

# Order! Order!

The Official Journal of the Association of Former Members of Parliament



SUMMER 2026

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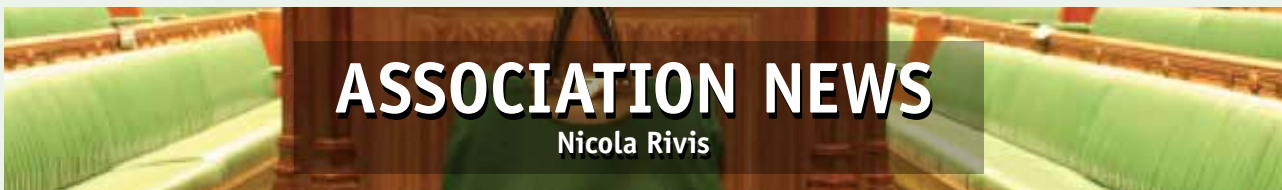
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NICOLA RIVIS

### NEXT MEETING

The Association's next All-Member Meeting will take place on Thursday **9 July 2026** from **16:30–17:30** in CR1, House of Lords, where we will hear from Baroness (Angela) Smith of Basildon, Leader of the House of Lords.

The Summer Reception will also take place on **Thursday 9 July 2026** from **17:30–19:30** in the Speaker's State Apartments, House of Commons, which Mr Speaker has kindly allowed us to use for our reception again.

If you wish to attend the reception, please email me with confirmation of all names. Partners are welcome, but please no guests due to restriction on numbers. This event is ticketed at £42 per head.

Please also include the **ref: Summer Reception**. Payment can be made by bank transfer or cheque in the post to me at House of Commons, Room G13, 1 Parliament St, London SW1A 2NE. Upon receipt of payment and names, I will confirm your name(s) are on the guest list. I will then send out the official individually named invitations a couple of weeks before the event.

### Payment details:

Account name: "Association of Former MPs"

Barclays Bank

**Account no:** 50281506

**Sort Code:** 20–47–39



Unfortunately, the proposed visit to the National Memorial Arboretum (Order! Order! Spring 2026) has now been postponed until September 2027. We hope this will allow additional time for advance planning and, in turn, enable more members to attend.

It will also mean that the Remembrance Clock will be in place for us to view next September, which will make the occasion even more special.



## NEWS FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OUTREACH TRUST

An update from the Chair, John Austin

### UNIVERSITIES

We seldom receive requests for speakers in the final term of the academic year, when students and lecturers are concentrating on exams and assessments but we are in discussion with a number of universities regarding possible engagements for the new academic year. We are keen to expand our work and would like to hear from members who have contacts with universities that we may not have worked with before. Our work with secondary schools is conducted through a partnership with the educational charity Futures for All (<https://www.futuresforall.org/>)

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Parliamentary Outreach Trust will be held on **Thursday 9 July** at **15:30–16:30** in Committee Room

1, House of Lords. Membership of the Trust is open to any member of the Association without charge, and all Association members are invited to attend the Trust AGM. Membership of the Trust is also open to former members of the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Parliament/Senedd Cymru, Northern Ireland Assembly and former UK Members of the European Parliament.

The closing date for nominations for trustees (Chair, two Vice-Chairs, Secretary and Treasurer) and committee members (maximum eight) is **24 June, 2026**.

The retiring trustees and committee members are all eligible for re-election: Trustees: John Austin (Chair), Keith Best (Secretary), Sarah McCarthy-Fry (Treasurer), Dr Tania Mathias and Michael Meadowcroft (Vice-Chairs)

Committee Members: Huw Edwards, Nigel Griffiths, Dame Sylvia Heal, Adrian Sanders, Tom Levitt, Lawrie Quinn, David Morris.

**The agenda and full details of the meeting will be sent to all members who have joined the Trust mailing list. If you wish your name to be added or wish to volunteer to speak to schools or universities, or receive further information, contact John Austin at [admin@parlyoutreach.org.uk](mailto:admin@parlyoutreach.org.uk)**

*As this edition was going to print, sadly we learned of the death of the Trust's Vice-chair, former Liberal MP, Michael Meadowcroft. Tributes will follow in the next edition of Order! Order!*

**JOHN AUSTIN**  
Chair, Parliamentary Outreach Trust

# FINAL WHISTLES AND DIVISION BELLS

**MIKE HALL REMEMBERS THE OBSTACLES FOOTBALL  
MAD MPS OVERCAME TO WATCH THE '98 WORLD CUP  
INSIDE THEIR ILLUSTRIOUS WORKPLACE**



*The House of Commons, like most large centres of employment, has workers who are football fans. Their interest ranges from those who just look at the results each weekend out of curiosity to see how their local team has got on, to tribal fanatics supporting their chosen team to the exclusion of all others.*

What separates the Palace of Westminster from almost every other large employer is that the House of Commons has representation that covers the whole of the United Kingdom. Every team from the grassroots to the top leagues and the four national sides is represented by at least one Member of Parliament.

This is one of the reasons why the Football All-Party Parliamentary Group is one of the largest groups in Westminster.

After the Labour Party's 1997 general election victory, the first major international football event was the 1998 FIFA World Cup finals in France. With both Scotland and England qualifying for the finals passions were running high, but where could MPs watch the televised games? In 1998 the parliamentary annunciators strategically positioned around the Palace of Westminster only carried limited information about activities in the Commons chamber and MPs' offices did not have TVs.

