meeting of Parliament Act 1694*, the Crown must issue writs for a general election and meeting of Parliament within three years from the dissolution of the last one. In practice it is not possible for the Crown to allow even one year to elapse before calling a parliament since certain statutory authorities are only conferred on a yearly basis. However, one can argue that once Parliament has expired there are no legal reasons why a proclamation has to be made on the *first* day after the Parliament has expired; a delay of some weeks might be feasible.

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<sup>8</sup> For further detail on the expiry of parliament and consequential polling days see 'Analysis: Putting out the writs', *Public Law*, Autumn 1997

<sup>9</sup> In both timetables, it has been taken into account that Monday 31 May 2010 would be a Bank Holiday.

## F. Illustrative General Election Timetables

Day of electoral timetable	Stage of electoral timetable	General election date	General election date	General election date	General election date
		<b>8 October 2009</b>	<b>15 October 2009</b>	<b>22 October 2009</b>	<b>5 November 2009</b>
Day 0	Proclamation of dissolution and issue of writ	<b>Tuesday 15 Sept 2009</b>	<b>Tuesday 22 Sept 2009</b>	<b>Tuesday 29 Sept 2009</b>	<b>Tuesday 13 Oct 2009</b>
Day 1	Receipt of writ	16 Sept	23 Sept	30 Sept	14 Oct
Day 2		17 Sept	24 Sept	1 Oct	15 Oct
Day 3	Last day for publication of notice of election (4pm)	18 Sept	25 Sept	2 Oct	16 Oct
Day 4		21 Sept	28 Sept	5 Oct	19 Oct
Day 5		22 Sept	29 Sept	6 Oct	20 Oct
Day 6	Last day for delivery of nomination papers /withdrawal of candidature/appointment of election agents (4pm)  Statement of persons nominated published at close of time for making objections to nomination papers (5pm on Day 6) or as soon afterwards as any objections are disposed of  Last day for receipt of absent voting applications (5pm)  Last day to apply to register to vote	23 Sept	30 Sept	7 Oct	21 Oct
Day 7		24 Sept	1 Oct	8 Oct	22 Oct
Day 8		25 Sept	2 Oct	9 Oct	23 Oct
Day 9		28 Sept	5 Oct	12 Oct	26 Oct
Day 10		29 Sept	6 Oct	13 Oct	27 Oct
Day 11		30 Sept	7 Oct	14 Oct	28 Oct
Day 12		1 Oct	8 Oct	15 Oct	29 Oct
Day 13		2 Oct	9 Oct	16 Oct	30 Oct
Day 14		5 Oct	12 Oct	19 Oct	2 Nov
Day 15	Last day for appointment of polling and counting agents	6 Oct	13 Oct	20 Oct	3 Nov
Day 16		7 Oct	14 Oct	21 Oct	4 Nov
Day 17	Polling Day (7am – 10pm) Last day to apply for a replacement for spoilt or lost postal ballot papers (5pm)	<b>8 October 2009</b>	<b>15 October 2009</b>	<b>22 October 2009</b>	<b>5 November 2009</b>

Day of electoral timetable	Stage of electoral timetable	General election date	General election date	General election date	General election date	General election date
		<b>4 February 2010</b>	<b>4 March 2010</b>	<b>8 April 2010</b>	<b>6 May 2010</b>	<b>3 June 2010</b>
Day 0	<b>Proclamation of dissolution and issue of writ</b>	Tuesday 12 Jan 2010	Tuesday 9 Feb 2010	Thursday 11 March 2010	Monday 12 April 2010	Monday 10 May 2010
Day 1	Receipt of writ	13 Jan	10 Feb	12 March	13 April	11 May
Day 2		14 Jan	11 Feb	15 March	14 April	12 May
Day 3	Last day for publication of notice of election (4pm)	15 Jan	12 Feb	16 March*	15 April	13 May
Day 4		18 Jan	15 Feb	18 March	16 April	14 May
Day 5		19 Jan	16 Feb	19 March	19 April	17 May
Day 6	Last day for delivery of nomination papers /withdrawal of candidature/appointment of election agents (4pm)  Statement of persons nominated published at close of time for making objections to nomination papers (5pm on Day 6) or as soon afterwards as any objections are disposed of  Last day for receipt of absent voting applications (5pm)  Last day to apply to register to vote	20 Jan	17 Feb	22 March	20 April	18 May
Day 7		21 Jan	18 Feb	23 March	21 April	19 May
Day 8		22 Jan	19 Feb	24 March	22 April	20 May
Day 9		25 Jan	22 Feb	25 March	23 April	21 May
Day 10		26 Jan	23 Feb	26 March	26 April	24 May
Day 11		27 Jan	24 Feb	29 March	27 April	25 May
Day 12		28 Jan	25 Feb	30 March	28 April	26 May
Day 13		29 Jan	26 Feb	31 March	29 April	27 May
Day 14		1 Feb	1 March	1 April*	30 April	28 May
Day 15	Last day for appointment of polling and counting agents	2 Feb	2 March	6 April*	4 May*	1 June*
Day 16		3 Feb	3 March	7 April	5 May	2 June
Day 17	Polling Day (7am – 10pm) Last day to apply for a replacement for spoilt or lost postal ballot papers (5pm)	<b>4 February 2010</b>	<b>4 March 2010</b>	<b>8 April 2010</b>	<b>6 May 2010</b>	<b>3 June 2010</b>

\* In the timetable for **8 April 2010** 17 March is not counted because it is a Bank Holiday (St Patrick's Day) in Northern Ireland and 2 and 5 April are not counted as they are also Bank Holidays (Good Friday and Easter Monday). In the timetable for **6 May 2010** 3 May is not counted as it is a Bank Holiday and in the timetable for **3 June 2010** the Bank Holiday on 31 May (Whitsun) is not counted.

## G. Dissolution Procedure

Dissolution may occur at any time; Parliament does not need to be sitting, or to be recalled, for the purpose of dissolution. In 1992, 1997 and 2005 dissolution was preceded by prorogation of Parliament. However in 2001, Parliament was dissolved without being prorogued beforehand.

