

# William Waldegrave

Born 1946.

Life story interview by Alan Macfarlane.

Available online at [www.livesretold.co.uk](http://www.livesretold.co.uk)

## Contents

1. Ancestors
2. Parents
3. Childhood
4. Eton College
5. Oxford University
6. Religion
7. Kennedy Fellowship
8. Early Career
9. Member of Parliament
10. Minister
11. After Politics
12. The Political System
13. Provost of Eton College
14. Reflections

*The text of this life story is transcribed, with thanks and acknowledgement, from the collection of Filmed Interviews with Leading Thinkers at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. The interview was carried out by Prof. Alan Macfarlane on 3rd September 2008, and was transcribed by Sarah Harrison. The video is in two parts which can be accessed from this page: <http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/ancestors/audiovisual.html>*

# 1. Ancestors

I was born in 1946 at Chewton Mendip in Somerset, the youngest of seven siblings and the only one to be born post-war. My brother who is the nearest was born in 1940, and my five sisters born in the 1930s. The Waldegrave family is always described in seventeenth century genealogies as "ancient"; we were of the minor aristocracy, and in the very early days post-Conquest, senior landed gentry of East Anglia. As with many English families, it is a tree which starts with Warren de Waldegrave coming over with the Conqueror and marrying his cousin in order to redeem the family lands already here, which I think is a pretty good propaganda story by the Normans.

We were about in the twelfth century as Sheriff of London, third Speaker of the House of Commons; knighted on the field of that dreadful battle at Towton Moor, and prominent under Mary Tudor where we became national, and again under the Stuarts, married off to an illegitimate daughter of James II whom he had by Arabella Churchill.

Then into the higher aristocracy, having gone into exile came back in 1723 having negotiated their way back, having changed religion, a step up in the peerage to an earldom. Then sent straight back to Paris to spy on Berwick, his close cousin, and close confidant and public servant in the period of Robert Walpole. The following I think shows why, unlike the French, we did not have a revolution. Edward Walpole, older brother of Horace Walpole, a fairly idle son of the great Prime Minister, had chambers in Pall Mall above a milliner's shop. In the shop there was a pretty girl and in France we would know how the story ends.

In England, the pretty girl and Edward Walpole live happily together for thirty years until they both die. They produce a daughter, Maria, who marries first, James, 2nd Earl Waldegrave, the grandson of James II and at that time a powerful figure in national politics. When James, 2nd Earl dies, Maria Waldegrave marries the King's brother, the Duke of Gloucester, the man who said "scribble, scribble, scribble Mr Gibbon"; so from the milliner's shop to the King's brother is a matter of a few decades.

Although it caused a bit of a stink, and was one of the reasons for the Royal Marriages Act, it was possible in England, and not possible, in my view, in France. This formidable girl, Maria Walpole (right with her baby daughter Elizabeth), was Horace's favourite niece. She was quite a character and much painted by Reynolds. She produced the three famous ladies Waldegrave, painted by Reynolds, a commission undertaken for Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill, where the picture hung. One of them married a first cousin Waldegrave which is why it goes down that line; anyway, Horace was fond of his niece, fond of her children, and left Strawberry Hill and all its collections in his will, with a life interest to Mrs Damer, a cousin of his, a sculptor.



Mrs Damer gave it up early, and then it went permanently to the Waldegrave family, I think because he thought that the Waldegraves, great survivors for centuries, were a safe bet; not so rich that his possessions would be swamped in a great collection like Chatsworth.



Strawberry Hill.

Unfortunately we then had a very bad patch with two Regency characters who did a sale at Strawberry Hill in 1842, scattering the collection to the four winds. So poor Horace's intention failed, although he knew it would fail because in his 1784 description of Strawberry Hill he said that all great collections get scattered as his father's did. His father's pictures were sold to Catherine the Great by another of his elder brothers. He described his own collection so that when they were scattered they would have a genealogy, not quite like the Peerage, but more like race horses.

Then came an extraordinary episode because these two neer-do-well brothers both of them, one after the other, married this wonderful young adventuress, a Jewish girl called Frances Braham (right) - one died of drink, and then she married the other one. She then made herself one of the great Whig, liberal hostesses of the mid-nineteenth century. She marries very well twice more, ending up with Lord Carlingford who was in Gladstone's Cabinet, and she makes Strawberry Hill a major centre of liberal politics. She is described by Disraeli as the real leader of the opposition. She buys back a lot of things because our little estate in Somerset, which had been given us by Mary Tudor for the lead mines, now began to produce coal, so she was rich for a bit. That sense of guilt about the destruction of Horace's collection in 1842 is why I have tried to collect a few things back myself.



I am descended from the younger son, born posthumously, of my great-grandfather, who was killed at the battle of the Alma as Lord Chewton, leaving a pregnant widow. His elder son became a rather conventional, not very attractive, high Tory

pheasant-shooting figure, at the turn of the century. He was Chief Whip in the Lords at the time of the Constitutional crisis in 1911, and the last-ditcher, who resigned in disgust at the compromises that were made and went back to shooting pheasants.

He had a son who died of multiple sclerosis without producing a child. It then went across to the younger son who was a Church of England vicar, who produced my father. So the line was very thin then, and my father was brought up in the uncomfortable position of having an intimidating old uncle with a crippled, dying son, knowing that he was going to inherit from his uncle. It was a very uncomfortable childhood with no great prosperity at all in the various vicarages. He inherited the Earldom in 1930 and married my mother, a Grenfell from the great Liberal Imperial family, and her mother was a Lyttleton, another such family.

Lyttletons and Grenfells cover the place at Eton where we are, with war memorials and achievements; they have everything from VCs to Governors of the Bank, they were the sort of High Liberal, Imperial families, along with many others. But my Grenfell grandfather was alternately very rich and very poor. He had made two great fortunes and lost them both. His last great speculation was chrome mines in Yugoslavia.

I was brought up with the old boy sitting in an armchair, still bankrupt and paid for by my father, saying "Bloody fellow, Tito.." as he had nationalized his chrome mines. Two of his brothers, twins, were killed in the First World War, one winning the VC. His first cousin was Julian Grenfell; eight or nine of them were killed then; he had the D.S.O. and was badly wounded. They were a classic of that generation that suffered then, and somehow went indomitably on. My mother's mother was Hilda Lyttleton; they were related to Richard Braithwaite, and Edward Lyttleton who was Head Master at Eton. Braithwaite's mother was a Lyttleton and I knew him a bit although my brother knew him better as he was at Cambridge.

---

## 2. Parents

My father was brought up in a tradition, a kind of Toryism that doesn't exist any more. He was deeply suspicious of free markets, hierarchical, Christian, much more sympathetic to socialism than to capitalism. I found amongst his papers a letter from Walter Citrine at the time of the General Strike, in a beautiful copper-plate hand, thanking him for his support; he was a signer of the Peace Pledge in the 30s, a radical young man who believed in inherited wealth if it was made to work; my mother, long before the National Health Service, held clinics on the estate.



Chewton House, Chewton Mendip.

They took their noblesse oblige very seriously indeed, with a Christian background of the Church of England; very high church. One of his sisters never married because her young man was judged to be too low church. They were modernist in a sense and pulled down the great Victorian house and moved into quite a modest house, described in Anthony Powell's diaries as not really suitable for an Earl but for a country vicar.

They didn't have any indoor servants after the war and lived rather modestly, despite their wealth. They didn't have flashy cars or go to the south of France; all the money that was made on the estate, and farming was good in the fifties and early sixties, was mostly invested back in the estate, in improved houses and so on. So I was brought up with a strong sense of public duty, but at the same time, a sense of local hierarchy. I was the son of the relatively big house and everybody in the village lived in our houses, though many of them have been sold now.

Most people were employed by my father in his farms or the cheese business which he started, but he was intensely proud of the small businesses that he helped to start with his people. It was an old-fashioned paternalist, but rather admirable world, that will never exist again. It reminds me of some of the things in 'The World we have Lost', Peter Laslett's book. There is a picture of me handing out



Coronation mugs to the villagers who are lined up respectfully; this was the task for the younger son. My elder brother, much grander, was Page at the Coronation and I was deeply envious of his sword and his uniform. The picture is of the children lining up in quite a respectful manner, and I aged six or seven, standing behind the table, with my Governess on one side, and the gentleman Vicar, whom I remember very well with a waistcoat and a gold watch chain, wearing a trilby hat, with a list of the children.

It is extraordinary to think that that is in one lifetime; my mother was a scholar manqué; she was at St Paul's Girls' School and went up to Somerville on a full scholarship, and then left to marry my father which I think she probably regretted later in life. With her father having gone from great riches, living at Carlton House Terrace with a great picture collection, and the next moment he was bust. The first great fortune - a great company before the First World War called Select Trust, which was bigger than Cecil Rhodes' company at one stage, over-borrowed.

Then he fell off his horse while hunting and suffered from a broken back for six months and gave the company to his brother to run who was no businessman, and went bust. He owned that wonderful Titian, 'The Man with a Glove' (right), that is now in the Frick collection in New York, which he had to sell in 1916. There is a letter from him in the trenches to Frick, saying that it was a little uncomfortable out here but hoped he was enjoying his new picture - think of the distance from the trenches and the ruthless old businessman Frick who was buying pictures on the cheap in Europe. It seems to me that she thought to get stability by marrying my father young.



She then produced seven children with an obvious search for an heir. She told me once that my father never showed any sign of disappointment when another daughter appeared, but when my brother was born in 1940, the church bells were rung and it was a major event. I was born in 1946 and I saw a letter somewhere to her saying well done, you now have guarded your ace; the production of sons in a family that had gone in a very narrow line obviously was an achievement.

My father had elements of what now would be called bipolarism; he was subject to tremendous tempers - "a depression over the Mendips", we used to say - and he could be very frightening and uncontrolled in his temper. My mother was a rock-like equable person. She had taken the decision that come what may, she was going to look after him, and was determined, incidentally, to outlive him, because she was sure that he couldn't live without her.

She died four or five months after him in 1995; it was a marriage that cannot have been very easy for her at times because his temperament was difficult. He was capable, like quite a lot of such people, of putting on a wonderful show for outsiders. People would say what a charming man your father was, and he was charming, but you also saw another side where he could get very depressed and that

took the form often of rage. I as the youngest probably suffered from that much less than some of the others.

Some of my sisters were hurt by it, and my brother and he had a very poor relationship; it is a classic thing, poor relationships in landed families anyway between eldest son and father. But it was particularly so; one of the things it did was to train all us siblings in the avoidance of confrontation. When there were signs of danger, people absented themselves or found strategies for avoidance. I was much younger than Margaret Thatcher and she was always extremely kind to me, but perhaps that earlier experience did help. The thing I learnt from it was that there were times when you just had to put your head down and let the objects fly past you.

I was close to my father even in his very difficult old age because he was a remarkable man - disappointed in many ways; he was very intelligent and had been sent up to read land management or something at Trinity, Cambridge, and always felt he was uneducated. He suffered another thing that his brothers-in-law, my mother's brothers, all had rather heroic wars as did his sons-in-law. He was in the Artillery and in the air defences of Bristol for a time, but was sent to the British Military Liaison Mission in Washington at the end of 1941 - he was thirty-six so not surprising - but he felt overshadowed by the Bernard Fergussons and the brothers-in-law who had all been conventional soldiers.

