The Party of Opportunity

THE SECOND EDITION

FOREWORD BY
Rt Hon John Major KG GH

COMPILED BY
David Amess MP
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgement</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword by Sir John Major</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction by Jonathan Evans MP</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigel Adams MP</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Amess MP</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Bingham MP</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Blackman MP</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie Doyle-Price MP</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham Evans MP</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rt Hon Mark Francois MP</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rt Hon Damian Green MP</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Henderson MP</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Hoban MP</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Howell MP</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Macleod MP</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl McCartney MP</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rt Hon Patrick Mcloughlin MP</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Menzies MP</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheryll Murray MP</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Nuttall MP</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Ollerenshaw OBE, MP</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rt Hon Mike Penning MP</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rt Hon John Redwood MP</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurence Robertson MP</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Rosindell MP</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee Scott MP</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alec Shelbrooke MP</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Uppal MP</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Vickers MP</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dame Angela Watkinson MP</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This booklet is the Second Edition of a publication produced by the Renewal Group which was launched in April 2014.

This booklet has been produced thanks to the generosity of the Association of Conservative Clubs.

This booklet has been designed and edited by Soapbox Communications, London.

The print edition of this booklet was printed by Charsley Stewart, Leigh-on-Sea.
FOREWORD

THE Rt Hon Sir John Major KG CH

CLASSLESS SOCIETY

Many years ago, I spoke of a classless society. By that, I meant a society in which anyone from any background or culture could rise as high as hard work and ability could take them.

To achieve this, we must follow our better instincts and define ourselves by what we are for: not what we are against. We must reach out to everyone of every background in every part of our country. And we must speak to them, not at them. We must also speak for them, not sectional interests.

Many in our society need help but, to deliver it, we must build a strong economy. Only national wealth can ease poverty, pay for social care and create jobs.

From the wreckage of the financial crisis bequeathed to us, that is what we Conservatives know must be done.

And, as in the past, we must do so for people of all classes: it is our purpose, our privilege and our duty.

March 2014
INTRODUCTION

JONATHAN EVANS MP

The Association of Conservative Clubs came into existence over a century ago as voting rights were being extended by our Party, with the aim of widening political involvement and engagement of people from all parts of society with the Conservative Party and our values.

Today, the Conservative Clubs remains the most successful such movement in the country with almost a thousand clubs in all parts of the country. Our clubs attract members from all backgrounds and collectively we represent the biggest political association in Britain with half a million Club members.

We demonstrate that our Conservative values are enduring and remain at the heart of every section of our society.

Our clubs are also very proud to show daily that they are an integral part of the communities they serve, through their outstanding support for local charities. No less than £15 million has been raised in Tory clubs for local good causes in recent years. It is a remarkable demonstration of the unbreakable bond between Conservatives and the communities in which they live.

We are pleased to support the publication of the second edition of ‘The Party of Opportunity’ and its objective of showing the broad appeal of Conservative values to all working people in Britain.

Jonathan Evans is the Chairman of the Association of Conservative Clubs
Not all members of my family were overly pleased when I decided to enter the political world and particularly with my choice of Party. I was at my Uncle John’s funeral a few years back and as an ex-miner, the wake was held at the Grimethorpe Miners Welfare Institute. A cousin, who I had not seen for some years fixed me with a steely glare, shook my hand and said, ‘Nigel lad, thy grandfatha’ would be turning in his grave if he knew tha’ was a Tory.’ I was slightly taken aback but understood where he was coming from. However, I would like to think that secretly he would be rather proud that one of his grandchildren had been elected as a Member of Parliament, irrespective of Party!

One of my earliest pre-school memories is accompanying my mother to the nearby Catholic School where she worked as a part time cleaner. Fast forward forty years and I was the guest speaker at the school’s annual prizegiving evening, invited as the newly elected Member of Parliament for Selby and Ainsty.

MPs will tell you different stories about when they became involved in or aware of politics and many are shaped politically by events from childhood. The one event which I recall was when my parents were turned down for a grant to install central heating at our home and with the intervention of the local Conservative MP, Michael Alison, the decision was overturned and the need to share a bed with my brother and bedroom windows frosted on the inside were alleviated. This help from our MP had a huge effect on our family and in fact, my dad still has the letter from Michael Alison on House of Commons notepaper notifying them of the success of their appeal. It also influenced me in so much that from that moment on, I knew that a Member of Parliament could have a positive impact on ordinary people’s lives.
It was a cruel twist of fate that saw me raised in North Yorkshire as both my parents were from the Labour dominated South Yorkshire mining villages of Grimethorpe and Thurnscoe where my grandparents, uncles and nephews were employed in the coal mining industry. My dad had an accident at work aged 17, which left him with terrible leg injuries and unable to work in the pit or mills so his employer helped the newly married couple relocate to near Selby where he was given a job at a pet food wholesaler.

Most of my school holidays were spent with my dad at work or occasionally helping my mother out looking after old folks in the village as she was now employed as a part-time home help. Two week summer holidays were usually taken in Great Yarmouth where a static caravan was rented and having made the horrific seven hour journey, we then hoped it wouldn’t rain for the whole fortnight.

I knew that lack of money was always an issue in our house and I am aware that my parents struggled to make ends meet but they never complained, they simply worked hard and instilled the same ethos into their children. Growing up in a family where money was scarce meant that you did not expect much and I suppose nowadays, some well meaning group would say that I was brought up in poverty, but it certainly didn’t feel that way. However, the knowledge that my first pair of football boots and my first bike were cast offs from school friends did motivate me in my later business career.

In the late seventies, my dad was made redundant and this period was deeply traumatic as the only wage coming into the house was my mother’s part-time income. This period coincided with the emergence of Margaret Thatcher and whilst politics was rarely discussed in our house apart from the odd mention of the saintly Michael Alison (who went on to become Mrs Thatcher’s PPS) Britain at the time was experiencing decline, industrial action and international ridicule. Margaret Thatcher reached out to households like ours, she pushed the sell-off of council houses, she gave working class people the opportunity to own shares for the first time and she took on special interests intent on grinding the country to a halt. Her vision was simple; create a property owning democracy that encouraged and did not frown upon aspiration. She created a country where people had a real stake in society and it did not matter where you were from, who your parents were, or which school you went to, you had the opportunity to get on in life. It was around this time that I realised that the Conservatives were the Party for me.
It’s a huge honour to represent the constituency where I was brought up and have lived most of my life and I consider my upbringing a huge advantage in my work as an MP.

Nigel Adams is the Member of Parliament for Selby and Ainsty
I was born in the East End of London, in Plaistow, in 1952, the second of two children. My father was an electrician and my mother a Tea Lady, a Dinner Lady and before that a ‘Court Dress Maker’ following her time serving in the Land Army. The family home was a little terraced house where my widowed mother still lives, ironically called Disraeli Terrace.

Apparently in the Second World War the roof of the property was blown off by a ‘Doodlebug’ landing and an air raid shelter was at the bottom of the small garden. As a child my family had little money but a strong work ethic, which meant that every penny counted. We had no bathroom (the tin bath used to hang on the wall outside), an outside toilet, and a larder instead of a refrigerator. We didn’t have a washing machine, but had a scrubbing board and we didn’t have a telephone we just threw the window opened and shouted loudly at one another. So when I think of my children today, they would regard me as having been born into poverty. It certainly didn’t feel like that at the time, I had a very happy childhood. I walked to school every day, a couple of miles there, a couple of miles back. In my infant and primary schools we had classes of 52 children. The teachers were very dedicated and I owe them so much, particularly when one identified to my mother that I had a speech defect and I ended up attending a speech therapy clinic for two years to stop my stutter. We could spell properly, knew our times tables and could write clearly. I then went onto a Catholic Secondary School, having taken the 11-Plus into the Grammar Stream.
Newham produced the first ever Labour Member of Parliament, Kier Hardie. Everything was Labour; one hundred percent Labour Council, a Labour GLC Member and a Labour Member of Parliament who had been there for forty years. So the simple reason I became a Conservative was that I was absolutely fed up with local Labour politicians describing how bad everything was, I wanted them to do something about it. I felt the Conservative Party’s policies, certainly under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher were best placed to meet people’s aspirations, to ‘get on’ in life, and make the most of opportunities. So when I became the Member of Parliament for Basildon I was completely at home with lots of Eastenders who wanted to be upwardly mobile and fulfil their aspirations. Whether it was Right-to-Buy, share ownership or support for private enterprise, all of these policies and more were extremely popular with residents who had a working class background. Since those ‘heady days’ at my first election more than thirty years ago much has changed. Prosperity has increased and with that people’s aspirations.

For the Conservative Party to win the next election it is essential that we retain and increase Working Class support throughout the length and breadth of our country. We need to develop and enhance policies which fulfil people’s aspirations in terms of housing, employment, lifestyle and opportunities generally.

David Amess is the Member of Parliament for Southend West
I was brought up in a non-political household. My parents were always floating voters although politics was never the talk around the breakfast table. My paternal grandfather was a chef. On one occasion having the honour to have made a cake for Nikita Khrushchev, and my maternal Grandfather was a bus driver. My late father was trained as an electrician whilst my Mum looked after the family home and kept my brother and I in check!

