

The Commonwealth Headquarters

in

MARLBOROUGH HOUSE



The Commonwealth



Front cover: Nelson Mandela. Pictured here with Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Commonwealth Secretary-General, in Marlborough House gardens.

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Welcome to **MARLBOROUGH HOUSE**



Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland with President Buhari of Nigeria during the Tackling Corruption Together conference, 2016

Throughout its long history, many famous and notable figures have come through the doors of Marlborough House. Within its halls they have exchanged news and views, shared visions and made plans, negotiated and concluded agreements. Still, today, true to its original purpose, Marlborough House is a place of meeting and hospitality, for cultural connection and conversation, for diplomacy and political planning.



Commonwealth Secretary General Patricia Scotland and the High Commissioner of The Gambia raising the flag, 2018

The narrative which began in 1709, when the foundation stone was laid, continues today, with Marlborough House continuing through changing times to fulfil its fascinating function as a fulcrum for international development and progress - socially, politically, and economically. Sir Christopher Wren would perhaps be surprised to see how his original building has been remodelled through the centuries to adapt to new uses and circumstances, yet within change there has been continuity. That is also true of the Commonwealth, which has steadily grown in stature and scope since the London Declaration of 1949, which brought into being the Commonwealth we know today.

Ten years later, in 1959, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth, generously dedicated for Commonwealth purposes the palace which had until early in her reign been home to her grandmother, Queen Mary. The buildings have now for over sixty years provided an imposing setting to match the grandeur of aspiration and ambition for

which the Commonwealth is famous. It was at Marlborough House that the Heads of Government of member countries met in 1965 and agreed to create the role of Commonwealth Secretary-General and to establish the Commonwealth Secretariat, which since then has been principal organisation accommodated within the building.

Today, Marlborough House is a busy working hub, and a centre for decision-making and consensus-building. A broad range of meetings and activities take place week by week within its walls. The officials and delegates participating, and the Commonwealth staff working alongside them, are a constantly changing kaleidoscope of global diversity, drawn from member nations set in every continent and ocean. Combining in unity of purpose under the Commonwealth Charter, they make many positive impacts in the daily lives of the 2.4 billion people living in the Commonwealth.

By expressing so vividly and in such practical ways what can be achieved through goodwill and international connection, nourished by a spirit of respect and understanding, the Commonwealth shines as a beacon for multilateral collaboration. Marlborough House provides an historic stage and setting for this continuing story of hope and harmony.

Patricia Scotland

The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC
Secretary-General of the Commonwealth

