

Order! Order!

The Official Journal of the Association of Former Members of Parliament



SPRING 2024



ON THE TRAIL OF THE POST OFFICE SCANDAL

ALSO IN THIS EDITION...



2 ALF DUBS
Guest speaker at our April meeting



4 MICHAEL DOBBS
On 25 years of failure in UK foreign policy



9 TANIA MATHIAS
How to cope with losing your seat



16 PETER HEATON-JONES
The absence of ego in Norman Fowler's diary



James Arbuthnot recalls his battle to get justice for sub-postmasters pp5-7





ASSOCIATION NEWS

Laura Blake

FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 25th April 2024 4pm
SPRING ALL MEMBER MEETING
House of Lords Committee Room 1



We are delighted that **Lord Dubs** has agreed to be our guest speaker. Lord Dubs is a Labour politician and leading refugee rights advocate. He was MP for Battersea 1979–1987, during which time he served for four years as a shadow Home Office Minister.

After leaving the Commons in 1987, he became the Director of the Refugee Council and was appointed as a Labour life peer in 1994.

In 1997, after Labour’s election victory, he was appointed as a Minister in Northern Ireland where he served until the establishment of a new devolved administration following the Good Friday Agreement.

In 2016, he sponsored an amendment (which later became known as the “Dubs Amendment”) to the Immigration Act 2016, to offer some unaccompanied refugee children stranded in camps in Europe safe passage to Britain, having himself arrived in Britain in 1939 as a six-year-old refugee fleeing the Nazis in Czechoslovakia.

He currently serves on the British

Irish Parliamentary Assembly and on the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly. He continues to campaign on human rights and specifically on behalf of refugees.

Monday 15th July 2024 4pm
ALL MEMBERS’ MEETING

We look forward to hearing from our guest speaker, **Baroness Butler-Sloss**.

Baroness Butler-Sloss was called to the Bar in 1955 from the Inner Temple. She was appointed a Registrar at the Principal Registry of the Family Division. In 1979 she became the fourth woman to be appointed a High Court judge. In 1988, she became the first woman appointed as a Lord Justice of Appeal. In 1999, she became President of the Family Division of the High Court of Justice, the first woman to hold this position and the highest-ranking woman judge in the United Kingdom

In 2006 until June 2007, she chaired the inquests into the deaths of Diana, Princess of Wales, and Dodi Fayed.

Monday 15th July 2024 6–8pm
SUMMER RECEPTION

State Apartments, Speakers’ House

Our Patron, **Mr Speaker**, has again kindly agreed for us to hold our Summer reception in the State Apartments in Speakers House.

As usual there will be a cover charge to attend this event of £40 per head.

Please complete the form below and send it to me either by post or email. Upon receipt of payment I will forward the official invitation for the event.

Partners are welcome, but no guests please.

WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

DAVE ANDERSON



Dave was MP for Blaydon from 2005 to 2017. He served as Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland from 2016 to 2017. He was on the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee from 2005 onward, having had a long standing interest in the peace process in Northern Ireland. He was also a member of the House of Commons Procedure Committee for a year. In 2006 he was appointed as the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Education and Skills Minister and has served as opposition whip twice.

Prior to his Parliamentary career he was a coal miner for 20 years and then became a care worker until he entered Parliament. Dave has been a trade union activist and was president of Unison from 2004 to 2004.

SAM GYIMAH

Sam was the MP for East Surrey from 2010 to 2019.

Between 2014 and 2018, Sam served as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, David Cameron, and

I would like to attend the Annual Summer Reception on Monday 15th July 2024 6–8pm

NAME _____

I would like to bring my partner (NAME) _____

Please pay “The Association of Former MPs” Barclays Bank, Account No. 50281506 Sort code 20-47-39.

Reference: “Summer” the sum of £40 per head

Please return the form either by email (Blakelb@parliament.uk) or post to me Laura Blake, Association of Former MPs, House of Commons, Room G13, 1 Parliament Street, LONDON, SW1A 2NE



A NOTE FROM THE SCOTTISH BRANCH

Gordon Banks



was a government whip. He was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Childcare and Education from 2014 to 2016. He was the Minister for Universities,

Science, Research and Innovation from January 2018 to November 2018.

Before entering politics Sam began his career in Investment Banking with Goldman Sachs where he still serves on the board and is an adviser to private equity and venture capital investors. Sam was an angel investor in early-stage businesses and currently hosts a podcast called Geopolitics of Business.

He also sits on the boards of Cambridge University Endowment Trust and Oxford University Innovation.

ALISON RAYNSFORD



Following a role in Roy Hattersley's office from 1987–1992, Alison moved to work for Nick Raynsford advising him through his Shadow Ministerial roles and later his Ministerial role.

In 2005 she stood for the new seat of Plymouth Moor View. Alison won the election and was the Labour MP for Plymouth Devonport from 2005 to 2010.

From 2007 to 2008 she served as a Government Whip attached to the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. She chaired the South West Regional Select Committee between 2009 and 2010 and sat on the Local Government Select Committee and the Regulatory Reform Select Committee between 2005 and 2007. Alison served on Select Committees for Defence, Local Government and Regulatory Reform. Between 2006 and 2007, and again from 2008 to 2009, she was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Geoff Hoon.

In 2010 Alison became Shadow Housing Minister and in 2011–15 was Shadow Defence Procurement Minister.

After losing the Plymouth Moor View seat in 2015 Alison worked as a consultant, and in MP offices troubleshooting, mentoring and helping to set up offices for new MPs.

In 2023 Alison stood for election to Plymouth City Council and was elected as the Labour and Cooperative Councillor for the St Peter and the Waterfront ward.

WELL, HOPEFULLY we can say that the worst of winter is behind us now and we can look forward to some longer and brighter days, even in Scotland!



The Scottish branch had planned for Executive and all member meetings to be held on the 25th of January 2024 in Queen Elizabeth House, Edinburgh where former Labour leader in the Scottish Parliament, Kezia Dugdale, who is now Professor and Director of the John Smith Centre in Glasgow University was due to address us.

Sadly, due to reduced numbers planning to attend and further last minute call offs for health reasons these events had to be cancelled.

However, Kez, was undaunted and agreed to attend a future meeting which was held on 21st March 2024 in Queen Elizabeth House, Edinburgh- (many thanks to Alanna Philbin at Queen Elizabeth House and the Secretary of State for Scotland for facilitating our attendance).

Although attendance was smaller than planned it was a good event and Kez displayed passion for her own work and the role of the John Smith Centre and its contribution to, and achievements within, political life in Scotland and the UK.

We remain indebted to our speakers who give up their time to meet with us and use their knowledge and experience to inform our opinions and thinking.

The branch will hopefully be meeting again in late June (pre general election?) and we are currently attempting to secure a speaker with topical experience on general election campaigns.

As usual should branch members have any suggestions regarding possible speakers or potential new members, I would welcome you contacting me on Gordon.banks@cartmore.com. Securing speakers is always a challenge so any forward suggestions or contacts are always appreciated.

Obviously, we are moving towards a General Election, which will result in some churn of current Members of Parliament so if you have contact with any current members, or individuals you believe are standing down, it would be useful if you could make them aware of the UK Association and the Scottish branch, so that they may consider joining us at some point in the future.

Gordon.banks@cartmore.com



Michael Dobbs speaking at December's all members' meeting

THE MADNESS THAT DRIVES GREAT LEADERS

MICHAEL DOBBS ON THATCHER, NIXON AND HOW THE UK FOREIGN POLICY IS A 25 YEARS STRING OF BLUNDERS

Andy McSmith

Over the past quarter of a century, almost everything the British government has done in its relations to the world outside has been wrong. And not just slightly wrong – hopelessly wrong, according to the Tory peer, Michael Dobbs.

In future, he added, we might do better sorting ourselves out rather than trying to force our version of democracy on others. There may not be any obvious figure in the current political landscape capable of the kind of visionary leadership the task requires, the British political system has a way of finding such people, he said.

But they come with a downside: the psychological characteristics that make them outstanding are often the cause of their downfall.

Lord Dobbs, who was guest speaker at the Association's December meeting, in the House of Lords, was a postgraduate student in the USA during the fall of Richard Nixon, who, he believes could have been remembered as a great President.

"Every single day for 18 months I watched Watergate develop and I watched the most powerful man on the planet at that time, Richard Nixon, destroy himself. He was responsible for world changing events, but all he is remembered for is that," he said.

"It made me wonder what makes leaders great, and in his case I think there was a darkness in Richard Nixon. He was driven by a ghost sitting on his shoulder telling him all the time 'You're not good enough'. I think that's one of the driving forces that made him President, and then actually destroyed him."

There was also Winston Churchill, whom Lord Dobbs described as "a great, great man – and what made him great was his struggle with his internal flaws. The ghost of his father on his shoulder, even after all the great things he had achieved, whispering in his ear: 'You're not up to it'."

Also, there was Margaret Thatcher. Michael Dobbs worked as her adviser when she was leader of the opposition, and rose to be her Chief of Staff, but his time in that job hit an unhappy climax during the general election of 1987, on 'wobble Thursday', the day – exactly a week before polling day – when Margaret Thatcher was convinced that the Conservative election campaign was heading for disaster.

"Wobble Thursday was a moment of madness, where it seemed that she had completely lost her grip on the situation. It was desperately upsetting," he said.

We cannot impose democracy and our gentle way of doing things on others

"She concluded that she was going to lose it, and it was my fault. I got the full force of that. It was a small meeting, about five or six Cabinet members and me. She was in the most terrible, terrible temper. She humiliated me in front of her colleagues, because she couldn't attack a Cabinet minister.

"As we walked out of the room, that wise old man Willie Whitelaw said 'There is a woman who will never fight another election'. He could see that great woman, driven by things within her – her unhappiness, dissatisfaction, her childhood, the fact that she had always been treated as a woman who was never going to make anything of herself – was destroying herself."

After that bruising experience, Michael Dobbs took a break in Gozo, where, under a Mediterranean sun, he conceived an idea for the novel, *House of Cards*, which was dramatised by the BBC in 1990, and then by Netflix, who transferred the action to Washington. Currently, he is taking a doctorate in world affairs, a subject he surveys with considerable dissatisfaction.

He said: "Forgive me, but I think British foreign policy for the last 25 years, by and large, with one or two great exceptions, has been hopeless. We have got so many things not only wrong, but really badly wrong – Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya.

"We need to have a very thorough reappraisal of what our foreign policy stands for. As a middle-ranking power, what is going to be our role over the next 15 years? And sadly, I don't see much sign of that at present. We have been following on, almost blindly, behind the US.

"We cannot impose democracy and our gentle way of doing things on others. Before we go to sort out everybody else, I think it's about time we really started sorting out ourselves."

"We have a habit of finding people who will rise to the challenge. I hope over the next few years we will find somebody who will rise to it."



THE MP, THE POSTMISTRESS, AND TRUTH OVER THE HORIZON

MY PURSUIT OF THE POST OFFICE SCANDAL

By James Arbuthnot

[L-R] Monica Dolan as Jo Hamilton, Julie Hesmondhalgh as Suzanne Sercombe (wife of Alan Bates), Alex Jennings as James Arbuthnot and Toby Jones as Alan Bates, from the ITV drama *Mr Bates vs the Post Office*



During a coffee morning, in 2009, I was told an extraordinary story by a local councillor, about a sub postmistress, Jo Hamilton, who was in court, in Winchester, pleading guilty to a charge of false accounting, when the entire village had turned out in her support. This was my first inkling of what we now know as the great Post Office scandal.

The next was a letter from a constituent named David Bristow, the sub postmaster in Odiham, which is about three miles from Jo Hamilton's village. Like Jo Hamilton, he was being told that the Post Office's new computer system, Horizon, had uncovered a huge discrepancy in his accounts, and that he owed the Post Office thousands of pounds.

I met them both in Jo Hamilton's post office/café, but concluded that there was not much I could do, at this stage, apart from writing to the Secretary of State, Peter Mandelson, who passed the matter to the post office minister, Pat McFadden, who replied that this was an operational matter for the Post Office.

All guilty?

Then I heard that another MP, David Jones, also had a constituent – the now famous Alan Bates – who had fallen foul of the Horizon system. David and I fixed a meeting with officials from the Post Office, and were firmly told that Horizon

was 'completely robust', that no other sub postmasters had had problems with it, and that these three – Jo Hamilton, David Bristow and Alan Bates – were guilty of what they had been accused of. I came away feeling very uneasy, but as far as David or I could see, we were at a dead end.

About 18 months later, I heard that Odiham village was up in arms over a new threat to their post office, because David Bristow's successor had been removed, after Horizon had found a discrepancy in his accounts.

This was too much of a coincidence. If I was to believe what the Post Office had told me, there were four sub postmasters in the entire country having this problem with Horizon, and three out of the four were in my constituency. So, I wrote to every MP to see if they knew of other cases, and quickly discovered that there were many more, though we could not yet know how many. We formed a core group of six or seven MPs who were troubled by this problem, including Oliver Letwin

[we] were firmly told that Horizon was 'completely robust'

and Andrew Tyrie – but not David Jones, who had to recuse himself when he was appointed to the Cabinet.

'I can't believe you're crooks!'

In February 2012, we had a meeting in Parliament with about 30 sub postmasters, and their solicitors, Shoosmiths. I looked around the room, and told them: "I can't believe that you're a load of crooks. You wouldn't be coming to the House of Commons to complain about this, in these numbers, if there was nothing in it. I am going to pursue this with the Chairman of the Post Office."

That Chairman, recently appointed, was Alice Perkins, Jack Straw's wife, whom I knew from my time as Minister for Defence Procurement. Oliver Letwin and I arranged to meet her, and Paula Vennells, Managing Director of the



Kathy deWitt/Alamy Stock Photo

Post Office. They were adamant that the Horizon was 'robust'. I had also written to the Chief Executive, Moya Greene, who replied using that same word 'robust'. But they knew Alan Bates was organising a group of aggrieved former sub postmasters, and wanted a resolution.

The accountants

Paula Vennells suggested that the Post Office should bring in forensic accountants, which was exactly what we needed. Andrew Tyrie had already suggested it to the MPs, but any accountants we hired would not have had access to Horizon, and there was a problem of who would pay. Paula Vennells's offer got round both problems. She brought in two accountants, Ian Henderson and Ron Warmington, from the London firm, Second Sight. (In the TV drama, they are morphed into one character, called Bob).

Paula Vennells also agreed with me and other MPs that there should be a mediation scheme that allowed individual sub postmasters to take their grievances to the Post Office, and to Second Sight. That scheme was set up, with a retired judge, Sir Anthony Hooper, in the chair.

But this promising start came to nothing. In the end, Second Sight's involvement did not solve anything – not through any fault of theirs, and not for the reason that we originally feared. We, the MPs, had had our doubts about whether accountants hired and paid by

the Post Office could be trusted to act independently, but when we met them, we were impressed by their determination to hold a proper investigation. We introduced them to Alan Bates, who was also initially suspicious, and brought along his own forensic accountant, Kay Linnell.

At first, it went slowly, but well. Second Sight produced an interim report, in which they said that they could not find any systemic issues that would affect every post office, at that stage, but that there were issues with software and bugs that had caused real problems in about 74 sub post offices. The Post Office treated this report as a clean bill of health for Horizon, despite the caveats.

Jo Hamilton's file

Second Sight was also allowed to study Jo Hamilton's file. There, they saw that the Post Office had accused her of theft, but dropped the charge when she agreed to plead guilty to false accounting, but also discovered that there was no evidence to support the charge of theft. It was wholly improper to use the threat of a charge for which there was no evidence to extract a guilty plea to an offence for which there was evidence. Second Sight warned that this could amount to abuse of public office.

That contributed to a rapid deterioration of the relationship between the Post Office and the accountants they had themselves brought in to examine the problems. Second Sight was told that

they would not be allowed access to any more files, because they were accountants, not lawyers, so weren't appropriately qualified. This was nonsense, and not what the MPs had agreed to.

We had been told at the outset there would not be any 'no-go' areas, but now the Post Office ruled that the mediation scheme was to be open only to sub postmasters who had not pleaded guilty or been convicted of a criminal offence. So, Jo Hamilton, for instance, was not going to be allowed to go before Sir Anthony Hooper to ask why it was that a loss suddenly appeared when she was putting figures into the Horizon system, and as she was on the phone to the helpline, the loss doubled, in front of her eyes.

In fact, 90 per cent of the cases that MPs wanted to bring to the mediation scheme were being excluded. And even on those cases that qualified there was no feedback, because the Post Office insisted that the scheme was confidential, and giving feedback would threaten its integrity.

The show down

The build-up of frustration among MPs, and Second Sight, came to a final bust up at a meeting in November 2014, with Paula Vennells, Angela van den Bogerd, who was handling complaints, and Chris Aujard, the Post Office's new general counsel. I told them: "You are trying to exclude Jo Hamilton from the mediation

scheme. She was the entire reason I came in. What on earth makes you think I would agree to a scheme such as this, if my constituent is excluded from it?"

They had no answer to that. We, the MPs, said we were breaking off negotiations with the Post Office.

Then for the first time in my 28 years in Parliament, I arranged an adjournment debate, held on 17 December 2014, to which numerous MPs contributed, including Andrew Bridgen, who raised the case of his constituent, Michael Rudkin, who had visited Fujitsu headquarters and had seen a roomful of technical wizards who appeared to be altering sub postmasters' accounts remotely, which was supposed to be impossible. Michael Rudkin was ushered out of the building, and the next day he was suspended from his post office and accused of being £40,000 adrift.

I stopped being an MP at the election in 2015, but meanwhile, somehow, Alan Bates managed to assemble 555 people to take the Post Office to court.

First two turning points

The first turning point in the entire saga came in 2019, when Mr Justice Fraser delivered an absolutely stonking judgement against the Post Office, finding that the Horizon was not at all 'robust', that the contract imposed on sub postmasters was unfair, because it made them liable for apparent losses, whether or not they had done anything wrong, and that remote access to postmasters' accounts was not only possible, but it had been happening. He also found that Post Office witnesses had sought to mislead him.

The Post Office agreed to pay £57 million compensation, but only about £12 million of that would actually go to sub postmasters. The rest would be swallowed up by the cost of litigation, but the sub postmasters had to accept what was on offer, because they were running out of money.

The second turning point was when Kate Osborne MP asked Boris Johnson during Prime Minister's Questions for a public inquiry into the post office scandal, and – much to the surprise, no doubt, of his officials – Boris Johnson said yes. Boris did the right thing, by mistake.

Sixty postmasters had died without receiving full compensation; some went to prison, some committed suicide. Families were broken up. There were a number of shocking divorces,

There were a number of shocking divorces, bankruptcies, and mental health problems

bankruptcies, and mental health problems. Yet all of this was still under the radar of the British public.