My education was at the local schools, leaving what was then Long Lane Comprehensive School at 16 before spending two years training to be a chef, a job I did for some three years after leaving college. Through a combination of events, I started to help my father out in a business he had recently started, selling engineering equipment to industry across the northwest of England. It was in this job that I realised the full benefit of the private sector, how through someone's own efforts they can improve their life and those around them, the need for aspiration and opportunity and how it can motivate people. Our business was a very small business, only ever employing four or five people, but I dealt with companies from the smallest sole trader to the big multinationals.

I was 16 when Margaret Thatcher was elected in 1979 and as I watched the successive Thatcher Governments I began to form my own political views. I am not the product of a political doctrine handed down by my parents, indeed I believe my Grandparents were Labour voters, but I have come to my own views on politics. I always revile at the term ‘posh Tories’. Anyone who has met me will know I am not posh. I am not from a privileged background, indeed I didn’t even attend University. My political philosophy has been built up through my own life experiences.
I have seen businessmen and women start businesses. I have seen them start from very humble beginnings and through hard work and effort build them into thriving and sometimes multi-million pound organisations. I have seen these entrepreneurs have the worry and the stress of building businesses and creating employment and wealth. As one business owner once told me, ‘I don’t have one mortgage, I have 50 – the 50 people who rely on me for their income’.

As I have seen these people I have built the belief that the state should be no more than a hand on the tiller, a light touch to allow these people to thrive. The heavy hand of the state can stifle and suffocate and we should never lose sight of the fact – it is the revenues of the private sector that fund the public sector, so if we want good public services we need a thriving private sector.

As we encourage business and commerce we can give people aspiration, a will to succeed and a belief that the state will not stand in their way, moreover, encourage them and facilitate their ambitions as far as is possible.

I am incredibly fortunate to be the Member of Parliament for where I was born in the High Peak, but I had an aspiration borne out of a speech by Margaret Thatcher who said that she would like to see more people in politics that have come from a working background. She put the thought in my mind, and the aspiration in my heart. It is that belief and aspiration that we need to build within people. It is a Conservative philosophy; freedom, within a society and its values, to do what you wish and to fulfil your dreams, ambitions and potential. That is why I am a Conservative and as a Conservative Member of Parliament from a working background I can say clearly that the Conservative Party can be and is the Party of the working man and woman who has an ambition for a better life for them and their family.

Andrew Bingham is PPS to Mark Francois as Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence and Member of Parliament for High Peak.
There are certain attributes which I believe we all recognise as integral to our sense of purpose as members of the Conservative Party; the tenets of working hard and reaping the rewards, of valuing meritocracy over the false economy of tokenism, of community values and working together, and of maintaining a strong voice for our nation on the world stage.

Our party has always attracted people from all walks of life, regardless of gender, ethnicity, wealth and age, despite the caricatures often put forward by the national press of old male Etonians weaned on power and prospects. We are the party of John Major and Margaret Thatcher, of Benjamin Disraeli and Winston Churchill; a more disparate bunch you couldn’t hope to find, yet we all share the same fundamental values.

The only privilege I have had in life is that of a loving family. I am one of many Conservatives MPs who have worked for everything we have. I went to a State comprehensive school and studied maths and physics at Liverpool University. I was unable to complete the course after the death of my parents required me to step up and support my three younger sisters, one of whom is mentally and physically handicapped. I worked from the bottom upwards. I did not inherit my political views, I simply worked hard and naturally saw that the Conservative Party was on my side, enabling me to get on in life, while the Labour Party offered nothing but punitive taxes, unfair redistribution and state interference.

I got involved in politics during my time at University and was Union President. I continued to pursue politics as a side interest while I worked a day job in the technology industries. I was always drawn to the prospect of helping people locally and interested in the legislative process. Inevitably, I spent 24 years serving my local area as a Councillor and I was the Leader of Brent Council between 1991
and 1996, where I instigated a culture of low taxes and greater efficiencies, leading to enormous improvements in local services. I continued to lead the Conservative group on the council and become the Greater London Assembly member for Brent & Harrow in June 2004. Finally, I became the Member of Parliament for Harrow East in 2010.

It wasn’t an easy road to Parliament and it remains a challenge now. I had to contest Brent South in 1992, Bedford in 1997 and Brent North in 2005 before being elected in Harrow East. My area is a rich melting pot of different cultures and faiths, many of whom have been indoctrinated into Labour support under false pretences. For me, it’s about being absolutely sincere in representing their views, and demonstrating that we also believe in hard work, in supporting the family unit and that we respect the values of faith in all forms. I believe it is the duty of all Conservative MPs to represent these views strongly and to demonstrate first hand that, regardless of background, you have a place in our party.
The Party of Opportunity II

RT HON STEPHEN CRABB MP

I became attracted to the Conservative Party because, as a teenager in the 1980s, it was the party above all others that seemed most intent on building a society where your background or family status should not matter.

Growing up in Wales, I had seen the destructive and divisive consequences of Labour’s class-based approach to politics. In contrast, the Conservative message struck me as being about smashing down class barriers and opening up opportunity – so that a person’s values and choices become the most important determinant of what they achieve.

But it wasn’t just the rhetoric that had an impact. The government of Margaret Thatcher delivered policies which won the hearts and minds of working people whose aspirations Labour completely failed to understand.

In the street of council houses where I lived, I remember my mother and neighbours having informal meetings to talk about the Right-to-Buy scheme. It was a cause of real excitement among families who previously had no chance of owning their own home.

My mother worked incredibly hard to make ends meet and increased her hours at work year-by-year as me and my brothers progressed through school. She made a remarkable journey from welfare dependency to a full working life. Eventually she saved enough to buy a small second hand car which made a huge difference to her economic and social opportunities.

Education and hard work were constant themes in our house.

My mother would take us to the local library every Saturday morning as children. As a single mum, she valued enormously – and taught us to value equally – the public services that we benefitted from: the library, the local swimming pool, the local bus service that we used to take to the beach in the summer.
I was incredibly fortunate that the local comprehensive school just across the road was outstanding in so many respects: academic, sports, music. I had the kind of education many families spend a lot of money trying to secure for their children in the private sector.

From the age of 13 I worked in the corner shop at the end of our street after school and on Saturday mornings. I would go running into town on Saturdays to try to catch the building society before it closed at lunchtime so I could bank my weekly earnings.

My summers before and during university in the early 90s were spent on building sites in Brighton, Newport Docks and Milford Haven. During that period I met an amazing variety of people who all had an enormous work ethic and a drive to improve their quality of life. It was a tough time economically for many people and I really felt for the guys with families who were having to travel around the country to get work.

I joined the Conservative Party in 1996 because, despite the mirage of Tony Blair and New Labour, I believed it was still the natural home for people who work hard and aspire to greater economic security for themselves and their families.

The Labour years were in fact a disaster for working people. From uncontrolled immigration to spiralling debt, it was families on lower incomes who felt the worst impact of Labour’s policies.

There is still a long road ahead but I am proud to be part of a government that is tackling the crisis while easing burdens on families.

The Conservative vision of a society where opportunity and fair-play go hand-in-hand remains the best hope for people of all backgrounds.

Stephen Crabb is Secretary of State for Wales and Member for Parliament for Preseli Pembrokeshire
The Party of Opportunity II

JACKIE DOYLE-PRICE MP

I was born and bred in Sheffield. My father was a bricklayer and my mother a part-time sales assistant at Woolworths. There has never been any doubt in my mind that it is the Conservative Party who support ordinary hard-working people who want to make the best of themselves.

In 1983 my parents decided to buy their council house. It changed their lives. It bought them independence and it gave them the opportunity to move on to something better.

This was a policy vigorously opposed by the Labour council in Sheffield who did all they could to stop them. Why would a Party that claims to be the Party of the worker stand in the way of the ambition of people to own their own home? They think that people should be grateful for what they are given by the State. We believe we should do all we can to give people opportunity to improve things for themselves and their families.

The same thing can be seen in their approach to schools. I was fortunate to attend a good comprehensive school which set me up to attend Durham University. Too often though comprehensives were allowed to become mediocre which meant that over time fewer people with my background were able to go to good universities. The Academies programme is giving us a real chance to boost parental choice and diversity in education provision so that all children will have access to an education which will equip them with a good foundation for life.

But the most important reason I support the Conservatives is tax. We instinctively believe that people should keep more of what they earn to spend as they see fit and that is the major fault line in British politics. Labour believes that the State knows best and that the state has a God-given right to take as much
as they want to spend. We believe that individuals know best for themselves and their families.

For most people much of what they take home is spent on essentials, on putting food on the table, on keeping the house warm and on paying the rent or mortgage. So each pound we give or take away in tax makes a real difference. That is why I am really clear that reducing taxes is the best thing we can do to support working people and why working people are best served by the Conservatives. In my view no one should be paying tax until they are earning a living wage. We should continue with increasing the personal tax allowance and taking more and more lower paid workers out of work altogether.

It has been a source of frustration for many working people that while they work hard, others seem to enjoy a good lifestyle living on benefits. That has to stop. Taxpayers cannot afford it. It is on welfare where Labour have let down working people most. The Benefits system has encouraged welfare dependency and generations have been failed by the failure to tackle worklessness. It will take time to fix, but we fail society if we do not work towards a country where all have the dignity afforded by independence and self-reliance. It is why we need a Majority Conservative Government.

