



Order, Order!

The Newsletter of the Association of Former Members of Parliament

Spring 2011

REACHING OUT



Association member Eric Moonman has been the lead in implementing the Executive Committee's plans to use the enormous expertise and experience of former MPs.

Our members come from all parts of the UK and can make such a positive contribution in schools, colleges, universities and community groups, explaining the role of Parliament and our democratic process.

A very promising start to our outreach programme was a recent meeting at London's City University. Eric, together with Dick Tracey, went along to talk to students, followed by a question and answer session, with an opportunity for students to meet informally afterwards over refreshments.

The students raised a number of questions on parliamentary procedure and on wider political issues. The Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Julius Weinberg, welcomed the Association's initiative and said he would recommend the idea to other colleges.

Indeed already, further presentations are planned in cooperation with universities in Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester. A welcome invitation has also come from one of the London academies in Hackney, following a visit there by Eric Moonman.

The Executive has been battling for some time now to gain the interest of the House's Education and Outreach services, with little success.

We have therefore taken action ourselves to reach out to the community and we pay tribute to Eric's enthusiasm and hard work to make our own outreach service a success.

We already have some names of members willing to take part in these sessions, but if any other members are interested, then they should contact Eric through the Association's office.



Dick [left] and Eric [right] addressing the students



PARLIAMENTARY CONTRIBUTORY PENSION FUND

Trustee Sir Graham Bright writes:

I have been a Trustee of the PCPF for nearly four years now, and it is clear that the opportunity to have a representative from the Association on the Trustee Board has been extremely beneficial to all parties.

We have a new Chairman following the retirement of Sir John Butterfill and that is Brian Donohoe MP. The other Trustees are Clive Betts MP, Jim Dowd MP, Richard Harrington MP, Peter Lilley MP, Andy Love MP, David Mowat MP, John Thurso MP, Lord Naseby.

I must say I have been very impressed by the professionalism with which the scheme is managed. The Secretariat to the Trustees are very knowledgeable and helpful, and always looking to reduce costs. For example, they have saved the fund over £100k p.a. just by reviewing the mandate for the Custodian (who safeguards the Fund's assets). This is particularly invaluable in the current period of austerity.

The Secretariat is now quietly confident that the administration service is on an even keel, and should continue to improve over the coming months and years.

The Secretariat has also devoted considerable time and resources to managing the administrator of the Fund, a company called rpm. Rpm were appointed

in April 2008 and some of you will have experienced problems with the service provided. However, it is fair to say that they inherited a "mess" from the previous administrators. A major exercise to resolve numerous data issues is nearing completion, and this will help rpm improve their service to members of the Fund.

The Secretariat is now quietly confident that the administration service is on an even keel, and should continue to improve over the coming months and years. However, should you experience any problems, please contact Jimmy Walker, Head of Pensions, on 0207 219 2656, e-mail jiwalker@parliament.uk. Also, the Secretariat is always willing to meet Former Members to discuss their PCPF pension.

One of the major tasks for the Trustees over the next couple of years will be engaging with the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) to ensure that when the powers currently vested in the Leader are passed over to them, possibly some time in 2012/13, they are fully au fait with the operation of the Fund. You will be aware that IPSA is under pressure to reduce its expenditure and they have acknowledged that they do not have any pension expertise. The Trustees will be having regular meetings with them and offering the services of our Secretariat.

I will include more news about the PCPF at a future date.

FOR THE FUTURE



Executive Committee Member George Cunningham writes:

For some years we have argued that the rules should be changed to give retired MPs an equal voice in the management of the PCPF, with the right to join in the election of trustees and to stand for election as a trustee.

Members will have seen the passage on page 14 of the latest PCPF Annual Review, which was circulated to all scheme members. It says: "This means that eight of the trustees will, in future, be elected by the members of the fund." Retired members are of course members of the fund. It will now fall to the trustees to produce rules to implement this change. This may take some time, but the battle seems to have been won.