The drama

Then came the third turning point, when the ITV drama, *Mr Bates vs the Post Office*, was broadcast earlier this year. It was, by the way, very strange to see myself being portrayed in a drama: my family say that the actor, Alex Jennings, caught my mannerisms perfectly. Far more importantly, the drama caught the attention of a shocked public. The outcry brought the scandal to the full attention of Rishi Sunak, who agreed that all the criminal convictions that relied on the accuracy of Horizon would have to be quashed. About 100 already had been, but the court system simply could not cope with the 700 to 900 still outstanding, which was why Parliament had to legislate.

I have been serving now for two years on the Horizon compensation board. I suspect that the total bill for compensation will come to £1 billion or more. Part will have to come from the Treasury – meaning you and me – because the profits made by the Post Office went into the public coffers, but I would say that a good 50 per cent should come from Fujitsu.

It makes me deeply angry and very upset that a British institution should have behaved like this towards people who had been pillars of their communities. They were the glue holding communities together. We need a network of community hubs across the country, but these good people were hounded and vilified.

It happened because the people in charge thought that they must make the scandal go away, or it would be an existential threat not only to the Horizon accounting system, in which they had invested nearly £100 million, but also to the Post Office itself. As it turns out, they may have been right. The Post Office may not survive the scandal. I am in two minds about whether it should.

Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom was MP for Wanstead and Woodfords, 1987–97, and for North East Hampshire, 1997–2015.



Political Incident No. 6

Slogans at election time are extremely important, particularly for a new candidate. They must unify your literature and grab the voter's attention. Rhyming or alliterating your name with your constituency name – a bit difficult if you are standing in East Kilbride, Strathaven & Lesmahagow – does nicely. Following my selection at Barking in 1983 I was told that the slogan, "A breath of air for Barking", had already been decided. Instantly labelled a windbag I wasn't happy, but just weeks before the General Election the printers had already been primed.

At Walthamstow I was selected a year before the 1987 election, and I immediately asked for a meeting of the executive council to discuss and decide the slogan. My name rhymed with Walthamstow, and soon someone suggested "Let's go with Hugo". Great – punchy, memorable, fitted on leaflets etc. There were other suggestions, but in the end the general consensus was with "Let's go with Hugo".

But Jimmy Terrett, chairman of the Conservative Club, continued to dissent. "Nah nah" he kept saying in his lovely Essex voice. "Let's gow wiv Yugow? Nah, nah. Got now ring abahd it. We need somefink the vovters will remember and fink of." It was getting late, everyone was growing tired. The President turned to Jimmy and said "You don't want Let's go with Hugo, so what do you suggest?" Jimmy said "Nah nah, Let's gow wiv Yugow? Nah, nah. Yeh, I gotta suggestion, ah's abaht... ah's abaht... Let's come wiv Summerson"?

There was a silent pause, then a snigger and a voice said "I'll vote for that", followed by a roar of laughter. The President said "Jimmy mate, you're outvoted, we'll go for Let's go with Hugo." Many important decisions are taken in this sort of way and illuminate the value of democracy.

Hugo Summerson was MP for Walthamstow, 1987–1992. Between 1982 and 1994, he stood three times as a Council candidate, and three times as a Parliamentary candidate.

BRINGING MINDFULNESS TO PARLIAMENT

Chris Ruane

My first introduction to meditation was as a primary schoolteacher in 1987. The school was being inspected, and the staff members were feeling very anxious.

The principal invited the school nurse to teach the staff meditation, using techniques of watching the breath and muscle relaxation. I gained immediate benefit from these exercises and started to use them with the 9-year-old pupils in my class.

Around 2007, I learned more about mindfulness when I helped my daughter with her studies on comparative religion, including Buddhism. I became interested in meditation and mindfulness and started to read more books on these topics and listened to podcasts on the train journey to and from Parliament. In 2012, I conceived the idea to introduce mindfulness to the U.K Parliament.

Why Mindfulness?

There is growing interest in the benefits of mindfulness in helping people with depression, and having benefitted from practicing mindfulness for six years, I was eager to see these benefits translated into public policy. I sponsored my first debate on mindfulness in Parliament in December 2012. From the answers to the questions I raised, I discovered much information that caused me significant concern. For example, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), "By 2030, depression will be the leading cause of disease burden globally". In England alone, the number of prescriptions for antidepressants rose from nine million in 1991 to 53 million in 2013, then to approximately 71 million in 2019.

This information spurred me on to help to reduce the impact of depression and mental ill health and promote well-being. In June 2012, I approached Richard Layard, the author of *Happiness: Lessons From a New Science* to help establish a mindfulness practice group in Parliament. He enlisted Mark Williams and Chris Cullen from the Oxford Mindfulness Centre (OMC) to help with the establishment and running of the mindfulness course, which, we agreed, should transcend party lines and politics. We invited 650 MPs and 750 Peers from the House of Lords to the first session. I also engaged at a personal level with MPs whom I knew to be struggling, emphasising the personal flourishing

and improved executive functioning that mindfulness could bring.

Confidentiality

One of the challenges that we encountered was the issue of confidentiality. Initially, there was a degree of scepticism and fear of ridicule among some of the MPs. They agreed to attend the mindfulness course privately. Though confidentiality is still guaranteed currently, the fear of stigmatisation has lessened in recent years, especially with new practitioners. I also emphasised that mindfulness is a gentle, non-stigmatising pathway into the issues of mental health and human flourishing.

In January 2013, we had a full class of 22 participants. Some ministers (both in government and opposition) expressed interest in exploring the benefits of mindfulness for their departments or their parties. With the success of the mindfulness course, I was keen to shape the informal sessions into a more structured policy-development programme. It was at this point that Jon Kabat-Zinn, a keynote speaker at the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice Conference in 2013, offered me some timely advice. He said, "Slow down, Chris. This is a thousand-year project." I thought, "Oh no, I will be 1,054 when it finishes!" His advice turned out to be judicious.

He also gave me this advice: "Chris work on your parachute before you need to open it" which I will return to at the end.

I continued as an informal group for another year until approximately 90 parliamentarians had completed the mindfulness course and developed their own practices.

The U.K. Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group

With the establishment of a thriving practice group and the support of the Mindfulness Initiative, we were able to move forward with our plans to set up the MAPPG in May 2014 with co-chairs from the three main political parties. The stated objectives of the MAPPG are as follows:

To review research evidence, current best practice, extent and success of implementa-



Former MP Chris Ruane presenting a copy of his paper, *Be The Change You Want To See*, to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, for the House of Commons Library

tion, and potential developments in the application of mindfulness within a range of policy areas, and to develop policy recommendations for government based on these findings.

The MAPPG continues to run mindfulness courses in Parliament today and has trained 340 parliamentarians and 800 members of their staff.

A colleague who worked for many years in the whip's office maintained that, after 20 years in Parliament, MPs "start to go mad." Luckily for me, I got out in my 20th year! And by my last year, after many years of practising mindfulness, even the Speaker of the House of Commons commented on the change in my conduct: "The honourable gentleman is obviously a beneficiary of mindfulness himself. He seems a very calm and phlegmatic fellow these days, which wasn't always the case in the past"

A few months after losing my seat in the 2015 election. Jon Kabat Zinn emailed me to ask how I was coping. I said I'd worked on my parachute, I opened it and it worked.

Many of our former colleagues are leaving parliament voluntarily or involuntarily this year. I would urge them to work on their parachute.

If any former member is interested about learning more about mindfulness and perhaps practicing together please contact Chris on ruanec@hotmail.com.

Chris Ruane was MP for the Vale of Clwyd, 1997–2019.

LOSING YOUR SEAT

Dr Tania Mathias



It's election year, and elections mean casualties. There will be MPs who entered the campaign hoping to retain their seats, who find out during the count that they are out of a job. Dr Tania Mathias, an NHS doctor and trained therapeutic counsellor, who was MP for Twickenham in 2015–2017, gives advice on handling unexpected defeat.

OK. Number one. It isn't *your* seat, of course. And in all probability it wasn't your fault that you lost. You were fortunate to have served in that seat, and it will – at some point – inevitably pass to someone else.

If losing your seat, and not serving any longer in Parliament, is what you wanted then you may wish to skip this article. However, do realise that even happy changes in life can still bring up unexpected emotions. In many ways it's just a job loss and similar to other job losses.

However, if serving in the Commons was everything, or even more than everything, you had expected then I have some idea about how you may feel. I served for only two years and I loved every hour of every day of that term of office and I wish it could have gone on for a longer period of time.

What you can do now: prepare and know that even if the loss of your seat is expected you may still have feelings of disappointment.

As politicians how can we resist a five point plan...

Actions you can do in advance:

1. Prepare the constituent cases that are complex for a smooth handover. You need to assure a constituent with a difficult case that he/she/it will have representation that is not interrupted by an election.
2. Tell your staff to prepare their CVs in case they need to get a job post-election.

Above all, as a former public servant, know that you still have much to give...

Do this even if you believe you're in a safe seat. (I know: every politician is aware that there is no such thing as a safe seat.)

3. Have a route/job planned for yourself in case you lose.

4. Acknowledge that the stages of bereavement will come to you. The best scenario is that the feelings of bereavement [anger/disbelief/denial/ etc.] all happen within a few minutes and you are through all those stages by the time you finish your final speech at the end of the count.

But please be aware that people will pass through those stages at different paces. There is no "right" or "wrong" in bereavement. Allow yourself to go through those stages at whatever pace happens for you and do not give any weight to your internal dialogue that has "should" or "should not" in the conversation.

5. Do talk to friends/health professionals. Do include us: as former MPs we are happy to chat to you confidentially. Unlike most job losses this will be public. Hug your spouse; hug your cat/dog; reassure your family; do meet your friends and don't forget that your 'non-political friends' may well become your new best friends with their perspectives.

Above all, as a former public servant, know that you still have much to give...



