

## Anniversaries and Building for a Better Future

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

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Monday's Queen's Speech was a glorious display in the House of Lords. I contributed to the debate in the Commons. Before coming to my topics, I want to share sentences by my colleague Vicky Ford, MP for Chelmsford for two years, four months and six days. She believes rightly that the vast majority of people go into politics because they want to make a difference.

'When we see good things happen in our constituencies, we want to replicate them. When we see bad things happen, we want to eradicate them. We want to move forward and yet, for the past two years, four months and six days, I have often felt the we are going round and round in circles. This week gives us a chance: a chance for hope, a chance to end that merry-go-round, a chance to get that first phase of Brexit done and move on – and people across the country are crying out for us to move on.'

My topics were adolescent bad behaviour, the continuing need for leasehold reforms and two cases of injustice. I also praised police work, criticised street blockers on up to £400 expenses a week and teased the SNP who at the 2017 general election achieved 37% - so 63% chose alternative parties.

On Wednesday the Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin spoke in the Speaker's House to the all-party group of MPs who join the monthly Communion in St Margaret's church, Parliament Square. I serve as the parliamentary warden. After nine years as Speaker's Chaplain (she is also a Chaplain to the Queen), she becomes the Bishop of Dover and Bishop at Canterbury.

On Tuesday, I had quite a day. There are two ways I measure activity: one is to read the list of engagements; the other is to check the Health Data on my mobile. I walked five miles and climbed 18 floors, without consciously looking for exercise. I started with constituency cases and the Goring Gap planning worries, then there were some of the email blizzard issues.

The Jubilee room beside Westminster Hall and the Grand Committee room is where I chaired the Economic and Social Research Council meeting on the '3 Million', the EU nationals resident in the UK: how will they establish their status, what about blended families, and a myriad of other questions. Our next meeting will be the day before October 31st. Then we should know where the roundabout has got to.

At 11.30am I was with Virginia for the 750th anniversary of the present Westminster Abbey. It was fortunate that we arrived in good time. For some reason or by chance we were in the front row, alongside Cecil-Maurice Browne, a scholar from Stockwell at the impressive Harris Westminster Sixth Form. Across the aisle were the Queen and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall. Dr John Hall, soon retiring as Dean after 13 years, made the point that state funding for Roman Catholic schools had been important in integrating the Christian denominations. Now public funding is justified for Muslim schools. John had been curate at St John the Divine, Kennington when it was our family church and I was an intercessor.

After a non-existent lunch I heard a woman prison governor talk about mental health needs for female inmates. There was then time to monitor the Urgent debates granted rather often by the Speaker. Had John Bercow been chosen in my place, Worthing West would have had a non-party MP over the past ten years, somewhat longer than his guarantee that whatever the circumstances he would retire after nine years. 'After' can be an ambiguous word?