

# Sir Jerry Wiggin

Right-wing Conservative MP who was dubbed 'Junket Jerry' and became involved in the 'cash for amendments' scandal

Elected for a fairly safe seat at the age of 32 and with his party in office for all but six of the next 28 years, Jerry Wiggin might have expected a glittering career. It did not quite happen. By the time he retired as MP for Weston-super-Mare he was a "senior" Conservative without ever having become a grandee. He had also become embroiled in a "cash for amendments" scandal in 1995.

Without any consultation, Wiggin put the name of a fellow Conservative MP, Sebastian Coe, the former Olympic champion, to an amendment to a bill — safeguarding gas supplies to caravan sites — on behalf of a lobbying group for which he was a paid consultant. Had he tabled it in his own name he would have had to declare his interest and the amendment would probably not have been carried. There was something naive about his defence — "that is always the way I have operated".

He was reprimanded and the Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, accepted his apology, but it did not appease his critics, some of whom demanded his resignation. More than 50 Labour MPs complained that he had been treated too leniently and called for an inquiry by

## He appeared to bear a grudge against Thatcher after she sacked him

the privileges committee. Even Conservatives were unimpressed: "Greedy tosser" was the view of Tory MPs, according to the whip Giles Brandreth. The affair hastened the creation of a more independent oversight of MPs' expenses.

Wiggin came from a family of achievers. His father, Colonel Sir William, was a successful businessman, who led the last British cavalry charge, against the Turks at Huj near Gaza in 1917. His grandfather had been a Lord Mayor of Birmingham in 1865 and an MP, first as a Liberal, then as a Conservative.

Alfred William Wiggin — he took the name "Jerry" from his grandfather — was born in Worcester in 1937. He was educated at Eton and Trinity



Wiggin facing the media at Heathrow in 1995 after a trip to South Africa when the 'cash for amendments' scandal broke

College, Cambridge. He left Trinity without taking a degree but enjoyed the sport and social life. At Eton he had been captain of shooting; he won a blue at Cambridge and in later life was chairman of the British Shooting Council. After Cambridge he was a substantial tenant farmer in Croome in his native Worcestershire and had a hill farm in Peebleshire. He dabbled in local Conservative politics and stood as the party's candidate in Montgomery in the 1964 and 1966 general elections, losing to the Liberals on both occasions, but he won Weston-super-Mare at a by-election in 1969, holding the seat until his retirement.

He sat on the right of the party — he was a member of the Monday Club — and was a supporter of Ian Smith in

Rhodesia, opposing sanctions against Rhodesia and South Africa; he regularly called for the restoration of capital punishment.

Wiggin was tall, physically imposing and something of a bon viveur. He enjoyed life in the Commons and had his own "set", usually high-living and right-wing Sir Tufton Buftons. Although he held strong opinions, he was not impressive when speaking in the Commons and senior figures in the party doubted his judgment. *Private Eye* called him "Junket Jerry" because of his frequent trips abroad: he was a member of the British-Chinese parliamentary group, the British-Swedish parliamentary group, the British-Turkish parliamentary group and the British-Paraguayan parliamentary group.

In 1981 he became under secretary at the Ministry of Defence, covering the armed forces; it was left to him to defend the withdrawal of the naval ice patrol ship *Endurance* from the South Atlantic, which is often seen as having been the trigger for the Argentine invasion of the Falklands in 1982.

His dismissal from the post a year later was memorably captured in Alan Clark's diaries. On the eve of a government reshuffle in June 1983, Wiggin apparently anticipated a promotion. His face lit up when Ian Gow, who was Margaret Thatcher's parliamentary private secretary, informed him that she wanted to see him at Number 10 the next morning, quickly followed by, "I'm afraid it's not good news [so] come to the back door".

Despite his pleading and invocation of his experience as a major in the Territorial Army, Mrs Thatcher was unmoved. She may have heard rumours that he was something of a "chancer" who had diverted an RAF helicopter to visit a girlfriend. He took his rejection badly, compounded by the recent divorce from his first wife, Rosemary Orr. He complained that in the space of a few months "I lost my wife, my job and my [parliamentary] pair".

He had three children from his first marriage. William, the Conservative MP for Leominster from 2001, was a year ahead of David Cameron at Eton and married a former girlfriend of the prime minister's. Thomas is an asset manager and Audrey an executive coach. Wiggin married for a second time in 1991 when Morella Bulmer — who had previously married into the family of the cider group — became his wife. It was a happy marriage.

After his sacking, he seemed to nourish a grudge against the prime minister. In 1989 he voted for the "wet" Sir Anthony Meyer when he made a token challenge for the leadership, an extraordinary step given Wiggin's political views. Indeed, he frequently rebelled in the Commons. In 1996 he defied the whips over the Firearms Bill, which tightened the use of guns after the massacre of children in Dunblane. His objection was that the proposed level of compensation for those affected by the banning of firearms was inadequate, adding, "I am deeply ashamed of my government".

