**Worle’s MPs from 1900 to present**

From 1900 until 1918 our village of Worle was part of **Wells Constituency** and therefore probably scarcely represented at all.

**Election Member Party**

1899 Robert Edmund Dickinson Conservative

1906 Thomas Ball Silcock Liberal

1910 George John Sandys Conservative

In 1918, following the end of the Great War [it only become WW1 when we had WW2] the constituency boundaries were revised and the **Weston-super-Mare constituency** was formed. The new area included Worle, and it has remained so to the present, 2022.

**Election Member[3] Party**

1918 Sir Gilbert Wills Conservative

1922 Lord Erskine[n 3] Conservative

1923 Frank Murrell Liberal

1924 Lord Erskine Conservative

1934 by-election Ian Orr-Ewing Conservative

1958 by-election David Webster Conservative

1969 by-election Jerry Wiggin Conservative

1997 Brian Cotter Liberal Democrat

2005 John Penrose Conservative

John Penrose was re-elected for our constituency in 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019

**Worle’s Men at Westminster**

In the year 1900 Worle was a small part of the constituency known as Wells. Women, of course, had no vote, and could not stand for election. During the first decade or so of the 20th century Worle was represented by three men, and has in fact, never had a female Member of Parliament.

In 1899 a by-election had been triggered in the constituency. The Conservative incumbent, **Joliffe Hylton**, found himself elevated to the House of Lords as 3rd Baron Hylton, on the death of his father, the 2nd Baron Hylton. The constituency of Wells, including Worle, found itself in need of a new M. P.

**Robert Edmund Dickinson, Conservative** **1899-1906**



Dickinson was returned unopposed, which is a very illuminating fact on its own. It seems unbelievable now, in the 21st century, that an opportunity to put up candidates for election was not grasped. But presumably the Liberal Party, which was the main opposition at the time, did not consider the seat worth contesting. The upshot was that Dickinson served as the MP for Wells constituency between **1899 and 1906**. He had a strong connection with the City of Bath and presented that city with The City Sword.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The Gazette carried a story about the new Member of Parliament in the edition dated 6th January, 1900, which begins as follows:

*“THE NEW MEMBER FOR THE WELLS DIVISION is certainly not allowing the grass to grow under his feet. In his dual capacity as Mayor of Bath and as a member of parliament, Mr Dickinson is finding his time very fully occupied….****On the following Saturday, Mr Dickinson attended the hunt breakfast given by Mr. A. E. Hardwick [the master of the Weston Harriers] at Worle*** *and was rushed for two or three speeches. The farmers have quickly discovered that their new member enjoys single blessedness, and they were therefore delighted when the toast of ‘the ladies’ was submitted to hear Mr. Dickinson’s name coupled therewith. However, the new member was equal to the occasion although one of his less cultural friends ventured to give him a bit of their mind on the wickedness of bachelorhood.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

The bonhomie displayed at this first meeting of the people of Worle with their new representative was soon overpowered by national politics and Robert Dickinson lost his seat in the Liberal landslide of December 1905.

**Thomas Ball Silcock, Liberal 1906-1910**



The 1906 General Election was a landmark one, in that it was the first time the Labour Party played a major role. There was a ‘landslide victory’ for the Liberal Party. In fact, it was closer than people realised: actual votes cast nationally were: Liberals 2.75 million; Conservatives 2.5 million. R.E. Dickinson was one of many conservatives who lost their seats.

Thomas Ball Silcock was elected for Wells and therefore represented the people of Worle. He was born in Bradford-on- Avon, Wiltshire to Thomas Ball Silcock and Amelia Milsom. His secondary education was at Bristol Grammar School and he was later awarded a BSc. at London University. He married Mary Frances Tarrant of Bath in 1881 and produced three sons and two daughters. Silcock worked as an architect and surveyor. Like Dickinson before him, he had strong connections with the city of Bath, serving as Mayor from 1900–01 and again from 1910–11. He was also a Justice of the Peace. A turbulent period in national politics resulted in his defeat by the Conservatives at the following General Election in January 1910. He did not stand for parliament again.

**George John Sandys, Conservative** **1910 to 1918**

A famous family name established a connection with Worle when George Sandys was elected to represent Wells constituency in the election that took place between 15th January and 10th February, 1910. The portrait was presented to the National Gallery by George Sandys in 1919. He is described as: **George John Sandys** (1875-1937), Soldier and politician.