Prorogation of Parliament is a prerogative act of the Crown, which suspends nearly all business of both Houses, including the sitting of committees, until Parliament is summoned again. The ceremony normally takes place when both Houses are sitting; a Commission in the House of Lords, usually made up of five peers, requests the attendance of the Commons and Royal Assent is signified to outstanding Acts followed by a nominal speech from the throne. Alternatively, Parliament can be prorogued by proclamation when either House is adjourned. Prorogation is the normal instrument for ending an individual session of Parliament, but it has been the custom for much of the twentieth century also to prorogue Parliament before its dissolution. The instrument of prorogation will nominate a day for the summoning of Parliament but when superseded by a dissolution a later day is named in the Royal Proclamation announcing the issuing of writs.

From September 1974 until 1992 an alternative practice grew up of dissolving Parliament by proclamation following the adjournment of both Houses. An adjournment merely suspends a House's business within a session for a specified period of time, and the exercise of the power is by the Lords and Commons separately. All that is needed is a resolution of the House or for the Speaker to declare under Standing Order that the House is adjourned. It is not therefore a prerogative act. The practice appears to have been first used in 1922 following the sudden break-up of the coalition government. Since Parliament had already adjourned for the summer recess, Parliament was dissolved by royal proclamation on the same day as the announcement of a general election, and no prorogation took place. Parliament had been adjourned on August 4 until November 18 and the election was announced on 23 October, with dissolution on 26 October.

Thereafter prorogation was used until 1964 when Sir Alec Douglas Home called an election when Parliament was already adjourned for the summer recess; after consultation he decided against a recall of the Commons simply to prorogue them. Harold Wilson was the next Prime Minister to abandon prorogation in September 1974, once again when both Houses were already adjourned for the summer recess.<sup>10</sup> Thereafter adjournment became the norm, as Professor Robert Blackburn records in his 1990 study, *The Meeting of Parliament*.

According to Professor Blackburn, discussions took place between officials of both Houses and the Crown between 1974 and 1979 as to the necessity of the prorogation ceremony. The *Royal Assent Act 1967* meant that Commissioners in the Lords were no longer necessary, as Assent by Notification became the accepted practice.

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<sup>10</sup> Adjournment had come on 29 July until October 15; the election was announced on 15 September and Parliament dissolved on 25 September

Administrative convenience therefore told against the prorogation ceremony, which was time consuming, coming as it did a few days into the election campaign.

However before the 1987 dissolution, Speaker Weatherill expressed sadness that the ceremony was not taking place. Professor Blackburn notes this indication that it had been a Government, not a Commons decision to abandon prorogation. In 1992 prorogation was held before dissolution. Although it is not known what prompted the reversion, the Speaker's intervention was no doubt very influential.

In 1997 the decision to continue with prorogation may well have been taken with the 1992 precedent in mind, although the effect on select committees meant unfortunate publicity for the Government and may well have contributed to the reversion to adjournment before the 2001 election.<sup>11</sup> The relatively long period between the announcement of the election on 17 March 1997 and dissolution on 8 April 1997 focused attention on the manner of the dissolution.<sup>12</sup>

Prorogation came on 21 March 1997, a week before Good Friday, but technically Parliament while prorogued could have been summoned by proclamation for an earlier day than in the prorogation proclamation, pursuant to the *Meeting of Parliaments Act 1797 and 1870* and section 43 of the *Parliament (Elections and Meetings) Act 1943*.<sup>13</sup> In reality this power can only be exercised by the Prime Minister through advice to the Crown on the use of the prerogative. In contrast, adjournment could have been rescinded by the Speaker summoning the House back for an earlier date through standing orders, although the order is phrased so that representations from the Government to recall are a pre-condition.<sup>14</sup>

In addition, the meeting of Parliament after an election may be deferred under the *Proclamation Act 1867* by a further proclamation proroguing Parliament to a later day not less than 14 days after the date of the proclamation. In 1950 this power was used to extend prorogation from 24 January to 14 February when Parliament was in recess. In the event, a dissolution proclamation was issued on 3 February and polling took place on February 23. The election had been announced on 11 January.

In its report, *Revitalising the Chamber: the role of the back bench Member*, the Modernisation Committee recommended that "there should be a longer gap than usually occurred in the past between the election and the day the House first meets". It recommended that "the gap should be about twelve days".<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> There were press reports that the unusually early prorogation had been announced to ensure that the Select Committee on Standards and Privilege report on allegations against Neil Hamilton and others would not be published before the election. This was denied by the then Government.

<sup>12</sup> At 22 calendar days, it was the longest since 1950.

<sup>13</sup> Erskine May, 23<sup>rd</sup> edition, p276

<sup>14</sup> Erskine May, 23<sup>rd</sup> edition, p277

<sup>15</sup> Modernisation Committee, *Revitalising the Chamber: the role of the back bench Member*, 20 June 2007, HC 337 2006-07, para 39

The Government accepted the recommendation in principle.<sup>16</sup>

When the House debated the Modernisation Committee's report and the Government's response on 25 October 2007, it agreed to the following motion:

That this House welcomes the First Report of the Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons on Revitalising the Chamber: the role of the back bench Member (House of Commons Paper No. 337) and approves the proposals for changes in the procedures and practices of the House set out in the Government's response to the report (Cm. 7231), including the proposals for topical questions.<sup>17</sup>

Dissolution is normally carried out by royal proclamation with the Great Seal affixed, and announces not only the dissolution but that orders have been given for writs to be issued for summoning of the new Parliament. The date on which the new Parliament will meet is also given but not the date of the General Election. The writs are dispatched by post from the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery<sup>18</sup> and are delivered on the following day to the Returning Officer for each constituency. In modern times the royal proclamation has been issued only after either a session has been prorogued or the sittings of both Houses have been adjourned.<sup>19</sup>

The date of the election is therefore normally announced some days before prorogation or adjournment and subsequent dissolution, thus allowing a few days to finish Parliamentary business. In 2005 Tony Blair announced the date of the general election of 5 May on Tuesday 5 April outside 10 Downing Street. Parliament was prorogued on Thursday 7 April. In 2001, Tony Blair had announced the election date of 7 June on 8 May 2001, at St Saviour's & St Olave's Church of England School in Bermondsey, south London. Parliament was subsequently dissolved on 11 May 2001. In 1997, John Major announced the election date of 1 May on March 17 1997 to the press outside 10 Downing Street. At 44 days this started one of the longest election campaigns of modern times; Parliament prorogued on 21 March and proclamation and issue of writs was on 8 April 1997. In 1992 the Prime Minister made a televised announcement in Downing Street on March 11; Parliament was dissolved on March 16 and the election took place on 9 April.<sup>20</sup> In September 1974 Parliament was dissolved while already adjourned for the long recess. On 28 March 1979, immediately following the carrying of a vote of no-confidence the Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan, announced that he would request a dissolution from the Queen<sup>21</sup> on the following day and the dissolution was on April 7.

