

Douglas Hurd – Memoirs. Little, Brown 2003

At a time when the currency of all politicians is rather debased and most of us feel that none of them is worth a second's interest, Douglas Hurd's memoirs serve as an eloquent reminder of the truth that all politicians are not the same and further more that behind the rhetoric and the equivocation there often lurks what used to be called 'a good egg'.

Douglas Hurd is unusual among modern politicians in that he had a life outside politics before he became an MP; first as a diplomat and civil servant, and as a writer, until the 'greasy pole' became the major part of his everyday life.

Through the Memoirs one encounters a disarmingly honest and self-deprecating man with a droll sense of humour, a fine writer and a person of great modesty. In spite of having lived a life that many would too quickly dismiss as being 'exalted', Eton, Oxbridge, the FO, parliament, high political office and ultimately a life peerage, Hurd emerges from his autobiography as a regular guy with a true sense of service to his country.

Personally I found this book at its most satisfying when reading about Hurd's family life with his first and second wives, his children, his parents, and his siblings. Whatever your political views may be, Douglas Hurd's memoirs provide fascinating insights into some of the key events of the second half of the twentieth century, with a number of which he was closely involved, and lovers of the genre will find this autobiography one of the finest examples around at present.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh