

What the British Are Really Laughing About. The Cameron Dead Pig's Mouth Saga

By [Lawrence Richards](#)

Region: [Europe](#)

Global Research, September 23, 2015

[The Leveller](#) 21 September 2015

The rituals and secret-keeping of Britain's privately educated elites are a cornerstone of Conservative Party unity.

Whether or not it's true, the Internet has decided for the time being that British Prime Minister David Cameron probably put his private parts into the mouth of a dead pig when he was at Oxford. The allegations have been made by extremely well-connected Establishment figures, former Conservative Party Deputy Chairman Lord (Michael) Ashcroft, and former Sunday Times political editor Isabel Oakeshott, and the story is published in the Daily Mail, which makes this the highest possible tier of character assassination in British politics.

Ashcroft's goal is, according to the Mail, "revenge". In the years leading up to Cameron taking office in 2010, the [tax-dodging billionaire](#) had donated over £8 million to the Conservative Party, bailing them out of debt after their disastrous election defeat in 2005. He had worked as Treasurer and later Deputy Chairman of the party, helping to manage them back to an electable public image under Cameron. Yet Ashcroft had expected that he would be given high office in exchange for this, and Cameron didn't pay up when the time came. It now appears Ashcroft has spent the last five years compiling his new book, *Call Me Dave*, in which the pig story and other damning allegations about the Prime Minister are made.



Outsiders to the British cultural landscape are focusing on the central detail that a leader of a G8 country screwed a dead pig, because it's [hilarious](#). But the howling laughter of the British themselves goes deeper than just schadenfreude at a man doing something disgusting and getting caught – this is about class.

When Cameron was at Oxford, he was a member of several secret societies of rich young men. The most famous of these is the [Bullingdon Club](#), after which Yale's infamous Skull and Bones is fashioned. The aim of the Bullingdon Club is ostensibly to dress up fancy with the chaps, get blind drunk at an expensive restaurant or private dining room, and trash the place – because they can afford to pay for the damages without doing a day's work. Among their known initiation rites, they are said to have to burn a £50 bill in front of a homeless person.

And that leads to the other side of what the Bullingdon Club (and societies like it) is about: upper class right wing team-building. The friendships and alliances forged in the secret drinking societies of powerful rich kids go on to define their careers, and these young men all have access to the highest rungs of British society. Three [prominent members](#) of

Cameron's cabinet were members, whilst many others went on to run the banks that crashed the economy in 2008 and the media empires that protect them.

Burning money in front of a homeless person isn't just intended to be a nasty prank, it serves to train a Bullingdon boy's senses, to make other humans seem somehow less. That David Cameron and his allies George Osborne and Boris Johnson have all done this, and that they have all presided over a sharp spike in homelessness in London and throughout the UK, are not coincidental. The MP who provided Lord Ashcroft with the details of the pig story attended one meeting of the expensive club but left in disgust because 'it was all about despising poor people'.

And thus part of the reason why the British are so ready to believe Lord Ashcroft's story, aside from the fact that Ashcroft is a top-tier Establishment figure in a country with [absurdly plaintiff-friendly libel laws](#), is that Cameron's ideological training is already well understood by the public. There is nothing likable about such a background, particularly when the ruling class it produces is waging a war on the poor and disabled that would have made Thatcher blush.

So to then hear that the guy at the top of that pyramid was peer-pressured into putting his dick in a pig's mouth or risk not being included in a club of nasty, entitled people, it creates a much more satisfying reaction than mere laughter. A figure of terror becomes a figure of ridicule, a reversal like the boggarts in Harry Potter, who impersonate your worst nightmares until you can cast a spell on them that makes them look absurd.

The pig scandal that now has the world laughing at Cameron wasn't from the Bullingdon Club but the Piers Gaverston, less well-known (until this week), but with a reputation for bizarre sexual rituals and initiation rites. Where the Bullingdon boys built their fraternity around shared values of hating the poor, the Piers Gaverston was about sexual humiliation and the creation of shared secrets. Its structural function is as an agreement of mutually assured destruction between the rulers of tomorrow - I know your secret and you know mine, so let's stay on the same side, yeah?

This forms one of the core mechanics of the British ruling class - why reveal someone's dirty little secret when you can keep schtum about it and control them? This forms the basis of the [parliamentary whipping system](#), where the Chief Whip of each respective party is expected to have an arsenal of dirt locked away in their office so that when the time comes, their party leader can 'whip' rebellious backbenchers with threats that sometimes include leaking that story about you that you really don't want to be leaked.

