



**Majority:** 9,603 (17.9%) over Labour 8-way

**Description:** A redrawn seat, still based on Kent's county town; it was deprived in '83 of bits of the town itself and the North and East wards of the borough, to help make up Mid-Kent; in '95 the North and East wards were brought back in, plus the Weald to the Sussex border; but the council estate wedge to the southeast, including Shepway and Park Wood, has been removed for numerical equality; there is a strong Liberal presence in the town, but Tories are strong in the hop-growing and apple orchard area around;

**Position:** Shadow Home Secretary '99-; ex: Shadow Health Secretary '98-99; Minister of State: Home Office '95-97, Employment '94-95; Under

Secretary: Employment '93-94, Social Security '90-93; PPS, to Tristan Garel-Jones '90; on Select Committees: Standards and Privileges June-Nov '97, Social Services '88-90; Secretary, Conservative MPs' Horticulture Subcommittee '87-88; Runnymede District Councillor '76-78, Joint Secretary, Tory MPs' Disablement Income Group '76; Vice Chairman, Women and Families for Defence '82-??;

**Outlook:** Sharp-minded, forthright, hard-Right veteran who has dented her "reputation for being independent and intelligent" (Michael White, GUARDIAN) by her spectacular own-goals over on- the-spot fines for cannabis and imprisoning all asylum-seekers; "too off-the-wall to be a serious [Leadership] contender" (Ewan MacAskill, GUARDIAN); a "doughty fighter" who "moved into the national spotlight...when she was in the vanguard of the fight against easier abortion and more liberal laws on embryology research" (TIMES); by '98 "senior figures in the [Conservative] party [were] pressing for her elevation to William Hague's Shadow Cabinet" (SUNDAY TIMES); "an Opposition in which she [rose] like a rocket from total obscurity to leadership material in the space of about three minutes [was] an Opposition short of fireworks" (Matthew Parris, TIMES); "she may look like a death-watch beetle, but she is quite simply the best woman we've got; the hair, the teeth, the vast low-slung lop-sided bosom; she's certainly an oddity, but the integrity, the commitment, the ambition, make her quite special; she only says what she believes; you can't fault her" (former Tory Whip and Oxford contemporary Gyles Brandreth); her tabloid tag of 'Doris Karloff' - made her "the country's foremost victim of interview abuse" (Petronella Wyatt, DAILY TELEGRAPH); "Ms Widdecombe's debating style can only be described as operatic"; "she addresses the House like a superannuated diva singing 'Tosca' at a provincial Italian opera house; the purists in the stalls might wrinkle their noses, but the hoi polloi in the gods certainly get their money's worth"; "the animal energy of her performance sweeps all before it and hardbitten Labour MPs cower under the sheer weight of her decibels" (Max Davidson, DAILY TELEGRAPH); a black-and-whiter who sees things as absolutes; educated in a Catholic convent, was one of the prominent converts to Rome after opposing Anglican women priests; "the most extreme reactionary in her attitude to women generally" (a feminist political opponent); aggressively determined ("there has to be something in your life you've got to be prepared to go to the stake for"; "I distrust MPs without causes" (AW); "bone dry on economic issues" (INDEPENDENT); "a pale carbon copy of Mrs Thatcher" (SUNDAY TIMES); "combines Lady Porter's sensitivity with Edwina Currie's finesse" (Labour's Michael Meacher MP); a "dreadnought" (Quentin Letts, DAILY TELEGRAPH) who can irritate her supporters by patronising them, as well as her opponents by her "queue-jumping" tactics; pro: zero tolerance for cannabis, hanging, corporal punishment, animal welfare and nuclear defence; anti: homosexuality, abortion, blood sports and embryo experimentation (in SPUC

and LIFE); a quiet Eurosceptic; a Skinner-rivalling full-timer, an assiduous attender and voter; in '97 backed Lilley, then Clarke, avoiding Redwood on grounds of "his two-year adventure as an extensive and expensive trip in disloyalty" (Hywel Williams), having earlier helped destroy Michael Howard;

