

Diary Week Commencing 14th December 2009

Monday
14th

I did some work in Cheltenham before travelling to London to catch up on paperwork, which took up most of the day. I had dinner with a couple of friends in the evening, and didn't finish in the Commons until just before midnight.

Tuesday
15th

I carried out paperwork in the morning, held a business meeting at lunchtime and then spent most of the remainder of the day in the chamber discussing the floods Bill. I believe it needs strengthening so agreed to serve on the Committee Stage of the Bill in the new Year. I saw some business people late at night.

Wednesday
16th

the last day of the present term. I attended our team meeting and then asked a question from the Front Bench during Northern Ireland questions. I then carried out some paperwork throughout the afternoon. I had a rare evening off and attended a performance of Oliver at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. It was outstandingly good. A late curry followed with a couple of friends.

Thursday
17th

Parliament is now on Christmas recess but I attended my Commons office to carry out more paperwork, before travelling back and doing some work in Tewkesbury.

Friday
18th

A busy day. I was at the post sorting office at 8am and then attended an advent service at which three young members of my family were starring! I then attended an event at Brockworth before carrying out some more paperwork. I held a surgery in Winchcombe at 6pm and then on to an event hosted by a local company for the rest of the evening.

Saturday
19th

The inspection at Haydock says the course is fit so I set off. On my arrival, the recent snow got worse and the racing was off after all. So we had the lunch which was planned, and then spent the evening with friends up there.

Sunday
20th

Drove back through the snow and then did a bit of work from home, before having a drink with friends and a dinner with family.

<p>Monday 7th</p>	<p>I set off for London first thing and attended an awards event on behalf of horse racing. I also had an event for racing in the evening, but managed to fit in quite a bit of paperwork as well.</p>
<p>Tuesday 8th</p>	<p>I attended a number of events in the morning and a few in the afternoon. then I was one of a large number of MPs who presented petitions to the Commons on behalf of constituents who are concerned about some proposals contained in the Badman Report on home education. It basically calls for stronger licensing, which some see as over-bureaucratic.</p>
<p>Wednesday 9th</p>	<p>I very briefly attended a business breakfast before setting off for Heathrow to catch a flight to Belfast. I visited the tobacco factory at Ballymena, met the new Chief Constable, Matt Baggot and then had a meeting with the owners of a new hotel in Belfast, where I stayed.</p>
<p>Thursday 10th</p>	<p>I held meetings with a number of people, including the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Ulster Unionists, and the headed back to Birmingham, and then on to a meeting at my local office.</p>
<p>Friday 11th</p>	<p>I held a meeting with SWARD, the local campaigners in Bishop's Cleeve, about the Grundon site, and then attended the Mayor's Charity Race Day at Prestbury Park. I caught up with some paperwork in the evening and then had a dinner and drink with some friends.</p>
<p>Saturday 12th</p>	<p>Again, I attended the races, and then hosted a large event in the evening.</p>
<p>Sunday 13th</p>	<p>Took a day off today with the family.</p>

**Monday
23rd**

I held a meeting in my office first thing and then went to Cheltenham to discuss with the Chamber of Commerce the building of a possible light railway to serve Cheltenham, Gloucester, Bishop's Cleeve and a number of other local places. I then travelled to London to reply to post and emails.

**Tuesday
24th**

I had a meeting at the Foreign Office regarding our negotiations with Libya in relation to Northern Ireland. I then attended the AGM of the All Party parliamentary Uganda Group. I was in the Chamber for the most of the remainder of the day and spoke in the Queen's Speech debate on flood prevention. I also, however, held a meeting with Transport Secretary Lord Adonis regarding the light railway, and briefly attend a reception with Racing UK.

**Wednesday
25th**

I carried out a lot of paperwork today. In addition, I attended our Northern Ireland team meeting and then held a meeting with Royal & Sun Alliance about insurance and flooding issues. I held a meeting with young Unionists from Northern Ireland, attended the Chamber for a statement on Scotland and then carried out more paperwork. In the evening, I had dinner with a friend of mine who is a director of Ladbrokes.

**Thursday
26th**

I spent the whole day in Westminster wading through the piles of paperwork I have received, carrying out email and so on, then travelled to Tewkesbury at night.

**Friday
27th**

I received a petition in my office from people objecting to the Badman Report on home education. I then held a meeting with someone who had designed a type of flood prevention barrier, which was interesting. I then travelled to Bristol to attend a corporate governance lunch at which the speaker was Tom Bonham-carter. In the early evening I hosted a reception for some people from Leckhampton, warden Hill and Up Hatherley. I lose these wards to Cheltenham at the General Election and wanted to say thank you for their help and support over the years.

