

LYMINGTON TIMES

Sat., Feb. 26th, 2000

MP AND WIFE DIE IN FIRE

Michael Colvin had represented Romsey and Waterside

MICHAEL COLVIN, the 67 year old Conservative M.P. for Romsey, who had previously represented the former Romsey and Waterside constituency, died with his wife, Nichola, when fire destroyed their Georgian home, Tangle House, north of Andover, on Thursday morning. Formal identification had not been possible at the time of going to press.



Michael Colvin



Nichola Colvin

More than 70 firemen with ten appliances tackled the blaze after being called out by a member of staff just before four o'clock, but the heat was so intense they were unable to enter the country house, which was still burning fiercely more than three hours later. After the flames were quenched it was still expected to be several hours before the gutted building could be entered, and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service expected to be at the scene for the remainder of the day.

Mr. Colvin had represented the Waterside area of New Forest District and Romsey from 1983 to 1997, before being elected to the new constituency of Romsey. He had first entered Parliament as MP for Bristol North West in 1979.

Educated at Eton and Sandhurst, after which he attended the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, he served with the Grenadier Guards from 1950 to 1957 in Berlin, the Suez campaign and in Cyprus. He joined J. Walter Thompson in 1958, working for them until 1963.

His first public service was as a councillor with Andover RDC from 1965-72, followed by his election in 1972 for two years with Test Valley Borough Council on which he was its first vice-chairman.

During his Parliamentary career he served on the Select Committees on Employment and Energy, and until very recently was a member of the Select Committee on Defence, of which he was vice-chairman, having been chairman from 1985 to 1997. He had also been PPS to a number of Ministers.

Mr. Colvin was a popular constituency member, and was licensee of the local pub, hence his interest in the brewing trade. He is survived by a son and two daughters.

New Forest East MP, Julian Lewis told the "A. & T.": "From the moment I first met Michael, which was 48 hours after I was selected to fight the new seat, he showed me immense kindness and

Colvins' tragic deaths

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gave me great encouragement. "I was inheriting from him the majority of his previous constituency and nothing was too much trouble for him in showing me the ropes. He always had great courtesy, charm and kindness. He always seemed to be cheerful and I never once saw him angry or upset. He was very patient and a perfect gentleman.

"In the tradition of so many Hampshire MPs, given the history of this area, he had a specialised interest in defence issues, and of course he served as the last Conservative chairman of the House of Commons Defence Select Committee, which is regarded as one of the most influential in Parliament."

Dr. Lewis went on: "It is hard to believe that only on Tuesday we were participating in the same debate on the Defence White Paper and he was joking about how, having previously succeeded him in part of his former constituency, I was now taking his place on the Defence Committee.

"He was joking about what an achievement it was for the Select Committee to embrace views from the right of the Conservative Party to the left of the Labour Party and yet still manage to reach agreement without having to take a vote. These remarks were typical of Michael's gentle touch.

"If, as it appears, he and Nichola have both died in this disastrous tragedy," concluded Dr. Lewis, "then two outstanding personalities have been lost, because she was universally acknowledged to be a formidable and greatly attractive figure.

"One can only offer the deepest sympathy to their children and the rest of the family in the sure knowledge that they will take the greatest pride in everything that Michael and Nichola did for the community with such unselfish dedication."