

Obituary

Mr John Parker, C.B.E.

John Parker, who died on 24 November, 1987, had been 'Father' of the House of Commons for a number of years when he retired in 1983. One of his main parliamentary interests was the conservation of historic buildings. He joined the Council of the Ancient Monuments Society in 1966 and was Deputy Chairman from 1978. He was zealous in his attendance at meetings and will be greatly missed by his colleagues.

Herbert John Harvey Parker was the son of Captain K. A. M. Parker, a retired schoolmaster, and was born on 15 July 1906. He was educated at Marlborough, of which he retained happier memories than his contemporary, John Betjeman, and at St John's College, Oxford, where he had as fellow undergraduates two future parliamentary colleagues, Michael Stewart and the writer of this notice. He took a second class in the school of Modern History, but his main interests were already political. He was an active member of the University strike committee during the General Strike of 1926 and became Chairman of the University Labour Club in 1928. On taking his degree he became for three years assistant to the Director of the Social Survey of Merseyside organized by Liverpool University, but the pattern of his life was set in 1933 when he became General Secretary of the New Fabian Research Bureau. This was a body formed by thrusting young members of the Labour Party who felt that the Fabian Society founded by the Webbs, Shaw and others had become effete, and in 1939 they secured control of it and Parker was its General Secretary from 1939 to 1945.

In the meantime he had entered Parliament. He had contested Holland-with-Boston unsuccessfully in 1931 but in 1935 was returned for Romford. From 1940 to 1942 he served as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Ellen Wilkinson, and when Attlee formed his Government in 1945 Parker was made Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Dominions. As the result of a boundary revision he had then become M.P. for Dagenham, with the Ford motor works in his constituency, and he represented it until he retired at the age of seventy-six, having been a member for forty-eight years and having served under seven Speakers and eleven Prime Ministers.

The legislative programme of Attlee's Government was the triumph of Fabianism, and Parker seemed set for advancement when his career received a sudden check. The South African Prime Minister, Smuts, took exception to his liberal views on the protectorates, and Attlee, who had a high regard for Smuts, dismissed him. He never recovered office, but without any recrimination began an influential new life on the back benches

and was able to resume his work for the Fabian Society. Himself the gentlest of characters, his socialism was of the moderate, practical type that befitted a Fabian, but he never lost the support of the Ford workers, nor did the Left make any attempt to unseat him. He had learnt that the first rule of parliamentary horsemanship is to stay in the saddle.

Having been successful in the ballot for Private Members' Bills he brought in one to liberalize Sunday observance which was defeated but led to an inquiry and heralded future legislation. A second Bill led to the legitimacy Act of 1959 which enabled children born out of wedlock to become legitimate on the subsequent marriage of their parents. Outside this country Parker took a special interest in Turkey and Yugoslavia, and frequently organized tours to them.

He was a member of the Arts and Amenities Committee of the Labour Party and this led to active participation in the amenity movement outside Parliament. His work for the Ancient Monuments Society has already been noticed. He was a member of the Historic Buildings Council throughout his life and a member of the Executive Committee of the National Trust for twenty-two years.

Parker became President of the Fabian Society in 1980. He was a Governor of the London School of Economics for thirty-two years. He wrote a number of books, including his memoirs, *Father of the House* (1982).

Parker's varied services were recognized by the award of the C.B.E. After his retirement there was a natural expectation that he would go to the House of Lords, and he was, indeed, in a list of recommendations made by the Labour Party. But the Prime Minister considered the list too long and also thought that any new Peers should be working members. As with his dismissal by Attlee, Parker showed no public sign of disappointment.

He had married in 1943 Zena Mimardière and is survived by her and a son, Michael.

IVOR BULMER-THOMAS

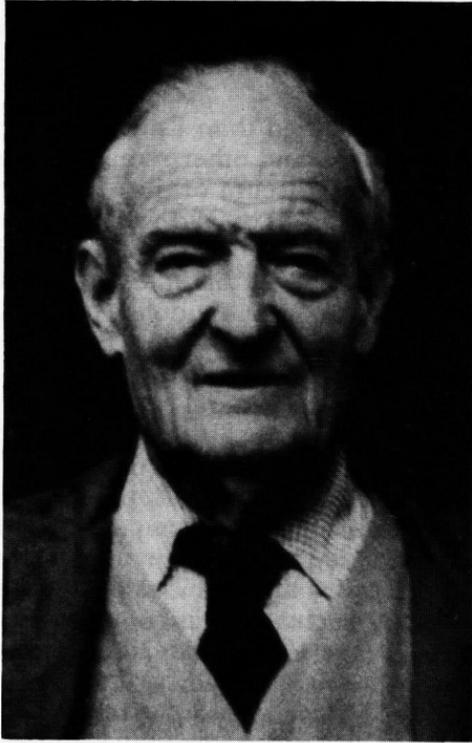
The Hon. Hubert Howard

The Hon. Hubert Howard, who died in Rome on 17 February 1987, was an Honorary Life Fellow of the Society and for many years had played a leading part in the European conservation movement.

Born on 23 December 1907, Hubert John Edward Dominic Howard was the third son of the 1st Baron Howard of Penrith and of Lady Isabella Howard, daughter of Prince Giustiniani-Bandini, 8th Earl of Newborough. He was educated at Downside and Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1951 he married Donna Lelia Calista Ada Caetani, only daughter of Roffredo Caetani, 18th Duke of Sermoneta, and this set the pattern of his life for the remainder of his days. Thereafter he lived almost entirely in Italy, but he retained a small family property at Lyulph's Tower, Ullswater, which he visited once a year. Far from becoming an *inglese italianizzato*, however, he remained every inch an English aristocrat in Italian society.

The Caetani were a famous Roman family with large properties in the Pontine marshes, and Hubert Howard's main task after his marriage was the maintenance and enhancement of this estate for the benefit of the nation. He and his wife set up the Camillo Caetani Foundation in 1963 to maintain the Palazzo Caetani in Rome and the family archives which were consulted by students from all over the world; they continued to occupy a flat in the top story. In 1972 they established the Roffredo Caetani Foundation to maintain as a centre of the arts and music the great family castle at Sermoneta among the hills overlooking the marshes, several farms in Latina, and the famous garden at Ninfa which had been created by Lelia's grandmother and enhanced by her mother and herself. The couple fought successfully to prevent Ninfa from being engulfed by industrial developments and this, together with the growth of Sermoneta as a cultural centre, had an appreciable influence on the policy of the authorities in that area, the rural character of which they were anxious to maintain. They continued the work of draining the marshes, and Hubert campaigned for an extension of the National Parks and against the shooting at birds and other wild life; it is largely due to him that the Pontine lakes are again a centre of migration of birds.

His work for conservation was not confined to the family properties. In 1956 he convened a meeting at the Palazzo Caetani when Italia Nostra was formed, and thereafter he took a leading part in it. Later he played a principal role in the foundation of Europa Nostra, and in 1962 was elected its President.



Though his visits to England after his marriage were only occasional, Hubert prompted the Society to take up several cases of conservation in Cumbria. On one occasion he also invoked the help of the Society in protecting from building the one tongue of countryside that still reached the walls of Rome, a precious legacy even though used by the neighbouring Romans as a rubbish dump.

As an Honorary Life Fellow he had no need to pay a subscription, but he once insisted on sending the Society a substantial donation to mark his appreciation of the *Transactions*, of which he was an avid reader.

His wife died in 1977. There were no children of the marriage.

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