At the time I was PPS to Ann Taylor, Leader of the House of Commons and President of the Council. It did not take long before two options emerged from our informal discussions: either find somewhere on the parliamentary estate which could be set up to screen the world cup, or leave it up to MPs to make their way out to local pubs and other venues screening the world cup.

A small number of likeminded Labour MPs met to come up with a plan to watch the world cup on the parliamentary estate and identified four objectives – source a big screen, find a secure room big enough to accommodate a large group of

viewers in a discrete location, allow the consumption of refreshments (booze and soft drinks), and be self-funding without any freebies, sponsorship or subsidy from the taxpayer.

As I had a friend in the white goods trade who assured me there were a lot of second-hand "big screens" available at very reasonable prices, I ordered one from him. Objective one achieved – in theory.

## **Where?**

Finding a suitable room was problematic. Using any of the committee rooms in the House of Commons was out of the question, they were not secure, the public could gain access to them, refreshments were not permitted and a big screen could not be left in there for the duration of the world cup finals.

The great rooms of state in the House of Commons, such as the Speaker's House and the Prime Minister's suite were clearly out of bounds. Likewise, Westminster Hall. Putting a TV in the Strangers' Bar or the old Sports and Social Club was ruled out because of lack of control on access.

*As the opening of the World Cup came closer,  
I pressed my friend for a delivery date of the big screen  
only to be met by evasion. By this time the draw for the group stages  
of the finals had been made and brought the extra excitement  
of the opening tie being Scotland versus Brazil*

The Large Ministerial Conference Room directly under the chamber of the House of Commons seemed ideal. Big enough. Discrete with access only available to pass holders, and secure. We would need permission to use the room to watch the world cup matches, and a Minister of the Crown to book the room for each game.

It was my job to persuade the Leader of the House that hosting the screenings of the world cup was an appropriate use of the Large Ministerial Conference Room and that she should be the one to book the room for all the matches taking place while the House of Commons was sitting.

After taking appropriate advice, Ann agreed the usage of the room and made all the necessary bookings (in fact she delegated that task to her grateful PPS).

### Preparations

The refreshment problem was solved quite easily. Jim Dowd MP (Lewisham West) brought in alcoholic beverages and soft drinks from the Majestic Wine Warehouse. And at the suggestion of Ian McKenzie, SPAD to the Leader of the House, lidded crates filled with ice from the House of Commons kitchen icemaker (with permission from the chair of the House of Commons Catering Committee, Dennis Turner MP for Wolverhampton South East), were used to chill the white wine, beer and soft drinks.

The funding was straightforward. Initially around 20 Labour MPs agreed to club together and stump up the approximate estimated £1,000 for the second-hand big screen; £50 a head seemed a good investment.

As the opening of the World Cup came closer, I pressed my friend for a delivery date of the big screen only to be met by evasion. By this time the

draw for the group stages of the finals had been made and brought the extra excitement of the opening tie being Scotland versus Brazil.

### Finding the screen

With only days to go to the opening game on 10 June the purchase of a big screen telly was proving elusive. In desperation I approached a friend and local businessman, Mike Carr, who owned a TV rental retailer in Warrington. I explained our predicament and he promised to put his best manager on the case. Word came back that there were no big screens available to rent but a 48-inch screen was available to buy for the grand sum of £2,500 with delivery on 11 June!

A hasty meeting of the 20 members of the emerging Big Screen Co-operative was convened to discuss the escalating costs. Once again Dennis Turner, later Lord Bilston came to the rescue. He said the Springvale Co-operative Club in Bilston would underwrite the purchase of the TV to cover the shortfall of £1,500.

Meanwhile Mike Carr was told the TV had to be delivered to the Palace of Westminster in time for the Scotland v Brazil match because Prime Minister Tony Blair would be one of the MPs watching the opening game. of the 1998 World Cup finals. This small piece of name dropping did the trick and it was delivered on time.

### Noise

Come 10 June the 48-inch screen was in place, refreshments were on ice, the Large Ministerial Conference Room was full and the Prime Minister was in attendance.

The atmosphere was electric. When Brazil took the lead only five minutes into the first half it could not put a

dampener on the atmosphere in the Large Ministerial Conference Room.

When Scotland was awarded a penalty in the 38th minute you could hear a pin drop as John Collins stepped up to the spot. When he slotted home the ball the roar of the crowd watching the big screen was heard in the chamber of the House of Commons.

Scotland kept the game level until Tom Boyd scored an own goal giving Brazil a 2–1 victory. And to make matters worse a message was dispatched from Madam Speaker to the Large Ministerial Conference Room to keep the noise down.

England's opening game in Group G was on 15 June against Tunisia at the Stade Velodrome in Marseille. Goals from Alan Shearer and Paul Scholes saw England through to a 2–0 victory.

As the competition progressed so did the number of people watching the big screen. To cover the costs of refreshments, which were provided free, Gerry Sutcliffe MP (Bradford South) organised a "golden goal" sweepstake for each half of the game. Punters paid a £1 a go to predict the time of the first goal in each half. The pot was split 50:50, half going to the winner and half towards the costs of refreshments. Right from the start, as with many sporting events, "statos" emerged. Andrew Taylor, son of Ann Taylor, and Alex Stewart, son of Ian Stewart MP became our resident commentators and statisticians. Their presence, knowledge and insights at each game were invaluable.

