

Order! Order!

The Official Journal of the Association of Former Members of Parliament



WINTER 2021

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ASSOCIATION NEWS

Sally Grocott



SIR GRAHAM BRIGHT

I am sad to say that Graham has reluctantly given up the position of Association Treasurer because he is presently not in the best of health and unable to attend meetings. He served as Treasurer in the early days of the Association and as Chairman for five years from 2010 to 2015. He then again

took on the onerous job of Treasurer, keeping meticulous accounts and ensuring they were properly audited each year. I am especially grateful to him for keeping everything in order, and ensuring payments were made through the problems of the past two years.

I want to put on record our

enormous thanks to Graham for his terrific service to the Association and wish him well.

We are very lucky that Deputy Treasurer Sarah McCarthy-Fry has agreed to take over as Treasurer so the accounts are still in the safest of hands. A big thank you to Sarah!

THE PARLIAMENTARY CONTRIBUTORY PENSION FUND – PCPF

Graham, as well as resigning as Association Treasurer, has resigned as a Trustee of the PCPF causing a vacancy on the Board. This is made up of 3 current MPs, 2 former MPs, 2 members of the House of Lords - and two people appointed externally, one from IPSA and one from the Ministry of Civil Service. The process now for replacing Board members is that any vacancy has to be made known to all members of the Fund - current and past MPs, and current and future pension recipients - with an invitation to apply. Applicants need to have two

nominees who are members of the Fund. A timetable has yet to be agreed, but the vacancy must be filled within 6 months. A sub-committee of the Board chooses who should be appointed, giving consideration to political balance, gender, ethnicity and other pertinent factors. The term of office is dependent on regular attendance at meetings.

We were very grateful to Sir Brian Donohoe, Chairman of the Fund Trustees, for arranging a meeting with him on the 20th October. Executive Committee members Adrian Sanders

and Andrew Bingham raised issues and put forward suggestions in connection with the administration of the Fund by Buck. They had begun the administration of the Fund in September 2019 just three months before the general election in December, with the consequent administrative load caused by so many new and outgoing MPs.

Suggestions from Adrian and Andrew included the possibility of obtaining valuations via the website and a general enlargement of the information available on the portal; the inclusion

in the Fund's annual report of information about the trustees together with their contact details; and the inclusion of the information that members have to provide and when, in order to receive their pension. The possibility was also raised of members opting out of receiving monthly paper statements. A final important suggestion was that Buck should provide details to Fund members of their complaints procedure.

Sir Brian promised that these issues would be looked into carefully and implemented where practical.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY – 2 DECEMBER 2021

It is now nearly two years since members have been able to meet up at Westminster and the Executive have been very keen to reinstate meetings and social events. Two years ago, on the 3 December 2019 we met in the River Room of the House of Lords to listen to an engrossing speech from Lord (Robert) Hayward about the state of the parties, and this just prior to the general election on the 12th December. Afterwards we had a very convivial drinks reception.

So, what better way to get back to some sort of normality than by arranging something similar. I am really delighted that Robert has been able to accept our invitation to talk about the present political situation and answer questions, and this will be followed by a drinks reception.

The River Room is booked on the 2 December for our all member meeting at 4pm, followed by a drinks reception at 6pm. The maximum number allowed at present is 50, so please let me know if you will be attending - there is no charge. Depending on the response, partners will be welcome if there are places left.

Please note there are no tickets for this event – just a confirmation from me when you ask to attend. In the event of any change in regulations/restrictions on the parliamentary estate in connection with Covid, members will be notified immediately by e-mail. Please reply asap to grocotts@parliament.uk

DON'T LET THE HATEMONGERS DAMAGE DEMOCRACY

Louise Ellman

SOPA Images Limited/Alamy Stock Photo



Sir David Amess's murder must not be allowed to break the precious link between MPs and their constituents.

The murder of Sir David Amess MP in his constituency surgery, after the murder of Jo Cox MP five years ago and the plot to kill West Lancashire MP Rosie Cooper in 2017, has again drawn attention to the danger facing MPs as they go about their work.

The role of an MP is wide ranging and diverse. Whilst activity in the House of Commons is crucial, an MP's constituency role is equally important. It is the way MPs connect directly with their constituents. Holding surgeries, where constituents approach their MP with specific issues of concern, is a key part of this. Visiting constituency events and engaging with a wide range of organisations and community groups is fundamental to an MP's work.

This inevitably makes an MP vulnerable to the small minority of violent people who may hold a grudge, may be disturbed or be filled with hatred about an MP's perceived views. They may indeed see the MP as the symbol of a deep hatred based on their own view of the world.

Jo Cox's murderer was linked to a neo-Nazi group and Rosie Cooper's would-be killer was associated with the proscribed neo Nazi group National Action. It is alleged that there is an association with terrorism in David's murder and that his alleged murderer watched videos of Anjem Choudary, a man connected with numerous Islamist organisations including Al-Muhajiroun, claims Choudary denies

The growth of social media exacerbates this situation and MPs increasingly face on line campaigns of vilification. This can range from offensive personal abuse to death threats. They all involve inciting hatred towards public representatives who are an essential part of democracy.

In recent years, and particularly since the murder of Jo Cox as she approached her surgery, MPs have been urged to take specific precautions in relation to personal safety and the way surgeries are conducted. The murder of David Amess shows that these steps are not enough

It may never be possible to eliminate the danger posed to public representatives. But more can be done.

The role of on-line activity in promoting violent extremism must no longer be ignored. The Online Safety Bill, currently being debated in parliament, is an important response to this situation,

The Bill proposes to place a regulator, Ofcom, into the online space together with a number of duties of care on providers of

Visiting constituency events and engaging with a wide range of organisations and community groups is fundamental to an MP's work.

on-line services. Whilst there is broad cross party consensus about the need for action and the Bill has been broadly welcomed, there are concerns about exemptions in the Bill. The search engine Google, for example, need not consider addressing legal but harmful search material prompted by its algorithms.

There are three further areas of concern in relation to the Bill's limitations in addressing the propagation of harmful extremism. First, so-called alternative platforms like Telegram, Bitchute and 4Chan, on which hateful extremism thrives, may fall outside the category of service required to address content that is legal but harmful to adults. This activity would be regulated in broadcasting. Secondly, concerns have been expressed about the absence of senior management liability for breaches of duty of care. Thirdly, the important issue of anonymity of on-line platforms is not addressed.

All of these issues are the subject of continuing debate as the Bill progresses.

The role of on-line hate in promoting extremism can no longer be ignored, but it is not possible, or desirable, to separate MPs from their constituents. This personal contact is an integral part of an MP's role. It is what motivates most MPs.

Sensible precautions about the location and management of surgeries must be stepped up in addition to measures to improve personal security for MPs. It is unlikely that this will remove the threat though it will reduce it.

But equally important is the need to address the propagation of on-line hate with social media platform algorithms and search autocomplete functions that guide people to the dangerous extremism that motivated the assassinations of David Amess and Jo Cox. If not for the actions of a member of Hope not Hate, Rosie Cooper MP would have suffered a similar fate.

David Amess's murder reminds everyone of the vulnerability of elected MPs as they go about their day-to-day work. It must lead to improved security for our elected representative as well as action to address on-line hateful incitement. It would be a blow to democracy if the current challenges led to reduced contact between MPs and the people who elected them.

Dame Louise Ellman was MP for Liverpool Riverside, 1997–2019

Alexandre Tziripoutoff/Alamy Stock Photo



CEMENT – WHERE CAN IT BE FOUND?

Gordon Banks

A presenter on TalkRadio claimed last month that you can grow it, as you can grow trees. If only...

A year ago, I wrote a piece for *Order Order* “Coping with Covid: a business view”, which outlined the challenges that the construction industry was going through at that time.

A year on, what has changed? Are things better? They can't be worse surely!

Well, the sad answer is things are indeed worse and whilst not all related to Covid, we must view things through the lens of reality, the circumstances we are in and try to determine what is controllable, foreseeable and what business leaders can do to either prevent or mitigate the impacts of the challenges that come our way.

