

Festivals and Community Fairs After Jubilee

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

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On Saturday, at the East Preston Festival procession I was delighted to be driven by Jules Chatterton in his impressive gull-winged car. Many of the crowd knew him. Janine Nicholson chairs the organising committee. We remembered the late legendary Doug Medhurst, one of her predecessors. His words live today. 'We want people to have a good time and to enjoy each other's company. The festival brings people together. Holding on to the fragile fabric of a village community is something to cherish.'

On Sussex Day I joined Tim Loughton and others to replicate the historic Commons Terrace photograph of Sussex MPs more than 100 years ago. Fifteen years ago, Henry Smith was leader of West Sussex County Council before his election to parliament. He instituted the day in memory of St Richard.

The Sussex Charter includes: Let it be known, as guardians of Sussex, we all know Sussex is Sussex ... and Sussex won't be druv. We will not be forced against our will and we have minds of our own.

Together with the West Sussex flag, we should have hired a choir leader to improve our rendition of the marching song 'Sussex by the Sea'. We can be in time if not in tune. Perhaps the problem is that we would not be druv?

Durrington Festival was started in 1992. I admire its Village Fayre, Carnival Procession and the free Concert. I thank and congratulate everyone involved in the arena events with fun for all the family. The activities appeared to be arranged around the cheerful flags of St Symphorian's church.

The first of my three community events that day was the Heene Centre Summer Fayre. The entertainment ranged from ukuleles to Zumba drumming,

If you had an annoying sister or a brother who is a menace, you could put them in the stocks. If you did not, you could splat the rat or have a try at circus skills.

My team and I enjoy boosting recognition of people serving and setting an example in the constituency. At one stage of its development, the Durrington Sea Scouts at Pond Lane had 16 adult helpers for their 90 members. There are similar groups giving the opportunity to enjoy sport, music, dance and environmental activities.

We also support some of those experiencing difficulties in life or approaching the natural stages before death. I worked with an experienced nurse who had helped, at some personal cost, expose a scandal of dangerous behaviour decades ago at a hospital in another county.

She told me by telephone call that she expected to expire within days. I called to speak with her dedicated experienced carer. I was invited in. We did not need to speak as we held hands. I did tell her that I would remember her words: she had said that when I felt a soft breeze across my cheeks, it would signify that she had reached her resting place. Each zephyr reminds me of her.

Local MPs will work with council leaders to bid for central government support in assistance to levelling up, helping the less fortunate to join fully in life at work and in decent homes. For those like my caring team and me, it is important to build and to retain the benefits of cooperation in the public interest.

That interest is communal and countywide; it is also individual and household. We appreciate the messages when a problem has been resolved satisfactorily. If the problem is common, systems need to improve. If uncommon, consider if it is really rare or whether other examples are hidden.