MENTORS STILL REQUIRED

Keen readers of *Order! Order!* will have read the article in the Winter 2023 edition regarding post-election mentors for defeated MP's.

As the article said, losing your seat is a very difficult time for any MP and many of us have been through that experience. The sense of loss and desolation, especially when the defeat is unexpected is impossible to explain to those who haven't experienced it.

When it does come it is very difficult to know where to turn or who to speak to. Trying to wind up your affairs, concern for your staff are all issues to be addressed in a fairly short time frame but all the time there is your underlying feelings of your own future, what it holds and your next move.

The Association Executive have been liaising with the House authorities to try and involve the Association in providing some support for those who lose in the forthcoming Election. Our plan is to make some former MP's available to act as support and mentors for the defeated MP's.

Following the last article several former MP's have come forward and we are grateful to you all. However, we are always looking for more. If it is something you are even just mildly interested in then please email Laura at blakelb@parliament.uk. We will be having a first mentors briefing meeting soon. For ease this will be done via teams, if you are interested but not sure please let Laura know and come along to the discussion.

It is looking likely that there could be a significant churn at the next Election so the more mentors we can have on board the easier it will be. Please come along, if you find it doesn't work for you that is absolutely fine, there is no obligation on any as it is a voluntary role.

Andrew Bingham is former MP for High Peak, who lost his seat in 2017.

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

We asked a selection of ex-colleagues to say what they have been doing since they stood down or lost their seats

ROGER BERRY Kingswood, 1992–2010



I’VE NOT APPEARED on *Strictly Come Dancing*. I’ve not had any great train journeys. I’ve not done a podcast. I’ve not written my memoirs.

But I have pursued similar interests to those I had when I was an MP – however, with rather more time for socialising, gardening and going on holiday.

For several years I continued to campaign for

disability rights, for example, as a trustee of Disability Rights UK.

Also, ten years ago, I served as one of the six members of the Labour Party’s Taskforce on Breaking the Link between Disability and Poverty. This group was chaired by the late Sir Bert Massey, one of the most effective campaigners for disability rights I have ever known. I’d like to think that some of our recommendations may have had some impact, but there is still a massive amount that needs to be done.

Indeed, I am deeply disappointed that in the 14 years since I left the House, progress has been so slow and, in some areas of the disability equality agenda, almost non-existent.

I’ve been active in the Law Centres movement, as a trustee and then chair of the Bristol Law Centre, and a member of the Law Centres Network Executive Committee. The value of their essential work also cannot be overstated.

As readers can imagine, I took great pleasure in campaigning in the by-election in Kingswood (a constituency that includes a substantial part of the former Kingswood constituency I used to represent).

Now, I must get back to the local elections!

CONAL GREGORY York, 1983–1992



LOSING YORK after two Parliaments was a wrench. Whilst it was not unexpected when I had the smallest majority (147) in the House, it left a void. However, I had success in securing several Private Members Bills on consumer and financial protection.

I took up two pre-Parliamentary strands: financial

commentary and wine. The former had been with two national papers and for 16 years I was Personal Finance Editor of the

Yorkshire Post. I enjoyed researching a major subject each week, attending in-depth meetings with analysts and fund managers and in presenting regional case studies wherever possible.

The plethora of problems raised by readers led to me to introduce a “ticked off” column on naughty financial practices. It certainly provoked an audience way beyond the City of London.

As a Master of Wine, I set up my own consultancy, specialising in wine selection for airlines and cruise operators as well as individual estates. This has involved blending for specific labels and forecasting how a particular wine will develop. I have been on judging panels for leading international wine competitions and much enjoy tutoring corporate wine events.

Still living in York and supporting York Minster, I have been elected to both the Deanery and Diocesan Synods.

However, life now allows far more time with my four grandchildren and supporting my wife who is currently Chairman of The Arts Society York. We travel frequently, particularly to lesser known lands, experiencing different cultures.

HELEN JONES Warrington North, 1997–2019



I WAS LUCKY to be able to leave Parliament at a time of my own choosing and I decided that this would be as near as possible to my 65th birthday. I wanted to retire while I was still young enough and fit enough to enjoy it.

I expected an election in 2020 and I had been preparing for it by clearing out my office and deciding

what I wanted to do when I left. When the election came at the end of 2019, I was ready to go.

I wanted to write. English Literature was my first love, and I wanted to return to it, so I planned to join a writers’ group. I also wanted to travel, both in this country and abroad and to learn a new language.

Of course, all these plans were delayed by the Coronavirus and lockdowns but, afterwards, we moved back to Chester, my home city. I joined several writers’ groups, mixing prose and poetry, and I’ve been lucky to have several poems published.

My husband and I take regular trips and I learnt Spanish, to add to my rather rusty French. I knew I needed some physical activity to replace pounding the pavements, so I signed up for yoga classes, and took swimming lessons.

Then I was asked to put my name forward for the IPSA board and was successful. I was grateful to have the support of all sides of the House for my appointment and I have tried to be a voice for MPs on the board.

I follow politics as an interested observer but I’m glad I now have time to pursue my own interests.

CALUM MACDONALD

Western Isles, 1987–2005



I STARTED MY NEW LIFE as a community wind farm developer and operator the week after I lost my seat in 2005, convening a meeting of local community groups to gauge interest in the idea. 18 years on, I have been doing it for as long as I was an MP. It has been just as enjoyable and rewarding – and a lot less stressful! I set up a community charity

(www.pointandsandwick.co.uk) to receive the dividends and spent 10 years finding a site, getting the consents and the bank funding (£14 million), and building the wind farm. It's a long time to spend "in development" but it's the norm in the energy industry. EDF have been developing a neighbouring site since 2003 and their earliest anticipated build date is 2030!

In the past year our three turbines delivered a dividend of £3.8 million to the charity. That is not a misprint. We spend this on projects as various as a native tree planting programme on crofts (a million trees targeted for 2030), a local hospice, various arts and culture projects, a new coastline path, and the most generous fuel poverty programme in the UK (up to £1,500 for the worst affected households).

To me, it's a no-brainer model for the next Labour Government to deliver all over the UK. In Denmark over half of onshore turbines are in community, cooperative or municipal ownership. In Britain it's just 1%. Crazy. If anybody is interested in something similar in their own areas, you can contact me through the website.

DAME CAROLINE SPELMAN

Meriden, 1997–2019



WHEN YOU STEP DOWN from Parliament many people ask you to come and help them with your recent knowledge of how Parliament works and – in my case – 22 years' experience. Not many of these roles are remunerated so your time becomes your currency and how you spend it becomes very important.

I'd say think what you are passionate about. As a keen equestrian I was co-opted onto the board of the British Horse Society and was proud to be part of the decision by the charity to pay the feed bill for riding school horses during the pandemic, when they had no income.

I joined the board of Commonwealth Games England to assist in the huge success of the Birmingham games but am now engaged in the campaign to find a host for 2026 and beyond. I was asked by the Archbishops of York and Canterbury to help them with plans to help dioceses to become more sustainable which is a work in progress.

Putting my Environment Secretary experience to good use I have joined the board of Natural England to champion a new approach combining care for nature with food production on our farms. This diverse mix of interests makes for a good range of different challenges and I enjoy sharing best practice from board to board. This still leaves time to care for my own horses in competitive dressage, as well as my new role as "Ranny" to Iona who was two on April 1st.

IAN TWINN

Edmonton, 1983–1997



LEAVING THE HOUSE in 1997 was a wrench. Yes, we knew it was extremely likely but there is always a hint of suspending disbelief. We drove home after the count past the celebratory noise from New Labour's party on the South Bank ... if the news programmes hadn't hammered the new reality home the party noise did.

We closed the door, put the coffee on and prepared for a full day's earth moving and gardening. It was therapeutic.

The future back in 1997 did not feel as bleak for ex-Tory MPs as it turned out. Eventually after a year I was very happy and lucky to land a role as Public Affairs Director for British Advertisers (ISBA). I spent the next 19 years arguing the toss about the right and need to advertise, to self-regulate and reflect society's concerns. This took me regularly to Brussels, Paris and New York with the World Federation of Advertisers and the Marketing Commission of the ICC. Really enjoyable work and the chance to scour the second-hand book shops!

In the meantime, I stood in the European Elections in 1999, coming in as the reserve. In 2003 Nick Bethell needed to retire after a brilliant career. I became one of London's MEPs for a year. I am very critical of the direction the EU has taken, but for all its faults the European Parliament works very well for those MEPs who want to get seriously involved. I still miss it.

Now retired I consult and do lots of voluntary roles in politics.

NEW LINKS WITH THE IRISH ASSOCIATION

Nicholas Bennett

The Association's links with sister organisations took a step forward following an inaugural meeting and lunch with three representatives from the Irish Association on November 14 in the House of Commons.

On behalf of the Association I accepted an invitation, at my own expense, for a reciprocal visit, the following week, to Leinster House, the home of the Irish Parliament for their Christmas lunch.

Landing in Dublin at 10 pm, I found all buses had been withdrawn. My Nigerian born taxi driver explained that, following a tragic knife attack on a teacher and her primary aged pupils that afternoon, a mob had attempted to breach the crime scene and rioting had taken place in the centre of Dublin.

As it transpired my hotel was next to the Central Criminal courts and a procession of ferret-faced youths in grey jogging bottoms exited to waiting TV crews the next morning, some hiding their faces, whilst others 'gave the finger'.

Tram services were curtailed because the mob had burnt a tram and a bus on O'Connell Street and it was necessary to resurface the road and overhead.