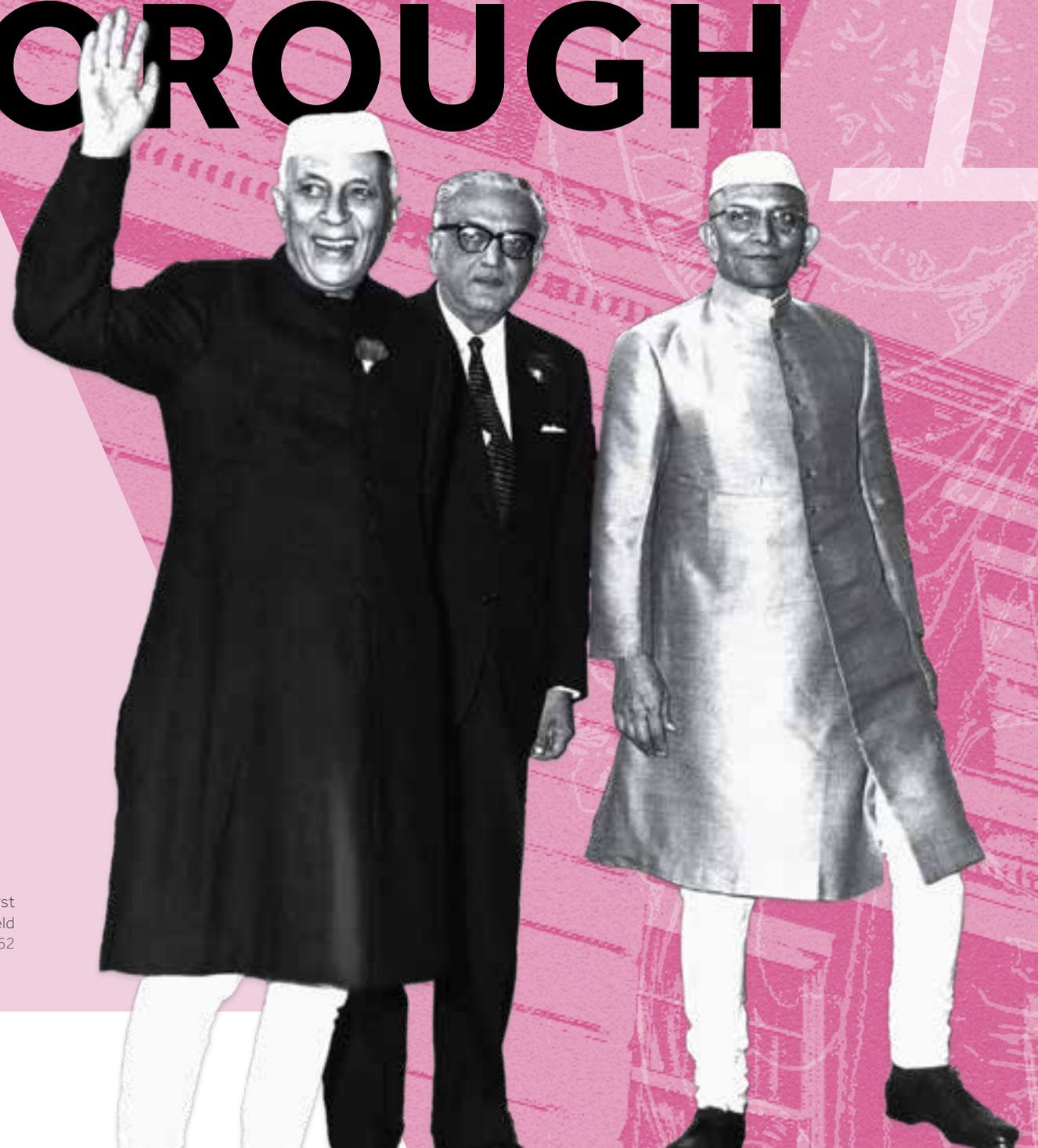
The Commonwealth comes to

MARLBOROUGH HOUSE

"In this world which is today sick and which has not recovered from so many wounds... it is necessary that we touch upon the world's problems, not with passion and prejudice... but in a friendly way and with a touch of healing"

Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, on the value of the Commonwealth, 1949

Jawaharlal Nehru, arriving for the first Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meeting to be held at Marlborough House, 1962



What is Marlborough House?

The building owes its existence to Sarah Churchill, first Duchess of Marlborough. The idea of a town house was hers and it was she who secured a lease and the site from Queen Anne and chose Sir Christopher Wren as her architect.

The foundation stone was laid in 1709 by Sarah Churchill and the building was eventually finished in 1711.

Dukes and Duchesses of Marlborough continued to occupy Marlborough House for a further five generations. However, in 1816 the Crown bought back the lease and since then three dowager Queens, three Princes of Wales, the future Kings Edward VII, George V and Edward VIII, as well as Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, later King of the Belgians have called Marlborough House their home. In 1959, Queen Elizabeth II gave Marlborough House to the Commonwealth for use as its headquarters.



Commonwealth leaders and King George VI, following the Declaration of London, Buckingham Palace, 1949

What is the Commonwealth?

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and equal sovereign countries. It is home to 2.4 billion people and includes both advanced economies and developing nations. Thirty-one of its members are small states, many of which are island nations. The organisation's shared values and principles are inscribed in the Commonwealth Charter. Member countries are supported by a network of more than 80 intergovernmental, civil society, cultural and professional organisations.

The Modern Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is one of the world's oldest political association of states. Its roots go back to the British Empire when most countries were ruled directly or indirectly by the United Kingdom. Some of these countries became self-governing while retaining Britain's monarch as Head of State.

The modern Commonwealth came into being in 1949, prompted by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India. He wanted his country to become a republic yet remain a member of the Commonwealth. The Declaration of London ruled that Commonwealth membership did not depend on being part of the former British Empire but rather upon "a common allegiance to the Crown, which is also the symbol of their free association".

The Commonwealth comes to Marlborough House

After 1949, both Commonwealth membership and its intergovernmental work began to expand. In addition to Meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, Commonwealth meetings at the Ministerial level also took place. To support these events, the Queen gave the use of Marlborough House to the Commonwealth in 1959. A plaque commemorating this event can be seen in the hallway outside the Blenheim Saloon. Since then it has been the location for a number of Constitutional Conferences, multiple Heads of Government and Ministerial meetings, high level bi-lateral meetings of the Secretary-General and Commonwealth Day celebrations attended by the Queen.

Creating Countries

As the process of decolonisation gathered pace, Marlborough House also served as the location for a number of Constitutional Conferences. During the early 1960s, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta and The Gambia all secured their dates for independence and onward transition to full and equal membership of the Commonwealth in the same room at Marlborough House that would soon see the creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat itself.

Commonwealth leaders debate the need for a Commonwealth Secretariat

Gathering round the table in the long conference room in 1964, Commonwealth leaders discussed "The Commonwealth – the way ahead". Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), initially put forward the concept for a secretariat. Arguing that what now bonded members going forward was not historic ties to Britain, but a new obligation of mutual economic development amongst a group of independent and equal nations. Additionally, Eric Williams (Trinidad and Tobago) gave emphasis to the political role that such an organisation might perform, not only in terms of convening and servicing Commonwealth meetings in the mutual interest of all members, but also arguing that intra-Commonwealth discussion on shared issues could provide a means for promoting greater political cohesion.



The establishment of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965 emphasised the equality of all members, and gave final discouragement to the lingering sentiment that one member had a right to some predominance over others.'

Julius Nyerere, of Tanzania (here with Sir Seretse Khama, left, of Botswana)

Birth of the Commonwealth Secretariat

When Heads met a year later, again in the Conference Room of Marlborough House, they gave solid structure to their earlier verbal commitments, and so both the Commonwealth Secretariat and the role of the Secretary-General were born. In constructing the Memorandum of Understanding, leaders asserted that "consultation is the life blood of the Commonwealth association" and that the Secretariat should operate as "a visible symbol of the spirit of co-operation that animates the Commonwealth". These remain two of the Commonwealth's enduring features.