Jackie Doyle-Price is the Member of Parliament for Thurrock
One of my earliest memories, and the one which made me certain about my political views, were of the three day weeks in the early seventies. Long, dark, cold nights without electricity seemed to stretch on for an eternity. I watched my family, community, and country be held hostage by militant unions, fighting a battle that made no sense to me. Some 50 years after my Grandfather fought in World War I, the country was being dragged to a standstill from within, and it showed me that something, somewhere, had gone very wrong. Little did I realise that those thoughts, so long ago, would take me on a journey that led all the way to the House of Commons.

I was born the youngest of four children, living in a quasi-semi council estate in Poynton, Cheshire.

Life for a big family on a low income was always tough and the greatest thing impressed on me by my parents was the value of hard work. Nothing comes for free, and you can’t expect to get anything back without putting something in.

My father died when I was a teenager, and I watched my mother, by this time in her late forties, struggle to make ends meet. Single parent families face a constant uphill struggle and seeing the challenges my mother met made me certain that there are ways that we can better help those who need an extra hand.

I wasn’t academic and leaving school at 16 with a handful of qualifications I was certain that further education was not an option for me. Indeed, my family were so convinced of this fact that in future years when I attained my O-Levels and A-Levels the results were met with strong incredulity.

I spent some time unemployed and the days seemed endless. It’s a dispiriting situation, putting yourself out there only to get knocked back again and again.
Looking back on those times sharpens the strength of my belief in the importance of work and the self-belief it gives you.

My first job was stacking shelves in the Co-Op, and it was here I built the people skills which have served me all throughout my life, especially in public service as a Special Constable, a Councillor, School Governor and, ultimately, as a Member of Parliament.

My first job in manufacturing was with BAE Systems as a technical clerk, before I moved on to Hewlett Packard and then Sun Chemicals. During this time I began studying at night school as a mature student, finally graduating from Manchester University Business School with a Business Degree and Diploma in Marketing Management.

The greatest benefit of having a working class background has always been an understanding of the importance of a hard day’s graft, and the value of a close knit community. That community spirit is what motivated me to work in public service for the police, schools, local government and finally here to Parliament to serve the people of Weaver Vale.

Graham Evans is the Member of Parliament for Weaver Vale
I was born in Islington, north London, in 1965, the son of working class parents. My father, Reginald Francois, was an engineer who had fought in the Royal Navy in the Second World War (he was on a minesweeper on D Day). My mother, Anna Carloni, was Italian and met my dad after coming to the UK as an au pair in the early 1960s.

We moved out to Essex in 1971 and settled in the New Town of Basildon, much of which comprised ex-Londoners. I attended St Nicholas comprehensive school in Basildon, which was a ten minute walk from the council estate that we lived on. I had a modest but very happy childhood with two loving parents.

My first political thought was probably during a 1973 ‘three day week’, when the lights suddenly went out and the TV failed during a power cut, right in the middle of an England World Cup qualifier. When I inquired of my father what had happened he simply replied ‘It’s the unions, son’ to which I retorted that I didn’t know who they were but it seemed pretty unfair that they wanted to stop people simply enjoying the football!

However, what really brought me to politics was the defence issue. I was fascinated by the Second World War (not least because my dad had fought in it) and my bedroom was full of Airfix models and plastic soldiers. As I grew into my teens I began to read about the rise of Adolf Hitler, the errors of Appeasement and the intriguing figure of Winston Churchill – who predicted what was coming but whom, initially at least, very few in the post Great War Establishment wanted to believe.

The more I read about Churchill and the House of Commons, in which he made such great speeches, the more fascinated I became. By the time I was around
thirteen I had decided that I wanted to become a Member of Parliament, which delighted my father when I told him. About a year later he sadly passed away.

I was in the Sixth form at school and then Bristol University in the early to mid 1980s, when CND were again on the march and there was much debate about cruise missiles and Trident. From what I had read about history it seemed to me that these people, and their Labour Party fellow travellers under Michael Foot, were perhaps well meaning but also hopelessly naive. In contrast, Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative Party believed in strong defences, NATO, the nuclear deterrent – and stood up to Argentina over the Falkland Islands as well.

However, I found that I also instinctively agreed with the Conservatives about other things as well – their emphasis on hard work and enterprise, their belief in the Nation State and their willingness to promote aspiration, for instance by allowing working class people a chance to buy their own council houses. This was one of our best ever policies and one which was tremendously popular in Basildon, with its large number of council estates.

My father had worked overtime to buy me an Encyclopaedia Britannica, which greatly assisted my studies. I was one of only two out of the 226 in my original year group from St Nicholas to make it to university – and I have held strong views about the lack of aspiration among some teachers for working class kids in ‘bog standard comprehensives’ ever since.

I joined the Conservative Party on my first full day at Bristol University and also the University Officer Training Corps later the same day. An MA in War Studies from Kings College London followed, prior to local Government, a run out against Ken Livingston in Brent East in 1997 and then election to Parliament for Rayleigh in 2001.

I am proud of where I came from and of having two loving parents, who greatly encouraged me. However, I have always held in contempt those champagne socialists – from wealthy backgrounds but hopelessly wracked by middle class guilt – who earnestly profess their love for working class people but would scarcely dream of inviting any of them to dinner. It is the Conservative Party which really believes in aspiration – and that’s why I will always be a member of it.

Mark Francois is the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence, and Member of Parliament for Rayleigh and Wickford.
My contribution to this collection is to challenge the whole idea behind ‘class politics’, whether in the old-fashioned Marxist sense or the modern focus-group mode. What matters in a healthy society, and what for me is at the core of the Conservative offering, is to give people the chance to change their economic circumstances for the better by their own efforts.

If you organise society in this way then no one is irretrievably middle or working class. This used to be the case in Britain. My evidence for this is simple observation of my own life. I was born in a terraced house in a small town in South Wales (Barry) which was not particularly prosperous in those days. Both my parents left school at 14. One of my grandfathers was a dock worker, the other was a clock-maker.

Despite this, it would be absurd for me to say that I was anything other than middle class. Indeed as a Tory MP who is also an Oxford graduate, formerly worked for the BBC and News International, and has a range of interests which encompass the modern habits of the British bourgeoisie, a snapshot of my 50-something self would suggest a very different background from the one I actually have.

Yet for me this has been a seamless journey. At no point did I think I was consciously changing who I was, still less cutting myself off from my real roots. So at what point did I become middle-class? Was it when my parents moved from Wales to England? Was it when I passed the 11-plus to go to a grammar school? Was it when that very good grammar school helped me win a scholarship to Oxford? All these questions are, of course, designed to be ridiculous. What matters is that the journey was possible.

Two things made it possible. One was the unwavering commitment of my parents to the importance of a good education. The second was the availability
of excellent schools to families who would never have thought about private education. In the intervening decades that availability was reduced, and it is why the education reforms of this Government are so essential to the future health of the country, and to the spread of opportunity.

Almost everything in Britain in 2014 is better than it was when I was growing up. One of the things which is worse is the ease of making the same journey I have. Is it still relatively easy for a child from a terraced house in South Wales to enjoy the benefits of one of the best universities in the world, and then a series of professional careers? I fear not.

This is one of the big challenges facing all Conservative Governments. Making sure that the routes of opportunity are open, without simply devising a system in which nobody ‘fails’, (which as we have seen simply helps those who know how to use the system) is the only way to give the non-connected a start in life, and the only way to make good use of all latent talent.

Damian Green is the Minister for Policing, Criminal Justice and Victims and Member of Parliament for Ashford
I am a working class boy and proud of it.

I grew up on a tough council estate in Chatham and for the first couple of years of my life lived in one of the prefabricated houses that were common in post war Britain. When we moved to a modest brick built council house it was luxury.

When I was five my mum died and I went to live with my aunt and uncle. I didn’t live with my dad again until he remarried when I was ten. I attended state schools and, probably because of the disruption in my early life, I did not pass my 11 Plus and ended up at a secondary modern school.

My family was not well off. As a child I was able to have bread and butter, or bread and jam, but not both. It was a hard life, but we were happy.

The social environment in which I grew up offered boys like me few opportunities to go onto university. When we left school at 16 our employment options were limited. It was either become an apprentice in Chatham Dockyard; go to work at the BP refinery on the Isle of Grain; or join the Armed Forces.

My dad, who came from a long line of soldiers wanted me to join the Army. Instead, I decided to get a job in Woolworths, which did not impress my dad, nor my friends who thought shop-work was for girls. I suppose the decision to go against the wishes of my dad was the first indication of the rebellious streak which has stayed with me the rest of my life.

I eventually became a senior store manager with Woolworths before taking a number of different jobs, including: being a restaurateur, a wine merchant, a senior contracts officer in the Avionics Industry, a director for a drinks wholesaler and Operations Manager for the country’s leading alcoholic gift manufacturer.
So why did a working class boy, from one of the toughest council estates in Kent, decide to become a Member of Parliament and a Tory to boot? There are lots of reasons, but I will mention just three.

The first is that I have always been at heart a capitalist; I believe in the profit motive; and I believe that business creates wealth, not governments.