---

### 3. Childhood

My childhood was much more like being an only child than the member of a big family. By the time I became conscious, my elder brother was at prep boarding school. I was educated before prep school by a governess at home, with one other little boy, the son of the head of the theological college at Wells.

I had quite a lonely childhood; my early consciousness is a lot to do with looking forward to siblings coming home in the holidays. Quite a lot of others of my early memories are to do with physical things. I do remember the tremendous peal of the church bells at Chewton (right) from a very early age. The little bedroom which I had opposite my parents, which doesn't now exist as it was turned into a cupboard. My mother never believed in nannies, she had governesses, but without nannies the bond with my mother was always extremely strong and remained so until she died. I remember the rumbling noise of the turnpike being knocked down at the bottom of the garden, and confirmed the memory with a contemporary of mine in the village recently.



He remembered the same thing, American tanks on tank transporters going home when they were dismantling their bases, did knock down all the walls. I remember the empty big Victorian house which we never moved back into after the war, which was off limits because it was dangerous. It had been used by the American Army and was largely destroyed. I remember that post-war feeling of there being something mysterious. All the woods had remains of concrete and barbed wire, and over-grown things in them. That very strong over-hang of the war, which although when I was growing up was very near, was somehow already mythic and heroic.

My elder sisters' early boy-friends, and their husbands in the end, had flown bombers and been in battles, but it felt, strangely, as far away as the Trojan Wars. I was a precocious child and wrote a newspaper on a typewriter that I still have, and I used to sell it when I was five and six. It was a mixture of science fiction, rockets and things, but a little bit of precocious politics that I must have been hearing. Mr Bevan's was a very alarming figure. In spite of the background, and intermittent terror when my father was angry, it was a very happy childhood, very protected, with a cook and daily ladies who came in, all of whom were great friends. It was a friendly, comfortable, but somewhat lonely childhood

I did fish, collect birds' eggs and moths; I was never very competent at these things. I found the remains of my moth collection, and there were only about two different kinds, so I collected only common ones; the birds' eggs were mostly thrushes and blackbirds. When I was twelve I was allowed to have a 410 shotgun. Just as in Beavis, I remember the great day when I shot my first pigeon. No horses, as my mother had broken her back riding, and although some of my sisters rode a bit, we



were never encouraged. Also we were never encouraged to have anything much to do with the hunt because my mother thought it dangerous.

My father, characteristically, had intelligent and wayward ideas about fox hunting/ Je thought it unfair to hunt a nocturnal animal during the day; that was a kind of intelligent, landed intellectual aristocracy, which is hard now to conjure up. He had all kinds of quite radical ideas. My father didn't have a vote but my mother certainly voted Liberal in 1945. They both brought me up to believe that it was a very good thing that Churchill hadn't been re-elected - we would have had a dictatorship, and have gone to war with the Russians, goodness knows what would have happened. They were strong supporters of the creation of the welfare state, though I was also hearing that Mr Bevan was a dangerous man, but that might have been because they were supporting Atlee at the time.

I had a governess before going to prep school at eight; I went to Pinewood near Shrivenham because the Astor family liked it. My uncle Reggie Grenfell was married to Joyce Phipps, the Joyce Grenfell (right), and a wonderful background figure in my childhood, and she was part of that set.



It wasn't a very good school but I had the essential things, a teacher who taught me to read - Mr Vallen - and to write a bit, an art master who encouraged huge poster painting, and most of the school activity was building mud huts and tree houses. I went back to see it the other day - they asked me when I became Provost of Eton to speak at their Speech Day - and it seems immeasurably smart. You always think that places look much smaller when you go back but this looked much bigger and grander, and now co-educational and modern.

I remember it with some affection; it taught me a little bit of Greek, and taught Latin well, mathematics well, and it taught me to read and had books in its library. I am sure I felt homesick at first, but my brother had been there and it seemed the natural thing to do. Later on my mother told me it was the worst day of her life when I went to boarding school, the last of seven children. I don't know why I couldn't have gone to the Eagle School in Wells, for example, but that was the tradition, and it was all right.

---

## 4. Eton College



Eton College.

I was a moderate performer, began to do better towards the end, and to my astonishment when I did the common entrance for Eton, was placed in the Remove which meant I missed out a whole year. That seemed to me very wrong. I was extremely shy at this point which may seem difficult to imagine in someone who later became a politician, but I talked very little and was very anxious, as I think the youngest of large families often are, not to be made a fool of. The best strategy for that was to keep quiet.

I remember an episode when I can't have been more than about eight. We were in a taxi with several of my older sisters, going past the Queen Victoria memorial outside Buckingham Palace. My sisters were ridiculing some young man who said it was one of Beethoven's best violin concertos. I didn't know what was wrong with this remark. I remember almost promising myself that I was going to put myself in the situation that I never did not know what is wrong with a remark like that.

I was pretty hopeless at sport though I played a little cricket. My brother was a sporting hero, stroked the eight here, stroked the eight at Cambridge, and was in the Boat Race for two years, and was much worshipped by everybody. I was plodding along behind. I began to flower a bit more at Eton; I was never a spectacular intellectual, but I worked very hard. I had two slogans 'labor omnia vincit' from Virgil and one that I thought was Lenin's slogan 'Work, work, work', in Russian. I used to work very, very hard, and began to win prizes, from about the age of thirteen or fourteen.

I did row relatively successfully for a time, but I was never going to be as good as my brother;. I was allowed to do my 'A' levels early when I was sixteen, and did very badly; then I decided to give up rowing, and concentrated very hard on getting good 'A' levels and trying to get a scholarship to Oxford, and trying to win the

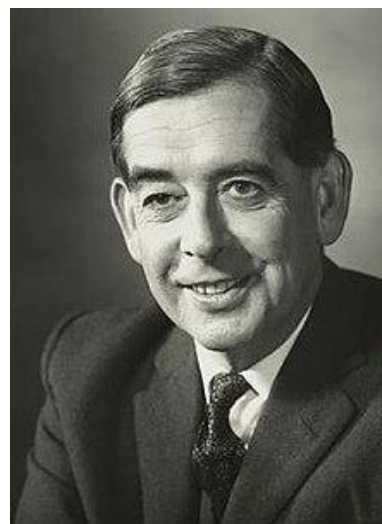
Newcastle Prize here. All of which I then did, but not elegantly, not like proper scholars; I did it by application.

My father was a Wykehamist and hated it, but my mother's family had all been Eton heroes; her father had been in the XI here; there had been Etonian Waldegraves before, one of whom drowned here as a little boy in the 1760s which caused them to boycott the school for a bit. I don't think my father made any serious attempt to send us to Winchester because he didn't care for it himself.

I remember coming here while my brother was still here. I was sent early so arrived when I was twelve in the house of a man called John Marsden who was a rowing hero, a Commando in the War, a huge tough man who won the Wingfield Skulls. He could not have been a schoolmaster nowadays so I don't know what would have become of him. An eccentric, formidable man, whom I became devoted to. Not an intellectual man but he knew what he didn't know. I remember him when I was about fourteen saying that I needed more intellectual stimulus, and finding a young master, a man called Coxall who was a wonderful aesthete who had come from Tübingen University. I remember going into his rooms and he had a print on his wall. His first remark was to ask me who the picture was by; into my head floated de la Tour which was correct. The next thing he mentioned was Ruskin's 'Stones of Venice' which I admitted I had never read, which surprised him.

The great thing about a school like this is that there are masters like that. I was taught also by another formidable man who could easily have been a philosophy Don at Oxford, called John Roberts. I was at the end of a time when, apart from mathematics, the highest prestige was classics. All that changed not long afterwards, but I went up the classical route. I used to win the English literature prizes; I was very competitive. Because of my elder siblings, I think I sounded much more mature than other boys so I wrote the sort of things that grown-ups liked, earlier I think. I won all these prizes from the age of sixteen up to the Prize Fellowship at All Souls, in every case feeling this was a fraud.

I remember Eton as a tumultuous place. At that time it was in a strange state; Anthony Chenevix-Trench (right) was Head Master, the ruins of a great man who was intelligent and fascinating. He beat too many boys, drank too much, but one was smart enough to see that this was somebody interesting who was damaged, and I was fond of him. My great influence at that level was Robert Birley, his predecessor, who was an enthusiast - an antiquarian rather than an historian. His sermons always began with reminiscences, for example on glass in a Dorset church. He was an ideal Etonian, being a member of the Atomic Energy Authority and following the second lesson in his local church in the original Greek; that is not a bad ideal.



I did no drama as I was far too shy; I rowed until I decided to give it up; I became a tremendous bureaucrat - President of Pop, then self-electing prefects' body - I was

Captain of the Oppidans, I edited the 'Chronicle', I was a fluent essayist, so I did all those sort of things. I had very close friends, usually outsiders. Charles O'Hagan - Charles Strachey, Jamie McCulloch who died was a most talented sculptor and poet, and I was conscious always that I was not really a proper intellectual like Derek Parfitt or Edward Mortimer. Just above me were some spectacular intellectuals, Mortimer and Parfitt amongst them, another called Haysloe who never quite did it. There was a mathematical prodigy called Simon Norton who was a little younger than me.

The school was still an old-fashioned place. We had no top hats, but there was still fagging and beating. I was a progressive campaigner against various things and led a strike in my house against the food once, and campaigned against beating and refused to beat people when I was Captain of my House and President of Pop; a rather priggish youth, I think.

The changes in Eton then and Eton now reflect changes in society as a whole in many respects. It's a far more humane place. Then there was still beating of boys and a greater remoteness from the outside world. Particularly as a younger boy, you were not allowed to go to London or see your parents except in limited circumstances. Although the curriculum was beginning to be reformed at the end of my time, it still descended at least from the Victorian. There was a classical side and the top class, A1, was a classics division; the grandest prize which carried the greatest prestige, a classics and theology prize, was the Newcastle Prize. Mathematics was the other; rather like the double first at Oxford in Gladstone's day of mathematics and classics.

You had to choose at sixteen whether you went one way or the other, so in curriculum terms now there is a far greater range with boys doing ancient Greek and chemistry, and so on. Classics still carries prestige but is not quite the centre of everything as it was. I remember my uncle, a sensible modern person, trying to persuade me to do PPE on the grounds that that was a modern thing to do, which had decorated itself by trying to call itself Modern Greats in order to borrow the prestige of real Greats. But it never occurred to me to do anything but Mods and Greats at Oxford, partly because I genuinely loved the classics, Plato, Aristotle and the pre-Socratic philosophers, and then classical history. But I was never a good enough linguist to be completely fluent as one should be as a real classicist.

At Eton then, discipline was very pre-modern although Birley (right) was a liberal man. He was not interested in that sort of thing so didn't reform that aspect, although he started another fundamental reform of the school in that when he arrived about 70% of the teachers were Old Etonians and about 60-70% of the children were sons of Old Etonians.