Editorial



Meet the team [L-R] Keith Mans, Elizabeth Peacock, John Austin, Syd Rapson and Sally Grocott

Last Autumn Association Chairman Graham Bright asked me to lead the new editorial team for *Order Order*, following Joe's retirement. Joe has kindly agreed to continue to contribute to our magazine, having done so much to make it the success which it is today.

The new team wants to ensure that this success continues, and for it to do so we need contributions from as many of our members as possible, ranging from book reviews to your life after parliament. We also want your views on *Order Order*. We want it to be both readable and relevant, and with your help I know we can, so please keep your ideas flowing in.

ALL MEMBER MEETINGS

A new and welcome initiative of our Chairman is to make our All Member Meetings more interesting and lively. At the meeting on the 9th December, one of our members, Bruce Grocott, former Government Chief Whip in the Lords, gave a talk on the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill.

As I write this, the bill seems to be completing its slow progress through the House of Lords, and as you read this, we could be preparing for the referendum on AV. Those that attended the meeting were well prepared for subsequent events following the excellent talk given by Bruce.

He began by explaining the unusual nature of the bill in that it provided for a referendum on AV as well as for the reduction in the number of MPs from 650 to 600. He pointed out that it ran to around three hundred pages, and needed to pass into law by the middle of February to allow time to prepare for the referendum on the 5th May. He suggested it would have been better for it to have been split into two separate bills.

Bruce then went on to discuss the merits, or lack of them of the Alternative Vote, pointing out that few countries had adopted it. During the subsequent

I found Bruce's talk and the discussion afterwards a great deal more informative than much of what has been printed in the broadsheets on the subject.

discussion, it was pointed out that under AV it was possible for a candidate who came third or worse in the first ballot to be elected after the transfer of preferences. Bruce also said that during the referendum campaign it could be difficult to explain exactly what people would be voting for as AV was not a proportional representation system. He said that he personally was opposed to it.

So far as the other part of the bill was concerned, Bruce felt that any reduction in the number of MPs would need to be accompanied by a reduction in the number of ministers. Not to do so would risk weakening scrutiny of legislation because of the increased proportion of MPs who would be part of the payroll vote. He also felt it was going to be difficult not to agree to exceptions to the standard constituency size, and would lead to inevitable difficulties if boundaries crossed county council borders.

I found Bruce's talk and the discussion afterwards a great deal more informative than much of what has been printed in the broadsheets on the subject. It is clear that convincing arguments can be made both for and against AV. Those opposing AV may have had the upper hand, but by rather less than might have been expected and it is clear that over the next four years we will see some fierce arguments over the size and shape of the new constituencies. We are spectators now, but many of us have experienced some form of boundary change and future events should be particularly interesting for us all. Perhaps we should even offer some advice!

Keith Mans

NEXT ALL MEMBER MEETING:

THURSDAY 31ST MARCH, 4pm COMMITTEE ROOM 10

COME AND LISTEN TO LORD NORTON OF LOUTH ON THE SUBJECT OF LORDS REFORM AND TAKE PART IN A DISCUSSION AFTERWARDS.

Philip Norton is a distinguished academic and an author/editor of a large number of books on politics and the constitution.



Old Joe's Almanac

Orange Juice Blues

It's been a hard cold winter everywhere this year but especially so in the backwoods of Yorkshire where miners once fought to keep their pits open and their villages alive.

The sadness and sorrow of this January was deeper than usual because the actor Pete Postlethwaite had died.

Remember him? He made grown men weep in the film "Brassed Off", where the pit's brass band plays its last competition at the Royal Albert Hall before it disbands.

Their flugal horn rendering of Rodrigo's Concierto de Aranjuez (commonly called Orange Juice by the band) would sadden the heart of any picket line nostalgia.



ALEC WOODALL

20 September 1918 to 3 January 2011

MP for Hemsworth

We were also sad because one of the founder members of our Association and a former coal miner aged 92 died around the same time. His name was Alec Woodall, former MP for Hemsworth, Yorkshire. Alec was 56 before he got to parliament in the knife edge election of 1974 when Ted Heath lost to Arthur Scargill. Alec's majority then was 34,940 and he shared a room with newcomer Bruce Grocott whose majority in comparison was just 331!

