

# Each Other's Habits and Histories

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

*Worthing Herald Article*

*28<sup>th</sup> October 2021*

It is good to consider how and why people get on well and productively together. Co-working and marriage came to mind, particularly during a moving supper at the weekend. About every three years, Virginia and I join four other couples for an evening of talking and walking between each other's homes for food and drink.

One offered these lines: 'How married all these years? Well, that's no mystery – We are each other's habit, and each other's history.' (In modern words, herstory too.)

Some have been friends for nearly sixty years, some for just a few decades. We have worked together in public service and for voluntary causes. Our children have overlapped. We have trusted each other and by good fortune, our marriages have lasted too.

Political service also includes long term friendships. This has been demonstrated in the tributes to the late James Brokenshire MP and to Sir David Amess MP. Constituency service also includes lives overlapping over the years.

Before writing this article, I have been talking with local residents. The joys are hearing how family or work life turned better. There are tears when tragedy happens. Being an MP for many years allows me to have known people over decades. New developments on 'cold cases' make sense when we were involved together at the start.

None of this is intended to claim superiority over the new MP, the newly married or the unmarried: it is my appreciation of how I try to help and how often my team and I do achieve change in the lives of others.

Do we ourselves change? Lucy Kellaway left the Financial Times to become a teacher and to create the charity Now Teach. After changing her job, her home, her husband and her hair, she asked friends and family if she had changed, even changed for the better? Had she re-invented herself?

One reply questioned whether she had invented herself in the first place. She concludes her new book by understanding she has changed her experiences rather than her character, now immersed in a new world, a long way from her old one. She declares she is being re-educated.

During a full constituency day, I had time to reflect on how I learn. The celebrant at the funeral of my East Preston friend Beryl was Joe Davis who I first knew through the Maybridge Fellowship. We have to consider lives fulfilled, whether the person we loved was over 90 or under a year old.

On the journey from the well-managed Worthing crematorium, I called in at a residential parking area where there is an environmental problem to resolve, before visiting an area where contractors have not yet managed to connect the lighting needed to increase safety for people of all ages walking in the area.

Later, I met Councillor Sean McDonald and the developers of the newest housing in West Durrington. Unlike some more traditional builders, these were actively engaged from the start with the remarkable Terry Woodjetts whose well-judged activism is appreciated.

Beechwood Hall, the former hotel on Wykeham Road, lives on as a function room in the new Brewhouse & Kitchen. The copper microbrewery is impressive; so are the overall levels of investment. During my visit I admired the growing range of good no-and-low alcohol drinks.

The familiarity and history of traditional pubs will guarantee their continuing popularity. The range of food and drink venues is growing excitingly. Soon the Perch on the Pier will revive the south end of Worthing Pier, nearly 160 years after completion. The new habit of pier glazing and the history of our hospitality continues to be written.