Guest of Honour at the lunch was the US Ambassador to Ireland, the Hon Claire Cronin. Claire, a lawyer by profession, gave an interesting speech on her appointment by President Biden after being Democratic Leader of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. The appointment process takes some time and it was more than a year after the departure of President Trump's nominee before she took office.

After the lunch former Senator Dr Martin Mansergh gave me a tour of Leinster House, a handsome Georgian building, which was the model for The White House in Washington DC. The House of Oireachtas – the Dail Eireann and the Seanad are hemicycle chambers which reflect the Single Transferable Vote system operated in the Republic.

In September Former Members of Congress (FMC) will visit Ireland and we have been invited to send representatives to join them and, I hope, further expand our ties with countries.



VISITING NO 10



Members of the Association were offered a rare treat this spring – a visit to 10 Downing Street, for a reception kindly hosted by Dame Amanda Milling, MP for Cannock Chase, a government whip and Lord Commissioner of HM Treasury.

For some, the event, on 26 February, meant revisiting a building whose interior they have not seen for years – and for one or two, it was the first time they had ever set foot inside inside Britain's most famous address.

No photography was allowed inside the building, but there was nothing to stop guests from posing by the famous black door.

This is a short extract from the speech that Dame Milling delivered:

"Good afternoon everyone – it is a genuine privilege to be amongst such esteemed colleagues today, and I am honoured to join you.

I want to thank the Past Members of Parliament Association and in particular Laura Blake for allowing me to host you today – in the current rough and tumble, this is truly the highlight of my week, because the Association does such fantastic work to support MPs leaving Parliament.

Whether it is acting as mentors to support with the transition out of politics, assisting with passes for the estate, or linking them up with educational, social and cultural groups to promote the work of Parliament and the role of an MP – everything you do adds value to MPs as they leave their role.

And of course, I know that around the country, right across the board, MPs aren't exactly flavour of the month – one of those rare public opinions that has stood the test of time!

But I also know, and you all know, what a privilege this job is and the sacrifices it takes to serve our constituents.

I would challenge anyone to find a better representation of Britain in all its diversity of background and experience than those gathered here and our other fellow sitting and former Members of Parliament.

The knowledge you have – not only of life within the bubble, but also for the afterlife – is invaluable. As someone who hasn't yet left the House, it is comforting to know that there are people like you all to guide us and help us."

WASHINGTON REVISITED

Steve Norris

In early November last year Ann Taylor and I had the pleasure of reprising our visit to the Library of Congress in Washington as guests of the American Association for the British Library.



...what was striking is that while there are ... differences there is an enormously strong bond that exists between our two countries

Our great library hosted an evening event at which two former members of Congress, Californian Democrat Loretta Sanchez and Oregon Republican Greg Walden, alongside Ann and I, told an audience of students, academics and library staffers what got us into politics, just as we had done to a similar audience in Washington.

All four stories were very different, but the unifying theme was the value of public service and how two great systems of government may look very different but are actually both determined to defend democracy against the rising tide of dictatorship. Both knew there would be an election this year

that was likely to change the political landscape but this was not a confrontational session. We weren't on a version of Question Time. There was clearly more that united us than divided us.

There are of course huge differences in the way our democracies work. One with a written constitution and one that has survived for centuries without. One has term limits and the other has sell-by dates – both it turns out equally effective. But what was striking is that while there are those differences there is an enormously strong bond that exists between our two countries and long may it continue. Ann and I agreed it was a privilege to take part.



NEWS FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OUTREACH TRUST

An update from the Chair, John Austin

OUR PARTNERSHIP with the charity, Speakers for Schools, continues and since our last report a number of our members have given talks. **Ian Lucas** has spoken to the Ysgol David Hughes, in Anglesey and in January **Sir David Hanson** addressed the Heanor Gater Spencer Academy, in Derbyshire. Sir David is also due to speak at Swanwick Hall School, Derbyshire in April. Heanor Gate Academy said that "David inspired our students to really set their goals and aspirations towards something they are passionate about and strive to achieve these".

Jeremy Lefroy has spoken at the Blessed William Howard Catholic School, Staffordshire and **Hilton Dawson** at the Cardinal Hulme Catholic School in Gateshead. **Victoria Borwick** has given two talks to Palmer Catholic Academy, Redbridge, **Adrian Sanders** has talked to students at Queen Elizabeth School, Devon and **Stephen Twigg** is due to speak at the North Liverpool Academy.



We continue to provide speakers for universities and, since our last update, **Helen Jones** has spoken to students at Nottingham Trent University about the role of Whips and to Westminster University about the Labour administrations 1997–2010. **Tom Levitt** has spoken to students at Brunel with a personal perspective on how practice reflects the ideal. We have had an on-going series of sessions at Exeter University with **Debra Shipley** explaining the role of backbenchers and **Huw Edwards** on parliamentary process and scrutiny of legislation and the executive. Ian Lucas is scheduled for a

session on the influence of social media. Former MEP, **Julie Ward**, has participated in a seminar on Women in Politics at the London School of Economics.

A possible programme with the Edinburgh Political Union is in the pipeline and we have recently made contact with both Stirling and Aberdeen Universities and are hopeful that this

will bear fruit in the next academic year.

We continue to receive very positive feedback from schools and universities with this from Nottingham being fairly typical "The Parliamentary Outreach Trust is a great resource for educators through bringing hands on experience into the classroom. Every guest speaker we have had has been engaging and has supported our students in expanding their knowledge of parliament".

For more information contact John Austin at admin@parlyoutreach.org.uk.

A GOOD READ

TWO WOMEN, CENTURIES APART, ONE DRAMA

Debra Shipley

Freeborn Girls

By Sally Keeble

Published by Eleanor Press

FIRSTLY, *Freeborn Girls* is a very good read; fast paced, tightly written with a powerful narrative – this is a book to enjoy for pleasure. However, it’s much more than that. Sally very cleverly weaves the stories of two young women seeking freedom, they are centuries apart, but have much in common.

In doing so, she has created a novel which makes the reader consider issues around people trafficking, immigration, knife crime, housing and urban regeneration. These are heavy-weight topics, but Sally’s deftness of writing means that the reader is carried along by the strong narrative and a plot which twists and turns, but never disappoints.

There are several things which make Sally’s fiction writing powerful: her careful historical research which allows her to create highly believable scenarios and characters; and her own political background as an MP.

As a former MP myself, I can fully appreciate the brilliance of her writing about the work of an MP and its fast pace. With relatively few words, Sally conjures up how politics actually works and she also shines a light on political motivations, actions, and consequences.

Her main character, Francis Quilter MP, is seeking to help her unappreciative constituents, support her political party in the House of Commons in the ways that her party whips require, engage with an unrequested American intern, cope with media attention and also keep an eye on her ageing mother.

The dynamic of the demands upon Francis are, I think, an accurate reflection of the multifaceted existence of contemporary MPs – particularly, perhaps, women MPs. As such, it offers a glimpse into the forces under which MPs operate and the short amount of time they have available to them when there are so many demands on their time.

The overtly political aspects of the novel are adroitly balanced by the co-existence of the historical narrative which tells the story of Elizabeth Gardner. The reader is introduced to Elizabeth as a young freeborn girl living in 1638, who is subsequently indentured (losing her freedom), made to travel to America and struggles to survive by living as a boy. That Sally is able to unite the two disparate strands of politics and history throughout the book is a credit to her writing skills and the twist at the end of the book is shocking.



Debra Shipley was Labour MP for Stourbridge, 1997–2005.

A GOOD LISTEN



JUST A GAME OF CHANCE

Mike Gapes

Roulette

By Gordon Banks

GORDON BANKS WAS THE Labour MP for Ochil and South Perthshire from 2005 to 2015

and was Shadow Minister for Business, Innovation and Skills and then Shadow Scotland Office Minister. He has since leaving the Commons been director of Cartmore Building Supplies in Lochgelly. But Gordon is also a very talented musician, singer and songwriter. Something I did not know when we were colleagues in the PLP.

Gordon produced his first album, titled ‘It Never Made the News’, in 1996 and he has now over 25 years later, aged 68, made his second album ‘Roulette’ which was issued in December 2023.

The album contains 12 original songs, all but one are written by Gordon Banks himself. The blurb for the album says “Songwriting Influences include John Lennon, David Bowie, Ray Davies, Dean Friedman, Steve Harley, Glenn Tilbrook & Chris Difford and Neil Finn”.

I also noted some echoes of

the great American country singer John Prine.

‘Roulette’ is a high quality and musically impressive album. It was professionally produced by Michael Brennan at SubStation Recording Studios in Rosyth and features guest appearances by The Zephyrs, members of Pork Pie, Carl Williams, Peter Little and Gary Campbell from Empire Music Productions and Elaine Green, who Gordon has worked with before.

The title track, *Roulette*, is a poignant love song involving dementia as a source of inspiration:

*But its all just roulette
Just a game of chance
When you take the bet
You can win or you can lose
It’s not for you to choose
When you take the bet.*

His song *35 men* is a cry of anguish dedicated to The Valleyfield Mining Disaster on 28 October 1939, where Gordon’s grandfather was

killed:

*Just 35 men
Diamonds in the dark
Salt of the earth
Leaving broken hearts
Just 35 men remembered in black.*

Gordon was interviewed about this by BBC Radio Scotland.

Other songs range from the heavy metal influenced celebration of footwear *Way of Life*; to the bluesy *Sleep*; the upbeat and bouncy *I wanna be with you*; the love songs *The mirror never lies* (part of the charm); and *Rose of Jericho*; the sad *Angel Wings*; the confessional ‘My Tuesday night girlfriend’ – “Don’t drink her wine or move the chairs, cos she’ll notice things”; the political *Moderate Man*; the country inspired *Paint Your Face*; to the final track *Postcard from Rome*.