In a wider context, the creation of United Nations organisations formed a new norm for international relations. In that light, the creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the role of the Commonwealth Secretary-General can be seen as the product of newly independent countries, collaborating to create a new pan-global international organisation designed and operated, specifically by and for their needs, within this new international framework.

A Commonwealth of **VALUES**

“When the Commonwealth took a firm and united stand against the system of apartheid, it added great impetus to the struggle to secure the international isolation of the apartheid regime. At the same time, and by this act, it defined itself as being more than a mere club whose members were brought together by accident.”

Nelson Mandela, Commonwealth
Heads of Government Meeting, 1995

Meeting of Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group
following their mission to apartheid South Africa, 1986



South Africa and the Commonwealth

Ending white minority rule in South Africa was the dominant challenge for the Commonwealth and for nearly 30 years a focus of the Secretariat's operations. Although South Africa was not an official member, there was a determined commitment across the Commonwealth family to see democratic majority rule established and to welcome them into the modern Commonwealth. A number of notable events in this undertaking took place at Marlborough House.

1985 – Private Dinner for Oliver Tambo and Desmond Tutu

On 4 October 1985 Secretary-General Shridath Ramphal (Guyana) hosted a private dinner at Marlborough House for Oliver Tambo, President of the Africa National Congress, and Desmond Tutu, the Bishop of Johannesburg. Also in attendance were leaders of industry, commerce, banking and media, anti-apartheid campaigners, and key Commonwealth diplomats. Held just prior to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting that year, the purpose of the dinner was to enable the guests to hear first-hand the experience of life under apartheid and the message that sanctions would send to the government of South Africa. The dinner was testament to the coordinating and convening role that the Commonwealth could play. It also brought two freedom fighters, the bishop and the ANC activist, together for the first time in many years.

1986 – Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons: Mission to South Africa

The 1985 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting did not reach a consensus on sanctions. Britain had remained reluctant to sign up to the full package; instead it agreed to the Commonwealth sending a delegation of eminent Commonwealth individuals to South Africa to bring about political dialogue and advance change. Co-chaired by the former Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Fraser, and the former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, the group met five times at Marlborough House before embarking on its visits to South Africa. Once there, they had unparalleled access to a range of groups across government, opposition, church, and civil society. Plus, they visited the ANC leader, Nelson Mandela, three times in Pollsmoor prison.



'None of us was prepared for the full reality of apartheid.'

Opening sentence of the Eminent Persons Group Report, 1986

Despite their activity, it became clear that the government of South Africa was not yet ready to negotiate. When the South African military bombed ANC bases in neighbouring countries the group ceased its mission. Upon return they reconvened again in Marlborough House and finished writing their report on the 7 June. Just five days later, the publication was launched at Marlborough House and available in the shops. It began 'None of us was prepared for the full reality of apartheid.'

The rest of its contents developed the 'negotiating concept' which set out preconditions for peace and for bringing parties round the table. It also called for sanctions. A copy of the report can be seen depicted in the portrait of Secretary-General Ramphal on display in Marlborough House.

1986 – Commonwealth Heads of Government Mini Summit

In August, seven Commonwealth heads of government met at Marlborough House, with full authority to act on behalf of all members. They received the report of the eminent persons and renewed discussions on a co-ordinated Commonwealth response to apartheid. Once again, however, the outcome pitted Britain against the rest of the Commonwealth. For many this was a fractured and frustrating moment in Commonwealth history, which was made prominent when 32 Commonwealth countries boycotted the Commonwealth Games that were held in Edinburgh that same year.

Yet the work of the group and their report was not without long term influence. In a recent oral history interview Pik Botha, the South African foreign minister, called it 'prophetic'. Adding "It embodied all the elements which formed the basis of the negotiations between the South African Government and the ANC four years later. Those negotiations led to the new era in South Africa's history," he stated.

1993 – Nelson Mandela visits Marlborough House

On 4 May 1993 Secretariat staff lined the rooms of Marlborough House to give Nelson Mandela a surprise hero's welcome during his visit to talk with Secretary-General Emeka Anyaoku (Nigeria). Mr Mandela was there to discuss the Commonwealth Observer Mission to South Africa and examine some additional training roles the Commonwealth might play in South Africa's transition.

Reflecting on the work of the Commonwealth Mandela has stated that "the commitment to democracy, principled and unflinching, has been the foundation of all the Commonwealth's achievements since 1990; it remains the basis of its potential for the future."

1994 – South Africa Re-Joins the Commonwealth

One of the first Cabinet decisions of the new Republic of South Africa was to re-join the Commonwealth. On 20 July 1994 a special service at Westminster Abbey marked the occasion. It was followed by a party in the garden of Marlborough House, attended by the Queen, the Prince of Wales, Deputy President Thabo Mbeki and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.



Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)

Maintaining and upholding the values of democracy, democratic processes and institutions, is a key part of the work of the Commonwealth. At their meeting in New Zealand in 1995, Commonwealth Heads endorsed the creation of a mechanism to monitor and take action against member countries who violated their shared democratic commitments – the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, or CMAG. They gave CMAG the power to suspend a member from the Commonwealth, a unique power amongst international organisations.

CMAG meets at least twice a year - once in New York following the UN General Assembly and also in Marlborough House in March. Extraordinary meetings are held as necessary.

The first formal meeting of the Group took place in the Conference Room at Marlborough House on 19th-20th December 1995. Foreign Ministers from eight countries met and elected Don McKinnon, then Deputy Prime

Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, as Vice Chair. He would later become the fourth Secretary-General and spend 13 years chairing CMAG. Afterwards, Mr McKinnon concluded:

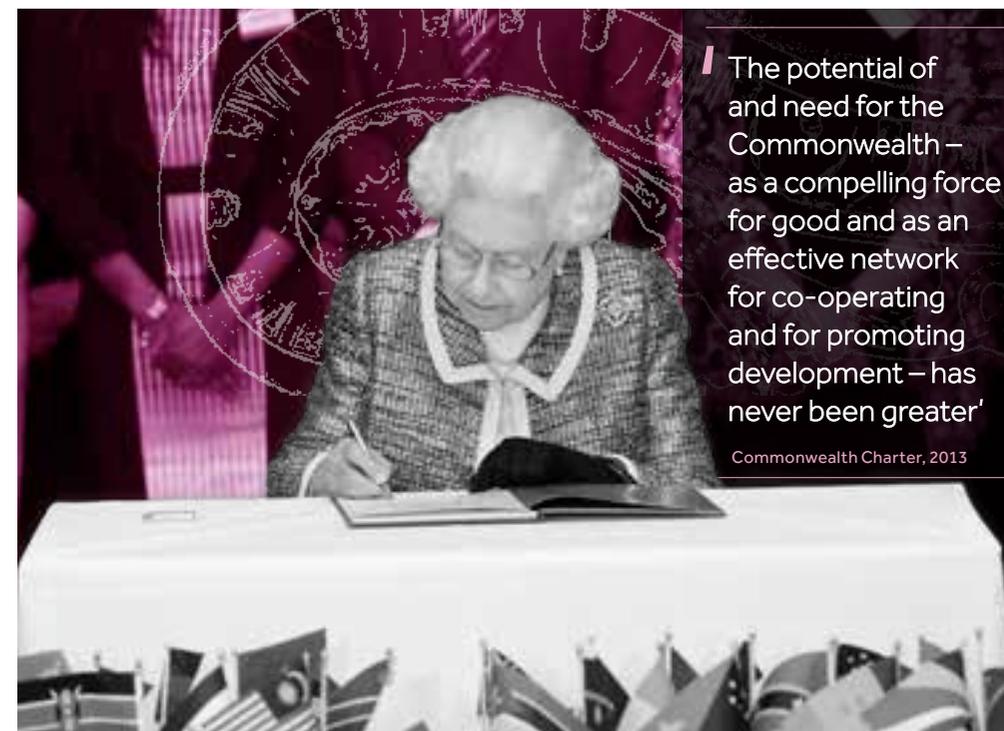
"I do believe that if more international organisations other than the Commonwealth, and more recently the Pacific Islands Forum, had similar mechanisms, this world would be a safer place. In the end, nations are like people – they want to be in the group, they want to be respected, they want to participate and they want to play by the rules. So yes, CMAG has made that possible." Since then over thirty meetings have been held in Marlborough House.

The Commonwealth Charter

While members may share a history or a language, the area of commonality that truly binds the Commonwealth is its shared values and principles. They were first set out in 1971 with the Singapore Declaration. Commonwealth commitments to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, were ultimately enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter, which was signed by Queen Elizabeth II in the Blenheim Saloon, Marlborough House, on Commonwealth Day, 11th March, 2013.

Australia's Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, emphasised that the Charter, belongs as much to the people of the Commonwealth as it does to their governments.

Secretary-General Kamallesh Sharma (India) described the Charter as a defining document for an inclusive and accountable Commonwealth, stating "We are now better placed to respond to the needs of our citizens".



The potential of and need for the Commonwealth – as a compelling force for good and as an effective network for co-operating and for promoting development – has never been greater'

Commonwealth Charter, 2013



CONSULTATION

Commonwealth Prime ministers see the Secretariat as being at the service of all Commonwealth Governments and as a visible symbol of the spirit of co-operation which animates the Commonwealth... Consultation is the lifeblood of the Commonwealth association.

Commonwealth Secretariat
Memorandum of Understanding
1965

is the **life-blood**
of the Commonwealth

Commonwealth Secretary-General
Patricia Scotland and former
United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan,
Commonwealth Day, Marlborough House, 2016



Despite the majority of Commonwealth meetings being held around the world, Marlborough House has played host to a number of high profile gatherings. Trade Ministers, who first met in Marlborough House in 1966, met again under its roof in 2016. The Commonwealth's "Tackling Corruption Together" conference brought together members from civil society, business and government leaders to discuss innovative ways to address corruption. Most recently, Marlborough House was used as the media centre during the 2018 heads of government meeting in London, and all Secretaries-General have routinely held high-level bilateral meetings here at Marlborough House.

Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meetings

At the highest level and with the longest tradition of meeting, sits the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meeting. Prior to 1971 most of these meetings were held in London. Marlborough House played host to five of them: 1962, 1964, 1965, 1966 and 1969. Following the creation of the Secretariat, the wider Commonwealth took ownership of hosting. Since then, Marlborough House has provided the location for two Commonwealth heads of government mini summits in 1986 and 2008. With their emphasis on informality and equality, heads of government

Delegates on the steps of Marlborough House, at the first Prime Ministers Meeting to be held at Marlborough House, 1962



Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former United Nations Secretary-General and first Secretary-General of La Francophonie, meets Commonwealth Secretary-General, Don McKinnon at Marlborough House, 2002.

meetings in the Commonwealth have a unique place in the international system. As the second Secretary-General, Shridath Ramphal, noted, "their special style and format are cherished because they allow full play to the Commonwealth spirit of friendship and understanding natural among the members of a family of nations which share a heritage of similar practices in education, law, business and administration, and a common respect for pluralism and democracy."

1962 This was the first meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers to be held in Marlborough House. It was also the first meeting attended by Jamaica, the first Caribbean country to join the Commonwealth. Top of the agenda was Britain's entry into the European Economic Community and its implications for Commonwealth countries.

1964 and 1965 Leaders discussed and created the role of Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Commonwealth Secretariat as an intergovernmental organisation and the Commonwealth Foundation to promote civil society organisations. Queen Elizabeth offered Marlborough House as the headquarters of both the Secretariat and the Foundation.

1966 The agenda focused on the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Rhodesia. Britain stated that independence required the establishment of majority rule. Collectively, Commonwealth countries agreed to continue sanctions against Rhodesia as well as to provide additional assistance to Zambia, whose economy was also impacted by the sanctions.

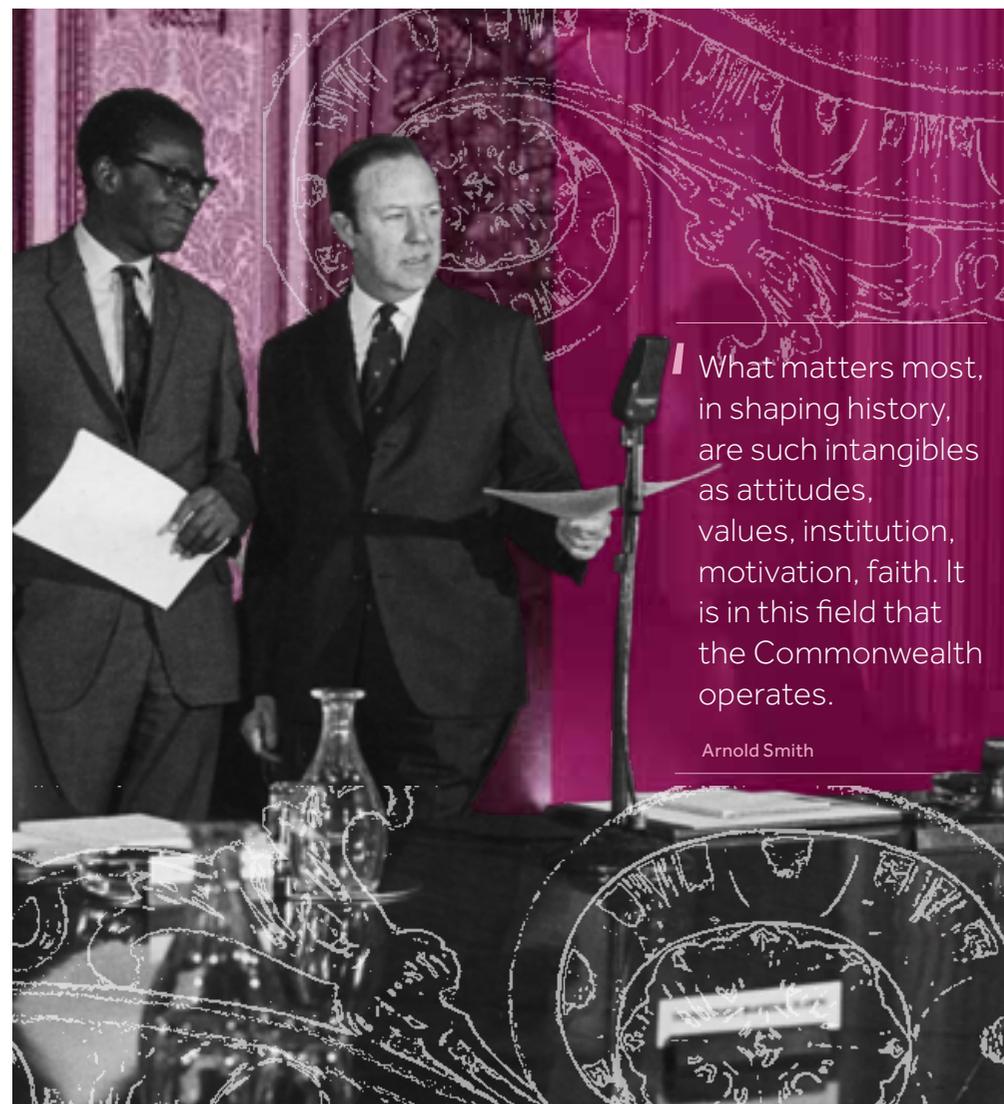
1969 Discussion on Rhodesia continued, along with discussion of the civil war in Nigeria. Leaders also reviewed their own arrangements for meeting and agreed that going forward their meetings should be held outside London and across the wider Commonwealth. This photo of the meeting shows Sir Shridath Ramphal, Guyanese Attorney General and Minister of State and subsequently the second Secretary-General, in attendance.

