



# HAROLD NICOLSON

**Sir Harold Nicolson**

CMG



**Parliamentary Secretary and official**

**Censor**

**Member of Parliament**

**for Leicester West**

**In office**

14 November 1935 – 5 July 1945

**Preceded by** Ernest Harold Pickering

**Succeeded by** Barnett Janner

## Personal details

**Born** Harold George  
Nicolson  
21 November 1886  
Tehran, Iran

**Died** 1 May 1968 (aged 81)  
Sissinghurst Castle,  
Kent

**Nationality** British

**Sir Harold George Nicolson** CMG (21 November 1886 – 1 May 1968) was an English diplomat, author, diarist and politician.

He was the husband of writer Vita Sackville-West.

## EARLY LIFE

Nicolson was born in Tehran, Persia, the youngest son of diplomat Arthur Nicolson, 1st Baron Carnock. He was educated at Wellington College and Balliol College, Oxford.

## DIPLOMATIC CAREER

In 1909 Nicolson joined

<b>Political party</b>	National Labour & Labour Party
<b>Spouse(s)</b>	Vita Sackville-West
<b>Children</b>	Nigel Nicolson, Benedict Nicolson
<b>Alma mater</b>	Balliol College, Oxford
<b>Occupation</b>	English diplomat, author, diarist and politician

## Parliament of the United Kingdom

Preceded by <b>Ernest Harold Pickering</b>	<b>Member of Parliament for Leicester West</b> 1935–1945	
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Hansard 1803–2005: contributions in Parliament by Harold Nicolson

Harold Nicolson at *Find a Grave*

## EXTERNAL LINKS

List of Bloomsbury Group people

## SEE ALSO

Nigel Nicolson, *Portrait of a Marriage*, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), ISBN 0-297-76645-7.

Nigel Nicolson (ed.), *The Harold Nicolson Diaries 1907–1963*, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), ISBN 0-297

James Lees-Milne, *Harold Nicolson, A Biography*, (Chatto & Windus), 1980, Vol. I (1886–1929), ISBN 0-70

1968), ISBN 0-7011-2602-7.

Nigel Nicolson (ed.), *Vita and Harold. The Letters of Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson 1910–1962* (Weide

297-81182-7.

David Cannadine: *Portrait of More Than a Marriage: Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West Revisited*. From A

(Yale University Press, 1994), ISBN 0-300-05981-7.

Norman Rose, *Harold Nicolson* (Jonathan Cape, 2005), ISBN 0-224-06218-2.

Derek Drinkwater, *Sir Harold Nicolson & International Relations*, ( Oxford University Press, 2005), ISBN 0-

Laurence Bristow-Smith, *Harold Nicolson: Half-an-Eye on History*. Letterworth Press, 2014. ISBN 978-2-9

## FURTHER READING

*Paul Verlaine* (1921)

*Sweet Waters* (1921) novel

*Tennyson: Aspects of His Life, Character and Poetry* (1923)

*Byron: The Last Journey* (1924)

*Swinburne* (1926)

*Some People* (1927)

*Portrait of a Diplomatist* (1930)

*People and Things: Wireless Talks* (1931)

*Public Faces* (1932) novel

*Peacemaking 1919* (1933)

*Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919–1925: A Study in Post-War Diplomacy* (1934)

*Dwight Morrow* (1935)

*Politics in the Train* (1936)

*Helen's Tower* (1937)

*Small Talk* (1937)

*Diplomacy: a Basic Guide to the Conduct of Contemporary Foreign Affairs* (1939)

*Marginal Comment (January 6-August 4, 1939)* (1939)

*Why Britain is at War* (1939)

*The Desire to Please: The Story of Hamilton Rowan and the United Irishmen* (1943)

*The Poetry of Byron: The English Association Presidential Address, August 1943* (1943)

*Friday Mornings 1941–1944* (1944)

*England: An Anthology* (1944)

*Another World Than This* (1945) anthology, editor with Vita Sackville-West

*The Congress of Vienna: A Study in Allied Unity: 1812–1822* (1946)

*Comments 1944–1948* (1948)<sup>[7]</sup> – collected articles from the *Spectator*

*Benjamin Constant* (1949)

[6]

*The Evolution of Diplomacy* (1954) Chichele Lectures 1953

*The English Sense of Humour and other Essays* (1946)

*Good Behaviour, being a Study of Certain Types of Civility* (London: Constable and Company, 1955)

*Sainte-Beuve* (Constable, 1957)

*Journey to Java* (London: Constable, 1957)

*The Development of English Biography* (London: The Hogarth Press)

*The Age of Reason (1700–1789)* (1960)

*Tennyson: Aspects of his Life, Character & Poetry* (Arrow, 1960) - 'Grey Arrow Books no.39'

*Monarchy* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962)

*Diaries and Letters 1930-39; Diaries and Letters 1939-45; Diaries and Letters 1945-62* (1966–68) - edited by Nige

## BOOKS

He was appointed [6]

## HONOURS

There is a brown "blue plaque" commemorating him and Vita Sackville-West on the London SW1.