**History:** Her RN civil servant father was "very, very Conservative"; she decided at 14 she wanted to be a politician '61; her first political activity was at Oxford where she joined SPUC, and became Secretary of the Oxford Union '71, and its Treasurer '72; was personal assistant to Michael Ancram in the general elections Feb and Oct '74; was elected as Conservative Councillor for Runnymede District Council May '76; "when I went for a Sunderland seat in 1977, a woman on the [Tory] selection committee said, 'You're very small; do you think you are up to it?' I was 12 stone then, so not small really" ??? '77; spoke up for capital punishment at annual conference Oct '78; urged change in selection of Tory candidates because of growth of applications Feb '80; was co-founder of Women and Families for Defence with Lady Olga Maitland '82; contested Burnley losing by 6,000 votes (15%), but halving the Labour majority May '79; fought Plymouth Devonport where she came second to Dr David Owen, trailing by 5,000 votes (10%) - although she expected to win by 1,000 votes June '83; wrote pamphlet in "simple comprehensible English" to support Cruise and Trident Feb '84; was selected for the safe Tory stronghold of Maidstone, a seat which had turned down Margaret Thatcher twenty-five years earlier) Dec '85; won her seat as Maidstone's first woman MP, with a majority increased by 3,000 to 10,364 June '87; her Maiden in Defence debate, supported "an effective nuclear deterrent", especially Trident; opposed early negotiations on a reduction of battlefield nuclear weapons Oct '87; expressed hesitations about longer licensing hours Nov '87; supported anti-abortion motion Nov '87; supported David Alton's Bill lowering ceiling on abortion to 18 weeks although "I would draw the line below" it Jan '88; supported televising of Commons Feb '88; backed reintroduction of corporal punishment Mar '88; introduced Bill to give local authorities greater flexibility in issuing school bus passes Apr '88; urged more time for David Alton's abortion-curbing Bill May '88; she had the best voting record of any MP in the year up to July '88; coming 7th in ballot for Private Members' Bills, she introduced an abortion- curbing Bill Dec '88; Dennis Skinner staged a 3-hour filibuster, pretending to move the writ for the Richmond by-election, to prevent debate on her abortion-curbing Bill, forcing a change in rules on Private Members' Bill procedure Jan '89; her tactics with rival Private Members' Bills incensed some anti-abortion MPs , including Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman and Dale Campbell-Savours, because she had tried to use time for Private Members' motions for her Bill Jan '89; was physically ill after her abortion- curbing efforts failed Jan '89; unsuccessfully introduced Bill to abolish regional health authorities, losing by 91 votes to 88 Jan '89; co-sponsored Bill to abolish Net Book Agreement Feb '89; introduced Bill to force doctors to inform doctors in native countries of women who come to Britain for abortions Feb '89; introduced Bill to require health warnings where spectacles are sold without prescription Apr '89; supported more rigorous pursuit of litter louts, as in Singapore, where she lived as child June '89; claimed that a majority of MPs might support a 20-week ceiling on abortion; "we have a vast majority at 22" Oct '89; was ranked second most assiduous voter in '88-89 session, Nov '89; opposed war crimes trials for elderly Baltic immigrants Dec '89; was a rebel against forced repatriation of Vietnamese boat people Dec '89; backed Teresa Gorman's effort to abolish Rent Acts Jan '90; urged her colleagues to face down the ambulance drivers as they had the miners Jan '90; was accused by Procedure Committee Chairman Sir Peter Emery of having been "unfair" in trying to bulldoze through her abortion-curbing Bill by "cheating" Feb '90; opposed suspending John Browne MP for failing to declare his interests Mar '90; joined rebellion to prevent eviction of elderly from private homes because of shortfall of state contributions Mar '90; Labour MP Frank Field urged Mrs Thatcher to give her a Government job ??? '90; introduced amendment strengthening Bill on headgear for young riders, telling of her own fall from a horse Apr '90; despite her claims that MPs would vote for 20 or 22 week