1986 Following the visit of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group to apartheid South Africa, a Mini Summit of seven Commonwealth leaders met at Marlborough House to consider their report and what actions could be taken against South Africa.

2008 Secretary-General Kamallesh Sharma convened a meeting of eleven heads of government, with Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom as Chair. They discussed reform of international institutions including United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions.



Prime Minister Forbes Burnham of Guyana, supported by future Commonwealth Secretary-General Shridath Ramphal, at the 1969 Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meeting, Marlborough House



What matters most, in shaping history, are such intangibles as attitudes, values, institution, motivation, faith. It is in this field that the Commonwealth operates.

Arnold Smith

Secretary General Arnold Smith (right) with Deputy Secretary-General A.L. Adu, in the Main Conference Room, Marlborough House

"These bodies need to reflect the interests of the whole membership, especially those small developing states, as championed by the Commonwealth, whose voice is often not heard in international councils. I expect the diversity of our membership and the strength of our influence to achieve global impact," said the Secretary-General.

COMMONWEALTH DAY 4

"I am glad that the new date for the observance of Commonwealth Day should have been introduced in my Silver Jubilee year. It will be an important reaffirmation of our faith in the Commonwealth if the peoples of such diverse countries and traditions are able to join, on the same day every year, in remembering the objectives we all share."

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II,
Head of Commonwealth,
Commonwealth Day 1977

Commonwealth Youth Award winners meeting
Queen Elizabeth II, Head of Commonwealth,
Commonwealth Day, Marlborough House, 2016





Māori cultural group Ngati Ranana, Commonwealth Day, Marlborough House, 2018

Simultaneous Observance

During the 1975 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, Canada proposed that a “simultaneously observed Commonwealth Day would focus attention upon the association and its contribution to a harmonious global environment.” The date for Commonwealth Day was settled at the Senior Officials Meeting in Canberra the following year. With a focus on reaching young people, the second Monday in March was selected as a date when all Commonwealth children were in school. So 1977 marked the first simultaneous observance of Commonwealth Day across all the Commonwealth.

Over the past 30 years the day and its accompanying theme have been an opportunity to learn and explore both the history of the organisation as well as current concerns that are common to all. Recent themes have included



Footballer Nwankwo Kanu and former Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma, Commonwealth Day, Marlborough House, 2010



Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Bob Geldof at 2004 Commonwealth Day, 'Building a Commonwealth of Freedom'

2019: 'A Connected Commonwealth',
2018: 'Towards a Common Future', 2017:
'A Peace-Building Commonwealth'

In London, Commonwealth Day is celebrated by a multi-faith service at Westminster Abbey, and an evening reception hosted by the Secretary-General held at Marlborough House.

Flying the

FLAG

“You will find in due course that you will need a flag and a symbol. When you do, don’t ask heads of government to approve a design. We have enough to divide us, and problems enough on which we must think out an agreed solution. Decide what you can do for yourself, and do it.”

Milton Obote, President of Uganda
to first Commonwealth Secretary-General
Arnold Smith, 1965

5



Logo Design

When the Commonwealth Secretariat was established in 1965, Milton Obote, the President of Uganda, had this advice for Arnold Smith, the first Secretary-General: "you will find in due course that you will need a flag and a symbol. When you do, don't ask heads of government to approve a design. We have enough to divide us, and problems enough on which we must think out an agreed solution. Decide what you can do for yourself, and do it."

However, it wasn't until 1973 that a logo was created by the Gemini News Service. It was first used that year at the heads of government meeting in Ottawa, Canada.

The logo has undergone a couple of revisions since then. The rays were changed to spears in 1989 and the globe was tilted to 23.5-degree angle, the exact axis of planet Earth, in 2013. A popular misconception is that the radiating spears represent the number of member countries. In fact, they represent the many facets of Commonwealth co-operation.



Flag raising ceremony in the gardens of Marlborough House, 2002



Over the House

The Commonwealth Flag was first flown above Marlborough House in 1976, when the Secretariat also decided to fly national flags on national days. Some elements of the British press were reluctant to embrace this change. An article in the Daily Express declared 'Commonwealth officials have delivered tradition another kick in the teeth'. It seems the Palace was rather more philosophical, taking the line that 'we don't object to change, provided that it's sensible'.