Alec was born in the village of Hemsworth. He went to school there, got married there, became the MP, and died there. All within 500 yards of the church. He left school and had to go down the pit at 14 because his dad, also a miner, was severely injured and the colliery bosses then refused to buy him a wheelchair.

Alec was soon on strike against the 1932 management and was delighted to find that his strike pay of two shillings a day was actually better than his wages! When war broke out, he could have stayed at the pit digging coal because it was a reserved occupation but instead he immediately volunteered to join the army and fight for his country. He was in the second day of the landings in Normandy carrying the rank of sergeant in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. Unfortunately, Alec was blown up on the beaches and spent many, many months in hospitals abroad before being returned once again to the pit.

At the age of 56 and a loyal member of the miners

union he became an MP with the biggest Labour majority ever and was the first miner to stand up in the House and tell the new Mrs Thatcher what the life of a miner was really like.

Sadly, at the age of 67, the NUM refused to endorse his candidature on age grounds, and he stood down as an MP although he carried on with his charity work for another 20 years until he passed away at the age of 92. Which must have been a record for the oldest MP among our membership and certainly one for anybody who worked down the pit.

It is often said that the value of an MP can be judged by how many of his colleagues turn up at his funeral. Hemsworth is a very small community but we counted there former MPs Deputy Chief Whip Walter Harrison (now aged 90), Lord Geoff Lofthouse, Sir Bill O'Brien, David Hinchcliffe, Alan McKay together with Kevin Barron MP, and local MP John Trickett. Joe Ashton delivered the eulogy.

Unfortunately, there is no pit band anymore to play Rodrigo's Concierto de Aranjuez but his friends in the military old soldiers turned up to provide the long standing music of farewell and showed that they too are not ignored even though Pete Postlethwaite has passed away.

Alec was married to his wife Mollie for over 60 years and leaves a son John and daughter Margaret.

Joe Ashton



PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE HOUSE

An update from John Austin

In 2008 funding for the CPA UK Branch and the British Group of the IPU was transferred from the Treasury to the House authorities.

At that time, some members of the CPA and IPU feared that such a move might threaten the independence of the two organisations. Others argued that their activities were essentially parliamentary and it made more sense for them to be funded by parliament rather than government.

The change proved to be uneventful and fears expressed by some that the organisations would lose independence and be taken over by the clerks or the whips, proved groundless. At the same time the House took over responsibility for funding the British Irish Parliamentary Body, renamed the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly.

After the change in funding arrangements, it was largely business as usual, apart from an increase in representation of the Lords, reflecting the two thirds/one third funding from the House of Commons Commission and the House Committee of the Lords. However, there remained no focus and little co-ordination for parliament's international relations work. There has been very little sharing of information or best practice. There has been no over-arching strategy or priority guidelines to bring the many groups dealing with the outside world together.

The new Speaker has taken a more involved interest in "parliamentary outreach" and parliament's international role, and in 2009 the House of Commons Commission decided that work on international relations should have a more strategic focus. The Commission and the Lords House Committee decided that an International Relations Directorate should be established which they hope will be up and running by the 1st April. But at the time of writing discussions are still on-going between the various interested parties and it is not certain that this deadline will be met.

It is a complex process as all staff on the three inter-parliamentary bodies will transfer to the House of

Commons service under the TUPE regulations. The new Directorate will incorporate all of the activities currently supported by the Overseas Office, i.e. delegations to other parliamentary assemblies such as the Council of Europe, NATO etc. The future of the British American Parliamentary Group is unclear as it appears to be outside of the proposed Directorate.

The Commission hopes that the Directorate will "bring greater clarity to the organisation and funding of parliament's international activities" and provide more effective support to members in their work on parliamentary diplomacy and parliamentary strengthening.

