

Acts of Remembrance in Towns and Villages

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

Worthing Herald Article

14th November 2019

Around the constituency, across the nation and around the Commonwealth on Remembrance Sunday and this year on Remembrance Day we have gathered at memorials to the fallen.

This year there are no Members of Parliament because of the General Election. I have been careful to be part of the congregation: the Portcullis was not on my wreaths.

We are grateful to Janet Goldbrough-Jones, to Tom Wye, to the Mayor of Worthing Hazel Thorpe, to her chaplain Dr Hazel Sherman and to people of all ages who came together at 11 a.m. for The Silence. The young joined the veterans and adults who have lived through recent conflicts, whether or not they were alive during World War II.

On Sunday, Virginia and I were marshalled in East Preston before the 200 from the village walked from the Royal British Legion club to St Mary's church where the Rev Andrew Percy and the curate Emma led the Service. I am always impressed by the virtuosity of their organist.

After the additional short Service at the Memorial by the Library, some of us proceeded to Kingston to their Memorial. When I was first elected, the congregation numbered fewer than ten. This year there were about 60. We remembered before God those who have died for their country in war, with all who have lived and died in the service of mankind. Every day is Remembrance Day; there are special days when we come together.

I pay tribute to the local press who do so much to foster our sense of community. We enjoy seeing the new school classes, the Halloween gatherings, the golden wedding families and the sports teams. One of the reasons I seek re-election is the opportunity to contribute an occasional article and then to discuss topics when constituents (usually) make pleasant comments.

On Saturday I attended the East Preston Festival Committee fair and fund-raising gathering at the village hall. Virginia's present for Christmas is now purchased. The range of goodies was matched at the Rustington Parish Hall where the Women's Institute Fayre was held. The WI gives opportunities to build new skills, enjoy a wide range of activity and to work on issues that affect the community.

After Monday's Two Minute Silence, I interrupted election planning to try to see an image of Mercury transiting the sun shortly after noon: I knew that direct vision was dangerous. Remembering from the solar eclipse in June 1954 that it was possible to project the image using binoculars, we tried and failed. Next time I will think about it earlier, consulting the local astronomers.

Most non-essential events have to be cancelled, though I am attending a funeral of an old friend. We did meet some of our grandchildren and their sailing mates on Sunday evening.

If any reader would like to help deliver leaflets or to make a modest contribution to the election fighting fund, please do. I hope not to spend too much.

When first I stood for election, there were 40-50 countries around the world that could reasonably be described as democracies – countries where unpopular governments do not cling to power or rig elections. Within twenty years, nearly half the members of the United Nations had joined the democratic club or seemed likely to do so soon. Now the world appears to have turned back.

The latest to have the chance to come forward is Bolivia. It is a pity that Jeremy Corbyn cannot turn his mantra about popular decision-making into a belief that opposition parties should be allowed to win in countries with left-wing rulers?

I believe it is the combination of fair elections and a social-market economy with government willing to step in to help the economy grow and also to help the needy and to develop opportunity for the vulnerable that makes lives better. It also reduces the chance or choice of international war and of civil war.