abortion ceilings, most MPs opted for a 24-week ceiling on abortion Apr '90; HFC Bank was granted a judgement summons for £5,389.71 against her in Lambeth County Court May '90; introduced Bill on Injurious Affection, to enable constituents to receive quicker recompense for damage from Channel Tunnel links June '90; in the wake of the Tories losing Ian Gow's former Eastbourne seat to the LibDems, she said: the IRA would be "toasting their success; if blame has to be put anywhere, it is on every single elector who didn't vote Conservative" Oct '90; was named PPS - for a fortnight - to Tristan Garel-Jones Nov '90; in controversy over Tory leadership, made clear her anger at moves to dislodge Mrs Thatcher; refused to dine with "traitors" to Thatcher - Edwina Currie and Emma Nicholson; when Mrs Thatcher stepped down, she backed Douglas Hurd Nov '90; was promoted Under Secretary for Social Security by incoming Prime Minister John Major (allegedly as part of a deal with Thatcherite Rightwingers) Nov '90; was accused of "ignorance" by her colleagues when she claimed that if employers gave employees money to buy cars it would not increase purchases of foreign cars May '91; a petition for bankruptcy was filed against her by HFC Bank, which was settled out of court Mar '91; insisted there was "no reason why a person on social security should not be able to afford a normal healthy diet" May '91; dismissed a report that families on low incomes regularly go hungry, saying "it gives me cause to believe that we do in fact supply enough", but that it was badly spent June '91; was re- elected with 16,286 majority Apr '92; after leaving the Church of England, started worshipping at Westminster Cathedral, without taking communion there Nov '92; wrote an open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, ridiculing him and his fellow bishops for having sold out and encouraged Anglican church's "terminal decline" Jan '93; after wrestling with her conscience for four months, decided to join the Roman Catholic church, after a private interview with Cardinal Hume Mar '93; miscalculated the reaction to the proposal to add VAT to fuel costs, finding herself the target of a public furore; "why is it special?" she asked on Radio 4's Today programme; "I don't think something has happened which is so out of the ordinary..." just before the Cabinet retreated Mar '93; amidst massive, self-generated publicity, became the first person since the Reformation to be received into the Catholic Church in the Crypt of the House of Commons, sponsored by RCs David Alton and John Patten Apr '93; visited China for UN women's conference July-Aug '93; disclosed that she had not owned a TV set for 19 years: "I refuse to pay the BBC to broadcast scenes of violence, bad language and political bias" Sep '93; having explained she was not against women deacons, was one of 21 who voted against ordination of women priests Oct '93; visited Morocco to secure release of an imprisoned constituent '93; voted against reducing age of homosexual consent from 21, Feb '94; announced that the hours which the unemployed could study and still be eligible for benefit would be cut from 21 to 16, Feb '94; voted to restore capital punishment, especially for killers of policemen Feb '94; blamed chairmen of Training and Enterprise Councils for not providing guaranteed places for young people within eight weeks Apr '94; was accused by Bishop of Durham of fleeing "from the reality about the command to love your neighbour in so many practical, down-to-earth ways" for backing VAT on fuel Apr '94; conducted a high-profile campaign against ageism in employment Nov '94; repeated her belief, "I'm pro-hanging because I believe the death penalty was a deterrent; capital punishment saves lives" Jan '95; supported Bill to ban fox-hunting, stag-hunting and hare-coursing Mar '95; was promoted Minister of State at the Home Office (Prisons Minister) in the reshuffle replacing Michael Forsyth as No 2 alongside David Maclean July '95; met Derek Lewis, Director General of the Prison Service, in a backstreet Blackpool hotel to discuss his defence against the Home Secretary's charges about blame for prison breakouts, only to be spotted by Howard's lieutenants; she wept when he was sacked the next week Oct '95; in a leaked hand-written note, she ordered the acting head of the Prison Service, Richard Tilt, to doctor his Parliamentary reply to Labour MP Janet Anderson about escapes from Parkhurst jail because "it conveys the impression that the only issue was funding", blowing wide open the Government's pretence about the "independence" of the