He became chairman of the select committee on agriculture in 1987 during a stormy period for farming, which included growing concern over salmonella in eggs and mad-cow disease. He was knighted in 1993 and retired from parliament in 1997.

William Rees-Mogg, a former editor of *The Times*, described Wiggin as "a shrewd politician — though perhaps closer to the intellectual tone of the rugby XV than of All Souls".

**Sir Jerry Wiggin, Conservative politician, was born on February 24, 1937. He died on March 12, 2015, aged 78**

# Peter Lee

Clairvoyant who predicted Princess Diana's demise and solved the mystery of a kidnapped Nigerian minister

In 1984 Peter Lee was already a well-known clairvoyant with a roster of famous clients when he was called in to help thwart a bizarre kidnapping that became an international incident. Umaru Dikko, a former Nigerian transport minister who had fled his country after a military coup, was seized in the garden of his London house and bundled into a yellow van with blacked-out windows. His secretary contacted the police and a Scotland Yard alert was flashed to all ports and airports.

At the same time Lee was contacted by a client who was a friend of Dikko's and asked for his help. "As soon as I began to concentrate fully and tune in to the situation, I was inundated with huge amounts of electricity — a good sign that I was on the right path," Lee said. He found himself painfully reliving Dikko's ordeal, being seized, driven away and drugged, before homing in on an airport on the outskirts of London.

Letters came to him, spelling out Stansted. Lee told his client who informed Scotland Yard and an alert customs officer at Stansted became suspicious of two crates being loaded on to a Nigerian Airways Boeing 707. In one they found Dikko and an Israeli anaesthetist, who was to drug Dikko and



insert a tube to prevent him choking during the flight. Although Lee's involvement did not emerge until later he was adamant that he had saved Dikko's life, and they became friends. Lee predicted that the minister would eventually return to Nigeria, which he did, but without playing the important political role that Lee had foreseen.

The son of an engineer, Lee was born Peter Chambers in Highgate, north

London, in 1940. Early one morning, aged six, he was awoken by his paternal grandmother at the side of his bed. Since she lived 60 miles away he was surprised she was there. She had a silvery blue light around her which changed into gold. She said she had come to say goodbye, adding: "I died four hours ago." He ran downstairs to find his father with a telephone in his hand. A family friend had called to say that the boy's grandmother had died four hours earlier. "Somehow, at that young age", Lee said, "I knew my clairvoyance had come to stay".

He left school at 18, spent a couple of years studying history and philosophy in Germany, managed a restaurant and sold telephone answering machines. But he was persuaded to take up clairvoyance professionally and to adopt a more catchy surname. Lee was suggested by the popular singing partnership of Peters and Lee. He started from a flat in north London and newspaper articles and TV interviews soon helped to expand the practice.

Government and police called on his services. When Princess Michael of Kent was being pursued by the tabloid press over her private life, *The Daily Mirror* named Lee as her "secret psychic". He found the attention

unwelcome but he remained silent. Lee had form when it came to the royal family. The actress and singer Rustie Lee, no relation, hosted him as a guest on her live show in Leicester when somebody asked about Diana, Princess of Wales. Peter Lee answered that something bad was going to happen and the princess might not be with us very much longer. The audience's reaction was one of anger but Lee proved to be broadly right. About a year later the princess died.

In his 1986 autobiography, *The Spirit*

## He helped Bob Marley come to terms with his imminent death

*Calls*, he predicted that one of Prince Charles's sons would be the last reigning monarch and only for a very short time. A sudden tragedy would end the rule, followed by "a short and extremely tempestuous regency" under Prince Andrew. Britain would find itself "under a dramatically changed system of government: a republic of intense and possibly extreme political ideas" before settling into a more middle-of-the-road regime.

Other clients included Bob Marley, who came for readings after he was introduced by a friend. Lee realised the singer was close to death and helped his family to prepare for it. A perhaps unlikely client was Charlie Kray, the older brother of the Kray twins, Ronnie and Reggie. When they were given life sentences for murder, Charlie got ten years as an accessory, though he always denied involvement. Lee found him "a total gentleman" and predicted that he would achieve the release from prison of at least one of his brothers. Ronnie died in Broadmoor but Reggie, who had cancer, was released on compassionate grounds a few weeks before his death in 2000. Charlie would not be quite the reformed character Lee claimed. In 1997 he was given 12 years for conspiracy to smuggle cocaine. He died in prison.

Lee never doubted his psychic powers: "I am hardly ever wrong. I'm never wrong on important issues." A single gay man, he was a firm believer in the after-life. Although suffering from ill-health in his later years he continued working until he was no longer physically able.

**Peter Lee, clairvoyant, was born on September 18, 1940. He died on January 12, 2015, aged 74**