

Street OF Shame

HYSTERICAL RECORD...

PAGES of post-election celebrations in last Saturday's *Daily Mail* culminated in the huge headline "WALPOLE. PALMERSTON. DISRAELI. CHURCHILL. THATCHER. BORIS ENTERS THE PANTHEON", over a spread in which "historian Dominic Sandbrook argues that, after this new triumph, Johnson has uncanny parallels with the greats".

According to Sandbrook: "To his bien pensant critics, Mr Johnson is the devil incarnate, at once a clownish buffoon and a malevolent conspirator. To prigs and puritans, his rackets love life, jokey asides and indifference to rules are a standing affront. Yet somehow, to their baffled fury, he keeps winning elections. How does he do it? One obvious answer is that the Prime Minister is a far cannier operator than his critics realise."

After 1,500 words in similar vein, he concluded: "Whisper it if you dare, but perhaps the secret of Boris Johnson's success is something his critics have never dreamed of considering. Maybe, just maybe, he's pretty good at politics."

This will surprise anyone who read an epic *Mail* tirade on 17 November 2018 by one Dominic Sandbrook against "the pygmies sniping at Mrs May", who "care little for Britain's future. They are much more interested in their own political future". Chief pygmy was "Boris Johnson, such a risible failure as Foreign Secretary... Whatever you think of Mrs May's deal, a woman who has served the country with such conspicuous commitment, integrity and sense of duty deserves better than to be betrayed by a moral degenerate like Boris Johnson."

On 16 March 2019, after the Commons rejected May's deal, the *Mail* cleared more space for its pet historian to berate the "almost mind-boggling irresponsibility" of MPs who refused to "put the national interest ahead of their own narcissistic posturing" – notably "that clown Boris Johnson, who sees all this as a vehicle for his leadership ambitions". Sandbrook was also shocked to hear Johnson talk of spaffing money up the wall, "a street-slang word meaning ejaculation". When Sandbrook now sneers at prigs, puritans and bien pensant critics, does he by any chance mean himself?