The whole purpose of the Big Screen Co-operative was to provide a safe and discrete environment for members of the Parliamentary Labour Party and invited guests to watch world cup games. This worked for the most part, but things did not always go right.

*On 30 June, England played Argentina in the knockout round of 16. Argentina took an early lead from the penalty spot. Shearer got a quick equaliser for England. Michael Owen scored a wonder goal to put England in front. On the stroke of half-time Argentina equalised and the sides went in 2–2 at the end of the first half.*

### Oops!

Early in the competition a group the gatekeeper did not recognise tried to gain entrance to watch a game. He was at the point of turning them away when Ann Taylor intervened: “It’s OK to let them in. That’s Pat McFadden, senior adviser to the Prime Minister, and others staffers from No 10.”

After another early game a considerable amount of booze was left in the Large Ministerial Conference Room only to disappear overnight. Of course, the parliamentary police investigated but no one was charged. Fortunately, Paul Goggins MP, a serious Manchester City fan, and Home Office minister, had an office next door. He kindly gave permission for the spare booze to be securely stashed there.

As word got around about the big screen interest began to increase.

The journalist and former MP Matthew Parris found his way to Large Ministerial Conference Room when a game was in progress. How he managed to circumvent the security to find his way there was not disclosed, but he was asked very politely to leave. And as far as we know he did not report on his discovery.

On another occasion when I went to set up the room for an evening game, I found a security guard sat on his own watching a tennis match from the Wimbledon championships!

During the screening of one of Scotland’s matches Eleanor Laing, the Tory MP for Epping Forest and now Baroness Laing of Elderslie, arrived saying she had been invited to watch the match by fellow Scot, Ian Gibson. But Ian, who was a Big Screen Co-operative shareholder, was not present for that match and she was refused entry. Eleanor, a very sociable person who got on with MPs across the party divide, left without a fuss. But to this day she has not

forgiven Gerry Sutcliffe for turning her away.

The big screen was particularly popular with MPs from Scotland, those who represented Scottish constituencies and those Scots who represented constituencies in other parts of the UK. Ian Gibson (Norwich North) was one of them. During the match in which Scotland was eliminated from the competition Ian threw his cloth cap at the big screen.

### England v Argentina

On 30 June, England played Argentina in the knockout round of 16. Argentina took an early lead from the penalty spot. Shearer got a quick equaliser for England. Michael Owen scored a wonder goal to put England in front. On the stroke of half-time Argentina equalised and the sides went in 2–2 at the end of the first half.

Only two minutes into the second half David Beckham was fouled by Diego Simeone. Beckham was left prostrate on the ground. To provoke Beckham further Simeone rubbed his knuckles across the back of his head. Foolishly Beckham gently raised his leg towards Simeone who fell to the ground as though he had been kneecapped with a baseball bat. Beckham was sent off for retaliation. Simeone wasn’t even booked.

The scores stayed level as the final whistle approached. In a last-minute goal mouth scramble Sol Campbell scored for England. The crowd in the Large Ministerial Conference Room erupted. Again, the cheers were heard in the House of Commons chamber directly above where a debate was underway.

Unfortunately, the referee disallowed the goal because of a perceived foul by Alan Shearer on the Argentinian goalkeeper.

At full-time the game ended level and the Leader of the House of Commons

sent an urgent message to Deputy Speaker Dawn Primarolo MP, who was presiding in the House of Commons, to keep the debate going until extra time had finished. But the score remained at 2–2 and the game went to a penalty shoot-out. Another message was dispatched to the Deputy Speaker to prolong the debate until the shoot-out was over.

England lost the penalty shoot-out 4–3 and were eliminated.

### Now what!

The competition ended on 12 July when France beat the favourites Brazil 3–0. Shortly after, a meeting of the now 62-strong Big Screen Co-operative was convened to decide what to do about the TV and how to dispose the assets.

We had before us two serious options: sell the big screen to the Springvale Co-operative Club for the previously agreed sum of £1,500, or accept an offer of £3,000 from LBC Radio. They planned to put a plaque on it saying something along the lines of “The TV on which Prime Minister Tony Blair watched the opening game of the 1998 Football World Cup” and then offer it as a competition prize for listeners.

By unanimous agreement it was decided to sell the TV to the Springvale Co-operative Club. Each member of the Big Screen Co-operative received a refund of £34, which was seen as a very satisfactory outcome for all concerned.

Dennis Turner duly arranged for a van to transport it to Bilston. The van was not big enough to accommodate the TV which had to be dismantled before departing the parliamentary estate. It proved a huge success with the Springvale club members for watching sports – particularly horseracing.

**Mike Hall was Labour MP for Warrington South 1993–97 and for Weaver Vale, 1997–2010.**

# 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

## REBECCA POW

### TAUNTON DEANE 2015–2024



Losing my parliamentary seat in the place I've called home for more than thirty years was one of the most brutal experiences of my life – second only to the loss of my wonderful husband. Overnight, the foundations beneath me seemed to crumble.

As many former MPs will know, public service ends abruptly. The immediate focus becomes supporting loyal staff through redundancy and winding up offices. My role as Environment Minister – an area I had championed all my life and was honoured to serve in for five years – also stopped instantly. With that, the grief for my husband, which I had kept at bay while serving in Parliament, finally caught up with me.