This album is very good. Listening to it was a real pleasure. I hope you do too.

“YOUR TROUBLE IS THAT YOU’RE ALWAYS IN THE PAPERS”

Jerry Hayes

Labour Takes Power:

The Denis MacShane Diaries 1997–2001

by Denis MacShane

Published by Biteback

THESE DIARIES HAVE A FRESHNESS, an honesty and the sort of troubled introspection one would expect of a bright and ambitious backbencher who is frustrated at sitting in the front row, but wants to be on the stage.

They are beautifully written and adorned with the sort of character assassinations that would make Alan Clark *salut* with a glass of decent claret.

Robin Cook, as Foreign Secretary: ‘He has all the courtesy of a moth eater rat and really isn’t much fun to be around. He was one of the worst chairman and allows endless dribbling discussions’.

Tony Benn: ‘His upper class courtesy and mannerisms mask a deep vanity and arrogance. Anti European, anti American, anti the aspirations of people to better themselves. Naturally John Bercow calls him the greatest living parliamentarian’.

Quoting a colleague on Gordon Brown: ‘There will not be any stability in the government while Brown is there. He just can’t help his poisonous activities’.

Followed by his own view: ‘There is a real anger over Brown’s refusal to say anything positive on Europe. I don’t like the smell of future politics’

Quoting Tom Baldwin about Number 10’s line on Clare Short: ‘It’s not just a question of being in the tent pissing out or her being outside the tent pissing in, but simply being in the tent being pissed’.

And Clare Short’s view of Blair: ‘Lone parent cut was never discussed in Cabinet. Tony never reads anything. He just sits in an armchair and thinks in terms of presentation all the time. There is no attention paid to detail.’

With a few barbs from Europe minister Doug Henderson: ‘Blair is incredibly cold and distant. He never smiles when you are with him. His smile is for the media and when the public is around, but otherwise he never gives anything of himself’.

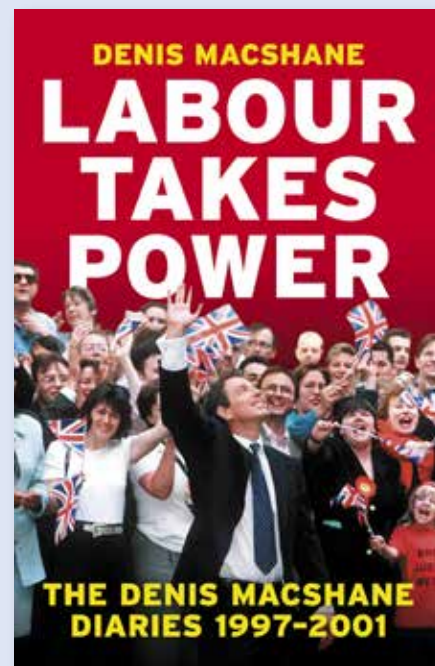
As a Foreign Office PPS, MacShane was rather troubled that a scathing piece about him might hinder promotion, so he approached Peter Mandelson. ‘A column by Polly Toynbee attacking you Denis? In the *Guardian*? I can think of nothing that would more highly commend you to the Prime Minister’.

Mandelson was, ‘the most hated man in the Parliamentary Labour Party he has come to symbolise all that is manipulative and coterie around government’.

When he was sacked for the third time, MacShane describes an encounter in a Commons loo with the Deputy Chief Whip. ‘I ask him if Mandelson is now finished’.

“Yes, for about a week”, comes the cynical reply as he shakes his willy’.

After four years as a PPS MacShane was utterly fed up with not getting promotion. ‘There is about as much leadership,



His diaries should be a must read as both a lesson and a warning for those who just don't want to be a minister but achieve something as one.

sense of team work and *esprit de corps* in the FCO ministerial team as there would be in a French Army platoon in 1940’.

Ann Taylor, the Chief Whip gave him the Gypsy warning: ‘... try and show some more gravitas in the next few months. You’re very good. You have lots of talents, you speak foreign languages, but sometimes you just say things that might lead Cabinet ministers to ask whether they want you in their team.’

His problem was put more succinctly by a colleague: ‘Your trouble is that you are always in the papers and other ministers get so jealous whenever anybody else is mentioned’.

Which leads into a quote by Abba Eban about his time at the LSE: ‘Here I learned a passion for truth, justice and fair play, but these have been such a disadvantage in my political career’.

And there are moments of prescience in these diaries – ‘I think the rise in poverty and the ever increasing differences between the wealthy...and the rest of humanity will create at some stage a counter reaction, an over explosion of anger that may provide a new right wing politics and workers will be told to blame their lost job and poor wages on immigrants’.

Denis MacShane is a renaissance politician who can make speeches in German and French. He is an intellectual who has forgotten more about European politics than most at the Foreign Office will ever know. He is good company and has more reach in EU affairs than anyone in the Labour Party. If Starmer had any sense he would make use of his talents to build bridges with our European Partners.

His diaries should be a must read as both a lesson and a warning for those who just don’t want to be a minister but achieve something as one.

Jerry Hayes was MP for Harlow, 1983–1997.

A RINGSIDE TAKE ON THE THATCHER YEARS

Peter Heaton-Jones

The Best of Enemies, Diaries 1980–1997

by Norman Fowler

Published by Biteback

POLITICAL DIARIES CAN BE HIT-AND-MISS AFFAIRS. Inevitably overtaken by the passage of time, we know what's going to happen because, well, it happened. It's like a bad airport novel in which the author telegraphs the denouement so clunkily that you guess the plot twist long before the final chapter. So, what's the point of wading through it all?

Norman Fowler cleverly avoids this trap in *The Best of Enemies, Diaries 1980–1997* by augmenting his original, unedited diary entries with new footnotes, thoughtful annotations and updated commentary. This adds value, as well as highlighting Fowler's characteristic modesty in the tacit admissions that his initial judgements were sometimes awry. It makes you want to read on, even though you know how it ends.

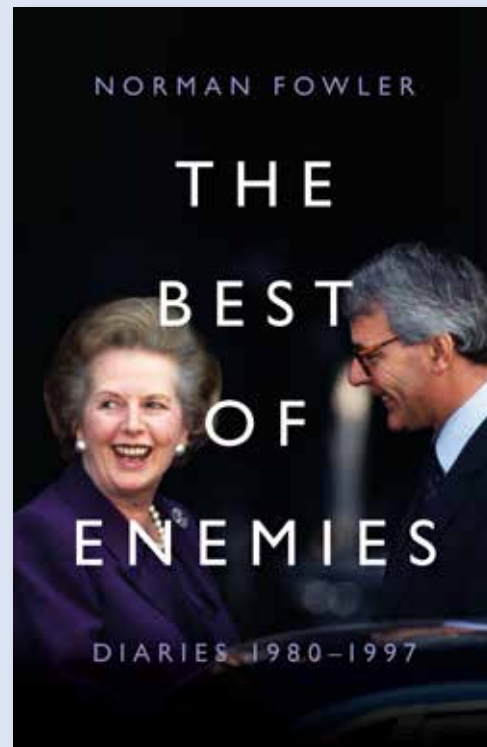
Take the diary entry for New Year's Eve 1986. Fowler is Secretary of State at the sprawling Department of Health and Social Security, one of numerous ministerial posts he held throughout the '80s. He's championing the hard-hitting AIDS prevention campaign, but not everyone is on board. As the final hours of the year tick by, Fowler finds himself at Number Ten trying to persuade a reluctant Margaret Thatcher to do a ministerial broadcast.

At the time, Fowler records, 'At one point, she says to me: 'you mustn't become known as just the minister for Aids'. Her (kind) point was that...there were other frontiers in politics'. In a modern footnote, however, Fowler concedes, 'I fear my diary interpretation of her words was too generous. She meant: 'Go and do something else'.... I am unrepentant about my refusal to change direction'. And so he should be. Fowler's insistence on pushing on with the campaign is surely one of his enduring legacies. Nearly forty years on, those of us of a certain age still remember the tombstones, the iceberg and the John Hurt voiceover, and are forever grateful.

It's one of the most powerful sections of the book, and another display of Fowler's modesty. The AIDS campaign, and the introduction of compulsory seat-belt wearing while he was at the Transport Department, saved countless lives. But Fowler does not draw undue attention to either. Put simply, the diaries are not all about him – a refreshing change from certain recent political journals.

The selling point of the book is the ringside seat Norman Fowler occupied for the rise and fall of two Prime Ministers. The book's title and its cover picture (just Margaret Thatcher and John Major – Fowler's photo does not appear) are clearly designed to entice would-be readers with the promise of juicy new revelations from this tumultuous period.

If that was the intention – and I suspect it was the publisher's more than the author's – for me, it falls short. Fowler was not one of the leading players in the downfall of Thatcher in 1990; he'd resigned quietly from her cabinet the previous year, and anyway he was too busy (and too nice) to



The book's title and its cover picture ... are clearly designed to entice would-be readers with the promise of juicy new revelations from this tumultuous period.

be involved with the plotting. Consequently, in the sections dealing with Thatcher's regicide and Major's anointing, Fowler's diary frequently records him hearing about significant events second-hand, rather than actually being in the room.

It means we learn nothing particularly new about these dramas. The bonus, however, is that some of the unamended diary entries are deliciously understated, with the significance of certain events only becoming obvious with hindsight. Take this, from Monday 2 October 1989: 'Breakfast with John Wakeham who says that Geoffrey Howe had a major bust-up with Margaret Thatcher in Madrid and threatened to resign'. Fewer than two dozen words, but a clear portent of what was to come.