What does this mean for members of the Association of Former MPs? At present, the CPA UK and BGIPU are independent, self-governing organisations which will cease to exist in these forms. Many former MPs are Associate Members of the CPA and IPU and clearly if the organisations cease to be member based associations, that Associate status will end. We will be raising this issue with the Commission to see how current Associate Members can continue to be kept in touch and informed of activities. We are also raising with the Commission whether there might be scope for involvement in parliamentary outreach and parliamentary strengthening activities, enabling the House to draw on the expertise and knowledge of former MPs, supplementing the excellent work already being undertaken by Eric Moonman.

John Austin, former MP for Woolwich and then Erith & Thamesmead, 1992-2010, has served as Chair of both the British Group of the IPU and the UK Branch Executive of the CPA.



Past Times

Order Order's new Editor, Keith Mans, wants to hear from our members. We want YOUR reminiscences/recollections of past times and people. So starting us off are Executive Committee members Syd Rapson and Elizabeth Peacock.

Dressing up – A Cautionary Tale

In May 1971 the municipal elections in Portsmouth proved to be a watershed for local politics. After many years of despair the Labour Party elected nine new City Councillors including myself and the Hon M. T. Hancock C.B.E. We also elected the youngest councillor then possible, a 21 year old called Charles Johnson. The significance of the huge change was to see the old Labour guard ousted and a new, more political and restless group form the opposition. It also shook the ruling Conservatives who realised they had to “up their game” to survive.

During that year a new casino was opened in Portsmouth called Tiberius. Mike and I were invited to the grand opening, as one of our first perks as newly elected City Councillors.



The event was fantastic with a host of ladies dressed in Roman style clothes. It had been made plain that we had to wear black tie with our ladies in evening gowns. It was quite monumental for Mike and me as we were both working class but we felt pretty well able to hold our heads up amongst the glitterati there.

About a month after the opening Mike suggested that we took our wives down to “our club” and treat them to a meal. We had after all been given life membership cards as a thank you for attending the opening night and we had our evening wear all ready. We were made welcome, but soon became uncomfortably aware that everyone else was wearing ordinary clothes. We stood out from the rest - the only other people in black ties were the waiters. All evening we were ribbed by the locals, ordering drinks from us and having a good laugh at our expense.

‘...we felt pretty well able to hold our heads up amongst the glitterati there’

But of course we had thought that black tie was the right dress for a casino. After all, James Bond always wore it in the films when he strolled nonchalantly into casinos. I never returned to Tiberius again, and it does not now exist, but it taught me a good lesson. You can take the lad out of his working class but you cannot take the working class out of the lad, even when he’s in disguise.



Early Recollections of 'Downton Abbey'

In 1973 I was elected to Hampshire County Council. In those days local government changes meant that for the first time experienced borough councillors were forced to participate in the rather more gentlemanly county council.

In order to educate us “urban guerrillas” the Chairman of the Council, Lord Portchester, whom I called Henry, arranged visits to great estates and houses within the County to impress on us our “realm”.

One such place was Highclere Castle where Lord Portchester entertained us, although the Earl of Caernarvon, his father, was the owner. His house was grand enough to facilitate a large champagne and canapé party and of course many will know it as the “Downton Abbey” from the enormously successful television series.

The Earl was physically just like Manny Shinwell, short, balding and getting on a bit in years but he had all the ladies eating out of his hand. I mentioned that I was fascinated by the architecture of the house which was a copy of Blenheim Palace. For some reason the Earl took a liking to me and showed me round places in the house that were out of bounds to the general public or even to my county colleagues. I was



impressed by his modern Swedish sauna where he claimed he read the Daily Mirror while sweating off a few pounds. I was naturally a bit sceptical about that claim.

The Earl then showed me into a drawing room which seemed to be a cross between a living room and a museum. He directed me to an antique chair and asked me to sit down which I did rather gingerly, putting my arms on the armrests. He told me to feel the curled ends and I found they were deeply scratched. The Earl then explained that the chair was the one that Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte had sat on when he signed the surrender to The Duke of Wellington. He was so angry that he ripped the arms of the chair with his fingernails in a controlled rage. Was this true? Apparently it was. Although the Earl has now passed on along with his son Henry, I cherish the time they both took to talk to me.

I am so glad that the present Earl is having such success with Highclere Castle being used as Downton Abbey in the series written by Julian, now Lord Fellows. As you may know a second series has been commissioned. Perhaps it will be the end of the bad luck rumoured to be cast on the Caernarvon family when Henry's great grandfather discovered Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922.

Syd Rapson

Where Are you Now Peter? Asks Elizabeth

Whatever happened to Peter Bruinvels, the diminutive but very talkative MP for Leicester East, elected in 1983 with a majority of just 933. In the 1987 election Peter increased his share of the vote by 3.5% but still lost the seat to Keith Vaz who had a majority of 1,924.

Who can tell us where he is and what he is doing now?



What Was Parliament Discussing 30 Years Ago?

What was the most interesting debate in January 1981 – you may have already guessed! Mr Murdoch was then, as now, on the acquisition trail – he was attempting to purchase the Times and Sunday Times but had not yet reached for the Sky.

The late John Smith opened the debate, and the late John Biffen, the then Secretary of State for Trade endured some earbending by the troops. The importance of the issue was emphasised by the fact that Jo Grimond had made the long journey from Orkney and Shetland to attend and take part in the debate.

Thankfully, Patrick Cormack brought some intellectual power to the argument while Geoffrey Robinson spotted a touch of blackmail from the Murdoch camp. Peter Tapsell, who is still today making pithy contributions from the floor of the House, asked about the circumstances in which a newspaper editor could be dismissed. Douglas Jay, like the Minister, remained confused as to whether the Sunday Times was making or losing money.

'Peter Tapsell asked about the circumstances in which a newspaper editor could be dismissed.'

As the debate was about newspapers, Jonathan Aitken, George Gardner and Geoffrey Johnson Smith, suddenly arrived to join in and promptly confused each other and the House. So much so, that the government, after hours of debate, won the vote by a short head!

What was Parliament Discussing 20 years Ago?

As part of the general routine of the House in January 1991, I spotted that we were giving due consideration to, amongst other things, ports and pigs.

Malcolm Rifkind, the then Secretary of State for Transport launched a Ports Bill, ably opposed by John Prescott who were jointly sailing ships into the harbour under the Harbour Master's control, i.e. Betty Boothroyd, then Deputy Speaker. Interference was provided by Patrick McLoughlin, Minister for Shipping and Public Transport, with knowledgeable contributions from Stuart Bell (Middlesborough) and David Shaw (Dover).

Interesting long view observations were made by Spencer Batiste (Elmet) and Harry Barnes (Derbyshire North East) who could not quite see the sea from where they stood.

When the vote came and was counted it was found that 464 members had attended.

The Pig Husbandry Bill provided a lower turnout with Sir Richard Body (Holland Boston) setting the pace under the guidance of Sir Paul Dean, the Deputy Speaker. Miss Emma Nicholson (Torrige and Devon) made an early intervention as she had been up before dawn to inspect the stock. Michael Lord (Suffolk Central) insisted he had kept pigs in the past and emphasized the importance of the matter. Mr John Townend (Bridlington) who ruefully counted more pigs in his constituency than wine drinkers, concurred.

When the vote came the tellers for the Noes were Mr William Hague and Mr John Townend who complained of overwork with NIL votes recorded.



SUMMER RECEPTION Tuesday 5th July 2011 at 6.30pm

Our Patron has again kindly agreed that we can hold our Summer Reception in Speaker's House. However, he has said he hopes we will understand that in the present financial climate he is unable to pay for refreshments as in the past.

The cost therefore will be £25 per head for drinks and canapés. The maximum number allowed is 150, and places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. As usual, members are welcome to include their partners, but it is stressed that no guests are allowed. Not only would this be unfair on members of the

Association in view of the limited number of places available, but the Association qualifies for a discount from the catering department only if the reception is strictly limited to former MPs and their partners.