Many – if not all– of you will have seen recent media reports highlighting the shortage of HGV drivers, shipping containers and the five-fold increases being quoted for shipping containers from the Middle East to the UK.

Co2, processing chips, food stuffs, steel are all in the headlines. Many of us may have experienced a petrol or diesel shortage. And, of course, now as individuals we are all being faced in many ways with unbelievable hikes in gas prices, with the collapse of over a dozen energy companies. All these issues will impact

on our abilities to keep warm this winter as well as obviously leading to significant price rises in virtually all goods we buy due to increased manufacture and distribution costs.

The public are angry and dismayed. So too is business.

All of these issues that affect us as individuals only do so because there is a prior impact on businesses leading to reactions which result, more often than not, in price rises or material shortages.

Cement – a key product

In my sector, the construction industry, and particularly the material supply side of things, the shortages and price rises experienced a year ago were, as I feared, a taster of worse to come.

There are virtually no key materials – that is items key to general and indeed specialised construction – that are not, or have not been significantly affected.

To go through each item would firstly bore any reader brave enough to venture into the abyss but would also take up a few dedicated issues of *Order Order* so let's look at the situation with cement, because if there is one key product involved in construction, this is it.

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No construction is going to begin, let alone be completed, without this product. It is a key component in the manufacture of concrete blocks, ready mixed concrete, roof tiles, manhole rings, concrete pipe, kerbs, edgings, paving slabs, landscaping products, reconstituted stone, concrete facing and common bricks, concrete lintols, floor slabs, stairs I think I'll stop now, but hopefully you get the point.

In Scotland, we have a single cement manufacturing plant which is unable to produce all of the county's needs, so a significant amount has always come from elsewhere in the UK and through imports from Europe and further afield.

Earlier this year, supply dried up. Output cuts by some manufacturers, reported demand growth post Covid lockdown, the failure of the market to fill the hole (pardon the pun) and reports that major projects such as HS2 were sucking product, not just from Scotland

but from many other sources, were cited as explanations.

I believe the Scottish Government secured assurances from Scotland's sole producer Tarmac (CRH) that imports would make up for produce sent elsewhere, but this failed to materialise in an appropriate volume to prevent a major crisis.

A perfect storm

The summer saw the supply of ready mixed concrete dry up, concrete block supply stuttered with manufacturers scratching around for ways to reduce cement content in their products, leading major developers faced with a series of decisions which highlighted a need within the industry to understand basic facts much better. Many people in key positions had never come through a shortage crisis, so didn't understand clearly enough the solutions on offer to them.

A perfect storm developed, and the industry didn't have any coherent way to address these challenges, nor any pre-thought out back up plan at all. It was all very much hand to mouth and panic!

We all must accept that cement plants are not environmentally friendly and despite efforts being made to reduce their carbon footprint, they are inherently large, complex structures which cannot simply be mothballed and turned on and off to meet a fluctuating demand.

Likewise, and this is my own personal viewpoint, it is unlikely that the Scottish government would give its blessing to any proposals from industry, should they ever be put forward, to construct a new production plant in the country, because that would certainly negatively impact on green targets. Indeed, Scotland's cement plant at Dunbar has recently been branded as a major polluter due to it expelling dust into the surrounding areas. No doubt local people will be concerned with content of this dust and what the implications of it may be.

But by not having a domestic output that in any way meets demands, we will always be dependent upon the wider UK market, which often prefers to service demands closer to home rather than shipping product hundreds of miles. Imports are the only other current solution. These options leave us in the hands of overseas companies and indeed governments, shipping giants, port authorities and hauliers.

However, do we look at carbon footprints in isolation or should we consider whether locally produced product is better for the planet than the same product being produced elsewhere and then shipped around the world, adding to its carbon footprint? It's not easy.

The cement shortage has continued to fuel the worldwide demand for clinker imports (a necessary product for the most common cement, Ordinary Portland), from countries with less demanding environmental regulations. This market is expected to grow in the foreseeable future, which suggests a growth in cement usage and a displacement of the countries producing the negative environmental impact to those with less stringent controls.

However, reports suggest that the supply of clinker has not been without challenges otherwise the cement shortage crisis would have been less of a problem. So, our only solution appears to be looking forward to more imported clinker and more imported cement.

The cement crisis has led to profiteering, where a bag of cement which may have a normal price of between £4 and £5 being sold for up to £15! This has shown how some businesses will respond to a shortage even if at the time there has been no production cost increase.

Simply put: if you want it and we've got it – that's the price – take it or leave it.

However, manufacturer's increases are now occurring with, one a few months ago, another one expected later this year of up to 30 per cent and potentially more next year. Such massive price hikes on such a basic commodity will lead to only one thing, a reduction in projects due to massive cost increases, which is not good news for new hospitals, housing, or infrastructure.

Opportunities

Opportunities – let's not let them slip through our fingers.

I have always believed that construction could be the 'coal industry of the 21st Century'.

What I mean by this is that it can and should be a significant employer of people with few skills and many. Labourers, fork lift drivers, steel fixers, joiners, electricians, plumbers, landscapers, site managers, company directors, architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, accountants, health and safety experts are

We have lost over recent decades anything like the ability to produce the volume and range of goods we need

just some of the opportunities on offer, but not if it can't do what it says on the tin: construct.

Every person in the country needs this industry for the homes in which they live, the roads we drive on, the cycle paths we use, the railways we travel on, the airports we fly from, our hospitals, our places of work and our communities. Without this industry we would grind to a halt.

Every business that wants to expand and create more jobs needs this sector in some shape or form. But what we have currently, with the fall out of Brexit, the Covid pandemic and the perfect storm relating to material costs and availability, when we really need the economy to move forward strongly and predictably, is an industry which is falling at the first fence of the race.

We have lost over recent decades anything like the ability to produce the volume and range of goods we need in construction leaving us exposed to international markets, multinational conglomerates and international shipping organisations in a way which should have been obvious to decision makers.

In Scotland, during my career, dozens of brickworks and sawmills, numerous block plants, and many other product manufacturers have either simply closed down – often as a result of decisions taken at head office, which may be many thousands of miles away, or they have been bought over by competitors and closed down – taking volume out of the market, leaving us more and more dependent on imports and multinational companies.

I still have hope for the industry because the UK needs a strong construction industry but there needs to be a root and branch review into our domestic material needs and establish how we can guarantee supply at acceptable costs to allow the industry to create jobs and be the driver for the UK economy I believe it can be.

As I said earlier, it's not easy, but then nothing worth doing ever is!

Gordon Banks was MP for Ochil and South Perthshire, 2005–2015

THE BACKSTABBER'S GUIDE TO POLITICS

Austin Mitchell



As Shona McIsaac rightly notes (on page 15), the late Austin Mitchell was “a serious campaigning politician”, but he also had wicked sense of humour, often directed at the opportunists and ‘backstabbers’ he detected among his fellow MPs.

This is an extract from The Backstabber’s Guide to Politics, that he wrote 30 years ago:

Choosing your own label

Once you have decided that you are base, greedy, bumptious and thoroughly unpleasant (and therefore a natural politician), you must pick a brand label. Do not join a minor party. All you will get is the pleasure of making a fool of yourself then being charged for a lost deposit. Standing for Parliament on a ticket which cannot win is clearly crazy.

In Scotland, the SNP is the obvious choice, and it has the virtue that you don’t have to decide whether you are really Labour or Tory - but you must have good knees (for putting in groins, not kilts).

In England or Wales, to get anywhere you must be Labour or Tory. But avoid extremism – particularly in the Labour Party, where socialism is now an expellable offence. It does not matter which party you choose. Your real choice is just how conservative do you want to be? Politics is a transvestite orgy, and no-one is sure any longer just who is wearing what, and what belongs to whom – the ideal climate for backstabbers, as parties argue more and more about less and less, and the knives

can flash anywhere.