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<sup>16</sup> Office of the Leader of the House of Commons, *Revitalising the Chamber – The role of the back bench Member (The Government's Response to the modernisation Committee's First Report of session 2006-07: HC 337)*, October 2007, Cm 7231, para 6, <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm72/7231/7231.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> HC Deb 25 October 2007 c502

<sup>18</sup> Head of the permanent staff of the Crown Office

<sup>19</sup> For further details see *The Meeting of Parliament* (1990) by Robert Blackburn, Erskine May (22<sup>nd</sup> ed 1997) p232

<sup>20</sup> Table 5.03 General Election Timetable 1918-1997 in *British Electoral Facts 1918-1999*, edited by Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, gives further details for earlier Parliaments.

<sup>21</sup> HC Deb 28 March 1979 c589



The following tables set out the length of time in days between the election announcement, prorogation and dissolution, polling day and assembly of the new Parliament.

Year	Election announced	Parliament prorogued	Parliament dissolved	Polling day	Parliament assembled
1918	November 14	November 21	November 25	December 14	February 4 (1919)
1922	October 23	-	October 26	November 15	November 20
1923	November 13	November 16	November 16	December 6	January 8 (1924)
1924	October 9	October 9	October 9	October 29	December 2
1929	April 24	May 10	May 10	May 30	June 25
1931	October 6	October 7	October 7	October 27	November 3
1935	October 23	October 25	October 25	November 14	November 26
1945	May 23	June 15	June 15	July 5 <sup>22</sup>	August 1
1950	January 11	January 21	February 3	February 23	March 1
1951	September 19	October 4	October 5	October 25	October 31
1955	April 15	May 6	May 6	May 26	June 7
1959	September 8	September 18	September 18	October 8	October 20
1964	September 15	-	September 25	October 15	October 27
1966	February 28	March 10	March 10	March 31	April 18
1970	May 18	May 29	May 29	June 18	June 29
1974	February 7	-	February 8	February 28	March 6
1974	September 18	-	September 20	October 10	October 22
1979	March 29	-	April 7	May 3	May 9
1983	May 9	-	May 13	June 9	June 15
1987	May 11	-	May 18	June 11	June 17
1992	March 11	March 16	March 16	April 9	April 27
1997	March 17	March 21	April 8	May 1	May 7
2001	May 8	-	May 11	June 7	June 13
2005	April 5	April 7	April 11	May 5	May 11

<sup>22</sup> July 12 in twenty two constituencies and July 19 in one, because of local holiday weeks

**Intervals in days**

Year	Announcement to dissolution	Dissolution to assembly	Polling day to assembly
1918	11	71	52
1922	3	25	5
1923	3	53	33
1924	0	54	34
1929	16	46	26
1931	1	27	7
1935	2	32	12
1945	23	47	27
1950	23	26	6
1951	16	26	6
1955	21	32	12
1959	10	32	12
1964	10	32	12
1966	10	39	18
1970	11	31	11
1974(F)	1	26	6
1974(O)	2	32	12
1979	9	32	6
1983	4	33	6
1987	7	30	6
1992	5	42	18
1997	22	29	6
2001	3	36	6
2005	6	30	6

Source: FWS Craig *British Electoral Facts 1832-1987* Table 14.02, as amended

## II By – elections

The writ for a by-election is usually issued on the same day as or the day following a motion in the Commons for the Speaker to make out the warrant for the issue of a writ. By parliamentary convention the Chief Whip of the party to which the previous Member belonged will usually arrange for the motion to be moved. This convention causes difficulties when the seat is vacated by an Independent. The most recent incidence of this was the death of the Independent, Peter Law, on 25 April 2006. On this occasion the writ for the seat of the now Blaenau Gwent was moved by a Labour Whip on 6 June 2006. The seat was subsequently won by another Independent. There is a convention that the writ should be moved within about three months of the seat becoming vacant, but this is not a statutory or parliamentary requirement. Appendix 1 to this paper gives details of when the writ was moved for each by-election since 1974.

The writ is issued by the Clerk of the Crown in Chancery and sent to the Returning Officer or acting Returning Officer for the constituency. The by-election timetable is set in motion following the issue of the writ, but is more flexible than the general election timetable as the acting Returning Officer has some discretion in fixing the last day for the delivery of nomination papers and the subsequent polling day. In practice the motion is normally timed to ensure that the warrant is made with a particular polling day generally - Thursday - in mind, but the actual decision is for the acting Returning Officer, and there is no procedure for an appeal against the day chosen. Thursday has become a convention but there have been post war by-elections where polling day has been on another day.<sup>23</sup>

Saturdays, Sundays, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Good Friday, bank holidays and any day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning are disregarded in the timetable. A bank holiday for a by-election is only disregarded if it is a bank holiday in that part of the United Kingdom in which the constituency is situated.

The timetable for by-elections is significantly shorter than for any other type of election and the tight deadlines can cause problems in electoral administration, given the wider use of postal voting. The Electoral Commission proposals for a new standard timetable of 25 days included by-elections but as noted above implementation is unlikely.<sup>24</sup>

In 1973 a Speaker's Conference on Electoral Law recommended that the three month rule on the moving of a writ be embodied in a resolution of the House.<sup>25</sup>

1. The Conference, conscious that the intervals before the issue of byelection writs have on occasion been unduly prolonged, put forward the following guidelines:

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<sup>23</sup> The most recent example was the by election at Hamilton on 31 May 1978 which was a Wednesday; apparently this was chosen because the acting Returning Officer wished to avoid a clash with a World Cup match on TV. Earlier examples are given in Appendix 22 of *Chronology of British by-elections 1833-1987*, FWS Craig (1987)

<sup>24</sup> *Election Timetables in the United Kingdom*, Electoral Commission, July 2003

<sup>25</sup> Cmnd 5500 1973

(a) The motion for a writ for a by-election should normally be moved within three months of a vacancy arising.