Due to pressure of work, the Speaker's office needs the final guest list by the 1st April. If you wish to attend please complete and return the application form together with your cheque **by the 31st March latest**, otherwise the application will be invalid. Invitations will be sent out direct from the Speaker's office.

I WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND ON THE 5TH JULY AT 6.30PM IN SPEAKER'S HOUSE

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

I would like to bring my partner (NAME) _____

I enclose a cheque for one/two places - £25 per head - made payable to the Association of Former MPs

Please return to Sally Grocott, Association of Former MPs, House of Commons, Room G13, 1 Parliament Street, LONDON, SW1A 2NE



House of Commons Members' Fund

What is the Members' Fund?

The Members' Fund is a benevolent fund that assists former members of Parliament and their dependants who are in financial need.

What is its history?

The Members' Fund was established under the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1939 as there were no occupational pension arrangements for Members at that time. Its original purpose was to provide former members with benefits in lieu of a pension.

Further Acts were passed, namely in 1948, 1981 and 1991 to allow former members and their dependants to apply for assistance particularly in times of financial hardship.

What is its current role?

The Members' Fund has a dual role:

- to continue to make 'as of right' payments to existing claimants
- to provide benefits either as an annual grant or one-off payment to new and existing claimants.

How is it funded?

All current Members automatically contribute £2 per month which is deducted from their salary and the Treasury gives an annual grant-in-aid of £215,000.

How is it managed?

The Members' Fund is managed by a board of six Trustees, who are all serving Members appointed by the House.

The Trustees consider all applications for benefits and grant suitable awards accordingly. When doing so the Trustees will look at all the circumstances of the applicant, particularly their financial circumstances.

Who may benefit?

Any former member who meets the following criteria:

'As of right' Award:

- Former members or their widow/ers who served for 10 years or more before October 1964 (pre PCPF – Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund). The Trustees can waive the 10 year service requirement where they think appropriate.

Hardship/Discretionary Awards:

- PCPF widow/ers of former members who qualify for a 1/2 rate rather than a 5/8ths pension under the PCPF regulations.
- Any former member or their dependants who have financial difficulties.

How to apply for assistance?

If you believe that you qualify for an 'as of right' award or if you would like to apply for financial assistance from the Members' Fund then please contact the HCMF Secretariat (see contact details below).

You will be sent an application form requesting further information about your financial situation and reasons for applying. The Trustees will then consider your case and you will be notified of their decision in due course.

Confidentiality

All matters related to the Fund are handled on the basis of utmost confidentiality.

ENQUIRIES / FURTHER INFORMATION:

HCMF Secretariat
House of Commons Members' Fund
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Telephone: 020 7219 1356
Fax: 020 7219 2554
Email: hcmf@parliament.uk

OBITUARIES



SIR JOHN WARD

8 March 1925 to 26 June 2010

MP for Poole

Born in 1925, John Devereux Ward joined the RAF in 1943, serving as a navigator. He was demobilized in 1947 and

took an engineering degree at St Andrew's University.

He then went into consultancy as a structural engineer. He joined Taylor Woodrow in 1958, remaining with the firm, latterly as Managing Director, until elected to parliament.

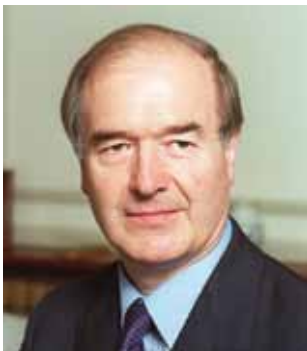
John had been elected Chairman of Eton and Slough Conservatives in 1962 and of the party's Wessex region four years later. He fought his first constituency, Portsmouth North, in October 1974, which he lost, and was then elected in 1979 after finding a safe seat, Poole, where the Deputy Speaker, Oscar Murton, was retiring. In the election which took Margaret Thatcher to Downing Street, he had a staggering majority of 23,555. However, by the 1992 election, his majority had been cut by more than 10,000 as

the Liberal Democrats continued to gain ground.