Time, though, is a healer. I now find myself entering what I call my "fourth trimester" after a media career, running my PR company, and then Parliament. I'm focusing on areas where I still hope to add value: farming, rural life, the environment, nature, food production – and yes, some cricket. I'm delighted to have joined the board of the Somerset Cricket Foundation. I'm co-chairing the climate committee for the Environmental Industries Association with the charismatic Mims Davies MP; serving as a non-executive director for the Royal Bath and West of England Society and the Hestercombe Gardens Trust; undertaking consultancy work on water; and working internationally with Vantara in India, the world's largest rescue centre for endangered animals. I'm also an ambassador for CHASE Africa, supporting women's health and sustainability in rural communities.

Grass roots matter too, so I'm back on my parish and church councils. I'm relishing precious time with my children and first grandchild, and have even reopened my garden for charity. Life is for living – and doing my bit for future generations and the planet remains a priority.

Website: <http://rebecca-pow.co.uk> Instagram: [powr\\_of\\_nature](#)



## TONY WRIGHT

### GREAT YARMOUTH, 1997–2010

It was no surprise when I lost my seat in 2010 after representing my town of birth for 13 years – the first Labour MP since 1966–70.

At the age of 55 it was a case of what do I do now? Fortunately, within a month of losing I was offered a position as Business Development Adviser at a local marine surveying company, Gardline, which operates throughout the world. I gladly took up the position and worked there for eight years. I am eternally grateful to the managing director for creating a role for me.

During my time at Gardline I was tasked with assisting in setting up a new seafarers' centre and became a director, a position I still hold today.

Although I took a step back from frontline politics I kept in touch with former colleagues and paid regular visits to Westminster.

In 2018 I decided to stand for the borough council again and was successful. In ensuing years I was made a director of the local Business Improvement District and joined the Eastern Area Merchant Navy Welfare Board, being chairman for three years.

When my councillor term ends officially in 2028 I will have served in total for 25 years as a borough councillor, 13 years as MP and will have worked in every election since February 1974.

I will undoubtedly miss the cut and thrust of politics but pleased that no longer will I have to consult my diary before arranging holidays.

## VIRGINIA CROSBIE

### YNYS MON, 2019–24



Losing by just 637 votes was very difficult and not a day goes by when I do not think about the people and communities across Anglesey. My time there led to deep friendships which I continue to value enormously, and it gave me a lasting passion for Wylfa, nuclear energy and the opportunity they represent for North Wales.

I was delighted to see Rolls-Royce SMR selected for Wylfa. Having long championed the site, I believe new nuclear can bring skilled jobs, investment and long-term opportunity to Anglesey and beyond.

I am determined to keep that flame alight. I now serve on the board of the Nuclear Institute and was honoured to have been made a fellow. I am also chair of Supporters of Nuclear Energy and take every opportunity to champion the sector, including through roundtables with government ministers, industry leaders and regional stakeholders.

Since leaving Parliament, I have also become Managing Director of the Nuclear Energy Maritime Organisation (NEMO), an international body working to enable the safe, secure, insurable and internationally workable use of nuclear energy in the maritime sector. It is a fascinating and fast-moving area, bringing together regulators, classification societies, ports, insurers and industry to move nuclear at sea from ambition to delivery.

Outside of work, I remain involved in community life, recently helping to raise funds for Riding for the Disabled and the British Heart Foundation, as well as mentoring, and spending more time with my family and our cocker spaniel, Violet.

## PADDY TIPPING SHERWOOD, 1992–2010



Serious illness in the family caused me to retire in May 2010. My wife, Irene, died some months later and the family's hopes and plans changed.

I had continued with a number of things. I chaired a public/private sector partnership that built and managed

health facilities. I was also involved with the Community Foundation in Nottinghamshire which I now chair.

I've been fortunate as a number of different and interesting opportunities have opened up. I was the first Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire, from 2012 to 2021. During that period knife crime fell and there was a real focus on violence against women and girls. I still chair the Nottingham Community Safety Partnership.

I've had a long-standing interest in health policy. It's disappointing that resources have barely moved from the acute sector into primary care and prevention. The new 10-year-plan provides an opportunity and I'm involved and enthusiastic. Locally, I've got a number of different roles to try to make things happen. I'm a non-executive director of an integrated and mental health trust; I work closely with the GP Federation in Nottingham and chair a supported housing and anti-poverty charity. I'm also involved with the government's new Pride in Place initiative.

I've continued to work with the Ramblers and am lobbying for an Access to Nature Bill as well as a greater focus on animal welfare issues.

One of my daughters and her family live just round the corner. I have a lot of fun with her three daughters. They help me a lot.

## SUSAN ELAN JONES CLWYD SOUTH, 2010–2019



Although I represented my home constituency of Clwyd South in Parliament for almost a decade, much of the seat had once been held by the Conservatives and I wasn't surprised to see that happen again in 2019. By Spring 2020, I'd exchanged the voting lobbies of Westminster for the socially-distanced queues of

Tesco Cefn Mawr, shopping for the extended family.