Prison Service Nov '95; in her aggressive defence of the Asylum and Immigration Bill, accused Labour of being "cynical" and "embarrassed by their appalling record" on asylum Dec '95; insisted that the Saudi dissident, Mohammed al-Mas'ari could not be allowed to endanger British exports to Saudi Arabia Jan '96; after first trying to defend it, finally apologised to the Commons for having kept pregnant female prisoners in shackles when visiting Whittington Hospital from Holloway Prison including one in the early stages of labour Jan '96; predicted a cutback in prison education Jan '96; joined with four Cabinet Ministers and 165 backbenchers in defeating the Conservative Government on its divorce reforms by backing an amendment to extend the "cooling-off" period from a year to 18 months Apr '96; was first mentioned as a possible for promotion to Cabinet Apr '96; became angry when she decided Michael Howard's office was partially leaking his out-of-court settlement with Derek Lewis, worth £261,000, including a £59,000 performance bonus, which was left out May '96; voted for a 3% cap on MPs' pay rises, and for a cut in their mileage allowances and against a pension based on £43,000 July '96; she signed a contract to computerise the civil service system for sorting out genuine refugees from economic migrants, and proceeded to cut the number of officials needed '96; made a controversial statement about hunger-striking asylum-seekers at Rochester Prison Jan '97; "on every third doorstep in the election I was greeted with talk of sleaze and corruption" (AW); retained her altered and renamed Maidstone and The Weald seat by a halved majority of 9,603, on a notional pro-Labour swing of 12.9% May '97; backed Peter Lilley for the Tory Leadership; attacked her former boss, Leader-aspirant Michael Howard, for misleading the Commons over the '95 sacking of Derek Lewis, saying Howard had "something of the night" about him, accusing him of "instant law and instant dismissals", effectively ending his Leadership aspirations May '97; was named to the Select Committee on Standards and Privileges June '97; in her first of three right hooks to Tony Blair's chin, asked him whether he felt "the slightest tinge of embarrassment that the latest person to donate £1m to the Labour Party [Robert Earl] comes from a [hamburger] company that pays its workers just £2.98 an hour?" Nov '97; again spoke strongly against fox-hunting: "I am not against killing foxes or culling deer; what I am against is the chase; it is the cruelty involved in prolonging the terror of a living, sentient being which is running for its life" Nov '97; resigned from the Select Committee on Standards and Privileges Nov '97; told the Commons that, although she suspected Neil Hamilton had taken cash in paper envelopes from al-Fayed, "I do not believe I can make a judgment as to whether he was innocent or guilty on the basis of the procedures that were adopted"; "we ended by reducing justice to the decision of a single inquisitor, against which there was no effective appeal" Dec '97; cited her use of a private GP as an example of reducing the burden on the overloaded NHS Jan '98; said, "last year is the great mystery of all time to me; I started out as everybody's bete noire and I ended the year as everybody's darling" Jan '98; when The TIMES published an Oxford photograph of her as a pretty young undergraduate, she forced an apology Mar '98; attacked Body Shop's Anne Roddick as "irresponsible" for distributing hemp seeds Mar '98; accused bishops of silence while religious freedom was under threat, since an atheist could be named the head of a church school Mar '98; there were misleading hints of reconciliation between her and Michael Howard, as Tory colleagues pressed for her inclusion in the Shadow Cabinet, and he said "I have gone out of my way to praise her"; she commented, "I was reaching for the sick bag" Mar '98; attacked Baroness Warnock as "putting A-levels before human life" for disclosing she had as an Oxford headmistress encouraged sixth formers to have abortions Mar '98; attacked Bishop David Sheppard for joining Labour in the Lords when the Government had "kicked Christianity out of the Millennium Dome" Apr '98; co-signed anti-abortion motion Apr '98; urged retention of the TA May '98; wrote MAIL ON SUNDAY article attacking "sodomy at 16" May '98; was restored to frontbench as Shadow Health Secretary June '98; said as Health Secretary she would never license an abortion clinic June '98; was bitterly

