



## The National Archives

Press Release

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### **Momentous decisions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century available at the touch of a button**

*From fuel crises to World Wars – find out how the Government  
dealt with it all behind the scenes*

“The country is now facing the gravest economic crisis since the end of the war”.

No, not a summing up of the country’s current economic woes, but the words of Anthony Barber in 1973, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer. The memorandum, part of the Cabinet papers, is from a time when the country stared into the face of oil shortages and impending fuel poverty, a poignant reminder of history’s ability to repeat itself.

Barber’s 1973 note is among more than half a million pages of key government papers that, from today, are available to search and download for free at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers)

Thanks to this groundbreaking website from The National Archives, people from around the country, and the rest of the world, can read how British Governments of the past took some of the seminal decisions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

From the Somme to Suez, via Black Wednesday and Dunkirk, the ‘Cabinet papers, 1915-1977’ project, funded by the JISC Digitisation Programme, provides a fascinating opportunity to delve into Government discussions that shaped the country we live in today.

Users will be able to key-word search the entire collection, making these documents more accessible than ever before, and opening up a vast amount of information to people all over the world.

As part of the website, a host of innovative teaching aids support the papers, helping users to understand and interpret the documents on screen. These include interactive maps and images, which support the content of the

records. The website is an especially rich resource for students, covering more than 100 topics which form an integral part of the A-level examination syllabuses and university programmes.

“This is an extremely valuable collection in terms of modern British history, and for the first time we have been able to open it up to everyone, not just those who are able to come to Kew,” says Edward Hampshire, a contemporary records expert at The National Archives.

“While we have created some fantastic resources for students, we hope the tools will help to open up the files to everyone with an interest in British history and politics. After all, this is recent history, and many of us will have lived through, and been affected by, the momentous issues and decisions recorded in these records.”

Paola Marchionni JISC digitisation programme manager says: "The digitisation of resources like this means that students have access to historical records tracing key events in 20<sup>th</sup> century British and international history. Learners are able to access the information when they want it, how they want it and see the documents as they were originally created – including Churchill's cigar ashes.

"This project is funded under the JISC digitisation programme, which aims to make available previously hard to access resources for use in teaching, learning, research and wherever possible open to the wider public too."

Log on and explore the workings of Government at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers)

**-Ends-**

For further information please contact Katrina McClintock on 020 8392 5277 or [katrina.mcclintock@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:katrina.mcclintock@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

### **Notes for editors**

#### **'British Governance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Cabinet papers, 1915-1977'**

The content of the records that have been digitised for this project will be free to access and download to A-level institutions in England and Wales for 10 years, Higher Education institutions in England and Wales for five years, and to all other users for 18 months.

**The National Archives** is a UK government department and executive agency of the Ministry of Justice. As the official archives of the UK government, it preserves and protects one of the most important collections in the world, holding public records dating back almost 1,000 years. The National Archives brings together the Public Record Office, Historical Manuscripts Commission, The Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

**The vision of the National Archives is to:**

- Lead and transform information management
- Guarantee the survival of today's information for tomorrow
- Bring history to life for everyone

**Learning Curve**

The National Archives award-winning education website, now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, is an online teaching resource, structured to tie in with the History National Curriculum from Key Stages 2 to 5. The Learning Curve contains a varied range of original sources including documents, photographs, film and sound recordings. To find out more visit [www.learningcurve.gov.uk](http://www.learningcurve.gov.uk)

**Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)** is a joint committee of the UK further and higher education funding bodies, and is responsible for supporting the innovative use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to support learning, teaching, and research. It is best known for providing the SuperJANET network, a range of services, and a portfolio of high-quality resources. Information about the JISC, its services and programmes can be found in the [What we do](#) section.