The second section of the book deals with the Major years, and Fowler's political comeback. He returns to the frontline as Chairman of the Conservative Party, and much of the diary now is taken up with the difficulties being caused by Thatcher, still bitter about her defenestration. 'Margaret holds court on the inadequacies of the government in general', Fowler records on the first day of the 1992 party conference. And it only goes downhill from there.

If you're looking for headline-making revelations, look elsewhere. But then, that's not the point of these diaries. Instead, they are an honest, unpretentious, first-hand account of events in the life of a man who rose to be Speaker of the House of Lords, but who remained incredibly grounded. When explaining why he was resigning from the Thatcher government, Fowler unwittingly coined the now euphemistic cliché, 'to spend more time with my family'. In his case, however, it was clearly the truth.

Peter Heaton-Jones was MP for North Devon 2015–2019 and now works in public affairs.

TRIBUTES

LORD SELKIRK OF DOUGLAS (James Hamilton-Douglas)

31 July 1942–28 November 2023

Conservative MP for Edinburgh West, October 1974–1997

Remembered by The Rt Hon Lord Forsyth of Drumlean

Uk Parliament



JAMES SELKIRK was one of these characters that you meet in life who will never be forgotten, for all the right reasons. Ask about him to anyone who knew him and they will tell you about his courtesy, kindness and impeccable manners. There was another side to Lord James, as he was affectionately known. He was a highly effective politician and

Minister driven by a deep determination to serve his country.

He had delivered the Skye Bridge and resisted the campaign against tolls, without which it would never have been constructed. When I returned to the Scottish Office as Secretary of State, the project had become so controversial that we abandoned the original plan for the Queen to open it. I proposed that James should have that honour. No, he insisted, I must do it. It was only when I turned up, on my birthday, to be confronted by Robbie the Pict and a thousand protesters that I realised he was a more skilful politician than I had given him credit for.

When we were junior Ministers in the Scottish Office, he suggested we share a Government car, to save money. One night,

as our wonderful old school driver was taking me home, she said I had to have a word with his Lordship, that all the drivers were talking about it and if it went on, she would have to resign. There had been a series of scandals involving Ministers and I can still recall the feeling of disbelief and alarm as I asked what had Lord James been doing. “He keeps opening the car door for me,” was the response.

At Oxford he was President of the Union, and a boxing blue. He was mugged one night, returning late from the Commons, but had laid out the unfortunate robber with one punch.

Loyalty and integrity were his guiding lights, reinforced with a core of steel. He gave up an Earldom to support Prime Minister, John Major. As a Minister, he was diligent and collegiate. Ever optimistic, he took defeat in 1997 square on, stood for the Scottish Parliament, and was elected to do what he enjoyed most – serving his country and his constituents.

John Major, to his enormous credit, recommended James for a life Peerage in his resignation honours list. As an active member of the House, he was not just well respected, but loved. His decision to retire when he realised his health was failing was greeted with great sadness. My thoughts are with Susie and his family, of course. He will be much missed.

JAMES COUCHMAN

11 February 1942–16 November 2023

Conservative MP for Gillingham, 1983–1997

Remembered by Nicholas Bennett

David Fowler/Alamy Stock Photo



JIM WAS A TALL well-built man with the physic of a rugby player and indeed his father played the sport with Denis Thatcher. He was educated at Cranleigh and King's College Newcastle, then part of Durham University, where he joined the Conservative Party. Leaving without taking a degree, he taught

for a year, then in 1964 went into the oil industry, as a salesman and later a property negotiator.

In 1970 he joined the family business, initially as a pub manager then, after four years, as general manager of the business; from 1980 to 1995 he was a director of Chiswick Caterers, a family firm operating seven brewery-owned pubs. This experience stood him in good stead when issues affecting the industry came before parliament. He was opposed to plans by Industry Secretary Lord Young, following a Monopolies and Mergers Commission report, to force Brewers to divest themselves pubs they owned in excess of 2,000. He described it as “a piece of interference in the market which seemed inappropriate, unfair and retrospective”.

Jim was elected to Bexley council in 1974, serving for eight years, during which he was twice chairman of social services.

He cut his parliamentary teeth in Chester-le-Street in the 1979 losing by a wide margin in then safe Labour seat. When Sir Freddy Burden decided to retire as MP for Gillingham in 1982, he was selected in the final ballot in a contest with Edward Leigh and me.

A former chairman of Bexley Health Authority from 1981–19983 and an advisor to Pfizer, Couchman took a special interest in the NHS, serving for four years on the relevant Select Committee. Declaring himself a “friend of the pharmaceutical industry”, he filibustered in 1993 against Giles Radice’s private member’s Medicines Information Bill.

Although generally seen as on the left of the Party, he was opposed to apartheid and capital punishment, supported the liberalisation of Sunday shopping hours and supported granting the right of abode in Britain to key Hong Kong Chinese. He opposed moves to curb tobacco advertising and voted against the War Crimes Bill.

Between 1984 and 1989 he was PPS to Tony Newton, who was in turn Minister of State for Social Security, Minister of Health and Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster as deputy to Lord Young. He rejoined him in 1995, by which time Newton was Leader of the House.

Convinced that his 16,000 majority would be secure, he was shocked when he lost his seat in 1997 on a 16% swing to Labour losing by nearly 2,000. He featured in a TV programme about how ten former MPs were faring one year after defeat. He was suffering from tinnitus and observed having made seventy unsuccessful job applications “Being a former Tory MP is a liability rather than an asset”.

In 2005 he made a comeback to politics as a member of Oxfordshire County council. He was cabinet member for social services from 2006 to 2010 and subsequently for finance and property, standing down in 2013.

James Couchman married Barbara Heilbrun in 1967; she survives him, with their son and daughter.

HARRY GREENWAY

4 October 1934–18 January 2024

Conservative MP for Ealing North, 1979–1997

Remembered by Nicholas Bennett

ALTHOUGH HARRY'S 18-year parliamentary career were spent on the Government backbenches, they were not ones which passed in obscurity. A man of strong Christian and Conservative beliefs he was assiduous in campaigning and speaking out on constituency and national concerns. Always a cheerful,

genial and companionable colleague, he and I had a common bond in that we had both attended the same school, I as a pupil and he, some years later, as its Deputy Head.

After Warwick School, Harry trained at the College of St Mark and St John in Chelsea and at the University of Caen. His teaching career included a stint as an English teacher and House master at Sir William Collins Comprehensive School in Somers Town before Deputy Headship at the 2,000 pupil Sedgehill Comprehensive School on the Bellingham Estate in SE London in 1972. By this time Harry had fought his first parliamentary election in one of only two seats which had once returned a Communist MP – the distinctly unpromising territory of Stepney against Peter Shore in the 1970 General Election. A glutton for punishment, he fought the reformed Stepney and Poplar division in the two General Elections in 1974 with equally heavy defeats. Success came in 1979 when he defeated Bill Molloy to take Ealing North for the Conservatives with a 1,400 majority. Harry held the seat with healthy majorities until he was unseated by Stephen Pound in 1997.

One of Harry's great passions was horse riding and he had first introduced it at William Collins as part of the sports curriculum. As he observed, it took one's mind off politics and was a great form of relaxation. In parliament he successfully sponsored a Bill to make mandatory the wearing of hard hats for riders under 14. His commitment to equestrianism was recognised by his presidency of the National Equine Welfare Council and the Association of British Riding Schools. It was fitting that he was a Liveryman of the Farriers Company.

As an Anglian, Harry regularly spoke on Church of England matters. He opposed the extension of Sunday Trading and the ordination of women. He supported moves to bring down the time limit for abortion and clashed with the heterodox views of the controversial Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins. Imbued by his love of teaching he served, from its inception, on the Education Select Committee. Forced to take break, after three parliaments he was an equally diligent member of the Employment Select Committee, before returning for his final five years to Education.

Harry was never short of a quote but perhaps met his match when having accused John McEnroe of loutish behaviour at Queens in 1984 when McEnroe abused the umpire and his opponent, McEnroe in a return volley accused him of a "publicity-seeking joke".

Harry married Carol Hooper in 1969 and they had two daughters Elizabeth and Eveline and a son Mark.

DAVID WILSHIRE

16 September 1942–31 October 2023

Conservative MP for Spelthorne 1987–2010

Remembered by Nicholas Bennett

DAVID WILSHIRE, although MP for Spelthorne from 1987–2010, was always very proud to say he came from the coal fields of north Somerset – in fact delighted in surprising people who assumed Somerset to be a totally rural county with no industrial heritage.

He was educated at Kingswood School and read Geography at Cambridge. On leaving university, He started his own printing firm and also taught and worked for a number of MEPs.

He believed passionately in the provision of organised activities for young people and successfully ran for many years one of the largest Scout Groups in the country, with over 200 members.

He began his political life as a councillor on Wansdyke District Council from 1976 to 1987 and served as leader from 1981 to 1987. He a councillor on Avon County Council for one term from 1977.

He was a lifelong Methodist and he organised and ran the Methodist Parliamentary Fellowship's monthly. Appalled by book entitled 'Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin', about two men and their daughter, which was stocked in an Inner London Education Authority teachers' resource centre, with Jill Knight,

he introduced an amendment to the Local Government Bill which became Section 28, making it illegal for local authorities to "promote homosexuality".

Many of his constituents worked at the nearby Heathrow airport and he rebelled against the whip and supported a third runway.

He was parliamentary private secretary to Alan Clark in 1991, the PPS to Peter Lloyd from 1992 to 1994, and was a Conservative whip in the House of Commons from 2001 to 2005. At various times he served on the Northern Ireland, Foreign Affairs, and Transport Select Committees and of the chairman's Panel in 2005. He was also elected on to the executive of the Conservatives' 1922 Committee.