Both proportions were reversed by the time he left; so now it is more humane, it is more catholic in its curriculum and interests, and a fundamental change which really took place just after I left and Michael McCrum became Head Master. Along with a

number of other Clarendon schools and other great Independent schools, as the state abandoned the grammar schools and Direct Grant schools and academic selectivity, to some extent the independent schools moved to fill that place. The academic entrance standards for Eton became much stiffer in the period after I left.

When I came it was first come first served. You put your child's name down at birth, and if he could pass common entrance, which was a pretty low hurdle, you got in, and there was a fourth form, so called, with really quite non-academic children. Birley used to say he was running a strange, socially select comprehensive school, which in academic abilities he pretty near was. In those days, apart from our scholars, our elite would never have thought of competing with Manchester Grammar School or Wolverhampton Grammar School, or the top academic order. Now we are a more academic school, though not a specialist academic school. We don't try to come first in league tables. In fact we have withdrawn from them as we think they are misleading and foolish, but we are a much more meritocratic place. This means that the Provost receives complaints from the grandparents who were used to the old system on why their children are not getting in

Eton positively did for me what it still tries to do; the ideology of the place is to develop the individual in a whole range of talents; we are not particularly a sporting school though we are good at some; we are not particularly an academic school but we have very high peaks of academic life; we are delighted that we have a boy who designs and makes his own high fashion clothes. We have a pack of beagles; we have art schools, very good drama, very good music; the objective is to find something that everybody can do, even if it has not been done before, like the boy designing clothes. If you wanted to be an Olympic rower, we should help you do that, and have done for a hundred years; so the ideal is to try to find the individual skill of the student.

Four years ago, a fascinating, unknown wall painting from about 1490-1500 was uncovered in the Head Master's chambers which had been long covered by panelling. It is a very early secular wall painting of a large schoolmaster in the middle with little boys sitting at desks, some paying attention, some playing with hoops, Winchester arms on one side, Eton arms on the other reflecting our origins, and a quotation from Quintilian running across the top which says the job of the schoolmaster is to find the individual talents of the child. It was a very good motto in Quintilian's day, a very good motto in 1500, and remains our motto.

That would be one side of it; the other side, which is the side that irritates people most is to try to build confidence. This can slip over into arrogance very easily and Etonians are often accused of it. But I notice with my daughter who teaches in difficult comprehensive schools, one of her constant battles is to raise the confidence of the children she is teaching, and show them that they have abilities that they can meet. It is pretty deeply attached to the DNA of this place that you should be able to handle yourself in any situation.

I arrived here, as my son did, as a shy boy, and left confident, over-confident in my case. None the less that is an important thing to do to show people that they can be themselves and make their own choices. The downside, more than now, it was an inward-looking place. It had aspects of all the old novels written mostly by people

who were very unhappy here. David Benedictus' was the scandalous novel of my day - 'The Fourth of June'. There was a homo-erotic atmosphere, much dissipated now because there is not much point if you can go into the outside world.

There was a greater sense of distance from the world, partly most people came from a society that was much more hierarchical than now. I was trying to describe my father's old-fashioned sense of noblesse oblige, though he would never have used the words, but a sense of duty. The other side of that were arrogant people who thought the world owed them respect and living just because they were who they were. The unpleasant aspect of it was that there were probably more of the latter than there are now; but it is the same place in some essential ways.

The little bit of anarchy was very much boy-led; we were always rather proud of the fact that in those days we wholly elected our own prefects, though that is somewhat moderated now. Pop, short for popina, allegedly a Latin word for a tuck shop, was earlier a debating society and met in a popina. The element of anarchy here has always been attractive. There is a story in Roxburgh of Stowe's autobiography about him bringing a team in the late '30s to play Eton.

They had been training and this was to be their big match, but when they arrived here nobody had any idea that the match was due to take place. A polite boy offered to find some people to play and managed to find ten. Stowe, of course, won the match. Eton were frightfully polite to them but didn't take it at all seriously; that could be seen as arrogance but could also be seen as muddle and freedom, which is rather attractive.

---

## 5. Oxford University



Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

The Newcastle Prize is local to Eton, but I won a scholarship to Corpus Christi College, Oxford. In those days you did a university scholarship examination in the autumn. Corpus was a famous classical college, but I was attracted to it because one of my boyhood heroes was Isaiah Berlin who had been in Washington with my father during the war. Though I didn't know him at that time, he was an intellectual presence and he had been in Corpus. It was a small college, and I thought that there were no Etonians there because after leaving Eton I went rather consciously through a de-Etonianizing phase for a bit.

It was the sixties then, when 70% of Oxford undergraduates were from the state system. It didn't seem that Etonians had inherited the world or that the Bullingdon Club was other than a really good bar - a better Oxford than it became the the '80s and '90s, I think. Corpus was a very meritocratic college; it was classics and medicine, it had no politicians, although I knew already I was very politically aware. It has lots now, and both Milibands were there. I also slightly consciously chose a small college as I have always been attracted by the idea of community. I don't regret my choice at all, although Christ Church people seem to think that Corpus is part of their back yard; Corpus is a beautiful college too, with a strong sense of its own history.

On politics, I certainly used to dream when I was a small child, and later when I was alone at home, that I was the centre of cheering crowds. I think seeking applause is part of being the youngest in a family, and of a big clan because my mother had a good many brothers and sisters.

My father was a Junior Minister, not really a politician, in Macmillan's Government between '58 and '63, so there were politicians about. He was an agriculturalist and was in the House of Lords as a Junior Minister. I knew Alec Douglas-Home - there was a political background and Mr Macmillan (right) was an early hero. My first political act was to write to Iain Macleod in support of his objections to the first Commonwealth Immigration Act in about '61 or '62. I had high ideals of the British Empire succeeding the Roman Empire at the time.



There was a Liberal-Tory background in my life, and I became more and more politically interested at Eton, and went into the Conservative Association where I became President at Oxford. I was a poor debater but it was another thing I forced myself to do. I can do after dinner speeches and tributes at funerals, but I was never a really good knock about debater like Kenneth Clark or Michael Foot, let alone Enoch Powell. I joined the Union at Oxford and forced myself to do it as I thought it was a skill I needed to have; I even became President of the Union rather to my astonishment and luck because the Left were still part of the Oxford Union at that point, though they withdrew just after my time, protesting that it was a club, and that the Students' Union was the real thing. There were no great speakers in my time though there had been not long before.

I read Mods and Greats but to my great chagrin I didn't get a first in Mods, quite deservedly and I was not a good linguist. Mods is to some extent a language-based course, probably more than now there was still more reliance on measuring your capacity to write and read Greek and Latin fluently. I was very disappointed; my dear Tutor, Ewen Bowie who just retired the other day, told me that that year out of the eleven people going in for mods from Corpus, nine of them got Firsts; he suggested that when they got to W the examiners felt they couldn't award another.

This was kind of him but as the scripts were anonymised it cannot be true unfortunately. I was very well taught, first by Richard Nisbet who became Professor of Latin, and then by Ewen Bowie; the central person in my development was Jim Hermison my philosophy tutor. It was the dying heyday of Oxford philosophy; the great names were Ayer and Ryle, Hare was at Corpus, Austin, and Wisdom from Cambridge - the later Wittgenstein rather than the earlier, Plato, Aristotle - Aristotle was an honorary Oxonian. His comment on ethics was the centre of all we did - and it was a very good education in my view, alongside very good history teaching. Brian Harrison was at Corpus later and I got to know him a bit; it was a very fine intellectual training and I don't regret it a moment, to have learnt economics of the day from Samuelson might have been useful, but not much more use to me as a politician than to know about first century Rome or Athens; I do regret not knowing more of the history of my own country which I have taught myself a bit since, but I really knew no history at all after the death of Marcus Aurelius until a good deal later.

I lived in Corpus itself to start with, and then in a wonderful building on Folly Bridge, an imitation castle built by a local businessman in the nineteenth century in order to keep up with the colleges. If you look at my background it must seem to any analyst that I am somebody from the centre of the British establishment, but I never felt like that and always felt that I was an outsider of some kind; looking at the grand Etonians of the day, Robert Cecil and the cool young men who were debs' delights, I never felt like that. I did have one grand establishment girlfriend but she was a rebel, and my main girlfriend at Oxford was a Lancashire girl who had nothing to do with the University really.

I remember consciously thinking that my model was Disraeli, that I was going to be someone that these grandees would have to hire for their party in due course, which was a lot of nonsense, but quite useful as a motivating force to feel that you don't



deserve anything, but must work for it. I was never a member of the Bullingdon Club or those sorts of things.



The imitation castle on Folly Bridge.

The Union was more like a club perhaps than later, but it was a political club. We had massive electoral machines in the University Conservative Association. My college being very small had to make alliances, and my alliances were with Exeter and St Johns, and colleges that were very meritocratic. Wolverhampton Grammar School was my main ally as an ex-school, and many of those people remain friends to this day.

It seems odd to say that now as the second son of an Earl, who had gone to Eton, but if I had felt like that I would have gone to Christ Church or New College. I was very lacking in confidence; I never went to deb dances, or to country house weekends. I was extremely shy; Eton had built up my confidence intellectually, and was rather explosively argumentative, but socially still shy.

I was told by my beloved teacher at Eton, John Roberts, in his very solemn antique way that there were five things you could do at university - religion, sport, academic work, sex - perhaps there were four; anyway, you had to choose one not to do, and he recommended not doing religion. But I really didn't do any sport apart from rowing for my college in the torpids for a year or two. I was never confident enough to do drama. I did politics, and my beloved girlfriend without whom I would never have got my First in Greats, looked after me.

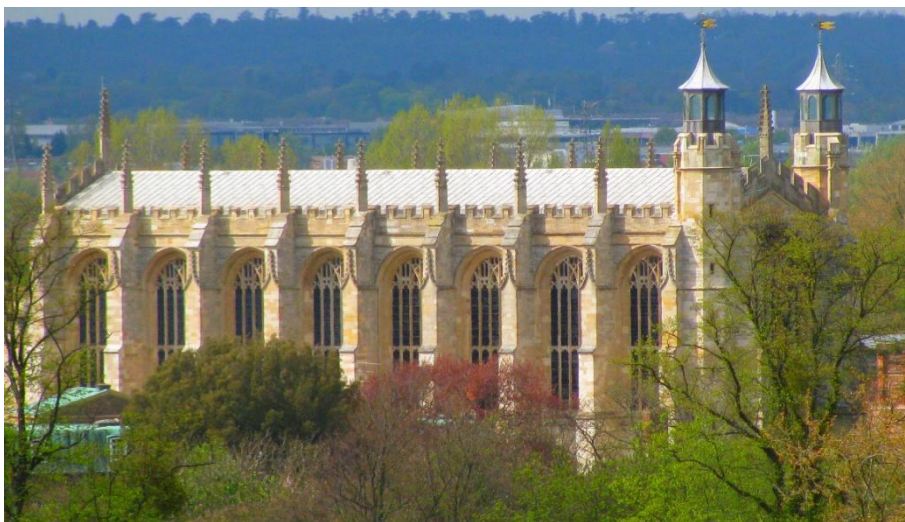
The last year I worked really hard, about six days a week according to a schedule - working through the great texts I had to do as Greats is a very long examination, and then having time to revisit things. I had a space to read alongside things so that one could keep up with the latest thing. I have always been a good examinee, it is a technique, rather a specious one really, but I knew if one kept up with the very latest publications that would really impress examiners then, probably not now. It is depressing seeing the boys being told for 'A' levels here that you just have to use the

key words that the examiners are looking for, and that if you think for yourself you will get nowhere at all. Oxford, I hope, is still better than that; I was very well prepared for Greats and got a very good First, but by heavy lifting and hard work, not an Oscar Wilde performance.

