



Order, Order!

The Newsletter of the Association of Former Members of Parliament

Winter 2011

BADGE OF HONOUR



**TO CROWN OR NOT TO CROWN?
SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS**

↔ ALSO IN THIS EDITION ↔

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Association Chairman, Sir Graham Bright writes:

I am pleased to report that, following the transfer of powers to IPSA, eight [PCPF] Trustees will be Members and/or Former Members.

I am delighted that Sir John Major has accepted my invitation to address our All Member Meeting on **Monday 14th November at 4 p.m.**



This is, I believe, the first time that Sir John has spoken at an event in Westminster since leaving the Commons. He should be with us for around three quarters of an hour. I do hope as many members as possible will attend to ensure a good turnout. Partners are very welcome.

The Executive Committee thought this presented an excellent opportunity to arrange a social event that evening. This will be at the Union Jack Club who have made us feel very welcome. The Club is situated at Sandwell Street, Waterloo, where we will have a three course dinner for the very reasonable cost of £25 per head excluding wine.

If you want to stay overnight, and do some pre-Christmas shopping or go to a matinee, then Association members can book accommodation at the Club for a very reasonable cost. However, as many will want to return home the dinner is early, 6.30 for 7.00. Overnight

accommodation needs to be booked with the Club quoting reference 11353, telephone 0207 902 6000.

A booking form for the dinner is on the back page. Please return this by the end of the month.

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Pensions Update

Trustees have been having regular meetings with IPSA, in the lead up to the Order being laid in the House to transfer the powers of the Leader to them. Sir Ian Kennedy attended the Trustee meeting on 23rd June. The Order was tabled on 18th of July and is likely to be debated in October. The main points arising from our discussion were:-

- that IPSA would prefer to undertake a combined review of salary, pensions and other benefits of Members, but had not yet decided how to proceed;
- that IPSA would work closely with the Trustees, and welcomed proposals as to how this relationship could work. Sir Ian was made aware of the issues and concerns of the Trustees in relation to IPSA's role;
- confirmation that IPSA would adhere to its statutory independent role, which included independence from public perception and the Government, in undertaking their review;
- following the transfer of powers, the role of the Trustees in administering and managing the Fund would continue as at present, although, (due to the way the CRaG Act 2010 was drafted), the Trustees would have additional responsibilities;
- the Trustees would continue to be supported by a team of pension

professionals in the House. This was of paramount importance to the Trustees, as there had been 'informal discussions' to transfer staff in the PCPF Secretariat to IPSA.

Protection for your pension

I would stress that IPSA will not be able to reduce or change the pensions for former Members. So how was the Government able to change the basis for the annual increase to our pensions from RPI to CPI? This was because increases to our pensions are referenced to the index as specified under the Pensions Increase Act 1971. Therefore, at any time, a Minister can change the basis on which our pensions are increased.

Make-Up of the Trustee Board

During the progress of the CRaG Bill through the House in early 2010, the PCPF Secretariat managed to alter significantly the future make-up of the Trustee Board. The original proposal was that only three out of the ten Trustees would be Members and/or Former Members. I am pleased to report that, following the transfer of powers to IPSA, eight Trustees will be Members and/or Former Members. Of the other two Trustees, one will be appointed by IPSA, and the other by the Minister for the Civil Service.

The current Trustees will continue to serve and will need to agree a process for the nomination and selection process of Trustees by Members and Former Members, as and when a position on the Trustee Board needs to be filled. I shall provide further details (once agreed), in a future update.

MOVING FROM GREEN TO RED

Jeff (Lord) Rooker writes:

Other than moving a Ten Minute Rule Bill in 1980, to abolish the Lords, I took no interest in “the other place” during my twenty-seven years as an MP.

I had no future plans in January 2000 when I announced my decision not to seek re-election. Post 1997 I had no expectations that I would serve as a Minister for the whole Parliament, and I thought I would have plenty of time to plan for my future - the Lords was certainly not on the agenda.

During my years at MAFF and DSS I made occasional visits to offer support to Lords Ministers who were carrying out my work. Neither Bernard Donoughue nor Patricia Hollis ever had any queries from me about the Lords. As they dashed away from departmental meetings, talking about rosters and starred questions, I had no idea what they were on about.

My transfer from green to red took place in three stages. Firstly, on the day that the General Election was announced I was asked to sign a form saying that I was a UK resident and taxpayer. This was for the Lords Commission on Appointments, one of whose members later claimed that “former MPs make the worst possible peers”. A slight I took personally. So much for the more friendly atmosphere I thought!

