

# *Hall of Fame*

## *JOSEPH ADDISON*



Joseph Addison was born 1 May 1672 in Milston, Wiltshire. He was the eldest son of Reverend Lancelot Addison. After his father was appointed Dean of Lichfield the family moved into the cathedral close. Lichfield Cathedral is situated in Lichfield, Staffordshire. It is the only medieval English cathedral with three spires.

Joseph was educated at Charterhouse School where he first met Richard Steele, and at The Queen's College, Oxford. Joseph and Richard were long standing friends and together founded The Spectator magazine. Joseph excelled in classics at school, being especially noted for his Latin verse and became a Fellow of Magdalen College. His first major work a book of the lives of English poets was published in 1694.

Joseph obtained a pension of Three Hundred Pounds from John Dryden, Lord Somers and Charles Montague, 1st Earl of Halifax who had taken an interest his work to enable him to travel to Europe with a view to diplomatic employment, continuing with writing and studying politics.

While in Switzerland in 1702 he heard of the death of William III an event which lost him his pension as his influential contacts, Halifax and Somers had lost their employment with the Crown.

Joseph returned to England at the end of 1703 and remained unemployed for more than a year, but the Battle of Blenheim in 1704 gave him a fresh opportunity of distinguishing himself. The Lord Treasurer, Godolphin commissioned Joseph to write a commemorative poem and he produced The Campaign, which gave such satisfaction that he was appointed Commissioner of Appeals in Halifax's Government.

From 1708 to 1709 he was MP for the rotten borough of Lostwithiel, Cornwall. He was shortly afterwards appointed secretary to the new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Wharton and Keeper of the Records of that county.

From 1710 he represented Malmesbury in his home county of Wiltshire holding the seat until his death.

In 1709 Joseph renewed his association with Richard Steele which resulted in the start of the magazine *The Spectator* the first number of which appeared on 1 March 1711.

He wrote the libretto for Thomas Clayton's opera *Rosamond* which had a disastrous premiere in London in 1707. In 1713 his tragedy *Cato* was produced. He followed this effort with a comedic play *The Drummer*, his last undertaking was *The Freeholder* a party-paper, 1715-16.

The later events in his life did not contribute to his happiness. In 1716 he married the Dowager Countess of Warwick to whose son he had been tutor, and his political career continued to flourish. His wife appears to have been arrogant and imperious, his stepson the seventh Earl was unfriendly to him, while in his public capacity his shyness made him of little use in Parliament.

Joseph was forced to resign as secretary of state because of his poor health but remained an MP until his death at Holland House, London on 17 June 1719, in his 48th year. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Besides the many writings that he produced he also wrote a *Dialogue on Medals* and left unfinished a work on the *Evidences of Christianity*.