



The Story of

HORATIO BOTTOMLEY



By Mark Hurst

HORATIO BOTTOMLEY (1860–1933)

Researched, written, and photographed by Mark Hurst

Horatio Bottomley was one of those larger than life characters who litter the stage of history and especially, politics. Along with many other politicians, he forms part of a long line of “fallen stars” that includes Lord Lambton, John Stonehouse, John Profumo, Cecil Parkinson and more recently, David Mellor, Jonathan Aitken and Jeffrey Archer.

“H.B.”, as he was affectionately known by his peers, was a colourful and outstanding Edwardian personality, who had many connections in the local area, residing in Upper Dicker and making use of stabling facilities for his horse racing interests in Alfriston.

HORATIO



A SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY

Horatio is a new and entirely original musical play, based on the life of Horatio Bottomley. He was a colourful character who rose from very humble beginnings to become one of the richest men in England, only to lose it all.

Horatio, or Botty as his friends would call him, had an amazing gift for oratory and could talk his way out of any situation. He frequently represented himself in the many court cases held against him and it was only when the excesses of champagne and high living caught up with him that he failed to win over the entire court with his emotionally charged speeches.

Bottomley was a true extrovert; he loved wine, women and money and all of these featured prominently in his life. After getting the taste for gambling and debate as a young office clerk, he started a career in the newspaper business. He was soon to be the owner of a number of major newspapers and

the founder and editor of the John Bull Magazine, which was renowned for exposés and outrageous comments on all the leading figures of the day. John Bull's key phrase was "If John Bull says so then it is so". Bottomley needed more and more money to support his expensive habits so he moved on to running lotteries, and finally wheedled money out of everyone, including his best friends, by fair means or foul. He spent his money like water and had a fine country house in East Sussex, now St. Bede's School, and trained horses at stables in Alfriston.

BACKGROUND TO THE PRODUCTION



The Writer

Following the success of previous productions written for the Alfriston Players depicting the colourful history of the village, including *The Smuggler's Tale* and *The Legend of Lewinna*, I decided to embark on an even more ambitious project – a musical based on the life of Horatio Bottomley.

On various occasions I had heard intriguing stories about Horatio Bottomley and his connections with this area but no-one could give me a comprehensive picture of his life. I decided to research this for myself and after delving into the local history collection at Eastbourne I soon realized that there was a story which had to be told. Horatio was a larger than life character who pushed the boundaries till they could stretch no more. You either loved him or you hated him and he had all the traits of an oversized politician, together with the scandal and intrigue that went with it. There were many links to Alfriston, such as the stables at the Wingrove where he kept his race horses, and also with The Dicker, a fine country house which he built and which now houses St. Bede's School.

Although the initial script and lyrics were written about ten years ago a major element of the project was missing – the music! As a result the production sat in the bottom drawer of a filing cabinet, being pulled out and dangled in front of prospective composers whenever an opportunity arose but to no avail. It was only last year that I heard about Alex, an up and coming young composer with grandparents living in the village, who had already written one musical, currently touring Taiwan. The idea was resurrected yet again with a vague hope that he might be interested. To my amazement Alex seized upon the project with gusto and we sat down to rewrite the script and lyrics in the form that you see today. He also wrote some great music in keeping with the story and the period.

Mike O' Neil, founder member of the Alfriston Players, agreed to direct the production and soon became as absorbed as I was in making it happen. Together we assembled a cast, a chorus and a team of helpers to work on the costumes, scenery, lighting, research and publicity. Men were in short supply for the character roles but somehow we managed, persuading any man between the age of 14 to 80 to accept a part.

The Players were fortunate in obtaining grants from the Local Heritage Initiative, Wealden District Council and Alfriston Parish Council. The production machine went into action in May of this year and from then on it was all systems go. Thanks to all the help and support from so many people we have finally reached our goal and present you with – *Horatio! The Musical*. It is now for you to judge for yourselves whether it was worth all the hard work but the Alfriston Players have certainly enjoyed the challenge and hope you have as much fun watching as we have in performing. All that remains to say is: "Bottomley's Up".

CAROLINE ADCOCK



A New Musical
for Alfriston

HORATIO!

The Story of
Horatio Bottomley

Performed by

THE ALFRISTON PLAYERS
Music by **Alex Silverman**

October 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th

at **Alfriston War Memorial Hall**

PROGRAMME

Supported by:



ALFRISTON
Parish Council





Russ Drewry as Horatio



Stephen Rabagliati as Tommy Cox



Michelle Gibbins as Eliza



Richard Adcock as Henry Houston