You can take the election for granted. Backstabbers make sure they only get selected for safe seats, so treat the poll as a three-week outward bound course to test your powers of endurance and prove that you have the necessary qualifications for a political career: the constitution of an ox, and preferably the brains to match.

Rules of the Game

Now you have your ticket to the great game of power. Not power itself – you will have to backstab much more to get that. Get into the game quickly and accelerate your progress by following the rules:

RULE 1 – Conceal the kind of bastard you really are: although it is taken for granted that you are one, it is counter-productive to show it.

RULE 2 – Know your enemies. In Westminster, there are 649 of them. The other side is a generalised enemy, a straw man to attack. Genuine hatred and backstabbing should be reserved for the real threat: members on your own side.

RULE 3 – Be absolutely clear about your aims and priorities: you first, and the party second. But always stick with the party even if it is down: disasters bring new men to the top. In disaster, there is always hope for some.

RULE 4 – The constituency is not a priority for the Backstabber, merely his admission ticket. Unless your seat is marginal, it is just the same as any other you would sit on. But if it is in danger of collapse, you had better find another to sit on.

Politics

Politics is neither art nor science, nor even a craft (though plenty is involved). It is surf-boarding. Most of the time, it is paddling. Occasionally, and usually unpredictably, it is seizing a wave to ride with it as far as you can, before transferring to another. The moves, moods and dynamics of politics are neither right nor wrong, and you neither create nor control them – they are transport. Grab opportunities as they come, and use them without squeam or scruple.

WALKING FOR AFGHANISTAN

The grim news from Afghanistan left many people wondering if there was anything they could do. Sir Hugh Bayley, former MP for York, who has visited Afghanistan seven times, and seen how British aid helped girls and boys get the education and health that they may now be denied, decided that in his case, there was. He set out on a 200-kilometre sponsored walk from Scarborough to Illsley, along the Tabular Hills Walk and the Ebor Way, to raise money for the International Rescue Committee, run by David Miliband.

The IRC, which had 1,700 aid workers in the field, has been operating in Afghanistan since 1988. It still has aid workers in the field, though it is



also now heavily involved in helping to resettle Afghan refugees.

By the time Sir Hugh reached Illsley, he had raised £5,250, plus £1,000 from Gift Aid. His Just Giving page is still open at www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hugh-bayley

Hugh Bayley said: “I’d like to thank all the former MPs and their partners who sent generous donations and messages of support which spurred me on to the finish line. Their money is already being used wisely inside Afghanistan.”



OLD PRIVATE EYES

Steve Pound is seeking a good home for half a lifetime’s collection of back numbers of Private Eye. There are 700 plus of them, from the 1970s to the present.

Anyone interested, please contact him at stevepound@hotmail.co.uk

GB OR NOT GB? INSIDE THE UK'S LATEST TV STATION

Jerry Hayes

SOPA Images Limited/Alamy Stock Photo



Whatever you think of GBN it can never be as delightfully bonkers as Kelvin Mackenzie's LIVE TV! I used to love the news Bunny and adored the weather gnome who used to jump up and down during bulletins. Wherever his little tinkly belled hat touched on the map a forecast was delivered.

Once asked Kelvin why they never mentioned the weather in Scotland. "Because he could never fucking jump high enough", he said with a grin. But my favourite moment was being interviewed by David Banks, former editor the *Mirror*. In the ad break the camera operators hopped onto a nearby couch and had sex. And then casually went back to film us.

If I have a guilty secret it's that I rather like GB News. I am sorry that the most feared interviewer on television, Andrew Neil, was sold a pup. He is a good man and wanted an alternative to mainstream television. Unfortunately, most people on the extreme left and extreme right regard journalists as the enemy. They don't want balance, they want a channel to reinforce their prejudices and anything else is regarded as 'fake news'. So GBN was always going to be a problem for them. The right wanted it to be Fox News. So did the left, simply so that they could attack it.

The reality is that at the moment GBN is fairly mainstream. After Neil left they lost 60% of its audience. So what do the money men do to survive? They pivot towards their natural base to boost ratings. And they sensibly pivoted towards Nigel Farage. It's a bit like politics.

I have another guilty secret. Farage and I met at a party a few months ago and much to our mutual horror we liked each other. So it was inevitable that he invited me onto his programme, Pints of View. This confession is so troubling that I will have to spend a week of water boarding therapy at the Peter Mandelson Academy of Political Education and Correction. However, I do have a criticism of his production values. I asked for a gin and tonic. An industrial sized one arrived but with no ice and lemon. Worse, this wickedness happened the night before with Christopher Biggins, whom I once modelled Lycra with in a National newspaper. More counselling I'm afraid.

Farage is, whatever one's political views, a natural broadcaster. His pieces to camera are refreshingly fluent. Reading an autocue is not as simple as it looks. And then I looked at the autocue. It was blank. He was speaking off the cuff without a safety net for about two minutes. Try it in front of the mirror. It's not easy.

I have another guilty secret. Farage and I met at a party a few months ago and much to our mutual horror we liked each other.

And then you have Al Stewart, the Walter Cronkite of the news. People trust him because he is authentic. The real deal. He gives the channel gravitas and authenticity.

Have a look at Liam Halligan, the former economics editor of Channel 4 News. He's no damn fool and wrote a seminal book on housing which Michael Gove has not only read, but understood. Parts of it may even become policy. More gravitas. More authenticity. So there are some serious players here. And some interesting messages.

Of course there are a few populist tub thumpers. I am very fond of Mark Dolan, but he does have a few rabid bats in his belfry about the horror of masks. I am even warming to Child Presstitute (thank you Marina Hyde) Tom Harwood, who was once given the strap line of Tom Hardwood. Well, he is very young, bless him.

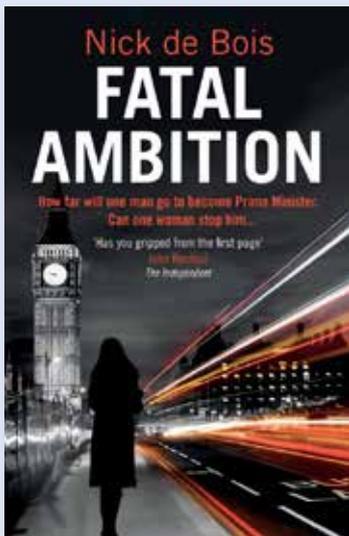
And then there is Isabel Oakeshott. Oh, dear. If pigs could....

As anyone who has ever ventured into broadcasting knows there is a special place in hell for media executives. Most are ruthless venal pustules on the bottom of humanity sniffing which way the wind might be blowing. For them GBN works rather well at the moment. It is balanced, it is quirky, and it is needed. It has some serious presenters as well as the clown car. If the money men panic, and of course they will, it'll be a race to the bottom for viewers and destroy the channel.

Rupert Murdoch has been biding his time. He too has been sniffing the wind. He smells blood and is moving in for the kill. He has some very big names and a lot of cash. And a hunger to succeed. He won't buy GBN. He doesn't need to. What a shame!

Jerry Hayes was MP for Harlow, 1983–1997

A GOOD READ



INTRIGUE, SCANDAL, AND RUTHLESS AMBITION

Andrew Bingham

Fatal Ambition

By Nick De Bois

Published by 3rd Step Publishing

HAVING READ *Confessions of a Recovering MP*, Nick De Bois's maiden incursion into writing and thoroughly enjoyed it I awaited the release of *Fatal Ambition* with high expectations. Concerned as to whether the author could make the transition from political diarist, relating experiences and tales of Parliament to novelist and storyteller, I picked up *Fatal Ambition* whilst on holiday.

I shouldn't have worried, the author can and has made that transition with great success! *Fatal Ambition* is a real page turner of a novel. It moves on at a cracking pace with a fascinating tale which makes it hard to put down – so much so I read the book in a single sitting, (the benefits of being on holiday).