Sandys was the son of James Sandys, of Slade House, Stroud and was educated at Clifton College and Pembroke College, Oxford. Commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the 5th Dragoon Guards, he served in the South African War from 1899 until 1901 with the Glamorgan Yeomanry, receiving a promotion to Lieutenant on 28th August 1901.

After the war he transferred to the 2nd Life Guards, but left the army in 1905. In 1914 he re-joined to serve in the British Expeditionary Force in the First World War, during which he was wounded. Sandys was a Member of Parliament for Wells from 1910 to 1918, so presumably he would have been away from Parliament and the constituency for the duration of World War 1. He later joined the diplomatic service, serving as an Honorary Attaché in the British Legation in Berne (1921-22) and Paris (1922-25).  He died in Antibes, France in 1937.

His son, Duncan Sandys, became a Member of Parliament and cabinet minister, and his granddaughter Laura Sandys, also a Conservative politician, was elected to represent South Thanet in 2010.

**Sir Gilbert Wills, Conservative 1918-1922**

Gilbert Alan Hamilton Wills, 1st Baron Dulverton (1880 – 1956), also known as Sir Gilbert Wills, 2nd Baronet of Northmoor & Manor Heath, was a British businessman and Conservative Member of Parliament from 1909 to 1929, including the newly formed Weston –super-Mare Constituency for the 4 years indicated.

Wills was the son of Sir Frederick Wills, 1st Baronet, and his wife Annie (née Hamilton). The Wills family were part owners of W. D. & H. O. Wills, tobacco importers and cigarette manufacturers, which later became part of Imperial Tobacco. Wills was President of the latter company and also served as a Member of Parliament for Taunton from 1912 to 1918 and for Weston-super-Mare from 1918 to 1922.[1] In the 1929 Dissolution Honours he was raised to the peerage as Baron Dulverton, of Batsford in the County of Gloucester.[2]

Lord Dulverton married Victoria May, daughter of Sir Edward Chichester, 9th Baronet, in 1914. He died in December 1956, aged 76, and was succeeded in his titles by his son Anthony.

**Lord Erskine, Conservative 1922-1923**

 **1924- 1934**

John Erskine was born on 12 April 1895 to Walter Erskine, 12th Earl of Mar and his wife Lady Violet Ashley Cooper(1868–1938). He was the elder of their two sons and had his education at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford University.

John Erskine married Lady Marjorie Hervey, the elder daughter of the 4th Marquess of Bristol, on 2 December 1919 and had four sons. On outbreak of the First World War, Erskine enlisted in the Scots Guards. By the end of the war he was a Major in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

With an interest in politics and an allegiance to the Conservative Party, Erskine was appointed Assistant Private Secretary to Viscount Long in 1920. At the 1922 general election, Erskine was elected as Conservative Member of Parliament for Weston-super-Mare. He lost his seat to a Liberal in the 1923 general election but easily regained it in 1924 and did not face a serious challenge there again.

William Joynson-Hicks, then a rapidly rising Conservative Minister, appointed Erskine as his Parliamentary Private Secretary in 1922, which gave him considerable interesting work to do. Joynson-Hicks was among the more controversial Ministers and had especial need to know that he had the support of Conservative backbenchers, and this Erskine was able to arrange.

After the 1931 general election, Erskine was named as an unpaid Assistant Government whip on 12 November 1931. This appointment effectively silenced Erskine in the Chamber of the House of Commons due to the tradition that Whips do not make speeches. Previously Erskine had been an effective and confident speaker who had taken a close interest in the affairs of India (although he admitted never to having visited it). He followed the 'Round Table Conferences' of the early 1930s closely.

In his later years, Erskine served as a member of Parliament for the two-member Brighton constituency. However Erskine's public support for native rule in India counted against him with Winston Churchill who had led the opposition to the Government of India Act 1935. Although hopeful of appointment to government office, Erskine was given nothing.

**Frank Murrell, Liberal 1923-1924**

Murrell was born in Tottenham, Middlesex, the son of Capt. Frederick Murrell JP of Barry. He was educated at Lewisham House, Weston-super-Mare. In 1906 he married Mary Gwendoline Howell.

Murrell was elected as a member of Barry Urban District Council and sat from 1908 to 1915.[6] He was selected to fight the Weston-super-Mare constituency at the 1922 general election. Although listed in contemporary records as a member of the Liberal faction led by H.H. Asquith, he preferred not to be associated with either of the two factions of the Liberal Party. He called himself an 'Independent Liberal' and stated he would work with either faction if in agreement with their policies.[7] He failed to win the seat at the 1922 general election.

