

Onside With Shared Goals

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

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Meeting students reminds me of football. Discussing the purposes and the practice of politics has the mixture of cooperation and challenge that makes life interesting. Matt Crawley is the distinguished Worthing College politics teacher who cheerfully left me with a group of questioning students on Tuesday morning before they toured the Houses of Parliament.

It was great to be at the Woodside Road stadium to watch most of the thrilling Saturday match. Between the storms, Worthing Football Club scored three goals against Welling United, holding on to win 3-2 in the National League South, balancing the earlier 2-4 away defeat.

I stood close to the posts for the first two goals. The breaks from midfield and some of the aerial passes were inspired, ambitious and successful. The scorers get their names into the match reports; those who started the build up and the player who put the ball through rightly merit applause. Parties at Westminster could collaborate as effectively as Worthing FC.

My history on the pitch has been dull (except when exchanging a pass with Bobby Charlton or letting in a goal at the old Wembley stadium). At school, I played in each age group as AN Other during the annual flu season, except in my final year. After bumping into me, someone fell over, damaging an elbow. That promoted me into the first team for a rough match against the Chelsea FC Juniors. I saw little of the game. The match ended early with two other players on the way to hospital.

Better games are better natured. I hold in high esteem the organisers and volunteers, including parents, who develop skills and fun for hundreds of children and teenagers in sports, music and talent shows. From Worthing's Broadwater Green, through Ferring to East Preston and Rustington, I admire the way generations come together to enjoy activities.

Gymnastics and ballet too are great ways for boys and girls to gain confidence and develop themselves. At Christmas, it is good to see children on stage in pantomime. As for group music, I remember my back row position in a children's choir singing 'Linden Lea', Ralph Vaughan Williams's first published composition for voice and piano. The words are based on the poem 'My Orcha'd' in Dorset dialect by the vicar William Barnes. They gave me a love of nature too.

'Within the woodlands, flow'ry gladed,/ By the oak trees' mossy moot./ The shining grass blades, timber-shaded,/ Now do quiver underfoot;/ And birds do whistle overhead, /An water's bubbling in its bed;/ And there, for me, the apple tree/ Do lean down low in Linden Lea.'

There is good verse about the city too. I often read the one painted around the map of the old London boroughs and Underground at the St Stephen's entrance to the Palace of Westminster. The Scottish poet William Dunbar wrote 'To the City of London' 500 years ago.

' London, thou art of townes A Per Se./ Sovereign of cities, seemliest in sight,/ Of high renoun, riches and roialtie;/ Of lords, barons, and many a goodly knight;/ Of most delectable lusty ladies bright;/ of famous prelatie, in habitis clericali;/ Of merchauntis full of substaunce and of might:/ London, thou are the flour of Cities all . . '

In his day the expression 'myghty carbuncle' was praise. Our more local poet William Blake wrote a powerful indictment of the forms of corruption in his 'London'. Consider too T. S. Eliot's 'The Wasteland' which has been described as capturing the essences of modern London in memorable phrases.

The students may come back to Westminster if elected to the House of Commons or to work here as leading journalists or to join the public service supporting Parliament. College alumni have worked in my office to the benefit of constituents. Applaud the community of teachers of this promising generation of aspiring young adults.