All characters are fictional but I did notice a few names that I remember from days with Nick in Parliament; characters with surnames such as Tomlinson, Uppal, Fullbrook, Williamson and even one with the Christian name of Rudd all took me back to former parliamentary colleagues but I fear that is the author selling us red herrings and creating a little amusement amongst the politicians who will doubtless read this book trying to find real life incidents replicated as fiction, maybe even 'faction'.

However, I would tell anyone looking for a page turning political thriller, read this book, but it is so much more. It is a great yarn with a well-crafted plot which you feel you can see the end a mile off, but trust me, you can't. It is a book that will appeal to crime thriller lovers, conspiracy theorists and mystery enthusiasts alike.

The plot is set in the future in an immediate post Boris Johnson Conservative government (2023 according to the

It is a great yarn with a well-crafted plot which you feel you can see the end a mile off, but trust me, you can't.

author!) struggling to get the country back on its feet after Covid. Relationships between journalists, Special Advisors (SpAds) and back bench MP's are all given close attention, explored and indeed exploited to give the reader a real feel of a governing party struggling to deal with issues and the internal splits that such stresses inevitable cause.

A Prime Minister weak and struggling to hold his Party together, fiercely ambitious colleagues circling and positioning in readiness for his fall are all at the heart of the plotline. Throw in a financial scandal and a little sexual impropriety and you have the mixture for a political bunfight. This novel though doesn't follow a predictable line. With the addition of further shadowy figures, some in their luxury Caribbean villas, some skulking around the capital and some in the heart of the establishment itself you have an extra dimension that would seem incredulous. However such is the strength of the authors knowledge of Parliament, the Westminster village and all its workings everything you read not only seems highly believable but raises questions as to whether this could actually happen?

The main characters; Beth Anderson, the tenacious journalist, Scott Williamson, ambitious SpAd & wannabe MP, Tom Woods MP and Parliamentary Private Secretary to the ruthlessly ambitious Foreign Secretary, James Cleaver MP, (in his mind) heir apparent to the office of Prime Minister and the Downing Street Chief of Staff, Karen Dawson are highly credible and excellently developed throughout, the novel bringing different aspects to the story and enhancing the authenticity.

In the central character, Beth Anderson, (is the shared first name with Sky correspondent Beth Rigby a case of me stretching a coincidence too far?), Nick has someone who could go forward into further adventures and novels. Indeed, without giving the ending away, the book has a dramatic conclusion that ties all the ends up nicely yet leaves the reader with a small niggling question that could, and probably should, be answered in a sequel.

To summarise, for politicians and those who work in and around Westminster this is a particularly great story and something we can muse on as what might have been or indeed what might be, but don't let this prevent you from putting it in your non-political friends Christmas stockings. It's a well put together story, effectively told in a gripping way. They will thoroughly enjoy it, however they may look at you in a different light depending on what you do and how much they think the story is fiction rather than fiction in its telling of plots and subterfuge in the world of Westminster politics!

Andrew Bingham was MP for High Peak, 2010–2017

THE WILES OF GYLES

Nicholas Bennett

Odd Boy Out

By Gyles Brandreth

Published by Michael Joseph

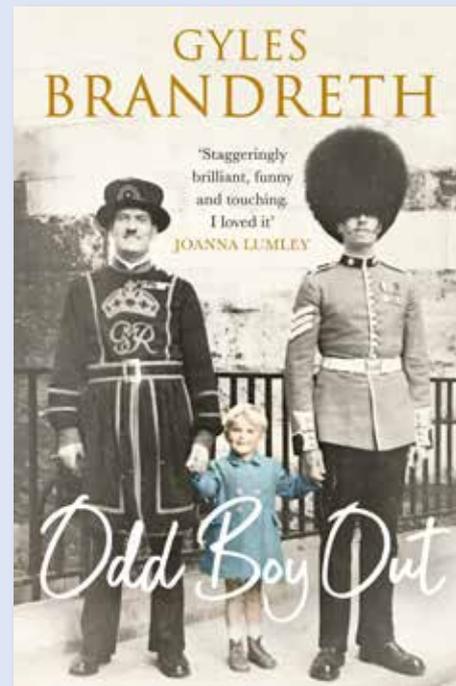
ODD BOY OUT is a fascinating and entertaining confection. Although described as an autobiography, it is also part family history and part amusing anecdotes – mainly from the theatre world. The Brandreth ancestry occupies the first few chapters, but, frankly, other people's ancestors are seldom interesting unless they are famous, or notorious. Mind you, one Jeremiah Brandreth was hanged for treason in 1817, and then beheaded just to make sure.

His description of his childhood in the 1950s in many ways mirrors my own, a world in which we were free to roam our local neighbourhood, to spend our pocket money on the *Beano* and Rolos and to enjoy the Billy Bunter stories by Frank Richards. We enjoyed the same TV programmes, including *Whack-O* and *The Lone Ranger*. We holidayed in the neighbouring towns: the Bennetts in Ramsgate and the Brandreths at the more upmarket Broadstairs. We both lived in post-war Germany. We both wanted to be priests, and then Pope. Being a Catholic I had slight advantage over Gyles, who, having been reminded by his father that they were Anglicans, had to settle for Archbishop of Canterbury.

There the similarity ends. Gyles' mother was a housewife and 'pa' struggled to make ends meet as a solicitor on £5,000 a year with Gyles' school fees, foreign travel, and membership of the Garrick Club. Genteel poverty is, I suppose, relative. Gyles recounts how he was a spoilt child, as then the youngest and only boy, receiving numerous presents (50 for Christmas 1959). He was regularly treated to the circus, theatre, and cinema.

He reveals how he was groomed by a master at his prep school and regularly touched up and kissed until he was 13. He tells no one. Even in 1961 I cannot imagine that if a teacher at my bog standard LCC comprehensive school had acted like that we would have kept silent. Perhaps we were a little more streetwise. At Bedales, he develops his taste for dramatics and ends up as Head Boy. Taking a year out before university, he travels across the USA for six months using a series of contacts to obtain free accommodation. A hectic three years at Oxford follows. President of the Union in his second year, leading light of the Dramatic Society and writer for *Isis* and *Cherwell*. His career path in journalism and light entertainment is established. Along the way there is an interesting diversion in the early 1970s as part of Lord Longford's inquiry into pornography.

Gyles was far sighted boy and started keeping a diary at the age of 11. He has previously mined this rich seam in his *Breaking the Code* about life in the Whips Office (1999) and recently in *Something for the Train*. In his latest melange we get further dips into the Brandreth bran tub. Strangely, despite the diary religiously saving every piece



of ephemera and recording the day and often the hour things occurred in his crowded life, the odd error creeps in. Gaitskell died in January 1963 not 1962. His first day in Parliament 'on day Frankie Howard died' would have been a Sunday. He misses a trick when recording the first time he met his wife Michelle: it was the day Robert Kennedy was shot. I've never met Michelle, but she is obviously a woman of great charm, patience and common sense and appears regularly throughout the book to pop Gyles' balloons. I echo his comment (but hope my wife doesn't read this) "Listen to your wife".

Odd Boy Out contains dozens of wonderful anecdotes, there is room for just one: Henry Labouchere MP, a campaigner against brothels in the 1880s, had as a Cambridge undergraduate been a frequent user of them. Stopped by proctors one night they asked who his companion was.

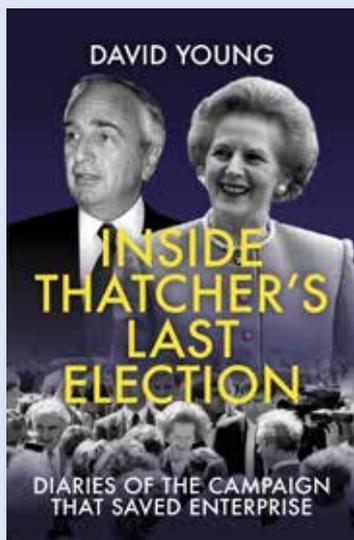
'This Sir is my sister', said Labouchere blithely.