---

## 6. Religion

My approach to the Church of England is very much like that of my friend Martin Rees; I feel it is my tribe and I love the liturgy and the language of the Book of Common Prayer. I am respectful of it and get cross - it seems to me that some of the propagandists for atheism make obvious mistakes. Equally I do not like being pushed by the evangelicals the other way. I like my relationship with something higher than the utilitarian world to be private; but I love the structure of the old-fashioned Church of England, which has rather fallen to pieces.



Eton College Chapel.

One of the very great pleasures of Eton is that our music, our liturgy is unchanged, and is done on a high day very well indeed, in a way that it is done in great cathedrals elsewhere or other colleges, and I find it very beautiful and satisfying. If I had been pushed intellectually at that time, or at Eton, I would have said I was an atheist. I was confirmed and went through a mystical period, and still regard myself as having elements of mystery and mysticism. I don't like entirely positivist explanations as I think they are never fully satisfying. I would like to believe in ghosts, and mystery.

Another good side of Eton which I failed to mention was its encouragement for reading in all directions - I mentioned Nigel Fox who directed me to read the 'Stones of Venice'; I had a great period when I became deeply in love with the Arthurian legends and the poetry and writing of Charles Williams, and I love those things and still do; Gilbert Murray had a theory about the inherited conglomerate, that we all inherit contradictory things, and it depends what we are doing at any particular time, which part of our beliefs can be used.

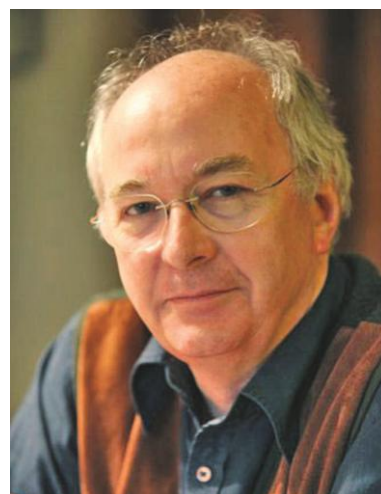
I am quite superstitious, and I am conscious on my intellectual side that it is nonsense, but I am still superstitious. But I have never formally committed myself to believing in Christian theology or any body else's theology. Reading a little bit around the edges of Buddhism which I don't think is really a religion at all, I find some of that interesting. I don't want to live in a world where I am told that rather naive reductionist science is all that I feel. Dawkins seems to me to be a slightly

absurd person though quite good at his science. I am much nearer to those scientists who like to say that there are limits to what we can know.

I fell in love with Emanuel Kant's metaphysics at one period, the concept that you live within the boundaries of understanding and you can't really speculate outside them, but I have never committed myself for long to any formal religion though I get extremely upset if people try to knock over the Church of England, or indeed any other generous religion.

My mother was interesting; she had strong views that we should read everything, but there was only a limited amount of time to read. Her argument against pornography was that it was just a waste of time. She was against the Narnia stories for complex and quite interesting reasons, and I never read them until I did so to my own children. She said that if you wanted Christianity you should take it straight not in children's stories, but she was very keen on the grown-up Lewis stories - 'That Hideous Strength', 'The Screwtape Letters', 'Perelandra'.

I have always loved mystical worlds; I am a great fan of Philip Pullman (right) whose own approach to religion is not unlike mine in some ways, in that he can hear the hound of God pacing along behind him, and he is a beautiful magical storyteller. I didn't read Tolkein, apart from 'The Hobbit', until I was an adult, and again, I like it. I like private worlds. I became a great fan and a friend of Patrick O'Brian who wrote the stories on Nelson's Navy, I like enclosed imaginary worlds.



## 7. Kennedy Fellowship

My last year at Oxford I spent working extremely hard. I had only got at second in Mods and I was determined to get a first in Greats, and left nothing to chance. I got my first and then had to decide what to do next. The year before had been the first year of awarding Kennedy Fellowships. The money to commemorate JFK in Britain after he was assassinated had been used to set up a smaller version of the Rhodes Scholarships in reverse, to Harvard and M.I.T.



SS United States.

The previous year Emma Rothschild had been in the first cohort, and I went in for that. Isaiah Berlin was on the panel, my old patron; whether or not he helped, I got one, so in the Autumn of 1969 we sailed in the USS United States. We sailed on the edge of a hurricane through enormous seas and blue skies, and arrived in America at a most fascinating time. I only spent a year and did not do a proper degree. I studied Government at Harvard and had the most privileged and fascinating time, but partly because the Kennedy School of Government was in the process of being set up.

Many of the new people were being assembled, Richard Neustadt I remember, Graham Allison, Joe Nye, who were already or became very well-known in that field. Kissinger was down in Washington advising the Government. It was the year of the bombing of Cambodia and huge student protests. It was a rather fascinating transition; half of the year there were street battles between almost professional protesters called things like 'The Weathermen', fighting the police. It was rather like going back to my teenage visits to Greece.

There was often the smell of tear gas in the streets; but then the bombing of Cambodia happened and the whole student body and wider, took the protest away from the self-appointed leaders, and it was very moving; hundreds and hundreds of people on Boston Common and the University on strike and closed for a considerable time. Students had been killed at Kent State University by National Guard. It was an extraordinary and fascinating time to be an observer in a foreign country, watching tremendous political travails. I also learnt a lot; I lived en famille with a wonderful scholar, though nothing to do with my subject, called Ernst

Kitzinger, who was the greatest Byzantinist of his day, who had run Dumbarton Oaks in Washington. He had catalogued the Byzantine collection at the British Museum when he arrived as a refugee in 1938, was then deported to Australia in one of the early panics of the war. A telegram arrived on the boat, from Harvard, and we lost him.



Through his house flowed a wonderful selection of that diaspora of scholars driven out of Germany from whom Harvard, and America in general, had benefited hugely. So I met all sorts of grand people whom I wouldn't otherwise have met ranging from Carl Friedrich to Lionel Trilling.

People came and went through his house and it was a lovely atmosphere; but I also learnt things I hadn't learnt at Oxford, things that were taken seriously in the postgraduate School of Government at Harvard, like Machiavelli, Hegel, Marx and so on, that had been treated rather with scepticism in the Greats school at Oxford. So it was a rather wonderful year shaking free of Eton, Oxford, and of England for a bit. I then travelled round the world the long way. I was given an air ticket by my uncle; I went to Vietnam, Burma, then a closed country, with an introduction from the Dictator, Ne Win's doctor. I was summoned at once to dinner with the Dictator, rather to the wrath of the British Embassy who were confined to their compound.

I went to Australia, Thailand, India - a grand tour, part of my rather self-conscious prince's education. It was a fascinating time in South East Asia and Southern Asia because there was the centre of conflict in Vietnam and Indo-China, with the two world empires fighting, the British ex-empire rather skilfully keeping out of it, with the exception of the Australians. We owe Harold Wilson a good deal for keeping us out of that war. I stayed in Vietnam with his token contribution who was a Kenya policeman called Walter Pridgeon, and heard from him that the American statistics of how they were winning, were to be treated with some scepticism. I went to India, Nepal, Kenya, to Egypt, still with a massive Soviet presence then, and back to England at Christmas 1970.

On the Vietnam war - I was not sympathetic towards the Soviet position. I felt in a rather superior British way that the Americans like the French were making a frightful hash of it, and that we had done much better in Malaya - very childish thoughts, really. I can't claim to have been a protester against the war; I thought it was their war; I was glad we were not in it. I was sceptical of claims of the North to be a heroic and social democratic place. I don't think I accepted the argument of dominoes, that if Vietnam fell the whole of Southern Asia would become communist, and I could see from my visit there that they were never going to win. So in a pragmatic sense I thought it was futile. There had earlier, at the Oxford Union, been famous debates, where Michael Stewart, the Foreign Secretary, was shouted down, but I was never part of that protest movement, partly because I was deeply suspicious of the hard left who seemed to be leading it.

## 8. Early Career

When I arrived back in England at the end of 1970 I had to get a job. In those far off days one assumed that a job would turn up from somewhere. I went for a interview in the City, at Warburgs, and was interviewed by Eric Roll who had just arrived there, a great former civil servant. He was also an economic historian, a formidable man, who lived to be nearly one hundred. At the end of my political life I did work for Warburgs, and he was still there. I had an interview at the Bank of England; I remember being taken through the corridors by people in pink frock coats.

Neither of those seemed very exciting to me, and I had an F.E. Smith approach to money and thought it would come from somewhere, normally from my long-suffering father, so I didn't have to go and earn a fortune. In early 1971, I was with my father in the guest room of the House of Lords, and a most frightful piece of nepotism happened. George Jellicoe, who was a Conservative, in the Government, Lord Privy Seal, presided in the Cabinet Office over a range of things, including Ted Heath's plan for the reform of the structure of Whitehall; I was having a drink with my father and George came over and asked me what I was doing; I said I had not found anything very interesting, and he said "Victor's looking for chaps"; this was Victor Rothschild who had just been appointed to run a unit in the Cabinet Office called the Central Policy Review Staff, which was going to be a new structured policy analysis unit, consisting half of insiders - all the members became temporarily established civil servants if they weren't civil servants already - so half proper civil servants, and half irregulars.

Victor (right) was charged with bringing in from outside; I went to see him and got a job in the so-called think tank, I think partly because he had asked the civil service department to send him some young people and they had sent him a whole lot of forty year olds. He having run scientific research establishments thought young people meant twenty-three year olds. He then gave me a job, with my long hair, no experience at all, partly, I think, to warn the civil servants that unless they tried a bit harder, this is what they would get.

It was a wonderful unit, and the first year and a half or so we had terrific fun, with very high-grade people. I shared a room with a young Treasury civil servant called Robin Butler, who became head of the Civil Service and Cabinet Secretary; there was Robert Wade-Gery from the Foreign Office who became High Commissioner in India; there was Peter Carey who became Permanent Secretary in the Department of Trade and Industry. There was John Guinness who was a civil servant then in the Foreign Office, subsequently in the Energy Department; William Plowden, Adam Ridley from outside, it was a wonderfully talented group of people, much-ridiculed by 'Private Eye' for being all toffs and being friends of Victor's.



For a time we did really quite good work, I think. Robert Wade-Gery described it in a pamphlet as throwing grit into the smooth-running of the machine, which is sometimes necessary. We were put there to stir up trouble and ask unanswerable questions. We looked at a whole range of things from race relations, to Concorde, to how to build more coordinated social policy, many issues that go on forever. Above all, twice a year we would take Cabinet away to Chequers and give them a situation report on how we thought they were doing, in a very impertinent and iconoclastic way.

