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**American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society Honors
Former UK Prime Minister The Rt Hon Sir John Major KG CH**

***April 22 Virtual Family History Benefit Gala Commemorates
175th Anniversary of NEHGS and 400th Anniversary of Mayflower Landing***

April 22, 2021 – Boston, Massachusetts – Former UK Prime Minister Sir John Major will be honored on Thursday, April 22, 2021, by American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), the oldest and largest genealogical society in America, with its prestigious NEHGS Lifetime Achievement Award for Distinguished Public Service.

At the Virtual Family History Benefit Gala commemorating the 175th anniversary of NEHGS (1845) and the 400th anniversary of the *Mayflower* landing in New England (1620), Sir John Major will be in conversation with Her Majesty's Consul General to New England Dr. Peter Abbott OBE, with special greetings from Dame Karen Pierce, British Ambassador to the United States, and Governor of Massachusetts Charles D. Baker, and presentations by hosts D. Brenton Simons, the Society's President and CEO, and Ryan J. Woods, its Executive Vice President and COO.

"We are delighted to honor Sir John Major with this award for his lifetime achievements and his place as an international statesman, as well as celebrate two significant milestones in the history of our nation and our organization." said Brenton Simons, President and CEO of American Ancestors and NEHGS. "Sir John's participation highlights the many important historical, cultural, and political bonds between the United Kingdom and the United States over four centuries."

In 1990, Sir John Major succeeded Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and served in that capacity until 1997. He worked to secure peace in Northern Ireland and oversaw Britain's longest period of continuous economic growth. Prior to becoming Prime Minister, Sir John served in the Thatcher Government as Foreign Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer. In 2005, he was made a Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of The Garter by The Queen.

The arrival of the Pilgrims in 1620 sparked the first waves of major English settlement in New England, and the Mayflower Compact signed by the Pilgrims at Provincetown Harbor is regarded by many historians as a key inspiration in shaping American democratic ideals. As many as 10 million Americans and 35 million or more people worldwide are believed to be descended from the Pilgrims.

In 2019, four nations – the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the Wampanoag Nation – united to create commemoration plans for the 400th anniversary of the *Mayflower* landing in New England. American Ancestors and NEHGS, located in Boston, was an anchor location for *Mayflower* and Wampanoag history-themed programming and activities that began in 2018 and continued into 2020, mainly as virtual events. The commemorative plans included educational programs developed with [Plymouth 400](#), publishing new scholarship on the Pilgrims and, with the General Society of Mayflower Descendants and FamilySearch, providing the largest online portal for [Mayflower genealogical research](#) ever created.

For more information on researching *Mayflower* and New England Native American history and ancestry, the following resources are available from American Ancestors:

- [Of Plimoth Plantation by William Bradford, with a special introduction by Paula Peters of the Wampanoag Nation, edited and with essays by Kenneth P. Minkema, Francis J. Bremer, and Jeremy D. Bangs](#) - published as part of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Plimoth Colony, this edition features a new transcription of the original manuscript with annotations that incorporate recent information and interpretations. This work brings together Native and non-Native commentators and contains an appendix that presents Bradford's later Hebrew exercises;
- [A New England Native American Reader, Volume 1](#) - This first of two volumes is a collection of articles on New England Native American genealogy, history, and culture that have appeared in the *Register* or *American Ancestors* magazine (formerly *New England Ancestors*) from 1854 to the present;
- A free online expert subject guide – [Native Nations of New England](#) – which also includes [Researching Native American Ancestors](#), a free American Ancestors webinar; and
- An educational [Wampum belts and beads](#) website – a collaboration between American Ancestors and [SmokeSygnals](#), a Native American creative agency.

About American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society

American Ancestors, also known as New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), with its national headquarters located in Boston's Back Bay, is the oldest and largest genealogical society in America. It serves more than 350,000 members and millions of online users engaged in family history nationally and around the world. It is home to a world-class research library and archive, an expert staff, and the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center. American Ancestors offers a genealogical research website at [AmericanAncestors.org](#) with more than 1.4 billion names and maintains a publishing division which produces original genealogical research, scholarship, and educational materials, including the *Register*, the flagship journal of American genealogy since 1847; *American Ancestors*, its award-winning magazine; and *Mayflower Descendant*, a quarterly journal of Pilgrim genealogy and history.

Biography: The Rt Hon Sir John Major KG CH

Former Prime Minister of Great Britain

Source: Office of The Rt Hon Sir John Major KG CH

Sir John entered the British Parliament in 1979 and joined Margaret Thatcher's Cabinet in 1987. Between 1989-1990 he served as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, and Chancellor of the Exchequer. He became Prime Minister in November 1990 and, in 1992, led the Conservative Party to an unprecedented fourth term in Office.

As Prime Minister, Sir John focused his efforts upon securing peace in Northern Ireland and upholding Britain's position in the world community as a political, social, and economic leader. He was Prime Minister throughout the first Gulf War and, at home, instigated long-term reforms in education, health and public services. On leaving Office in 1997, he handed over the strongest economy any incoming UK Government had inherited.

Sir John retired from Parliament at the UK General Election in May 2001. His business interests include Senior Advisor to Credit Suisse and Chairman of the Advisory Board of Global Infrastructure Management. He chairs the Campaign Board of King's London; is a Joint President of Chatham House; and Patron or President of a number of UK and international charities. In October 2011, he was appointed Chairman of The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, a Commonwealth-wide initiative which was established to create a lasting legacy to Her Majesty's 60 years as Sovereign.

In 1999, Sir John was awarded the Companion of Honour by HM The Queen, in recognition of his initiation of the Northern Ireland Peace Process. In 2005, HM The Queen appointed him a Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, England's highest award for chivalry. In 2012, he was awarded The Grand Cordon of The Rising Sun by The Emperor of Japan.

In 2017, he received the Sir Winston Churchill Award from the International Churchill Society. In 2019, he was presented with The George Bush Award for Excellence in Public Service – the last recipient to be personally chosen by President George H W Bush.

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