The Liberals were reunited at the 1923 general election and Murrell again stood in Weston-super-Mare. He won the seat with a majority of 905 votes, defeating the Conservative MP, Lord Erskine.

In Parliament, he proposed and received a Second Reading on a bill giving to local joint industrial councils, compulsory powers of enforcement of their decisions. The bill did not pass. Subsequently, his industrial proposals were formally taken up by the Liberal Party in their industrial policy programme for the 1929 general election contained in the 'Yellow Book'.[8]

Murrell was heavily defeated at the 1924 general election, with Conservative candidate John Erskine having a majority of 5,092 votes over Murrell and a 4% swing towards the Conservative Party.

He did not stand for parliament again.

**Sir Ian Orr-Ewing M.P Conservative 1934-1958**

****

Sir Ian Leslie Orr-Ewing, who was born in Ayr on 4th June 1893 was one of a line of career politicians, all Conservatives.

• Orr-Ewing was elected to represent the constituency in 1934, following the death of the previous incumbent, Lord Erskine, and remained our MP until his death on 27th April, 1958.

• He was knighted in the Queen’s New Year honours list on January 1st 1953, whilst he was P.P.S to the Minister of Labour.

• Educated at Harrow and Oxford.

• Blinded in one eye in a childhood accident.

• Served with the Scots Guards and the Royal Scots Fusiliers

• Married Miss Helen Bridget Gibbs in 1917. There was one daughter of the marriage.

• Lived at The Old Rectory, Christon, Near Axbridge.

• Obituaries and reports of his death available in Local History Room at Weston Library and in Worle History Society records.

How does someone born in Ayr relate to the problems of seaside town in Somerset, I wonder, and particularly, how does he begin to understand a village like Worle? Well, Ayr is also a seaside town on the West Coast of Britain, so perhaps there was some hope.

A trawl through Hansard for 1953 only uncovered two mentions of Orr-Ewing contributing to a debate. Mostly he was paired with a Labour MP so that neither of them had to attend and vote. However, he did speak twice in 1953. The first time was on 30th January in a debate about the Sunday Observance Bill, to which he contributed 34 words as follows:

‘Is the hon. Member suggesting that Sunday political meetings, which are not organised by those on this side of the House, are commercial enterprises? Is not that a new conception of a political meeting?’

He voted against the bill. A full transcript is available online at:

http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1953/jan/30/sunday-observance-bill

The second time he was roused to speak in 1953 was in February on the 13th of the month during the Criminal Justice Amendment Bill, when again he voted NO. This time he said

‘Would my right hon. And learned Friend in any event be prepared to undertake to examine the methods which are now used to bring to the attention of those who occupy the bench in any capacity, the records of those who have passed through their hands after sentence? Secondly, would he also institute an enquiry to discover whether it would be advisable or not to give publicity to second and further offenders who come before the juvenile court?’

Once again, Orr-Ewing voted against the bill but on this second occasion, it does seem that he made a sensible, practical suggestion. Again the full transcript can be found at the link below.

http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1953/feb/13/criminal-justice-amendment-bill

It is disappointing to note, however, that our MP’s contribution to parliamentary debate for the year 1953 appears to have ground to a halt on the 13th February.

Outside of the debating chamber Orr-Ewing seems to have taken a great interest in the Central African Republic question and was obviously much respected by other MPs on this topic.

He was also referred to several times during the Monopolies and Restrictive Practices Commission Bill.

Earlier in his parliamentary career, when he was plain Mr. Orr-Ewing, he had a higher profile in Weston, and actually spoke at Conservative meetings in the New Inn in Worle High Street.

The people of Worle and the rest of the area obviously turned out to vote for him regularly down the years, even in 1945 when Labour swept to victory, he kept his seat. It would be interesting to know why people thought him a decent MP, but I suspect and fear that mostly, they knew little about him except his name, and simply voted for the party of their forebears. Farmers and market gardeners in Worle were dyed in the wool Conservative for the most part. It was a big constituency covering many outlying villages around Weston, where people were well-healed and often owned land.

1934 By election Majority 13,652

1935 Gen election Majority 19,852

1945 Majority 10,178

1950 Majority 13,473

1951 Majority 14,543

1955 Majority 11,082

Sir Ian died on 27th April, 1958. His obituaries in the Mercury and Bristol papers praise his record of public service. The Bristol Evening Post said, ‘his courtesy and natural friendliness and his able manner at public meetings endeared him to many.....’

**David Webster, Conservative 1958-1969**

David William Ernest Webster (20 October 1923 – 7 January 1969) was a British Conservative Party politician.

