

Who is Theresa May?

Theresa May: We need proven leadership to negotiate the best deal

- **Date of birth:** 1 October 1956 (aged 59)
Job: MP for Maidenhead since 1997. Home Secretary since May 2010
Education: Mainly state-educated at Wheatley Park Comprehensive School with a brief time at an independent school; St Hugh's College, Oxford
- **Family:** Married to Philip May
- **Hobbies:** Cooking - she says she owns 100 recipe books. Occasional mountain walks. On BBC Radio 4's Desert Island Discs in 2014, she chose Abba's Dancing Queen and Walk Like A Man, from the musical Jersey Boys, among her picks, alongside Mozart and Elgar.
On her party's future: "(It is) nothing less than the patriotic duty of our party to unite and to govern in the best interests of the whole country⁷. We need a bold, new positive vision for the future of our country - a country that works not for a privileged few but for every one of us." Says people want more than just a "Brexit PM" and has vowed to unify the Leave and Remain factions in the party.

Even before entering Downing Street, she made history by becoming the second longest serving home secretary in the past 100 years.

The daughter of a Church of England vicar, Hubert, who died from injuries sustained in a car crash when she was only 25, Theresa May's middle class background has more in keeping with the last female occupant of Downing Street, Margaret Thatcher, than her immediate predecessor.

Born in Sussex but raised largely in Oxfordshire, Mrs May - both of whose grandmothers are reported to have been in domestic service - attended a state primary, an independent convent school and then a grammar school in the village of Wheatley, which became the Wheatley Park Comprehensive School during her time there.

The young Theresa Brasier, as she was then, threw herself into village life, taking part in a pantomime that was produced by her father and working in the bakery on Saturdays to earn pocket money.

Friends recall a tall, fashion-conscious young woman who from an early age spoke of her ambition to be the first woman prime minister.

Like Margaret Thatcher, she went to Oxford University to study and, like so many others of her generation, found that her personal and political lives soon became closely intertwined.

In 1976, in her third year, she met her husband Philip, who was president of the Oxford Union, a well-known breeding ground for future political leaders.

The story has it that they were introduced at a Conservative Association disco by the subsequent Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto. They married in 1980.

Her university friend Pat Frankland, speaking in 2011 on a BBC Radio 4 profile of the then home secretary, said: "I cannot remember a time when she did not have political ambitions.

"I well remember, at the time, that she did want to become the first woman prime minister and she was quite irritated when Margaret Thatcher got there first."

There are no tales of drunken student revelry, but Pat Frankland and other friends say May was not the austere figure she would later come to be seen as, saying she had a sense of fun and a full social life.

After graduating with a degree in Geography, May went to work in the City, initially starting work at the Bank of England and later rising to become head of the European Affairs Unit of the Association for Payment Clearing Services.

But it was already clear that she saw her future in politics. She was elected as a local councillor in Merton, south London, and served her ward for a decade, rising to become deputy leader. However, she was soon setting her sights even higher. Mrs May, who has become a confidante as well as role model for aspiring female MPs - told prospective candidates before the 2015 election that "there is always a seat out there with your name on it".