**Saturday
28th**

I attended the event staged by St John's Ambulance at Priors Park. They are looking to recruit more team leaders. I then chanced the weather in the afternoon and played golf. In the evening I attended a private dinner.

**Sunday
29th**

What a busy day! I started off by visiting a constituent. Then I attended an event at Cleeve Hill. then on to attend a constituent's birthday party near Twynning. Then on to the Christmas Lights ceremony at Tewkesbury, where we all got soaked.

**Monday
16th**

I travelled to Ghana to lead a trade mission on behalf of a few friends who do business there and are hoping to do more. It was part of the role of my being Chairman of the Conservative Africa Business Group. One business would like to carry out that country's census, while the other sells scientific equipment and provides training to educational establishments. I travelled via Amsterdam. On arriving in Ghana, the weather was very different to the UK, it being hot and humid.

**Tuesday
17th**

This was a day for a diplomatic meeting. I had arranged for us to have a briefing from the High Commission of Ghana in Accra. Two weeks previously, I had hosted the High Commissioner in London at a lunch in the Commons. In the afternoon, I was taken round the craft market and was mobbed by people trying to persuade me to buy things. This is the norm for some parts of Africa and developing countries elsewhere, and they are only trying to earn a living.

**Wednesday
18th**

We had a meeting with the Minister for Schools and it went well. It was agreed that one of the business people would travel to Ghana again to give a more detailed presentation.

**Thursday
19th**

I had accessed my emails all the time while I was in Ghana. This morning I also did an interview for radio Gloucestershire on the contents of the Queen's Speech, and, in particular, on the prospects of getting the Flood & Water management Bill through Parliament before the General Election. At night, I set off back for home.

**Friday
20th**

After changing planes at Amsterdam in the middle of the night, I arrived back at Heathrow at about 8am. I then drove back to Tewkesbury, got changed and headed for my local office, where I caught up with paperwork.

**Saturday
21st**

I did a few things in Tewkesbury and on my computer at home, and then went for a curry in Upton upon Severn

**Sunday
22nd**

Due to the terrible weather, I had to cancel my golf this morning. I have played just once in over four months - that won't do! I then met my daughter, Jemma, and her family for lunch - it was her 28th birthday. I then had a drink with a few friends locally, then prepared for the coming week. All the time, though, I kept my eye on the news and really felt for the people of the North West who were flooded. It brought back so many memories.

**Monday
9th**

I set off early for London and held a business meeting in the Commons with WRVS. Then I attended a corporate governance meeting and reception and held a meeting with an MEP about one or two European issues which are affecting us. I then went to a meeting of the All Party Beer Group to hear some of the points being made against the "tie" where some companies which own pubs are allowed to insist that the tenant also buys beer from them. In the evening I had dinner in the Commons with some friends.

**Tuesday
10th**

I chaired a meeting of the All Party Ethiopia Group, which was attended and addressed by the Ethiopian Ambassador. There are a number of issues in that country which are worrying, and all culminate in serious food shortages. I also carried out a great deal of paperwork today. I found myself unexpectedly free from votes in the evening so went out for a curry to a place which is normally good, but was very disappointing on this occasion!

**Wednesday
11th**

In the morning, I chaired our Northern Ireland team meeting, then carried out a survey with a company, while respecting the normal period of silence on this day. I was then dropped off at Heathrow to catch a flight to Northern Ireland.

**Thursday
12th**

I held meetings in Belfast, starting with the Director of Criminal Justice. I then held a meeting with two Assistant Chief Constables, and then two meetings with politicians at Stormont. I'm a little bit fearful about what is going on in the Province at the moment. The proposed devolution of policing and justice, which are currently controlled from Westminster, is causing difficulties. I then visited an integrated primary school which takes pupils regardless of their religious backgrounds. I believe that more schools like this would help to break down some of the prejudice and sectarianism which exists in Northern Ireland. Children aren't born with prejudice, they are taught it, so mixed schools are, I believe, crucially important.

**Friday
13th**

I held a meeting in my local office regarding the regeneration of Tewkesbury then attended the Diabetes UK Roadshow. I had a very close friend, who had diabetes, recently die at only my age so I do take this illness very seriously. In the afternoon, I got very wet down at Cheltenham races.

**Saturday
14th**

I attended the races again and met quite a few people there, including the No 2 in the Irish Embassy. Dinner with family rounded off an enjoyable day.

**Sunday
15th**

I went through quite a few emails in the evening and wrote a few other things. Lunch with family and drinks with a few friends in the local pub was enjoyable.

**Monday
2nd**

I started the week with a staff meeting in my local office, before travelling to London. I then set about tackling the post and the emails, and then held a meeting with Giles Chichester MEP at his house, which had been occupied by his father, Sir Francis Chichester, of whom I was a great admirer. I have been on his famous boat, Gipsy Moth IV.

**Tuesday
3rd**

Following more office work, I went to a meeting with an International development Minister to talk about both my and his - hopefully - visits to Ethiopia in the near future, with the aim of determining exactly what help they are going to need in the coming months. I then held a lunch meeting with someone from horse racing, and then on to the Foreign Office for a briefing on the negotiations with Libya with regard to possible compensation and community building projects in Northern Ireland.

**Wednesday
4th**

A very busy day. I started by attending a business breakfast with senior people from BT and the Chamber of Commerce. then I attended our Northern Ireland team meeting, to be followed by my asking a question from the Dispatch Box immediately before Prime Minister's Questions. I chose to condemn the loyalist paramilitaries who have not, as yet, given up all their weapons. In the early afternoon, I held a meeting with representatives of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service. Following that, I had to deal with some minor legislation for Northern Ireland, and then attend one or two Party meetings. In the evening, I attended a dinner held by the Integrated Education Fund, which is a body in Northern Ireland which promotes and funds schools which take in children regardless of their religious background.

**Thursday
5th**

Guy Fawkes Day. I had lunch with a senior person from the Irish Embassy and did more emails and letters. In the evening, I attended a charity dinner in aid of animal health.

**Friday
6th**

I travelled back to Tewkesbury in the morning, and then welcomed Canon Paul Williams and his wife, Catherine, to my house for lunch, with a few family members. I then carried out more office work.

**Saturday
7th**

I went across to Winchcombe to do a half-hour questions and answers slot with the local radio programme. In the afternoon, I - very nervously - played my first game of golf for four months, following my very bad back problem. So far, there are no ill effects, and I didn't play too badly, either. In the evening, I attended a small fireworks party.

**Sunday
8th**

I attended the Remembrance Day service at Tewkesbury. Please see my *View from Westminster* page on this issue.

**Monday
26th**

I started the week with a meeting with the new Chief Executive of Tewkesbury Borough Council, Mike Dawson, before travelling to London. I then caught up on post and emails and attended a reception for horse racing in the Commons, compered by Claire Balding.

**Tuesday
27th**

A frantic day. I had two Northern Ireland team meetings in preparation for a tricky debate in the House of Commons on parading in the Province, on which I had to speak from the Despatch Box. It all went quite well. I also welcomed some constituents to the Palace who had been on a tour, held a further business meeting, attended the All-Party Racing meeting and carried out a bit of paperwork as well.

**Wednesday
28th**

I had to attend St Thomas's hospital for a few jobs in connection with some foreign travel coming up. I carried out quite a bit of paperwork today then attended a Raleigh Day dinner at the Guards Museum in the evening.

**Thursday
29th**

I asked a question in the Commons about the spreading of bovine TB to Alpacas, which one of my constituents breeds. I also chaired a lunch with the High Commissioner from Ghana as part of my role of Chairman of the Conservative Africa Business Group. During this lunch things turned into chaos as I was asked to join the delegation travelling to Libya this Saturday to talk to the government there about possible compensation for IRA victims as a result of Libya's funding the IRA. My passport had to be sent across from Tewkesbury and other frantic arrangements had to be made. In the evening, I had a little respite as I went to see The Mousetrap. It was showing in London when my parents went on honeymoon there in 1955 and is still running now. I won't tell you the ending!

**Friday
30th**

I had a meeting about the indoor tennis tournament which is taking place at Brockworth as the organisers need sponsorship money. It is a high standard tournament but many organisations are asking me for advice on fundraising at the moment. Also, the Youth Parliament met in the Chamber of the Commons today and I went along to watch for a while and then spoke to some of them at lunch time. Many of them were very impressive and confident when they spoke. I felt proud of them. I then went to the Libyan Embassy to obtain my visa - only for there to be a major hitch and, well, they couldn't grant one. Somewhat annoyed and deflated, I was then very much invigorated by attending a Charity Racing Dinner which I'd helped to organise in the Commons. We raised £55,000 for Racing Welfare.

**Saturday
31st**

I travelled back to Tewkesbury in the morning, called at Cheltenham then greatly admired my grandchildren as they went out in splendid costumes on Halloween! An enjoyable dinner at the local pub with family followed.

**Sunday
1st Nov.**

I can't believe it's November already. A day off, apart from some computer work, and lunch locally with family and a drink with a few friends. What a busy week it was!

**Monday
19th**

I caught an early flight to Belfast for a few meetings. I first went to see people from the Integrated Education Fund. They have a big job on as only 6% of children in Northern Ireland attend integrated schools - in other words, not religious-based schools. I attended a CofE school, and it was very good, but in Northern Ireland we need to break down the sectarianism and integrate people. I then had two meetings at Stormont, and then attended a reception at the Parliament building that evening.

**Tuesday
20th**

I stayed the Monday night in Belfast and attended a seminar to do with policing and community partnerships. I then flew back to London and caught up with post, before attending a business reception in the evening.

**Wednesday
21st**

I had a meeting about Blackberries (Mobile Phones) in the morning - I still don't have one - then attended our Northern Ireland team meeting. I asked a question in the chamber of the Commons about the importance of providing both emergency aid to Ethiopia and the rest of East Africa during the present drought, but I also made the point about the importance of development aid, so that these countries can slowly begin to grow sufficient food. In the afternoon, I dealt with some Northern Ireland legislation in committee and then returned to Tewkesbury in the evening.

**Thursday
22nd**

I spent the day working in my constituency office, getting through a emails and letters.

**Friday
23rd**

I visited TRL in Tewkesbury, which is one of the world leaders in, basically, anti-bomb devices. I then had lunch with Edward Gillespie from Cheltenham racecourse and caught up with some racing issues. Following that, I visited another business and then attended a questions and answers dinner at Nettleton Bottom.

**Saturday
24th**

After doing some computer work, I held a small dinner at home for family and a few friends.

**Sunday
25th**

Basically, a day off, seeing family in the morning and then having a drink with some friends locally.

**Monday
12th**

This was the first day back at Westminster after the summer recess. I therefore had a lot of items to catch up on which could only really be done when Parliament is sitting. Most of the day was spent doing those things, though I also attended a reception with African Diaspora.

**Tuesday
13th**

More of the same today. I also had a meeting with someone from the British Horseracing Authority and another meeting with regard to the Charity Horseracing Dinner we are holding in the Commons on 30th October in aid of Racing Welfare. At last year's event we raised £50,000 for The Injured Jockeys' Fund. In the evening I hosted a dinner on behalf of Trett Consultancy, which basically advises on engineering and construction. Twenty four people - all men - grilled me on most political issues of the day. The evening was much interrupted by votes but it was a lively debate.

**Wednesday
14th**

I attended our Northern Ireland team meeting today before going off to lunch with a financier who invests mainly in renewable energy systems. I hope that he will invest in this area. I then had a further business meeting and went on to the AGM of the All-Party Ethiopia Group and was elected as Chairman of the Group, from previously having been secretary. I am now trying to put together a visit to that country to see at first hand the effects of the drought. I then attended a reception with quite a few engineers as part of the All-Party Engineering & IT Group.

**Thursday
15th**

I headed back to Tewkesbury in the morning and had lunch with the Editor of the Gloucestershire Echo, Kevan Blackadder. Then back to do more post and emails, then I attended an evening event at Gloucestershire Airport to mark the flights to the Isle of Man - I think it was the 4,000th passenger to fly there from Staverton.

**Friday
16th**

First thing, I visited Twyning School, only to find the head teacher in a class room covering for colleagues who were off ill! I then went to a meeting in Bishop's Cleeve to discuss climate change, then went to the races at Cheltenham. As I always remind people, the Cheltenham racecourse is actually in my Tewkesbury constituency!

**Saturday
17th**

I was annoyed to find that the cold I had shaken off had returned. Still, onwards. I enjoyed the second day at the races - still no winners! - then a quiet meal at the local pub.

**Sunday
18th**

A day off today. Saw a few friends and prepared for the coming week.

Monday
5th

The start of the Conservative Party Conference. I travelled to Manchester - we used to hold conferences at the sea-side! - on the Monday morning and, after dropping clothes off at the hotel and then parking the car somewhere, else, attended a meeting with the BBC trust. then, late afternoon I chaired a meeting about flood prevention, at which local County Councillor Andrew Gravells and Shadow Minister for Floods & Drought, Anne MacIntosh, spoke. i then went straight on to a reception held by our Northern Ireland department, which I am a member of. Then on to attend the annual Ladbrokes dinner, which is accompanied by good wine - the wine merchant actually attends the dinner.

