

Taking Liberties, Accepting Responsibilities and Doing Good

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

Worthing Herald Article

30th May 2019

Do try to visit the Palace of Westminster before the expected programme of restoration and renewal. Assuming there is neither devastating fire nor swamping flood, there are a few years as decisions are made about temporary homes for the two Houses.

When guiding constituents or visitors, I try to show three wall plaques that matter to me. One lists the trades of all those who built the place together with the occupations of those who work to make parliament effective. Next is Tony Benn's list of those who challenged the system to achieve liberty, knowledge and the opportunities to organise. I pick out William Tyndale who died because he translated our Bible into the language of the English, the Tolpuddle martyrs who were exiled for forming an agricultural trade union, and the Irish Robert Croker who as Robert Tressell wrote the novel *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*.

Two of my treasured lessons: my father said that liberty and responsibility are to be taken as they are seldom given; my father-in-law told me and anyone who would listen that it is usually a mistake to ask permission to try an unusual approach because the supervisor could articulate ten risks or reasons why it might not work – he recommended saying what you intend to try, and then not to wait uncertainly, because few bosses will say no.

Most of my days are in the Worthing West constituency or at Westminster. Occasionally we can see other parts of the United Kingdom. I enjoy Ireland, north and south, though the inflexibility of the two present political groups in Northern Ireland is damaging there as much as for the UK. Wales was where as a child we used an aunt's basic cottage on the Gower peninsula. Other years saw us in the Lake District where I first rowed and sailed on Coniston Water.

Scotland was where Virginia was born and where I was enumerated in the 1961 census, sharing a two man tent on an arduous training camp in the Cairngorms. I regret that my parents' peripatetic lives lost me the opportunity to be a Sea Scout or Cadet.

On Thursday we took the early train to Edinburgh to accompany the Lord High Commissioner to the concluding day of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. In addition to witnessing the challenges of adaptation for the church, we loved the east coast scenery in the north of England and the south of Scotland, we appreciated the combined cadet forces bands and dancers at Beating the Retreat in front of the Palace of Holyroodhouse, though the other great joy was listening to the head gardener describing the challenge of preparing the floral displays for Royal Week.

By Saturday I was in Arun and Worthing, considering the future of public and political service in our district and borough, in our county and for the nation. Liberal Democrats are involved in choosing the successor to Sir Vincent Cable, Conservatives are facing a wide range of potential leaders and even Labour may be considering what they should be doing.

I am going to try to get through my part in helping to choose two good candidates for party members to vote for by not saying an unkind word about any. The latest news is that the Commons Speaker appears to have let it be known that his continued service in the Chair is essential to whatever may be the outcome to the Brexit progress. Maybe. It does rather contradict his written declaration that in any event he would give over after nine years.

Perhaps he or his statue will be seen after the restoration and renewal?