The second reason is the influence of my dad, who always voted Labour at local elections, because he said they provided working people with homes. But he always voted Conservative at General Elections, because he believed the Tories looked after the Armed Forces. He was at least right on the latter score!

The third reason was the front door of the council house in which I grew up. My parents were never able to choose its colour; it was the socialist council of which my dad was a supporter that made that decision.

I wanted to choose the colour of my own door and I soon realised that only the Conservative Party offered real freedom of choice.
In the North East, loyalties whether political or footballing are tribal, so joining the Conservative Party as a sixteen year old in 1980 wasn’t the obvious thing to do. When you are the grandson of a miner and of a plumber and the son of an ex-miner, it was an even less obvious thing to do.

Whilst the family tradition was clearly Labour, my family’s values were hard work, getting on in life and service to the community. My parents saved and worked hard to swap their council house in Peterlee (a new town named after a miner’s leader) for a home of their own in Durham. A premium was placed on education as a route to progression. My parents play an active role in their local Catholic Church and the wider Catholic community. These values help shape my political beliefs, but the catalyst for the political route I chose was the state of the North East in the late 1970s.

I saw traditional industries like coal, shipbuilding and steel kept alive by taxpayer subsidies. There was an inherent pessimism about our ability to adapt to new economic challenges. An economy in a state of paralysis doesn’t create the opportunities for people to make the most of their talents. I believed that the economic policies of the Callaghan Government would hold back the North East and hold back those who wanted to get on in life. As a teenager I was, and still am, impatient for change. It was time for government to get out of the way of business. I wanted people to have the freedom and responsibility to make their own choices. The people who earned the money should decide how to spend it, not the Government. Labour, the traditional party of the North East, offered a
bleak, paternalistic message that did not appeal to me, so it was the Conservative Party that I joined in 1980.

Nearly 35 years later, my beliefs might be tempered by experience but the essence of why I am a Conservative has not changed. It is only by embracing economic change that we can look to the future with confidence. We let down the next generation if all we do is hanker after the past. Social mobility is as important to me now as it was in 1980. I want more people to have a home of their own which is why Help to Buy, and building more homes are important social and economic policies. I was very lucky that my parents and the Catholic comprehensive school I attended, encouraged me to achieve my full potential. They had high expectations of me. For too long we have had a culture of low expectations for white, working class boys. Our education reforms are rooted in the belief that everyone regardless of social class and ethnicity should be achieving their full potential. As a believer in serving your community, I would rather communities came together to tackle a problem than wait for government to sort it out.

It is glib shorthand to describe me and my generation as Thatcher’s children because it is only partly right. I am the child too of a working class family born and brought up in the North East, full of aspiration and ambition. That too shaped me and my politics.

Mark Hoban MP | The Party of Opportunity II

Mark Hoban is the Member of Parliament for Fareham
JOHN HOWELL MP

I was struck by an article in The Times on the cost of becoming an MP. The lines which resonated with me were ‘If there were a few more Tories of humble origin perhaps there would be a greater readiness to worry about people on average earnings.’ The fact is that there are lots of us in the Conservative Party from humble origins and it is why we have concentrated our efforts on ensuring that the lowest paid are looked after. My interest in politics began at about the age of 15, when I perceived the Conservatives as the party that provided individuals and society with the opportunities to advance.

My late father was for much of his time a cable jointer with the London Electricity Board before going to work at Heathrow Airport looking after disabled arrivals. My mother held down a variety of jobs in local organisations. For much of my life, we lived in a small house in the private rented sector in South London. There was no inside lavatory. There was no inside bathroom. The zinc bath had to be dragged inside and dusted down every time we wanted to use it. It was not a very political family and I am convinced my father voted different ways at different elections.

We knew the hard choices that have to be made. I find now that in mid-career, all I have is the result of my own efforts; I inherited nothing. I got on in life as a result of Conservative educational policies and hard work. The party I joined was one of aspiration and opportunity and I want to see those spread widely.

I went to primary school in Tooting and then Battersea Grammar school. At Edinburgh University I studied archaeology when the very last student rector was in place. That student rector was Gordon Brown! After Edinburgh, I continued
in the academic world to gain a doctorate in archaeology at Oxford and then as a research fellow at Liverpool. I followed a successful career in broadcasting and business – focusing largely on the, then, communist bloc and its fall.

It was this experience which reinvigorated my interest in Conservatism. Seeing at first hand how communism crushed all imagination and enthusiasm for anything confirmed me in my belief that the future lay in establishing free market economics which would benefit everyone.

I appreciate it is a difficult time for many people at the moment with household budgets being stretched. Nevertheless, the evidence shows that Britain’s economic plan is working thanks to all of our sacrifice and endeavour. I am reassured that where the Government can afford to do so, they will continue to help hard working families.

There is no shame in being a working class Conservative; quite the opposite. It is a party which crosses all such boundaries and believes passionately in spreading the aspiration and opportunity which first drew me to it.

John Howell is the Member of Parliament for Henley
Although I joined the Conservative Party during my time at Exeter University, it was my upbringing and early life that shaped my political consciousness.

Abdul-Ghani Javid (or, as he was known to me, Dad) arrived in the UK in 1961 at 23 years of age. His family lost everything during the partition of India and their move to Pakistan, so my father’s motivation was quite simple – he wanted to work in Britain and provide the means for his brothers back in Pakistan to be educated.

Disembarking at Heathrow with a £1 note in his pocket (which his father, touchingly but mistakenly, had said would see him through his first month in the UK), my father made his way up north and found a job in a Rochdale cotton mill.

Happy to be employed, he nevertheless strived for more. He set his sights on working on a bus, only to be turned away time and again.

But he didn’t give up. He persisted and was hired as a bus conductor, then a driver, earning the nickname ‘Mr Night & Day’ from his co-workers. After that came his own market stall, selling ladies clothes (many sewn by my mother at home) and, eventually, his own shop in Bristol.

My four brothers and I, all born in Rochdale, lived with my parents in the two-bedroom flat above our shop on Stapleton Road (which, although home to us, was later dubbed ‘Britain’s most dangerous street’).

This – along with our family breaks to visit cousins back in Rochdale and our biannual treat of hiring a VHS player for a weekend to binge on movies – might not fit everyone’s definition of success, but success is always relative. My parents achieved their aims – to help their immediate and extended families and to provide for and educate my brothers and me.
After attending state schools in Bristol, and being advised to start my working life by securing an apprenticeship, I decided to continue my academic education and won a place at Exeter University to study Economics and Politics, the first member of my family to go to university.

This is the root of my Conservative beliefs. My mother and father had nothing and, like many people in their adopted country, worked their way up. All they had to rely on was their own drive and determination, a willingness to work hard, and the confidence to take risks in the hope of greater rewards.

There were, of course, ups and downs. But, whenever my parents were knocked down, in business or in anything else, they picked themselves up and started again. The abiding lesson was clear to me: don’t doubt yourself and don’t stop trying.

I saw my parents’ resolve pay off, and their sense of personal responsibility and self-development was instilled in my brothers and me. My parents and, through them, my brothers and I, flourished in the UK’s meritocracy in ways that would not have been possible otherwise.

I believe that what worked for my family and me works for everyone else in the UK. Encouraging everyone to be the best that they can be is the surest way to personal and national contentment and prosperity. That is why I am proud to be British and Conservative.
When I look back at my childhood, I still remember how I felt. My most vivid memories were of a father who worked incredibly hard, so much so, that it seemed that we rarely saw him. My mother, highly organised, a former NHS ward sister, was left largely to bring up the four girls. I was the most difficult!

What was life like? We had no heating, no new clothes, no TV, no holidays, few toys. But we were not unhappy. It seemed fun to go to bed in winter with jumper, socks, woolly hat and gloves on! It was so special when I got a new outfit once a year on my birthday. I learned to create toys and games, rather than buy them.

I loved the local comprehensive school I attended. I dreaded though returning after holidays when we were asked to write an essay on what we had done. I had to really stretch the imagination. We could not afford to go away.

From age 12, I volunteered at the local hospital and the Red Cross. But given we had little money, I worked from the first moment I could. In holidays, I worked Monday to Friday in the bank, Friday nights and Saturdays in the supermarket. My workaholic approach to life had begun! At University, I worked 6–9am in a hotel cooking breakfasts, cleaning toilets and hotel rooms. I also worked two evenings a week. Every holiday from University I worked constantly.

These memories though make me reflect more on what I had, rather than what I didn’t. I did have parents who cared. Who set the bar very high. Who expected me to fulfil my potential and do my best. And that meant 100%! I became head girl, sports captain and editor of the school magazine. I was hungry for learning, achieving, becoming even better.
At University, as well as studying and working in the hotel, I was Chairman of the Student Industrial Society. I then got a glimpse into the world of business. I loved it. That was to be the start of my future career. I went onto join Accenture as a management consultant. Margaret Thatcher was then Prime Minister... showing me women could achieve anything.

These early years taught me many things. If you work hard enough at anything, you will get better at it. If you work really hard, you typically achieve more. If you expect ‘the best’ of yourself, then maybe you can get close to doing a great job. With aspiration and a belief in yourself, you are able to do anything.

So, in summary... it does not matter where you come from, how much money you have or what your background is. What matters is what you do with it and how you use what you have to make a difference in the world. And usually, the difficult and challenging times we face, make us better and stronger people.