We used to stick up charts with end-of-term reports - housing 3/10, foreign policy 6/10 - and the ministers more or less put up with it, until the Government began to get into serious trouble with strikes; in the Autumn of 1973 when everything started to go wrong in Heath's government, it lost influence. At that time I had become quite well-known to Ted Heath (right) because we saw quite a lot of the Prime Minister in the CPRS. I left the Civil Service and was appointed understudy to Douglas Hurd, who was his Political Secretary in Number 10.



There was to be a big election in 1975 and I was to have an eighteen months run in, but then came the winter of 1973-4, the miners' strike and three-day week, and so on; Hurd went off and got a seat in Oxfordshire as a parliamentary candidate, so I was pitched in as Parliamentary Secretary in the middle of a crisis, very inexperienced really. I was there through the first election of 1974 in which he got more votes than any other party but didn't have an overall majority, spent three days negotiating with the Liberals, and then resigned.

Wilson, rather to his astonishment, came back into power; I continued to work in Heath's office in opposition between the two elections of '74, the second of which we lost again, but not so badly as people had predicted. It is often not noticed that Heath having fought a rather good rearguard action in the second '74 election, left a situation where Labour had to make a deal with the Liberals - the Lib-Lab Pact - in '77 and '78. After the loss of various by-elections they were actually defeated in the House of Commons. Heath had fought a good campaign but was becoming more and more unpopular in his Party.

The Party was shifting in economic terms to the right with the rise of Keith Joseph; people who had been thought of as very outré and old-fashioned in the Institute of Economic Affairs, Selden and Harris, began to be the centre of things. Liberal economics of a fairly primitive kind began to come back into fashion, and the rumblings against Heath from the Party, which were not so much ideological, but the Party just does not like not winnin.

Heath who had won an unexpected and stunning victory in 1970, appeared to have squandered it by losing control of the situation, with famous u-turns and so on. He was an awkward man, strange really. Philip Ziegler had written a recent very good biography of him in which he addresses this point, how a man, a popular young officer in the war, and extremely effective Chief Whip at the time of Suez, keeping



the Party together, all those skills seemed to desert him when he became Prime Minister. He then behaved in a very a-political way in relation to his own Party, very unwilling to do the basic manoeuvring and lobbying that you need to do as the leader of a democratic party. So various people then began to be put forward as candidates against him; Edward du Cann, rather implausibly was Chairman of the 1922 Committee, and had a rather dubious record in the City.

Then Keith Joseph, who made a series of brave, but not really very politically wise speeches which were much ridiculed at the time. Some of the ideas have now come back into fashion again, but he put forward the idea of a cycle of deprivation through the generations which was taken at the time as meaning there was a genetic underclass. And then Margaret Thatcher, who was then not quite as ideological as her supporters later thought. She was new, she had a very skilful operation campaigning for her run by Airey Neave, who's basic campaign strategy was to say to people that there was not a chance of her being elected, but we must give Ted a warning. So lots of people voted for her and she won on the first ballot; I don't think the Conservative Party quite knew what they had done

I was intensely loyal to Heath, running his office, and part of his campaign. I resigned before I could be sacked from running the leader's office, as Mrs Thatcher was going to have her own team. She treated me with great courtesy; she understood that I had been working for the leader of the day.

After Heath lost the leadership in 1975 I left the political world. I had accompanied Heath between the two elections in '74 to China, on a famous and strange trip. The Chinese were not a bit bothered that he appeared to be out of power and assumed that his career would go on for another forty years or so. It was an extraordinary time in China. We met Mao Tse-tung; the leader of the effective negotiations and talks we took part in was Chou En-lai (right). Deng Xiao-ping had just been brought back from exile and was sitting in the corner of the room, so power was beginning to move but nothing had changed really. The Cultural Revolution had ended but there were signs everywhere of the strangeness of the place. Wherever we went, thousands of people were clapping as we went past, and Douglas Hurd who speaks Mandarin, said you could hear the loud-speakers in the background telling people to go and clap.



They had no idea who we were or what we were doing; I remember going to a primary school, where a rather scholarly old gentleman was teaching basic reading to small children; Ted, who was very good at not accepting the constraints of a trip like that, insisted on asking what he had been doing before the Cultural Revolution, much to the embarrassment of the hosts. We found out he had been teaching Chaucer in the university, so you suddenly had that flash of the destruction of people's lives.

All the destruction of the Great Leap Forward was disguised from us, but there were odd and peculiar things; half-built buildings and things everywhere, but were said to be not half-built buildings at all but shelters against incoming Russian missiles. This was the time of a tremendous confrontation, which was why they had invited Ted. They were extremely anti-Russian at this point so anybody who was anti-Russian in Europe was their friends and that was why they were making up to British Conservatives.

You had a sense of half-finished things everywhere, you didn't actually see hunger but you felt a tension everywhere, and the journalists who travelled with us were always on the lookout for signs of the Cultural Revolution breaking out again. We were told you could see things on the walls attacking local officials, so it was still a tense period, but it was the beginning of the great change because Deng Xiao-ping was the successor who changed everything.

We arrived after a long flight, not knowing what to expect, at what we then called Peking, to get out of our 'plane to see a sea of children in all directions with flowers and bunting, and banners proclaiming solidarity between the Peoples' Republic of China and the Conservative Party of Great Britain; the whole thing was surreal from start to end. I remember being struck, when we were taken to Kunming in the West, and shown how happy the Tibetans were, with people who were clearly Han Chinese dressed up as Tibetans doing Tibetan dances; they knew what we were sensitive about and were very careful.



We went to one of those execrable Chinese Communist ballet-operas, which had names like "Bringing Electricity to the Province of ..."; I remember our hostess was the famous Madam Mao (right), so it was a strange surreal interlude.

Anyway, in 1975 I found myself out of a job again, and this time I thought rather self-consciously as part of my prince's education that I must go and learn about real industry, so I kept clear of the City again. I was offered, generously, by Henry Keswick who had just bought 'The Spectator', to be its political editor, but I thought that journalism was a very low activity and that I was going to be much more important than that.

I took a very menial job with Arnold Weinstock (right), then boss of the great General Electric Company. I worked in his office for a bit and I was sent out to have a junior job in a factory in Leicester which made gas turbines, and I did learn a bit about how the then existing British heavy engineering sector worked. It has all been destroyed now by the people who ruined that company later. I never ran a unit in the company; I was about to be given a little company to run when the Labour Government began to lose its



majority and the Conservatives began to look for candidates much earlier than usual in the electoral cycle as there could have been an election at any time. So I started putting my name forward for Conservative seats and was selected for one in Bristol at either the end of '76 or beginning of '77. At that point my life became very odd as I couldn't be given a proper job in the company.

I married in 1977 so that was the other great change, and when I was working in Leicester I used to drive a long triangle to London, where Caroline (right) was, to Bristol where my future seat was, and then back to Leicester where I was working in the week, so it was a very exhausting time.

We were married and that began to change everything again; they gave me a job back at HQ in London and my parents gave us a house to live in, and grown-up life began. The election came in 1979 and I was elected with a pretty big majority in Bristol West. I got more than 50% of the vote, more than any time I did. At that time it was a seat where the Liberals were more of a challenge to the Conservatives than Labour, and a lot of people voted Conservative who never did again. Then I was in Parliament and that was another big watershed moment in my life.



## 9. Member of Parliament



I came in with a range of quite talented people. It is often forgotten that Thatcher's manifesto bore very little relation to what subsequently happened. It was a moderate manifesto, a safe manifesto, largely written by the Conservative Research Department let by Chris Patten who was a middle-of-the-road person, a friend of mine.

Her first Cabinet contained many old Macmillanite and Heathite people - Soames and Gilmour, as well as Carrington and Whitelaw and Hailsham - and as we are now learning in 2013 as Charles Moore's biography came out, her position was extremely shaky. She had been elected after the so-called "Winter of Discontent", which was a horrible time with public sector unions controlling access to hospitals, grave diggers on strike. Caroline's business partner, Prue Leith, helped to cause a major dustbin strike in London by refusing to pay the bribes that the brothers demanded to empty the dustbins.

It was the time that Sir Nicholas Henderson, our Ambassador in France, wrote his valedictory despatch which was then leaked, saying that to represent Britain abroad was a humiliating process. We were the sick man of Europe and regarded as a joke, and it was a very low period of national morale. Heath's Government had effectively been driven out by the leaders of the big unions, so had Jim Callaghan's. Callaghan had tried to do the same sort of deals on pay and productivity, and had also been defeated.

It was a fashionable thing to say that the country was ungovernable, and the first strike that Mrs Thatcher faced she gave in to - the first electricity strike - but she then began to prepare. She was not really an ideological person; she saw what she knew - Isaiah Berlin's distinction between hedgehogs and foxes - she was a complete fox. She just knew things from her own direct experience; she thought it intolerable that governments were being made outside the electoral process, and the only way to deal with this was to have a confrontation with the big organized

unions, and they gave it to her with Scargill famously leading the coal strike without taking a ballot from his own members.

Having been beaten in the first electricity strike she had prepared meticulously with the help of the old Central Electricity Generating Board led by Sir Walter Marshall (right). They had coal stocks prepared, they had cranes turned round in the docks so that you could import coal, they were ready for it and they beat it. It was very rough and very tough because she was reversing nearly twenty years of appeasement in this sector, which made it far worse when you had to deal with it. People say that Germans got rid of their coal miners without all this trouble, and so did the French, and that is perfectly true because they hadn't been subsidising them to nearly the same extent, and they had had a long period of running them down.



If we had been doing that we would have done better, but we didn't, and she was right to say that there was no alternative, I believe, at that point. Her famous budget of 1981 was attacked by 350 economists in the Times newspaper, including the present Governor of the Bank of England, who is rather shamefaced when you remind him of it, who said it would all lead to disaster, and it didn't. They did rebalance the economy, not really by cutting expenditure dramatically, but sitting on its growth, cutting taxes in the end to allow incentives for the private sector, and in the end the system worked.

I was quite nervous about all this. I was more clear that her economic policy was right than most of my friends. I was somewhat to the right on economic policy, partly because of the experience I had gone through with Ted Heath, and I knew it could not work again. He had gone to the other extreme of trying to run a planned economy with statutory pay and prices, and I knew that couldn't work.

I thought from my experience working for Weinstock that there was no alternative to being tough; we had a little dining group called the 'Blue Chips' - Chris Patten, John Patten, myself, John Major, Matthew Parris, and various others, where there was a microcosm of arguments that were going on across the Party. I was more robust than Chris Patten (right) who was the other main leader of the group, who was more consensual on economic policy. We weren't influential but were having the same argument that everybody else was having.



The key to our success, of course, was that the Labour Party moved to the left and split, and although David Owen and the Social Democrats would never ally with her, they were absolutely central in dividing the left vote and stopping anybody stopping her.

Then came the Falklands - as a matter of fact the polls had begun slightly to recover before the Falklands - but the huge gamble of the Falklands which showed her courage, sort of changed the nature of her relationship with the British public. Even people who disliked her began their sentences by saying they had to hand it to her. I remember the banner the soldiers hung over the side of the liner 'Canberra' as she came back "Maggie Rules OK", at which point it was clear we were going to win the next election, which we did.