Before I became an MP, I had worked in the voluntary

sector. Charities were also a big part of my parliamentary career as I co-chaired the APPG for charities and volunteering. Fittingly, my first post-Parliament role was a voluntary one. I was invited to join the board. Last year I took on the role of fundraising adviser for community projects at the Anglican Diocese of Southwark. It's one of the most interesting jobs I've ever had – working on the sustainability of community projects across 16 local authority areas. I'm also a trustee of the London Welsh Centre and the Wakefield and Tetley Trust (a London-based grant-making trust that's nothing to do with Yorkshire or tea).

Life these days is a happy mix of London and Rhosllannerchrugog, along with concerts and election campaigning (I mean it) in both places. I've also started learning Spanish with a view to visiting Latin America one day and hopefully being able to communicate when I do so.



## CHRIS RUANE VALE OF CLWYD, 1997–2015, 2017–19

When mindfulness professor Jon Kabat-Zinn visited Parliament, he advised politicians to "work on their parachute before they

needed to open it." I did — and opened mine twice, after losing my seat in 2015 and again in 2019. Each time it deployed fully and I had a gentle landing.

Outside Parliament I continued work on wellbeing, democracy, community and nature, mainly voluntarily, and have thrived. I believe the voluntary sector is the social cement of society: it binds us through community, common purpose and mutual support. I joined Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC) in 2021 and now serve as acting chair, supporting hundreds of voluntary groups across Denbighshire.

As an MP I campaigned on electoral registration for 20 years. After leaving Parliament my party asked me to serve on the UK Electoral Commission, where I pressed the issue; the Commission has prioritised registration and the government has included automated registration in its Representation of the People Bill. As a commissioner I must forgo active political involvement.

I promote mindfulness among legislators worldwide and chair the Mindfulness Initiative's Global Forum, working with academics, advocates and politicians in 55 countries. Since leaving Parliament I've spoken in São Paulo, Mumbai, Los Angeles, at the MoD and at the UN in Geneva. I serve on the boards of Mindfulness Wales and Monash University's M3Cs Mindfulness Centre.

I volunteer on three community gardening projects in Last December I unexpectedly received a formal letter informing me I had been awarded an OBE.

# A HALF-CENTURY OF POLITICAL INSIGHT

By Andy McSmith

**K**en Clarke – or Lord Clarke of Nottingham as he now is – was one of only five ministers appointed by Margaret Thatcher in May 1979 who were in office right the way through to 1997 – the others being Lynda Chalker, Patrick Mayhew, Tony Newton, and Malcolm Rifkind. Of that select band, he was the only one to have held office under Ted Heath, and he was the only one to return years later as a minister in David Cameron’s government.

He was indeed Britain’s longest serving minister since Lord Palmerston died, in 1865 – a surprising fact that even Lord Clarke did not know until the chairman, Lawrie Quinn, introduced him as the guest speaker at the Association’s spring meeting. He was also one of the longest serving MPs, having held Rushcliffe for 49 years and six months.

There is, therefore, no one who could talk more knowledgeably about the contrast between politics now and as it was more than half a century ago. In 1970, when he was first elected, people voted almost entirely along class lines.

“The public view of the politicians was pretty partisan,” he said. “Most people, when you canvassed, said ‘we’re all Conservative here’, or ‘we’re all Labour here’, and it very much depended on which neighbourhood you were in. You knew where to find your strength, but it was very deferential. If you were a parliamentary candidate – let alone a Member of Parliament – you were part of the Establishment and people respected you. Even the press, in reporting the debates, were quite serious.

“One reason was that we didn’t have scandals. There was a kind of unwritten rule that personal details about the lives of Members



of Parliament were not written up, but there were far more crooks in the House of Commons in those days, as I discovered once I got into the Whips’ office. Some of the private lives of colleagues would make Peter

Mandelson look quite saint-like.”

“We all attended the House of Commons and all-night sittings were quite usual. And we did all devote ourselves to politics. Parliament was a much more powerful institution.

The government of the day took far more notice of Parliament than it does now.

"We had real knights of the shire. They would visit their constituencies once a year. The station master would greet them, they would talk at a church lunch or the mayor's lunch, back on the train, and that was the constituency for that year.

"I only had about half a dozen letters a week. That was the only communication I had with my constituents. With three more members, mates of mine, I shared the services of a shorthand typist. I used to meet her, once a week. I asked for an office, but this was seen as extraordinary. What did an MP need an office for? I sat in a corridor with my secretary alongside me, and she would take notes then go away and type the half-dozen letters.

"I once had an old Labour friend walking past, who saw me doing this and asked – 'What you doing?' I said 'I'm just answering a few constituency letters.' 'Oo, I just chuck 'em in the bin!'"

### On Prime Ministers past

Ted Heath was the most unusual prime minister I have ever served with. I knew him quite well. He had no social graces whatever. He would not talk to anybody if he didn't have to. He could not speak to women. The only things he valued in life were yachting and classical music.

The two great prime ministers of my lifetime were Clement Attlee and Margaret Thatcher. They both took over the country in a terrible state, and left it in a better state than they found it. Clement Attlee created the welfare state and dealt with the post-war crisis; Margaret took on the excessive power of the trade unions.

The mythology that surrounds Margaret is farcical. To the right, she was a god-like heroine who was responsible for every act of her government; to the left, she was an evil lady who hated the working class and ate children for breakfast. The one thing Margaret really enjoyed was having a bloody good political row, but you could persuade her.

When we were introducing health reforms, I had more than a dozen meetings with her, with some unfortunate official trying to keep minutes, while we shouted at each

other. "The American health system is the best one in the world; we should go to it." I argued for the internal market. She conceded to me.