I will always be thankful to my parents, who couldn’t give me money, but more importantly, believed in me, were hard working role models, who encouraged me to aspire and give every task my all, and who pushed me to be the best I can be.

I am still trying to achieve that!
Like so many of the New Intake, I grew up in the heady days of Thatcher’s Britain, although for me at least they mostly passed me by as I concentrated on football and keeping up with my homework.

Throughout the 1980s, much as today, the Labour Party continually told us how we must spend more money on this Government Department, and how we should increase spending on that particular project or benefit. Margaret Thatcher and the Conservatives, on the other hand, in addition to being supportive of the need to provide a safety net for the weakest and most disadvantaged in our Society, talked about helping the wealth creators and job providers and freeing enterprise to enable it to flourish. The Conservatives far better understood that this safety net could only be provided in the long term by a strong, vibrant and enterprising private sector that pays its taxes.

This seemed to me a dichotomy at the heart of British politics. Given that when they were next in Government, Labour left Office in 2010 (after 13 years in charge) with the largest budget deficit in the G20, this is a dichotomy that is very much pronounced still today. Some things have not changed since I grew up and went to school in Birkenhead and on the Wirral all those years ago, among these constants we include Labour’s addiction to high taxes, borrowing and debt.

Many of us were brought up in relatively strict but loving families and I knew my Father’s and Mother’s views and respected the fact that both worked hard and valued the fact that everyone in our Country has an opportunity to better themselves. My parents made sacrifices to give me and my brothers the best start in life they possible could and I doubt they, my late Grandparents, the
rest of my closest family and friends would have ever guessed I would today be a Conservative Member of Parliament.

My parents instilled in me another great Conservative and Methodist principle: the hard work ethic. I have always played and worked hard, whatever the arena – I see no point in being an ‘also ran’ or just shouting from the sidelines.

Whilst at school I worked in a variety of part-time roles including delivering papers in the morning and evening every day for over seven years. Whilst still at school, and subsequently, I have at times been a shelf-stacker, till boy and deli-counter assistant, dustman, glass collector & then a barman, a plasterer's labourer, made 2,000+ plastic coathangers a day, exhaust delivery driver on the M4 corridor, worked as a palletizer for Iceland (-25°C), and worked in a shop-fitter’s factory, in addition to many other part-time and full-time roles. may have become unfashionable lately to say so but, for me, and millions of people like me, the Conservative Party is the Party of and for Strivers. The Party that helps, protects and supports hard-working families. That is our raison d'être. It must always remain so.

Like many of my ‘new-intake’ colleagues, I all-too-often have to counter the generalisations I hear of Members of Parliament – and particularly Conservative MPs – that we do not and could not possibly understand how real people have to live. I know that it is a cliché, but for us Conservatives it is not where you have come from that is really important, but where you are going. That for me is the very essence of my Conservatism and the reason I have always been, and will always be, a traditional Conservative.
The Party of Opportunity II

RT HON PATRICK MCLOUGHLIN MP

I remember well the first time I decided I wanted to serve in politics. It was after a trip to the House of Commons with my local MP Patrick Cormack. When, on my return to Cannock, I told a friend of my plans, he replied, ‘well, I’d keep that secret if I were you’.

No doubt if I had told him which party I planned to represent, the response might have been even more negative. Yet whilst people are always surprised that an ex-miner is now a Conservative member of the Cabinet, the truth is the people I worked with at Littleton Colliery in the West Midlands were far more right-wing than I was, whether you were talking about immigration, tax or law and order. They just voted for Labour because they always had done.

But I didn’t. I’d seen how a Labour government had let people down in the second half of the 1970s. And I understood that the Conservative Party was a party for all types of people, brought together not by background or wealth but by a shared understanding of the power of freedom, the potential of people and the great things that can be achieved through effort, enterprise and ambition. In short, ours is a party that helps people, rather than holding them down.

I didn’t follow my friend’s advice and keep my views to myself either. I worked as a miner while serving as a Conservative on Cannock Chase District Council. I was proud to be a Conservative because I saw the way in which our party, under Margaret Thatcher was helping people who wanted to help themselves and achieve a better life for themselves and those around them.

That pride is still there when I look today at what the current government, led by David Cameron, has achieved. That is true whether we are talking about enabling teachers to deliver higher standards and better discipline in our schools, reforming our welfare system so that it pays to work, increasing the amount
people can earn before paying tax or – our central task – reducing the deficit and tackling the complete mess left behind by the last lot.

Those are all vital tasks that will help people across the country growing up in similar circumstances to those I knew as a young man. The Conservatives were the ones sticking up for me back then. And we are the ones sticking up for hardworking people across the country now.

Patrick McLoughlin is Secretary of State for Transport and Member of Parliament for Derbyshire Dales
The Party of Opportunity II

MARK MENZIES MP

Tory MPs from Scotland are a rare breed indeed.

However, I have always been convinced that it is the Conservative Party which supports ordinary hard-working people who want to make the best of their lives.

I grew up in Ardrossan, a small town on the Ayrshire coast where my mother raised me alone after my father died a month before I was born while serving in the Merchant Navy. To bring in the money to feed and clothe us, my mother worked shifts on the assembly line at the local ICI explosives factory. A large proportion of people who lived in Ardrossan at that time worked for ICI and the town would suffer a major blow when the factory finally closed its doors in the early 2000s.

My mother’s stoicism and grit during those difficult times when money was scarce gave me an important early understanding of the importance of self-reliance and managing budgets, something which has served me well throughout my life and has been especially important since coming to Parliament where I have sat on a number of finance bill committees.

My grandmother was another strong woman in my life and looked after me to allow my mother to do the shift work required to support us. While we may not have been well-off, my mother was determined my education would not suffer and I attended my local Catholic primary school, St Peter’s, which offered a very good standard of schooling.

However, it was when I received an assisted place at the Keil School, an independent boarding school on the banks of the Clyde in Dumbarton, I realised how the Conservatives supported those with ambition and the desire to succeed. Were it not for the hugely successful assisted places scheme brought in by the Tory
government of the day, I and thousands of others across the UK would not have had the opportunities we have had.

Growing up as a teenager, I was profoundly impressed by the strong leadership and clarity of vision offered by Margaret Thatcher, who herself had come from humble beginnings and made it seem like anything was possible.

After successful completing my school career I went on to Glasgow University where, alongside my studies in economic and social history, I was President of the Conservative Association. I graduated in 1994 with an honours degree and retain a strong interest in economics.

After leaving university, I spent much of my working life in the retail sector. I joined Marks & Spencer straight after graduation and have since worked in marketing for two of the biggest names in the UK supermarket sector.

But a career in politics had always been my main focus and I stood as a Conservative candidate for the safe Labour seat of Glasgow Govan in the 2001 general election, where I came fourth. In 2005, I stood in Selby in Yorkshire, a Labour marginal, and came in second, making substantial gains on the previous Conservative campaign.

In November 2008, I was selected as the Conservative candidate for Fylde and was elected at the 2010 general election where I gained 22,826 votes, 52.2 per cent of the total.

People always assume that those from less privileged backgrounds must support the Labour Party but I know many people who bought their council house under the Conservative scheme or, like me, have benefitted from an assisted place at a fee-paying school whose lives have been profoundly improved by Tory policies.

I am proud to be a Conservative in the current government which continues to support hardworking people across the country.

Mark Menzies is the Member of Parliament for Fylde
I was born and raised in Millbrook, a village in Cornwall. I was the youngest of three children and we lived in a Council House. My father met my mother when he moved down the River Tamar to the village where he worked for his Aunt and Uncle skippering one of their pleasure boats. My mother was of the generation that gave up work to raise her children and my father was the sole breadwinner in the family.

Despite limited income, my parents always tried to do their best for us. I always remember my mother and father giving up things like new clothes for themselves to make sure that we had the Christmas present that we had asked for. Even these presents bore no resemblance to the presents children expect today, all I ever expected from my parents was a single present.

Summer holidays were spent at the local beach of Tregonhawke in Whitsand Bay, my parents could not afford to take us away to exotic places abroad and yet I only remember very happy times, spent with loving and caring parents.

As a teenager, I was much luckier than many of my friends. Whilst my parents could not afford to buy me what would be termed today as ‘designer’ clothes, my sister who was much older than me was a trained seamstress and would often spend hours making me clothes so I kept up with the latest fashions.

I was quite academic and on leaving school I trained with an insurance company as an underwriter. Once I started work I remembered the work ethic that my father had installed into me. This has remained with me throughout my life and I know that you never achieve anything unless you work hard for it.

Like my brother and sister, I strived to buy a home of my own and worked hard to achieve this. I met and married a local fisherman and put a lot of effort into our business. Fishing is a business where you can earn a lot of money in
one month and then go for weeks during the winter months with your boat tied alongside the quay because of bad weather. We had some very lean times but still tried to make sure that our children did not go without.

I worked part time at the local GP Surgery when my children were growing up and also volunteered for the local Fishermen’s Association as their Secretary. This is where my interest in politics started. The fishermen clearly felt I was doing good work because they elected me as Chairman of the local Fish Producer’s Organisation which was responsible for allocating £28 million of fish quota. I represented the Industry at EU meetings and also in meetings with various Ministers. I decided to stand for the Local County and District Councils and was delighted when my home area voted for me to represent them.