SS Canberra returns home after the Falklands War.

---

## 10. Minister



I became a junior Minister in the Education Department in 1981, with Keith Joseph. I was responsible for higher education at a time when university spending growth was to be curtailed - which Shirley Williams in the previous Government had warned was inevitable - and there was a most tremendous uproar wherever I went.

I was responsible for appointing Peter Swinnerton-Dyer to the U.G.C. because he believed that the cuts should be shaped, and excellence attempted to be preserved. He made very heavy cuts in some universities; curiously enough, the ones that were cut most, famously Salford and Aston, pulled themselves together and responded better than, for example, my university of Bristol, which had rather minor cuts but right across the board, because they couldn't make up their minds quite what to do.

Actually, by today's standards it was all fairly mild; I remember going to California to Berkeley, where there was a famous continuous seminar about higher education that I went to. It was run by an Englishman, Fulton, son of Lord Fulton of the Civil Service reforms. I remember being introduced by him to the American audience as Mr Waldegrave who had come along to explain to the audience how the British education system worked, where 17% of the population, mainly middle-class, were in the higher education system, paid for by the working class, and why it was such a good system.

This was broadly the truth; we had a very selective system, very generous to those who were within it, paid for by the basic tax payer, and it wasn't sustainable in the long term, particularly if we were going to expand the system to include a proper participation. Although it was very painful, I did not find myself thinking that this was incredibly wicked, and we were going to have to change.

I did have one thing that ran counter to the culture of the day and was soon swept away; I tried to protect the separation between the polytechnics and the universities/ I thought there was a separate role for much more locally rooted, vocational institutions. But there was huge lobbying from the heads of polytechnics to become vice-chancellors; I invented a partnership between Government and local

government which for a couple of years stopped them being wholly nationalized, but Kenneth Baker came along and they all became universities.

I still think it was actually a mistake; the idea that there is only one mission for a university is a little bit crazy. So I did that painful job for a couple of years. There were literally riots wherever I went quite often.

Then I was moved to the Department of the Environment where I had a lovely time, still at Parliamentary Secretary level because green policies had been asleep through the long recession. We were now beginning to recover; this is a normal cycle; when people are poor there is not much money to look after climate and environment, so it was all coming back to life again and I enjoyed that.

I was involved in getting some sensible beginnings of reform in the common agricultural policy. For example; it had more environmental objectives in it; we were overshadowed by the continuing row about acid rain, which the Scandinavians and, much less plausibly, the Germans said that their forests were being damaged by wicked British sulphur dioxide coming out of our coal-fired power stations. The Germans had no case for that at all; they were being damaged, if they were, by acid rain from Bohemia not from us.

The Scandinavians had more of a case, and I was keen to get our policy changed, which it was in the end, but after the coal strike had been defeated, and the Nottinghamshire coal miners had helped us to do so, putting up the price of coal by putting through gas de-sulphurization on the remaining coal fired power stations, was not easy.

That was one big issue, then there was the issue of CFCs in the atmosphere damaging the ozone layer which Mrs Thatcher was extremely quick to understand. She understood the chemistry of these issues; the hole in the ozone layer was identified, luckily for British science, by the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge. Mrs Thatcher was in favour of that partly because it was chemistry and partly because of the British involvement. Because she could see the point she quite swiftly put Britain in the leading role with that; the idea that she was anti-environmentalist was much too easy. If a thing was scientifically convincing she would accept it.

I stayed in the department for about five years doing all sorts of jobs. I was then Minister for Local Government and after the '87 election I was made Minister of Housing and took the legislations, which again I believed in, of liberalizing the rented sector, getting more investment in, which has worked, though it was very controversial at the time; doing away with the old somewhat absurd systems of leases, for instance. Julian Amery had a protected tenancy in Belgrave Square which he lived in.

Then came perhaps the most important episode in my life for which one has to go back a little; in the second election of 1974 there was a tremendous pressure on the Conservative Party, Heath in opposition, and on the Government there was a lesser pressure, to do something about the domestic rates which were of huge importance in the home counties and the Conservative heartland. Ted Heath was pressured into saying in the second election of 1974 that the Conservative Party would abolish the



domestic rate. It wasn't said what would replace it. This was popular in the Conservative heartlands. The pledge was given to our then environment spokesman to campaign with it, namely Margaret Thatcher. She had had a very good election on the back of it in 1974. Fast forward then to 1983-4 and the whole issue was coming up again.

Callaghan had postponed the revaluation of the rates a couple of times, but it was becoming absolutely apparent that if that if the old rating system was to continue, there had to be a revaluation of people's properties, which meant that the burden of rates, as the system was meant to do, shifted to places where property had gone up in value, and lessened where it had gone down.

This more or less coincided with areas of Labour and Conservative voting; the Conservatives, particularly in Scotland, were in a complete panic about this revaluation and brought huge pressure to bear on Margaret Thatcher to fulfill Heath's pledge of '74 to abolish the domestic rate. I was the junior Minister in charge of the immensely complex rateable grants system in the Department of the Environment. In an arrogant and ambitious way I went to see her and told her I could invent something better; I was accompanied by my Permanent Secretary, not by my Secretary of State, Patrick Jenkin.

Just before that I had been rung up by Tess Rothschild saying that her husband was bored and could I find a job for him; I said to Margaret Thatcher, who liked Rothschild, that I would get Victor and we'd set up a team and look into it, and come up with something; hence was born the unit which produced the Poll Tax or Community Charge. In 1986 it was adopted by Cabinet. I produced a package of nationalizing the non-domestic rate, simplifying the grant, and having a flat charge, pretending this wasn't a tax but a charge for services - Community Charge.

Nigel Lawson in the Treasury was always opposed to it and was bored with the whole subject/ The main campaigner inside Government who thought it was all wrong, was Heseltine. The Cabinet which adopted it as policy was the one out of which Heseltine walked over the Westland affair, on which he had quarrelled with the Prime Minister and Leon Brittan, the Attorney General, about helicopters. With a beautiful symmetry, that Cabinet then adopted my policy; a green paper was published, then a white paper, and then a manifesto commitment.

We won the 1987 election. I was by then moved to housing and others had to take the consequences. Nicholas Ridley became Secretary of State, followed by my old friend, Chris Patten, and they put the thing into action at the same time that Nigel Lawson took the opportunity of cutting income tax and cutting the grants to local authorities. It had a much sharper impact, both in terms of perception and fairness, because here were dustmen being charged the same as dukes, and the dukes' income tax was being cut, and local authority grants being cut, so that the whole weight of locally raised expenditure went up. If we had wanted to make it as unpopular as possible, we did, and it was. It is arrogant to say it was all my own work, but the original package of measures, which Nigel Lawson in his memoirs calls the Waldegrave reforms, was produced by me. It was then put through and examined by every conceivable part of the Government decision making machine, including a general election. I genuinely think that if I had come back after that unit with

Rothschild and said there is nothing to be done and we have got to go on, or we had some form of local income tax, probably nothing would have happened. Because we produced a convincing and rather speciously coherent thing which fitted with some other right-wing views - Alan Walters, her economic advisor, who caused Nigel Lawson to resign, was in favour of it, also Norman Tebbit; the Scots thought it was wonderful and George Younger asked to have it first as he was incredibly anxious to rescue the Tory Party in Scotland. It had the exact opposite effect, and left the Scots with the firm belief that they had been used as the guinea pig.



Anti Poll Tax demonstration.

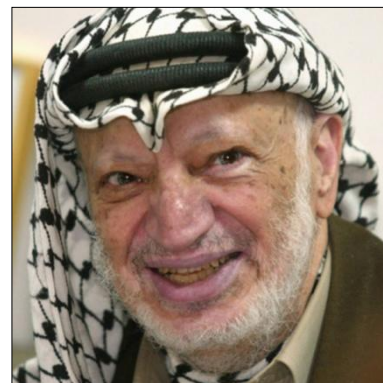
Next I became Minister of Housing and did the Housing Reform Bill, and then in 1988 was moved to the absolute dream job at that time as Minister of State at the Foreign Office. This was a wonderful two years of hope. The Berlin wall came down (below), Mandela was released, Rabin seemed to be leading positive policies in Israel and there was a response from the PLO.



I went to see Arafat out in Tunis because he had promised to renounce terrorism and engage in democratic dialogue with the Israelis. It was a fascinating and absolutely wonderful period. I had a grandstand seat at one of the times when it was a joy to be

alive, and met all these famous people - Mandela, Walesa, Gorbachev, De Klerk, Arafat and the Israelis and so on.

British prestige was high at that time; Margaret Thatcher's role in the building of trust with Gorbachev, often written about, but true, partly because we had a very good defector in Oleg Gordievsky who had told her early on that Gorbachev was quite different from the others.



Relations with America were very strong. For example, when I went to see Arafat (right) in Tunis, that was partly at the request of the Americans. They wanted to respond to what Arafat had said, but their own congressional locks wouldn't let them send a senior person to see him. The only time we fell off the rails was over the reunification of Germany which she had visceral views about. There was one sensible view that was real that we had to be extremely careful not to humiliate Gorbachev, and the Russians felt differently about Germany than anywhere else.

But the Americans were handling that skilfully; Thatcher got herself in a very weak position trying to block something that was completely inevitable, stirred up often by Mitterand who quite mischievously, who would then scuttle off to see Kohl to tell him. It was the perennial French diplomatic objective of marginalizing Britain in relation to Germany. That spoilt things a bit in terms of influence at the end, but arriving in Poland or Czechoslovakia or Hungary, her prestige was so high. They only really wanted to talk to the Americans and us, and it was wonderful to be a Minister at that time.



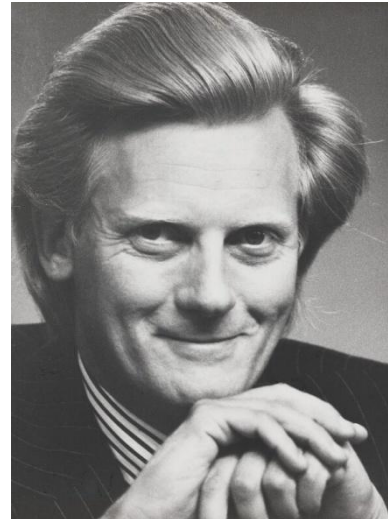
Oil fields in Kuwait on fire following the Iraqi invasion.

Then came the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein which caught us all by surprise. We were being told by the King of Jordan the night before that there was no chance of it happening. I was the Minister for that part of the world and the first

person to have to respond, and did so reasonably toughly, and was then a key player in the beautiful diplomacy that took place then, with proper UN sanctions and every ally you can imagine, from Syria to Japan.

It was partly because the Bush senior team was so strong. but also because we had good leadership in Britain. I was going to and fro from Number 10 all the time. In the build up to planning this transition to war in the Autumn of 1990; I was missing all the stresses and strains in the Tory Party when I was working so hard, often sleeping in the office and missing weekends. I wasn't in the House when Geoffrey Howe made his famous speech and resigned.