critical of £20,000 damages awarded to female Holloway prisoner whose shackling before childbirth she had defended as Prisons Minister June '98; in NHS debate dismissed Labour as "a fiddling, cheating, dissembling, spin-doctoring, bullying, arrogant Government" July '98; claimed Labour was packing NHS trust boards with cronies July '98; DAILY TELEGRAPH Gallup Poll found her the best-known Tory frontbencher Oct '98; at party conference she said she wanted to break down the Berlin Wall between the public and private health sectors and hinted at tax breaks for private health care Oct '98; opposed Road Traffic (NHS Charges) Bill Dec '98; claimed "overwhelming success" for Tory care in the community for mentally ill Dec '98; Cardinal Hume denied her published claim that he regarded the Archbishop of Canterbury with contempt Jan '99; accused Labour of NHS rationing Jan '99; she was reportedly at odds with her deputy Alan Duncan over his interest in alternative medicine Mar '99; challenged Health Minister John Denham on NHS rationing Mar '99; reasserted Tory commitment to private investment in health in contradiction of Peter Lilley's unexpected remarks on the limit of the free market and commitment to a state-run NHS Apr '99; following exposure of list of Labour's business donors she said "New Labour equals new favours for new donations" May '99; linked sex education and easier access to contraception to high teenage pregnancy rate May '99; GUARDIAN-ICM poll showed Tory support would drop to 21% with her as Leader May '99; attacked Labour for increasing junior doctors' hours, not paying increases to nurses and consultants and damaging NHS morale, and accused Health Secretary Frank Dobson of being afraid to look her in the eye May '98; was promoted to Shadow Home Secretary June '99; attacked Government over Passport Office delays June '99; her deputy, David Lidington, led for the Tories in the fox-hunting debate because of her opposition July '99; defended frontbench colleague John Greenway for describing muggers as "coloured boys", saying "too much political correctness destroys rather than promotes good race relations" July '99; was listed as one of 11 frontbenchers in CAFE (Conservatives Against a Federal Europe) Aug '99; declared her support for on-the-spot fines for cannabis possession Aug '99; accused Labour of making NATO Secretary General-elect a peer so as to manipulate the date of the Hamilton South byelection Aug '99; claimed Labour had turned Britain into a "soft touch" for asylum seekers Aug '99; blamed pro-Labour proprietor Lord Hollick for her sacking from her lucrative DAILY EXPRESS column Aug '99; queried cover-up and non-prosecution in Melita Norwood spy case Sep '99; accepted Labour's minimum wage "if it is working" Oct '99; barnstormed the Party Conference with a virtuoso, arm-waving, walk-about, noteless speech advocating the right of home-owners to repel burglars with force Oct '99; accused Home Secretary Jack Straw of being "sucked into the Labour lie machine" on police numbers Oct '99; sought tougher sentences for youths convicted of assault, vandalism and car theft Nov '99; opposed curbs on jury trials Nov '99; attacked Labour for falling police numbers, rising crime, jury trial curbs and a timid Freedom of Information Bill Nov '99; claimed Labour had "packed more sleaze into two years than we managed in 18" Dec '99; attacked Home Secretary Straw for "the fiasco" of passport office delays Dec '99; again opposed Labour's Freedom of Information Bill as "encouraging greater secrecy" Dec '99; accused Government of playing politics over the Pinochet extradition Jan '00; attacked Government over 130% rise in asylum applications and the fears of local authorities involved in the asylum-seekers dispersal scheme Feb '00; sacked Tory frontbencher John Maples warned, "we cannot win the election through private health insurance and being tough on asylum-seekers" Feb '00; she was interrupted by Tory MPs John Bercow and Alan Duncan for her opposition to lowering the age of consent for homosexual sex, because it could "lead to a lifestyle that would separate young men from the mainstream life of marriage and family" and because they needed "protection from older men" Feb '00; said Kent Council tax rises were due to coping with asylum seekers Feb '00; pledged the Tories would reintroduce the primary purpose rule barring immigration to marry to obtain citizenship Feb '00; Steve Norris described this as "immoral", disgusting" and "disgraceful"