The second stage came as the peerage list was announced. I remained as a DSS Minister but left one House to go to the other.

The third and final stage was after the election when Tony asked me to go to the Home Office. So I was to have a new department as well as a new House. Once appointed by the PM I was a Minister, but a member of neither House! I had nowhere to hang my coat or leave a bag.

When Her Majesty opened Parliament I couldn't be there as I was not yet a member. I was introduced, unusually, on a Thursday and the following Wednesday I made my maiden speech from the despatch box, on the Queen's Speech debate.



Chief Whip Denis Carter and Leader Gareth Williams had advised me to “make them laugh and keep it short”. So I reminded the House about my 10 Minute Rule Bill as proof that I never expected to enter the Lords.

Once appointed by the PM I was a Minister, but a member of neither House! I had nowhere to hang my coat or leave a bag.

Then followed four government departments between 2001 and 2008. In general, I was under more pressure and better quality scrutiny than when a Commons minister. The civil service fear the Lords because they do not know as much about it as the Commons - the Government, as ever, tries to get control of it.

My route in, as a transferring Minister, is not the normal route so I don't have many tips. In fact, it was only last winter that I found out where the Public Bill Office is located and put down my amendments to the Parliamentary Constituencies and Voting Systems Bill.

I do recall before my introduction, when I was being shown around by Denis Carter, that the very first Member to come up and say “welcome”, added “I am pleased to see you here. About 25 years ago you tried to get me thrown out of the Commons when I was a journalist and broke a rule about select committee reports!” Indeed, I did recall the incident though we had never met. By the time the report came back to the House from the Privileges Committee, recommending he be thrown out, I had grown up and opposed it. It was Mark Schreiber, now Lord Marlesford. His was typical of the warm welcome I received as I moved from green to red.



ONE EYE IN THE GRAVE



Joe Ashton writes:
Just have a glance at this poor old soul who looks as if he has been caught in the riots.

That is what you get having your cataracts cut off, or even just one of them. The medical term for it is called Posterior Vitreous Detachment with symptoms of flashing lights and floaters. Which is what I had three days after an operation on one eye, when I fell over the kerb in our local shopping centre.

In about two months' time, if I'm lucky, I might get the other eye done to match but I'm not banking on it.

This was all started I reckon by daft mums and grannies who never go to a football match but buy all the latest strips and colours for birthdays. These fancy shirts look lovely on the racks in Debenhams but are totally useless for figuring out who scored at the far end of the pitch one hundred yards away. That's when I sheepishly had to apologise for shouting at the wrong player.

Anyway I was really looking forward to becoming a cataracts eunuch if I could see the other end of the game.

TREATMENT ROOM

The NHS staff at Sheffield Hallamshire used their superb techniques very efficiently.

No anaesthetic. They just put your head in a bag where you see nothing but stars and fireworks. There was even a pretty young nurse to hold my hand while the big wheel inside my head went off on a New Year's Eve display.

Fantastic. I was in and outside the treatment room in less than an hour. The surgeons only do one eye at a time in case something goes wrong, but even one eye comes out in a fabulous new arena. The colours are so unbelievably bright and sharp. It is Hollywood at the movies and me dancing in the gutter like Gene Kelly at MGM.

But then, calamity. I fell over the kerb, went arm over tip,

We pensioners are not going to get our eyes cut because the hospitals have had their budgets cut.

and saw even more stars than Hollywood, until a local young teacher kindly gave me a lift home.

NO SYMPATHY

There was no sympathy from the granny at our house. Stop moaning she said. Lord Nelson won the battle of Trafalgar with only one eye and his arm strapped up. Long John Silver had only one eye too, and one leg missing as well, and still carried the treasure chest. I like it she said. It suits you.

At the age of 78 next month, I sometimes wonder if they can't wait to open my will and share it out. Anyway, I now have two different eyes. One makes the TV look like sludge and the other dazzles me unless I put my sunglasses on.

To make it worse, there is a story in her paper, *The Mail* which says, "Thousands left waiting for cataract operations." The report says that an army of one eyed elderly victims are now stranded with the cuts imposed by the Treasury, instead of the cuts we all expected to get both our eyes levelled up.

We pensioners are not going to get our eyes cut because the hospitals have had their budgets cut. And even the Lord High Pooh-Bahs in the Treasury say it's false economy to stop cutting. It just leads to older people having more accidents, falling downstairs and having to be taken to A & E in ambulances.

Old Victor Meldrew was absolutely right in the "One Foot in the Grave" series.

And One Foot in the Gutter does you in even faster.



Image of badge courtesy of David Howick, HPC Ltd, david@hplimited.com

More than twenty years ago, the then Speaker George Thomas awarded brass plaques to a number of former MPs who had served prior to 1983. Then later, under our former Patron, Speaker Michael Martin, a "Certificate of Service" was offered to include constituency name and dates, signed personally by him. Members were invited to apply if they wished to have one.

Early in 2011 the Association's Executive discussed a proposal from committee member Syd Rapson that a badge/ brooch should be produced and available to all former MPs to buy and wear in recognition of their service. It was agreed that Syd would commission a company to produce a draft design which would be triple plated in 18 carat gold, with a box made of green leather and silk inlay. It would be something that the children and grandchildren of former MPs would be proud to inherit. We are enormously grateful to Syd for the work he has put into the project and to the company who have enthusiastically worked with him on the design.

All was going well, with the agreement in principle of our Patron, The Speaker, until the design was questioned, with the view put forward that it was inappropriate for the Crowned Portcullis



Brass plaque given to former Members in 1983

BADGE OF HONOUR

Recognising MPs' Service

motif to be used. This was received with great concern by the Executive who refer to the fact that all items in the Commons and Lords gift shops bear the Portcullis and Crown, including cufflinks, passport holders, glassware, etc. for use and display by any member of the public. Even the teddy bears on sale have the Portcullis and Crown. Indeed, the IPU is allowed to produce badges with the Crown to give away to overseas visitors and to foreign MPs.

What our members simply cannot understand is that any member of the public can enter the Commons'/Lords' gift shops, buy a gold brooch with the Crowned Portcullis and wear this on their lapel whenever they choose, yet our members cannot wear the same showing their service to the House.



As can be seen in the photos of the brass plaque given out to former MPs in the 1980s, and the Certificate of Service in 2007, both bear the Crowned Portcullis, and are displayed with pride by our members. The Association is the only organization connected with Parliament which is being denied the use of the Crown. Everywhere, on every item, the Crowned Portcullis is used.

We are not an outside organization. We are recognised and supported by the House of Commons Commission, as is the IPU and the CPA. Like them, we have a (much less grand) office on the estate. On the 18th May 2006 the then Leader of the House, Jack

We feel very strongly that former MPs should be allowed to wear the Crowned Portcullis in recognition of their service to Parliament.

Straw MP, in a House of Commons Motion, welcomed the formation of the Association of Former Members of Parliament "in response to the Resolution of the House of 2nd May 2001." Our constitution says that two sitting MPs from the two main parties should be members of the Executive Committee and we are delighted that Sir Alan Meale MP is the current Labour MP member.



We are pursuing the matter vigorously. We feel very strongly that former MPs should be allowed to wear the Crowned Portcullis in recognition of their service to Parliament.

Let us know what you think! We certainly hope you feel the project is worthwhile pursuing.



Parliamentary Archives

The well attended launch of this fascinating reference book took place in the Macmillan Room, Portcullis House on the 8th June.

The event was introduced by Lord Grocott who placed the book in the context of the four volume *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament 1832 - 1979*, edited by Michael Stenton and Stephen Lees. He had found the biographies in those volumes "absolutely priceless and fascinating" in tracing various political figures over the years.

He also referred to the recent production by the Commons Library of an up to date list of all living ex-MPs (Parliamentary Information List (SN/PC/05324)). The Association of Former Members was proud to have recruited 425 of these as members. He described the book being launched as "a joy for anyone interested in Parliament". Given the biographies, the recollections, and the statistical analysis to bring out characteristics of those contained in the volume, it was fair to say that "all of political life is here".

Guest speaker David Winnick MP said how pleased he was to be associated with the book. He joked that he had observed the peculiar behaviour of MPs in the Library. When a new book of memoirs appeared they would enter the Library, pick up the volume, and turn straightaway to the index, looking of course for their own entry. Indeed, the late Woodrow Wyatt had decided not to provide an index to force colleagues to read his whole book!