I was summoned over to Number 10 for yet another meeting on whether the tanks had the right equipment, went into Mrs Thatcher's study where she said she wanted me to be Secretary of State for Health, that Kenneth Clark had stirred them all up and I was to calm them all down. To my astonishment and horror I became Secretary of State for Health which was, I knew, a nightmare hospital pass for any Conservative. I knew nothing about it at all and had no background, so arrived in the Cabinet that way, her last appointment because within a month or so a leadership challenge was launched by Michael Heseltine (right), and there was the nightmare of those last days which were horrible - a wounded Titan with all the sharks circling. It was really horrible. I was not part of the group, I was not powerful enough though I was in the Cabinet. What happened was that she just didn't get enough votes under the complicated Tory system.



Although she won she didn't get enough votes on the first ballot as you had to have a weighted majority; at that point it became absolutely clear that she wouldn't win on the second ballot; all sorts of people who were sitting on their hands and watching would now move away from her. Then all her remaining supporters pressed her to stand down because they felt that if it was her versus Heseltine in the second ballot, he might win, which would be a complete disaster as far as they were concerned, and she should stand down in favour of someone less bad than Heseltine. She interviewed the whole Cabinet one by one the next day, a horrible process.

I was the last as the most junior; we all said what was the truth, I think, that she wouldn't win in the second ballot. It was horrible, people with a sort of bogus excitement, it was all horrible. In retrospect it was a terrible thing, I think. She should have gone a little bit earlier as she was beginning to be rickety, but it was the moment of almost her greatest triumph. The reason she was in Paris was for the meeting of the Organization of European Cooperation I think it was called, it was really where the Cold War was declared to be over.

It shouldn't have been done like that. Her husband's view was that she should have retired a little bit earlier, but anyway politics is sometimes horrible. I then supported Douglas Hurd in the leadership election as did a good many of my friends. John

John Major (right) was her anointed candidate, she wrongly thinking that he was a natural right winger, which he was not. I got used to being overtaken by Chris Patten in my generation, but hadn't quite stomached the idea of being overtaken by John Major as well.



My opposition to him was partly based on jealousy, I think, but partly on the understanding, that may well have been true, that he was too decent and sane a person to make it as Prime Minister. You have to be very odd to be a successful Prime Minister, and he is not odd, but an exceptionally nice and decent man.

When he was elected he very loyally confirmed me in my post; we had the '92 election which by his courage, and the dignified way he carried himself, as opposed to Kinnock, the electorate warmed to him and elected him with a huge number of votes, though not a big majority. That election was of course a crucial one for the balance of politics in Britain because the Labour Party came to the conclusion that it really did have to change itself into a more centrist social democrat party.

At the 1992 election, I was Secretary of State for Health and Labour was making an attack on the Conservative health reforms the centrepiece of its campaign. They had a very able spokesman, Robin Cook, and there was a major fracas during the election to do with one of their advertising campaigns which was called "The war of Jennifer's ear" by the press as it concerned a little girl who had grommets, and whether she would be treated quickly as we were going to privatize everything - it was disgraceful. I didn't do very well though Labour retreated off the Health Service ground in the last week and we won the election.

The BBC had two outside broadcast units at my count with their social affairs correspondent, Polly Toynbee, in charge because they had analysed that we were going to lose the election because of my health reforms. I remember having the pleasure of walking across to Polly during the course of the evening as it became clear that the opposite was going to happen, asking when I would be interviewed. If I had lost I would certainly have been, but I wasn't interviewed once. I am not a great knock-about electoral politician.

John Major won that election; I was then given a mixed portfolio to do with the reform of the Civil Service and Government, called the 'Citizens' Charter', which was the big idea of the day. I was also given responsibility for science and technology policy which I much enjoyed. My career was flattening but I had reasonable expectation of further promotion I suppose when everything went wrong for me in a rather terminal way.

The trigger for it was a dinner given by the Prime Minister for Yeltsin in the Painted Hall at Greenwich, a tremendous occasion. I remember after the dinner, Robin Butler, the Head of the Civil Service, Cabinet Secretary, coming up to me and asking if I remembered a trial to do with the export of lathes to Iraq by Matrix Churchill. I had a faint memory of it, but he told me that the trial had collapsed because Alan Clark said under cross-examination that the Government was

encouraging them to export against the formal policy, and there would have to be an enquiry.

I remembered that the Foreign Office had been the one department in Whitehall arguing to limit exports to Iraq in the run-up to the First Gulf War in 1988-9, and didn't think much more about it. The trial did collapse and the people were acquitted. They had been accused of lying in what they had said to the Department of Trade and Industry about their export licences, and for what purpose were the lathes sent. They had written that they were for civil purposes though the prosecuting authority had argued that they were actually for weapons manufacture.

Alan Clark under cross-examination had said that nobody in Government cared about this and they could export what they liked. There was an enquiry and I argued that it should be as wide as possible because I thought that the Foreign Office and myself, vainly, had been on the right side of the argument. Sir Richard Scott, a distinguished civil lawyer, was put in charge of a non-judicial enquiry which rambled on for three or four years.

In the middle of it he sent to us, to those witnesses who were going to be criticized, the draft of his criticism (this was about 1995) and he was very critical of me. He said that I had sent letters to members of the public saying that certain guidelines for the export of weapons and dual-use machinery had been not altered secretly, while he contended that they had been. This was nothing to do with the export of weapons, but was to do with items like machine tools, and could they or could they not be used for the manufacture of weapons. When I read those draft conclusions I instinctively knew that my political career had come to an end because I was accused of lying to the public.

I thought, and still think, that I was innocent, but these draft conclusions which were supposed to be very confidential were then leaked, so it was all over the press. I never really recovered from this. As a matter of fact, various friends of mine who were watching all this, came to help me, above all Lord Justice Hoffman. He came to see me at the Ministry of Agriculture where I was then, and said he thought I was being treated unfairly, and who was my solicitor; I said I had a fifth of a nice young solicitor from the Treasury who is helping me.

Hoffmann said I needed a proper solicitor and wrote the name Allen & Overy, and said that he would advise me. He then with the solicitors turned it round, and in the end Scott didn't really criticize me at all. He said in a rather incomprehensible paragraph that I had written letters which were designedly misleading but I had no intent to deceive. Despite this, the damage had been done as the leaked conclusions had for two years put me in the middle of a maelstrom of press hostility. My colleagues, led by John Major, were incredibly loyal and stuck by me throughout; I served right through his Government as Minister of Agriculture and Chief Secretary, but these are posts of slightly declining importance after Health.

I knew I wasn't tough enough to recover. I think the Scott enquiry was unfair and badly handled, but it was one of those huge surges of public anger and distrust of government. If you looked at the facts they were different. The Swedish Institute of Peace Studies did an analysis having been to Iraq after the Americans invaded, and

analyzed all the weapons purchases by Iraq, and rounded down the British percentage contribution to the arming of Iraq to the nearest whole integer - namely zero.

The arms suppliers were Russia, France, China - Britain and America did not arm Iraq - but it is a very satisfying story that we armed these horrible people and then had to attack them, but it is not actually true. As I have learnt in my political life, its not the truth that counts, its the story that conforms to certain paradigms of stories that in the end is what is accepted, and it's deeply satisfying to think that our heroic soldiers were only fighting these people because our wicked politicians had supplied them with arms in the first place.

That knocked the heart out of my enjoyment of politics, and though my colleagues, Heseltine, John Major, Kenneth Clark, Chris Patten, were incredibly loyal and protected me, kept me in Cabinet posts throughout, I knew that it would never be bright morning again. I then lost my seat in the 1997 Conservative debacle, though the swing was not much worse than in the other urban seats, but it was an unpleasant campaign, so my political career came to a relatively inglorious end.

---

# 11. After Politics

So then I had to make another life. I was fifty. I went to see my usual mentor, Douglas Hurd, who said I had time to climb another mountain. I could have hung about, got myself another seat and gone back in, but I had been seven years in the Cabinet and fifteen years as a Minister, I could see that the Conservatives weren't going to be re-elected for at least ten years by which time I would be sixty.

Possibly I would be given one more job, but whether it would be an interesting one, and much more likely I wouldn't, and in the meantime I would be hanging about on the back benches doing a constituency job, but I would have been wasting a decade of my life in a way; so I decided to leave politics and got a job in the City, Kleinwort Benson initially, and then Warburgs.

I earned more money than I had done in politics though not as much as the very rich people, and I lived a different kind of life where the purpose of what I was doing was not at all important, but it was very well paid, whereas before I had been doing things that were important, and I wasn't very well paid. My father always used to tell me how much people were paid was in inverse relationship to the importance of the job they do, which is a trope which is nearly true, and certainly was for me. I had wonderful holidays with my family, with four children by then.

The eldest of them had been seventeen when I lost my seat and came to the count. It must have been horrible for them as nobody expected me to lose my seat except me. But the others were young enough not to be too badly hurt by being the children of a politician, latterly an unpopular politician, though it is very difficult for them, and many are damaged; it is a cost of being in the public eye, and not just for politicians. Just as the City and the financial services industry went into meltdown I was invited to be Provost of Eton, my old school, and returned here as a relatively safe haven; I was offered the job at the end of 2008 and appointed in 2009.

---



## 12. The Political System

I thought the period after I left government a very poor period, curiously enough. After the ejection of Britain from the ERM in 1992, badly handled, a long period of good economic management ensued. Kenneth Clark was a great Chancellor, and for the first few years, so was Gordon Brown. All they had to do to make a country unassailably strong economically was to increase public spending by a little less than the increase in wealth production each year, and steadily pay down debt, and steadily invest more. They didn't do that. Labour did it for the first couple of years but then gave in to the lobbies and were spending two or three times on average the underlying growth rate of the economy each year, on public expenditure.

One watched with great sorrow because it wasn't as though they had to cut expenditure, but not let it grow ridiculously fast. They were watching the wrong things. The inflation rate and deflation was being exported by China. They were watching the GDP growth rate which was a wonderful thing to watch, and they were ignoring public and private indebtedness, and it caught up with them. They weren't, of course, going to have avoided the global crash of 2008, but there was absolutely no reason why Britain couldn't have been in the sort of position of Sweden, Australia or Canada, which were relatively strong.

Gordon Brown, both as Chancellor and Prime Minister, used to have a great celebration every year in the Treasury where he would invite all the heroes of the day, and they were all great American investment bankers. Just as it is rash for the Tories to fall in love too much with untrammelled markets, it is mad for the centre left party to do so, and they made a frightful mess. Their reputations were largely based on our mistakes; if you look at the great reputation of Mandelson and Campbell and all those alleged skilful manipulators.

After the Tories were ejected from the ERM we went from being about five or six points ahead in all the average of the polls to about ten to fifteen points behind, and we stayed there for the next fifteen years, and we just did it to ourselves really. I just think it was a wasted decade; I don't blame Blair for supporting the Americans in Iraq; I think it was a mistake, but I can easily see why a Conservative Government might have done the same.

What I do blame them for is not using that golden period, the longest period of economic growth, to do a more fundamental shaping of the economy which would not have been very difficult to do. Others did it, Germany did it and is reaping the rewards now; so it was slightly a devil's decade in terms of lost opportunity, I think. But Blair remains a formidably complicated and interesting electoral politician, as does Clinton.