When I decided to stand for Parliament, I gave up my fishing work because I knew that I would not have the time to do everything. It was a complete surprise when I was elected to be the MP for South East Cornwall.

I am proud to represent my home area in Westminster as the Member of Parliament. Having been raised in a loving home by parents who strived to give us so much with very limited income is reflective of many of my constituents. I have the firm foundations to ensure the majority of people of South East Cornwall are represented in Westminster by someone who understands their lives as well as caring about their interests.

Sheryll Murray is the Member of Parliament for South East Cornwall
At the time I was growing up in Swallownest, a small village between Rotherham and Sheffield in South Yorkshire, I never really considered myself as living in a working class or blue collar neighbourhood.

All I knew was the love of my family who instilled in me the values and instincts that I still have today. Swallownest was undoubtedly a working class area full of miners and steelworkers. My father worked in a rolling mill in one of the many Sheffield steelworks. It was hot, dangerous work. I recall the horror stories of men killed by red hot bars shooting out of the mill that they failed to catch and went through them.

From an early age I was told if I wanted to avoid working in a mill or going down the pit I had to work hard at school and pass my exams. So I did. I worked hard. I went to Sunday School and was taught about the Bible and I make no apology for saying I believe in God.

I was taught that if at first I failed I should persevere. So I did. When I failed to get the grades to go to University at 18 I joined a local firm of Solicitors as a Trainee Legal Executive and after ten years of studying in the evenings and at weekends I was a fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives, had a Law degree as an external from London University, passed my Solicitors Finals and became a Solicitor.

It is not surprising therefore that today I am a Conservative. I believe in self-reliance. That one should do all they can to look after themselves and their families. I believe in individual responsibility and the free market. I grew up surrounded by those who believed in socialism. It was patently obvious to me that socialism led to reliance on the state and the crushing of the individual’s free spirit.
I had to deploy the same level of determination and perseverance to get to the House of Commons, only being elected at the fourth attempt. I want others to have the same chances as I had and as I look at the opportunities available to young people today there is no reason at all for anyone not to be able to make a success of their life. There are endless courses and schemes available from central government, local government charities and the private sector.

All too often nowadays people expect success and a good life to be handed them on a plate.

The problem is not poverty among the working class, it is poverty of aspiration.
What does the Conservative Party offer a working class boy from Lancashire? Well, to paraphrase a famous 1992 election poster, they made him an MP. Along with many others of my background and generation, arguments about social mobility are not abstract topics for a think-tank pamphlet, they are integral to our life story. I wasn’t born to a political life in the Conservative party – I chose it.

For me, it was the basic human desire to get on in life and try and make a positive difference that led me both into politics, and to the Conservative Party. I have never understood those who caricature Tories as privileged upper-class people who only look after their own. That has never been true, and a party that only appealed to a minority of the rich would never have survived to become the oldest and most successful party of government in the world.

The problem with misleading impressions of the party is often a rather British reserve when it comes to talking about our life stories. Unlike in America and other countries, politicians here – particularly those of us on the centre-right- tend not to spend a great deal of time burnishing our class credentials. As the Prime Minister often says, we’re more interested in where people are going than where they came from. The fear is always that we will end up stuck in a version of the Monty Python sketch, vying with one another to out-do each other for hard-luck stories of our humble beginnings.

But perhaps we should occasionally take a moment to dwell on where we’ve come from, if only to dispel the myths that some of our opponents seek to perpetuate. Personally, I was born in Ashton-under-Lyne in Lancashire, grew up on one of the new post-war council estates until I was 10 – and then lived above...
the shop as my parents struck out on their own family-run business. Like so many others of my generation, I was the first in the family to pass the 11-Plus and get to a grammar school.

For better or worse, grammar schools are no longer there across much of the country to provide the ladder of opportunity they gave to me, although as it happens in my constituency two excellent state grammars remain. But it was that experience that helped form my views on society, and my political convictions. I saw kids like me given the chance to compete on equal terms with our more privileged peers, and to succeed on merit. Whether in education or in life in general, we should all learn that lesson.

As an inner-city councillor in Hackney for 17 years, and now as MP for Lancaster and Fleetwood, I couldn’t have been elected if I only appealed to the wealthy and privileged. Engaging with people from a variety of backgrounds – black and white, rich and poor and everything in between – isn’t just a nice thing to do, it’s my job. I began with a Conservative election slogan from the 1990s, and I’ll end with another. Used in John Major’s time, it sums up how Conservatives have always embraced those from humble backgrounds, and how we aspire to do the same for others. It is simply this: ‘Opportunity for all’.
I’m very proud of my working class roots. From a very young age I’ve always wanted to get on in life; I’ve always had a dream to strive for.

At school it wasn’t about being top of the class, or going on to university. I actually found school very hard and just felt I didn’t fit in. I learnt, later in life that was partly due to my dyslexia – something I knew nothing about until I was in the Army.

As a young lad at school I must have been seen as disruptive at best. But the Army took me, perhaps because like many who are dyslexic, I was quite good at sport.

The Army let me live my dream and encouraged everyone’s dreams and aspirations. Sadly I wasn’t a very good Guardsman and never got beyond the rank of Acting Lance Corporal, (today I’m the Honorary Colonel of 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Regiment, Army Cadet Force!) It’s true that at times I felt the Army wasn’t for me but I compensated for this by always taking any opportunities as they came along, driving courses, parachuting and anything that helped me get on.

Later I left and joined the Fire Service in Essex which is still, to this day, one of the most invigorating and exiting professions I’ve ever had (especially on call, driving a fire appliance on a blue light takes some beating.) But, even then I harboured a passion to be my own boss, to use more of the brain than the brawn, so on leaving the service I taught myself business skills and went to evening classes to learn about journalism.

I am indebted to my incredibly supportive wife Angie. She married me as a Fireman and to this day must regret telling me, after one of my numerous moaning sessions about politicians, ‘to shut up or do something about it’. Along with a lot of luck… this is what has got me to where I am today.
I still have dreams and ambitions about what I want to do in life, but today they are more about helping others to ensure they have the same chances that I have had. These opportunities are only there because of what my Grandparents fought for and a party that gives everyone a chance.

That’s why I’m a Conservative.

Mike Penning is the Minister of State for Policing, Criminal Justice and Victims, and Member of Parliament for Hemel Hempstead
RT HON JOHN REDWOOD MP

My grandfathers were both veterans of the First World War and working men. One was a carpenter. The other trained to shoe horses which turned out to be short lived career at a time of rapid technological change. He became a labourer working for the new electricity industry. Both lived in rented accommodation. They worked hard to provide for their families.

My mother went to a grammar school and into a clerical job. My father left school to become a local government clerk. They met during service in the navy in the Second World War. My father subsequently trained as a book keeper and moved up into accountant roles within a fruit growers co-operative. parents took two crucial steps that helped me. They bought their own home towards the end of the 1950s, from the Council house we lived in when I was young. That got me a place at a good local Council primary school. They put me in for a scholarship to a Direct Grant School in Canterbury where I managed to obtain a place.

My family lived the English dream of the 1950s and 1960s. My parents changed from living in a rented Council house with a coal fire, no central heating, no fridge and no TV, to living in a home of their own with central heating, fridge, TV and a car by the time I left for university. They gave me the love and support which are so important for any child.

From the Direct Grant School I gained a scholarship and full grant to go to Magdalen College Oxford University. I stayed on in Oxford to do a doctorate and won a fellowship by examination at All Souls College Oxford, where I completed my first main book.

I went into politics from Oxford. At 21 years old. I was adopted as a County Council candidate for the 1973 Oxfordshire County election. It was a difficult
marginal where I had to unseat a sitting independent. Three weeks on the
doorsteps gained me a tiny majority and a fascinating job at a young age. From
there I developed ideas about privatising UK industry, took them to Margaret
Thatcher. The rest of the story is better known from there.

John Redwood is the Member of Parliament for Wokingham
I was born in Bolton, Lancashire. My father was a colliery electrician at Agecroft and my mother an office worker from Salford, both in Manchester. They were Labour supporters, as was their wider family, and as were many of the people we lived near.

My parents’ first house cost them £250. When I was a little older we had a house backing onto a coal depot. I remember 1972 – the miners were on strike and picketing the depot, and I remember saying to my mother ‘It’s wrong that people should be allowed to forcibly prevent others from going to work’. In spite of constantly being told ‘Labour’s for the working class’ I saw such union activity as anti-working class, as it was preventing needy people from working.

At this time, I also remember looking towards my own future work and saying to my father that I felt it wrong that one person should be paid the same as another – surely, your pay should depend on your abilities and the you effort put into the job? Given that my parents worked so very hard – my father worked seven days a week for many years – I just couldn’t understand why they would disagree with my political pronouncements. My grandfather worked until he was 68 even though he was registered blind – what was Labour doing for these people?

It seemed to me that, far from helping people, Labour kept people down, kept them back. What could it offer me, a working class boy but someone with energy and determination to make something of his life? At the same time, we saw wider industrial unrest, and the events in Northern Ireland were at their worst. It seems to me that, not only was socialism holding people back (even though we had a supposed Conservative government in 1972), but there were challenges to the very institutions of the state – Union power and, terrorism were making
the country ungovernable. Freedom itself seemed at risk. Not only did I want a future for myself, but I wanted a future for my country. I believed in the United Kingdom, Parliament, the Monarchy, the church and the great institutions of our country, but all, it seemed, were under threat.