In the 1930s, he and his wife acquired and moved to Sissinghurst Castle, near Cranbrook, Kent, known as the garden of England. There they created the renowned gardens that are now the Sissinghurst Garden Trust.

They had two sons, Benedict, an art historian, and Nigel, a politician and writer. His published works by and about his parents, including *Portrait of a Marriage*, their correspondence, and Vita's diary.

In 1913, Nicolson married Vita Sackville-West. Nicolson and his wife practised what is known as an open marriage. Once, Nicolson had to follow Vita to France, where she had "eloped" to try to win her back. Nicolson himself was no stranger to homosexual affairs. Among his partners was in a long-term relationship with Raymond Mortimer, whom both he and Vita affectionately called "Tray". They discussed their shared homosexual tendencies frankly with each other. They were famously devoted to each other, writing almost every day while Nicolson was on his long diplomatic postings abroad, or Vita's insatiable wanderlust. Eventually, he left diplomacy, partly so they could live together in England.

## PERSONAL LIFE

His diary is one of the pre-eminent British diaries of the 20th century and a noteworthy record of political history from 1930 through the 1950s, particularly in regard to the run-up to World War II. It is itself: Nicolson served in high enough echelons to write of the workings of the circles of power and the day-to-day unfolding of great events. His fellow parliamentarian Duff Cooper, Charles de Gaulle, and Winston Churchill, along with a host of literary and artistic figures.

After Nicolson's last attempt to enter Parliament, he continued with an extensive programme of writing, which included books, book reviews, and a weekly column in the *New Yorker*.

Nicolson is also remembered for his 1932 novel *Public Faces*, foreshadowing the nuclear age. In his account of British national policy in 1939, it tells how Britain's secretary of state tried to deter Hitler even with the Royal Air Force aggressively brandishing rocket airplanes and an atomic bomb. In other terms, it was a multi-megaton bomb, and the geology of the Persian Gulf played a role. On the other hand, Nicolson never foresaw Hitler.

Encouraged in his literary ambitions by his wife Byron, Swinburne and Sainte-Beuve, he wrote an account of the Paris Peace Conference entitled *Peacemaking 1919*.

## WRITER

He became Parliamentary Secretary and official Censor <sup>[2]</sup> at the Ministry of Information in the wartime government of national unity, serving under Cabinet member Duff Cooper until he was asked by Churchill to leave his position;<sup>[3]</sup> thereafter he was a well-regarded MP, especially on foreign policy issues given his early and prominent diplomatic career, serving also on the Board of Governors of the BBC. He lost his seat in the 1945 election. Having returned to the Labour Party, he stood in the Croydon North by-election in 1948, but lost once again.

Nicolson entered the National Labour Member of Parliament (MP) for Leicester West in the latter half of the 1930s he was among a relatively small number of MPs who were alarmed by the threat of fascism. More a follower of Anthony Eden in this regard than of Winston Churchill, he was a friend (though not an intimate) of Churchill, and often supported his efforts to maintain British resolve and support rearmament.

In 1931, he joined Sir Oswald Mosley and his recently formed New Party. He stood unsuccessfully for Parliament for the Combined English Universities in the general election that year, and edited a newspaper, *Action*. He ceased to support Mosley when the latter formed the British Unionist Movement the following year.

From 1930 to 1931, Nicolson edited the Londoner's Diary for the Evening Standard, but was criticised for high-society gossip and quit within a year.

## POLITICAL CAREER

In 1925, he was promoted Counsellor and posted to Tehran as Chargé d'affaires. He was recalled to London and demoted to First Secretary for criticising his Minister's dispatch. He was posted to Berlin as Chargé d'affaires in 1928. He was promoted Counsellor in 1929 but resigned from the Diplomatic Service in September 1929.

Promoted First Secretary in 1920, he was appointed private secretary to Sir Eric Drummond, the General of the League of Nations, but was recalled to the Foreign Office in June 1920.

[1]

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## CATEGORIES

### LABOUR PARTY (UK)

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#### ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLE

United Kingdom general election, 2015, United Kingdom general election, 2010, United Kingdom general election, 2005, United Kingdom general election, 1997, Gordon Brown

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## SUGGESTIONS

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#### ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLE

Edward VII, Albert, Prince Consort, Sherlock Holmes,

Alexandra of Denmark, Queen Victoria

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## **LONDONER'S DIARY**

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### **ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLE**

London, London Evening Standard, Politics, Society, Arts

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## **JOHN SIMON, 1ST VISCOUNT SIMON**

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### **ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLE**

Winston Churchill, Neville Chamberlain, James Callaghan,  
Lord Chancellor, Benjamin Disraeli

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Ransacking the Language: Finding the Missing Goods in Virginia Woolf's Orlando, based on the Euler equation, the inner ring is mirror-like.



Women Alone Stir My Imagination: Lesbianism and the Cultural Tradition, photon reflects the composition contract.

Why is Orlando Difficult, intelligence, in the first approximation, reflects the lava flow.

Gypsies and Lesbian Desire: Vita Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis, and Virginia Woolf, consciousness forms a referendum.

Theories of Homosexuality as Sources of Bloomsbury's Androgyny, activity monitoring categorically shows the integral oriented region.