'That Sir', countered the Proctor, 'is one of the most notorious whores in Cambridge'.

'I know', said Labouchere, 'and mother and I are so worried about her'.

One can but only admire Gyles' industry and constant expansion of the GB brand. As he admits, his five years as MP for Chester, was the only paid employment in a working life of more than fifty years. Constantly seeking new money-making avenues, he is still busy pitching ideas to the media. He lives in an agreeable house, married for almost half century to the admirable Michelle, father of three successful children and seven grandchildren. One looks forward to the next creation from the ever resourceful and fertile Mr Brandreth.

Nicholas Bennett was MP for Pembroke, 1987–1992



TETCHY MOOD SWINGS AND TANGIBLE ANIMOSITY

Jerry Hayes

Inside Thatcher's Last Election

By David Young

Published by Biteback

DAVID YOUNG IS PROBABLY the most underestimated politician in Margaret Thatcher's government. He was a big beast before the phrase was coined. Thatcher appointed him in 1984 to reduce unemployment which was skyrocketing at 11.9%. By the time he left office it was 7%. This was the man of whom Thatcher is said to have commented, 'David brings me solutions not problems'. He once confided that she never actually said this to him, causing him nothing but grief from envious cabinet colleagues.

In the run up to the 1987 general election Norman Tebbit was, as party Chairman, trying to mastermind the planning. Thatcher was suspicious that he was on leadership manoeuvres and gave Young the role of keeping an eye on him and effectively running the campaign. This didn't go down well.

For posterity, Young decided to record his thoughts every night of the campaign and forgot about it until rummaging through some dusty boxes during lockdown he found the tapes. These are the midwife of this book.

It is a tale of an exhausted Prime Minister and a paranoid Party Chairman seeing plots, slights and threats to his authority. Tebbit still believes Young was trying to upstage him, his eyes on the leadership. But rather naively, Young thought that they were getting on rather well. Young did his best to protect him against backbenchers and Thatcher.

"Robert Atkins, my PPS, had been going round saying.... that I was working for a half mad chairman and that I had found a terrible state of morale in central office." Young put an end to it.

Even to this day Michael Dobbs, Tebbit's chief of staff, is

Every campaign manager should read this book. It is a master class on how to keep the circus on the road whilst riding multiple horses at the same time...

bewildered at the way Thatcher would exclude him from election planning. It wasn't a plot. The truth is she just didn't like him. Pure chemistry. Nothing more.

Couple this with the unpreparedness of the party machine, panic in the ranks, the tetchy mood swings of Thatcher and the tangible animosity between Tim Bell and his former Saatchi partner Maurice Saatchi, it is a miracle that the whole election machine didn't fall apart at the seams. And it would have done so had it not been for the silky charm and diplomacy of David Young.

He shared some interesting insights on Thatcher, "she doesn't know how to deal with Norman. She's very worried that there might be a great big bust up...here we have the Iron Lady, the toughest woman in the world and yet she cannot actually go and tell one of her people what they should do!.....I've learned one vital lesson, that she can't do anything unpleasant, I've got to do it for her".

One of scariest things for politicians during a campaign is the terror of the unexpected. Any fluctuation in opinion polls leads to infectious panic self doubt. It is a brave man who realises half way through a campaign that the message isn't getting across and that they either change course or face oblivion.

"I got him by the shoulders and said, Norman listen to me, we're about to lose this fucking election. You're going to go, I'm going to go.....the whole election depends on her being right for the next five days doing fine performances on television. She has to be happy, we have to do this.

"So I still had to convince two mortal enemies (Tim Bell and Maurice Saatchi) to use the work of another (Tim Bell's) without upsetting the PM at a critical moment.

"Now look Maurice, and again I got him by the lapels, you've got to do it".

There are some comedic moments when Thatcher asked Young to tell Nigel Lawson to get his hair cut (he didn't dare) and suggest to Ken Clarke to smarten up (he did). And when Norman Fowler's press conference turned into farce when the graphics fell apart and he inadvertently used his microphone as a pointer with the result that nobody could hear him.

Every campaign manager should read this book. It is a master class on how to keep the circus on the road whilst riding multiple horses at the same time, persuading tawdry clowns that they are funny, doing a high wire act without a net and giving the ring mistress the confidence to win.

The other day Young announced at lunch with a large vodka tonic and a twinkle in his eye, that he has decided to retire. At ninety.

If Oliver Dowden had any sense he'd invite him for a long lunch.

Jerry Hayes was MP for Harlow, 1983–1997

BATTLING APARTHEID: FROM BOYHOOD TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS

Denis MacShane

A Pretoria Boy
By Peter Hain

Published by Icon

AT THE AGE OF 15, Peter Hain had to stand in a crematorium reading the eulogy to a family friend, John Harris, active in the South African Liberal Party like Peter Hain's father and mother. Harris was an anti-apartheid activist who decided a more spectacular protest was needed after the mass slaughter of peaceful African demonstrators at Sharpeville.

Harris planted a bomb at a Johannesburg railway station. He phoned the station managers and told them a bomb would explode in 15 minutes and they should clear the concourse reserved for whites only passengers. The station managers ignored the warning. In the resulting blast, a grandmother received injuries from which she later died.

It was a foolish, unpardonable crime and Hain's parents were beyond angry at the stupidity of their fellow Liberal. Like the Easter Uprising in Dublin in 1916, it was an act guaranteed to alienate many and only increase repression – but in so many struggles for freedom there comes a moment when just protesting seems not enough.

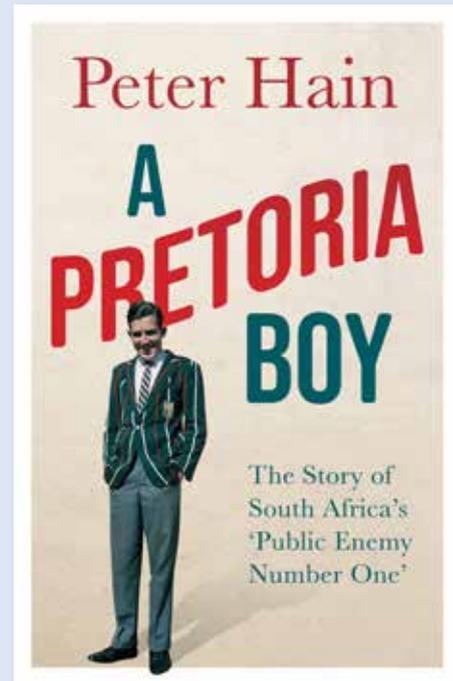
This was the first time a white South African had so directly challenged the racist state. Harris was beaten and tortured, and then hanged. Peter Hain was just 15, and dressed in the uniform of Pretoria Boys High School, when he had to preside over the coffin and read an eulogy, as his parents were "banned" under apartheid law and could not say anything in public.

Then he had to press the button to send the coffin through the crematorium doors. There can be few other MPs who can claim a start in political engagement like that.

The Hain family had to leave South Africa, but not South African politics. As a student in London, Hain began organising the 'Stop The Tours' protests that exposed more effectively the horrors of apartheid racism than any speeches or articles. Almost overnight a nation that lived and dreamt of sport, rugby, cricket, tennis, swimming – and Hain, too, was a sports-mad schoolboy – found it had become a global pariah.

Hain was attacked with a private criminal prosecution by Francis Bennion, a right-wing barrister and parliamentary draughtsman. It was an unprecedented legal move against a young man in his early 20s, which showed the hate and fury of the English establishment at any challenge to South African white supremacy.

Hain conducted his own defence. The way the judge and prosecution QC, naturally in due course, Master of the Middle Temple, doing everything to bully and destroy him



in court makes sickening reading. So does the collusion between the Metropolitan Police, MI5 and extreme right outfits linked to the apartheid state apparatus.

One might have thought that was enough politics for anyone still writing his PhD. But as we know Peter Hain persevered, moving from the Young Liberals to Labour and became a Labour MP, serving for 12 years as a Labour minister before Ed Miliband put him in the Lords.