Both of them sat on top of the boom and it would have been remarkable if they had not been re-elected in those conditions; but they wasted it. It is the most difficult thing of all to say no to the lobbies when there appears to be money everywhere. So I don't think it was a glorious period in political life; it was a horrible period to be in opposition for the Tories. They did not know what to say, and had a series of not very satisfactory leaders. The lion in the path for them was Europe which split them

down the middle, and still does, so I opted out of a difficult period in my party's history.

On the British political system, I think its strength is the radicalness and directness of its democracy which is often not understood. Everything is centred in the House of Commons which is why I am very sceptical about House of Lords reform. I think the way in which accountability and responsibility both rest in the House of Commons, very simply, in 1940 May you know where the power rests, in 1990 Autumn you know where the power rests, its in the House of Commons.

It is why we are always going to be uncomfortable members of the European Union because we don't see why we should surrender that effective direct democracy to more remote supranational powers. It is why we are sceptical about conventions on human rights. It may be dangerous, but we like having direct control in the hands of the people whom we have elected.

That is the plus side; one negative side is the danger of following America, going back to the late seventeenth century if you like, where there are no boundaries on the savagery of the political war which can itself destroy the institutions, which it seems to be in some danger of doing in America. I suppose the other great danger is of claiming too much; as the world is more and more genuinely interdependent, the room to put a specific exceptional swerve derived from politics on a particular part of the world becomes more diminished. Mrs Thatcher's career shows that individuals can and do make differences; if you select the right issue at the right time. Nobody thinks that the coal mines in Britain would have continued forever but we probably saved ourselves twenty years of continual decline by doing it roughly and toughly then.

But politicians over-claim; my heart sinks when I hear someone saying that they are going to put an end to crime. The complexity of social causes of things is so great, and interdependence and globalization of things adds to the complexity, that a little humility from politicians, and from the papers - I coined a phrase that didn't catch on as well as Eisenhower's 'military industrial complex' which was that we were really governed by a 'politico-media complex', which has begun to come a little bit to pieces with some of the revelations about the Murdoch press. That world feeds off the idea that there are movers and shakers who can do things; just as an electoral slogan has to be something like 'Vote for Change' or 'Say Yes', like Obama, saying 'Perhaps' or 'Vote for Getting Some Things a Bit Better', is not very easy. For a newspaper to say 'these people are not doing that badly and its all very difficult', is not going to sell many newspapers.

There is a sort of bubble in which people like Jonathan Dimbleby has to say that politicians are important just as politicians have to say so themselves, because they depend on each other, whereas actually they are a bit less important. They do every now and then make a swerve of difference; Churchill really did make a difference in 1940; it would have gone differently without him, but there are not many occasions like that. Mostly it is quite complicated boring stuff dealing with events, as Mr Macmillan famously said.

## 13. Provost of Eton College

Coming to Eton was wonderful timing because the City was not going to be an easy place, I might have lost my job in any case as lots of people did. I suppose that I had always had in my mind that a respectable place of a last job was to be the head of an Oxford or Cambridge college, and I had had interest shown in me by an Oxford college. Martin Charteris who had been Provost here three before me had put in my mind long ago that this would be a place to come; when I looked at the job compared to an Oxbridge college it was much more fun because I am the head of a charitable foundation with a board, and I own the place and run the place.

So as long as I am taking my board with me I have authority. We are not an Athenian limited democracy, like an Oxbridge college, where everything is voted upon, and the head of college can sometimes be seen as rather a low grade person who has been hired to raise money, and the more serious business is left to others - I am exaggerating a little bit, but they are not always happy jobs nowadays.

Of course, if by some miracle, someone had said we want you to be Warden of All Souls, I would certainly have jumped at that; I am a Fellow of All Souls and have been all through; the other factor was that in some colleges there is very little welcome to the spouse and no role, unless they happen to have an academic position themselves. Tim Lancaster who was head of Corpus used to go back after dinner to London because his wife found that she wasn't welcome, or so she thought. Caroline, whose great-great uncle, M.R. James, was a famous Provost, found a huge welcome here and indeed her predecessor, Poppy Anderson, had a major role, so that there was an open-arm welcome for a Provost's wife who wanted to join in the institution.

So both reasons, the sense of leading a confident, independent place, with a fine international reputation, confident in its role with room for manoeuvre, where the job is to be the executive chairman of the foundation - obviously I don't run the academic side, but my job is to appoint a Head Master to do that, but I run the business - and with Caroline's connections also, it seemed very attractive, and I don't regret it for a moment.

Eton is a complicated institution; because it has become so famous. It drew ahead of the other public schools about a hundred years ago, although I don't quite know why; its own school song is modest about its comparisons with Harrow and Rugby and so on, whereas now, certainly in the press, it's the one that gets all the attention;. The Head Master was looking at the quick crossword in some newspaper and it said "school, four letters", and you know what the answer was. So it has got a place in the English consciousness, and perhaps international consciousness, which is odd but unique; it's an institution which, in an opposite analogy of a snake, keeps its skin and changes its inside.

We keep the traditional forms, but is quite a radical institution in revolutionizing itself in each generation. It moved itself from being a comprehensive school for the upper classes, which it was when I was here, you put down your name and got in without any particular academic hurdle if you were first on the list. The people who were first on the list were people whose parents were first on the list. In the eighties,

as the grammar schools went down it began to respond to the demand for selective education which the state wasn't providing any more, and it's now pretty academic. It's far more humane and inclusive than it was in my day; twenty percent of the boys here are on bursaries and we are trying to put that up to twenty-five percent.

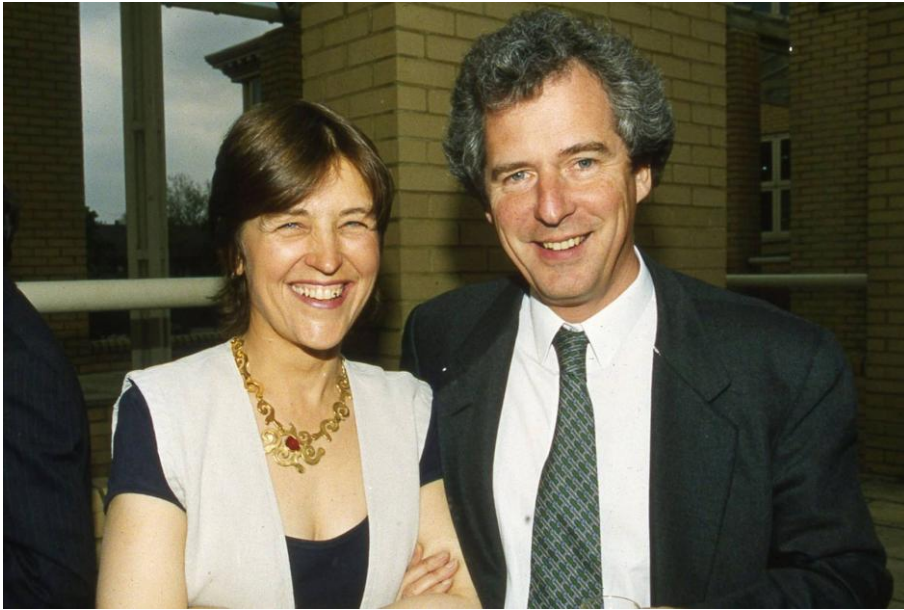
Unlike a lot of other English Public schools, it is not particularly dependent on overseas students - it has about 8-10% which it always had, which is lower than most. We are working hard to build bridges with those parts of the state sector which recognise they may have a child who needs a structured environment, and high academic and sporting facilities. We get large numbers of sixth form scholars coming out of the state sector into ours; so it is undergoing one of its perennial changes to continue to be part of the British education system.

People come and ask why we don't build schools in the Gulf or China or Malaysia. We could, but we are a British educational charity and should be doing things here, I think, and we are. We are the sponsor of a free school with others, a selective sixth form academy in East London, and part of a multi-academy trust in Slough. I believe in a free society where there will always be independent schools. For the state to have a monopoly of education is a very dangerous thing in a society, and the independent schools can follow various strategies.

Ours has always been to try and make ourselves a partner with whatever the society of the day wants. In Victorian times we produced the young Imperial officers, administrators and politicians, and now I think the purpose is to use our freedom and our resource to experiment with teaching methods and be always on the frontier of understanding what is going on in educational theory. Then to try and help people spread it. It will always be privileged because it is expensive for the majority of people who come here, though not for all. We are a charity which depends on being able to help other people by charging the majority; so it's fun, and fun being around the young, and it's fun being part of an institution that has retained its confidence, in a way that my beloved University of Oxford sometimes hasn't.

---

## 14. Reflections



My own personal objective? I have always felt that there is no particular reason why you can't have some understanding of all of human knowledge. I know that the last person who could genuinely understand everything that was going on at the frontiers was probably in the early nineteenth century, perhaps John Stuart Mill or goodness knows. There is no way that anyone can really understand string theory, the notation of mediaeval music, Plato, and French literature.

But I have always thought it is defeatist not to try and understand the shape of the landscape across the board if you can. I'm inquisitive, and I have never accepted the idea that if you are interested in how a motor car works you can't also be interested in Bach. I suppose my culture is easy to criticize by being a very thin veneer. I am not really an expert in anything; I envy the boys here who can play the most astounding music, or I look at my twin when I was elected to All Souls, Simon Hornblower, who is a proper classical scholar.

I am not any of those things, but I do love the sense of feeling, in the old stoic Marcus Aurelian way, that nothing is alien, that everything is interesting. I would love to have more time to learn about Buddhism and the Eastern cultures. I have an Indian son in law, which I am delighted about because I am beginning to get a feel on the surface. I know all these are surface things, but my culture is one of a sort of doomed attempt at universality.

I'm not a real bibliophile like some of the people in the Roxburghe Club, like McKitterick at Corpus, or somebody, but I love old books. I am not really musical, but I know where the music is. When I was in Whitehall I would walk at lunch through the National Gallery and just look at one picture. I love the old friends; there is something close in aesthetic feeling to recognition, so you need to know where the great pictures are and what they are. It is, I suppose, an eighteenth century Enlightenment approach to culture, and my hero is David Hume. The cool Enlightenment look at the world is what I respect most of all.

Something happened in 1980 when my first daughter was born. Up to then, and through marriage because Caroline joined in, I had always had the sense of single-minded ambition. But as soon as our first child was born that all fell to pieces really. I couldn't maintain that being Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary was really the only objective in life.

I come from a happy and reasonably stable family, the youngest of seven, with a powerful family ethos, and that has continued with my own family which is therefore central. Perhaps a psychologist would say, part of the reason that I began to falter in politics was because I began to lose the sense that it was the only thing in life that really mattered, as it became clear that it wasn't.

I think one of the effects my background has been an affection for those who try and maintain community. I have a soft spot for Peter Laslett and the face to face society. I have a soft spot for imaginary worlds of community, whether they are Jack Aubrey (right, acted by Russell Crowe) and Patrick O'Brian's ship stories, or the rather greater writings of William Golding. I am interested in the idea that human beings can only achieve their humanity properly in a community of some kind. Perhaps that is why I have ended up at Eton again, that it is a community.

---



