

**John Charles Wilmot**  
**1st Baron of Selmeston**



When the Anglo Saxons ruled this area of East Sussex, those warriors who were loyal to the King and were closest to him were often given land and a title such as *earl*. After the Normans landed on these shores in 1066, they introduced the French feudal system that also had various titles, *baron* was one of them (from Latin *baro* ) meaning; man, servant, soldier, mercenary.

Between 1950 and 1964 Selmeston had their very own Baron, known as Lord Wilmot -1st Baron of Selmeston. (There are five titles in the peerage system, Duke-Marquess-Earl-Viscount-Baron). In the 20th century Britain introduced non-hereditary *life peers*, where all appointees have been at the rank of baron, and are addressed in Parliament as 'The Noble Lord' They are entitled to hold a coat of arms which also depicts a coronet above the shield.

John Charles Wilmot was born in Plumstead, London on the 2nd April 1893, the son of Charles Wilmot, an engraver.

After leaving Hither Green Central School in South London, John became a bank clerk, and attended evening classes at Chelsea Polytechnic and Kings College, London. On the 21st March 1918 he volunteered to serve with the Royal Naval Air Service, and was given the service number 52801. His records show that he was 5'10" tall with dark brown hair and blue eyes, and was posted to the *President II*, the official title of the accounting section at The Admiralty, not a surprise with his banking background.

On the 1st April 1918, the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) and Royal Flying Corps (RFC) were incorporated into a new flying service, The Royal Air Force (RAF).



John served with the RAF as an AC2, (Aircrafts-man 2nd Class) until March 1919, when he was discharged back into civilian life. He had joined the Labour Party pre-war, aged 16, and was also a member of the Fabian Society, becoming a founder member of the Lewisham Labour Party in 1919.

He married Elsa Slate in 1928, and after three failed attempts entered parliament as the Labour MP for Fulham East in 1933 until 1935. He was elected as an alderman of the London County Council in November 1937, and was re-elected as an MP for Lambeth (Kennington) in May 1939, serving throughout the war for this constituency.

In July 1945 under Prime Minister Clement Attlee he became the MP for Deptford in South London, until January 1950, and made a Privy Councillor, serving as the Minister of Aircraft Production 1945-1946, (introducing the new jets for the RAF) and Minister of Supply until 1947. He retired as an MP before the General Election of 1950 and was made the 1st Baron Wilmot of Selmeston in the New Years Honour List of King George VI. He retired from Parliament in 1950 and became Chairman of the woollen textile company Illingworth Morris and Co Ltd of Bradford,



Baron Wilmot died at St Georges Hospital London, on the 22nd July 1964 aged 71, and was cremated at Putney Vale Crematorium, London.



John Wilmot with Dr Edith Summerskill at the Labour Party Conference Margate May 1947



Not everyone was enthralled with the topics of the day at Margate in 1947 ie; Decolonisation of India and Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon and Jordan, and the creation of the State of Israel, along with Britain's withdrawal from Palestine, not to mention The National Health Service.

\*\*It is not known why he John chose Selmeston as part of his title, as it would seem he had no connection here. (check made with Houses of Parliament Library).

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from Lord Wilmot.

Dear Mr Black  
I am very happy to  
send you my autograph  
Yours sincerely  
Wilmot

1<sup>st</sup> May 1952