Mar '00; she clashed with Jack Straw over police numbers Mar '00; she clashed with London's Tory mayoralty candidate Steve Norris's call on the police "not to prosecute those who use cannabis for medicinal purposes"; she replied: "you cannot expect the police to go round making the law; that's Parliament's job" Mar '00; complained about Home Secretary Straw's "muddle, contradiction and delay" on Gen Pinochet's being sent back to Chile Mar '00; backed Government policy of zero tolerance of organised London begging Mar '00; she criticised, as a "most unwarrantable interference" the European Court of Human Rights' decision to curb the sentences of James Bulger's killers Mar '00; was said to be one of Shadow Cabinet worried about Michael Portillo's moderating U-turns on the economy Mar '00; she met Charles Murray, controversial American social scientist whose book *The Bell Curve* attacked the emergence of a "new rabble" Apr '00; she was hit full in the face by a custard pie by an anti-racist in an Oxford bookstore promotion of her novel Apr '00; she proposed the end of the law against double jeopardy Apr '00; she attacked Home Secretary Straw for allowing Britain to become a "soft touch" by allowing "unbelievable and unprecedented levels" of asylum-seekers to remain in the country despite being refused permission Apr '00; she asked Jack Straw if "bogus" was racist as applied to immigrants Apr '00; she again said that householders should not be prosecuted if they attacked or wounded burglars Apr '00; she complained the police moved in too slowly to quash the May Day riots May '00; she promised Tories would compel prisoners to serve the full term meted out to them May '00; she proposed tougher prison sentences for paedophiles May '00; Lord (Douglas) Hurd criticised tougher Tory crime policies as making prisons into "wastepaper baskets" May '00; she asked Home Secretary Jack Straw why "crime is rising for the first time in six years" June '00; she urged that every school should have a police cadet force June '00; when hunting was again discussed, her deputy, David Lidington, again handled it June '00; criticised Jack Straw for rushing through anti-football-hooligan laws belatedly July '00; attacked Jack Straw for releasing prisoners prematurely July '00; twitted PM Blair about his climb-down on £100 instant fines on drunken louts July '00; criticised NEWS OF THE WORLD for inciting a lynch-mob mentality over paedophiles July '00; claimed Labour's Human Rights Act was plunging the British legal system into chaos July '00; demonstrators outraged by her stance on asylum-seekers besieged her Edinburgh taxi Aug '00; said, "the sight of Oliver Cromwell's statue outside the House of Commons causes me a quick grinding of the teeth; he was a bigot, a regicide and a deeply oppressive ruler" Aug '00; she was caught speeding at 50 mph in a 40 mph zone Aug '00; criticised any relaxation of immigration rules Sep '00; showed concern over too-light policing of Notting Hill carnival Sep '00; her demand for instant £100 fines for any cannabis possession was torpedoed by seven Shadow Cabinet colleagues who admitted to having previously tried cannabis; Lord Cranborne said it would make the law an ass Oct '00; she admitted the need to rethink her cannabis strategy after widespread criticism Nov '00; she scaled down her expensive plan to incarcerate all asylum-seekers Nov '00;

**Born:** 4 October 1947 , Bath, Somerset

**Family:** My grandfather was a Baptist of the old school, and didn't like to see me doing homework on a Sunday" (AW); daughter, of late James Murray Widdecombe, CB, OBE, retired Head of Naval Supplies, Ministry of Defence ("very, very Conservative, enough, in fact, to make me look like a wet socialist" [AW]) and Rita Noreen (Plummer), whose painful arthritis was healed in '72 by a religious "miracle", and for whom she has said she would quit politics if she needed fulltime care; her older brother, Canon Malcolm Widdecombe, is an Anglican clergyman;

**Education:** Bridge Mary School, Gosport; Royal Naval School, Singapore; La Sainte Union Convent, Bath (a strict Catholic convent where eating meat on Friday was a mortal sin; she walked in her sleep; "religion was pushed down your throat; we were forced to go to mass and benediction but not allowed to attend our own [Anglican] church" (AW); Birmingham University (BA Latin); Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University (BA Hons in PPE, MA);

**Occupation:** Novelist: *The Clematis Tree* (1999) (for which she had a £100,000 advance from Weidenfeld and Nicolson), an ethical novel about an MP with a handicapped nephew taking a Bill on euthanasia through Parliament '97-; Television Personality: hosted her own six-part series called 'Nothing But the Truth' in which she played a TV judge in a courtroom drama '98; ex: Columnist: on *DAILY EXPRESS* (£35,000-40,000 per six months until sacked Sep '99); Financial Administrator, London University (AUT) '75-87; Marketing Executive, with Unilever '73-75;