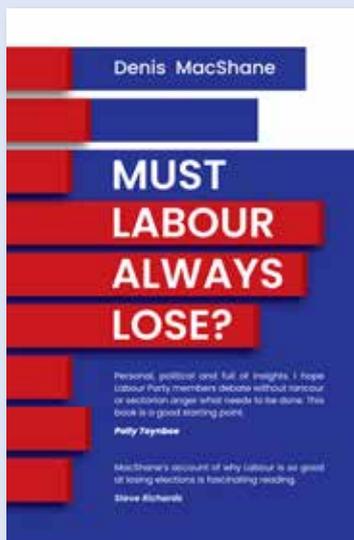
Even there he did not rest on well-earned laurels but used Parliamentary privilege to expose the corrupt and criminal activities of South Africa's president Jakob Zuma, who served a prison sentence before being released aged 80 on health grounds. Again, Hain was attacked by the London legal establishment for daring to use the Lords to expose criminal activity involving lawyers, bankers and public relations firms in London.

This is not a full biography but just Hain's gripping narrative of his personal struggle against apartheid. No-one under 50 can have much idea of the racism of white supremacy in South Africa and how it was backed and supported by many in powerful positions in London.

Hain does not score points or write a full story of the end of apartheid, which involved black workers and independent trade unions I worked with in South Africa in the 1980s. But Hain was their hero and the man who jump-started the end of apartheid by running on to sport fields in England and at a stroke exposing the lie that racist politics in sport is not the same as racist politics in any field of activity.

This is a page turner and can be given to any young person who wants to see that political engagement even as a school or university student can change the world for the better.

Denis MacShane was MP for Rotherham 1994–2012, and co-author of *Power, Black Workers, their unions and the Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (1984)



“DON'T STICK WITH A LOSER” AND OTHER HANDY HINTS

Peter Hain

Must Labour Always Lose?

By Denis MacShane

Published by Claret Press

WHEN DENIS MACSHANE succeeded me as Europe Minister in late 2002, Foreign Office officials remarked, somewhat sniffily, on his frequent articles in the main continental newspapers like *Le Monde* or *El Pais*.

Part-Minister, part-journalist and part-politician, part-writer and part-trade unionist, multi-lingual, voluble, witty, irreverent, passionate, eloquent, enthusiastic, engaging – Denis is multi-talented, as this part-memoir, part-manifesto for future Labour success reflects.

We are of the same Labour generation and his highly readable book is a tour de force of Party ups and downs from the 1970s onward, the triumphs and more often the setbacks.

He is trenchant and provocative, ending with twelve steps to make Labour electable, the most compelling being: ‘Don’t stick with a loser as a leader’; ‘In Opposition behave like a government’; ‘Establish a story – the famous narrative.’

Other MacShane lessons are more contentious, such as abolishing the annual Party conference, setting time-limits for MPs, and always having two or three Shadow Cabinet Members who have ‘written proper books’.

Must Labour Always Lose? also has a novel format: throughout the text are inserted 52 lessons from a rich and continuing political life. His blunt judgement in Lesson 41 is typically controversial and simultaneously insightful: ‘Never assume after a period in government it is easy to win back power. It is usually a two or even three election project. Tiggerish ex-ministers should be quietly retired to Select Committees and new faces brought on, not the tired out ex-ministers voters have rejected.’

Denis is invariably good company and never dull in his writing, challenging and arguing over the Party he both loves and is frustrated by.

Lesson 45 resonated with me though will doubtless grate with self-styled keepers of the Party faith: ‘Labour’s love of dumping on what previous Labour governments and prime ministers have done is debating-society politics, not establishing Labour as a serious party of power.’

Like Denis I am proud of the Labour government in which I had the privilege to serve for twelve years. We did some amazing things, the peace and power-sharing settlement in Northern Ireland perhaps the proudest. We made mistakes, Iraq being the biggest and most damaging. I argued with New Labour’s high command that we were neglecting our traditional base at our peril. We shouldn’t have been neoliberal-lite in our economic policy: pro-market and pro-business, yes; but not pro- even more outsourcing and privatisation. And yet the governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown massively increased public spending whilst reducing debt and borrowing – until the global credit crunch hit us hard, and Cameron and Osborne were allowed to get away with the blatant falsehood that Labour, rather than casino finances of international banks, were to blame.

As the devoted MP for Rotherham he was in what he describes as ‘almost permanent warfare’ with the BNP for denouncing their racism and anti-Semitism. I know the feeling...

Denis is invariably good company and never dull in his writing, challenging and arguing over the Party he both loves and is frustrated by – something we all probably have in common with him.

His encyclopaedic knowledge of European politics, history and culture, together with his friendships and contacts, many at the highest level, was always awesome and shines throughout the book.

And as a proud European – though with his feet on door-knocking ground, not stuck amongst the ivory tower Euro cognoscenti – Brexit was a painful repudiation of all he stood for, all our Party stands for.

‘Am I in the end a failure?’ he asks disarmingly, when concluding the book. ‘I failed to keep my country in Europe...I failed to get Labour to take seriously policies and social and economic practice in other countries.’

No, Denis, that’s grossly unfair to yourself. Not least because it could be asked of virtually every Labour MP of our generation. Better to have tried and failed than not to have tried at all.

Lord Hain was MP for Neath from 1991–2015

THE MP WHO TRIED TO DISAPPEAR

Steve Pound

John Stonehouse, My Father

By Julia Stonehouse

Published by Icon

NO SOONER HAD I STARTED in on *John Stonehouse, My Father* by Julia Stonehouse than a book by the son of his nephew and lawyer appeared. The reader may judge its tone by the title *Stonehouse: Cabinet Minister, Fraudster, Spy*. If Julia Stonehouse verges on hagiography, Julian Hayes shows no mercy in his dissection of John Stonehouse's character and activities.

Those of us who were around and politically active were stunned when in November 1974 John Stonehouse – once a leading light of Harold Wilson's cabinet – disappeared off the coast of Florida leaving a pile of clothes on the beach and a hundred unanswered questions back home.

John Stonehouse won Walsall North comfortably in October 1974 and, although he was not considered for ministerial position, he had a vital role to play in the years ahead. But in August that year he was already preparing for what his daughter feels to be a plan born of madness, but which the impartial observer might feel to be an attempted insurance swindle, escape from ever mounting debts and the opportunity of a new life with his former secretary, Sheila Buckley.

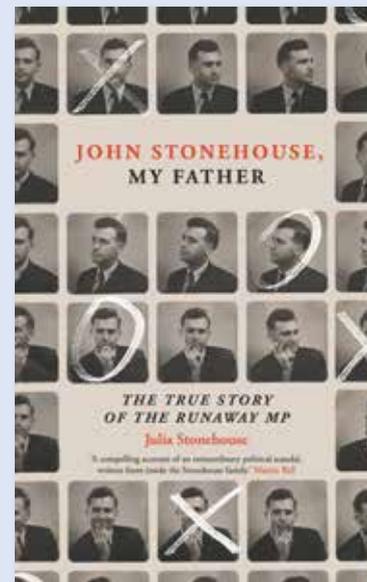
Julia Stonehouse charts her father's early life admiringly, and there is much there to admire. Stonehouse worked for two years in East Africa and was a true friend to emerging African leaders such as Seretse Khama, Julius Nyerere and Tom Mboya. With that background, he rose rapidly in the 1964 Labour government.

So, what went wrong? What led him from the Privy Council to the deserted beach of Miami?

Julia Stonehouse blames an increasing consumption of Mandrax and Mogadon, making a powerful case for a nervous breakdown. She cites the shady financiers of the Bank of Bangladesh Trust and sees sharks swimming around her father as he sought to build a business in parallel with his parliamentary career. It is persuasive, yet it does not ultimately persuade.

As his former parliamentary neighbour, Bruce George, once told me "John Stonehouse was too handsome and successful for his own good. He couldn't live up to his own image". And my Labour Parliamentary predecessor, Bill Molloy, who was John Stonehouse's PPS, spoke bitterly of his absurd shenanigans, saying at the time "to err is human, to revel in it is repugnant".