So I declared myself a Conservative. This didn’t go down well with my family or friends, or anyone else who knew about it, but the election to the Conservative Party leadership of Margaret Thatcher in 1975 cemented my decision. She was outstanding, she spoke such common sense and displayed such courage that it was obvious that she would turn the country round. It was going to be difficult, but she would do it. And, in 1981, after a particularly difficult budget, I joined the Conservative Party to support her.

In the meantime, I had started work for a transport company, doing the paperwork, sweeping the warehouse floor, loading wagons and driving a fork-lift truck. I moved on to the textiles industry, and later did a lot of charity work. All of this kept me in touch with those who were low-paid or in need, and I saw for myself how work and not welfare is the way forward.

I did something else in 1981 which changed the course of my life – I started to take an interest in horse racing. Both decisions have caused me much pain, but both have enriched my life beyond measure, and, as an MP, I hope I’m helping my country and my constituents.

Laurence Robertson is the Member of Parliament for Tewkesbury
I was not brought up in a political family and therefore, when I decided to join the Conservative Party at the age of fourteen, I had little idea that I would end up representing my home town of Romford in the House of Commons, some twenty one years later. I had grown up in a period when the day-to-day lives of my family and my neighbours had fallen hostage to an aggressive regime of powerful left-wing unions and socialist dogma, with strikes, disruption and violence subjecting our country to darkness and decline. It felt as if the state were controlling every aspect of our lives and we were without economic freedom.

In 1979, the country that I loved so much had come to breaking point. So naturally I searched for the party that wanted to put Britain back on the right track and I found this in Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative Party.

To me the Conservatives, then under the leadership of the late, great Maggie, represented the true workers’ party; a party which valued the individual irrespective of class or socio-economic status. The Conservatives believed – and continue to believe – that hard work should pay and that the state should never act as a barrier to individual self-fulfilment. It is clear to me that the Conservatives understood that big government and high taxation harm the labourers laying the foundations of our nations’ tallest buildings, as well as to those who own them and it was the Conservative Party that was dedicated to preserving all that is wonderful about our great nation. We are fortunate to hail from an island nation with a rich history and are – dare I say it – the envy of much of the world.

The Conservatives welcome patriots from across the land to join us in the fight against those who would see our country smothered in political correctness and shackled by the European Union. In my own constituency of Romford, you
find the British bull dog spirit in each of our towns’ people. We care about our national identity and are determined to preserve our nation’s heritage and culture. Be it flying the British flag proudly, singing ‘God Save the Queen’ or eating roast beef on a Sunday, patriotism and love of country is what unites us as a people and social cohesion depends upon it.

The Conservative Party is the party of Queen, Commonwealth and Nation and in today’s confused political times, we must strike out as the party that is truly dedicated to releasing the British Lion from its chains, so that it may once more roar for all the world to hear!

Andrew Rosindell is the Member of Parliament for Romford
Lee Scott was born in Stratford, East London on 6th April 1956. His mother Renne worked in the Lesley factory and his father Sydney was employed in a menswear shop.

Lee was educated at Clapton Jewish State school and then at Clark’s College in Ilford. He left school at 15 and went to work at Selfridges where he worked his way up to assistant buyer and gained a business degree while working for them. He went on to work for Toshiba, Panasonic and then Grinding.

Lee then became a fund raiser for the UJIA and worked for the charity for more than 20 years. He eventually rose to become campaign director. During this period he had the opportunity to work with George Bush Senior, Henry Kissinger, Madam Sadat and with many senior British politicians.

Employment restrictions meant that for much of his time with the charity Lee was constrained from being politically active himself. However, these where relaxed and in 1997 he stood as a Conservative candidate in a local government election in the Hainault ward of the London Borough of Redbridge.

Lee was returned as a councillor for Fairlop ward in 1998 and went on to serve as the Council cabinet member for regeneration and the community. He contested the Waveney (Suffolk) in the 2001 general election. Lee was elected as Member of Parliament for the Ilford North seat at the 2005 general election and was returned again in 2010. His current majority is 5,404.

Lee has lived in the area throughout his life and the family home is in the constituency he represents. He is married to Estelle and they have five children.
My background might be seen by many as not a ‘typical’ route into party politics. I got actively involved at the age of 41 and stood for my local Council. I felt passionately about a number of issues and felt that I should get involved. I wanted to try to achieve something rather than just sitting on the side-lines being critical. For me local government was an interesting and enlightening first step. I found that I enjoyed working with my fellow councillors and being able to help, directly and indirectly my ward’s residents.

I was asked if I might be interested in getting involved in national politics. After looking into the matter and finding out more information I decided that it was something I really did want to do. I considered that there was a meaningful contribution I could make on the wider political stage. There was the training to undertake but in the end the effort was well worth it. I have the great honour to be selected and elected to represent my home constituency.

These days the Conservative Party has moved on. We have adapted and expanded the ways for anyone with the skills and ambition to get active in the political scene. If you are interested I would urge you to make the effort and find out more.
When I’m asked why I – a comprehensive school educated son of two teachers, former kitchen and bathroom fitter – became a Conservative MP I usually quip: ‘I was too poor to be a socialist’.

But in truth it was more than my pretty ordinary upbringing that made me a Conservative, there was something in the ethos of the Tory party that chimed with me and made me want to be an MP from a relatively young age.

I never particularly enjoyed school, I found it quite boring and I was often itching to get out into the workplace. Yet, it was at school that I first recognised quite how Conservative policies were delivering for communities like mine. When the Tories introduced grant maintained state schools, of which mine was one, it really proved to me that Ronald Reagan’s mantra of small government delivering freedom to achieve the best outcomes, worked.

My state school was literally falling apart before this policy came in and yet when we returned to school for the autumn term after it achieve grant maintained status, you could see physical fabric improvement and pride in the school once again. From then to now, for me the Conservative Party is about helping people to achieve their own dreams, not telling them what they can achieve as has been the philosophy of past and current Labour frontbenches.

Looking back at my school days, seeing people I went to school with, who never bothered doing their homework or paying any attention, fail their exams and spend years living off the state, has shaped me enormously as an individual. Whilst I used to be up at 5am in the morning to do the papers in WH Smith’s before college, then whilst doing my degree getting up at 4am to sweep a factory
floor, the idea of working hard to achieve your own goals has been one I’ve always understood.

This work ethic, instilled in me from my parents, alongside a school full of militant teachers moaning at me every two minutes, told me that life rewards those who work hard and those who do work hard can achieve anything. On reflection, I realise now that this was what the Conservative conviction of Thatcher and Reagan was all about; governments empowering people. In his 1981 inaugural address, Reagan said ‘Government is not the solution to our problem; government is our problem’, it was this sense of realism that inspired me to become actively involved in politics later in life.

My sister and I both went to the same local comprehensive school and then onto University; I qualified as a Mechanical Engineer and she is now an orthopaedic surgeon. There were no silver spoons in our family, just a sense of optimism built on the principles of hard work, self discipline and ambition. So, when people do ask me why I became a Conservative MP, I can answer with all honesty that it’s because my very ordinary upbringing, in a close and supportive family, unknowingly moulded me this way. Fundamentally, I believe we need politicians from normal backgrounds to go out and stand up for others who often feel too afraid to stand up for themselves. I am a proud trade unionist and for many years I was member of Unite the Union, until I could no longer stay part of a union that – like Scargill before it – used its hard working members for its own political gain within the Labour Party. Like millions of my generation, I was brought up with no financial advantage or a family lineage typical of many Parliamentarians before me – both Labour and Conservative. Yet, I don’t feel disadvantaged by this; I had the same opportunities as most other people in Britain. Where I know I did have an advantage is that I joined a political party that is a broad church, welcoming people from all walks of life and promoting policies that back those who work hard and do the right thing to get on in life.

That’s why I am a Conservative.
I am the child of immigrants to the UK and was born in a small, terraced house in Smethwick, which was shared by not only my own family, but my uncle’s family too. Under modern classifications, at that time in my life, I would have probably been defined as homeless, as I used to share my bedroom with my sister and some of my cousins. I went from a state primary school and comprehensive school to a technical college in the centre of Birmingham before I went to University, which is not the usual route into the Palace of Westminster and the beginnings of a parliamentary career. I often tell family, friends and colleagues of the importance of education in my life.

In the 1970s, when I attended a state primary school in Northfield in South West Birmingham, I was largely ignored and, at first, put into remedial classes by my teachers who wrongly presumed that my competency with the English language was poor. However, one teacher, Mr Breedan, took a great interest in me; he not only encouraged but gave me confidence in my ability. More importantly, he noticed that I was receiving the wrong kind of education in response to my ability. After University, I ran my own business, and in that time, I was my own accountant, builder and occasional cleaner. I found that experiences like this, as well as being incredibly lonely, manage to keep you very grounded and humble. In hindsight, it is now very clear to me that without the intervention of this one teacher, I am sure that State Education would have failed me. I doubt whether I would have gone on to receive a University education, start a career in Business, and now, hold my position as an elected Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South West. As an MP, I am now in the privileged position to be able to affect the education that future pupils receive. I intend to make the most of
this position, and leave a positive legacy for future generations, so they can have the same opportunities I enjoyed.