(b) It is inexpedient for by-elections to be held in August, or at the time of local elections in April/May, or in the period from mid-December to mid-February before (under present arrangements) a new Register is issued.

(c) Consequently, if this restriction should bring the date of the by-election into one of these periods, the by-election should if practicable be held earlier. If this is impractical the period should be lengthened by the shortest possible additional time. The total period (from vacancy to the moving of the writ) should not be more than four months.

(d) In the fifth year of a Parliament, some relaxation of these guidelines should be allowed, in order if possible to avoid by-elections being held immediately before a general election.

These recommendations have not been implemented.

The Conference also recommended a relaxation of the arrangements for the issuing of writs during a recess, to allow the Speaker some discretion to issue a warrant only when asked by representatives of the appropriate party (para. 2.3). The Speaker was, at that time, required to issue a warrant for election to certain categories of vacant seats upon the application of any two Members during the recess without any consideration of the duration of the vacancy. However, the *Recess Elections Act 1975*<sup>26</sup> still requires the Speaker to issue a writ on application of any two Members during the recess and the Speaker's Conference recommendation has not been acted upon.<sup>27</sup>

The Speaker's Conference noted that a maximum time limit would increase the likelihood of a by-election being in progress when Parliament had been dissolved:

4. One consequence of putting a maximum on the period in which a by-election must be held is to increase the possibility that a by-election will be in train when Parliament is dissolved. If this happens, the writ for the General Election should manifestly cancel the earlier writ for the by-election; and similar provisions with regard to candidates' expenses should apply as now in the case when a poll is abandoned because of the death of a candidate.

Writs for by-elections have occasionally been issued, and then superseded due to an ensuing general election. A writ was issued for Warwick and Leamington on 5 November 1923 with a polling day of 22 November but Parliament was dissolved on 12 November and the by-election did not take place; the general election was held on 7 December.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The Act consolidated and clarified earlier provisions.

<sup>27</sup> The Speaker is required to give six days notice in the London Gazette before the writ can be issued and the recess must be long enough to allow the writ to be issued before the Commons meets again. See Parliament and Constitution Centre Standard Note no 529 *Recess Elections Act* for details of the procedure.

<sup>28</sup> The candidate was Anthony Eden on both occasions. See *Anthony Eden* [1986] by Robert Rhodes James pp.72-73. A writ was also apparently issued for a by-election in the University of London on September 15 1924, and Parliament was dissolved on October 9 (*Chronology of British Parliamentary Elections 1833-1983* [1983] F.W.S Craig pxi)

In 1983, a motion to issue a writ for the constituency of Cardiff North West was passed on 19 April 1983<sup>29</sup> but then a motion was passed on 10 May 1983<sup>30</sup> discharging the Speaker's warrant. The moving of the writ on 19 April 1983 is interesting in that it was moved by Dafydd Wigley (although the Member who had died on February 10 was Michael Roberts, a Conservative) and a Government amendment was carried which required the warrant to be issued by the Speaker on 10 May.<sup>31</sup> In the event the general election was announced on 9 May, dissolution took place on 13 May and the election was on June 9 1983.

There is no statutory provision providing for the cancellation of a by-election when a general election is in progress. It is presumed that an Acting Returning Officer would consider the writ to have been superseded if the by-election were due to take place at a date when Parliament had been dissolved, since the Member could not be elected to a Parliament which no longer existed. If the conduct of the by-election were to be contested in an election court<sup>32</sup>, the view may be taken that the Acting Returning Officer had acted sensibly in cancelling the election, although there had been no strict statutory authority for such action. The position where the day fixed for the by-election falls between the Government's announcement of a general election and actual dissolution through royal proclamation is much less clear-cut, since a Parliament would still exist. It is possible, for example, that an election court would uphold a decision by the Acting Returning Officer to cancel the election.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand if Parliament were still in existence on polling day the Acting Returning Officer might well consider he had no authority to cancel the election.

In 1979 the by-election for Liverpool Edge Hill took place on 29 March, and Parliament was dissolved on 7 April. On 28 March 1979 the Government lost a confidence vote and the then Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan, announced immediately after the vote that he would ask Her Majesty on the following day for a dissolution.<sup>34</sup> David Alton, the successful candidate, took his seat on 3 April 1979, and asked a number of Parliamentary Questions before dissolution.<sup>35</sup>

For information about by-elections in this Parliament see Library Standard Note SN/SG/3726, *By-elections since 2005*.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> HC Deb 19 April 1983 c164-171

<sup>30</sup> HC Deb 10 May 1983 c737

<sup>31</sup> See *Parliamentary Practice* (1989) p.277 fn2

<sup>32</sup> As provided for in Part III of the *Representation of the People Act 1983*

<sup>33</sup> The problem of election expenses remains as there is no statutory provision governing the calculation of candidates' expenses when a poll is countermanded, except where a candidate has died [s.76(3) *RPA* 1983]

<sup>34</sup> HC Deb 28 March 1979 c589

<sup>35</sup> See Hansard index vol 965 for details

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/briefings/SNSG-03726.pdf>

## A. Model by – election timetable

Issue of writ	Day 0
Receipt of writ	Day 1
Last day for publication of notice of election (4pm)	Day 3
Last day for delivery of nomination papers/withdrawals of candidature/appointment of election agents (4pm)	To be fixed by the acting returning officer; not earlier than Day 6; not later than Day 8
Statement of persons nominated published at close of time for making objections to nomination papers (5pm on Day 6,7 or 8 as the case may be) or as soon afterwards as any objections are disposed of	
Last day of receipt of absent voting applications (5pm)	11 days before polling day
Last day for appointment of polling and counting agents	2 <sup>nd</sup> day before polling day
Polling Day	To be fixed by the acting returning officer: between days 15 to 17, 16 to 18 or 17 to 19, depending on the day fixed as the last for the delivery of nomination papers

Note: - in computing any period of time for the purposes of the timetable, the following days are disregarded: Saturdays, Sundays, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Good Friday, bank holidays and any day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning.