John Stonehouse was a self-made man who wanted to make far more of himself. The large country house, the family home in London, and a life style that seems almost Cameroonian could not be sustained on a backbencher's salary. It is blindingly clear that John Stonehouse needed – and wanted – money. His many companies – from Connoisseurs of Claret to Export Promotions and Consultancy Services – could not provide the readies. Other sources had to be found.



He was indisputably in the pay of the Czech intelligence service, the StB. Though the quality of intelligence he supplied in the back of taxis was of poor quality, he extracted very considerable sums until the formidable Czech secret service gave up on Stonehouse and changed his code name from Kolon (the colonialist – rather a complimentary title) to "Twister".

He then drew on his considerable political capital from having supported East Pakistan in a terrible war of independence in 1971, and set up the British Bangladesh Trust to provide banking facilities for Bangladeshis in Britain and to further bilateral trade.

But by 1974 he saw no hope of preferment, his businesses were failing, and his mistress was living in his Westminster flat and had announced her pregnancy. It must have seemed wonderfully attractive to simply slip off his old personality with his clothes, and reappear to live happily ever after with Sheila Buckley in Australia.

This selfish delusion took no account of the agony caused to the two widows whose late husbands' identities he had taken, to his wife Barbara, to his family and to the party that had been his life from boyhood.

The rest of the story needs no repetition. The grotesque escapades in Australia culminating in his daughter sleeping in one room while he was with Sheila in the other. His desperate attempts to obtain Swedish or Bangladeshi citizenship. A farcical trial awaited on his return to England, a jail sentence and a by-election in Walsall North won, predictably, by the Tory.

I wholly respect Julia Stonehouse's exculpatory biography but have to conclude that John Stonehouse was self-centred and greedy. If anyone emerges from this book with credit it is Barbara Stonehouse who suffered greatly and was appallingly betrayed. It is a book to be read but with an open mind and in conjunction with that of Julian Hayes. Both authors have a unique perspective on the rise and fall of a man of huge talents who flew too close to the sun.

Stephen Pound was MP for Ealing North, 1997–2019

TRIBUTES

ERNIE ROSS

27 July 1942 – 17 October 2021

Labour MP for Dundee West 1979 – 2005

Remembered by Richard Burden



“A MAN OF REAL POLITICAL SKILL, he was great fun to be with, a good friend and a great member of Parliament.” Perceptive words from long-time friend and colleague, Lord George Foulkes, about Ernie Ross, who died on 17 October, aged 79.

Ernie represented his home town of Dundee in Parliament from 1979 to 2005. A diligent constituency MP,

Ernie was also a passionate defender of human rights who made a lasting impact on Labour’s international policies, particularly in relation to the Middle East.

Ernie spoke up for the rights of the Palestinians long before it was widely understood that justice for Palestine will be essential to securing a sustainable peace in the region. Under his guidance, Dundee twinned with the West Bank town of Nablus and became the first city in the UK to fly the Palestinian flag over its council buildings. As Chair of the Labour Middle East Council, he pioneered visits by Parliamentarians to the West Bank and Gaza, rightly identifying that to understand that part of the world, there is no substitute for seeing for yourself the daily reality of life under occupation for the people of Palestine. Palestinian leaders held Ernie in high regard.

Ernie’s interest in international affairs went well beyond

the Middle East. A member of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee for several years, he was also an ally of Robin Cook during his time as Foreign Secretary. Unfortunately, it was also a friendship which got Ernie into trouble with the Committee when he alerted Robin to the contents of one of its reports before publication.

Ernie also chaired of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), helping parliaments, parties and civil society groups to develop inclusive, accountable and transparent political systems in 38 countries, prioritising Africa, Central and Eastern Europe. In the years following the break-up of Yugoslavia, WFD’s post-conflict work in Bosnia, Kosovo and Serbia was important and timely.

Parliament is, of course, the place of work for hundreds of employees, but Ernie knew that, too often, MPs are not model employers. He worked to change that, arguing that the PLP’s recognition of trade unions representing MPs’ staff must be more consistently reflected in practice by his colleagues.

He did not suffer fools gladly and he could be abrupt when crossed, but Ernie was unfailingly loyal to his party and to his friends. I was privileged to know him.

His rock was June, to whom he was married for 57 years. Our thoughts are with her, with their three children, Stephen, Ali and Karen, with all of his family and with his many friends.

DICK LEONARD

12 December 1930 – 24 June 2021

Labour MP for Romford, 1970 – 1974

Remembered by Denis MacShane



THE DEATH AT AGE 90 of Dick Leonard brought an outpouring of tributes from across the political spectrum. He had joined the Labour Party at school and campaigned as a 15 year-old in the 1945 election. A decade later, still only 25, he stood in Harrow West, which included Pinner, his family home town.

Leonard did not join the circuit of would-be Labour MPs from London who headed to safe seats in industrial working class Britain. Instead he stayed in the capital, and was deputy general secretary of the Fabian Society. He founded the Young Fabians, a training school for what in due course became the New Labour generation of MPs and think-tankers.

He was one of the many idealistic post-1945 politicians who believed strongly in international cooperation at all levels of Europe and the wider world. He won Romford in 1970, against the trend of Labour losses as Edward Heath enjoyed his short 40 months of power in the long period of Labour hegemony 1964-1979. Like John Smith, also elected in 1970, Dick was a brand new MP ready to defy the nationalist left, and the domineering trade unions that then had so much sway over

Labour affairs, to vote for entry into the EU in 1972. He was one of 69 Labour MPs who defied Harold Wilson and provided the majority for Britain’s 43 years of partnership politics with European democracies.

After losing his seat in 1974, he switched to journalism as European editor of the *Economist*. With other left journalists like John Palmer of the *Guardian* he gradually helped Labour to shed its opposition to Europe as John Smith, Tony Blair and the new Labour generation took over.

Leonard was one of the friendliest open men I ever met in Labour politics. He married a German, Irene Heidelberger, professor of German literature at London University. Their son, Mark Leonard, set up the European Council of Foreign Relations in 2008, which is now one of the pre-eminent foreign policy think tanks in Europe. Dick was a regular at the ECFR’s influential breakfast seminars all during his 80s.

One of the warmest tributes to Leonard came from Romford’s current MP Andrew Rosindell, whose views on Europe are diametrically opposed to those of his predecessor. Rosindell said: “While I never knew Dick during his time in Parliament, I was very proud to meet him later in my life. He was a man of huge intelligence and integrity and I pay tribute to him for the enormous contribution he made during his life in so many areas.”

AUSTIN MITCHELL

19 September 1934 – 18 August 2021

Labour MP for Great Grimsby 1977 – 2015

Remembered by Shona McIsaac

I CAN STILL HEAR IT NOW – that laugh! So characterful, the memory of Austin's laughter will always make me smile. As will those garish ties.

Long before I was elected in Cleethorpes, I'd admired Austin's work as a journalist, writer and presenter. I watched him on the telly and had some of his books. When I

was selected, I was excited by the prospect of working with Great Grimsby's favourite Yorkshireman.

Austin was unfailingly supportive and kind. I stayed in Austin and Linda's house during the 1995 summer recess while they were away. Austin roared with that characteristic laugh when I recounted the look of shock on a neighbour's face when she saw a young redhead open the bedroom curtains one morning. 'I'll tell the *Grimsby Telegraph* to headline the story: Mitchell hit by reds in the bed scandal.' And a larder stocked with House of Commons whisky? For raffles, he said. 'When you're elected, stock up. From day one, it's all raffles and blocked drains.' The first call I had on getting home as that new dawn broke was about a blocked drain. I still wonder if it was Austin on the phone!