Margaret Thatcher and John Major were the last two who tried to run a proper Cabinet government. Every policy was cleared with a proper discussion in Cabinet. I have been in cabinets where the prime minister was on the losing side – Margaret, quite often. John Major was a perfectly good prime minister. It wasn't his fault, the completely split nature of the Cabinet.

Tony Blair did what John Major tried to do, which was to carry on and consolidate Margaret Thatcher's reforms. He was an outstandingly good prime minister – except for his involvement in the Iraq war. I never thought for a moment that he would take up this mad idea.

### The state of the world now

Lord Clarke's assessment of the current state of politics was short, and grim.

"The world is in its most dangerous condition since the Second World War. Global warfare is not impossible. The world's economy is in deep crisis, and is in danger of total collapse if the impact of the Iran war continues to get worse. This country's politics has collapsed. It is intolerant, extreme, personalised. Our economy is far nearer to another financial crisis than most people appreciate."

He also fears that as politics becomes more "intolerant, extreme and personalised" and "the political class is held in contempt by the public", gifted people who might have gone into politics at other times will be put off.

### That disputed 1966 goal

One story about Ken, which you can believe or not believe – your choice – is that he had a vital role in helping England win the World Cup in 1966. He was in the crowd, and there was a dispute, which has never died, over Geoff Hurst's second goal. "Needless to say, in my unbiased way, I was completely convinced that it had crossed the line. We were all shouting our advice at the linesman, and I once made a joke that I was sure that it was my shouting that persuaded him. But we scored another goal, so the dubious one was not decisive."

## THE CANDID CANDIDATE

Hugo Summerson

### Political Incident No. 12

If you saw my brother Henry walking down the street and were asked to guess his profession, you would say "an academic". Correct; he is a distinguished medieval historian. His mind being set on higher things, like many academics, he has no interest in sartorial matters. This formed an unlikely connection between Henry, our mother and myself in 1986, a year of council elections in Islington (I was standing), where Henry and I shared a house. He had the ground floor; I had the first.

Our mother worried about Henry. "He goes to all those learned gatherings, and sometimes gives papers, in the same clothes he wears every day."

I pointed out that most of those attending would also be wearing the same clothes, to no avail, as usual.

"I want you to take him to Moss Bros and get him a nice second-hand suit. I'll pay."

When I told Henry this, we simultaneously sighed in resignation and visited Moss Bros, returning with a £65 suit.

Then Gilly, mainstay of the Islington South & Finsbury Conservative Association, rang.

"We're having a jumble sale to raise funds!" she cried. "I'll come on Saturday morning to pick up anything you can spare."

"I'm away on Saturday, but I'll ask Henry if I can leave things in his bedroom."

On Sunday evening Henry told me he was to address a conference and might as well wear his suit; but he couldn't find it. He thought he might have left it on his bed. A chill gathered round my heart. I called Gilly.

"When you collected those things yesterday from Henry's bedroom, was there a suit?"

"Yes. It was on his bed. Very kind of you."

"What happened to it?"

"We sold it."

"How much for?"

"Fifty pence!"

We never dared tell our mother.

**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.**

## A GOOD READ

YES, THINGS COULD GET BETTER

Denis MacShane

*Why Populists are Winning and  
How to Beat Them*

By Liam Byrne

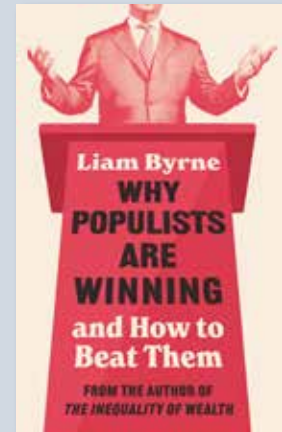
Head of Zeus £18.99

CAN WE BE RICH AGAIN?

*The Surprising Potential  
of Britain's Economy*

By Jeremy Hunt

Swift £25



THESE TWO THOUGHTFUL BOOKS by MPs who rose to high office under Labour and Tory governments might be usefully given to any MP, past, present or to come, who worries about the state and fate of Britain after the rupture with Europe and the rise of populist politics and populist social media financed from abroad by foreigners who hold British parliamentary democracy in contempt. Sir Jeremy Hunt was born to be a top Tory. Son of an admiral, educated at Charterhouse, favourite posh school for MPs including Dick Taverne and Douglas Carswell as well as a long list of Conservatives, chair of the Conservative Association at Oxford, Hunt has the charm, good manners and friendliness not found in the Tories who have defected to Reform.

He writes serious and mercifully readable books on politics. He has a politician's killer instinct. Before the 2024 election he reduced employees' National Insurance twice as a crude voter tax bribe. It was pointless as the Tories were heading for wipe-out. It did mean, however, that the incoming government's income was reduced by £22 billion.

Sir Keir Starmer is a lawyer, not an economist or politician. He could have denounced Hunt's manoeuvre and restored the cut. But if Hunt was cunning Labour were cack-handed and walked into his trap. To pay for Hunt's reduction in government income Labour cut help for older people keeping warm in the winter and thus began the loss of support culminating in Labour's election wipe out in May in council seats as well as in the Welsh and Scottish regional parliaments.

