

# Royal Succession is our Democratic Choice

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

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One of the great local historians, Roger Davies authored the book *Tarring – a Walk Through its History*, giving a comprehensive guide to the village's older building. Do see the Worthing Heritage Alliance website for fascinating information.

The Old Palace and Castle Goring are listed as Worthing's Grade 1 buildings. Local legend is that Saint Thomas a Becket stayed there. This overlooks his martyrdom in 1170, 60 years before the oldest known part of the Palace. He suggested the stories were really about Chichester Bishop de Wych, another saintly man who found refuge from Henry III in the Archbishop's personal manor at Tarring.

Several times during this momentous week, I have passed the statue of Oliver Cromwell (1599 – 1658). He was Lord Protector for about five years, before Charles II, son of Charles I was invited back when Richard Cromwell, the second and last Lord Protector renounced power after nine months.

Curiously, this Richard had the longest life of our Heads of State, until The Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth passed him ten years ago. He wisely went abroad for two decades. He had no living descendants.

An Australian asked about the monarchical system in a democracy. I declared it to be the constitutional wish of the people. Otherwise there could have been a revolution or a parliamentary majority for change.

This fortnight has demonstrated our strengths, our community strengths. The ceremony and Service in Belfast recollected events and change during the reign of our Elizabeth the Great. Despite the assassination of Prince Philip's uncle, King Charles followed The Queen in reconciliatory words and by bridging divisions.

How many other countries could have changed the prime minister and the Head of State within half a week?

In most countries, people would have taken to the streets. We did too, with love and flowers, not with clubs and guns.

Plans for Operation London Bridge have been revised many times. In the past days, there have been changes and there are still moving pieces. I was one when King Charles and the Queen Consort came to the Great Hall of Westminster on Monday. I wanted to be there so arrived fifteen minutes early.

There was not a spare place. One kind guide asked me to go forward. From one to another, I was taken forward toward the front row. I wondered who had not arrived, whose place I would fill.

The last shepherd instructed me to go up the stairs to the level where the throne chairs were central. 'You are sitting in the row behind the leader of the opposition and the prime minister'. I was by Harriet Harman, mother of the house, the female with longest continuous service.

On Sunday, Westminster Abbey held a Special Evening Service in St Margaret's church in Parliament Square. There I was in the rows behind the Speakers of the Lords and the Commons.

One of my initiatives was helping to build step free access to St Margaret's, Parliament's parish church. Many in Goring by Sea will have fond memories of St Paul's Dean-Designate Andrew Tremlett when he served as Vicar of St Mary's church. One of his later posts was as Canon of Westminster Abbey and Rector of St Margaret's.

He asked me to be Parliamentary Warden. I wanted to do all I could to help him and successive deans.

I first attended the Abbey when I was eight years old, months after the 1953 Coronation. In later years I was at services several times a week.

King Charles and the Queen Consort, together with the Princess Royal and others in the Queen's family put me in the shade. With others, I greatly admire their fortitude. God Save The King.