Tuesday
6th

I started the morning with a live interview for Radio Gloucestershire. The cough and cold I had been suffering from got a grip of me this morning but I struggled on bravely. It didn't help, though, when I got soaked in the rain on my way to the conference centre. My first meeting was with people from Sue Ryder Care, to talk, in particular, about the Leckhampton Hospice. I then met a representative of General Dynamics, who employ people and work from the barracks at Ashchurch. I then hosted a reception on behalf of the Parliamentary Beer Group, which was attended by a number of people from the beer and pubs industries. In the afternoon, I unsuccessfully attempted to access my emails through my lap-top, but the connection in the hotel was poor. I gave up. In the evening, I started by attending a reception hosted by the new Irish Ambassador, then went on to an event with Manchester Airport and then one on behalf of the Tobacco manufacturers Association - there is relevant business in the Commons on Monday on this issue.

Wednesday
7th

A brighter day today. I started with a meeting with a hearing company, then a health and safety company, then on to a meeting with the British Wind Energy Association. i then met someone from the Equitable Life Action Group, who are struggling to receive compensation for the poor financial supervision of that company by the relevent people. I then had lunch with people from the casino industry followed by a walk round the stands at the conference centre. The evening was busy again. I attended a meeting regarding helping children with disabilities and then attended a dinner with people from the Nuclear Industry Association.

Thursday
8th

I attended the conference hall for the session on the Union (of the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland) in which Northern Ireland featured. I have to admit that I then set off for home and listened to david Cameron's speech on the television, before tending to the huge number of Emails, which had come in during my absence!

Friday
9th

I had an early meeting with Canon Paul Williams and Philippa, who works at the Abbey, to discuss further fundraising which is needed to keep the Abbey open as often as it is. I then went to see Living Well, which is a company contracted to social services to provide help for people at home. They are now looking to build day and treatment centres. This was followed by a meeting at Twigworth with Gloucestershire Environmental Trust, which provides grants to various organisations from money paid to it by landfill companies who are allowed to contribute this way instead of paying the landfill tax. I then spent time in my local office and in the evening I attended the Mop Fair with my family.

Saturday
10th

I attended the launch of the Badgeworth Bell Appeal at Holy Trinity Church, Badgeworth, launched by the Bishop of Tewkesbury. they need to raise money to strengthen the tower. Following work from home, I attended an event at Laverton in the evening.

Sunday
11th

Although just outside my constituency, I officially started the Pink Fun race from the Railway Inn at Ripple, which was organised to raise money in aid of Breast cancer Awareness. After that, it was a drink with a few friends and a quiet evening, in preparation for the return to Westminster the following day.

**Monday
28th**

Up at 4.30am, I returned from a short break in New York. For once, I caught a day flight, which was much better than the normal night flights I have caught.

**Tuesday
29th**

I spent all day working in my constituency office catching up with paperwork.

**Wednesday
30th**

Another early morning, I flew from Birmingham to Belfast City. I visited two primary schools on the Shankill Road. This area is struggling to benefit from the "peace dividend" and West Belfast remains a divided community. I then went for a meeting with David Ford MLA, who is the leader of the Alliance Party in Northern Ireland. He would probably be the man who would become the Minister for Policing & Justice should those departments be devolved to the Assembly. I attended a lunch time meeting with members of the Orange Order, who have some concerns about marching and other matters. In the evening, I was on the panel for a debate on the future of Northern Ireland. One of the people I was on the panel with was Gerry Kelly, who admitted having been a member of the IRA and having taken part in "operations". He says he is now working hard for peace. But it's difficult.

**Thursday
1st**

Up early again to catch the flight back to Birmingham, then spent the rest of the day working in my constituency office.

**Friday
2nd**

I visited the Police Mounted Section at Avon & Somerset Constabulary as part of my Police Service Parliamentary Scheme. Then on to a meeting at Shire Hall to discuss waste proposals, Elmbridge Court Park & Ride proposals and a few other issues. In the evening, I attended an event at Winchcombe and took part in a questions and answers session.

**Saturday
3rd**

I held a surgery at Tewkesbury town hall in the morning, mainly to discuss problems people are having with insurance premiums and excesses following the flooding. In the afternoon, I attended the opening of the centre at Brizen Field and held a small reception for some friends in the evening.