## III Local election timetables

The current local election timetable of 25 days dates from the *Local Government Act 1972*. It is set out in Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the *Local Elections (Principal Areas) Rules 1986*.<sup>37</sup> In theory, the earliest day for publication of notice of election is 32 days before polling day, but the remaining deadlines are fixed days before polling day. The timetable is calculated backwards from polling day, in contrast to the parliamentary timetable which is counted forwards from issuing of the writ. This causes some problems when local elections are combined with general elections or by-elections as certain key dates, such

<sup>37</sup> SI 2214/1986

as closing time for nomination of candidates are not aligned. The timetables for the European Parliamentary elections and the devolved assemblies/parliaments are also 25 days in length.

## A. Model local authority timetable

	<b>Proceeding</b>
Day 1	Latest date for publication of notice of election
Day 2	
Day 3	
Day 4	
Day 5	
Day 6	
Day 7	Delivery of nomination papers (noon)
Day 8	
Day 9	Publication of statement of persons nominated (noon)
Day 10	Delivery of notices of withdrawals of candidature (noon) Last day for appointment of election agents (noon)
Day 11	
Day 12	
Day 13	
Day 14	
Day 15	Deadline for applications to be included on the register of electors to be used at the election. Last day for requests for a new postal vote or to change or cancel an existing postal vote or proxy appointment (5pm).
Day 16	
Day 17	
Day 18	
Day 19	
Day 20	Last day for publication of notice of poll. Last day for new applications to vote by proxy (except for medical emergencies).
Day 21	
Day 22	
Day 23	
Day 24	
Day 25	
	<b>Polling Day (7am – 10pm)</b> Last day to issue replacements for spoilt or lost postal ballot papers (5pm) Last day for new applications to vote by proxy on grounds of a medical emergency (5pm) Last day to make alterations to the register to correct a clerical error or to implement a court (registration appeal) decision (9pm)



## IV Timetable for the combined local and European Parliamentary elections on 4 June 2009

		European Parliamentary election		Local election
Date	Day	Stage of the electoral timetable	Day	Stage of the electoral timetable
28 April	1	Notice of election to be published	1	Latest date for publication of notice of election
29 April	2		2	
30 April	3		3	
1 May	4		4	
5 May	5		5	
6 May	6		6	
7 May	7	<p>Deadline for delivery of nomination papers (4pm)</p> <p>Deadline for withdrawals of nomination (4pm)</p> <p>Deadline to make objections to nominations for nominations delivered up to and including Wed 6 May (noon); for nominations delivered on Thurs 7 May (5pm)</p> <p>Publication of statement of parties and individual candidates nominated and notice of poll (5pm if no objections are made; 4pm on Fri 8 May if objections are made)</p> <p>Deadline for notice of appointment of election agents (4pm)</p>	7	Deadline for delivery of nomination papers (4pm) (Combined poll rules)
8 May	8		8	
11 May	9		9	Publication of statement of persons nominated (noon)
12 May	10		10	<p>Delivery of notices of withdrawals of candidature (noon)</p> <p>Last day for appointment of election agents (noon)</p>
13 May	11		11	
14 May	12		12	
15 May	13		13	
18 May	14		14	
19 May	15	<p>Last day to submit a registration form to be included on the register of electors in order to be able to vote in the election.</p> <p>Deadline for requests for anew postal vote or to change or cancel an existing postal vote or proxy arrangement (5pm)</p>	15	<p>Deadline for applications to be included on the register of electors to be used at the election.</p> <p>Last day for requests for a new postal vote or to change or cancel an existing postal vote or proxy appointment (5pm)</p>
20 May	16		16	
21 May	17		17	
22 May	18		18	

<b>26 May</b>	<b>19</b>		<b>19</b>	
<b>27 May</b>	<b>20</b>	Deadline for new applications to vote by proxy (not postal proxy) except for medical emergencies (5pm)	<b>20</b>	Last day for publication of notice of poll.  Last day for new applications to vote by proxy (except for medical emergencies) (5pm)
<b>28 May</b>	<b>21</b>	Last day for notice of appointment of polling and counting agents.  Last day for the appointment of sub-agents.	<b>21</b>	Last day for notice of appointment of polling and counting agents.
<b>29 May</b>	<b>22</b>	First day to issue replacement postal ballot packs in response to requests to replace lost ballot papers.	<b>22</b>	First day to issue replacement postal ballot packs in response to requests to replace lost ballot papers.
<b>1 June</b>	<b>23</b>		<b>23</b>	
<b>2 June</b>	<b>24</b>		<b>24</b>	
<b>3 June</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>25</b>	
<b>4 June</b>		<b>Polling Day 7am –10pm</b> Last day to issue replacements for spoilt or lost postal ballot papers (5pm)  Last day for new applications to vote by proxy on grounds of a medical emergency (5pm)  Last day to make alterations to the register to correct a clerical error or to implement a court (registration appeal) decision (9pm)		<b>Polling Day 7 am – 10pm</b> Last day to issue replacements for spoilt or lost postal ballot papers (5pm)  Last day for new applications to vote by proxy on grounds of a medical emergency (5pm)  Last day to make alterations to the register to correct a clerical error or to implement a court (registration appeal) decision (9pm)

