Alec Douglas-Home was the leader of the Conservative party from 1963 to the 27 July 1965, and PM from 1963-1964. By 1964, failure was seen with the country in recession and the Tories became damaged by the Profumo scandal. This discredited the Conservative government, resulted in a loss of support and a labour leader of the country – ending the thirteen years of the Conservative party in power.

Edward Heath was the Conservative party leader from 1965 to the 11 February 1975 and PM from 1970-1974. The Conservative party won the 1970 general election with a majority of 30 seats. During his time in office, he made the 3rd British application to join the European Economic Community (ECC). On the 28th October 1971, the House of Commons voted with a 112 majority to go into Europe – this created deep divisions that lasted over 30 years. Heath followed a policy of supporting British industry but came into conflicts with trade unions because of his attempts to enforce a prices and incomes policy.

On the 4th January 1975, Margaret Thatcher defeated Heath 130 votes to 119 for leadership of the Conservative party. Thatcher was the first woman leader of a major political party. She was leader of the Conservative party from 1975 to the 28 November 1990. She was the first female British Prime Minister and was in office from 1979 to 1990 - becoming Britain’s longest serving PM for over a hundred years. She adopted a more right-wing political programme which placed emphasis on the market economy. Thatcher continued a policy of reducing the power of trade unions. She started a programme of privatization and denationalised many nationalised industries which included the denationalization of British Telecom, British Airways, Rolls Royce and British Steel. Her government became known for its’ free market approach and privatisation. Thatcher converted it into a monetarist economic programme.

Cuts in public spending on education and health meant that the Labour party was easily defeated in the 1979 general election. Between 1979 and 1980, inflation was reduced but unemployment doubled. Her popularity was boosted by her successful campaign to expel Argentine forces from the Falklands and her agreement to be firm towards the Soviet Union, which caused her to be dubbed the ‘Iron Lady’. The Conservative party won the 1983 general election, however, there were further public spending cuts and the public opinion polls suggested Thatcher was the ‘most unpopular PM in British history’.

In April 1986, Thatcher was greatly criticized for giving permission for US bombers to take off from Britain to bomb Libya following a series of Libyan inspired terrorist attacks. Yet, she returned to power for a third time in 1987 when she won the general election. Her popularity became severely damaged when the Community Charge (Poll Tax) was introduced and this new tax was extremely unpopular. She was challenged as leader of the Conservative Party and on 28th November 1990, she resigned as PM.

Thatcher was replaced by John Major as Conservative leader and Prime Minister from 1990 to the 19th June 1997. The general election of 1992 won the Tories their fourth election victory in a row. Major launched the ‘back to basics’ campaign which seemed to emphasise the credentials of the Tories but failed when it backfired as newspapers carried a succession of scandalous revelations about various Tory backbenchers and ministers, whose private lives did not link with the Conservative’s moral values as many were having extra-marital