In this elite culture not all corruption is financial. When it comes to the top of British politics, sound character and a clean record do not make you an asset. You'll have a hard time joining unless they can confirm that you are scum - and can make sure that the public don't know about it.

An interesting example of this is the role Margaret Thatcher played in the elevation of certain members of her government and its allies. Recent allegations in the growing [parliamentary child abuse](#) scandal arose that Thatcher "[turned a blind eye](#)" to pedophiles that she promoted, including the provision of knighthoods to known serial child abusers Jimmy Savile and Cyril Smith. Her own Home Secretary, the now deceased [Leon Brittan](#), is still being investigated.

In each case, Thatcher is now thought to have been warned by security services about the deviancy of these men, but is alleged to have studiously ignored it. When it comes to secret-keeping and elite power, it is not out of the question that in knowing they were child abusers, Thatcher would have had political leverage over these allies of hers, and so promoting them would have helped her strengthen her own power while in office.

The parliamentary child abuse scandal is horrifying enough on its own terms, but beyond that it has also further undermined public trust in Westminster, already increasingly despised for being out-of-touch and unaccountable after financial crises and [expenses scandals](#) turn in a unsatisfyingly low number of scalps for voters to collect.

Where this relates to Cameron's little mishap is that the public are already exhausted to the point of raw antipathy with the way Westminster power works, as a marketplace of secrets among unaccountable elites. Our politicians might be screwing children, but the ones who could help us to find out about it are [making sure that story is blocked](#). When that kind of behavior is the norm, the British public can't really be blamed for believing that their PM put his knob into a pig to join a secret society. This, too, is probably normal to these people.

Something grievously misunderstood by many members of the British ruling class is that they believe hatred of the 'Bullingdon boy' archetype comes from mere jealousy. The vast majority of the privately educated men who run the country [really think](#) that everyone wants to be more like them, and that therefore any criticism of elites comes first and foremost from envy.

This is in large part because one of the core beliefs instilled into the 7% of pupils who attend Britain's [divisive independent schools](#) is that of meritocracy. This despite the fact that not only can most people not afford to send their children to these fee-paying schools, the ones who do attend them end up getting an easy ladder up to high society. They make up a third of MPs, nearly half of all newspaper columnists, a majority of Lords, diplomats and senior civil servants, and over 70% of senior judges. It is common knowledge that the old boys' network looks after its own.

This doesn't stop them from [telling the public](#) that the system is fair. Alumnus of Eton and former Bullingdon boy Boris Johnson [said in a speech](#) to the Centre for Policy Studies that the people with the highest IQ have the best jobs because they're smart. Not only was this not even remotely true, Boris then '[failed](#)' a live IQ test on air, yet persisted in the notion that kids who go to independent schools do well because they're brilliant. He has served variously as a cabinet minister, Mayor of London, newspaper columnist, and magazine editor, enjoying each job with the support of powerful people with whom he went to school.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne (also of the Bullingdon Club), was criticized by charities representing poor and disabled people whose economic and household security was ruined by his reforms. He [dismissed them](#) as "anti-business" and gave tax breaks to millionaires (half of whom, incidentally, went to independent schools) in the name of "fairness".

And David Cameron himself often likes to talk about the supposed existence of meritocracy in the United Kingdom. He, too, went to Eton before joining the Bullingdon Club and the Piers Gaverston. He is one of the most vocal Conservatives when it comes to championing the [ideology of meritocracy](#), telling poor people and ethnic minorities that their lack of social climbing is because they lack "[aspiration](#)", and that 'free' markets (that is, unregulated

financial bonanzas, by his allegiances) “can make you a better person”.

Separate from what he says, however, his government has significantly [increased inequality](#) and decreased [social mobility](#), making it even harder for people outside of his privileged background to fulfill the meritocratic values he regularly trumpets.

The wound of that hypocrisy was already festering before Lord Ashcroft punished him this week for breaking the rules of the ritual: that you will obey the people who made you, or you will be humiliated. This wasn't, as some have said, young men being silly. Not if the secrets being kept are designed by powerful men to keep other powerful men under control. That kind of arrangement is the antithesis of democracy.

And it is also the antithesis to the meritocracy they proclaim. Not just because it's rich boys getting an easy ride to the top – we already knew that – but because David Cameron's nasty little scandal speaks to a suspicion many people already have: that in British society, you don't get to become Prime Minister because you're talented or because you work hard. You don't even get there just because you're rich. You get there by traumatizing the homeless and skull-fucking a dead pig, and that ritual gives you power because you have demonstrated utter, pathetic submission to your fellow oligarchs.

That is why we're laughing.

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