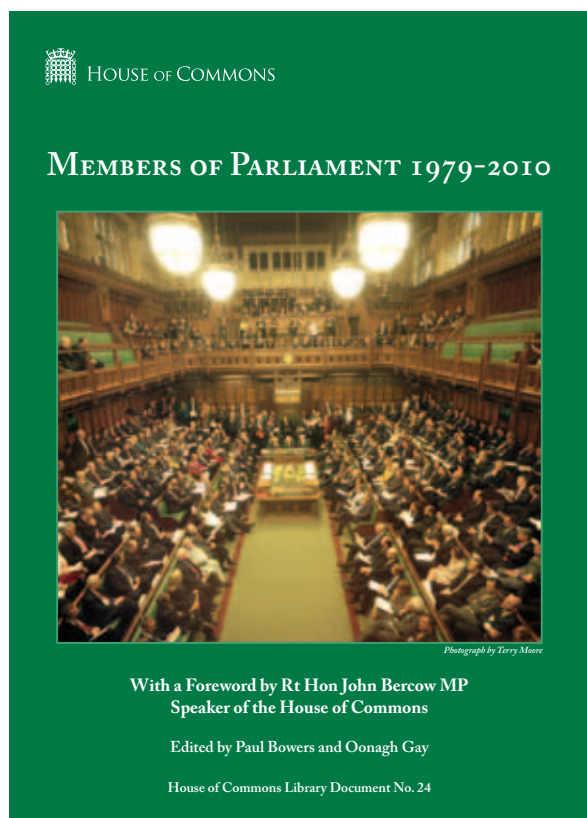
He had seen many changes over time and recalled MPs sitting in the Library on a regular basis to write to their constituents by hand. They had started their careers in the 1930s or 1940s, before public funds were available to employ a secretary. There had been an amazing transformation over the last 45 years in the provision for MPs.

Future historians of Parliament would find Members of Parliament 1979 – 2010 tremendously useful. Members owed a debt of gratitude to the Library.

The other guest speaker, Stephen Lees, said how important backbenchers were during that period. In the last two years their influence had been reasserted by the Backbench Business Committee. Most observers accepted the importance of Select Committees since their establishment in modern form in 1979. These gave the public a chance to see MPs doing something other than chamber work.

He also referred to the late Tony Banks, Austin Mitchell and Dennis Skinner who had the capacity to deflate pomposity. He singled out, to agreement from the audience, the bravery of Gerry Fitt. He noted the mastery of parliamentary questions by Tam Dalyell, including his famous use of the one-word question "WHY?".

Dr Lees mentioned the growth in writing among MPs. There were at least 25 novelists in the volume being launched, from Douglas Hurd to Ian Duncan Smith to Peter Hain, plus political biographers such as Roy Jenkins, and diarists such as Alan Clarke and Chris Mullin. There had been an interesting



exchange between the media and Parliament, with Clement Freud and Giles Brandreth moving in one direction, while Michael Portillo and Robert Kilroy-Silk had gone in the other. Andrew Faulds and Glenda Jackson had entered Parliament from acting careers, while sport was represented by Sebastian (Lord) Coe, Sir Menzies Campbell and Colin (Lord) Moynihan.

Four remaining MPs were about to enter their 40th year – Sir Gerald Kaufman, Michael Meacher, Dennis Skinner and Kenneth Clarke. Ken Clarke's ministerial career was likely to become one of the longest since Churchill.

There was a very lively question and answer session following the speeches.

The book is published by TSO, priced £25 and is available in the Parliamentary Bookshop, online at the TSO Bookshop, and through online retailers such as Amazon.



Lord Grocott, Stephen Lees and David Winnick MP



THE HISTORY OF PARLIAMENT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Dr Paul Seward is Director of the History of Parliament, a major academic project creating a comprehensive account of the parliamentary politics in England then Britain.

He writes:

This autumn, The History of Parliament Trust is working with Dods to start an exciting new project to record the reminiscences of former MPs. The History of Parliament Oral History project will create a sound archive of people involved in politics at national and constituency level, and will provide a unique record of post-2nd World War British political history. It is inspired by the 1930s project of the History of Parliament's founder, Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, which used a questionnaire to capture from MPs who sat in Parliament from 1885 to 1918, impressions of their political careers, which formed the basis for biographical sketches of each Member.

