

## IAN LIDDIARD CLARKE

Mr Chancellor,

Although few may have met him, more will know of him, and many thousands of University employees owe a debt of gratitude to Mr Ian Clarke, who has tirelessly worked on our behalf for over 15 years.

Mr Clarke is currently Chairman of the Trustees Board of the Retirements Benefit Plan for Newcastle University. With his experienced hand at the tiller, the value of the plan has grown steadily during highly volatile financial times. Now, as a mere 40 year old, this gives me great comfort – but I can imagine that this information might be of more immediate relevance to one or two of the more senior guests assembled here tonight.

In the words of his colleagues, Ian has shown true altruism, bringing over 40 years of experience in the financial sector to University Council, the Audit and Nominations Committees and the Retirements Benefit Plan. His energy and attention to detail have undoubtedly been central to the success of the Pension Plan – and these are attributes that he has nurtured throughout his career.

After leaving Wimbledon College, Ian spent a mandatory two years in National Service. I understand this was mainly on the polo field which, rather inconveniently, was close the East German

border. Unfortunately his exploits at polo were rudely interrupted by regular forays close to the Iron Curtain for border patrols that were a necessary distraction for the 1st Royal Dragoon Guards.

It seems likely that his polo prowess led, indirectly, to a longstanding and intimate relationship with a famous old lady of the British establishment whom he met nearly ten years before his wife Jacquie. I am, of course, referring to the old lady residing on Threadneedle Street in the City of London.

Ian's 39 years with the Bank of England provided experience in many different disciplines, and he acquired a broad portfolio of skills along the way. He was involved in the investigation of prominent take-over and merger cases, including that involving the late Robert Maxwell, and he also delicately handled the complex issues surrounding potential cases of insider dealing. I wonder what he makes of recent events at the London Stock Exchange and Wall Street, and what advice he might give our current Chancellor, Mr Chancellor?

His work with the Bank took him to all four corners of the globe – including the Gambia – where he set up anti-fraud systems in, what one can easily appreciate, was a challenging environment. Given his experience in remote and hostile foreign climes, he was the obvious choice when the bank needed a new “agent” in unchartered territories.... I am, of course, talking about the cold, damp and dark

northern province in a peripheral corner of the Empire.... based here in Newcastle upon Tyne.

His work as a Bank “Agent” was not an easy. It required someone with credibility, experience, and patience to engage and collect intelligence from the initially suspicious business figures in the region. This information was then reported back to London, so that The Bank could analyse and interpret events influencing the local economy, and thus facilitate economic growth. Within a few years Ian became a respected ally of the “Geordie Tycoons”, gaining their confidence and trust, and offering sound advice during challenging times.

I am told that his actions were always carefully considered and precise. Now if anyone seeks proof of this key attribute, it is not necessary to take a peek at his bank statement. Rather, they should take a peek over his garden wall. Ian has a meticulously manicured front lawn. This is achieved using hand scissors around the edges. This is not a trivial menial task. Naturally, given his experience, Ian has opted for the “higher strategic visionary role”, providing advice and encouragement to his wife Jacquie who is charged with the responsibility of getting the job done. Unfortunately his influence does not extend to the weather, to which he attributes his occasional failure in the delphinium class at the Corbridge Gardening Society Annual Show.

Throughout his career, Ian has remained very much part of the British establishment. I was therefore extremely shocked and rather worried when I heard about his covert operations on Bank premises. I am afraid to say, Mr Chancellor, that he was involved in money laundering on a grand scale. How could this be? Had his regular contact with cut-throat businessmen infected his mind? Did his intimate knowledge of insider dealings corrupt his thoughts? And what could this mean for the security of the University pension fund?

I am pleased to reassure you that he laundered money in the quite literal sense. Vast quantities of money were removed from circulation and stored in the bank vaults on Grey Street. Ian personally supervised the actual washing and ironing of used banknotes, making them ready for re-distribution. One of his colleagues told me that the most difficult notes to clean were (and I quote) “those passed by Labradors”, but, providing the serial number was recognisable, Ian did a job that simply had to be done. Only when the notes became too tattered and torn did he personally supervise their incineration - an event that would have brought many of his business colleagues close to tears.

But his work for the Bank was not all directly about pounds, shillings and pence. To be effective Ian had to know his clients well, and this involved both formal and informal dinners. At the less formal dinners Ian introduced a new tradition. After the first course he would tap gently on his glass. This heralded the immediate circulation of male guests one place to the right. The sequence of

events was repeated throughout the evening until Ian found himself sat next to the most “entertaining” lady (purely by chance, I am sure). Now, I was tempted to re-introduce this tradition this evening, until it was pointed out that Mrs Clarke did not always have such a positive experience of the “random selection procedure”, often ending up next to a rather dull male companion. I must say, however, that on looking at their current table, I very much doubt she would be disappointed this evening.

Now, this same simple tap of the glass had quite different implications at male only dinners, where the guests were required to sing in turn as the evening progressed. Another reason for not continuing the tradition tonight, would you not agree Mr Chancellor?

I have only touched on but a few of Mr Clarke’s attributes this evening, all of which have served the University well. But we have not been the only beneficiaries. Since retirement he has served on the Board of Prudhoe and Northgate NHS Trust, and served the National Lottery Charity Board. Therefore, Mr Chancellor, for his dedication, vigour, industry and wisdom whilst serving our University on several key Committees, and for quietly keeping an eye on our retirement plans, I ask you to bestow upon him an Honorary Fellowship of Newcastle University.

**Citation by Professor Patrick Chinnery**