**Sunday
4th**

A day off, apart from having to do some emails and make preparations for the coming week at the Conservative Party conference. Though I was starting to feel the effects of a cold and cough, I still had plenty to do today. But I managed a visit to my local pub to see some friends.

Diary week commencing 21st September 2009

Monday 21st

I spent the morning at my local office before travelling to London in advance of meetings the following day.

Tuesday 22nd

I attended our Northern Ireland team meeting in the morning. We discussed the security and political situation in the Province, both of which are giving some cause for concern. I then attended a private business meeting in the afternoon, did further office work in London and travelled back to Tewkesbury that evening.

Wednesday 23rd

I had a meeting with the head at Tewkesbury School, John Reilly. He is really switched on. We discussed the problems of continuing the leisure facilities for the community once the borough council's revenue funding ends. Other schools will also be affected. He also showed me round the *Launchpad* in Tewkesbury, which provides training in such professions as hairdressing, engineering, catering etc for school-aged children. It is very impressive. I had the "pleasure" of carrying out the "topping-out" ceremony of the building – high up in the sky on a cherry-picker (that was the worst bit) on a rainy day – some months ago!

Thursday 24th

I spoke at the Tewkesbury Business Breakfast Club held at Sherdons in the morning, my theme being the need for a return by government to honest money following the debt and banking crisis. I then carried out some office work before travelling to Heathrow to leave for a short break. Later that evening I arrived in New York!

Friday 25th – Monday 28th

I spent a few days in New York City. It is a tremendously exciting place. Crime is much lower now than in the past. It's my first visit to the city since I ran the marathon there in 1994, when I was considerably younger, fitter and slimmer! Certain things are now very expensive and hotel rooms are small, but it was a great time.

**Monday
14th**

I started the day with a visit to Cleeve School to be shown round the new parts of the school by the head Allen McConaghie. Allen has shown tremendous leadership at the school and the development is something to be proud of.

I then visited Tesco stores at Bishop's Cleeve, Brockworth and Tewkesbury to make presentations on behalf of the stores to children from a number of schools in each area.

**Tuesday
15th**

I spent time on my Police Service Parliamentary Scheme with the forensics department, looking at the work done by units such as finger prints, foot prints, computer staff, imaging and other departments. It was fascinating.

I then attended a meeting which I had helped to broker between members of Up Hatherley Parish Council and Gloucestershire Airport. I had previously looked into the possibility of attaching silencers to planes and will look into this further as it would seem to be a large part of the answer to a problem.

**Wednesday
16th**

I spent the morning at my local office and then attended Alderman Knight School for the opening of the MUGA - Multi-Use Games Area. I have a strong affection for the work of this school and was pleased to attend this function. In the evening I went for a private dinner at an Italian restaurant with family.

**Thursday
17th**

I spent the day working from my local office and got quite a bit done.

**Friday
18th**

I again visited Alderman Knight School, this time for a discussion with the head Claire Steel. I then went down to Brockworth School for a discussion with the new head, Jan Scott. Following these meetings, I attended the funeral of Bernard Snape, a local business man who was extremely popular in the community. It was very well attended.

**Saturday
19th**

Following breakfast and some shopping in Tewkesbury, I took the rest of the afternoon off, and had a curry in a restaurant in Tewkesbury that evening.

**Sunday
20th**

I had family visiting in the morning then we had lunch together. The children were very well behaved but the dogs less so!

Diary week commencing 7th September 2009

Monday 7th

I visited a company called Cymbio in Tewkesbury, which basically provides IT help and advice to the NHS. We had a very interesting discussion. The rest of the day I spent in my local office on correspondence.

Tuesday 8th

I spent most of the day in my local office then attended an event held by the Chamber of Commerce in Tewkesbury in the evening. The discussion centred around IT but there was also a presentation by the head teacher of Alderman Knight School, Claire Steel. I continue to take a close interest in the school since we won the battle to keep it open.

Wednesday 9th

I travelled to Birmingham airport and caught an early flight to Belfast as part of my Front Bench duties. While there, I had a meeting on the Shankill Road to discuss the poor education achievements of children in that area. And then, as if by contrast, I travelled to Enniskillen to speak at a grammar school which has a rich history, boasting Oscar Wilde as one of its past pupils. The questions from the pupils were many and varied! The Northern Ireland Education Minister (as part of the Assembly) has got the education system into a bit of a mess there, in that they seem to have abolished the 11-plus but kept grammar schools. I then had a meeting with representatives of the drinks industry regarding the problems facing pubs because of the - unfair in their eyes - competition they face from supermarkets. This is a matter I have raised in Westminster.