## Appendix I: By-Election Writs Since 1974

### By-elections since May 2005

Constituency	Date of vacancy	Date of Writ	Date of by-election	Days to issue writ from date of vacancy
Cheadle	Death of Patsy Calton 29 May 2005	23 June 2005	15 July 2005	25
Livingston	Death of Rt Hon Robin Cook 6 August 2005	8 September 2005	29 September 2005	33
Dunfermline & W Fife	Death of Rachel Squire 6 January 2006	19 January 2006	9 February 2006	13
Blaenau Gwent	Death of Peter Law 25 April 2006	6 June 2006	29 June 2006	42
Bromley and Chislehurst	Death of Eric Forth 17 May 2006	6 June 2006	29 June 2006	20
Ealing Southall	Death of Piara Khabra 20 June 2007	28 June 2007	19 July 2007	8
Sedgefield	Resignation of Tony Blair 27 June 2007	28 June 2007	19 July 2007	1
Crewe and Nantwich	Death of Gwyneth Dunwoody 17 April 2008	30 April 2008	22 May 2008	13
Henley	Resignation of Boris Johnson after becoming Mayor of London 4 June 2008	5 June 2008	26 June 2008	1
Haltemprice and Howden	Resignation of David Davies 18 June 2008	19 June 2008	10 July 2008	1
Glasgow East	Resignation of David Marshall 30 June 2008	1 July 2008	24 July 2008	1
Glenrothes	Death of John Macdougall 12 August 2008	13 October 2008	6 November 2008	62

Norwich North	Resignation of Ian Gibson 5 June 2009	30 June 2009	23 July 2009	25
Glasgow North East	Resignation of Speaker Martin 22 June 2009	16 October 2009	12 November 2009	116

**By-elections 2001- 2005**

<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Date of vacancy</b>	<b>Date of Writ</b>	<b>Date of by-election</b>	<b>Days to issue writ from date of vacancy</b>
Ipswich	Death of Jamie Cann 15 October 2001	1 November 2001	22 November 2001	17
Ogmore	Death of Ray Powell 7 December 2001	21 January 2002	14 February 2002	45
Brent East	Death of Paul Daisley 18 June 2003	21 August 2003 Writ issued during the recess	18 September 2003	64
Birmingham Hodge Hill	Resignation of Rt Hon Terry Davis to take up post of Secretary General of the Council of Europe 23 June 2004	24 June 2004	15 July 2004	1
Leicester South	Death of Jim Marshall 27 May 2004	24 June 2004	15 July 2004	28
Hartlepool	Resignation of Rt Hon Peter Mandelson to take up post of European Commissioner 8 Sep 2004	9 September 2004	30 September 2004	1

**By-elections 1997- 2001**

<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Date of vacancy</b>	<b>Date of Writ</b>	<b>Date of by-election</b>	<b>Days to issue writ from date of vacancy</b>
Uxbridge	Death of Sir Michael Shersby 8 May 1997	9 July 1997	31 July 1997	62

Paisley South	Death of Gordon McMaster 28 July 1997	9 October 1997 Writ issued during the recess	6 November 1997	73
Beckenham	Resignation of Piers Merchant 21 Oct 1997	30 October 1997	20 November 1997	9
Winchester	General Election result challenged; election petition	28 October 1997	20 November 1997	
Leeds Central	Death of Rt Hon Derek Fatchett 9 May 1999	19 May 1999	10 June 1999	10
Eddisbury	Resignation of Rt Hon Sir Alastair Goodlad 28 June 1999	30 June 1999	22 July 1999	2
Hamilton South	Elevation to Peerage of Rt Hon George Robertson 24 August 1999	25 August 1999 Writ issued during the recess	23 September 1999	1
Wigan	Death of Roger Stott 8 August 1999	1 September 1999	23 September 1999	24
Kensington & Chelsea	Death of Rt Hon Alan Clark 5 September 1999	3 November 1999	25 November 1999	59
Ceredigion	Resignation of Cynog Dafis 10 January 2000	11 January 2000	3 February 2000	1
Romsey	Death of Sir Michael Colvin 24 February 2000	6 April 2000	4 May 2000	42
Tottenham	Death of Bernie Grant 8 April 2000	25 May 2000	22 June 2000	47
South Antrim	Death of Clifford Forsythe 27 April 2000	15 August 2000 Writ issued during the recess	21 September 2000	110
Glasgow Anniesland	Death of Rt Hon Donald Dewar 11 October 2000	31 October 2000	23 November 2000	20

Preston	Death of Audrey Wise 2 September 2000	31 October 2000	23 November 2000	59
Bromwich W	Resignation of Rt Hon Betty Boothroyd 23 October 2000	31 October 2000	23 November 2000	8
Falkirk W	Resignation of Dennis Canavan 11 November 2000	29 November 2000	21 December 2000	18

**By-elections 1992 - 1997**

<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Date of vacancy</b>	<b>Date of Writ</b>	<b>Date of by-election</b>	<b>Days to issue writ from date of vacancy</b>
Newbury	Death of Judith Chaplin 19 February 1993	14 April 1993	6 May 1993	54
Christchurch	Death of Robert Adley 13 May 1993	7 July 1993	29 July 1993	55
Rotherham	Death of James Boyce 25 January 1994	13 April 1994	5 May 1994	78
Barking	Death of Jo Richardson 1 February 1994	17 May 1994	9 June 1994	105
Eastleigh	Death of Stephen Milligan 7 February 1994	17 May 1994	9 June 1994	99
Newham NE	Death of Ron Leighton 28 February 1994	17 May 1994	9 June 1994	78
Bradford S	Death of Bob Cryer 12 April 1994	17 May 1994	9 June 1994	35
Monklands E	Death of John Smith 12 May 1994	14 June 1994	30 June 1994	33

Dagenham	Resignation of Bryan Gould 17 May 1994	17 May 1994	9 June 1994	0
Dudley W	Death of Dr John Blackburn 12 October 1994	23 November 1994	15 December 1994	42
Islwyn	Resignation of Neil Kinnock 20 January 1995	24 January 1995	16 February 1995	4
Perth & Kinross	Death of Sir Nicholas Fairbairn 19 February 1995	2 May 1995	25 May 1995	72
North Down	Death of James Kilfedder 20 March 1995	23 May 1995	15 June 1995	33
Littleborough & Saddleworth	Death of Geoffrey Dickens 17 May 1995	6 July 1995	27 July 1995	50
Hemsworth	Death of Derek Enright 31 October 1995	9 January 1996	1 February 1996	70
Staffordshire	Death of Sir David Lightbown 12 December 1995	12 March 1996	11 April 1996	91
Barnsley E	Death of Terry Patchett 11 October 1996	20 November 1996	12 December 1996	40
Wirral S	Death of Barry Porter 3 November 1996	3 February 1997	27 February 1997	92

