

What a pleasure it was to meet the four newly-appointed candidates for the other parties in the (fairly imminent) General Election. The nice Labour school-teacher from Box is hopeful of securing second place; the Lib Dem candidate from Yatton Keynell thinks he will buck the polls; I welcome back the decent Green Party candidate who also stood at the last election; and UKIP have selected a lady from Devizes. Good luck to her too. I look forward to engaging in civilised debate about the great issues of the day as soon as the campaign kicks off next April 1st, but, for the sake of the sanity of you the electorate, will resist any such debates prior to that. Such discussions are the lifeblood of democracy, and I relish them.

I will hope that my long record as a hard-working, outspoken, sometimes rebellious, constituency MP who has no interest in life other than the good of the people of North Wiltshire will stand me personally in good stead. But the fact of the matter is that much as we would like to tell ourselves that we have a ‘strong personal following,’ elections are decided not on the individual characteristics of the candidate, but on TV-carried impressions of the parties and what they will do for you, the voters. That is one reason why I never mention the other candidates, certainly never attack them personally in any way. They are all good people of decent conviction and I respect and salute them for their determination to engage in the political process. I hope that they will share this mutual respect and abhorrence of personal attacks, and focus with me purely on the issues.

The long Remembrance period continues for me. During this anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War I am trying to visit all 55 cemeteries in North Wiltshire which contain 209 war graves all told, where possible accompanied by local school students. So far I have visited Corston, Stanton St Quintin, Crudwell, both Holy Trinity and Curzon Street, Calne; Sherston, Bradenstoke, and Lyneham; and tomorrow will be in Brinkworth, Hilmarton, Ashton Keynes and Cricklade; and have plans for Colerne and elsewhere soon. I will report back with my progress.

Jonty Conway in Calne read his most lovely poem “For all who Forgot,” the second verse reading:-

“For those who were invaded, for those whose lives have faded;

They will never forget the sights they saw, forever remembering the sound of war;

They lost so much, they lived with death, they gave their all with every breath;

We thank you Lord for all, especially those who had to fall.”