Thursday 10th

I travelled to South Armagh and held meetings with two victims' support groups in that area. They do tremendous work against all odds and against a background of great tragedy and sadness. I also had a briefing from the police in this area. There is a heightened security concern at the moment following dissident republican activity which culminated in a large bomb being discovered in Forkhill last week. I visited the site. The bomb was intended to kill police officers who use this quiet country lane. I also visited a number of other border towns, including Crossmaglen. I then returned to Belfast and spent some time waiting for an again-delayed plane! It was almost midnight when I returned to Tewkesbury.

Friday 11th

I was on the road again first thing on my way to visit Rolls-Royce down at Filton. As aerospace is so important to my constituency, I wanted to have a look round this company's site, as they make the engines for some of the planes. I found it very interesting. I returned to Tewkesbury in the afternoon and then attended a Party gathering in Cheltenham in the evening, at which I spoke.

Saturday 12th

I took this day off. Well, almost - I did do a few emails. And then I enjoyed a meal and a few drinks with friends at the local pub in the evening.

Sunday 13th

Another busy day! I travelled to Winchcombe to attend a Party gathering. Then I attended the Borough Mayor's Civic Service at St Lawrence's Church, Sandhurst. It was a well attended service. Following a meal on the run, or at least on the road, in the evening I attended a performance of Amadeus at Deane Close School in Cheltenham. It was very powerfully acted by the young actors (I am informed that actresses are these days referred to as actors) and it was quite educational.

Monday
24th

I had a meeting with the District Auditor to discuss his role, particularly in the Cheltenham Borough Council v Christine Laird case, the failure of which is costing the local taxpayer a great deal of money. The District Auditor is carrying out an investigation into who took the decisions to take Mrs Laird to court, what assessment was made of the likelihood of winning the case, how much money could have been recovered from Mrs Laird if they had won the case, and the general management of the decision making process. Mrs Laird is a constituent of mine and, as someone who also represents a number of people who pay Council Tax to Cheltenham Borough, I don't believe that the case should ever have been brought. I wrote to the District Auditor requesting this investigation and I'm pleased it is being carried out.

I also held a meeting with representatives and customers of Clydesdale Bank at Brockworth and we had a useful discussion regarding the economy and the way their bank works. They told me that they seek to provide a better, more personal service to their customers than do many other banks. I then went on to another meeting with some local Conservative Party people for an hour.

Then, in the evening, I spent quite a bit of time on my computer, doing emails, writing my weekly article for The Citizen and writing a few other items.

Tuesday
25th

I started the day by visiting Star Hydraulics Ltd in Tewkesbury. As the name suggests, they repair and manufacture hydraulic systems for aircraft and other vehicles. They are a small company but export worldwide. They raised a particularly silly approach taken by Customs & Exise to import duty, which I'll look into.

I then had a private meeting with someone who had been a stockbroker and is a top-notch business man, to discuss the economy. Then on to Jesmond Street doctors' practice in Tewkesbury, as part of a visit-a-surgery week being organised centrally. We had a very useful discussion about health matters, the possible new hospital in Tewkesbury and running a GP practice. It was very interesting, even though I've seen too much of doctors recently!

I then called at my office in Tewkesbury, had a further meeting with a man about finance and carried out quite a bit of computer work at night.

Wednesday
26th

I spent the day with the traffic police, based at Bamfurlong, as part of my Police Service Parliamentary Scheme. It was a very interesting day, which included a briefing and demonstration of the number plate recognition system, which alerts the police to cars which, for one reason or another, shouldn't be being driven. I also spent some time with the accident team, which was harrowing in parts. It certainly is an interesting scheme. That evening I drove down to London in advance of an early meeting the next day.

Thursday
27th

I am a Shadow Minister for Northern Ireland and attended our team meeting this morning to discuss policies for the Province if we should win the General Election. Of course, responsibility for many of the departments has been devolved to the Assembly, but there are areas, such as policing and justice, which remain the responsibility of Westminster. Our main priorities will be to try to cement the relative peace and political stability which exists in Northern Ireland but also to try to improve the economy, which is too state dependent. I then attended another business meeting in London, carried out quite a lot of office work then drove back to Tewkesbury.

Friday
28th

I spent much of the day in my local office carrying out computer work and dealing with correspondence. In the evening, I visited a curry house in Cheltenham with friends. I am very keen on the Indian curry, particularly enjoying Madras-strength dishes!