### By-elections 1987 - 1992

Constituency	Date of vacancy	Date of Writ	Date of by-election	Days to issue writ from date of vacancy
Kensington	Death of Sir Brandon Rhys Williams 18 May 1988	22 June 1988	14 July 1988	35

Epping Forest	Death of Sir John Biggs-Davison 17 September 1988	23 November 1988	15 December 1988	67
Glasgow Govan	Resignation of Bruce Millan 18 October 1988	19 October 1988	10 November 1988	1
Pontypridd	Death of Brynmor John 13 December 1988	1 February 1989	23 February 1989	50
Richmond (Yorks)	Resignation of Leon Brittan 31 December 1988	1 February 1989	23 February 1989	32
Vale of Glamorgan	Death of Sir Raymond Gower 22 February 1989	12 April 1989	4 May 1989	49
Glasgow Central	Death of Robert McTaggart 23 March 1989	22 May 1989	15 June 1989	60
Vauxhall	Resignation of Stuart Holland 18 May 1989	22 May 1989	15 June 1989	4
Staffordshire Mid	Death of John Heddle 19 December 1989	28 February 1989	22 March 1990	71
Upper Bann	Death of Harold McCusker 12 February 1990	24 April 1990	17 May 1990	71
Bootle	Death of Allan Roberts 20 July 1990	17 October 1990	8 November 1990	89
Eastbourne	Death of Ian Gow 30 July 1990	26 September 1990	18 October 1990	58
Bradford North	Death of Pat Wall 6 August 1990	17 October 1990	8 November 1990	72
Paisley North	Death of Allen Adams 5 September 1990	8 November 1990	29 November 1990	64
Paisley South	Death of Norman Buchan 23 October 1990	8 November 1990	29 November 1990	16



Ribble Valley	Elevation to Peerage of David Waddington 4 December 1990	13 February 1991	7 March 1991	71
Neath	Death of Donald Coleman 14 January 1991	12 March 1991	4 April 1991	57
Monmouth	Death of Sir John Stradling Thomas 29 March 1991	23 April 1991	16 May 1991	25
Liverpool, Walton	Death of Eric Heffer 27 May 1991	13 June 1991	4 July 1991	17
Kincardine	Death of Alick Buchanan-Smith 29 August 1991	16 October 1991	7 November 1991	48
Hemsworth	Death of George Buckley 14 September 1991	16 October 1991	7 November 1991	32
Langbaugh	Death of Richard Holt 20 September 1991	16 October 1991	7 November 1991	26

### By-elections 1983 - 1987

Constituency	Date of vacancy	Date of Writ	Date of by-election	Days to issue writ from date of vacancy
Penrith & The Border	Elevation of Rt Hon William Whitelaw to Peerage, 11 June 1983	6 July 1984	28 July 1983	25
Chesterfield	Resignation of Rt Hon Eric Varley 16 January 1984	6 February 1984	1 March 1984	21
Cynon Valley	Death of Ioan Evans 10 February 1984	4 April 1984	3 May 1984	54

Stafford	Death of Rt Hon Sir Hugh Fraser 6 March 1984	4 April 1984	3 May 1984	29
Surrey SW	Death of Rt Hon Viscount Macmillan of Ovenden 10 March 1984	4 April 1984	3 May 1984	25
Portsmouth S	Death of Bonner Pink 6 May 1984	18 May 1984	14 June 1984	12
Enfield, Southgate	Death of Sir Anthony Berry 12 October 1984	21 November 1984	13 December 1984	40
Brecon & Radnor	Death of Tom Hooson 8 May 1985	12 June 1985	4 July 1985	35
Tyne Bridge	Death of Harry Cowans 3 October 1985	12 November 1985	5 December 1985	40
Antrim E	Roy Beggs resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Londonderry E	William Ross resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Fermanagh & S Tyrone	Ken Maginnis resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Lagan Valley	Rt Hon Sir James Molyneux resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0

	and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985			
Mid-Ulster	Rev Dr William McCrea resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Newry & Armagh	Jim Nicholson resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement, however Seamus Mallon won the seat in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Antrim N	Rt Hon Reverend Ian Paisley resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
N Down	Sir James Kilfedder resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Strangford	John D. Taylor resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Antrim S	Clifford Forsythe resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0

	in the by-election 17 December 1985			
S Down	Rt Hon Enoch Powell resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Upper Bann	Harold McCusker resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Belfast E	Rt Hon Peter Robinson resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Belfast N	Sir Cecil Walker resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Belfast S	The Rev Martin Smyth resigned seat in protest at Anglo-Irish Agreement and was re-elected in the by-election 17 December 1985	17 December 1985	23 January 1986	0
Fulham	Death of Martin Stevens 10 January 1986	13 March 1986	10 April 1986	62
Ryedale	Death of John Spence 4 March 1986	15 April 1986	8 May 1986	42

Derbyshire W	Resignation of Matthew Parris 15 April 1986	17 July 1986	8 May 1986	93
Newcastle-u-Lyme	Resignation of John Golding 25 June 1986	25 June 1986	17 July 1986	0
Knowsley N	Resignation of Robert Kilroy-Silk 1 October 1986	23 October 1986	13 November 1986	22
Truro	Death of David Penhaligon 22 December 1986	17 February 1987	12 March 1987	57
Greenwich	Death of Guy Barnett 24 December 1986	3 February 1987	26 February 1987	41
Kirkcaldy	Death of Harry Gourlay 20 April 1987	By-Election still pending at date of General Election		
Lewisham Deptford	Death of Rt Hon John Silkin 26 April 1987	By-Election still pending at date of General Election		