The reason I became interested in politics was because I realised that politics matters. My family came to these shores because they wanted to live in a country that offered them refuge, opportunities and stability. I managed to escape poverty through my own ambition, drive and an element of good fortune. The reason I’m a Conservative is because I want to give that same ladder of social mobility, which Mr Breedan gave me, to any other shy child that may be sitting in a British classroom today. Inevitably, your Politics reflects your personal experience, and unlike many people who have read about poverty, I’ve actually experienced it and can assure anyone that unlike those who assume this on the left, there is no nobility in poverty. Government can’t do it all for you, but it can provide the platform and catalyst for anyone from any background to fulfil their dreams.

Paul Uppal is the Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South West
An only child, I was born in Cleethorpes and my first home was a rented terraced house in the Town’s Fuller Street. At the bottom of the street there was a footbridge over the railway and onto the beach; steam trains and sandy beaches, what bliss for a young lad.

My father worked for the same firm on Grimsby Docks throughout his working life, working up to a position in middle management, my mother a part-time shop assistant. Part-time so that she could always be there when I arrived home. When I was approaching my 5th birthday my parents were allocated a council house on a Grimsby estate. They thought they had won the pools, or lottery as we would probably say nowadays. I benefited from a secure home background. My parents instilled in me the importance of family, the benefits of religion – like many children of the 50s I went to Sunday School, self-sufficiency, pride in our country and a whole host of traditional values. ‘We’re working class Tories’ my father said, ‘Labour governments always run out of money.’ How true.

I attended Welholme Primary School, was a border-line case in the 11 plus. ‘just a mark or two below the threshold’ my parents were told. At that time both Grimsby and Cleethorpes had a grammar school but I wasn’t going to either. Havelock was a possibility I was told. In order to secure a place I would have to be interviewed by Mr Hill, the headmaster and if I impressed…

Along with my parents I duly attended Mr Hill’s study. To an 11 year old Mr Hill looked a stern fellow in his gown, mortarboard on the table and cane hanging on the back of the door. Despite my nerves I found favour. Havelock at that time was a bi-lateral school with both grammar and secondary modern streams and
also an ‘S’ stream for those, like me, who almost made it through the 11 plus. Importantly pupils could move between the grammar, ‘S’ and secondary streams.

It was during my time at Havelock that I began my interest in politics when I opted for Social Studies which meant studying the big issues of the day: Viet-Nam, Rhodesian UDI, the Middle East conflict and much more. We also studied Civics and I became fascinated by the process and structures of government.

It was as a part of this course that I made my first visit to a council meeting and during half-term, 31st October 1966 to be precise, I made it to Westminster and saw for myself the House of Commons in action. A visit was all it was to be, the thought of a working class lad from a Grimsby council estate entering parliament or even becoming a councillor would never have occurred to me though strangely just after being elected a councillor my mother gave me a picture of the Palace of Westminster with a sticker on the back saying ‘hope you make it one day.’

The possibility of going to university (I eventually graduated the day after my 54th birthday) was never considered but my parents were determined that I ‘stay-on’ rather than opt for leaving at 15 and after that extra year with a few ‘O’ level and CSE passes I started my first job – an office junior at a local print works. All went well and I moved into the estimating and costing section.

The company’s main factory was in Loughborough, and eventually production was transferred to HQ; I and around 200 others were made redundant.

I went on to work for two other local printers whilst continuing my studies at the local FE College. After eleven years in printing I moved into the retail sector and remained there until 1994.

I joined the Conservative Party between the two General Elections of 1974, campaigned for a No vote in the 1975 Euro referendum, became completely immersed in politics during the 1977 Grimsby by-election when all the big names were in Town, was elected a councillor at the fourth attempt in 1980.

After 17 years in retail I saw an opportunity to be paid for what I spent most of my spare time doing and applied to become the Agent in the neighbouring Gainsborough constituency. I was appointed and served until the election of 2010.

There is a road to Westminster from wherever you begin with the Party of Opportunity.

Martin Vickers is the Member of Parliament for Cleethorpes
I didn’t know I was working class until my arrival at Wanstead County High School in 1953, having passed the 11 plus. It was a culture shock. I was born and brought up in nearby Leytonstone – in private rented accommodation, (council tenants were the lucky ones), outside lavatory, no bathroom or running hot water. I sound like one of Monty Python’s 4 Yorkshiremen, but ‘by, we really did ‘ave it tough!”. But I didn’t know I was poor until I met middle class children for the first time at Wanstead. They came from a different world where people lived in houses and had cars, telephones and fridges. Their mothers didn’t have to work and I was ashamed that mine did. Neither had I ever heard the words poverty, benefit or entitlement. The people I knew were proud, independent and respectable. They knew that if they wanted something, the only way to get it was to work hard, save up and wait until they could afford it. Those principles are dyed in the wool with me and made me a Conservative.

I was exposed to political debate from the cradle although I didn’t recognise it as such. My father was old Labour, seething with resentment at anyone who had a better life than him. He assumed that they had either achieved it dishonestly or had it handed to them on a plate. My mother, conversely, had ambition and aspiration to make life better by her own efforts and I instinctively knew she was right. I believe that people are not responsible for their luck, good or bad, but they are responsible for how they play the hand they were dealt. Good manners, honesty, tolerance and personal responsibility are non-negotiable – that also makes me a Conservative, but I also love the wide spectrum of character traits, personalities, talents and skills that make us so different from one another. I
particularly enjoy eccentricity and admire the ability of the human spirit to endure setbacks in life and emerge stronger.

I recall the only career advice I received at Wanstead. The girls were gathered in the hall and told that there were only two respectable occupations for girls – teaching or nursing. ‘Teachers over there – nurses over there!’ As I wished to do neither I was a lost cause. This was reinforced by the Head teacher when I left. When I said I had a job in a bank (I was too embarrassed to explain that we could not afford for me to go to university) – there was a pregnant pause followed by ‘Oh, commerce!’

I also recall our English Literature teacher, when a girl said she didn’t understand something, saying that it didn’t matter as she was only a girl and would probably just get married. Neither was it deemed necessary for the girls to attend lessons on current affairs – that was the exclusive domain of the boys.

The traditional grammar style education I received at Wanstead was otherwise good, provided you could make rapid notes! Latin, which I hated at the time, has proved invaluable and the attitudes to girls are barely remembered.

Respect cannot be demanded or bought – it has to be earned. I learned not to tolerate condescension, pomposity, prejudice or discrimination, and that people treat you the way you allow them to treat you. Those values make me a Conservative.

My route to parliament was long. I took a career break to look after my three children for twelve years. Raising three children to be reasonably happy, well adjusted and productive adults is my most significant achievement. That makes me a Conservative.

I spent the next twelve years working in a Special School and I draw on those experiences constantly. There followed a career in local government, during which I completed my higher education. It also enabled me to observe Labour and Conservative administrations in action.

The Conservatives always had more respect for the taxpayer, sought best value and high standards in public services. It reinforced my Conservative principles. Later I took early retirement and stood for election, first as a councillor and then as a county councillor.

When I applied to be a parliamentary candidate, everyone thought I had left it too late. Undeterred, I progressed smoothly though the approval process and came out the other end without my age, background or gender ever being
mentioned. We really are not the Nasty Party. I was lucky enough to be selected at my first attempt and tackled the challenge of getting myself elected in the only way I know – work, work and then work some more. My working class credentials helped me to buck the trend in the 2001 election which, overall, was very bad for the Conservatives.

The experiences of economising on a very modest budget throughout my early years are invaluable in empathising with other people’s problems – that makes me a Conservative.

Most of my parliamentary career has been as a Whip, in opposition and as a lord commissioner in government. The Whips are first in, last out every day, so my working class habits were ideally suited to that role.

The job brings other immense privileges. Just working in the historic Palace of Westminster meeting special people like the Queen and the Royal Family, Pope Benedict, Heads of State and world leaders that would not otherwise have been possible and visited countries I would probably never have seen. A visit of UK women MPs to Iran to promote women’s rights, the UN in New York and the first visit by the UK parliament to South Africa stand out in my memory. Becoming a Dame was completely unexpected and all the more precious when I remember my starting point. We Conservatives and our values make great ambassadors for our country, whatever our origins.

Angela Watkinson is the Member of Parliament for Hornchurch and Upminster
My motivation for compiling this booklet was as a response to those who portray the Conservative Party as being elitist. Specifically I wanted to combat the false impression that is given about the background of Conservative Members of Parliament.

There are some who seek to portray the Conservative Parliamentary Party as only comprising people from comfortable backgrounds. That is not, and has never, been the case since I was first elected to Parliament in 1983. The Party is a very broad church attracting people from all walks of life.

So for those who use the narrative of a class-ridden society, and like to perpetuate the compartmentalisation of people into upper, middle and working class, this booklet contains a selection of colleagues with working class backgrounds. None of these colleagues would claim they were better than those from other backgrounds, rather believing that we are all equal, and that these days it is the Conservative Party who are the true representatives of working class people, and best able to give people a step up in life in order to make the most of their God-given talents.

David Amess
Member of Parliament for Southend West, compiler of the booklet