Saturday
29th

I opened the fete at Northway which was organised and run by the Northway Residents Association and then attended the fete run by Tewkesbury hospital in town. The rest of the day was spent on emails and other correspondence and preparing for a big barbecue which I am hosting tomorrow.

Sunday
30th

I held my annual summer barbecue today for quite a few local people. The weather just about held, but it was hard to believe that it was still August! So much for the predictions of a "barbecue summer" – yes, a barbecue was possible, but only just!

Diary Week Commencing 17th August 2009

Monday 17th

I spent the day at my office in Tewkesbury working on emails and letters. People can still write to me at the House of Commons and, if I'm working at this end, either my Secretary can send the letters on to me or I can arrange for the House of Commons to redirect it to me.

Tuesday 18th - Thursday 20th

I took some time out to attend York races. I take a keen interest in horse racing and have attended the "Ebor" meeting for a number of years now. York is a beautiful, historic city and it's a privilege to be there. I was still able to access some emails while there, as I like to keep in touch.

Friday 21st

I returned from York in the morning and went to see the Consultant about my back injury. He then wanted me to go for an MRI scan that afternoon. I was not looking forward to this, given the claustrophobic nature of the machine! I had one which was open at the sides, but I kept my eyes firmly shut for the 20-25 minutes duration, and listened to the PM programme on Radio 4! I spent the evening catching up on further emails.

Saturday 22nd

I travelled to Coventry for the wedding of a friend of mine, Raj, who was marrying Sangeeta. Raj is a Christian and Sangeeta a Hindu, so there were two wedding ceremonies. The Hindu one was very interesting in that there are rituals involved which have much meaning. Both lunch and dinner consisted of curry, which I very much like. I was so pleased for this couple. Raj, a heart surgeon, had been suspended by the NHS in that area for a number of years on a trumped-up charge and the case had cost the NHS millions. He was supported by Sangeeta for years and won his case recently.

Sunday 23rd

I travelled back from Coventry, did some emails then spent the rest of the day with friends. I also received the tragic news that one of our villagers had been hit by a lorry on the Saturday morning at the Mythe and was in an extremely serious condition in Cheltenham General. I very much hope he pulls through.

Diary week commencing 10th August 2009

Monday 10th

I made the key-note address at a course entitled "Leadership for a Global Society" at the Federal Executive Institute in Charlottesville, Virginia. The people attending the week-long course paid \$3,500 for the pleasure of doing so, which made it important for me to get it right! I have posted a summary of the speech I made elsewhere on this web-site. Virginia (named so after the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth I) was one of the original 13 colonies in the USA and the history of the Civil War/Revolution is very strong there.

Tuesday 11th

I attended part of the course in the morning, then made my way by car back up to Washington Dulles airport for my flight back. I was able to access my emails from the airport as I waited for the plane. I also made a number of phone calls to my Tewkesbury office to try to sort out one or two issues which had arisen.

Wednesday 12th

I arrived back from Virginia with BA. It was a reasonably comfortable flight, though the overnight ones, which this was, are never too comfortable! In the evening, we went to TGI Friday in Cheltenham to celebrate the 4th birthday of my granddaughter, Hannah!

Thursday 13th

I visited my GP for some advice on my back problem, which (I like to think) was aggravated by a sporting injury, sustained when playing in a charity cricket match a few weeks ago. It is extremely painful. One of the problems with my visiting my GP is that he also talks to me about NHS issues and the appointment can take a while, keeping others waiting - sorry! I then spent the rest of the day in my Tewkesbury office, catching up on letters, emails and invitations.

Friday 14th

I held a meeting with a representative of Ecclesiastical Insurance, who are looking to relocate to consolidate their business. Formed in the 19th Century, their profits are distributed to mainly church-based charities and are an interesting company. I then had a meeting at Coopers Edge to discuss the new primary school which will come about because of money from the developers as part of their planning permission in that area. A parents group are bidding to run the school, as they can under recent legislation.

Saturday 15th

A day off, largely, spent with visits from my step-daughter, Jemma, her husband, Mark, and their three children, Natasha, 10, Kieran, 7, and Hannah, 4. They enjoyed some time riding our horses. At the moment, because of my back injury, I have to just watch - no golf or riding horses for me at the moment!

Sunday 16th

At my computer from first thing, looking through emails, writing bits for my website and drawing up items for my next newsletter in Churchdown. I had lunch with my family, then more computer work later in the day.