In 1994, when John Ward was approaching 70, John Major plucked him from the backbenches to be his Parliamentary Private Secretary in an effort to improve his relations with the Eurosceptic 92 Group. During this divisive time, he was the embattled Prime Minister's eyes and ears on the back benches. His loyalty was all the more valued given that he had a reputation for going off-message on issues he was passionate about during his 18 years as an MP. He was one of the few Tory MPs, along with Ann Widdecombe, to vote in favour of a ban on fox hunting when a private members' bill was introduced in 1995.

At the age of 69 he was one of the "grey beards" along with Tony Benn, David Alton and Marcus Fox, who formed a committee to investigate two MPs, Ian Hamilton and Tim Smith, who had allegedly accepted case to ask questions on behalf of Mohamed Al-Fayed, the owner of Harrods.

John is survived by his wife and a son and daughter.



LORD LYELL OF MARKYATE

6 December 1938 to 30 August 2010

MP for Hemel Hempstead

Born in 1938, Nicholas Walter Lyell was the son of Sir Maurice Lyell, a High Court judge, and his wife the sculptor/designer Veronica Luard.

He was educated at Stowe School which he left to do his National Service in 1957-59, during which he was commissioned in the Royal Artillery. He subsequently read Modern History at Christ Church, Oxford, where he was a member of the Bullingdon Club now made famous by David Cameron and Boris Johnson.

Lyell was called to the Bar in 1965, having trained with a firm associated with his stepmother's family, Walter Runciman and Co. He joined one of the top chambers in the country, at Brick Court in the Temple. He took Silk in 1980.

In the second general election of 1974 he unsuccessfully contested Lambeth Central, but in 1979 he defeated Robin Corbett in the marginal Labour seat of Hemel Hempstead. In 1982 he was appointed by the Conservative Party Chairman, Cecil Parkinson, to a task force charged with defending

key marginal seats. That year he wisely exchanged Hemel Hempstead for the safe seat of Mid-Bedfordshire.

In 1987 Nicholas Lyell was appointed Solicitor General and a year later caused a frisson in Parliament when he declared that the Maastricht Treaty could be ratified even if the government suffered a defeat over the social chapter. In 1993 he defended the Serious Fraud Office against accusations of impropriety in its handling of the case involving the fugitive tycoon, Asil Nadir. However, he was later obliged to return to the Commons and admit that he had misled the House after being given inaccurate information by the SFO. He then ordered studies into the possibility of reducing the Attorney General's responsibility for the SFO, Crown Prosecution Service, and the Treasury Solicitor's office by turning them into semi-autonomous agencies.

Nicholas Lyell owned a farm in Hertfordshire and a manor and 24 acres in France between Chablis and Beaune where his wife Susanna conducted wine and art schools. She survives him with their two sons and two daughters.



SIR CYRIL SMITH

28 June 1928 to 3 September 2010

MP for Rochdale

Cyril Smith was one of the most colourful figures in the House of his era.

An unashamed populist, he endeared himself to people with his robust

northern sense of humour and straightforward manner.

After his grandmother's death in 1947, Cyril continued to live with his mother in the small terrace house in which he grew up. A glandular disorder that afflicted him from childhood resulted in the obesity which remained with him for the rest of his life. He gave a new meaning to the phrase "political heavyweight".

He left school at 16 to work as a clerk in the Inland Revenue and he learnt the art of speaking through his membership of the Unitarian Church. He left the Liberal Party after its poor performance in the 1950 general election and in that year joined the Labour Party. He was a Labour Party agent in the 1950s and was a Labour councillor in Rochdale from 1952 to 1966, becoming an Alderman.

