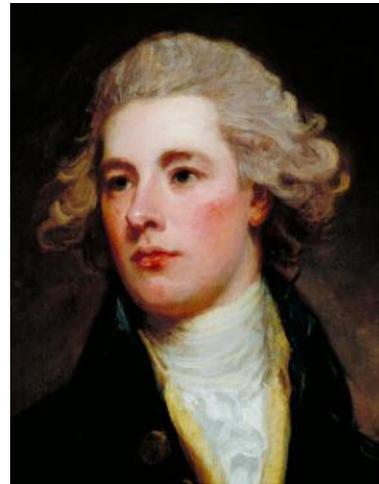


I thought we would spend today talking about three great Prime Ministers. And then on Wednesday, I will tell you about three great thinkers, and on Friday about three great composers. So our three great Prime Ministers are:

WILLIAM PITT THE YOUNGER

If William Pitt had been American, he would have been known as William Pitt Jr, or William Pitt Junior - because he had the same name as his father, who had also been Prime Minister, from 1756 to 1761 and from 1766 to 1768. So no one was that surprised that William Pitt the Younger followed in his father's footsteps and became Prime Minister - but the age at which he did it, 24, would have come as a real shock. No one will ever beat Pitt's record for being the youngest ever Prime Minister - but what was all the more amazing that for someone who was so young, he was a brilliant Prime Minister, serving as Prime Minister for 18 years from 1783 to 1801, and then from 1804 until he died in 1806, at the age of only 47.



What made Pitt so brilliant was that for most of the time he was Prime Minister, he had to deal with the problems arising out of the FRENCH REVOLUTION in 1789 and the rise of NAPOLEON from 1795. While Pitt didn't live long enough to see Napoleon finally being defeated at WATERLOO, he did live long enough to see the French Navy destroyed by ADMIRAL HORATIO (pronounced 'Her - ay - see - oh') NELSON at the BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR in 1805. And he laid the foundations of Britain's eventual victory over the French, by ensuring that the French Revolution didn't spark off a British Revolution, even though there were lots of people who wanted to see that happen, and by ensuring that Britain's military was properly funded to defeat the French. In order to do that he was the first Prime Minister to impose an INCOME TAX, where people paid tax to the government based on how much income they had earned. While this was supposed to be just a short-term measure, we still have income tax nowadays, with people paying up to 45% of their income to the government in income tax. And in the 1960s, the amount of income tax people had to pay was even higher - almost 99% for the richest earners once their income got over a certain level.

Another thing that William Pitt the Younger helped to bring about, though he didn't live long enough to see it happen, was the abolition of slavery throughout the BRITISH EMPIRE. As Prime Minister, he gave a speech in 1792, urging that the slave trade should be abolished - but it was Pitt's close friend WILLIAM WILBERFORCE who ensured that slavery was abolished, with an ACT OF PARLIAMENT abolishing the slave trade being passed in 1833, just before Wilberforce died. Pitt and Wilberforce and are buried near each other in Westminster Abbey.

WILLIAM GLADSTONE AND BENJAMIN DISRAELI

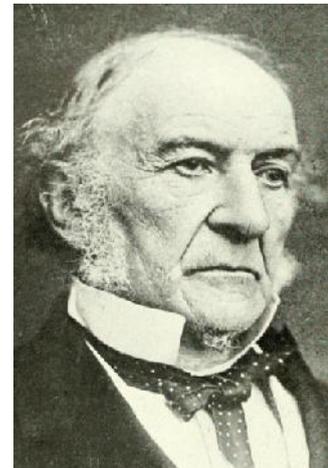
We can take our second and third great Prime Ministers together because they were really big rivals - the Ronaldo and Messi of their days. Disraeli was slightly older - he was born in 1804, while Gladstone was born five years later in 1809. Disraeli got to be Prime Minister twice, once very briefly in 1868, and then from 1874 to 1880. Gladstone got to be Prime Minister three times, the first time from 1868 to 1874, the second time from 1880 to 1885,

and then the third time briefly in 1886, and then the fourth time from 1892 to 1894. They faced off against each other in a General Election three times, with Disraeli leading the Conservative Party, and Gladstone the Liberal Party. The first time, in 1868, Gladstone won. The second time, in 1874, Disraeli won. And the third time, in 1880, Gladstone got his revenge and won again. And then in 1881, Disraeli died and Gladstone was robbed of his all-time greatest opponent.

All these elections happened under QUEEN VICTORIA, and Victoria LOVED Disraeli and HATED Gladstone. Disraeli was really charming, and wrote novels in his spare time. Gladstone was really uptight and serious. Disraeli was a genuine world leader, throwing Britain's weight all over the globe, and giving Queen Victoria the title EMPRESS OF INDIA in 1877 (one of the reasons she loved Disraeli). Gladstone's focus was more on the United Kingdom, and improving the lives of the people living in this country. He also improved the way the British government worked, making people who wanted to work for the BRITISH CIVIL SERVICE (which is supposed to help the politicians in power run the country properly) pass exams to show that they were clever enough to work as CIVIL SERVANTS.



Gladstone's biggest failure was over IRELAND, which had been part of the UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND since 1800. In 1886, having become Prime Minister again for the third time, Gladstone proposed that Ireland enjoy HOME RULE and run itself within the United Kingdom. Parliament rejected this idea, and Gladstone lost his position as Prime Minister, and Ireland went on to become a real problem for the United Kingdom for almost all of the 20th century. A small number of liberals - who believed in free trade and the power of free markets - broke away from Gladstone's Liberal Party over the issue of Home Rule and found themselves allied with the Conservative Party. Their ideas eventually took over the Conservative Party towards the end of the 20th century and strongly influenced another Prime Minister, MARGARET THATCHER, who I expect we will talk about some time.



Margaret Thatcher also had to face up to the influence that Disraeli had on the Conservative Party, and in particular the fact that he argued in favour of ONE NATION TORYISM - where the Conservative Party sought to govern on behalf of EVERYONE living in the United Kingdom and not a particular class of people living in the United Kingdom. Thatcher was constantly asked whether she was a 'One Nation Tory'. And we will see whether she was or not when we talk about her some other time.