For our project, we will be aiming to interview as many former MPs as we can, using volunteers who are trained in oral history interviewing and knowledgeable about the history of politics. While it will draw out unique information possessed by Members about how they became politicians, their activities within Parliament and their impressions of it, the project will also make a particular point of collecting information about Members' constituency links and other extra-parliamentary activities: campaigns and contacts with lobby groups; local links to newspapers and local campaigns and so on. Ultimately it is planned to secure funding to extend the project well beyond Westminster, to interview those involved in politics at a constituency level, and those involved in campaigning and lobbying groups at local and national level.

Dods has generously funded this initial phase of the project, and we would like to work closely with the Association of Former Members as well. It will take us some time to get around all 920 or so former Members: but sooner or later, we hope to be getting in touch!



Book Reviews



A HISTORY OF BRITAIN'S PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES

Association member Jacques Arnold originally compiled this publication as an enthusiast in the years immediately following the 1974 election. As it developed, he began to market it to public and academic libraries, candidates

and journalists, he has kept it up to date over the years.

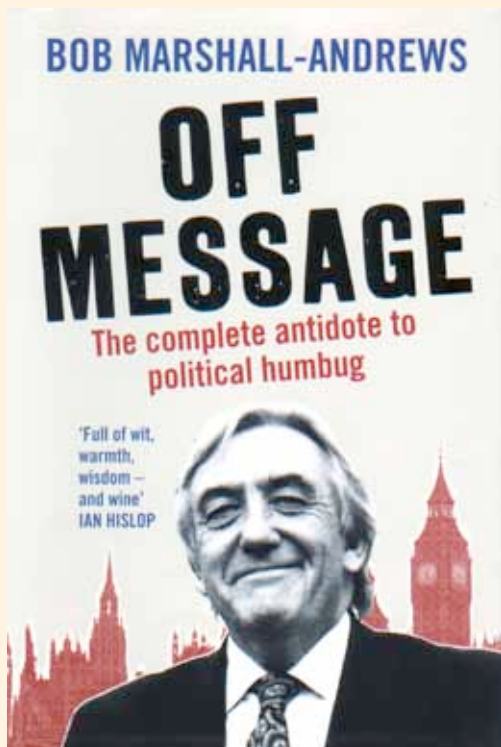
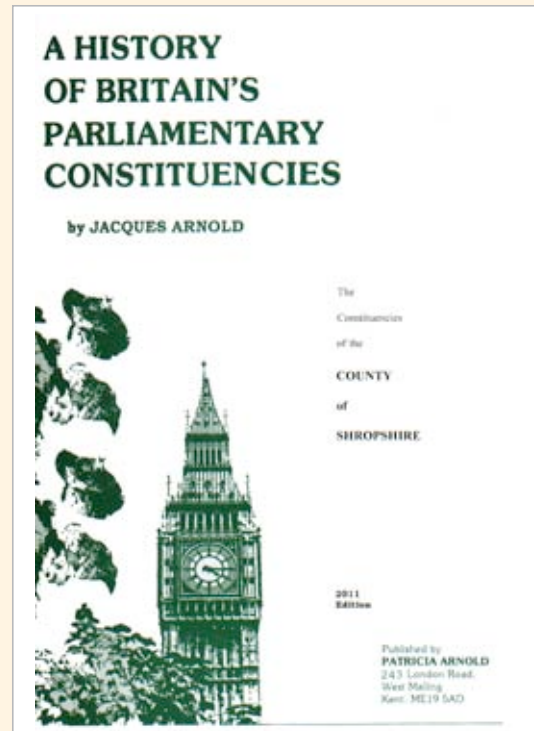
The latest edition includes the results of the last general election, has been further expanded and now provides a thumbnail summary on each constituency.

Jacques is offering Association members copies of volumes of their own constituency/county/city/borough at a 50% discount.

The books are published by Patricia Arnold, 243 London Road, West Malling, Kent, ME19 5AD. Telephone: 01732 848388

Enquiries by e-mail: constituencyhistory@uwclub.net

website: www.theroyalhousesofeurope.co.uk.



OFF MESSAGE

Robin (Lord) Corbett describes this book by Association member Bob Marshall-Andrews, as a witty, irreverent romp through some of the triumphs and turmoils of New Labour of which Bob believed that little was worthwhile.

Having decided in 1996 that Tony Blair was "dangerously delusional", Bob was never going to be the Prime Minister's greatest fan. The book charts Bob's thirteen year parliamentary career during which he became a favourite of the media, if not the whips, and was known by friend and foe alike as a "rebel without a pause".

Hardcover: 256 pages

Price: £16.99

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