### By-elections 1979 - 1983

Constituency	Date of vacancy	Date of Writ	Date of by-election	Days to issue writ from date of vacancy
Southend East	Death of Sir Stephen McAdden 26 December 1979	22 February 1980	13 March 1980	58
Glasgow Central	Death of Thomas McMillan 30 April 1980	6 June 1980	26 June 1980	37
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	Death of Frank Maguire 5 March 1981	20 March 1981	9 April 1981	15
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	Death of Bobby Sands 5 May 1981	20 July 1981	20 August 1981	76
Warrington	Resignation of Sir Thomas Williams	26 June 1981	16 July 1981	27

	on appointment as a Circuit Court Judge 30 May 1981			
Croyden North West	Death of Robert Taylor 19 June 1981	21 September 1981 Writ issued during the recess	22 October 1981	94
Crosby	Death of Rt Hon Sir Graham Page 1 October 1981	4 November 1981	26 November 1981	34
Belfast South	Death of Reverend Robert Bradford 14 November 1981		4 March 1982	
Glasgow Hillhead	Death of Sir Thomas Galbraith 2 January 1982	3 March 1982	25 March 1982	60
Beaconsfield	Death of Sir Ronald Bell 27 February 1982	4 May 1982	27 May 1982	66
Mitcham & Morden	Bruce Douglas-Mann sought re-election on joining the Social Democratic Party 4 May 1982	11 May 1982	24 June 1982	7
Coatbridge & Airdrie	Death of James Dempsey 12 May 1982	27 May 1982	24 June 1982	15
Gower	Death of Ifor Davies 6 June 1982	11 August 1982 Writ issued during the recess	16 September 1982	66
Birmingham Northfield	Death of Jocelyn Cadbury 31 July 1982	30 September 1982 Writ issued during the recess	28 October 1982	61
Peckham	Death of Harry Lamborn 21 August 1982	23 September 1982 Writ issued during the recess	28 October 1982	33
Glasgow, Queen's Park	Death of Frank McElhone 22 September 1982	8 November 1982	2 December 1982	47

Bermondsey	Resignation of Rt Hon Bob Mellish 1 November 1982	31 January 1983	24 February 1984	91
Darlington	Death of Edward Fletcher 13 February 1983	28 February 1983	24 March 1983	15
Cardiff West	Death of Michael Roberts 10 February 1983	By-Election still pending at date of General Election		
Rhondda	30 March 1983	By-Election still pending at date of General Election		

### By-elections 1974 - 1979

Constituency	Date of vacancy	Date of Writ	Date of by-election	Days to issue writ from date of vacancy
Woolwich West	Death of William Hamling 19 March 1975	6 June 1975	26 June 1975	79
Coventry North West	Death of Maurice Edelman 14 December 1975	13 February 1976	4 March 1976	61
Sutton, Carshalton	Elevation of Robert Carr to Peerage (Lord Carr of Hadley) 17 December 1975	20 February 1976	11 March 1976	65
Wirral	Resignation of Selwyn Lloyd 4 February 1976	20 February 1976	11 March 1976	16
Rotherham	Death of Brian O'Malley 6 April 1976	7 June 1976	24 June 1976	62
Thurrock	Death of Hugh Delargy 4 May 1976	25 June 1976	15 July 1976	52

Walsall N	Resignation of John Stonehouse 27 August 1976	15 October 1976	4 November 1976	49
Workington	Elevation of Frederick Peart to Peerage (Lord Peart) 10 September 1976	15 October 1976	4 November 1976	35
Newcastle C	Resignation of Edward Short on appointment as Chairman of Cable and Wireless Ltd. 13 October 1976	15 October 1976	4 November 1976	2
Cambridge	Resignation of David Lane on appointment as Chairman of the Racial Equality Commission 12 November 1976	12 November 1976	2 December 1976	0
Birmingham, Stechford	Resignation of Roy Jenkins on appointment as a European Economic Community Commissioner 5 January 1977	11 March 1977	31 March 1977	65
City of London & Westminster	Resignation of Christopher Tugendhat on appointment as a European Economic Community Commissioner 5 January 1977	4 February 1977	24 February 1977	30
Grimsby	Death of Anthony Crosland 19 February 1977	4 April 1977	28 April 1977	44
Ashfield	Resignation of David Marquand on appointment to a post with the European Economic Community Commission 5 April 1977	6 April 1977	28 April 1977	1



Saffron Walden	Death of Peter Kirk 17 April 1977	17 June 1977	7 July 1977	61
Birmingham, Ladywood	Resignation of Brian Walden 17 June 1977	28 July 1977	18 August 1977	41
Bournemouth East	Resignation of John Cordle 25 July 1977	4 November 1977	24 November 1977	102
Ilford North	Death of Mrs Millie Miller 29 October 1977	10 February 1978	2 March 1978	104
Glasgow, Garscadden	Death of William Small 18 January 1978	20 March 1978	13 April 1978	61
Wycombe	Death of Sir John Hall 19 January 1978	7 April 1978	27 April 1978	78
Lambeth C	Death of Marcus Lipton 22 February 1978	4 April 1978	20 April 1978	41
Hamilton	Death of Alexander Wilson 23 March 1978	10 May 1978	31 May 1978	48
Epsom & Ewell	Elevation of Sir Peter Rawlinson to Peerage (Lord Rawlinson of Ewell) 6 April 1978	7 April 1978	27 April 1978	1
Manchester, Moss Side	Death of Frank Hatton 16 May 1978	23 June 1978	13 July 1978	38
Penistone	Death of John Mendelson 20 May 1978	23 June 1978	13 July 1978	34
Pontrefract	Death of Joseph Harper 24 June 1978	6 October 1978 Writ issued during the recess	26 October 1978	97
Berwick and E. Lothian	Death of John Mackintosh 30 July 1978	29 September Writ issued during the recess	26 October 1978	61

Clitheroe	Death of David Walder 26 October 1978	9 February 1979	1 March 1979	106
Knutsford	Resignation of John Davies 6 November 1978	9 February 1979	1 March 1979	95
Liverpool, Edge Hill	Death of Sir Arthur Irvine 17 December 1978	9 March 1979	29 March 1979	82
Barnet, Chipping Barnet	Death of Reginald Maudling 14 February 1979		Seat vacant at Dissolution	
Derbys NE	Death of Thomas Swain 2 March 1979		Seat vacant at Dissolution	
Abingdon	Death of Airey Neave 30 March 1979		Seat vacant at Dissolution	
Batley and Morley	Death of Sir Alfred Broughton 2 April 1979		Seat vacant at Dissolution	