Born in Arbroath, Scotland, Webster was educated at Fettes College, Edinburgh and Downing College, Cambridge (MA History), and was a stockbroker before entering Parliament. He contested Bristol North East in 1955. He was elected as Member of Parliament (MP) for Weston-super-Mare in the 1958 by-election after the death of Sir Ian Leslie Orr-Ewing. He was returned at the three subsequent general elections.

Webster died suddenly at Westminster Hospital on 7th January 1969, after being taken ill following an Austrian ski holiday with his family. He had a fall while skiing but it was not clear if this was a contributory factor in his death.[1] He was 45 years old. The consequent by-election for his seat was won by the Conservative candidate, Jerry Wiggin.

**Jerry Wiggin, Conservative 1969- 1997**

Sir Alfred William Wiggin TD (24 February 1937 – 12 March 2015), known as Jerry Wiggin, was a British Conservative Party politician.

Born in Worcestershire, England, Jerry Wiggin was educated at Eton College, followed by Trinity College, Cambridge. He became a farmer in Clevelode in his native Worcestershire.

Parliamentary career

Wiggin contested Montgomeryshire in 1964 and 1966. He became Member of Parliament (MP) for Weston-super-Mare in the 1969 by-election after the death of David Webster. He defeated Tom King in the selection contest for this by-election. He served until he retired at the 1997 general election. Wiggin was a junior Armed Forces minister from 1981 to 1983 and defended the withdrawal of HMS Endurance from the South Atlantic which, according to The Times, was seen as the trigger for the 1982 Falklands war.[1]

In May 1995, Wiggin apologised to the House of Commons for having tabled amendments to a bill in Standing Committee in the name of fellow MP Sebastian Coe, but without Coe's knowledge or consent. The amendment – to safeguard gas supplies to caravan sites – benefited a lobbying group which employed Wiggin as a consultant. His behaviour which meant he avoided having to declare a financial interest upset MPs of both main parties and became known as the cash for amendments scandal.[1] William Rees-Mogg described Wiggin as "a shrewd politician — though perhaps closer to the intellectual tone of the rugby XV than of All Souls".[1]

He was knighted in the 1993 New Year’s Honours List.

**Brian Cotter, Liberal Democrat 1997-2005**

Born in London, the son of a doctor from Weston-super-Mare, he was educated at Saint Benedict's School, Ealing, and Downside School in Somerset, where at age sixteen; he ran a 4½ minute mile. Upon leaving school, he entered the British Army, serving two years National Service, spending time stationed in West Germany. He entered business after leaving the army. He studied Business Studies at a polytechnic in London, eventually running his own small manufacturing company, Plasticable Ltd in Alton, which is now run as a co-operative.

Formerly a Conservative, as he stated in Woking Liberal/SDP Alliance general election campaign newspaper The Voice in 1987, Brian Cotter was elected to Woking Borough Council in 1986, as a Liberal/SDP Alliance candidate, representing the Mount Hermon West ward. He retained this seat until standing down in 1990.

In 1997, he was the first Member of Parliament for Weston-super-Mare to not be from the Conservative Party since 1923. He had contested the same seat in 1992 without success. He was re-elected in 2001, but Cotter lost the seat to John Penrose of the Conservatives at the 2005 general election. Throughout his time in Parliament, he served as Small Business Spokesman for the Liberal Democrats.

In April 2006, it was announced that Cotter would be created a life peer to join the Liberal Democrat ranks in the House of Lords, and on 30 May he was created Baron Cotter, of Congresbury in the County of Somerset.[1] He delivered his maiden speech in the Lords on 29 June.[2]

He takes an interest in a number of areas, and on various issues as they arise. Specifically, before the coalition government was formed in 2010, he led for the Liberal Democrats on Small Business issues and vocational education; specifically apprenticeships. Within the coalition, he concentrated on business and vocational training issues.

Baron Cotter is a practising Roman Catholic. Cotter is a patron of domestic violence charity the ManKind Initiative.[3]

He married Eyleen Patricia Wade in February 1963. They have two sons and a daughter.

**John Penrose, Conservative, 2005 to present**



Penrose was born in Sudbury, Suffolk, on 22 June 1964. He was privately educated at Ipswich School and studied at Downing College, Cambridge, receiving a BA in Law in 1986. He received an MBA from Columbia Business School, New York in 1991.