**Traits:** Short, dumpy; "Danny de Vito meets Margaret Rutherford" (Giles Brandreth, *SUNDAY TELEGRAPH*); toothy; black-dyed, previously-greying hair; "pudding-basin hairstyle" (Valerie Grove, *TIMES*); "stick-insect legs...incredibly top-heavy" (Mary Spillane); "rather good legs and dainty feet (Simon Hoggart, *GUARDIAN*); "for such a tiny woman, she is terrifically mobile, like a Womble on speed"; "short and dark, if Miss Widdecombe had been designed by an architect the result would be called 'new brutalist'; her hair-style appears to be by Braun - Eva Braun; you would expect to find her manning the desk in an Albanian library, glaring at everybody to be quiet"; "her style is always rather menacing"; "stern black dresses and severe jackets in burst blood vessel purple are...her thing" (Andrew Rawnsley, *GUARDIAN*); "Dalek-voiced" (Quentin Letts, *DAILY TELEGRAPH*); shrill; her voice is prone to slip easily into a high falsetto; "when she loses control it's like the chainsaw hitting the barbed wire" (Simon Carr, *INDEPENDENT*); it "kept squeaking up an octave as though she had a private supply of helium tucked somewhere in that vast bosom; she reached in these yodels, frequencies inaudible to humans; bats in their rafters began flying into things" (Matthew Parris, *TIMES*); "she flaunts her 'ugliness' just as other women stick out their silicone implants" (Rachel Sylvester and Alice Thomson, *DAILY TELEGRAPH*): "I'm overweight, I'm ugly, I've got bad teeth" (AW); "I used to say that Mrs Thatcher could get off a train at five in the morning looking as if she'd stepped from a beauty parlour and I could step from a beauty parlour and look as though I'd got off a train at five in the morning" (AW); Conservative Central Office used to beg her to wear a more supportive bra during election campaigns; "the best example of the use of a bosom as a theatrical prop since Barbara Windsor" (Andrew Pierce, *TIMES*); "Miss Widdecombe does not have breasts, but a single bosom, as vast and lavishly upholstered as any Ikea armchair" (Simon Hoggart, *GUARDIAN*); "gratingly priggish" (Edwina Currie); "in the old days she flopped over the dispatch box so that you thought she was about to play the national anthem on motor horns and beg for fish", "the world's most sophisticated bag-lady" (Simon Hoggart, *GUARDIAN*); fierce debating style; "small, lively and rather bossy" (Andrew Alexander, *DAILY MAIL*); "this foghorn-voiced, quick-witted, sharp-minded, formidably-constructed...Anne Widdecombe in action is like a railway station on horseback" (Matthew Parris, *TIMES*); (Matthew Parris, *TIMES*); not "domesticated, not at all"; takes her coffee without sugar; "I don't take salt either, or fried food"; "I put fresh single cream in my coffee and double on profiteroles"; "in adolescence I developed a fear of heights; and these days I hate even being on the top of a double-decker bus"; "the cornea of my right eye spontaneously scratches itself"; "at the end of the day, I love a drink to unwind, normally a whisky and soda"; "when I get home at night and shut the door on the rest of the world I think, 'Thank God for that'"; does not seem to have had a boyfriend since her Oxford beau, Colin Maltby; before her widowed mother joined her, said "I'm glad there's not somebody there demanding his supper or wondering where on earth I put his clean socks; cats are the perfect pets for politicians; they never answer you back, like you whatever you do, enjoy being picked up for a cuddle, and grooming them is a great therapy"; "if somebody could wave a magic wand and give me back the energy and figure I had when I was 20, I'd be well pleased; I used to ride; now all I do is swim occasionally; but I can still manage 20 lengths and a width under water"; "I'm tone deaf" (AW); has two cats - Pugwash and Carruthers; despite a three-year romance at Oxford, she does not miss sex: "Yuk! Spare me! Ugh! That's one thing I don't miss; I prefer a bath and

a detective novel; I really can't understand why people make such a thing about it"; "I don't enjoy watching people having sex in films or on television" (AW); she will sue anyone who claims she is not a virgin; she only acquired a TV set in '99 having previously described TV as `filth'; she resigned from her health club because they refused to install private changing cubicles: "there was no privacy; colleagues showing their bodies off, how revolting" (AW); "the biggest single frustration I know is I can't actually live to 200; whenever my time comes the words on my gravestone will be: `Go tell the Chief Whip, passerby, that here, alack unpaired, I lie"; asked her civil servants to call her Ann, explaining, "God calls me Ann"; "God's existence is a certainty to me" (AW);

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