In the Garden

The flagpoles in Marlborough House gardens were erected in 2002, and this proposal also met with opposition. The then Secretary-General, Don McKinnon, proposed to fly the flag of every Commonwealth country in the garden to give headquarters a Commonwealth feel. No less than half a dozen local organisations were against the flags, insisting that Marlborough House was a Royal Palace and only a Royal Palace. Despite this opposition, the Palace granted permission, and on 30 May 2002, legendary cricketer Gary Sobers (Barbados), sprinter Darren Campbell (UK), and of course staff of the Secretariat attended a ceremony to raise the flags. They run in alphabetical order from west to east, just inside the brick wall on Pall Mall.

Previous **Commonwealth**

SECRETARIES- GENERAL

"The Secretary-General is probably the contemporary Commonwealth's major resource. If in co-operation with member governments [s]he can make the Commonwealth in some sense a resource for the world, yet another chapter in the evolution of this strange association will have been written."

Margaret Doxey, 1979



Arnold Smith (Canada) 1965 – 1975

Artist: Brenda Bury

The first Commonwealth Secretary-General, Smith firmly established the Commonwealth as a values based organisation with the Singapore Declaration of Principles and he also expanded its role into that of technical assistance via the creation of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) and the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP).

“We all need to learn to share a planet and we believe that using the Commonwealth can help”

Sir Shridath Ramphal (Guyana) 1975 – 1990

Artist: Barrington Watson

A commitment to ending white minority rule in Southern Africa was core to Ramphal's time in office. Secretariat work involved assisting Zimbabwe to independence, and fighting apartheid in South Africa most notably via the visit of the Eminent Persons Group. Ramphal also sat on the Brandt Commission, which examined economic difference between North and South.

“We cannot negotiate for the world, but we can help the world to negotiate”

Chief Emeka Anyaoku (Nigeria) 1990 – 2000

Artist: Chinwe Chukwuogo-Roy

The Commonwealth election monitoring programme was introduced under Anyaoku, and the associations commitments to upholding democracy were further advanced with the creation of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) which has the power to suspend members found to be in violation of the Commonwealths shared principles.

“The challenge is to ensure that true democracy enshrined in accountable and transparent governments becomes a common inheritance not just within the Commonwealth but beyond it.”



Sir Don McKinnon (New Zealand) 2000 – 2008

Artist: Richard McWhennell

"Good Offices" as a Commonwealth approach in addressing political tensions came to the fore, under McKinnon. Employed either in his own personal capacity, or with the appointment of Special Envoys, the quiet diplomacy approach became firmly embedded within the Secretariat way of working. Equally McKinnon sought out ways of enabling greater interaction between the official and civil society, of which the Latimer House Principles was a notable product.

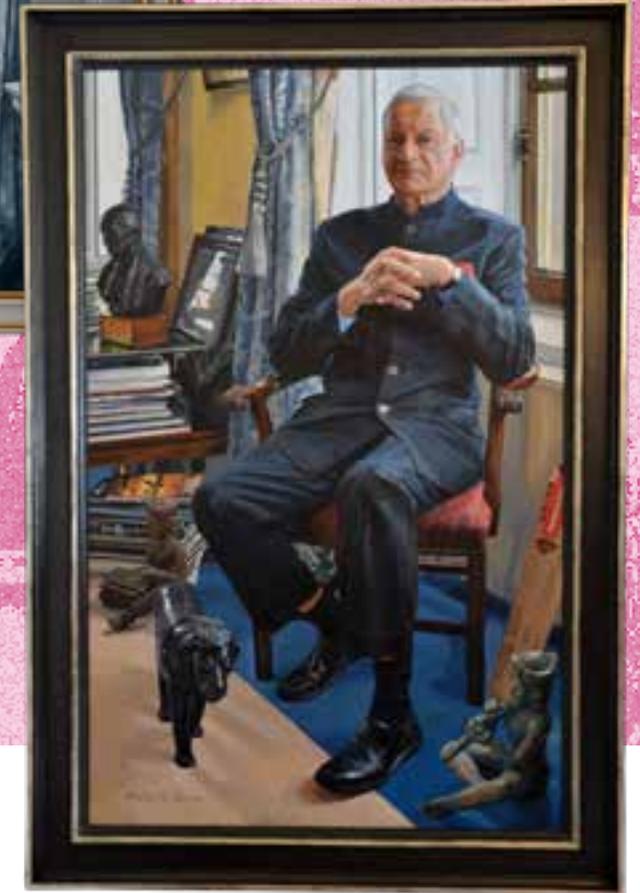
"The Commonwealth makes the space for 53 countries to stand together and share. It is the embodiment of multilateralism, of pluralism, and of genuine respect and understanding across the many divides that separate people in our troubled world. "

Kamalesh Sharma (India) 2008 – 2016

Artist: Alastair Adams

An enhanced Commonwealth engagement with other international fora was developed under Sharma, most notably at the G20. Here he called for the voices of Commonwealth members present to speak for those Commonwealth countries absent. It was also under Sharma that the Commonwealth Charter was signed by the Queen. The Charter brought together all of the Commonwealths values and principles into one unifying document.

"It is a great global good. If the Commonwealth can agree on something important, it is already a prototype of a global idea."



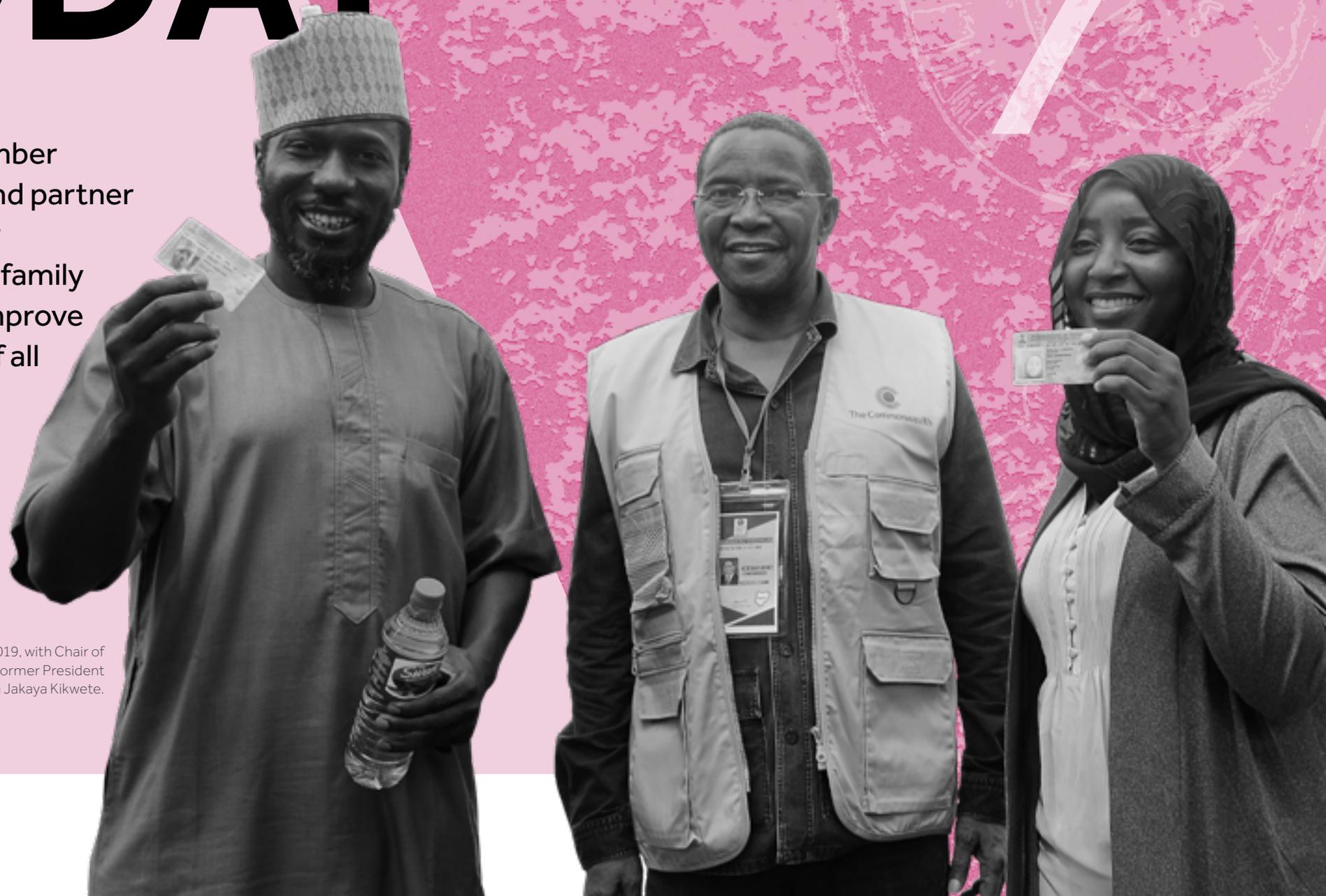
Commonwealth

TODAY

Our Mission:

We support member governments, and partner with the broader Commonwealth family and others, to improve the well-being of all Commonwealth citizens and to advance their shared interests globally.

Voters at the Nigeria Elections 2019, with Chair of Commonwealth Observer Group, Former President of the United Republic of Tanzania Jakaya Kikwete.



The Commonwealth has since grown in both size and capacity, acting as a voice for small and vulnerable states in the global arena and a champion for young people. It works to strengthen governance, build inclusive institutions and promote justice and human rights – values enshrined in the Charter of the Commonwealth signed in 2013.

Today, Marlborough House serves as the nucleus of the Commonwealth's extensive portfolio of work programmes, divided into three divisions focusing on key thematic areas: (i) Governance and Peace; (ii) Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources; and (iii) Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development. The Commonwealth provides technical support to governments and decision-makers to help deliver policies, strategies, and draw up legislation to achieve national goals. It also provides systems, software and research for managing resources.

The Commonwealth's convening power means it can bring together its diverse membership to amplify their voice and achieve collective action on global challenges. Each year, numerous ministerial meetings take place, both in Commonwealth countries and at the Commonwealth headquarters at Marlborough House in London. Leaders also gather biennially for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) to outline priorities for the group. These gatherings serve to reinforce the cohesiveness of the group as it addresses shared challenges of the 21st century, including rising inequality, climate change, and security issues.



Commonwealth Secretariat

Marlborough House, Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX
United Kingdom

thecommonwealth.org



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