

Written by J.L. Wedgwood

CHAMBERLAIN, Austen.

BIOGRAPHIES OF LIVING MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

✓ Returned

In 1929 the Prime Minister (the Right Honourable Stanley Baldwin, M.P.) appointed a Committee, presided over by Colonel the Right Honourable Josiah Wedgwood, D.S.O., M.P., to examine the material available for a record of the personnel and politics of members of the House of Commons from A.D. 1264. The Committee reported that the task of preparing and publishing such a record was possible and should be undertaken.

It has been suggested that it would be desirable for living Members or ex-Members of Parliament to assist in the compilation of their own biographies. Below are questions which ought to be dealt with. It would be useful to have answers to these from our predecessors and contemporaries; they will inform and guide our contemporaries and successors in this and other lands.

No biographer, only the man himself, can answer such questions.

1. When did you first become interested in national politics? Why?
2. What influence started you on this line of thought?
3. What books formed your political views?
4. What were your religious convictions?
5. Which was then your favourite newspaper?
6. Why did you want to be an M.P.?
7. What or who first led you to think of it as a career?
8. What was your trade, profession or occupation?
9. Annual income, earned and un-earned, when first you stood for Parliament?
10. Had you experience of public work—if so, what?
11. How did you first get a seat?
12. What was your chief political interest?
13. On what did you, in fact, concentrate most in Parliament?
14. What did it cost you then to contest? And how much yearly while M.P.?
15. Who, at that time, was your ideal living British statesman, or dead statesman of any land?
16. How did Parliament modify your views?
17. How did being an M.P. affect your earning capacity?
18. What did you enjoy most in Parliamentary life?
19. What did you dislike most, apart from getting re-elected?
20. Which speech do you think was your best?
21. What was the greatest speech that you remember hearing?
22. Did speeches affect your vote?
23. What was your best piece of work?
24. If you are no longer in Parliament, why did you leave?

Answers to all these questions are optional. If it is desired that answers be treated as confidential, they should be enclosed in brackets; these will remain unpublished for 100 years.

Please supply also the usual bald facts from "Who's Who" or any other work of reference so as to save the compilers trouble.

Please write your answers overleaf.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORY OF PARLIAMENT,
1, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE BUILDINGS,
DARTMOUTH STREET, S.W.1.

1. As a boy; certainly before I was 15. Because of my father's interest & the talk I heard at home.

2. My father's.

3. Not formed by books

4. Bham Post, Times & Standard (Preston's articles)

5. Unitarian

6. I thought it an opportunity for congenial work & a useful career.

7. The influence of home

8. Home. I was an undergraduate when my father offered me the choice of law, business or politics

9. I should think an allowance of £300 p.a.

10. I had spoken a good deal for so young a man, but I had no practical experience.

11. I was chosen as the Liberal Unionist candidate for the Oxford Boroughs but after 3 1/2 years was elected for East Worcestershire at a by-election.

12. General.

13. I spoke little. I became a whip in opposition in a few months & Civil Lord of the Admiralty 3 years later.

14. £1500 to £1800. Say £200 & 1/2 to £300 - nearer £200

15. Living British Statesman, my father.

Dead statesmen: Chatham, Cochrane, Pitt — but none of them ideal

16. To be a member of the House was 'a liberal education'.

17. Not at all at first. Very seriously later.

18. Administration.

19. Dining in the House & for 10 years I never dined out on a Government night & only very rarely on other nights.

20. I can't say.

21. Again I can't say. Balfour & my father agreed that, given the circumstances, Gladstone's

speech on the first of his Bulgarian
resolutions in 1878(?) was the
finest parliamentary performance
effort they have heard.

22. Sometimes - not very often; but
they often modify or change the decision
of a government in Committee

23. Posteriorly, if it is interested, must
decide.

24. Still in it.

Arthur Chamberlain
July 14. 1936.