Jeremy is a very rich man who has now written a book for the rest of us titled *Can We Be Rich Again?* His answer is "Yes" and surprisingly the core message of his book is that Europe does it better. Each easy-to-read chapter urges his fellow MPs to adopt French-style planning to build more houses, copy Scandinavia to get more people into work based on apprenticeships, which were abolished by Margaret Thatcher and not restored by any government Jeremy Hunt has been in or lived under since.

Sir Jeremy urges adopting Swiss-style regional government with full tax-raising power, importing German-style vocational training, Australian-style pension reforms, and Dutch locally elected mayors with power to fund local infrastructure projects.

I have not read a Tory so enthusiastic for Europe in decades. So, will Hunt be the first Tory to break ranks with

the Farage-Badenoch hostility to reconnecting with our European neighbours?

The answer according to Liam Byrne is probably not, unless we clean up the financing of politics. Byrne has used his time since leaving ministerial office to chair the prestigious Commons Business and Trade Committee. He has set up independent commissions and as with his Select Committee work has used his backbench years to commission reports and polling on populism and interrogate witnesses on the role of secret donations made by men in faraway tax havens who have made billions out of crypto or foreign currency manipulations.

Some of them give mammoth sums of money to help set up and fund far-right propaganda in Britain transmitted by GB News or social media influencers. Between 2020 and 2025, outside of the few weeks of a general election when the law demands some balance between different parties, a small number of rich overseas donors – Byrne names just four – donated £138 million to far-right propaganda and political work.

The toothless Electoral Commission has turned a blind eye to this torrent of overseas money used to buy votes. Ofcom, which has been given detailed evidence of the domination of far-right voices on GB News broadcasts which would be illegal if done by the BBC, Sky or Channel 4 News, has refused to intervene.

MPs and ministers seem powerless. As PPS at the Foreign Office when Robin Cook was Foreign Secretary, I asked radical Robin why the new Labour government did not bring in laws that some European countries have under which all external donations for political purposes are banned so that in effect, democracy pays for democracy. "I don't think the British public would accept taxpayers' money going to party politics," said Robin unhappily. I think he meant the then prime minister rejected the idea. He looked so miserable that he was not a member of the great reforming radical government he had dreamt of I didn't press the point.

In the 25 years since, our politics has got worse, more racist, more xenophobic, more misogynist as off-shore billionaires have paid for their rancid pathologies to enter the mainstream via our new populist political elites.

Denis MacShane was Labour MP for Rotherham 1994–2012 and Minister of State at the FCO 2002–05

## A BAD READ

### THE MADNESS OF KING DONALD

Jerry Hayes dips into Truth Social so you don't have to.

When our editor asked me to view three months of Trump's Truth Social for this piece, I replied that it might be fun, which rather bemused him. "You have a pretty weird idea of fun, Jerry." Yet "weird" does not go anywhere near describing this parallel Orwellian universe. This echo chamber resonates with not so much a dog whistle as a howl from the assorted bigots, white supremacists and conspiracy nut jobs who infest this depressing excuse for a website where Trump worshippers are in communion with their deity.

It reeks of the 1984 playbook in which Trump is the master manipulator of doublethink, the holding of two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously and accepting both of them. "If you kept the small rules, you could break the big ones", should have been written for him.

What is so deeply troubling is the personal abuse that is meted out to past presidents, the FBI, newspapers, TV channels, judges, in fact anyone who has displeased him. All of this is interspersed with adverts for products to improve the lives of the elderly, and disturbing clickbait, usually involving attractive women, with the creepy enticement of "you must watch this before it is banned". And many tales from the world of crypto. When Trump is not monsterring his enemies, lauding his disciples and making outrageous claims that nobody in their right mind could possibly believe he becomes whiny. "There has never been a president who has been treated so unfairly."

Yet there are moments of unintended humour. He praises a newly appointed "diplomat", Andrew Puzder, "a former fast-food executive who is trying to build bridges with Europe at a time of deep transatlantic tensions."

Please don't be deceived into thinking that Truth Social is just the ravings of a bitter old keyboard warrior a few wallies short of a Big Mac spitting his bile on to the internet in the early hours. This is a deeply cynical and very professional White House operation, weaponising AI in a very effective way. Trump may dictate his posts but he is supported by MAGA graphic artists and satirists. Academics have described this as "slopaganda" and "shitposting". Those mock-ups of Trump as Pope, Jesus, a fake front cover of Time magazine depicting him crowned as king, get messages over to the public superfast. The irony of it all is that the man who screams at the purveyors of fake news has industrialised it. And his supporters lap it up.

The aim is to stick one to his enemies and make the rednecks whoop and laugh. And all the professional slopoganda tools of memes, wishcasting, nostalgia and deep fake are exploited to the full. Trump's response to those who criticise him for these outlandish stunts are accused of not having a sense of humour. It's based on the apocryphal story about Lyndon Johnson intending to accuse a senator of



having sex with a pig, to the horror of his advisers, who said that he shouldn't as it wasn't true. "Of course it ain't true. But I want to hear the son of a bitch deny it."

There are also some serious issues where AI becomes lethally effective. For instance, the nihilistic penguin and Trump walking hand in hand towards Greenland. In the boonies they neither know nor care that penguins live in the Antarctic. The truth no longer matters. That's the point.

There was justifiable outrage at Trump's portrayal of Obama and his wife as monkeys and the ethnic cleansing in Gaza. Appalling. Shocking. Revolting. They were taken down; eventually. But only after MAGA reptiles had a quiet chuckle. "It's just Trump being Trump."

