

Three Men and a Quote

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

Worthing Herald Article

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Jerome K Jerome wrote the popular novels *Three Men in a Boat* and *Three Men on the Bummel* (a.k.a. *Three Men on Wheels*): these titles inspired three south coast journalists to collect experiences from 150 years of local news and scandal. They claim rightly that their stories are revealing, funny and sad, but never dull.

Careers that ranged from the 1950s to the recession in 2009 included a great number of memorable events, involving the eccentricities of editors, the historic printers' strikes and the introduction of terrifying new newspaper technology. There is also the quotation: 'A good journalist, on retirement, has few friends: if the job has been done properly, just about all of them will have been upset at some time.'

I enjoy the Herald and Gazette newspapers. Each week there are articles I want to read and there are news reports I need to read. The notices, the advertisements and the contributions of columnists add to the knowledge of readers.

One benefit comes from the unexpected articles. The most recent edition included James Butler's report on the activity of David Russell who remembers the kindness shown by the homeless people when events led to him living on the streets. The Housing Association support worker helped him. Now he has a home and work. He has become a volunteer visiting those sleeping rough and he helps at the soup kitchen.

I appreciate the Behind the Headlines feature article on supporting young people through issues with mental health. It is good to read of the West Sussex County Council YES Youth Emotional Support teams who offer one-to-one and group sessions.

One half page that is necessary is one that might disappear one day. The Court reports tell of over-the-limit drink driving, of driving without the necessary licence or insurance. We also read of assaults and of thefts. Would it be too much to hope for a month when this offending did not happen?

Walking this week along the coast from Worthing to the Arun parishes and villages of Ferring, Kingston, East Preston and Rustington, I shared the expectation that the weather will become a favourable climate with gentle breezes.

One of the journalists contributing to *Three Men and a Quote* retold the time of the 1989 Great Storm. It is at times of chaos and disaster that the dedication and skills of professionals become clear. At other times we take for granted that every name and word is spelt correctly, that every article is balanced, that every interest, church and sport is covered – all with staffing that is possibly a tenth of thirty years ago.

It concerns me that government and big business now employ many more media professionals. It may appear that their instructions are to keep information, real news, out of the newspapers. The view I took when doing something potentially controversial as an MP was that I should state it publicly. One example was my visits to Israel and the West Bank, first with the Israelis before returning to many of the same places with the PLO.

Returning to our local newspaper, I commend the feature on fresh air and fun outside. Damian Hinds as Education Secretary encouraged exploration of the outdoors. Keeping children entertained during the summer break does not need to be expensive. Go for a walk. Play a sport. Build a den.

We holiday with our grandchildren. On Tuesday morning, most of them were racing in dinghies between the Isle of Wight and the south coast. If the weather had remained foul, they could read Jerome K Jerome?