In retirement he worked on restoring a semi derelict house, taking on the design and specifications, as well as creating a large garden. His son Simon recalls; "He was never happier than when on his mower, planting trees, knowing he would not be around when many reached maturity".

Sadly, in his final year he was afflicted by a form of dementia which along with a late diagnosed Parkinson disease restricted many such activities.

He married Margaret Weeks in 1967 and had two children, Simon and Sarah who died aged 12. He separated in 2000 and from then until his death lived with his partner Ann Palmer.

RONNIE CAMPBELL

14 August 1943 – 23 February 2024

Labour MP for Blyth Valley, 1987–2019

Remembered by Sally Keeble

UK Parliament

WITH RONNIE CAMPBELL'S passing, aged 80, from cancer, his friends & family have lost a cherished member, his northern community a resolute advocate and the political world a link with its heritage.

His determination to speak up and vote for his beliefs, made him a staunch champion for his

constituency and the political causes he supported, and a challenge for the Labour whips.

Born in Tynemouth in 1943, one of a family of eight children, his early life was classic Labour. He left school at the age of 14, and the following year went to work at the Bates Colliery where he remained for 28 years, most of the times working underground.

He was elected to the branch committee of the National Union of Mineworkers in 1965. Two years later he joined the Labour Party, and two years after that was elected to Blyth Borough council, serving as a local councillor for 18 years. His commitment to his union, his party and his community shaped his entire his life.

After the Bates colliery was closed in 1986, he had planned to become a care worker, but then – with NUM support – was selected as Labour candidate for Blyth Valley. He narrowly won it in the 1987 General Election, joining 12 other mining union sponsored MPs, including Dennis Skinner and Kevin Barron.

Stories about Ronnie are legion and colourful. During the

miners' strike, he was arrested twice, and took a boatload of colleagues to block the delivery of a load of oil to the Blyth power station. He was one of three MPs to fly to Baghdad after Saddam Hussein annexed Kuwait to try to mediate with the Iraqi leader. To make sure the then Prime Minister John Major understood the anguish of one of his constituents on an NHS waiting list, Ronnie walked across the floor of the Chamber of the House of Commons and hand-delivered a letter.

He didn't compromise on his views when Labour came into government, nor when his ally Jeremy Corbyn became Labour leader. Although some of his views were problematic for his colleagues – his Catholicism meant he was a strong opponent of extension of abortion rights – some were remarkably prescient. An opponent of the Maastricht treaty, he called for the UK to leave the EU a year before the referendum, and voted for key sections of Brexit legislation. If Labour had listened to the canary perhaps it could have found a way to avoid the collapse of the red wall that lost Blyth Valley and so much else of the party's traditional heartlands in the 2019 General Election.

On his retirement he listed among his greatest achievements winning enterprise zone status for the Blyth estuary, getting funding for school buildings and tackling an epidemic of drug abuse among local youth.

In his parliamentary office Ronnie had a picture that perhaps best summed up his grit and commitment, of himself emerging from the Bates colliery – last man out before it was closed.

JOHN TOMLINSON

1 August 1939 – 20 January 2024

Labour MP for Meriden, February 1974–1979

Remembered by Richard Burden

LIKE SO MANY OTHERS, I was sad hear that John Tomlinson – Lord Tomlinson of Walsall – had died. Before he became a life peer in 1998, John had served with distinction as both an MP and MEP in the West Midlands.

I first met him when he was standing to become MEP for

Birmingham West in 1984. I actually lived in west Birmingham at the time but he was not my candidate. Such was the arcane way that European Parliamentary constituencies were named in those days, that I was classified as living in Birmingham East!

Whatever the eccentricities of his constituency name, John went on to champion the West Midlands in Europe for the next 15 years. At a personal level, he was also a friend and support to me as candidate and then MP for Northfield from 1992, and when I stood in his former Westminster constituency of Meriden in 1987.

John Tomlinson may have been an MP for only five years, but he made his mark on the House of Commons. He was Harold Wilson's last Parliamentary Private Secretary as Prime Minister in 1975–76, going on to become a Minister in the Foreign Office and then the Ministry of Overseas Development in the Callaghan government.

Indeed, John's ability had been recognised well before he ever set foot in Westminster. As far back as 1964, he had been elected as the youngest councillor on Sheffield City Council at 24 years of age.

John Tomlinson and I were on different wings of the Party, in the divisive atmosphere that disfigured a lot of internal Labour politics in the 1980s, but he never let that get in the way of our friendship. In fact, he forged strong and lasting relationships across the Labour and Cooperative Parties and well beyond party lines of any kind.

A committed internationalist, John was also widely respected across Europe, serving as Deputy Leader of the European Parliamentary Labour Party and, in 1990, as the European Parliament's Rapporteur on the EU Budget. His internationalism continued to shine through after he joined the House of Lords, when he served as one of the UK representatives on both the Council of Europe and the Western European Union.

A former colleague with whom I share a WhatsApp group for ex Labour MPs recently described John as "friendly, experienced and a powerful, inspirational orator...a great person."

Announcing his death, at the end of January, John's family said he will be "fondly remembered for his sense of duty and his generosity, by his four children and ten grandchildren, his wider family and many others."

Amen to that. John Tomlinson will be sadly missed.



SIR GRAHAM BRIGHT

2 April 1942 – 19 January 2024
Conservative MP for Luton East,
1979–1983, Luton South 1983–1997

*Remembered by Eric Martlew, Chairman
of the Association of Former MPs*

FOLLOWING THE SAD DEATH of Graham,
I write to pay tribute to his immense
contribution to the Former Members
Association.

I served with Graham in Parliament
for ten years but due to the fact we
were on opposite sides in the Chamber
our paths rarely crossed. But I was
able, through our brief contacts, to
know that he was a thoroughly nice and
decent man.

I really got to know him much better
through his work with the Association.

In 2001 I was asked by the the
Speaker to help set up the Association.
This led to the setting up of a Steering
Committee on which Graham was a
founder member. The work that he and
others did on that Steering Committee
laid the strong foundations for our
Association today.

He always played an active role. He
was a member of the Executive from
2003 until he stood down in 2020.
In 2010 he took over the Chair of the
Association from Joe Ashton and during
his five-year tenure the Association
went from strength to strength.
Membership increased, the popular
speakers meetings were introduced and

he realised the value to former members
of *Order Order* and actively promoted it.

One of his greatest skills was getting
consensus. This was often achieved
by his inherent good humour and a
smile. The adage “if you want anything
doing give it to a busy man” applied
completely to Graham. During his
membership of the Association he was
chairman of a very successful business
as well as being Police and Crime
Commissioner for Cambridgeshire, but
he never failed to give priority to the
Association.

After he stood down as Chair he took
the unenviable task of being Treasurer.
This was during a period of failing
health but that did not deter him from
attending meetings and ensuring that
our accounts were properly managed
and that we had money in the bank.

We owe Graham a great debt of
gratitude as our Association has
benefitted from his great vision and
hard work.

Thank you Graham.



MAUREEN HICKS

23 February 1948 – 13 February 2024
Conservative MP for Wolverhampton
North East, 1987–199

Remembered by her daughter, Lydia Hicks

IN MAUREEN'S OWN WORDS in the
Winter 2023 edition of *Order Order* she
was “hell bent on joining Margaret
Thatcher's government”, admiring her
greatly. When Maureen was elected in
1987 there were just 17 Conservative
women of the 41 women MPs elected
from all Parties. Maureen was so
proud to become one of them when
she won Wolverhampton N.E, after it
had been held by Labour for 40 years
and was one of only nine Conservative
gains that year. Maureen served on
the Education Select Committee, was
secretary of the All Party group on
tourism and from 1990 was PPS to the

Foreign Office ministers, the Earl of
Caithness and Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Of her time in Parliament her
colleagues describe her as an
intelligent, special, hard working MP
with a great sense of humour who
was dedicated and cared deeply for
her constituents, supporting her
colleagues across the political divide.

As a little girl under 10 and my
brother Marcus under 13, our vivid
recollection of Maureen (Mum) during
that time was: her bold coloured
power suits (lots of blues and purple);
her desk opposite William Hague (and
his brilliant sense of humour); the
honour of meeting Margaret Thatcher
in No 10 (whilst clutching my Care
Bear tightly); visiting her surgery
and key locations in her constituency
(including supporting Wolves); her
delightful agent Warren Appleby and
her campaign bus song that remains
synonymous with her today, Tina
Turner's ‘Simply the Best’.

After Parliament Maureen went on to
be active in the hospice movement,
initially as a fundraising director and
latterly as vice-chair of Mountbatten
Hospice on the Isle of Wight. She

was also heavily involved in tourism,
delivering many first initiatives in her
hometown of Stratford upon Avon.
Her final career chapter followed her
desire to travel the world as “a mini-
Portillo” as she put it, as a Freelance
Tour Director for Great Rail Journeys.
Maureen's passion and dedication for
making change for the better in the
world never wavered even in her final
few weeks with her trustee work for
the Warwick Independent Schools
Foundation and HPB.

Maureen's close friend Baroness
(Angela) Browning shared: “As
friends fighting our first election
in 1987 we remained friends even
though we never served together,
our paths crossing in 1992. Maureen
was totally dedicated to the causes
she took up. This applied also to
her life after Westminster. She was
involved for many years as a Trustee
of the Hospice on the Isle of Wight...
Maureen always gave of her time,
expertise and devotion”.

Maureen's enthusiasm for life will
be missed by her friends and family,
including myself, my brother and her
beloved grandson.

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