And then there was the AI mock-up of ICE thugs portrayed as 1980s action heroes. That little horror resonates with Orwell. "If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – forever." And, "the party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential command."

It was a bright cold day in April and the clocks were striking thirteen. Jerry Hayes, his chin nuzzled in his chest in an effort to escape the vile wind slipped quickly into Truth Social. And out again.

It was a deeply disturbing experience. There is a real fear that Trumpian AI will soon infect British politics. God help us all. And who will be the first politician to laugh it off with, "you have no sense of humour"? Discuss.

# TRIBUTES

## SIR JEREMY HANLEY

17 November 1945 – 22 May 2026

Conservative MP for Richmond and Barnes, 1983–1997

By *Nicholas Bennett*



Jeremy was a force of nature. Six foot four and well built, gregarious and always cheerful, he was a clubbable colleague who enjoyed being a parliamentarian. It was always a pleasure to share a table at dinner or in the tearoom and he would

provide a fund of amusing stories.

The son of film stars Jeremy Hanley and Dinah Sheridan he had an uncredited role as a baby in *Holiday Camp* (1947) one of the Huggett family saga films. The first few years of his time as MP for Richmond and Barnes from 1983 coincided with his mother starring in a BBC sitcom 'Don't Wait Up' with Nigel Havers, son of Jeremy's constituency neighbour Michael Havers MP and – as Jeremy liked to point out – prominent in the opening titles was a photograph of Jeremy naked as a baby. Jeremy's younger sister, Jenny, also became an actress, and presented *Magpie* the ITV rival to *Blue Peter*.

Educated at Rugby, Jeremy qualified as a chartered accountant. He fought the Lambeth Central by-election caused by the death of the veteran Labour MP Marcus Lipton in 1978. He achieved a creditable 9.4% but Labour held on by 3,000 votes. He contested the seat again at the general election the following year but lost by nearly 6,000. In 1983 he was elected as MP for the new constituency of Richmond and Barnes, narrowly beating Alan Watson (now Lord Watson of Richmond) by 74 votes. It is a tribute to Jeremy's assiduous work as a constituency MP that he held off the Liberal Democrat challenge until his defeat in the redrawn Richmond Park seat in the landslide election of 1997.

After three years as a PPS, Jeremy was appointed Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Northern Ireland office in John Major's first administration in November 1990. It was said that John remarked to Jeremy that his ability to mimic Ian Paisley's voice meant he was ideal for the post as he spoke the language. Elevated to Minister of State for the Armed Forces in 1993, he joined the cabinet in 1994 as Minister without Portfolio and Chairman of the Conservative Party.

The appointment proved a mixed blessing. His charm and bonhomie meant he was popular with party members and he cut the party's deficit by £4.5m in just a year, however his tenure came at a time when the government was becoming increasingly unpopular. Unfortunately, in various media interviews he appeared unbriefed and soon gained a reputation for gaffes. After less than a year he was demoted.

After losing his seat Jeremy was knighted in 1997.

He was married twice. His second wife Verna survives him together with his two sons Jason and Joel, Sophie his stepdaughter and his sister Jenny.

## PATRICK GROUND

9 August 1932 – 7 April 2026

Conservative MP for Feltham and Heston, 1983–1992

By *Matthew Carrington (Baron Carrington of Fulham)*



Patrick Ground won Feltham and Heston against the odds in 1983 and held in 1987, eventually losing in 1992, but his commitment to the constituency was even greater than that suggests. He first fought it in 1974, going on to stand in seven General Elections, the losing five

times and winning twice. His dedication to his constituency was part of his determination to use his skills, charm and drive to make life better for his friends, neighbours and constituents.

I came to know Patrick well as a colleague in the House of Commons and as a constituent. We campaigned together on many local issues, protecting the future of the Charing Cross Hospital being but one.

I had first met him in the run up to the Fulham by-election of 1986. As the MP for a near-by constituency, he was assiduous in campaigning with me. But, just as important for me, he was the long standing and immensely influential Chairman of the Fulham Society.

Since 1975, he had built the Society into the major environmental pressure group in Hammersmith and Fulham, with a very broadly based membership, most of whom were our target voters. I was very keen that they should host a rally for me during the campaign. Patrick flatly refused. He was determined that the local concerns of planning, conservation and quality of life should not be put at risk for short term political advantage. And he was of course right and I was wrong.

The determination, clarity of thought, intense commitment to the local community whether in Feltham and Heston or in Fulham, his humour and good, old fashioned common sense allowed no truck with what he thought was nonsense. He would make up his own mind, whether it was on the role of the Fulham Society or the future of the GLC, whose abolition he strongly opposed.

The very qualities which made him a superb local MP were the very qualities which delayed any ministerial promotion in government. If he had won in 1992, his expertise as a senior planning QC would have been invaluable to the John Major government at a time when it was already clear that the housing shortage was becoming critical.

Out of Parliament, he and his wife Caroline still worked hard for the people of Feltham and Heston. He last fought the seat against the Blairite tide of 1997. And he was still involved over 12 years later, when I found myself trying to help them return a Conservative MP.

Patrick enjoyed a very close and loving family life. His wife, Caroline, was both his chief cheerleader and his advisor. They are both sorely missed.

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