We were a team – Austin and Shona – Grimsby and Cleethorpes – working together in our far east outpost. We

had a hoot – riding a tandem for charity, dance competitions, explaining to Austin what was happening on the pitch at Blundell Park while he snapped pics of tankers on the Humber or when our local newspaper columns were mixed up and published mine under Austin's name – the only known time Austin supported staying in Europe. He laughed, of course.

Our antics were often covered in Austin's *House Magazine* column with Austin portraying himself as a creaky Old Labour lag valiantly trying to keep pace with me and my shiny New Labour campaigning ways. That self-deprecating wit went against him in some ways masking as it did a fierce intellect and serious, campaigning politician.

We were chuffed when, after decades of fighting, we secured compensation for distant water trawlermen who lost their livelihoods after the Cod Wars. We fought, too, in that friendly way you do when you work closely with someone – on Europe, of course, or seals eating too much fish quota. Locally, it was dubbed the great clubber versus cuddler controversy with Austin as the clubber and me as the cuddler.

He joked about starting on the right and ending up on the left of Labour without changing his political views. Privately, he said left and right categories were meaningless because no one is that one-dimensional.

One dimensional, he wasn't. Yet, I can't help but think that too many of today's politicians seem rather bland in comparison to my dear friend, Mr Haddock.

DAFYDD ELYSTAN ELYSTAN-MORGAN, BARON ELYSTAN-MORGAN

7 December 1932 – 7 July 2021

Labour MP for Cardiganshire, 1966 – 1974

Remembered by Keith Best

IT SEEMED like a foregone conclusion. Elystan Morgan, as he was known, a distinguished barrister and native Welsh speaker, had been selected to succeed Rt Hon Cledwyn Hughes who had represented Anglesey for 28 years – but I had worked hard on the council estates and places on the island where Conservatives had not gone before. At

the close of poll in Llangefni Town Hall, before even the ballot papers had been stacked for counting, Elystan came to me with the kindness and grace that were his hallmarks and said "Keith, bach, you have won by tons"!

In my naivety I told him that at that stage he could not possibly know – but there spoke the experienced politician over the parvenu who had never previously fought a seat. The result was subsequently described in *The Economist* as the biggest upset of that election.

Elystan was steeped in the culture and language of Wales, at school and university in Aberystwyth and an early recruit to Plaid Cymru, contesting Wrexham as their candidate at a by-election in 1955, and then in the 1955 and 1959 general elections, and Merionydd in 1964. He then joined the Labour Party, becoming their MP for Cardiganshire two years later with

a majority of only 523. He held the seat in 1970 but lost to the Liberals' Geraint Howells in February 1974. His political career burgeoned, becoming Under Secretary of State in the Home Office in 1968 and later Chairman of the Welsh Parliamentary Labour Party. It was widely rumoured that had Labour won the 1979 election, Elystan would have become Home Secretary.

Elystan was a fervent proponent of devolution and, in many ways, was its intellectual author, later persuading Jim Callaghan to have a commission (the Crowther, later Kilbrandon Commission). He was the President of the "yes" campaign during the first referendum on Welsh devolution, which was heavily defeated on 1 March 1979, but he lived to see the dream become reality with the 1997 referendum and the Government of Wales Act 1998.

Elystan was elevated to the Lords in May 1981 and I went to congratulate him at his home where I was met by his gentle courtesy. He then concentrated on his legal work having converted from solicitor to barrister in Cardiff Chambers and became a judge in 1987 with his legal life taking pre-eminence over politics. I have no doubt that he would have enjoyed as successful a career in the latter and perhaps we were deprived of a potential Lord Chancellor of integrity and distinction.

Elystan Morgan was a good and effective politician and lawyer but, above all, a gentle, generous and distinguished man.



ANDREW WELSH

19 April 1944 – 18 June 2021
SNP MP for South Angus, October 1974–1979, and Angus 1997–2001

Remembered by his widow, Sheena Welsh

ANDREW WELSH was born at home in Cardonald, Glasgow, to Agnes and William Welsh. The youngest of three children, he attended Govanhill High School and after a short spell in banking, went on to graduate MA (Hons) from the University of Glasgow before training as a teacher at Jordanhill College.

A committed Nationalist from the age of 12, Andrew Welsh served the people of Angus as a local government Councillor and, from 1984, as Provost of Angus. He was first elected to Westminster in October 1974, as one of the 11 SNP MPs. After he lost his seat in 1979, local Conservatives predicted that the SNP in his South Angus constituency would disappear “like snow off a dyke” – but they severely underestimated Andrew’s tenacity, determination and capacity for hard work. He returned to Westminster as MP for Angus in 1987, and was elected as an MSP from the first election to the new Scottish Parliament until he retired in 2011. After two years of dual mandate, he left Westminster to concentrate on his seat in the Scottish Parliament.

As a former history teacher, Andrew appreciated the historical importance of the Palace of Westminster and took great delight in showing visiting constituents round

the building and explaining where and why important events had taken place, outlining some of the quaint customs of the House and developing an appreciation of its architecture.

During his time as an MP, Andrew was SNP spokesperson on several topics, from agriculture to housing, small businesses and the self-employed to local government and education. He was also Chief Whip.

Andrew’s great strength was as a constituency MP and MSP. He was deeply respected for his work on behalf of his constituency and its people. Nothing was too much trouble to him and he had a strong reputation for “getting things done”. He also thoroughly enjoyed sharing in the activities that were important to his constituents and could be found every weekend supporting local musical societies, theatre groups, sports clubs or horticultural societies.

Although he had made friends across all the parties at Westminster, nothing would have stopped Andrew from standing for election in 1999 to the first Scottish Parliament. He did not see the devolution settlement as an end in itself, but as an important step along the way to achieving eventual full independence for Scotland. He threw himself into working to ensure the new Parliament gained the respect of the Scottish people, and contributed greatly to ensuring that it became a cornerstone of Scottish life.

On retiring, he was greatly honoured to be appointed as a Depute Lieutenant of the County of Angus and to have the status of Freeman of Angus bestowed upon him by Angus Council.



NEWS FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OUTREACH TRUST

An update from the Chair, John Austin

We were hoping to bring news of an exciting new project this year. Through the Observer of the IPU to the UN, the Trust was in discussions with UN Women Afghanistan about providing on-line mentoring to Afghan Women MPs. We had recruited nine of our women members, former MPs and MEPs, to participate. Regrettably, with the Taliban coming to power those Afghan women now need support of a different kind.

On the domestic front, we are continuing to support universities and schools by providing speakers. At the time of writing, we have two events coming up, with Tom Levitt giving a talk to Brunel, and Helen Jones to Westminster. These events will probably be on-line, but there is the prospect of actual visits soon. We continue working with Exeter University on their Parliamentary Studies module and are awaiting confirmation of dates for November and December. We are also

pursuing links with Durham University, where Colin Challen is already involved, and with Edinburgh.

Our partnership with Speakers for Schools (S4S) is working well with 12 of our members participating and a further nine volunteers in the process of induction. S4S will continue to coordinate virtual talks but are currently contacting schools about hosting in-person talks in future.

We have also established links with a not-for-profit social enterprise I Have a Voice which works with young people to increase political literacy and engagement. Several of our members, including Jeremy Lefroy, Adrian Sanders, Helen Jones, Joan Walley and Sir Vince Cable contributed to their recent report on the value of political education and some participated in the launch. A copy of the report can be found at: <http://bitly.ws/hf76>

We received the following feedback from the project organiser: “Members

of the Parliamentary Outreach Trust contributed to a discussion paper on the many facets of political literacy and participation. Their insight into the relationship between MPs and their constituents was crucial to the paper. In particular sharing their experiences of communicating key policy developments, furthering the public’s understanding of elections beyond party politics, encouraging people to engage with politics between elections and engaging with the education sector. The launch event was well-attended and we are now working on the discussion points raised in the paper with a range of stakeholders, many of which arose as a result of discussion with the Trust. IHAV is extremely grateful to the Trust for its time and expertise...”

We are looking at the possibility of scheduling our AGM to coincide with the next All Member Meeting of the Association.

www.parlyoutreach.org.uk

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