Cyril resigned from the Labour Party in 1966 and rejoined the Liberals in 1967. He contested Rochdale in 1970, somewhat reluctantly, given that he had guided, as agent, its incumbent Jack McCann to victory in 1958. He lost by more than 5000 votes, but within two years with the death of McCann, he defeated the Labour candidate, Lawrence Cunliffe, winning this time by around 5000 votes.

Cyril Smith served as Liberal Chief Whip for a year from 1975 to 1976 but resigned over what he considered his leader's dishonest dealings with his colleagues over the Norman Scott affair. He was a vocal critic of Jeremy Thorpe and was scarcely less critical of David Steel. He opposed the pact with Labour in 1977 and initially took a similar hostile line to alliance with the Social Democrats, announcing on radio that it should be "strangled at birth".

He was knighted in 1988 for political and public service, and retired from the Commons in 1992. He was the author of two books, "Industrial Partnership" and "Big Cyril", both published in 1977.

His beloved mother died in 1994 and Cyril remained unmarried.

Due to constraints of space, we are only able to include obituaries of former MPs who were paid up members of the Association. We are indebted to Ted Graham for his hard work in writing about our former colleagues.

GET TOGETHERS

Knowing how difficult and expensive it is for many of our members to get to Association events in London, we hope the following article from Association member Eric Deakins will inspire others to think about organising regional get togethers, either all party or single party.

For the past eleven years, some former Home Counties Labour MPs from the period 1964-1987 have met annually for an informal reunion lunch. The venue is the lovely Hydro Hotel in Eastbourne, Sussex. The date is a Saturday in mid September, after the summer holiday season and before the Party Conference season. We all sit at a large rectangular table which allows for conversation up and down the table as well as across it. Part of the Hotel's reception area

is reserved for us from 12 p.m. for pre-lunch drinks and for tea and coffee afterwards.

I make the necessary arrangements (hotel booking, contact with colleagues etc), building on the excellent work of my predecessor John Cartwright. Numbers attending range from 10 to 18, with spouses and partners equally welcome. The occasion allows plenty of time for catching up with colleagues' activities (as well as state of health!), reminiscing about

the past and talking about the current state of the Labour Party.

If any former colleagues would like more information, they can contact me at epdeakins@blueyonder.co.uk
Eric was a MP for Walthamstow West 1970-1987



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SPEAKER'S LECTURES 2011

The Speaker has launched a series of lectures to mark the 100th anniversary of the 1911 Parliament Act.



Upcoming lectures are:

- Baroness Williams on **Nancy Astor**
- Nicholas Soames MP on **Sir Winston Churchill**
- Gordon Marsden MP on **Aneurin Bevan**
- Lord Norton on **Enoch Powell**
- Lord Kinnock on **Michael Foot**
- Lord Hurd on Ian **McLeod**
- Lord Adonis on **Roy Jenkins**
- John Wittingdale MP on **Margaret Thatcher**
- Tristram Hunt MP on **Tony Benn**

The dates of the lectures will be announced shortly.

Tickets to these events are on a first come, first served basis, but it has been confirmed that if sitting MPs do not take up all the tickets, then former MPs can apply to attend. Sally Grocott will be informed when the next one takes place so if you are interested in attending future lectures, please let her know and she will inform you as and when details are advertised.

MISCELLANY

PASS RENEWAL

Remember when the date on your security pass expires, you will need to go in person to renew it to the Pass Administration office, 1 Canon Row (Derby Gate)

E-MAIL REMINDER

A lot of useful information is sent to members via e-mail, so PLEASE REMEMBER if you change your e-mail address, or acquire one for the first time, let Sally know on grocotts@parliament.uk

FINALLY, PLEASE NOTE THE DATES OF THE NEXT TWO ALL MEMBER MEETINGS:

Thursday 31st March 4 – 6pm
Committee Room 10

Speaker: Lord Norton of Louth on Lords Reform

Tuesday 5th July 4 – 6pm
Committee Room 10, followed by Summer Reception in Speaker's House.
REMEMBER TO APPLY EARLY USING APPLICATION FORM ON PAGE 8.