He was a Bank Trading Floor Risk Manager at JPMorgan Chase from 1986 to 1990, then a management consultant at McKinsey & Company from 1992 to 1994. He was Commercial Director of the Academic Books Division at Thomson Publishing in Andover from 1995 to 1996, then Managing Director of Schools Book Publishing at Longman (Pearson plc), publishing school textbooks for the UK and parts of Africa. He was chairman of Logotron Ltd in Cambridge (also owned by Pearson). In 1998, he was in charge of research at the Bow Group - a UK-based independent think tank, promoting conservative opinion internationally.

Penrose unsuccessfully contested the seat of Ealing Southall in the 1997 general election, before unsuccessfully contesting the seat of Weston-super-Mare in 2001. He was elected in the same seat in the 2005 general election, defeating the Liberal Democrat Brian Cotter and he retained his seat in the 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019 general elections. He served on the Work and Pensions Committee from July 2005 to January 2009, and in 2006 was appointed joint chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Further Education and Lifelong Learning. In 2006 he was also appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary to Oliver Letwin MP and in 2009 was promoted to Shadow Minister for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

After his re-election in 2010 and the formation of the coalition government, Penrose served as the Minister for Tourism and Heritage from 2010 to 2012 during which he wrote and implemented the Government's Tourism Strategy,[6] removed licences on live entertainment[7] sold the Tote bookmaker[8] and protected the Lloyd's of London building with a 'Grade 1' listing.[9]

Penrose returned to the backbenches in 2012. He wrote a paper (We Deserve Better) on how to give people a better deal on their utilities.[10] Less than a year later the Prime Minister invited Penrose back to a Government role with a new position as Assistant Whip (HM Treasury), before he was promoted in February 2014 as one of the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury (Whip). In May 2015 he became Parliamentary Secretary for the Constitution, a role he held until July 2016.[11]

He was opposed to Brexit prior to the 2016 referendum.[12] Since the result was announced, Penrose supported the official position of his party as an advocate of leaving the European Union.[13][better source needed]

Penrose was a Minister of State in the Northern Ireland Office from November 2018 to July 2019.[14]

He was appointed the Prime Minister’s Anti-Corruption Champion in December 2017, and then reappointed in July 2019.[14]

He came under criticism for voting to change lobbying rules in order to defend his Conservative colleague Owen Paterson, who had been found to have "repeatedly used his privileged position to benefit two companies for whom he was a paid consultant". One of the companies that Paterson was paid to lobby for, Randox, was awarded contracts from the Department of Health and Social Care during the pandemic. Penrose defended the government's issuing of such contracts to Conservative donors, associates and inexperienced companies.[15] The High Court also ruled illegal the Prime Minister's appointment of Dido Harding, Penrose's wife, to Chair the National Institute for Health Protection, overseeing the Test and Trace initiative;[16] the scheme cost £37bn which was allocated to Serco and other private companies, before it failed in its primary objectives.[17]

In October 2020 he attracted media attention by suggesting that “chaotic parents” are to blame for sending their children to school hungry.[18]

Penrose resigned as the Anti-Corruption Champion on 6 June 2022, the same day as the vote of no confidence in Boris Johnson. He said he could not defend "a fundamental breach of the ministerial code." He also confirmed he would be voting against Johnson in the vote of no confidence[19]

Personal life

Penrose met Dido Harding (who was made Baroness Harding of Winscombe in 2014), only daughter of Lord Harding of Petherton, while both worked at McKinsey. The couple married in October 1995, and have two daughters. Penrose has his home in the Weston-super-Mare constituency and a flat in London.[20] Harding is the Chair of NHS Improvement,[21] former Chief Executive of TalkTalk Group.[22]

In 2016, Penrose, who lives in Winscombe, North Somerset, caused some local controversy over the design of a proposed swimming pool complex at his home. Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council formally objected to the 'ugly and massive' design on the grounds it would harm local views. The Daily Telegraph reported that this was noteworthy as Penrose had argued in 2013, in a previous ministerial role, for greater protection of historic views, suggesting some of the finest urban views in the country should be listed like buildings. Ultimately, the district council approved the planning application and accepted the argument that an originally planned grass roof was not possible.[23] In May 2020, Penrose joined the advisory board of the think tank 1828 which has campaigned to scrap the NHS and replace it with a health insurance based system.[

1. See Worle History Society’s file ‘Edwardian Worle’ for further detail. The photograph of Robert Dickinson is hanging at Bath city Town Hall. It is under glass, and screwed to the wall. Thanks to Richard Wyatt for this copy. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A copy of the entire article is available in the Edwardian Worle file under the heading **Mr. Hardwick’s Hunt Breakfast.** [↑](#footnote-ref-2)